# Concordia Theological Quarterly

CTQ

Vol. 64 No. 2
April 2000

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

*Concordia Theological Quarterly*, a continuation of *The Springfielder*, is a theological journal of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Its website is at http://www.ctsfw.edu/ctq/index.html.





*Concordia Theological Quarterly* is indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals* and abstracted in *Old Testament Abstracts* and *New Testament Abstracts*.

Manuscripts should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and are subject to peer review and editorial modification. Please accompany manuscripts with a computer disk version, preferably in WordPerfect. Unsolicited submissions should be original unpublished works and will *not* be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelopes and sufficient return postage.

*Concordia Theological Quarterly* is published in January, April, July, and October. The annual subscription rate is $15.00 within the United States, $20.00 U.S. in Canada, and $35.00 U.S. elsewhere. All changes of address (including clergymen of the Missouri Synod), subscription payments, and other correspondence concerning business matters should be sent to *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825.


 • ISSN 0038-8610

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

Volume 64:2 April 2000

*Table of Contents*

# Unity and Diversity in Irenaeus as Paradigm for Contemporary Lutheran Ceremonial Consensus

Jon D. Vieker

Missouri Synod Lutheranism is facing a ceremonial, and consequently, an ecclesiastical crisis. A recent article understatedly but aptly described the Missouri's contemporary situation: there is "much disagreement in our church on the topic of worship."[1] In this context, a key confessional text is Article X of the Formula of Concord, which examines the question whether or not, during times of persecution, the Lutheran confessors could yield to demands to reintroduce ceremonies that were true adiaphora, that is, neither commanded nor forbidden by God. Both the Epitome and Solid Declaration of Article X quote the words of the second-century church father, Irenaeus of Lyons: "Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith."[2]

This study examines the historical and theological tension between the unity of faith and diversity in ceremony in the theological writings of Irenaeus, as well as his role as "peacemaker" in the Quartodeciman Controversy. By examining the historical and theological background of the Irenaean and Lutheran confessional saying, "Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith," a paradigm for ceremonial consensus among Missouri Lutherans today will emerge.[3]

---

[1]Sean Parker, "Worship Wars: Traditional vs. Contemporary Worship. What's Right? And, Is Anyone Wrong?" *Reporter*, November 22, 1996.

[2]*The Book of Concord,* edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 493 (hereafter Tappert). One may see FC Ep X, 7, FC SD X, 31, and AC XXVI, 44.

[3]Toward that end, the Missouri Synod resolved at its 1998 convention, as noted in *Proceedings . . .* (Res. 2-10; 1998): "that the Commission on Worship bring together a forum representing the diversity of practices within the

---

*The Rev. Jon Vieker is Assistant Director of the LCMS Commission on Worship.*

## Irenaeus and the Rule of Truth: Unity in Doctrine

### *Irenaeus and His Historical Context*

Irenaeus came from Smyrna in Asia Minor, having once sat at the feet of Polycarp.[4] Although the dates of both his birth and death are uncertain, he served most of his life in the Gallic Church of the west, centered principally in the city of Lyons (Roman Lugdunum).[5] About A.D. 177, the church of Lyons suffered a severe persecution. Shortly thereafter Irenaeus journeyed to Rome as presbyter emissary to visit Eleutherius, bishop of Rome.[6] It was some time after his return to Lyons that Irenaeus wrote the only two works that have survived: *Against Heresies: On the Detection and Refutation of the Knowledge Falsely So Called,* a substantial work written to refute second-century Gnosticism; and *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching,* a much briefer apologetic work couched in catechetical form.[7] The threat of Gnosticism, however, served as the central backdrop for much of Irenaeus' thought and writing, and it was in the face of this potent heresy that Irenaeus first coined the phrase "the rule of

---

Synod . . . for the purposes of increasing understanding, building consensus in our doctrine and practice of worship, and providing input to the Commission on Worship as it develops guidelines for worship . . ."

[4]Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses,* 3. 3, 4 (hereafter *AH*); as published in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996 reprint), 1:416 (hereafter *ANF*); and published in the original Greek and Latin in Norbert Brox, translator and editor, *Fontes Christiani,* 5 volumes of *AH* (Freiburg: Herder, 1993-97), 8/3:34 (hereafter *FChr*).

[5]Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 9-10.

[6]Although Irenaeus never used the title "bishop" of himself, it is likely that he was consecrated during this visit (Frank D. Gilliard, "The Apostolicity of the Gallic Churches," *Harvard Theological Review* 68 [1975]: 30).

[7]Donovan, *One Right Reading?* 10. *AH* survives in Latin, with much of it found also in various Greek fragments. Without this work, we would know little about second-century Gnosticism today. The *Proof* or *Epideixis* was only recovered in 1904 in an Armenian translation (Donovan, *One Right Reading?* 19).

truth."[8]

*The Rule of Truth and Scripture*

Although the phrase the rule of truth[9] finds no direct literary parallels in the New Testament, the "emphasis on the transmission of authoritative doctrine . . . found everywhere in the New Testament . . . is clear enough."[10] In the face of the Gnostic threat, Irenaeus sought to confess authoritative and apostolic doctrine. The result was one of the earliest recorded instances of extensive postapostolic apologetics. For example, Irenaeus repeatedly points out the endless contradictions apparent in Gnostic cosmology and soteriology. He notes that as one begins to question this Gnostic teacher or that, such teachers "convict themselves, since they are not of one mind with regard to the same words." Christians, on the other hand, follow "the one and only true God," "possess His words as the rule of truth [*regulam veritatis*]," and "all speak alike with regard to the same things . . ."[11] Thus, for Irenaeus, the unity of the Scriptures and the unity of confessing those Scriptures were bound inseparably together. Such unity meant that the church throughout the world could speak the same of God, Christ, Creation, the Holy Spirit, and every other Christian doctrine because the Scriptures spoke unanimously of them.

In contrast to the church's unified confession grounded in the

---

[8]R.P.C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, The Library of History and Doctrine (London: SCM Press, 1962), 75.

[9]Gerald Bray ("Authority in the Early Church," *Churchman* 95 [1981]: 50) notes: "The term in fact was well known to any student of Roman law; a *regula* was a short summary of the contents of a statute, and in legal terms it possessed the same authority as that statute in so far as it faithfully reproduced the spirit of the original. This neat device made it possible to consult the whole corpus of Roman law without reading every word on each occasion, and it greatly speeded up the conduct of business. One can see immediately the relevance of this to Christian teaching; the *regula fidei* provided a short summary of scriptural teaching by which doctrine could be measured, though its own authority rested on that of the underlying text."

[10]J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (New York: Longman, 1972), 8-9.

[11]*AH* 4. 35, 4; *ANF* 1:514; *FChr* 8/4:294.

sure words of Scripture, Irenaeus observes the Gnostic penchant for taking words and their meanings completely out of context. For example, in one section, Irenaeus describes the Gnostic use of ancient Greek poets and concludes that "he who is acquainted with the Homeric writings will recognize the verses [the Gnostics quote] indeed, but not the subject to which they are applied . . . knowing that some of them were spoken of Ulysses, others of Hercules himself, others still of Priam, and others again of Menelaus and Agamemnon." Clearly, the Gnostics twist the words—whether they were of Scripture or of pagan poetry—to fit their own pattern of teachings. Nevertheless, Irenaeus maintains that

> . . . he also who retains unchangeable in his heart the rule of the truth [τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἀληθείας ἀκλινῆ ἐν ἑαυτῷ] which he received by means of baptism, will doubtless recognize the names, the expressions, and the parables taken from the Scriptures. . . . But when he has restored every one of the expressions quoted to its proper position, and has fitted it to the body of the truth [τῆς ἀληθείας σομάτίῳ], he will lay bare, and prove to be without any foundation, the figment of these heretics.[12]

For Irenaeus, the rule of truth was received "by means of baptism," perhaps a reference to catechesis in the Scriptures prior to baptism. Likewise, such "truth" formed a "body of truth," which was dependent upon interpreting the words of Scripture accurately and within their original contexts. The Gnostics, however, did not follow such hermeneutical principles, and so came unglued from the true meaning of the Scriptures, that is, they separated themselves from the "rule of truth."

Apprehending the rule of truth required no secret knowledge. Indeed, "these things are such as fall under our observation, and are clearly and unambiguously in express terms set forth in the Sacred Scriptures." Likewise, a clear and unambiguous interpretation and teaching of the Scriptures was crucial for the

---

[12] *AH* 1. 9, 4; *ANF* 1:330; *FChr* 8/1:196.

"body of truth [*veritatis corpus*]" to remain entire and without contradiction.[13] Thus, for Irenaeus, a unified Scripture and its plain meaning were to serve as the source and norm for the "rule of truth."

The converse is the case for the Gnostics. Indeed, "to apply expressions which are not clear or evident to interpretations of the parables, such as every one discovers for himself as inclination leads him, is absurd. For in this way no one will possess the rule of truth [*regula veritatis*]."[14] The Gnostics then go beyond the absurd, for in addition to failing to believe that the Scriptures agree with the "rule of truth," they are quite content to live with the contradictions inherent in their cosmological system. They hold

> discordant opinions as to the same Scriptures; and when the same identical passage is read out, they all begin to purse up their eyebrows, and to shake their heads, and they say that they might indeed utter a discourse transcendently lofty, but that all cannot comprehend the greatness of that thought which is implied in it . . .[15]

The "secret" knowledge of the Gnostic religion was, in fact, so lofty that it had to be guaranteed by an "oral tradition" apart from the Scriptures. For the Gnostics allege

> that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *vivâ voce* . . . so that, according to their idea, the truth properly resides at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at another in Cerinthus, then afterwards in Basilides. . . . For every one of these men,

---

[13]Outler, "The Sense of Tradition," n. 20. He continues (17): "It is only as we recognize the unity of Scripture—by acknowledging Jesus Christ as its center—that we can begin to understand the meaning of its various parts. If, however, a person denies the unity of the Scriptures—or the centrality of Christ within Scripture—the interpretation of Scripture can only be arbitrary and notional. This is what makes men heretics and what makes heresy so grievous an error."

[14]*AH* 2. 27, 1; *ANF* 1:398; *FChr* 8/2:220.

[15]*AH* 4. 35, 4; *ANF* 1:514; *FChr* 8/4:294.

> being altogether of a perverse disposition, depraving the system of truth, is not ashamed to preach himself.[16]

Thus, for Irenaeus, anyone who departs from and thus compromises the unity of doctrine inherent in the "rule of truth," preaches himself and not Christ. And any oral tradition that departs from the truth of the "written documents" of Holy Scripture is an individualistic fiction, which does not pertain to salvation in Christ. The end result of such a course is a rule of truth that exists nowhere and is thus of no use to anyone.

In summary, for Irenaeus the unity of the rule of truth is firmly grounded in the unity of the Scriptures. As the Scriptures speak with one voice of God, Christ, creation, and all other doctrines, so the rule of truth provides inflection and timbre to that voice, as it were, giving shape to the words of Scripture as they are delivered into the ears of the faithful. Consequently, there is no room for extra-biblical and individualistic doctrinal claims or speculations, as with his Gnostic adversaries. For Irenaeus, where Scripture does not speak, neither does the rule of truth give voice.

*The Rule of Truth and Tradition*

One may perceive, however, a kind of uneasy tension in the thought of Irenaeus when it comes to "tradition," especially in the matter of "oral tradition." Indeed, for Irenaeus a kind of oral tradition may hold a salutary use within the church catholic. For example, Irenaeus remarks concerning Clement, that he was "in the third place from the apostles," that "he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them," and that he "might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and the tradition before his eyes [τὸ κήρυγμα τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τὴν παράδοσιν πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχων]."[17] Clearly, this describes something not only written, but also delivered orally through the preaching of the church. As Irenaeus lists the

[16] *AH* 3. 2, 1; *ANF* 1:415; *FChr* 8/3:28.
[17] *AH* 3. 3, 3; *ANF* 1:416; *FChr* 8/3:32-34.

Roman episcopate down to his own day, he concludes:

> In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition [*ecclesia traditio*] from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth [*veritatis praeconatio*] have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith [*unam et eandem vivificatricem fidem esse*], which has been preserved in the church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth [*et tradita in veritate*].[18]

Notice how for Irenaeus, "preaching" and "tradition" run almost interchangeably—the κήρυγμα and παράδοσις both declaring together the one truth contained in the Holy Scriptures. Just as the Scriptures are received by the church as a unit, so the preaching of the truth contained therein and the confession of that truth in the rule of truth are handed down from one generation of apostolic teachers to the next. Such unified "preaching" and tradition have global implications.

In another well-known passage, Irenaeus observes that "the church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. . . . For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same."[19] In spite of a plethora of languages, when it comes to doctrine, the church throughout the world speaks with "only one mouth," passing on from one generation to the next only the tradition she has received. Amazingly, even in spite of a range of ability and eloquence among the teachers of the church throughout the world, the talented can add nothing to the "rule of truth," and the less-talented can take nothing away. "For the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one,

---

[18]Bengt Hägglund, "Die Bedeutung der *regula fidei* als Grundlage theologischer Aussagen," *Studia Theologica* 12 (1958): n. 35.

[19]*AH* 1. 10, 2; *ANF* 1:331; *FChr* 8/1:200.

who can say but little diminish it."[20]

Irenaeus goes on to demonstrate the strength of such a unified apostolic tradition in the rule of truth by noting that even barbarians in distant lands, who have no written language or Scripture, nevertheless confess the same "ancient tradition [*veteram traditionem*] as the church throughout the world."[21] Thus, the Gnostic heresy and any other heresy preached would be self-evident even to unlettered barbarians, who, though they might lack the written Scriptures, yet, because of thorough catechesis in the rule of truth and faithful apostolic preaching, would be wise enough to reject such heresy. For indeed, it was through the oral proclamation of the gospel alone that they learned of Christ and were sustained in their faith.

In summary, there is no tension between the written Scriptures and the oral tradition or rule of truth in the thought of Irenaeus. Tradition simply confesses and confirms the truth of Scripture. The rule of truth is not a rule by which to measure the truth. Rather, the rule of truth is the rule that is the truth, that is, "the true rule." In spite of language, culture, literacy, or talent, the rule of truth delivers the truth of Scripture into faithful hearts. For Irenaeus, it is the organizing interpretive principle for all of Christian teaching and preaching.

> The Rule of Faith governs right exegesis, and the Scriptures (the object of the exegesis) explain the Rule of Faith. Logically this is a circular argument, but in practice the relationship Irenaeus understands between the Rule of Faith and the Scriptures is not so much circular as

---

[20]*AH* 1. 10, 2. *ANF* 1:331; *FChr* 8/1:200. W.C. Van Unnik, "An Interesting Document of Second Century Theological Discussion," *Vigiliae Christianae* 31 (1977): 203: ". . . the terminology employed [here] is a variation of a form of speech, well-known to Irenaeus and his contemporaries: the combination 'not to add to, not to diminish from' is a mark that the integrity of something is safe-guarded, that it is inviolable and sacrosanct. In other words: the christian faith as received from the apostles being always one and the same cannot in any way be changed by man's eloquence or parsimony of words."

[21]*AH* 3. 4, 2; *ANF* 1:417; *FChr* 8/3:40.

dialogical. In the happy formulation of Rowan A. Greer, "text and interpretation are like twin brothers; one can scarcely tell the one from the other."[22]

## Irenaeus and the Quartodeciman Controversy: Diversity in Ceremony

### *A Brief Overview of the Quartodeciman Controversy*

Although for Irenaeus, the rule of truth represented a global and unanimous confession of a unified Holy Scripture, we also see in Irenaeus an acknowledgment of and tolerance for diversity in liturgical custom and form in the church. Thus, in the Quartodeciman Controversy of the second century, Irenaeus played a major role as "peacemaker" in a controversy where there were no apparent doctrinal issues at stake, but where disagreement over apostolic custom seriously threatened to divide the church.[23]

The Quartodeciman Controversy, also known as the "Paschal Controversy," emerged over this question: should Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ on the date of the Jewish Passover (whichever day of the week it might fall on), or on the Sunday following the Jewish Passover. The "Quartodecimans," or "fourteenthers," so-called because they held to the "fourteenth day of Nisan" as the day of Passover prescribed in Exodus 12, maintained the former position, while Rome and the rest of the church catholic maintained the latter.[24] Likewise, the Quartodeciman observance seemed to emphasize the death of Christ, whereas the catholic observance emphasized the

[22]Donovan, *One Right Reading?* 11; citing Rowan A. Greer, "The Christian Bible," 107-109 in James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation,* LEC 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 157.

[23]Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916-1924), 2:210 and following.

[24]Eusebius, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae,* 5. 5, 8 (hereafter *HE*); in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series,* edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996 reprint); hereafter *NPNF2.*

resurrection of Christ.

