

# Why Is the Lutheran Church a Liturgical Church?

## *A Confessional Anthology*

**I. According to its official Confessions, the Lutheran Church is a liturgical church. A Confessionally Lutheran congregational piety is characterized by the regular proclamation of the Gospel and the regular administration of the Lord's Supper, within the framework of an orderly, dignified, Scripturally-based and historically-informed pattern of worship.**

But let us talk about the term "liturgy." It does not really mean a sacrifice but a public service. Thus it squares with our position that a minister who consecrates shows forth the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches shows forth the gospel to the people, as Paul says (I Cor. 4:1), "This is how one should regard us, as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the sacraments of God," that is, of the Word and sacraments; and II Cor. 5:20, "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Thus the term "liturgy" squares well with the ministry. (Apology XXIV:79-81)

We on our part also retain many ceremonies and traditions (such as the liturgy of the Mass and various canticles, festivals, and the like) which serve to preserve order in the church. (Augsburg Confession XXVI:40 [German])

We are unjustly accused of having abolished the Mass. Without boasting, it is manifest that the Mass is observed among us with greater devotion and more earnestness than among our opponents. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:9 [German])

We are perfectly willing for the Mass to be understood as a daily sacrifice, provided this means the whole Mass, the ceremony and also the proclamation of the Gospel, faith, prayer, and thanksgiving. Taken together, these are the daily sacrifice of the New Testament; the ceremony was instituted because of them and ought not be separated from them. Therefore Paul says (I Cor. 11:26), "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death." (Apology XXIV:35)

From this description of the state of our churches it is evident that we diligently maintain church discipline, pious ceremonies, and the good customs of the church. (Apology XV:4)

**II. The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church because it is a catholic church. The Lutheran Reformers of the sixteenth century were not sectarian innovators who set out to create a new church, but they acknowledged, and rejoiced in, their continuity with the church of the apostles and ancient Christian Fathers. They recognized that many of the centuries-old liturgical customs which they had inherited were both useful and beneficial, and they saw no reason to discard them. With humble gratitude Confessional Lutherans embrace the edifying liturgical usages of the pre-Reformation catholic church as important components of their own heritage and identity. They do not believe that such historic Christian customs are unique to the Roman Catholic Church (or to any other individual church body or denomination). The Book of Acts indicates that the corporate worship of the Christian church has *always* been liturgical in character. The Christians in Jerusalem “continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the communion of the breaking of the bread and in the prayers” (Acts 2:42, RCRV); on one occasion the Holy Spirit spoke to the Christians in Antioch “while they were engaged in the liturgy of the Lord” (Acts 13:2, NAB); and in regard to the Christians at Troas St. Luke reports that “On the first day of the week when we gathered for the breaking of bread, Paul preached to them” (Acts 20:7, NAB). The New Testament encourages all Christians to “Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings” (Hebrews 13:7-9, NASB). In the forms for public worship which they employ, Lutherans do indeed “remember” and “imitate” those who have served the cause of Christ’s unchanging Gospel throughout the church’s history. The main elements of the historic Lutheran Liturgy are not distinctively “Lutheran” and do not simply reflect the culture of sixteenth-century Germany and Scandinavia (or of twentieth-century America). They reflect instead the faith and devotion of God’s people of all times and places.**

...our churches dissent from the church catholic in no article of faith but only omit some few abuses which are new and have been adopted by the fault of the times although contrary to the intent of the canons... (Augsburg Confession, prologue to XXII,1 [Latin])

...nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic. (Augsburg Confession, epilogue to XXVIII,5 [Latin])

...no novelty has been introduced which did not exist in the church from ancient times... (Augsburg Confession XXIV:40 [German])

We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquillity, and we interpret them in an evangelical way, excluding the opinion that they justify. Our enemies falsely accuse us of abolishing good ordinances and church discipline.