The controversy played out in three stages. The first occurred between 150 and 155 when Polycarp visited Anicetus, bishop of Rome, and the two agreed to disagree on this issue, yet departed in peace with each other. The controversy broke out again in a second stage about 170 between Melito of Sardis and Apollinarius of Hierapolis without any apparent resolution. This stage does not directly concern our study. The final stage, however, developed in the last decade of the second century when Victor, bishop of Rome, sought to excommunicate Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, and any others who failed to observe the Roman date for celebrating Easter. Widespread conflict was the immediate result, and Irenaeus played a significant role in its resolution.

*The Account of Eusebius*

The only existing account of Irenaeus' role in the Quartodeciman Controversy comes from Eusebius in Book 5 of his *Historiae Ecclesiasticae.*[25] Eusebius begins by describing the third stage of the controversy, in which Victor of Rome demanded that Polycrates of Ephesus and the other Quartodecimans conform to the Roman date for celebrating Easter. Eusebius describes the Quartodeciman minority as consisting of "the parishes of all Asia," who, "from an older tradition" [ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀρχαιοτέρας], held that the fourteenth day of Nisan was the day that should be observed "as the feast of the Savior's passover." He concludes:

> It was therefore necessary to end their fast on that day, whatever day of the week it should happen to be. But it was not the custom [ἔθους] of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this time, as they observed the practice [ἔθος] which, from apostolic tradition [ἀποστολικῆς παραδόσεως], has prevailed to the present time, of terminating the fast on no other day than on that of the

[25]*HE* 5. 23-25; *NPNF2* 1:241-44; *MPG* 20:489-510.

resurrection of our Savior.[26]

The contrast here is between the "older tradition" of the Quartodecimans in celebrating the Pascha on the fourteenth day of Nisan, and the "apostolic tradition" observed by the rest of the world in celebrating it on the Lord's Day following. Consequently, because there was no agreement as to when to celebrate the festival, there was likewise no agreement as to when to terminate the accompanying prefestival fasting. When the festival began, the fasting would end. However, if some began the festival several days before the others, their celebration would begin while others were still fasting.[27] Thus, two different traditions or "customs" [ἔθος] were in conflict with each other, yet both were very ancient, even "apostolic."

Christians began to see this as a problem. Eusebius continues by noting that a number of "synods and assemblies of bishops" were held and by "unanimous decision" resolved that "the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other but the Lord's day." The parishes of Gaul, over which Irenaeus was bishop, were among those who concurred with this decision.[28]

The decision, however, was not completely unanimous, for Eusebius goes on to note that "the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates" resolved to hold on to the custom handed down to them, that is, the Quartodeciman observance.[29] In defense of their practice, Polycrates wrote a letter to Victor that states the case for the Quartodecimans by rehearsing the sacred formula for having properly kept a tradition: "We observe the exact day;

---

[26]*HE* 5. 23, 1; *NPNF2* 1:241; *MPG* 20:489-492.

[27]Turner suggests (*The Pattern of Christian Truth,* 332): "The real difficulty probably lay elsewhere, in the presence at Rome of groups of permanent settlers from Asia Minor who maintained a liturgical tradition at variance with their local bishop. It could therefore be regarded as a problem domestic to the Church at Rome of peculiar delicacy as it involved her relations with other churches."

[28]*HE* 5. 23, 2-3; *NPNF2* 1:241-242; *MPG* 20:492.

[29]*HE* 5. 24, 1; *NPNF2* 1:242; *MPG* 20:493.

neither adding, nor taking away" [μήτε προστιθέντες, μήτε ἀφαιρούμενοι]. He then lists the pedigree of those who preceded him in the celebration of the Quartodeciman festival—among them the Apostles Philip and John, the bishop/martyr Polycarp of Smyrna, Thraseas of Eumenia, Sagaris of Laodicea, and Melito of Sardis.[30] Polycrates concludes:

> All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel [κατὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον], deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith [κατὰ τὸ κανόνα τῆς πίστεως]. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives [κατὰ παράδοσιν τῶν συγγενῶν μοῦ], some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the [Jewish] people put away the leaven.[31]

Polycrates validates his listing of pedigree by invoking a threefold basis. First, he claims that the Quartodecimans are celebrating the Passover "according to the Gospel"—that is, according to the written Gospels, which all make special reference to the Passover in their respective Passion narratives. Here it appears that Polycrates is seeking to provide a biblical grounding and precedent for the Quartodeciman celebration. Next he appeals to "the rule of faith." Practically interchangeable with Irenaeus' "rule of truth," here it appears that Polycrates is appealing to the church's unified confession of the doctrines of Holy Scripture, that is, that there is nothing in observing the Quartodeciman tradition that opposes the doctrines that the church has always taught of Christ.[32] Last (and self-professedly "least"), Polycrates appeals to "the tradition of my relatives," for seven of his relatives were

---

[30] *HE* 5. 24, 2-5; *NPNF2* 1:242; *MPG* 20:493-496.

[31] *HE* 5. 24, 6; *NPNF2* 1:242; *MPG* 20:496.

[32] Yet Ammundsen ("The Rule of Truth in Irenaeus," 579) observes: "I think it is the case with Polykrates of Ephesus. He says [Euseb. *HE* 5. 24, 6] that the great Christian leaders of Asia Minor kept Easter *according to the Gospel,* and the following *according to the Rule of Faith* probably means the same" (emphasis in original).

bishops, and he the eighth. And so Polycrates concludes his letter: "I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said 'We ought to obey God rather than man.'"[33]

Polycrates shows no hesitation in facing those from within the church who would seek to remove him and the rest of the Quartodecimans from the catholic fellowship, for that is exactly what Victor then attempted to do upon receiving Polycrates' letter. Victor wrote his own letters, declaring the Quartodeciman churches to be unorthodox and all the brethren to be excommunicated.

The rest of the church did not concur. Eusebius notes that they implored Victor to consider "the things of peace, and of neighborly unity and love." Chief among those urging such peace, according to Eusebius, was Irenaeus, who admonished Victor that he should not cut off those churches that "observed the tradition of an ancient custom"[ἀρχαίου ἔθους παράδοσιν ἐπιτηρούσας].[34] "... For the controversy is not only concerning the day, but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more; some, moreover, count their day as consisting of forty hours day and night."[35] Here Irenaeus describes the diversity of practice, even among the Quartodecimans with regard to fasting and also comments on the source of this diversity. "And this

---

[33]*HE* 5. 24, 7; *NPNF2* 1:242; *MPG* 20:497.

[34]*HE* 5. 24, 10; *NPNF2* 1:243; *MPG* 20:500. Here one might observe a distinction in Irenaeus' use of the word παράδοσις. Whereas elsewhere Irenaeus uses παράδοσις to designate the handing on of true Christian doctrine from one teacher to the next, here he modifies it with the addition of the words ἀρχαίου ἔθους ("ancient custom"). In other words, it may be inferred that a παράδοσις from the Lord (that is, a doctrine) carries a different weight and freight than a mere "ancient custom" (that is, a practice), in this case, which day to observe an annual celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

[35]*HE* 5. 24, 12; *NPNF2* 1:243; *MPG* 20:500-504.

variety in its observance has not originated in our time; but long before in that of our ancestors. It is likely that they did not hold to strict accuracy, and thus formed a custom for their posterity according to their own simplicity and peculiar mode."[36]

As the form (εἶδος) was passed on from one generation to the next, it was not held onto with complete accuracy. Perhaps some aspects were lost; others were added. Variation in form, even among those with a common Quartodeciman practice (ἔθος) was the inevitable result, and then such variant streams of practice were subsequently adapted according to individual circumstances (ἰδιωτισμός). Irenaeus concludes pointedly: "Yet all of these lived none the less in peace, and we also live in peace with one another; and the disagreement in regard to the fast confirms the agreement in the faith."[37]

Irenaeus urges peace, just as the various churches had lived for many decades in peace despite a diversity of paschal observance. To further substantiate his appeal for peace, Irenaeus then pleads with Victor to consider those who had occupied the Roman see before him, how they, though not observing the Quartodeciman Easter, "were nonetheless at peace with those who came from parishes in which it was observed." None were ever excommunicated "on account of this form" (εἶδος).[38] To clinch his case, Irenaeus then recounts a visit that his own teacher and bishop, Polycarp, once made to Anicetus, then Bishop of Rome:

> And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to quarrel over this matter. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither

---

[36]*HE* 5. 24, 13; *NPNF2* 1:243; *MPG* 20:504.
[37]*HE* 5. 24, 13; *NPNF2* 1:243; *MPG* 20:504.
[38]*HE* 5. 24, 14; *NPNF2* 1:243; *MPG* 20:505.

> could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it as he said that he ought to follow the customs [συνήθειαν] of the presbyters that had preceded him.[39]

Indeed, Polycarp and Anicetus had set a precedent as to how disagreement "a little about certain other things" should be dealt with. Although each, on the basis of weighty apostolic precedent, attempted to persuade the other to observe a different paschal practice, neither could consent to the other's "custom." Nevertheless, they "made peace." Both Polycarp and Anicetus recognized that their respective customs were not regarding teachings of the faith—not constitutive elements of the "rule of truth."[40] True "peace" was found only in the unity of a common confession of the truth and was to be enjoyed together in a joint celebration of the Lord's Supper. As Irenaeus concludes:

> But though matters were in this shape, they communed together [ἐκοινώνησαν], and Anicetus conceded the administration of the eucharist in the church to Polycarp, manifestly as a mark of respect. And they parted from each other in peace, both those who observed, and those who did not, maintaining the peace of the whole church.[41]

Indeed, the Bishop of Rome yielded his altar to the visiting Bishop of Smyrna as a mark of the fellowship (κοινωνία) they shared.[42] In their teaching, and thus, in the Supper, they were

---

[39]*HE* 5. 24, 16; *NPNF2* 1:243-44; *MPG* 20:505-508.

[40]Roch Kereszty, "The Unity of the Church in the Theology of Irenaeus," *Second Century* 4 (1984):216: "Thus the attitude of Irenaeus on church unity is nuanced: he never stops insisting on unity in essentials, but he also insists on tolerating a difference in traditions which do not concern the 'one and the same faith.' . . . It seems that precisely his theology of unity based on the transcendent unity of God allows him a tolerance and acceptance of different customs where there was no danger to the unity of the faith. As he himself put it with admirable precision: 'the divergency in the fast emphasized the unanimity of our faith.'"

[41]*HE* 5. 24, 17; *NPNF2* 1:244; *MPG* 20:503.

[42]Werner Elert (*Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, translated by Norman Nagel [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House,

one, even though they differed with regard to custom and form. And the result was that peace was maintained throughout the whole church.

## Conclusions

*Then and Now*

Missouri Lutheranism's widespread ecclesiastical conflict mirrors the tension that resulted from the Quartodeciman observance during those final years of the second century. Then as now, the relationship between the unity of the faith and diversity of ceremony is a crucial factor in the debate. In the second century, the Quartodeciman call for diversity of ceremony was grounded in their own apostolically-based customs and forms, filtered through the first few decades of the postapostolic age. Today, however, the call for a widened diversity of ceremony is grounded in a perceived separation between "style and substance" and a desire to appeal to the various segments of an increasingly diverse and unchurched population.[43] Whereas the Quartodecimans looked back to their ceremonial tradition in order to substantiate their argument for diversity, modern cries for ceremonial tolerance and diversity in Missouri are essentially forward-looking in their justification. Such forward-looking manufacturing of a tradition is completely absent in the thought of Irenaeus and the church of the second century.

Of course, for the Gnostics of the second century, diversity of every sort was a given and, in fact, a desirable commodity. The various schools of thought tossed about from teacher to teacher

---

1966], 165-66) notes: "Anicetus' action therefore must be understood to bestow permission to celebrate the Sacrament. . . . What happened during Polycarp's visit is proof positive of enacted fellowship between the churches of Rome and Smyrna. Practiced altar fellowship is proof of the fellowship between the churches of Rome and Asia Minor."

[43]One may see David Luecke, *Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance: Facing America's Mission Challenge* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988).

must have made it a nearly maddening enterprise for one such as Irenaeus to tie down and refute such teachings. In many ways, this kind of ideological diversity is not far from our current "postmodern" approach to epistemology, with no absolutes and a desire for "spirituality without truth."[44]

With such a world view today, there are two simplistic paths Missouri may follow. The first is to allow the church and her worship to be conformed to the fluid epistemology of postmodernism. In such a scenario, little or nothing stays the same, and the goal of the worship service is to provide an appropriate comfort level for all who attend. Here the appeal is made primarily to the will and emotion instead of the intellect. The second simplistic path is that of repristination. Whether it is fourth-century eucharistic prayers, sixteenth-century hymnody, or 1950s worship from *The Lutheran Hymnal,* the goal of the service is to find solid grounding and security by doing things the way they used to be done, a romanticism that believes that things were once grand. Here the appeal is made primarily to the intellect.

A third path, more complicated but also more churchly, is the path of peace, once traveled by Irenaeus, the "peacemaker."

*Unity in Doctrine*

First of all, peace for Irenaeus was only possible through thorough grounding in Christianity's foundation—the Holy Scriptures and the confession of such Scriptures as proclaimed in "the rule of truth." This was no mere "text book theology," but a living, breathing, organic proclamation that flowed forth in the preaching and teaching of the bishops and presbyters. Such theology was, in its essence, a unity—a unified Holy Scripture and a unified "rule of truth." The goal was to teach and hand down no more and no less than what the apostles had

[44]One may see Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), 191 and following.

taught and handed down.

This same spirit animates authentic Lutheranism. The confessors at Augsburg concluded by acknowledging that "nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic."[45] The compilers of the Book of Concord likewise spelled out their intention to confess only "the doctrine as the ancient consensus which the universal and orthodox church of Christ has believed, fought for against many heresies and errors, and repeatedly affirmed."[46] The true spirit of Lutheranism is, therefore, not sectarian in any sense of the word. Properly speaking, it does not even claim to be a "denomination." Rather, authentic Lutheranism claims to confess that which the universal church has always taught and confessed of the doctrines of Holy Scriptures. Thus, Lutheranism is truly the most "ecumenical" of confessions within the church catholic, for it seeks to ground its teaching and preaching in a unified Scripture and a unified confession of the faith.

If Missouri today would learn from Irenaeus or from her Lutheran fathers, she must first come to grips with the essential need for a unified confession of the faith in her midst. As with Polycarp and Anicetus, diversity in ceremony can never be resolved until unity in doctrine has first been achieved. Therefore, to strive toward unity around a commonly held confession of the faith among all her pastors and bishops would be the most crucial and beneficial first step toward arriving at any sort of ceremonial consensus.

*The Role of Tradition*

From the unity and peace enjoyed in a common confession of the faith flows the freedom to approach the role of tradition with regard to ceremony. Lutherans, however, may be uneasy

[45] *Augsburg Confession*, Conclusion; Tappert, 95 (emphasis added).
[46] Book of Concord, Preface; Tappert, 3.

with such a concept. The word tradition conjures up images of Roman Catholic private masses, rosary beads, and intercessory prayers to the saints. The Reformation rightly discarded these traditions because they were not in conformity with the Scriptures and the "rule of truth," to speak in Irenaean terms.

Lutheranism, however, has historically retained a great number of traditions from its heritage in the western rite. The sign of the cross, bowing, chanting, a variety of vestments, candles, stained-glass, and the like are all salutary traditions inherited from the church catholic prior to the Reformation. Likewise, Lutheranism has even developed traditions of her own in her nearly five centuries of existence—the Lutheran chorale, congregational singing, and Lutheran confirmation, to name but a few. Of all these traditions, either pre- or post-Reformation, none are commanded or forbidden in Scripture; all are true adiaphora. And yet, these ceremonial traditions have proven helpful to the proclamation of the gospel throughout the history of Lutheranism.

Thus, Lutherans today need to recognize that, as with Irenaeus, it is a legitimate enterprise to appeal to the history of such customs and forms when making the case for or against retaining a particular ceremony. While the appeal to history certainly does not play on the same level as a direct appeal to, on the one hand, the Scriptures or, on the other, the Confessions of the church, nevertheless, such an appeal is also not a matter to be dismissed as having no consequence. The decision of whether or not to wear traditional vestments, for example, cannot be made simply on the basis of the Scriptures; neither can it be dogmatically made even on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions. Such traditions are purely matters of freedom—and yet, a freedom that lives and breathes and knows itself to live within the history of the church catholic. As C. F. W. Walther once wrote:

> 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 . . . one may nevertheless have them because good ceremonies are lovely and beautiful and are not forbidden in the word of God. . . . 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 or forbidden.[47]

The converse, however, is also true for Lutheranism. For just as Lutheranism historically has been slow to remove such "lovely and beautiful" ceremonies, so also it should exercise caution in importing ceremonies from other traditions, and it may appeal to history for or against such incorporation. The revivalism of nineteenth-century America and its modern legacy in the Church Growth Movement and neo-evangelicalism, for instance, should certainly inform us as to whether or not to use certain revivalistic musical forms in worship, how to order the service, or even the location from which the pastor preaches.[48] Again, all of these matters are true adiaphora in and of themselves, but the history and background of the various customs and forms of Lutheranism, as well as those from other traditions, are not completely indifferent matters. Thus, an historical sense of and appreciation for the catholicity (or lack thereof) of the church's various rites and ceremonies is essential to the Lutheran ceremonial enterprise.

*Diversity in Ceremony*

As with Irenaeus, the Lutheran Confessors recognized that rites and ceremonies need not be everywhere alike, and that such diversity, in fact, "stands together with" the unity of the faith. Within the history of Lutheranism, this tenet has played itself out to a remarkable degree. The plethora of hymnals and

---

[47]C. F. W. Walther, *Essays for the Church,* 2 volumes (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 1:193.

[48]Lawrence R. Rast Jr., "Charles Finney on Theology and Worship," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62 (January 1998):63-67.

agendas in the history of German Lutheranism alone testifies to the fact that it has never been part of the spirit of Lutheranism to bring all Lutheran rites and ceremonies into complete uniformity. Especially in matters of ceremonial adiaphora, Lutheranism has led an amazingly free existence—all within the unity of a common confession.

And yet, within the various jurisdictions of each locality, Lutherans strove for uniformity in rite and ceremony. As with the local bishops and synods of the second century who decided for or against the Quartodeciman observance, so the Lutheran tradition has sought to maintain within various local provinces or synodical affiliations a common hymnody, order of the mass, and other attendant rites. It does this because such rites and ceremonies publicly testify to the truth as well as to error, assist the spiritual growth of the faithful and their instruction in the Scriptures, help safeguard purity of doctrine among God's people, and provide for good order and peace, evangelical decorum, dignity, reverence, and devotion in the gathering of the church.[49] Indeed, for many generations of Lutheranism the various provincial agendas served as the guides for how the church was to be run in that particular locality, not the later *Kirchenrecht* or Handbook.

The Missouri Synod finds itself at the receiving end of such a way of ordering the church. Within our own synodical affiliation, there has been for many decades a tradition of a common hymnody, order of the Lord's Supper, and other attendant rites. Although there has always been a certain degree of diversity in custom from congregation to congregation (just as there was a certain degree of variation even among the Quartodecimans), nevertheless, there has been a general commonalty in ceremony and rite. Such local diversity as well as a common synodical observance stood together with the unity of the faith for Missouri.

---

[49] 1 Corinthians 11:26; AC Abuses, 6; AC XXIV, 2-4; AC XXVI, 40; AC XXVIII, 53-55; Ap VII/VIII, 33, 40; Ap XV, 1, 13, 20; Ap XXIV, 3; Ap XXVIII, 15; Ep X, 1.

*Toward Maintaining the Peace*

In this era of "Worship Wars," however, synodical diversity in matters of rite and ceremony have become frayed at the edges. For some, the solution appears to be rebellion against anything that stands as official synodical hymnals and agendas. For others, the solution seems to be a rigid enforcement of synodical standards by appealing to the synodical *Kirchenrecht*. It is a sad commentary that as Missouri has come to rely less and less in recent years on the *ordos* of the church to give order to its life together, it has consequently begun to rely more and more on the words of the synodical Handbook.

The path toward peace that Irenaeus and the Quartodecimans once trod forms the path of peace for Missouri. Such a path begins with unity in doctrine, flows forth in the freedom of ceremonial diversity within the tradition of the church catholic, and is ultimately realized in the fellowship of the Lord's body and blood. As Luther once wrote to the people of Franconia:

> I pray all of you, my dear sirs, let each one surrender his own opinions and get together in a friendly way and come to a common decision about these external matters, so that there will be one uniform practice throughout your district instead of disorder—one thing being done here and another there—lest the common people get confused and discouraged.[50]

[50]Martin Luther, "A Christian Exhortation to the Livonians Concerning Public Worship and Concord, 1525," *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 volumes (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-85), 53:47.

# Cultures, Chorales, and Catechesis

**Daniel Zager**

This essay explores the philosophical differences between two uses of music in the church: first, music as a tool for outreach and numerical growth in church attendance; second, music as a participant in theological proclamation. It also examines the premise that church music ought, properly speaking, to be countercultural, which means counter to the prevailing popular culture of our day. In this context, it refers to congregational song and to Martin Luther's views on the music of his own time. Finally, it suggests that the way out of the current controversies in worship and music resides not in building a consensus on musical and worship styles in which both "sides" concede certain elements to each other. Rather, the solution must be centered around the recognition that worship is not coterminous with evangelism, and that the "unchurched" are brought fully into the Christian community not through the music of our worship services but through catechesis and baptism. There is, indeed, a controversy in the church today that centers around music. The solution to this problem, however, lies not in musical considerations but in renewed and ongoing catechesis.

We find today two very different and mutually incompatible streams of thought regarding the purpose of music in the church. One regards music as a participant in theological proclamation. The other views music as a tool for outreach and numerical growth in attendance—targeting a certain demographically defined group and presenting the music supposedly favored by the majority of that group. Typical of this latter perspective are the following statements by Rich Warren:

> The style of music you choose to use in your service will be one of the most critical (and controversial) decisions you make in the life of the church. It may also be *the* most influential factor in determining who your church reaches for Christ and whether or not your church grows. You

---

***Daniel Zager is Adjunct Associate Professor and Music Librarian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.***

> must match your music to the kind of people God wants your church to reach.
>
> The music you use "positions" your church in your community. It defines who you are. Once you have decided on the style of music you're going to use in worship, you have set the direction of your church in far more ways than you realize. It will determine the kind of people you attract, the kind of people you keep, and the kind of people you lose.[1]

In categorizing music as "*the* most influential factor in determining who your church reaches," Warren elevates music to a position that is untenable for many Lutherans. Yet this statement does illustrate, with great clarity, the stream of thought that conceptualizes music as a tool—even the most important tool—for numerical growth in the church.

There are at least four problems with Warren's position. First, musical tastes and preferences within a single congregation are always much more diverse than Warren or other church growth writers would have us believe. As organist at a small parish (attendance of sixty to ninety people on a Sunday) I observed individual musical preferences including at least: country, pop, rock, and western art music (or "classical"). There was no single style of music preferred by a majority of the congregation. Larger congregations, of course, will present a correspondingly higher diversity of musical tastes.

Second, if a church self-consciously defines itself in terms of musical style—Warren identifies his church as "the flock that likes to rock"[2]—then it implicitly says: "Don't come here if you don't like the musical taste of the majority of our members." Christian congregations of whatever denominational stripe ought to be profoundly uncomfortable with such a premise. The notion that "You must match your music to the kind of people

---

[1]Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 280-281.

[2]Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 285.

God wants your church to reach" should call from us the response that, in each of our communities, God wants us to bring the gospel to all who will hear, regardless of their musical preferences. The concept of defining evangelism activities by age group and musical preference is simply wrongheaded. Such thinking actually limits our work in evangelism and, by insisting that each group needs its own music, has done incalculable damage with regard to church music and indeed with regard to our concept of Christian community.

Third, there is the expectation, articulated by Warren and other church growth writers, that the "unchurched" and "irreligious" should come to us and fill our sanctuaries. Indeed, there is the expectation that they will come if we provide the kind of music that they like. We need to regard such thinking very skeptically. Instead, we need to go out to them. The Great Commission sends us out into the world—not to share myriad musical styles, but to baptize and to teach.

Finally, worship, contrary to Warren's point of view, is not an opportunity to "attract" a target audience. Rather, in the words of Frank Senn, "worship is the occasion for God and his people to encounter one another, by means of God's sacramental gifts and his people's sacrificial response."[3] Or, as the introduction to *Lutheran Worship* states: "Our Lord speaks and we listen. . . . The rhythm of our worship is from him to us, and then from us back to him. He gives his gifts, and together we receive and extol them."[4] Worship is for God's people, the baptized; it is the occasion for Him to give His gifts to us. It is not, in Senn's words, for "those who do not yet confess themselves to be a part of the Lord's people."[5] Worship is not the same as evangelism or outreach, and we diminish worship when we reduce it to marketing a product to consumers.

Warren comes out of the Baptist tradition, which, of course,

---

[3]Frank C. Senn, *The Witness of the Worshiping Community: Liturgy and the Practice of Evangelism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 88.

[4]*Lutheran Worship* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 6.

[5]Senn, *Witness*, 3.

embraces a different set of presuppositions regarding worship and music than does the Lutheran tradition. The writings of two Lutheran pastors currently active in the area of so-called contemporary worship, Timothy Wright and David Luecke, will illustrate that the use of music as a tool for outreach and numerical growth in church attendance is conceptually consistent across denominational boundaries.

Wright, a pastor at the Community Church of Joy in Phoenix (an ELCA congregation), states:

> As people shop for a church, they look for congregations that value them by valuing their music.
>
> . . . no other ingredient shapes the relevancy of a service more than the choice of music. The music used should reflect the styles of music heard on the radio today.
>
> Today's worshipers see music as the most important part of the worship service. No other communication tool has more impact on these new church shoppers.[6]

For Wright, music is a tool, useful primarily to make visitors feel comfortable, and to encourage them to return. Thus, he requires that the music used in church be a reflection of music heard on adult contemporary radio stations, in his words "the heart language of today's generations."[7]

David Luecke, an LCMS pastor, provides a similar point of view regarding music in worship. "The music at seeker services is decidedly contemporary, ranging from Christian rock to country and western. The intent is to be similar to the music these people most commonly listen to." He goes on to say: "Music alone does not explain all the differences between contemporary and traditional worship. But it explains more

---

[6]Timothy Wright, *A Community of Joy: How to Create Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 22, 68, 71.

[7]Wright, *Community*, 33.

than any other single factor."[8]

There is substantial agreement among these writers, denominational differences notwithstanding, that the primary purpose of music in the church is simply to attract people to attend some sort of worship service. There is near unanimous agreement among these writers that music is the single most important ingredient in contemporary services. It is not an overstatement to assert that the movement toward contemporary worship is primarily a musical phenomenon.

One searches the writings of Warren, Wright, and others in vain for even a hint that music might play a role in theological proclamation. Luecke recognizes that music in the church—he points particularly to hymns—can have a teaching function. But he deprives music of participating in the task of theological proclamation:

> Yes, many contemporary praise and worship songs fall short of a full Christological message, or do not present a good reminder of sin and justification. But that is not the intent. There are other parts of the time together, chiefly the sermon, for the full message.
>
> Is it OK in authentic Lutheran worship to sing simple praise and worship songs that fall short of teaching the full message of sin and salvation in Christ? A reasonable answer is Yes, assuming other parts of the service present law and gospel proclamation.[9]

For Luecke there is a compartmentalization in which music is simply "a time for praise," and the sermon is necessarily the time to present "the full message." Luecke is much too quick to diminish the enormous potential of music wedded to theology; of the well-planned service in which music complements theology; of the rich potential for interconnections among

---

[8]David S. Luecke, *The Other Story of Lutherans at Worship: Reclaiming Our Heritage of Diversity* (Tempe, Arizona: Fellowship Ministries, 1995), 7, 23.
[9]Luecke, *Other Story*, 33, 35.

appointed readings, congregational song, instrumental music based on hymns, and choral music that proclaims proper portions of the liturgy to the gathered assembly. There is another point of view that sees music as a well-integrated participant in theological proclamation, rather than merely an outreach tool to promote numerical growth.

In what ways might music participate in theological proclamation? The most common way is in the realm of congregational song or hymnody, when music is wedded to and thus bears a theological text. Frequently, a melody will become so singularly connected with a particular text that the mere suggestion of the melody brings to mind a specific text, for example, the tune *Saint Anne* and its connection with "O God Our Help in Ages Past," or the tune *Lobe den Herren* and its connection with the text "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." In choral music the same is true—music bears a theological text, but there may be an added interpretational dimension in which the music underlines, emphasizes, interprets, and proclaims particular nuances of the theological text. The cantatas and passion settings of Johann Sebastian Bach come readily to mind as examples. Finally, in instrumental music, such as an organ prelude, the presence of a well-known hymn melody triggers an associative communication process: the perception of a well-known hymn melody leads to the recall of an associated hymn text, which in turn leads to a recognition of theological concepts conveyed by that hymn text.[10] We take such a process somewhat for granted—it often occurs without our really thinking about it. However, if an organist were to play a setting of "Silent Night" during the offering on Easter Sunday, it might cause one to pause. In such an absurd situation, the obvious potential for associative meaning—for proclaiming the resurrection through an organ setting of, for example, the Easter hymn "I Know that My Redeemer Lives"—would be badly misused. Whether in congregational song, choral music, or even instrumental music,

[10]Daniel Zager, "On the Value of Organ Music in the Worship Service," *The Diapason* 79 (June 1988): 18–19.

the possibilities for music to participate in theological proclamation are endless and rich, and have, in fact, especially characterized the Lutheran tradition.

In 1538 Martin Luther wrote a preface to a collection of polyphonic Latin motets (Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae*) in which he articulated his views on music in the church at some length. In a well-known passage, one whose significance we may undervalue simply because the passage is so often quoted, Luther writes: "After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely by proclaiming [the word of God] through music."[11] The operative concept for Luther is "proclaiming [the word of God] through music." For Luther, music is not something to be feared (as it is with Zwingli), or something that needs to be closely controlled (as it is with Calvin). Rather, music is a gift of God useful for proclaiming the word of God.

If we had only this statement from Luther, we might wonder precisely what he means by "proclaiming [the word of God] through music." He was not, however, merely a theorist, he was also a practitioner, and we may look to his chorales for insight in answering the question. For example, in "Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice," Luther shows us what it means to proclaim the word of God through music. The text is a magnificent exposition of justification by grace alone, one that he joined to a rhythmically engaging melody for publication in the 1524 *Etlich christlich Lieder,* the so-called *Achtliederbuch.* Another example is the Reformer's great Christmas chorale, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come." Note the last line of the first stanza: "whereof I now will say and sing," after which Luther proclaims the incarnation, through text and music, in the subsequent stanzas. This union of word and melody, theology and music, fulfilled Luther's intention stated in a 1523 letter to Georg Spalatin: "I intend to make German Psalms for the

[11]Martin Luther, *Liturgy and Hymns,* edited by Ulrich S. Leupold, *Luther's Works,* volume 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 323.

people, i.e., spiritual songs, so that the Word of God even by means of song may live among the people."[12] Luther used music to teach, to catechize, to bring theology to the people in a most powerful way, in short, to proclaim the word of God.

While this proposition is hardly new for those who have studied Luther's views on music, it has been largely ignored in the current controversies on music in worship. Instead, one finds an emphasis on a statement incorrectly attributed to Luther: "Why should the devil have all the good tunes?"[13] The intent of this statement is to show Luther as somehow endorsing music from the secular culture of his time. Similarly, we also read today the mistaken conclusion that Luther was not above using popular barroom tunes of his day for his chorales. There is no evidence whatsoever that he did so. That the music most favored by Luther had its origins in the best art music of his day, and was, in fact, distinct from the popular culture of his day, is a premise explored in greater detail in the next section of this essay. For now, suffice it to say that Luther recognized music as a great gift of God, one to be used in the proclamation of theology.

Luther's writings present a unique point of view regarding the function of music in the church. Among the sixteenth-century reformers Luther uniquely encouraged and provided for the participation of music in proclaiming the word of God. To surrender this paradigm diminishes significantly the enormous potential of music to contribute in deeply meaningful ways to the life of the church. To the extent that one takes Luther's view of music seriously, one simply cannot bear the crass late-twentieth-century commercialism that makes music a mere commodity to increase church attendance. There is no reconciling these two views of music in the life of the church. Either church music is deeply connected with theology, or it is

[12] *LW* 53:221.

[13] James Brauer sets the record straight on the incorrect attribution of this statement to Luther; one may see his "The Devil's Tunes," *Concordia Journal* 23 (January 1997): 2–3.

deeply connected with marketing techniques. That these marketing techniques are utilized in a confused conjoining of evangelism and worship only exacerbates matters. We need to recognize that the disagreement today regarding music in the church occurs precisely because we do not agree on whether music should be used simply to attract the unchurched to come to an event in a church, or whether music should be used to participate in a more specific kind of theological proclamation that finds its roots in church year and lectionary and presupposes a participant community that has been formed through catechesis.