We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than in theirs, and if you look at it correctly we are more faithful to the canons than our opponents are. (Apology XV:38-39)

On holy days, and at other times when communicants are present, Mass is held and those who desire it are communicated. Thus the Mass is preserved among us in its proper use, the use which was formerly observed in the church and which can be proved by St. Paul's statement in I Cor. 11:20 ff. and by many statements of the Fathers. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:34-35 [German])

Since, therefore, the Mass among us is supported by the example of the church as seen from the Scriptures and the Fathers, we are confident that it cannot be disapproved, especially since the customary public ceremonies are for the most part retained. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:40 [Latin])

...we do not abolish the Mass but religiously keep and defend it. In our churches Mass is celebrated every Sunday and on other festivals, when the sacrament is offered to those who wish for it after they have been examined and absolved. (Apology XXIV:1)

**III. The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church because it is an orthodox church. Its historic worship forms are thoroughly Biblical and evangelical in content, and therefore serve as faithful guides in orthodox Christian worship. The chief articles of Christian doctrine (the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, sin and grace, etc.) are deeply embedded in the unchanging parts of the Service (the Ordinary), and they become deeply embedded in the minds and hearts of Christian worshipers through the disciplined, weekly repetition of those texts. (The Ordinary of the Mass includes the Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Nicene Creed, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei.) The annual cycle of festivals and seasons in the traditional church year reminds worshipers of the important events in salvation history. The weekly sequence of Scripture readings and other Propers appointed for each Sunday of the year exposes worshipers to "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, NKJV). The historic Liturgy provides a proper balance of continuity and variety in each Sunday's service. Through the words of the Liturgy, worshipers are able to hear God's timeless message to his people, and to respond with prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and petition that have been molded and shaped by that message. The Liturgy focuses the worshipers' attention on the objective Means of Grace and the unchanging truths of Holy Scripture, rather than on their own subjective and unreliable emotions. It thereby helps them to remain faithful to St. Paul's directive: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16, NIV).**

The purpose of observing ceremonies is that men may learn the Scriptures and that those who have been touched by the Word may receive faith and fear and so may also pray. (Apology XXIV:3)

...the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:3 [German])

...ceremonies are needed especially in order that the unlearned may be taught. (Augsburg Confession XXIV:3 [Latin])

Places, times, persons, and the entire outward order of worship are therefore instituted and appointed in order that God's Word may exert its power publicly. (Large Catechism I:94)

To determine the apostles' wish and intention, therefore, we must consult their writings, not merely their example. They observed certain days, not because such observance was necessary for justification but to let the people know when to assemble. When they assembled, they also observed other rites and a sequence of lessons. Frequently the people continued to observe certain Old Testament customs, which the apostles adapted in modified form to the Gospel history, like the Passover [Acts 18:21] and Pentecost [Acts 20:16], so that by these examples as well as by instruction they might transmit to posterity the memory of these great events. (Apology VII/VIII:40)

Although the holy Fathers themselves had rites and traditions, they did not regard them as useful or necessary for justification. They did not obscure the glory or work of Christ but taught that we are justified by faith for Christ's sake, not for the sake of these human rites. They observed these human rites because they were profitable for good order, because they gave the people a set time to assemble, because they provided an example of how all things could be done decently and in order in the churches, and finally because they helped instruct the common folk. For different seasons and various rites serve as reminders for the common folk. For these reasons the Fathers kept ceremonies, and for the same reasons we also believe in keeping traditions. (Apology XV:20-21)

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

Every Lord's Day many in our circles use the Lord's Supper, but only after they have been instructed, examined, and absolved. The children chant the psalms in order to learn; the people sing, too, in order to

learn or to worship. (Apology XV:40)

**IV. The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church because it is an aesthetic church. The traditional symbols and ceremonies which often accompany the historic Liturgy help to harmonize the outward appearance of the sanctuary and the outward actions of the congregation and pastor with the words that are being spoken and sung. The evangelical ceremonies employed in the Lutheran Church serve to underscore, and draw attention to, various aspects of the evangelical message of the Liturgy. The New Testament itself testifies to a wide variety of such ceremonial aids in Christian worship. Before St. Paul departed from the Ephesian elders, “he knelt down and prayed with them all” (Acts 20:36, NKJV). Christians are told that they “have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat” (Hebrews 13:10, NKJV). The worship of the courts of heaven, as described in the Revelation to St. John, is characterized by much symbolic imagery: “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes... Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne...” (Revelation 4:4,5, NKJV); “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand” (Revelation 8:3-4, NKJV). The liturgical ceremonies of the Lutheran Church, many of which have their origin in the apostolic church, are indeed useful for the maintenance of dignity in worship and for the cultivation of reverence and devotion among worshipers. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Hebrews 12:28-29, NIV).**