This fundamental question concerning the function of music in the church is followed quickly by other questions that relate to the nature of the music to be used in the church. What should be the overarching characteristics of this music? Just as our theology ought to run counter to our popular, self-help culture, so too music in the church ought finally to be countercultural, in the sense that it should run counter to the popular musical cultures of our day. Indeed, it must be countercultural if it is to be a participant in theological proclamation. Congregational song, the quintessential musical expression of the church, will serve as the primary means of exploring this premise. While that will lead ineluctably to a consideration of text as well as music, the style of the music—in addition to the theological content of the text—needs to be countercultural. The latter premise—that the theological content of the text must be countercultural—is always more readily accepted. However, the former premise—regarding the countercultural nature of the music itself—is no less important.

It is precisely in the area of congregational song that we can see the clearest evidence of divergent directions in church music today. Simultaneous with an "explosion" in the writing of new hymns (both texts and tunes) has come the phenomenon known as "praise choruses." Luecke offers the following distinction between the two:

> The traditional hymn features a text in poetic form that usually offers instruction as well as expression. . . . A

> contemporary chorus focuses completely on expression of feeling and sentiment. . . . Implicit is the assumption that the fewer the words the more focus there can be on their meaning. . . . A tendency in contemporary worship is to cluster the songs together, typically at the beginning of the service. They become medlies [*sic*], with one song flowing into the next and the next, and so on. A medley usually would have three or four songs but might extend to seven or even ten.[14]

Luecke's characterization of praise choruses is consistent with personal observation: 1) they are usually "an expression of feeling and sentiment," often in the first person singular; 2) they employ a minimum of text; and 3) their placement in the service (frequently grouped together at the beginning) is such that these songs often do not function in specific ways, as hymns do, for example, when they relate to the Gospel lesson and sermon, or when they are used during communion distribution.

Luecke characterizes the praise chorus as "an expression of feeling and sentiment" with few words. A chorus entitled "Lord, I'm Gonna Love You" consists simply of repetitions of the text: "Lord, I'm gonna love you with all that's in my heart." Another chorus entitled "I Want to Follow You" says:

> Lord I want to follow and serve you alone.
> Lord, help me to live right and bring glory to your throne.
> Lord, I am willing to be your servant faithfully.
> Oh Lord, I want to follow you.
> I'll follow you. Wherever you lead me, I'll follow you.

What is striking about these two choruses, one of which I encountered in a Missouri Synod congregation and the other in a Wisconsin Synod congregation, is not so much what they say (though decision theology seems to predominate in them), but what they never say, theological roads they never traverse. A veteran pastor once remarked that he expected every one of his sermons to sound the redemptive note. The same kind of

[14]Luecke, *Other Story*, 26-27.

theological intent must be present in hymns because hymns proclaim theology. By way of example, consider this hymn, written by the poet and hymnist Susan Palo Cherwien, which is as recent as the two cited praise choruses.

> O blessed spring, where Word and sign embrace us into
> Christ the Vine;
> here Christ enjoins each one to be a branch of this
> lifegiving Tree.
>
> Through summer heat of youthful years, uncertain faith,
> rebellious tears,
> sustained by Christ's infusing rain, the boughs will
> shout for joy again.
>
> When autumn cools and youth is cold, when limbs their
> heavy harvest hold,
> then through us, warm, the Christ will move with gifts
> of beauty, wisdom, love.
>
> As winter comes, as winters must, we breathe our last,
> return to dust;
> still held in Christ, our souls take wing and trust the
> promise of the spring.
>
> Christ, holy Vine, Christ living Tree, be praised for
> this blest mystery;
> that word and water thus revive and join us to your
> Tree of Life.[15]

There are several reasons why this hymn text is a very fine one. First of all, noteworthy is its double entendre of the word "spring," referring first to the source of baptismal water, and then giving way to the seasonal metaphor that uses spring, summer, fall, and winter to represent stages in human life. One cannot but appreciate the poet's reminder that the promise of baptism works throughout our lives: "through summer heat of

---

[15]*With One Voice: A Lutheran Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995). Text copyright © 1993 Susan Palo Cherwien, administrated by Augsburg Fortress. Reprinted with permission.

youthful years . . . ," "when autumn cools and youth is cold . . . ," "as winter comes, as winters must." It echoes two statements made by Edward Koehler: "The covenant and the promise of baptism cover the entire life of a Christian, and at any time, even in old age, he may comfort himself with the assurance of God's grace, made to him in baptism," and "While baptism is administered but once, it is of use to us every day of our lives. . . ."[16] The fourth stanza of the hymn is particularly striking: "we breathe our last, return to dust; still held in Christ our souls take wing and trust the promise of the spring." Hymnody should sound the eschatological note—to remind me always that death is the doorway to eternal life, that, still held in Christ, my soul will take wing—because in that baptismal spring God put his name on me; I am a baptized child of God. Such a hymn, joined to a well-crafted and singable melody, proclaims theology.

It is an urgent necessity that we in the church work actively to foster the singing of hymns that proclaim theology. When we give to God's people praise choruses, such as "Lord, I'm Gonna Love You" or "I Want to Follow You," we deprive them of hymns that proclaim the Christian faith in its fullness. Instead, we give them the opportunity to sing largely about themselves, about their own "feeling and sentiment," as Luecke so aptly put it. Congregational song needs to be theocentric rather than anthropocentric, which is, in fact, countercultural—in the sense that it finds its meaning in the richness of the church's theology rather than in the vagueness of individual emotions and the borrowed idioms of pop musical culture.

What about the music? The music of praise choruses is not countercultural; it takes its cue from the popular musical idioms of our day, particularly that which has been variously labeled "soft rock" or "adult contemporary." In addition to the medium of accompaniment, the "praise band," with its emphasis on electronic and synthesized sound, the primary musical

[16]Edward W. A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine* (1939; reprint, Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 209–210, 211–212.

characteristic of the praise chorus is a rhythmic syncopation of the melodic line that emulates the solo pop singer. Such syncopation, easily handled by a solo singer or small backup ensemble, frequently results in rhythmic awkwardness for singing by an entire congregation. The strong and steady rhythmic pulse that facilitates congregational singing is frequently absent in praise choruses. A Wisconsin Synod congregation that featured contemporary worship had the following disclaimer located prominently on the front page of the bulletin: "Please sing whenever you feel comfortable singing. When the music is difficult, please allow us to sing to you." When the music is difficult, we ought to teach it to the congregation, deliberately and carefully. The notion of "allowing us to sing to you" comes out of the church growth concept of using music and musicians to entertain the gathered congregation.[17] The music of contemporary Christian music has its roots in the pop music culture of our day, and brings to the church a rhythmic style ill-suited for congregational singing and a connectedness with the popular entertainment world that belies the countercultural nature of our theology.[18]

It is no doubt unfashionable to say that the quality of contemporary Christian music is poor. There is a line of thinking in the church today that musical quality is completely relative, that quality is merely a function of individual musical preference. That is akin to stating that the quality of preaching is merely a function of what parishioners wish to hear, that preaching is good if the people say it is good. In fact, there is good preaching and poor preaching; preaching founded on thorough exegetical work and preaching founded on indifferent or haphazard preparation. There is, similarly, good church music and poor church music; music that is based on a sure

---

[17]One may see, for example, Walt Kallestad, *Entertainment Evangelism: Taking the Church Public* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

[18]For further thoughts specifically on questions of musical value and meaning in church music see Daniel Zager, "Church Music or Pop Music: Proclamation or Accomodation?" *Cross Accent: Journal of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians* 7 (Fall 1999).

command of the craft of composition and music that is simply poorly made. Pastors who are formally and thoroughly trained in theology are equipped to recognize poor preaching, even when it masquerades as good communication. Similarly, church musicians who are well trained in music history, theory, and performance are equipped to recognize the music of poor composers, of musical charlatans. And make no mistake about it, such poor church music by far outnumbers well-crafted church music. There are entire music publishing companies that churn out nothing but poorly crafted compositions for the church, whether congregational song, choral, or instrumental music. This is not a statement of opinion or musical preference; any well-trained church musician will attest to this sorry state of affairs.

Turning to Luther once more, we find that the Reformer, who regarded music as a gift of God for proclaiming the word of God, not only had a keen sense of musical quality, he wrote about it. He was well acquainted with the best composers and music of his day and desired precisely that music for use in the church. The sixteenth century was one of those ages in music history when there was a kind of musical *lingua franca;* individual stylistic differences among composers notwithstanding, the overall musical language of the sixteenth century was remarkably consistent. That language was defined by a contemporary of Luther, Josquin Desprez (circa 1440–1521). Luther recognized Josquin for what he was: the consummate musical craftsman, one who set the style for the entire sixteenth century. Luther noted: "God has preached the gospel through music, too, as may be seen in Josquin, all of whose compositions flow freely, gently, and cheerfully, are not forced or cramped by rules. . . ."[19]

Similarly, Luther prized the music of Ludwig Senfl (circa 1486–1542/43), who served Emperor Maximilian I until 1519, when Charles V became Emperor and disbanded the court

[19]Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 21.

chapel in favor of Spanish musicians. Subsequently Senfl led the ducal court chapel in Munich. Luther corresponded with him and indeed requested compositions from him. Luther knew the best composers of his time, recognized the best musical craftsmanship, and sought such music for use in the church.

In his efforts to provide the best music for the church, Luther was aided greatly by the Wittenberg printer, Georg Rhau. He published exegetical works by Luther, Melanchthon, and Bugenhagen; editions of Luther's Catechism and the Augsburg Confession; as well as anthologies of choral music for use in the young Lutheran church. Rhau was a well-trained musician who served as Kantor of the Thomasschule and Thomaskirche in Leipzig from 1518 until 1520, where he also lectured on music theory at the University. In 1523 he returned to Wittenberg, where he spent the rest of his life engaged in publishing. Between 1538 and 1545 he published fifteen major collections of church music. Many of these collections were designed to provide artistically significant music for the mass and vespers, drawn from the Franco-Flemish repertories of Josquin, Senfl, and others. The rest of the collections were intended for use in teaching music in the schools. Luther wrote the preface for one of these, the *Symphoniae iucundae* of 1538. This anthology contained fifty-two Latin motets by composers such as Josquin, Senfl, Heinrich Isaac, and others. The statement from Luther's preface, in which he speaks specifically of proclaiming the word of God through music, has already been quoted. In this same preface Luther says of music: "next to the word of God, music deserves the highest praise," and he goes on to speak eloquently of the wonder of the polyphonic art of his day.[20] Clearly, for Luther there was such a thing as quality in music—he recognized it, he expected it in the church, and he encouraged it through educational and publication endeavors.

However, appealing to Luther will not prove this case. Pastors and laypeople will expect their church musicians to provide quality music from both our own and previous generations.

[20]*LW* 53:323.

Indeed, Luecke, for example, argues against concepts of quality in music and specifically warns his readers that worship planning should not be "left to the experts," whom he labels as elitists.[21] He sets up a false dichotomy between high culture and popular culture, equating high culture with the music of J. S. Bach and classical music, and popular culture with contemporary Christian music and "music you hear on the most-listened-to radio stations."[22] Such an approach fails by equating church music with classical music—the music of our western concert hall traditions.

The vast corpus of Christian hymnody, including such hymns as "The Church's One Foundation," "Now Thank We All Our God," "Crown Him With Many Crowns," "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," is not "classical" music; it has nothing to do with our western concert hall traditions. The music of J. S. Bach, particularly the cantatas and Passion settings, though originally intended as functional music for use in the divine service, is now (unfortunately) largely confined to the concert hall. For most Lutheran church musicians today, the music of Bach hardly predominates as they provide music for each Sunday and festival of the church year. Carl Schalk, Donald Busarow, David Cherwien, Paul Manz, Richard Hillert, Paul Bouman, and a host of other talented, living composers provide much of the music that is used on a weekly basis in Lutheran congregations. This is not classical music that is coterminous with the concert hall. Nor is it meaningful to categorize this music as traditional music. It is, in fact, contemporary music in the broadest and best sense of the word, not in the narrow sense that has made the word nearly useless today in the church. The music of these church composers is well-crafted music written to function within Lutheran worship: hymns for the congregation to sing, organ music based on those hymns, choral music based on the rhythm of the church year as well as the individual focus provided by each set of pericopes in the lectionary. This is

[21]Luecke, *Other Story*, 111.
[22]Luecke, *Other Story*, 98.

neither classical nor popular music, neither traditional nor contemporary music (in the current narrow sense of these terms). This is *church* music—a category that transcends individual musical preferences. We do not have to worry about how to please a congregation full of people who listen to all kinds of different music on the radio, in their homes, in their cars, or through the privacy of headphones: classical, jazz, folk, ethnic, pop, rock, heavy metal, rap, reggae, blues, or country western music. No matter what kinds of music people listen to during the week they can come together on Sunday to sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," "Beautiful Savior," "Children of the Heavenly Father," "Lift High the Cross," or "Thine the Amen, Thine the Praise." Church music, particularly the congregational song of our worship books, is the common denominator that unites people of disparate musical tastes and preferences—at least it ought to. Church music has done so in the past and can continue to do so—if we allow well-crafted church music to function within the liturgy as it is intended; if we cease our fixation on musical styles; and if we realize that worship is not the primary means for outreach to the unchurched.

Proponents of contemporary music attempt to take the moral high ground by insisting that they are the ones who are reaching out to the unchurched and meeting them on their own ground. Or they might say that, like the Apostle Paul, they wish to become all things to all people (1 Corinthians 9:22), which usually means nothing more than giving people pop music and perhaps a pastor looking appropriately informal in sport shirt and athletic shoes rather than in vestments (which are considered too foreign for the outsider). The problem with proceeding this way Sunday after Sunday is that there is never a provision for growth in faith and knowledge. Further, if well-crafted church music in a liturgical context and clerical vestments are too foreign for the outsider, how much more foreign will be law and gospel, confession and absolution, baptism, and the Lord's Supper? The church cannot provide entertainment, the "lite" version of Christian theology, and tips for practical living—all packaged in good humor and soft rock music—if it wants to make an impact on a world infected with sin. Instead, we need to regain a focus on forming Christians through catechesis; that is the context in which we need to meet the outsider.

At a meeting of pastors and church musicians in the metropolitan Chicago area, the conversation focused on the sorts of issues this paper has addressed. One pastor remarked that as the members of his congregation were out in the mission field during the work week they subsequently needed a specific kind of Sunday morning worship opportunity to which they could bring the unchurched "inquirers" they might have encountered during the course of the previous week. This pastor stated his preference for a "seeker service" as the best option. I suggested that a Sunday morning educational experience specifically for such inquirers might be more beneficial. In the seeker service, the inquirer will be primarily an observer. For example, he is unlikely to interrupt the pastor's message to ask a question. In an educational setting the inquirer may, of course, choose to be a passive observer, but at the very least the possibility for the person to ask questions and participate in conversation is present. This is not the time to consider the specifics of implementing such a Sunday morning opportunity in the large parish. Rather, this anecdote brings to the fore a common assumption—that de facto we must meet inquirers, seekers, the unchurched, the irreligious, or "pre-Christians" (all of these terms are used by the writers alluded to earlier) on Sunday mornings in the context of some kind of worship experience. Luecke writes: "The current contemporary worship movement has its base in congregations pursuing mission outreach to people not yet in the church."[23]

Note the assumption: Luecke links "contemporary worship" with "mission outreach to people not yet in the church," the latter being dependent on the former. Outreach for Luecke is primarily accomplished through worship, though it must, of course, be a particular kind of worship. He also writes: "What

[23]Luecke, *Other Story*, 113.

about the unchurched today who are turning to God and are ready to come to church? Many find the highly developed and even complicated ritual of current service settings in Lutheran worship books to be a burden on their way to being drawn to God."[24] Luecke's solution, of course, is to provide "simpler, more accessible, more 'user-friendly' forms of worship." What he fails to recognize is that of course "the unchurched who are turning to God and are ready to come to church" will find worship to be unfamiliar territory. Until they are formed in the faith they cannot understand that worship is primarily God coming to us in word and sacrament—that in worship we receive God's gifts. Until they have been baptized and formed in the faith they cannot understand, for example, that the very first words spoken by the pastor, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" remind each Christian of his or her baptism.

We find ourselves, then, at the crux of the matter. Do we bring people into the church through worship and music or through teaching and formation? The current assumption in many quarters within the church is that we bring people in through worship and music; that the unchurched should find their first point of contact with the church in the context of a worship service. This point of view has led to the sorts of things that we argue about today: the rejection of the richness of the western liturgy, the writing of homemade creedal statements, the rejection of "Lutheran" in the public name of a church, the use of vapid and trite poetic texts coupled with inferior music that takes its cue from pop music, and the list could go on.

Might we not do far better to focus on bringing people into the church through teaching and formation, that is, through catechesis? Recall Luecke's statement: "The current contemporary worship movement has its base in congregations pursuing mission outreach to people not yet in the church." I would very much like to see the day when we might say: "The current movement toward *a revitalized adult catechumenate* has its

[24]Luecke, *Other Story*, 70.

base in congregations pursuing mission outreach to people not yet in the church." That is an urgent goal for the church at large, for the way out of the current controversies in worship and music is precisely through the development of revitalized programs of adult catechesis in individual parishes. Church musicians must see it as an urgent necessity to participate in such programs by collaborating with their pastoral colleagues in teaching about topics such as worship, liturgy, hymnody, and music.

The Fall 1998 issue of the *Lutheran Forum* provides a thought-provoking introduction to the adult catechumenate; the articles by Frank Senn and Arthur Just are particularly beneficial. Just points out that "Catechesis is more than *instruction* in the faith; it is *formation* into the life of Christ." He points out that catechumens are "formed gradually by Scripture, liturgy, and catechism, the three sources of catechesis for life in Christ."[25] He couches all of his observations on catechesis within the concept of the journey:

> As Christians journey to their destination of full communion with Christ in heaven, they live under the cross where they are continually living in Christ as they hear his Holy Word and feed upon his Holy Food that sustain them on the journey. Their pilgrimage climaxes in their physical death which is an entrance to full communion with Christ in their heavenly home. The goal of the journey is to live in Christ's presence forever and to feast at his table for eternity. Christian pilgrims follow Christ in their journey to a life that never ends.[26]

This journey to full, abundant, and eternal life is central to the Christian faith. In His divine service God freely gives us through word and sacrament what we need most deeply to sustain us on the journey. The liturgy of the western church,

[25] Arthur A. Just Jr., "Journey to Life in Christ: An Introduction to the Catechumenate," *Lutheran Forum* (Fall 1998): 27.

[26] Just, "Journey," 24.

evolving over the early centuries of the church's existence, has become for us what Philip Pfatteicher appropriately terms "the school of the church."[27] For catechumen and baptized Christian alike, the liturgy teaches through the richest kind of repetition. It is far more than a mere "order of service" and is not adequately defined when referred to as "the work of the people."

We stand at a critical juncture: some in the church would have us embrace the culture around us, using entertainment and pop music in a desperate and ultimately futile attempt to win popular approval for the church in a postmodern world. In reading and listening to such individuals one marvels at their willingness to downplay the means of grace and their eagerness to abandon the liturgy as "the school of the church." They wish to bring the good news of this journey to eternal life, but they deprive themselves of the very tools that they need to do so, squandering the theological, liturgical, poetic, and musical riches developed by the church over centuries. Instead, they borrow from the popular culture of the moment and appeal to the hopelessly vague subjectivities of human emotions.

There are, however, others in the church—gifted theologians who are reacquainting us with catechetical processes that will form Christians in our increasingly secular world, and gifted poets and musicians who create theologically grounded and well-crafted hymns and musical expressions that we may use to proclaim the theology of the church. This theology speaks of sacrifice, of death leading to life, and stands squarely against our contemporary culture. As theologians and church musicians we do well not to lose sight of the fact that we are engaged in a countercultural enterprise. We should not, therefore, expect to derive our inspiration or our intellectual materials from the popular culture around us. That the church itself is so badly divided on these questions makes our enterprise more difficult. We must continue to work in our individual parishes, schools,

[27]Philip H. Pfatteicher, *The School of the Church: Worship and Christian Formation* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995).

universities, and seminaries, always remembering God's promise through the prophet Isaiah: "my word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

# Wilhelm Löhe's *Hauptgottesdienst* (1844) as Critique of Luther's *Deutsche Messe*

John W. Fenton

*Two Streams in the Lutheran* Hauptgottesdienst

In the span of a dozen years two significant *Agenden,* or books of liturgy, made their debut in congregations that became members of the Missouri Synod. Wilhelm Löhe compiled and published the first in 1844, entitled *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses,* specifically for use in American Lutheran frontier congregations. He dedicated it to Pastor Friedrich Wyneken.[1] In 1856 the *Kirchen-Agende für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession,* "compiled from the old orthodox Saxon Church Agendas," was published by (and for) the Missouri Synod.[2] Published specifically by and for participants in the nineteenth-century Lutheran "Confessional Revival" movement, these *Agenden* represent two different streams of Lutheran liturgical theory and practice, specifically in regard to the *Hauptgottesdienst* (the celebration of Holy Communion). In general terms, these two streams may be grouped around the two mass orders published by Martin Luther: the 1523 *Formula Missae et Communionis pro Ecclesia Vuitembergensi* and the 1526

[1]This work will hereafter be referred to as *Agende (1844).* A second expanded edition of Löhe's *Agende* was published in 1853 and so will be referenced as *Agende (1853).* This edition, with the forwards to the first and second editions, is what appears in the critical edition of Löhe's *Gesammelte Werke,* VII/1, 9-487. The second edition is equivalent to the first edition in the rite of the *Hauptgottesdienst,* but expands the rubrics, adds extensive explanatory footnotes, and includes an appendix of liturgical music arranged by Friderich Layriz. For this reason, *GW* VII/1 will be referenced when the two forwards and the second edition (1853) are cited, but citations from the first edition (1844) will be referenced to an original copy. A paraphrastic and abridged translation of the third edition of Löhe's *Agende* appeared as *Liturgy for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Faith,* translated by F. C. Longaker (Newport, Kentucky: n.p., 1902).

[2]This work shall hereafter be referred to as *1856 Kirchen-Agende.*

***The Rev. John Fenton is pastor of Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Detroit, Michigan.***

*Deudsche Messe und ordnung des Gottis dienstts.*[3] The former stream is embodied in the "Ordnung der Gottesdienste: Die Communio oder der Hauptgottesdienst" of Löhe's *Agende,* while the latter stream is embodied in the "Hauptgottesdienst an Sonn- und Festtagen mit Communion" of the *1856 Kirchen-Agende.* Because the founding pastors and congregations of the Missouri Synod were either Franconians (two-thirds) or Saxons (one-third) and were insistent on orthodox Lutheran teaching and liturgy, it is safe to assume that prior to the synodically mandated *1856 Kirchen-Agende,* Missouri Synod "pastors generally used either the Saxon Agenda or Löhe's Agenda."[4] Since 1856, one stream or the other has dominated large periods of Missouri's liturgical landscape, yet neither has disappeared. Thus, both flow side by side in Missouri's present-day official hymnals.

These liturgical streams retain the structure of the western rite mass, though cleansed by Luther of theological and liturgical accretions, innovations, and errors. That structure has two interdependent parts, the "Liturgy of the Word" and the "Liturgy of the Eucharist," with each part having predetermined propers and ordinaries.[5] With certain exceptions (less in the *Formula Missae,* more in the *Deutsche Messe*), the historic propers and ordinaries of the western rite are retained. The chief exception, and Luther's major reform of the mass, is the omission of the canon of the mass and certain propers, such

[3]WA 12.205-220; translated into English in *Liturgy and Hymns,* edited by Ulrich S. Leupold, *Luther's Works,* volume 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 19-40. Citations from this edition will be abbreviated *LW.* WA 19.72-113; English translation: "The German Mass and Order of Service" (*LW* 53:61-90).

[4]Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy,* revised edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947), 176. By "Saxon Agenda" Reed is referring to one of the "alten rechtgläubigen Sächsischen Kirchenagenden" mentioned on the title page of the *1856 Kirchen-Agende.* Fred Precht asserts that *Agende (1844)* "was largely used by congregations in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana, until it was gradually supplanted by the official agenda of the Synod" (Fred Precht, "Worship Resources in Missouri Synod's History" in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993], 85).

[5]*Lutheran Worship: History and Practice,* 366-368.

as the *Secreta* and any thing else in the offertory because "from here on almost everything smacks and savors of sacrifice."[6] Friedrich Lochner evaluates Luther's reforms as follows:

> Luther proceeded with extreme caution and forbearance *according to the principles drawn from the inmost lifespring of Scripture and truly evangelical practice.* Following these principles, he unrelentingly swept out everything that was intrinsically papistic leaven and part of the abominable sacrifice of the mass, even though it had only the odor of sacrifice.[7]

In other words, Luther released the words of Our Lord's Testament from any encumbrance so that they were highlighted as the pinnacle of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.[8] Other noticeable changes common to both forms that Luther made in the propers and ordinaries include changing nearly all the first person pronouns in the prayers from singular to plural, omitting the *Offertorium* (chanted psalm or psalm verse while the altar is prepared), changing the *Post-communio* (the collect after the distribution) from a proper to an ordinary, eliminating the *Ite missa* (dismissal) in favor of year-round use of the *Benedicamus domino,* eliminating the pre-Lenten and Lenten *Tract* in favor of year-round singing of the *Alleluia* (or eliminating the *Gradual* and *Alleluia/Tract* altogether in favor of a hymn), and suggesting or directing that the Aaronic benediction replace the customary blessing concluding the mass. Finally, although it was not a textual or even rubrical change per se, Luther emphasized preaching in both forms. In both the *Formula Missae* and *Deutsche Messe,* Luther insisted on preaching (or at least

[6] *LW* 53:26.

[7] Friedrich Lochner, *Der Hauptgottesdienst der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895), 10-11. Translated by Fred H. Lindemann, "The Mass Restored to Its Evangelical Form by Luther" in *American Lutheran,* volume 34, number 7, 9. Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the author.

[8] For a detailed account of Luther's reform of the canon and his emphasis on the Words of Institution, one may see Bryan Spinks, *Luther's Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass* (Bramcote and Notts: Grove Books, 1982).

reading) from a book of sermons because, as he states in the earlier order, "properly speaking, the mass consists in using the Gospel and communing at the table of the Lord."[9] In another liturgical treatise, Luther went so far as to declare the following:

> Now in order to correct these abuses, know first of all that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's word and prayer, no matter how briefly. . . . Therefore, when God's word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.[10]

Major liturgical differences, however, exist between the earlier *Formula Missae* and the later *Deutsche Messe.* While the *Formula Missae* retained much of the actual rite (text) of the historic western mass, in his *Deutsche Messe* Luther only makes use of the *Kyrie*, the series of readings, the Lord's Prayer and the *Verba testamenti.* Of the propers, the *Introit* was replaced with a hymn (or made an ordinary with a whole psalm in German set to the first tone); the *Gradual* and *Alleluia/Tract* were replaced with a German hymn; the *Offertorium* and *Communio* were omitted; and the *Collecta* and *Post-communio* were made ordinaries.[11] Of the ordinaries, the *Gloria in excelsis* is omitted altogether, and the Nicene Creed and *Sanctus* are replaced with hymnic versions.

*Luther's Intentions with the* Deutsche Messe

Even with these radical omissions and changes, Luther's purpose is not to replace the *Formula Missae* with the *Deutsche Messe.* Rather, he sees the *Deutsche Messe* acting as a temporary catechism or teaching mass in which the unlearned learn both

---

[9] *LW* 53:25.

[10] "Concerning the Order of Public Worship," *LW* 53:11.

[11] That the first collect (*Collecta*) Luther gives is a conflation of two historic collects (and therefore nowhere to be found) suggests that it is intended less as an example and more as an ordinary much as the *Post-communio. LW* 53:72,84.

by what they hear and by what they sing.[12] This is unmistakably evident in two ways. First, Luther begins the *Deutsche Messe* by stating unequivocally:

> In short, we prepare such orders not for those who already are Christians; for they need none of them. . . . But such orders are needed for those who are still becoming Christians or need to be strengthened, since a Christian does not need baptism, the word and the sacrament as a Christian—for all things are his—but as a sinner. They are essential especially for the immature and the young who must be trained and educated in the Scripture and God's word daily so that they may become familiar with the Bible, grounded, well versed, and skilled in it, ready to defend their faith and in due time to teach others and to increase the kingdom of Christ. . . . For this is the damnable thing about the popish services: that men made laws, works and merits out of them—to the detriment of faith—and did not use them to train the youth and common people in the Scriptures and in the word of God, but became so engrossed in them as to regard them as inherently useful and necessary for salvation. This is the [work of the] very devil. The ancients did not institute or order them to that intent.[13]

Following that preface, after lamenting the need for a catechism, Luther spends several pages developing a catechetical plan and incorporating that plan into the *Gottesdienst*, beginning with an order for catechism services set within matins and vespers and then setting up a catechetical form of the mass for greater teachability and retention. Throughout the description of this *Deutsche Messe*, Luther repeats its catechetical focus and then concludes with a reiteration of the need for teaching the unlearned and young.[14]

---

[12]*LW* 53:62-63: "The first is the one in Latin which we published earlier under the title *Formula Missae*. It is not now my intention to abrogate or to change this service." One may also see *LW* 53:89.

[13]*LW* 53:62.

[14]*LW* 53:64-67, 68-69, 80; 89.

In short, Luther sees this *Deutsche Messe* as simply another cog in his catechetical plan.

Second, Luther makes it clear that he does not intend this form to survive, but supplies it only to address a pressing need.

> In the first place, I would kindly and for God's sake request all those who see this order of service or desire to follow it: Do not make it a rigid law to bind or entangle anyone's conscience, but use it in Christian liberty *as long, when, where, and how you find it to be practical and useful.* For this is being published not as though we meant to lord it over anyone else, or to legislate for him, but *because of the widespread demand for German masses and services and the general dissatisfaction and offense that has been caused by the great variety of new masses,* for everyone makes his own order of service.[15]

What Luther desires as an eventual replacement for the *Deutsche Messe* is "a third kind of service" where "those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should . . . meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works."[16] Luther, then, designed the *Deutsche Messe* to serve until the truly evangelical order was established. So Luther writes:

> *In the meanwhile* the two-above mentioned orders of service must suffice. And to train the young and to call and attract others to faith, I shall—besides preaching—help to further such public services for the people, *until Christians who earnestly love the word find each other and join together.*[17]

---

[15]*LW* 53:61 (emphasis added).

[16]*LW* 53:63-64. Although no evidence can be found that Luther ever provided the third "truly evangelical order," it may be that something of that sort was the basis of the mass celebrated in his home during the years of his *Hauspostille* (circa 1530s). Fred Precht asserts that when "[Luther] became aware that such a procedure undermined the doctrine of the ministry and the church, he eschewed such gathering" ("Worship Resources," 111, n.8).

[17]*LW* 53:23-27 (emphasis added).

*Wilhelm Löhe's Critique of* Deutsche Messe

The liturgical result of this temporary catechetical and didactic *Hauptgottesdienst* is an unbalanced "word-heavy" service short on the psalmody of the propers and to which the Liturgy of the Eucharist appears to be an odd appendage. Despite Luther's self-caution toward sectarianism,[18] it also gives the impression that any pastor or bishop may determine that ". . . it is best to plan the services in the interest of the young and such of the unlearned as may happen to come."[19] This imbalance and implied permission to do whatever is best to meet the needs of the young and unlearned materializes because liturgy is driven by its secondary function (instructing the faith) rather than by its primary function—imparting the faith by the dominical gifts faith joyfully receives.[20]

That is the judgment of the foremost nineteenth-century Lutheran liturgical scholar, Wilhelm Löhe, who not only shared Luther's desire for catechesis for the young and unlearned, but was equal to him in catechetical scholarship. Löhe maintained that liturgy generally and the *Hauptgottesdienst* particularly are not primarily part of the instructional task. The liturgy, rather, is chiefly action—the action of God received by His children, and the active response of the faithful to their God's gifts and giving.

> He [Löhe] wants liturgy for its own sake, and the Lord's Service as a genuine ceremony and not merely as an instructional hour. Löhe wants ceremony in the profoundest sense—as devotion. . . . So through his *Agende* and all of his liturgical recommendations, he desires to bring to the understanding of worship an ever increasing

[18]*LW* 53:64: "For if I should try to make it up out of my own need, it might turn into a sect."

[19]*LW* 53:89.

[20]In *What is Liturgical Theology?* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992) David Fagerberg describes more fully what I term the primary and secondary functions of liturgy. One may see especially his critique of Geoffrey Wainright's *Doxology* and Peter Brunner's *Worship in the Name of Jesus* on pages 132-142.

> development of ceremony so that ceremony is experienced both in deed and in truth.[21]

According to this understanding of liturgy as faith, whose true celebration and adoration is to receive and rejoice in God's gifts, Löhe stood with Luther. "For Löhe, as for Luther, the liturgy is a holy drama full of life and movement; worship is a holy dialogue between the Triune God and the congregation."[22] Yet precisely because of that understanding, Löhe also stood against what he saw as Luther's misuse of the liturgy to fulfill pedagogical needs.

Secondly, Löhe saw in the *Deutsche Messe*—and other early Lutheran liturgical orders—an air of improvisation.

> Löhe sought to be honest in his historical assessment of Lutheranism and was compelled to criticize a certain direction which the Reformation took in liturgical matters, although he consistently defended the Reformation itself as a necessary reform and purification of the church's life and doctrine. . . . His criticism of the reformers in the area of liturgical life grew out of his conviction that they lacked both historical knowledge and insight into the larger liturgical tradition. This resulted in a tendency toward both radicalism and superficiality. Positive liturgical principles were lacking and the consequence was liturgical improvisation.[23]

For this reason, the well-founded need for correcting doctrinal and liturgical aberrations (for example, the lack of congregational participation), coupled with a lack of liturgical historical knowledge, oftentimes led unintentionally to a liturgical and (consequently) doctrinal correction where undue emphasis was placed on the Liturgy of the Word—and the sermon particularly—while congregational participation, in

[21]Hans Kressel, *Wilhelm Löhe als Liturg und Liturgiker* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1952), 82-83.

[22]Kressel, *Löhe*, 83.

[23]Hans Goebel, "Wilhelm Loehe and The Quest for Liturgical Principle," *Una Sancta* 22 (1965): 22-23.

both the dialogue of faith and the catholic continuity of worship, was (again, unintentionally) de-emphasized by rhymed ordinaries, an elimination of proper chants, and a dearth of the traditional versicles with their responses (that is, the salutation, *Benedicamus,* and *Pax Domini,* among others). The change of the primary function of the *Hauptgottesdienst* from the imparting and receptivity of faith to indoctrination in the faith, the deficiency in historical continuity, and the lack of positive liturgical principles—these are the three elements that inform Wilhelm Löhe's criticism of Luther's *Deutsche Messe,* which culminates in this scathing rebuke:

> Even though Luther exceeded the boundaries of the reformational approach to liturgy with his *Deutsche Messe* (1526), and set forth on a path other than the one on which he had embarked with the genuinely reformational approach of 1523 [*Formula Missae*], his example did not prove decisive to the extent that one would have followed him wherever he went. At the very least, in a very large number of regional churches (*Landeskirchen*) one refrained from discarding anything wherein a blessing might be found. Notably, there existed too great a dearth in liturgical education and that particular insight which was able to scan the entire liturgical field (*des großen liturgischen Ganzen*) of the early church, even among the earliest Lutherans, so that even then many an irreproachable and splendid treasure inherited from ancient times might have been cast aside. For my part, I find nowhere the application of a Lutheran principle in the Lutheran agendas—save that of negative dogmatism.[24]

With such a rebuke, the lines are clearly drawn—as well as the issues that inform those lines—between the two different streams of Lutheran liturgical theory and practice that made their way into the first liturgies of the Missouri Synod. Clearly on the one side stands Wilhelm Löhe, not only because he defined the differences, but also because he produced the

[24]Wilhelm Löhe, *Der evangelische Geistliche* (volume 2) in *Gesammelte Werke,* III/2, 251 (author's translation with gratitude to Dr. Gerald S. Krispin).

1844/1853 *Agende,* with which the majority of the founding pastors and congregations of the Missouri Synod were familiar. Löhe's *Agende* determinedly landed on the side of Luther's *Formula Missae,* although not slavishly so. On the other side stands the *1856 Kirchen-Agende,* which followed a *Hauptgottesdienst* order very much in line with the *Deutsche Messe,* but again not slavishly so. With its adoption, the Synod in convention assembled effectively outlawed all other *Agenden* (most notably Löhe's *Agende*). Hence the *1856 Kirchen-Agende* necessarily dominated the Synod's liturgical practice throughout its German period and, in doing so, seared itself into the collective liturgical memory of all synodical pastors and congregations.

*Löhe's Corrective Principles in the* 1844 Agende

Löhe describes the elements he uses to judge the *Deutsche Messe* in the *Agende.* These comprise the elements of his "positive principle" for Lutheran liturgy. The question his positive liturgical principle seeks to answer may be posed in this manner: does the Evangelical-Lutheran confession and doctrine determine or establish certain criterion that constitute not simply what is liturgically inappropriate or heretical, but what is liturgically necessary—criterion not only by which liturgy can be judged, but that also define what theologically and liturgically sound Lutheran liturgy is and of what it consists? Wilhelm Löhe's affirmative answer rests both in Lutheranism's *Hauptartikel* of the doctrine of forensic justification and the gospel, and in that justification and gospel word grounded christologically in the incarnation of the Son of God, the benefits of which are concretely bestowed upon the believer. In his *Agende* and other liturgical writings, we can identify at least three outstanding elements to this positive principle for Lutheran liturgy.

One element that Löhe enunciates is that liturgy is not only intimately connected with the Church's confession and doctrine, but also the central action of the faithful, what Hans Kressel calls a "holy dialogue" (*heiliges Wechselgespräch*). Through this holy dialogue, the grace of God is both given and received, and consequently "the order of salvation" *(die Ordnung des Heils)* moves from being a theoretical construct to being real and concrete.

> A careful examination of this Agenda will convince them that it is built entirely on the order of worship (*Ordnung des Gottesdienst*). In worship, the congregation feels herself near her Lord. There, in closest proximity to the Bridegroom, she lives a life of heaven on earth (*ein himmlisches Erdenleben*)—or the earthly life in heaven (*ein irdisches Himmelsleben*). Worship is the beautiful flowering of all temporal life. The Agenda should be the expression and depiction of the inner unity and harmony of this wonderful life—not an abstract but concrete aesthetic of the church of God. In this inner life and in the worship, the congregation is like rocks in the sea of word and sacrament. As the sea flows over the rocks, the holy shape of the liturgy flows over its focus of word and sacrament. As the sea breaks on the rocks (both to erode and to roar—as caused by the rocks), so also the liturgical life is not arbitrary but its waves move in concentration around the inner revolution of the spiritual life; [that is] it revolves around its focus of word and sacrament. Word and sacrament determine the order of salvation (*Ordnung des Heils*), and this [in turn] determines the order of worship (*Ordnung des Gottesdienst*). Just as spiritual life without the order of salvation is inconceivable, so also worship is inconceivable without an order, without a well-written progress of salutary thanksgiving (*schriftgemäßen Fortschritt heilsamer Gedanken*). This is especially true of the congregation's Sunday and feast communion services (*Haupgottesdiensten*).[25]

In his *Hauptgottesdienst*, this element of the concrete holy dialogue—the order of salvation in action—is demonstrated by an order of service that is not only balanced but also has within itself a dynamic and upward movement. The summit of "the

[25]Löhe, "Vorwort zur ersten Auflage" of *Löhe's Agende (1844)* in *GW* VII/1, 12-13 (emphasis in original).

word" is clearly elevated in the "Liturgy of the Word" as the gospel and preaching. The former is not simply another reading in a series of readings, but surrounded by the simple, yet profound, dialogue between celebrant and faithful ("The Lord be with you/And with your spirit," "The holy Evangelist writes . . . /Glory be to You, O Lord" before and "Praise to be You, O Christ" after), while the latter also is surrounded with an uncomplicated and grace-filled dialogue ("The Pastor . . . greets . . . the congregation with an apostolic greeting . . . ," "[The pastor] concludes the sermon with the *Gloria Patri* or a similar doxology [Lobpreisung] so that the congregation can say its fitting 'Amen'").[26] Before and after this summit is a crescendo (introit, *Kyrie, Gloria in excelsis*, collect, epistle, hymn) and decrescendo (prayer) with the repeating of the faith (creed) as a response or dialogical statement between the Gospel reading and sermon. The summit of "the sacrament" also is elevated at least to the level of "the word" by the liturgy employed. The climax is the Words of Institution, followed by the distribution, which also are couched within a "holy dialogue" between celebrant and faithful. The crescendo to the *Verba* is the preface, which contains a smaller and larger dialogue (the prefatory versicles, and the proper preface followed by the *Sanctus*). The decrescendo is a song of thanksgiving (*Nunc Dimittis*), a prayer of thanksgiving (preceded by the customary salutation), and the blessing (also preceded by the customary salutation and *Benedicamus*). As with the Liturgy of the Word, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist a responsory (the *Agnus Dei*) connects the dual summit of *Verba* and distribution, with the *Pater noster* also added as a kind of "priestly" response followed immediately by the dialogical *Pax domini*.[27] The summit itself is set apart by a

[26] *Agende (1844)*, 21-22, 23. The latter rubric concerning the *Gloria Patri* after the sermon is from the second edition (*Agende [1853]*, 37).

[27] As Löhe points out, the placement of the Lord's Prayer after the *Verba testamenti* is not only the more ancient practice, but also the one followed by a number of sixteenth-century Lutheran *Kirchenordnungen*, both before and after Luther's innovative change in the *Deutsche Messe* (one may compare *Agende [1853]*, 47.) Whether done before or after the *Verba testamenti*, until recent times the Lord's Prayer in the Lutheran *Hauptgottesdienst* was prayed only by the pastor with the people saying or singing only the "Amen."

rubric purposefully reminiscent of Luther's 1523 *Formula Missae:* "[After the *Sanctus*], there shall be a brief but deep silence."[28] In the second edition of 1853, the primacy of the *Verba testamenti* is further confirmed with this rubric:

> During the distribution, if either the bread or wine run out and more must be used, then the new supply must be consecrated aloud (that is, bread when the bread is lacking, or wine when the wine is lacking). The organ and singing must stop, and everything is celebrated as it was during the original consecration. For this consecration, the same part of the Words of Institution is used which applies to the element that is to be consecrated.[29]

Nowhere to be found, then, are the jarring and "conversationally" one-sided movements from hymn to hymn, or the complete absence of simple but theologically poignant dialogues; neither also the long catechesis on the Lord's Prayer nor the break in the *Verba*—all of which Luther provides for in the *Deutsche Messe*. They not only eliminate or break the dialogical flow, but also make for a tedious mass.

In the forward to the *Agende (1844)*, Löhe forthrightly asserts historical continuity as a second element to his "positive liturgical principle." Historical continuity in the liturgy is built not only on what is doctrinally sound according to the Scriptures and Confessions, but also on that doctrinal soundness carried through the catholic liturgical tradition. For this reason, Löhe is not satisfied simply to state, "I have . . . refrained from using anything in this Liturgy *which is not already found in one or the other of the many old Lutheran Orders.*"[30] Before that, he is compelled to declare the following:

> The Lutheran liturgy certainly emerged from the Roman. Yet the entire Lutheran Church is not a new building but

[28]*Agende (1844)*, 29.One may see *LW* 53:28.

[29]*Agende (1853)*, 52 (author's translation with gratitude to the Rev. Charles J. Evanson).

[30]*Agende (1844)* in *GW* VII/1, 12 (translated from *Liturgy for Christian Congregations*, xi).

> the old [building], purified and stripped of superfluities and distortions. For three hundred years, the [Lutheran] Church advanced no new doctrines, but quite the contrary, removed novelties from the ancient doctrines. In the same way, she has not set off on a new course in the liturgy, but after removing harmful innovations has retained the unadulterated old [forms]. Thus it happens that in the communion service, for example, we have with the Roman Church the selfsame constituent elements. And so Article XXIV of the Augsburg Confession can maintain that "no conspicuous changes have been made in the public ceremonies of the mass" [and] "without boasting, it is manifest that the mass is observed among us with greater devotion and more earnestness than among our opponents." Should it be said that this is a romanizing agenda, then the same must be said of all Lutheran agendas, indeed of the entire Lutheran Church. (And as one of her members, I will gladly endure such polemic!) However, it would be more correct to say that, in those parts of the liturgy that are catholic, the Roman Church agrees with the truly catholic church (which, on earth, is known by the name "Lutheran").[31]

This historical or catholic element to liturgy is carried out in no clearer way than in the retention of many of the western rite propers and ordinaries, "which we have received through the channels of Rome."[32] Not only are the propers provided for, they are printed in the *Agende* itself so that all can see and make use of the historic introits, collects, and readings. Following the latter sixteenth-century Lutheran Church Orders (*Kirchenordnungen*), Löhe makes the preparatory priestly confession of sins (*Confiteor*) an ordinary for the laity, provides a general prayer prayed from the altar, and replaces the proper *Offertorium, Communio,* and *Post-communio* with ordinaries (the "Create in me," the *Nunc dimittis,* and one of four post-communion collects, respectively). He also dispenses with the

---

[31] *Agende* (1844) 10-11.

[32] *Agende (1844)* 12 (translated in *Liturgy for Christian Congregations,* xi).

gradual and *Alleluia/Tract* (although the word "halleluja" is always to be sung) in favor of the "the congregation's chorale whose content is suited to the season and circumstances or the text." However, the rubric does permit that "in cities or elsewhere as circumstances allow and one desires, an ancient gradual, sequence or prose can be sung before the alleluia verse on feasts. But, in any case, it must not displace the congregational hymn (*Choralgesang*)."[33] Finally, Löhe provides for the use of the shorter liturgical dialogue of versicle with response (particularly the salutation), which *Deutsche Messe* omits, and even allows for more frequent use than Luther does in his *Formula Missae.*

A third element that Wilhelm Löhe develops and employs in his positive principle might be termed the "christological" or "sacramental" element. For Löhe, true liturgy in the Evangelical-Lutheran confession culminates in receiving salvation in Christ not solely or exclusively or even primarily in the preaching, but in the Testament of His body and blood. For this reason, Löhe argues that the sacrament of the altar is both the kernel and foundation—the culmination, if you will—of a decidedly Lutheran *Hauptgottesdienst.*

> The chief service (*Hauptgottesdienst*) of the church always has as its purpose the communion or the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is certainly the core. Whatever proceeds or follows stands in relation to it. This is how it is not only in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Churches, but also in the Evangelical[-Lutheran] Church. A chief service without the Lord's Supper is unacceptable. It is like a broken column or like a flower which has lost its bloom. . . . A liturgy whose order of worship is neither generally nor specifically centered on the holy supper is merely something incidental, lacking of thought—a pile of bones properly arranged but no body in an organic union; flesh without a skeleton, stones without a building. . . . [So] if we want to understand the Evangelical[-Lutheran] mass correctly, we must necessarily compare it to the Roman as

[33] *Agende (1844)*, 21.

> it is now and as it was before the time of the Reformation. For both employed the liturgy of Gregory the Great. So [the Lutheran mass] is nothing other than the Roman mass purified according to the form of the Holy Scriptures.[34]

In another place, Löhe makes the same point when speaking of "sacred space":

> This is now the chief question: In the Lutheran Church, which is the primary and most important location—the altar or the pulpit? This question is easily answered. In the Lutheran service, not the sermon but the holy sacrament is the greatest ceremony. The sermon leads to the holy meal since it directs the Christians to a fervent mystical union with their Christ. . . . Therefore, the altar is and remains the most important location both for the Lutheran church building and for the appointments of our worship edifice since it gives purpose to the entire holy room. For this reason, even the layout of the Lutheran Church is wholly patterned after the older houses of God.[35]

These and other statements by Löhe lead to Hans Kressel's claim that Löhe's emphasis on the historical understanding of a sacramental liturgy is his primary liturgical contribution.

> [Löhe] did not get stuck in the doorway of confession and penance, as many early Lutherans did. Rather, he stepped into the resounding, bright choir (*in den hellen, lichten Chor*) toward the resplendent joy of the eucharist—a complete eucharist in the Lutheran service. Eucharist, as early Christianity understood [it, was] nothing other than ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει ("with gladness"; Acts 2.46); that is, the Lord's Supper celebrated with great, overflowing joy. Eucharist, as Luther boasted about the true, Christian mass: "God be praised" (WA 38.247.10 [*LW* 38:208]). Eucharist, as Johann Scriver implores: "Let Your Supper be my heaven on

---

[34]"Wilhelm Löhe, *Sammlung liturgischer Formulare der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche: Drittes Heft: Ordnung der Communio oder der evangelischen Messe*, 3 in *GW* VII/2, 698-699.

[35]Wilhelm Löhe, *Der evangelische Geistliche* (volume 2) in *GW* III/2, 243-244.

> on earth!" Eucharist, as a Russian theologian in our time writes (following in Löhe's footsteps): "Le ciel sur la terre" ("Heaven on earth"). Indeed, a eucharistic worship: "Paradise on earth." There is no other Lutheran theologian in modern times (and not only in modern times) who has presented to us anew the sacrament of the altar as eucharist so much as has Löhe.[36]

This christological or sacramental element of Lutheran liturgy is of course evident in Löhe's *Agende (1844)*. He devotes a significant portion of the forward to an almost poetic, yet careful explanation of the movement and drama in the communion service. Near the beginning of this description, he describes the place of the sacrament within the *Hauptgottesdienst*.

> I would compare the rationale (*Gedankengang*) of the liturgy of the chief service (*Hauptgottesdienst*) with a two-peaked mountain (something like Horeb and Sinai) where one peak is lower than the other. The first [lower] peak is the sermon, and the second is the sacrament of the altar—without which I myself cannot conceive of a complete service on earth. In the chief service, one is always ascending until he reaches the table of the Lord. Here one finds nothing higher than what he has in heaven itself. Yet a suitable expression for this inward longing can be found in the *Nunc dimittis*.[37]

After detailing the movement in the parts that lead to the first peak and then from there to the greater part or higher peak, Löhe concludes the explanation with this brief summary:

> From faith in faith, man has gone from one stage to another [until] he has come to the most blessed experience. Because he can ascend no higher except by death (*Nunc dimittis*), he descends to the familiar conclusion of the service seeking the transition to the earthly vocation God has imposed on each as preparation for heaven.[38]

---

[36]Kressel, *Löhe*, 226-227.
[37]*Agende (1844)*, in *GW* VII/1, 13.
[38]*Agende (1844)*, in *GW* VII/1, 13.

That the sacrament of the altar is the climax and peak of the *Hauptgottesdienst* in *Agende (1844)* is also evident in the rubric, rite, and ceremony surrounding the sermon, the consecration, and the distribution. In laying out the rubrics for the sermon, Löhe deliberately reduces an elaborate pulpit ceremony that had built up during the time of Pietism and Rationalism. The rubrics direct the pastor, immediately after the creed, simply to greet the congregation with the apostolic greeting and then to preach the sermon. In addition, he shall preach on the Gospel reading "so that it need not be read yet again from the pulpit since it was first sung or read at the altar before the creed." Similarly, after the sermon the pastor simply bids the congregation to pray, not with a lengthy or drawn out exhortation, but "with a few words."[39] With these rubrics, Löhe's puts into practice his understanding that the altar takes center stage in Lutheran liturgy and liturgical theology.

For this reason, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is embellished in a way that purposefully hearkens back to the early Lutheran Church Orders. Löhe includes the proper prefaces because "the retained and commoner form of the preface includes, as it ought, more of thanksgiving, and the thanksgiving is thus brought into closer relation with the sacrament, for which the thanks are really to be given."[40] Additionally, in the fuller second edition of 1853, Löhe provides not only communion preparation prayers for the pastor, but also this more elaborate distribution formula: (1) the pastor says a prayer aloud for all to receive the sacrament worthily; (2) turning to the communicants with the paten in hand, he speaks the *Confessio corporis Christi;* (3) he distributes the body of Christ repeating Christ's words from the first part of the Words of Institution; (4) he then takes the chalice and holding before the communicants says the *Confessio sanguinis Christi;* (5) he distributes the blood of Christ repeating Christ's words from the second part of the Words of Institution; (6) and he dismisses the communicants with a

[39]*Agende (1844)*, 23.

[40]*Agende (1853)*, 56 in *GW* VII/1, 77. Translated by F. C. Longaker in *Liturgy for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Faith*, 57.

variation of the post-sumtio prayer in the *Missale Romanum*.[41] The ceremony is further heightened by the rubrically encouraged "amen" by the communicants following each of the six parts. Besides its elaborate yet devotional ritual, what stands out in the distribution ceremony is the innovative *Confessio corporis et sanguinis*. Löhe incorporated this from the 1524 Wittenberg *Ordnung christlicher Messe* compiled by Johannes Bugenhagen, which he readily admits is nowhere to be found in other Lutheran agendas or in the Roman mass. Yet Löhe defends its inclusion, and at the same time provides one more piece of evidence for his understanding of the sacrament as liturgical climax:

> At a time like ours when the conscience for confessional distinction is so dull and when indifferentism and carelessness, under the guise of charity, seek to establish themselves in regard to the words of Christ especially in the Lord's Supper, a *Confessio corporis et sanguinis* seems to be entirely appropriate and even required. So I have daringly followed Bugenhagen and the Wittenberg congregation and inserted them in this place. Should they seem superfluous after the consecration and elevation, then they can simply be omitted. Bugenhagen certainly did not consider them wrong. Yet we do not require [others] to pay homage to false dogma.[42]

Löhe's most profound indication of the sacramental "positive liturgical principle," however, is his refusal to include an admonition to communion (*Abendsmahlsvermahnung*) within the chief service. This omission may seem especially striking since Löhe, in the 1853 edition, does not hesitate to list immediately after the benediction the placement of the admonition in several prominent sixteenth-century church orders.[43] To be sure, he provides a communion admonition in a section immediately following the communion service. But the rubric he uses to preface the seemingly original admonition is as much a

[41] *Agende (1853)*, 49 in *GW* VII/1, 70; 50 in *GW* VII/1, 71.
[42] *Agende (1853)*, 49 in *GW* VII/I, 70.
[43] *Agende (1853)*, 55 in *GW* VII/1, 76.

testimony to and attestation of his sacramental liturgical principle as it is catechetical: "After the sermon, the service is celebrated in full to the end of the communion. If the complete communion liturgy cannot be celebrated because there are no communicants, then the service must be cut short at the very point where it should climax—in the holy sacrament."[44]

After the rubric, Löhe gives his "Example of an Admonition," where he leaves no doubt in the minds of the hearers that the sacrament is the culmination of the *Hauptgottesdienst* and that the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not only to be celebrated but communion is to be received by all eligible parishioners. With a proper division and balance of law and gospel, Löhe both exposes the sin of refusing to heed the Lord's gracious invitation and implores the parishioners to consider and receive the grace from the fulness of Christ given in the sacrament. The conclusion of his admonition also serves well to summarize the sacramental aspect of Löhe's positive liturgical principle:

> He is rightly prepared who time and again hungers for this food and thirsts for this drink. And the more he communes at Jesus' table, the better he knows that life itself (*das ganze Leben*) should be nothing other than a perpetual preparation for the marriage feast of the Lamb in this life and the next *(Abendmahle des Lammes hier und dort)*—a coming and going and returning to His sanctuary; and that this passage refers to frequent communion: "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You! Selah."[45]

*The Result: A Liturgy that Endures*

In defining and applying the threefold elements of liturgy as a holy dialogue, liturgy within catholic continuity and context, and liturgy where the sacrament of the altar is both core and climax, the result is a *Hauptgottesdienst* similar to Luther's *Formula Missae*. This should not be surprising because in his

[44]*Agende (1844)*, 35.
[45]*Agende (1844)*, 36.

*Formula Missae* Luther is deliberately conservative in the "shape" or "form" of this service, not simply because he does not wish to disrupt the worship of the people or to head off "fickle and fastidious spirit," but more so because he primarily understands that "the mass, that is, the communion of bread and wine, is a rite divinely instituted by Christ Himself." That rite has been retained and celebrated since the time of the apostles with many scriptural (and therefore commendable) additions such as the proper psalmidic chants, the series of readings, and the "unobjectionable" Sunday ordinaries, all of which "testify to ancient purity."[46] One could say, then, that with his *Agende (1844)*, Wilhelm Löhe merely fleshes out the bare outline given by Martin Luther in the *Formula Missae,* providing the traditional propers and ordinaries and excising the innovations and accretions as Luther did (with the exception of restoring the proper prefaces, which then necessitated reordering preface and sanctus).

At the same time, what Löhe adds is a thoroughly researched, dogmatically grounded, historically conscious, and liturgically cogent positive argument or rationale for why Lutheran liturgy *must* include certain portions or elements in her chief service. Such a rationale, as well as the *Agende* that is its fruit, greatly influenced the liturgical studies of the theologians and scholars who prepared the 1888 Common Service.[47] That service was compiled under the following rule, which clearly incorporates a greater part of the historical continuity element in Löhe's positive liturgical principle and, in so doing, implicitly includes the other two elements. "The Rule which shall decide all questions arising in its preparation shall be: the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century, and when there is not an entire agreement among them the consent of the largest number of the greatest weight."[48]

Resulting from this rule and Löhe's careful explanations is an English version of the *Hauptgottesdienst* (the 1888 Common

[46] *LW* 53:20-21.

[47] Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 153.

[48] Reed, *Lutheran Liturgy*, 183.

Service) that is hardly distinguishable from "Ordnung der Gottesdienst: Die Communio oder der Hauptgottesdienst" in *Agende (1844)*. Within less than a quarter century, this Common Service was adopted with very few variations by every major Lutheran church body in America. It came into the Missouri Synod when the English Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States joined the German Missouri Synod in 1911. In 1912, the Missouri Synod published an expanded edition of the *Evangelical Luthearn Hymn-Book,* making the Common Service an official communion service.[49] That English communion service, so dependent on *Agende (1844)*, is certainly within the *Formula Missae* liturgical stream and survives in the Missouri Synod to this day in the form of "The Order of Holy Communion" in *The Lutheran Hymnal* and "Divine Service I" in *Lutheran Worship.*[50] But standing alongside (or even within) those current hymnals are "Divine Service III" in *Lutheran Worship* and "Divine Service" in *Hymnal Supplement 98,* communion liturgies that, implicitly or overtly, trace their origin to Luther's *Deutsche Messe* as it was mediated through the first official Missouri Synod Communion Service in the 1856 *Kirchen-Agende.*

---

[49]The English Synod had been using the Common Service since the publication of the second edition *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* ("Pittsburgh Hymnal") in 1891. One may see Fred Precht, "Worship Resources," 97-99.

[50]Although the compilers of "Holy Communion" of *Lutheran Book of Worship,* and its step-sister, "Divine Service II" in *Lutheran Worship,* trace its heritage to the 1888 Common Service, it is this writer's opinion that the differences in propers and ordinaries (in terms of what is retained or omitted, and what is changed or new) are enough to constitute yet a third stream in the history of American Lutheran liturgy.

# Theological Observer

## Needed: A Paradigm Shift in Missouri's Mission Outlook

In January 1992, as a fairly junior Navy chaplain, I attended a Lutheran Chaplains Conference in San Diego, California. Such conferences are conducted annually as a joint endeavor between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Sponsorship of these conferences alternates between the two church bodies. That year the Missouri Synod hosted the West Coast Lutheran Chaplains Conference. The guest speaker was the Rev. Dr. Eugene Bunkowske, Professor of Missiology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana who spoke on "The Chaplain as Missionary." One of Dr. Bunkowske's major emphases in his presentation was a discussion on paradigm shifts, which he saw as extremely important for effective mission work. This was the first time I was introduced to such a concept, and I freely admit that I did not embrace the viewpoint wholeheartedly. I saw in it a possible way of rationalizing proposed changes in our church body's doctrinal position and long-standing practices. However, I see more clearly now how some things can change, and how the concept can be useful. The Missouri Synod must indeed consider a paradigm shift in its mission outlook, and we need to act now.

A shift in Missouri Synod mission outlook took place in 1962. At the Cleveland Synodical Convention, the Synod faced the cessation of fellowship by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) had done so several years before. Mission work that had been carried on jointly through the Synodical Conference was quickly coming to an end or being assumed by the Missouri Synod alone. Thus, the 1962 LCMS synodical convention voted to work toward a new inter-Lutheran agency. The result was the Lutheran Council in the United States of America (LCUSA), which included joint work between the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Missouri Synod in various areas. Over the course of time, mission work became an area of joint endeavor. Joint international Lutheran congregations supported by all participants in LCUSA were established in Germany, Korea, Guam, and Japan. These congregations were neither identified as LCA, ALC, nor LCMS. They were simply "Lutheran," yet supported by all three church bodies, and pastors from all three would rotate in serving these "special" mission congregations. In Korea, only one Lutheran church body exists, and it received varying degrees of support by all the members of LCUSA.

The military chaplaincy was another area where joint work was carried out. Lutheran military chaplains were to serve all Lutherans, regardless of their synodical affiliation. Cooperation in base-wide "Lutheran" worship services was also encouraged. Furthermore, as noted above, yearly Lutheran chaplain conferences were held as a combined effort among all members of LCUSA. Services of Holy Communion were conducted together at these conferences, even though fellowship between the members of LCUSA had not been established. This continued, even during the tumultuous years of the exodus from Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis and the formation of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). Separate ELCA and LCMS services of Holy Communion were not established at Lutheran chaplain conferences until the late 1980s, and then many of the older chaplains complained because a distinction in doctrine and practice had been made.

Since the formation of the ELCA in 1988, several things have happened which necessitate a paradigm shift in the mission outlook of the Missouri Synod. In 1997, the ELCA declared itself in full fellowship with the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the USA. That same year, the ELCA also declared that there is no longer any substantial disagreement between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic understandings of the doctrine of justification. Finally, during its church-wide assembly in August 1999, the ELCA voted to adopt full communion with the Episcopal Church and the Moravian Church in America. The LCMS does not agree with the ELCA with regard to any of these decisions. In each case, Missouri Synod leaders have expressed deep regret over the actions of the ELCA. However, the Missouri Synod continues to operate through the Board for Mission Services as if the old LCUSA model was in place, fully operational, and effective. The truth can no longer be ignored: LCUSA is no longer in effect; a change has taken place; and Missouri Synod Mission leadership needs to shift their perspective. The LCMS cannot continue to operate under the old paradigm!

Even before the ELCA declared itself in full fellowship with various Reformed bodies and the Episcopal Church, questions of Lutheran identity and confessional commitment were ignored in various mission areas. The LCMS does not believe, teach, and confess the same as the ELCA with respect to the nature of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, confessional subscription, the ordination of women, church fellowship, the sanctity of human life, and membership in certain ecumenical organizations. With the recent ecumenical declarations of the ELCA, the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, the doctrine of justification, and the doctrine of the ministry are called into question as well. Furthermore, the ELCA has permitted on its clergy roster pastors and theological professors who deny or question the following: the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Christ, whether the New Testament teaches that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin, whether Jesus Himself actually claimed to be God, whether Jesus did, in fact, speak the words of institution, and whether the miracles recorded in Holy Scripture are real or merely myths. Thus, "Lutheran" is not "Lutheran" is not "Lutheran." The LCMS Board for Mission Services cannot carry on outside the United States of America as if differences between the LCMS and ELCA do not exist.

Yet, carry on under the LCUSA model is precisely what the Missouri Synod Board for Mission Services continues to do. There is only one Lutheran church body in the Republic of Korea. Although its seminary acknowledges it was founded by the Missouri Synod, there is no distinction made in its affiliation. The reason given: "this [more than one Lutheran church body] would be considered too much of an offense in Korea." Training and study for the pastoral office at Concordia Seminary in Hong Kong are all but defunct. The only LCMS professor called to the LCMS affiliated seminary in Hong Kong teaches predominantly at the Lutheran School of Theology, which is associated with the Lutheran World Federation. The only full-time student for the pastoral office from the LCMS affiliated Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod takes classes at the Lutheran School of Theology as well. The only active program at Concordia Seminary, Hong Kong involves preparation for a newly established "Evangelist Program." Successful candidates who complete the four-year, part-time program (two nights per week) will be entrusted with a "Word and Sacrament ministry in one of the smaller, vacant congregations" of the Hong Kong Synod. The International Lutheran Church in Tokyo, although served by an LCMS pastor, still declares itself a joint congregation of the ELCA and LCMS. No distinction between denominational affiliation is made by the International Lutheran Church on Guam either. This is not second-hand information. As Command Chaplain aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE and Fleet Chaplain for COMMANDER, SEVENTH FLEET, I have visited each and every place referred to above within the past year.

The Ministry to the Armed Forces of the LCMS, which falls under the

Board for Mission Services, continues to cling to the LCUSA model as well. LCMS chaplains are expected to provide word and sacrament ministry to all Lutherans. They are also expected to work with ELCA chaplains in providing a Lutheran worship service at military installations when stationed together. In addition, combined Lutheran chaplain conferences continue to be conducted. Meanwhile, the ELCA is clearly heading in a direction very different from even the LCUSA model—toward a "general, main-line Protestantism" not dissimilar from the "American Lutheranism" proposed by Samuel Schmucker, Samuel Sprecher, and Benjamin Kurtz in the Definite Synodical Platform of 1855. Although a new, updated edition of the LCMS Chaplain Guidelines was published this year, these new Guidelines do not specifically address how Missouri Synod chaplains should deal with ELCA chaplains in view of the current ELCA direction, nor has any other specific guidance been forthcoming from the Ministry to the Armed Forces of the Board for Mission Services to assist in this regard.

On November 19, 1997, an agreement was signed by the Rev. Dr. Lowell Almen, Secretary for the ELCA, and the Rev. Dr. Walter Rosin, Secretary for LCMS. The key section (in bold in the agreement) states:

> The ELCA and the LCMS shall continue the present agreement related to federal chaplaincies in which Lutheran services are conducted by Lutheran chaplains. . . . Only in special circumstances under policy to be developed by the respective churches would a clergy person of one participating body be available for service in another participating church body. Mutual recognition of the validity of ordained ministry in another church body does not imply free, unordered exchange. . . . Clearly under the Formula of Agreement, Lutheran pastors remain Lutheran pastors. They continue to be responsible for Lutheran witness; therefore, they are to teach, preach, and confess the faith of the Church for which the Lutheran confessional writings serve as true witnesses.

A new agreement was reached between the ELCA Committee on Federal Chaplaincies and the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces Committee on October 14, 1999. A letter sent to all LCMS chaplains in November 1999, discussing the agreement stated:

> Both committees remain strongly committed to the continuation of our cooperative Lutheran ministry in the military. As you know, chaplains of both church bodies agree to provide pastoral care to all Lutherans in their units or installations.

> In light of the above, our committees concurred that the ecumenical agreements of the ELCA should not be understood as being applicable to the voluntary gathering of Lutheran worship communities in the military. Rather, in respect for the variety of Lutherans gathered, these services should remain distinctly Lutheran.
>
> A previous agreement emphasized that Lutheran services on military installations would always be conducted by Lutheran chaplains. This new agreement additionally affirms that those who commune at military Lutheran services should have a clear understanding and acceptance of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

The current agreement between the ELCA and the LCMS dealing with cooperative Lutheran ministry in the military is silent with respect to profound differences that exist between the two church bodies. It therefore gives the appearance of a unity of doctrine that unfortunately does not exist and implies that the differences between the ELCA and the LCMS are insignificant.

Furthermore, despite these agreements, an ELCA chaplain stationed in Yokosuka, Japan several years ago combined the Lutheran and Episcopal congregations at the base chapel under the title "Lutheran-Episcopal Sunday Communion Service." This was done before the agreement of full communion was reached in 1999 between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, and it was done with the full complicity of both the ELCA and Episcopal military Endorsing Agents. Services are co-celebrated by both an ELCA pastor and an Episcopal priest. Recently, a visiting female United Church of Christ Naval Reserve chaplain was invited to participate in this service as well. Since the formation of this joint "Lutheran-Episcopal" service, LCMS chaplains stationed in the Yokosuka, Japan area have found it difficult, if not impossible, to support this joint or "union" worshiping community without violating their confessional commitment and their membership in the Missouri Synod (see Article VI 2 b of the "Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod"). Because this service is already in place, it is extremely difficult to start a separate Lutheran service at the base chapel; also, this would be viewed as divisive by military authorities. If this kind of situation is proliferated at other military installations by ELCA chaplains, particularly now that the ELCA has established fellowship agreements with the Episcopal and other Reformed church bodies, the opportunities for LCMS military chaplains to provide a confessional Lutheran ministry of word and sacrament at their duty stations will be further undercut. In addition, LCMS lay people serving in the military in isolated duty stations will be without a purely Lutheran worship opportunity.

The situation between the LCMS and the ELCA has clearly changed. Therefore, a paradigm shift in Missouri Synod mission outlook is necessary. As the ELCA continues in its current ecumenical direction, the LCMS must set its own confessional course, and that must include the policies and programs of the LCMS Board for Mission Services. To date, it remains unclear which way the LCMS wants to go in its mission outlook: in the ecumenical, "main-line Protestant" direction of the ELCA or toward the orthodox, confessional position that is our Lutheran heritage. If the LCMS Board for Mission Services continues on its current path, following the LCUSA model, either the mission work of the Missouri Synod will be pulled further and further away from its confessional foundation or the Synod will find itself standing alone, facing depleted mission resources with no plan or direction. Neither prospect is acceptable. Hopefully, a plan for confessional Lutheran mission work independent of the ELCA will be forthcoming.

John C. Wohlrabe Jr.
Commander, Chaplain Corps
United States Navy

## A Missed Opportunity

Church historians generally look forward to church anniversaries because these are the few times that people generally seem prepared to seek them out and listen to the stories they have to tell. Yet, for a church body that claims to be so intimately aware of the story of its founding, it is strange that the Synod's sesquicentennial came and went without the production of an authoritative history—unless one sees the video series fulfilling that purpose. The failure to produce an up-to-date, critical narrative of the Synod's history has left Walter Baepler's *A Century of Grace* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1947) at the top of the heap of Missouri histories.

Several authors have jumped into the breach after the fact. Recently, Leland Stevens published a volume that adds to our understanding of the Synod and is helpful, as far as it goes. However, *A History of the Missouri Synod as Told by the Lutheran Witness* is too narrow in scope. It focuses on one periodical that was founded thirty-five years after the Synod, and thus is ultimately incapable of telling Missouri's story fully. Still, it does have a provocative thesis: "The *Lutheran Witness* through its editors has influenced the Synod more than the other way around" (page 204). Certainly the *Witness* has significantly impacted the Synod, at least in the sense that it reflects the Synod's experience. Yet the image in the mirror is not a comforting one. One thing that a careful perusal of the *Witness* over the years does clearly show is the manner in which substantive theological issues have been displaced by shallow treatments with lots of slick graphics. What little Stevens has to say about this shift is approving. For the Missouri Synod as a whole, it betrays a significant accommodation to emerging media sensibilities. The *Witness* has always dealt with issues facing the contemporary church. However, where the Graebner and Sommer team had hard-hitting articles that stated the unequivocal position of the Synod on these issues (a position the editors were convinced rested on the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions), the modern *Witness* seems to find it difficult to say exactly what the Lutheran position is. A case in point—an issue on Promise Keepers in November 1995 featured a pro and con argument, but, ultimately, found it impossible to speak clearly to the issue. The result—the sovereign individual reader is left to make his or her own decision. Is it too much to expect the *official* organ of the Missouri Synod to speak clearly in regard to the point? After all, Promise Keepers' Arminian doctrine of the will and resultant synergistic conception of salvation, along with its flawed ecclesiology and unionistic practices, should not be so difficult to understand. Yet in the end the *Witness* simply allowed the *sic et non* stand side by side. Abelard lives!

Mary Todd's recently published book *Authority Vested: A Story of Identity and Change in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod* also claims to tell Missouri's story, though this time in the hope that it will lead the Synod to realize its evangelical and confessional identity and finally embrace the ordination of women—or at least to think seriously about the issue. At issue is Missouri's claim to doctrinal and historical consistency. Thus, Todd notes that "...a hallmark of Missouri Synod identity politics is evocation of a seamless past" (1). Her purpose is to show that historical and doctrinal continuity, both with the Lutheran Confessions and within its own setting, is a myth. At the heart of her thesis is the argument that at its founding and over the course of its history, Missouri has failed to define adequately the doctrine of the ministry. However, her position shows a lack of familiarity with Walther. She fails to appreciate the fine distinction that Walther makes between the one Office of the Holy Ministry and the various "auxiliary" offices that the church, in human freedom, may develop. Thus, when she then equates the Missouri's demonstrable shift on certain nonessential expressions of service as "ministry" with the one Office of the Holy Ministry, Todd, at the very least, obscures Walther's clearly articulated position—one that the Synod happened to accept in thesis form in 1851.

In fact, she is guilty of being anachronistic—reading back into the nineteenth century the fact of change that only entered Missouri, as John C. Wohlrabe Jr. has so ably shown, in 1962. In other words, her interpretive model, which depends heavily on secondary sources, does not demonstrate a clear grasp of Walther's primary sources. Further, the character of her sources is, to say the least, unambiguously biased. She writes, for example: "Since C. F. W. Walther wrote the first issue of *Der Lutheraner* in 1844, the synod has proclaimed itself the voice of confessional Lutheranism in America. To be truly confessional one could argue that the Missouri Synod must acknowledge the ordination of women to be an *adiaphoron*, a matter of evangelical freedom" (254). What result should we expect? "Hope anticipates a church transformed by actualization of the Gospel message, a church that practices what it preaches" (267). What are her sources? the ELCA's John Reumann, radical feminists Letty Russell and Rosemary Radford Ruether, and ELIM's *Missouri in Perspective* ! With such sources, the results, as it were, are guaranteed. By basing her narrative largely on twentieth century sources, and, in the latter section of the book, simply ignoring a significant amount of material that directly speaks to the issues she raises, a delicious irony results. Where L. DeAne Lagerquist's recently published *The Lutherans* (Praeger, 1999) gives voice to those that older histories have marginalized (namely, African-Americans, women, and the laity in general), while simultaneously allowing more "traditional" sources their rightful place, Mary Todd's *Authority Vested* dispatches confessional sources to the margin. Hence the guaranteed results—the one voice speaking is the voice of change. In this Stevens and Todd seem to be agreed, though their applications differ. In distinct contrast is the following statement of President John Behnken on a critical purpose of the Synod: "to promote, and insist on, unity in doctrine;. . . to provide Christ-centered publications and practices among the congregations" (*Lutheran Witness* [February 3, 1953]).

Missouri has rarely missed the opportunity to tell its own story clearly at critical points in its history. Our recently passed sesquicentennial, however, was a missed opportunity.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

# Book Reviews

*Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium.* **By Bart D. Ehrman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Cloth. 274 pages. $25.00.**

Bart D. Ehrmann, a professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina, takes advantage of the millennium change to revive the theme that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who expected to be delivered by the"Son of Man." As the theory goes, Jesus dies hopelessly with no one to aid Him. Later, an anonymous but influential early church community erroneously concluded that Jesus was Himself the "Son of Man." Without critically analyzing their sources, the Evangelists took this misidentification over into the Gospels. Early Christian communities, and not Jesus, are also held responsible for most Christian doctrines.

There is nothing new offered here, notwithstanding a very entertaining writing style. Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet has been around since the quest for the historical Jesus began in the eighteenth century and was popularized a century ago by Albert Schweitzer. To arrive at his conclusion Ehrman applies his principle of "the criterion of dissimilarity" (85-101) to the Gospel data. In reviewing raw historical data, the historian should have at his disposal numerous, independent, noncontradictory, internally coherent, nonbiased sources which are close to the event. This avoids contamination by legend or hearsay. According to these criteria most Gospel data prove unusable for Ehrman. An example of applying his principles are the origins of Jesus. Matthew and Luke have vested interests in presenting his virgin birth and hence these accounts are discredited. Mark knows nothing of the birth of Jesus and Paul simply says that He was born of a woman. John speaks of Joseph as Jesus' father (96). Since the data is contradictory, prejudiced and far removed from the event, nothing is known "about the sex lives of Jesus' parents before he was born" (97). That is pretty straightforward.

Dismissed as biased and hence questionable is any coherence between what the church preached about Jesus and what is attributed to Him. All that is left is a politically radical Jesus, which is not a very radical idea. Ehrman's "criterion of dissimilarity" is not unlike Bultmann's principle of demythologizing: church testimony about Jesus is discounted as prejudicial and hence not historically trustworthy. His principles, like those of other historical investigators of the Gospels, often give off the aroma of a rarely challenged immunity. By assuming a late date for the New Testament, its writings are disqualified as valid witnesses. Since the Gospels come from Q and Mark, they cannot be counted as independent witnesses anyway. Then by showing alleged differences in the Gospels about the origins of Jesus, Ehrman completely ignores either the purpose of the individual Evangelist or the setting where the words are found. Endorsers of Ehrman's approach credit him with a consistent application of his principles; however, it seems that he looked for principles that would lead him to his conclusion. Of course there are solutions to the conclusions his method presents. Reference to Jesus as Joseph's son is found in the mouth of unbelievers, at least according to John's Gospel. Now if John was so biased in favor of Jesus, why didn't he exclude it? What interest did Luke have in showing that Jesus was born of a virgin and if he did have an interest in it, why does this disqualify his being a valid historical source? If "the criterion of dissimilarity" were to be applied to all other aspects of history, we would have to disqualify nearly all of the materials out of which historians construct their histories. Anything Stalin's comrades or later Communists wrote about him would have to be dismissed as biased. However, by using catchy paragraph headings like "If the Shoe Fits . . . The Criterion of Contextual Credibility," he takes his readers into the esoteric realm of New Testament criticism, whose vocabulary is often a barrier to the uninitiated. For traditionalists his conclusions are outrageous, but for the New Testament world of scholars these are nothing all that new. Neither is his method.

David P. Scaer

***Der güldene Griff:Kontoverse um den ,Güldenen Griff' vom judicio im Menschen.* By Valentin Weigel. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Horst Pfefferl. Stugart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-holzboog, 1997. LXIII + 169 pages. Cloth.**

Fromman-holzboog has been collecting and publishing the works of a little known figure among American Lutherans, Valentin Weigel. Horst Pfefferl has edited *Der güldene Griff,* first published in 1578. Pfefferl divides the volume into three sections, a detailed introduction, the text of *Der güldene Griff* itself, and several indices. This text, along with the other works of Weigel published by Frommann-holzboog, have opened the door to understanding Valentin Weigel.

Valentin Weigel (1533-1588) was born at Naundorf, Saxony in 1533. After studying at Leipzig and Wittenberg, he assumed the pastoral office at Zschopau in 1567. At the onset of his ministry he was apparently part of the orthodox camp. Over time, however, his posthumously published writings indicate that he moved from orthodoxy to a proto-pietistic form of mysticism. Drawing on such sources as Johannes Tauler, the "German Theology," Sebastian Franck, Paracelsus (Theophrastus), and even, perhaps, Thomas Müntster, he moved from a theology based on the word of God and reflected in the Lutheran Confessions to a radical neo-platonism that maintained that man's soul possessed a "divine spark." If cultivated, this divine spark allowed for the soul's immediate communication with God. This move was obviously unorthodox. The means of grace, the institutional church, the office of the ministry all are peripheral, in fact, unnecessary for the soul that has sufficiently progressed in its development. What is only now beginning to emerge is the evidence of Weigel's impact on the development of Lutheran Pietism in the century following his death. Some time ago James Haney provocatively argued that Johann Arndt (1555-1621), a Lutheran pastor and theologian, incorporated elements of eastern mysticism into his theological program, which in turn influenced Lutheran Pietism through the likes of those whom Arndt influenced, most notably Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705). The volume at hand raises the question the question of the role of Weigel may have played in influencing the formation of Pietism, as many of its themes appear in incipient form in Weigel.

Obviously, most pastors, or even professors for that matter, will not need this volume in their personal libraries. However, the publication of this particular volume in the larger corpus of the collected works of Weigel provides a significant resource for scholars who seek to discern the roots of Pietism and the sources of its theological assumptions. In this respect, the publication of Weigel's works is a commendable endeavor that may serve confessional Lutherans in unveiling the powerful impact that theologians like Weigel and Arndt have had even on the orthodox Lutheran position via Pietism. Horst Pfefferl and Frommann-holzboog publishers have done their part. Now the literature waits for able interpreters.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

*The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic.* **By John H. Berthrong. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999.**

This book studies how notions of religious identity, particularly Christian identity, have changed in America. Berthrong argues that since the 1960's many Americans have blurred the lines separating different religions by adapting and blending beliefs and practices from different religions into Christianity. His chief example of this is the widespread use of Eastern meditation techniques within some Christian circles. Reasons for this blurring include increased non-Christian immigration to the United States, which has resulted in more religious options for seekers as well as a general cultural trend toward "spirituality," but not Christianity. Berthrong, an avowed and unapologetic liberal, sees this as a positive indication that Christianity can finally throw off its exclusivist claims to the truth and come to respect other religions as valid ways of seeking out the "divine reality." Once this has been done, people of all faiths will be able to unite to fight the only true evil in the world—the growing planet wide ecological crisis. When all is said and done this is Berthrong's only real concern. His ecological agenda is at the background of every chapter of the book whether it is relevant to the topic or not. The book however, is not without its uses. It would make an excellent introduction to the post-modern mind set and would help future pastors prepare for the kinds of presuppositions they may encounter as they talk to people with little or no background in the church. In the end when in comes to Berthrong's *Divine Deli,* you can look at the menu, but eating will result in food poisoning.

Grant Knepper
Faith Lutheran Church
Tucson, Arizona

***Atlas of American Religion: The Denominational Era, 1776-1990.* By William M. Newman and Peter L. Halverson. Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press, 2000. 176 pages. $49.95 cloth.**

Since the publication of Edwin Scott Gaustad's revised *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1976), there has not been a successful attempt at compiling and publishing a comprehensive atlas of American religion–that is, until now. William Newman, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, and Peter Halverson, Professor of Geography, both at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, have helped bring American religious demographics up-to-date in a useable form. More than a collection of data, however, this atlas also has a prominent theme. The authors seek to allow the maps to act narratively–they intend for the maps to tell a story leading up to a very specific point, namely, "that the resulting pattern of organized religions in the United States at the dawn of the twenty-first century is a unique happening" (15). The specific character of that "unique happening" emerges in the five chapters of the book, which articulate a fivefold typology: national denominations, multiregional denominations, classic sects, multiregional sects, and national sects. The result is a very informative and useful volume, both as a reference volume and as a introductory narrative, which should find its way into the library of every serious American religious historian. Beyond that, however, it has an immensely practical value and applicability for the parish pastor, for it can help him understand the denominational development of his particular geographic setting; something no pastor should undervalue as he engages in the ministry.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.