The real adornment of the churches is godly, practical, and clear teaching, the godly use of the sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like. Candles, golden vessels, and ornaments like that are fitting... (Apology XXIV:51)

...in the Sacrament of the Altar the body and blood of Christ are truly eaten and drunk in the bread and wine... (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII:32)

We keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc. (Apology XXIV:1)

...make the sign of the cross and say, “In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.” Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. (Small Catechism VII:1-2)

In the administration of Communion the words of Institution are to be spoken or sung distinctly and clearly before the congregation and are under no circumstances to be omitted. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII:79)

...it can readily be judged that nothing contributes so much to the maintenance of dignity in public worship and the cultivation of reverence and devotion among the people as the proper observance of ceremonies in the churches. (Augsburg Confession, prologue to XXII,6 [Latin])

...let all good men understand that we most zealously preserve the dignity of the Mass... (Apology XXIV:99)

**V. The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church, but its various branches are not obligated to adhere to the rubrics of any one particular rite. The sixteenth-century liturgical orders of the various branches of the Church generally did follow the basic outline of the Western catholic Mass, but they often differed from each other in many details. The Lutheran Church acknowledges that God's Word has not bound Christian worshipers to any specific liturgical forms or ceremonies (beyond the divinely-instituted Means of Grace), and that all Christian churches therefore are, in principle, free to modify or change their liturgical practices. However, the Confessions of the Lutheran Church are also very clear in their teaching that such modifications or changes are to be made only when there are good reasons for them, and only in ways that are fully in keeping with the Church's Biblical standards of liturgical solemnity and doctrinal purity. Lutheran congregations are not required to be "high church" or "low church," but they *are* required to be *churchly*. The Confessions accordingly do not endorse the substitution of frivolous "Church Growth" gimmicks for the public Divine Service, and they do not condone whimsical and arbitrary alterations of "the pattern of the sound words" of the established Liturgy (2 Timothy 1:13, RSV). St. Paul reminds us that "God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33, NASB), and he tells us to "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40, NKJV). St. Paul's insights on the exercise of Christian freedom apply to the question of unnecessary deviations from the historic Lutheran (Christian) Liturgy: "'Everything is permissible' -- but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible' -- but not everything is constructive" (1 Corinthians 10:23-24, NIV). The basic liturgical policy of the Church of the Lutheran Reformation can aptly be summarized in the words of the well-known witticism: "If it's not broken, don't fix it."**

With regard to church usages that have been established by men, it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in

the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like. Yet we accompany these observances with instruction so that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things are necessary for salvation. (Augsburg Confession XV:1-2 [German])

Among us the ancient rites are for the most part diligently observed, for it is false and malicious to charge that all ceremonies and all old ordinances are abolished in our churches. But it has been a common complaint that certain abuses were connected with ordinary rites. Because these could not be approved with a good conscience, they have to some extent been corrected. (Augsburg Confession, epilogue to XXI, 4,5 [Latin])

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

Neither are useless and foolish spectacles, which serve neither good order, Christian discipline, nor evangelical decorum in the church, true adiaphora or things indifferent. (Solid Declaration X:7)

...our opponents condemn us for teaching that human traditions do not merit the forgiveness of sins, and they require so-called “universal rites” as necessary for salvation. Here Paul is our constant champion; everywhere he insists that these observances neither justify nor are necessary over and above the righteousness of faith. Nevertheless, liberty in these matters should be used moderately, lest the weak be offended and become more hostile to the true teaching of the Gospel because of an abuse of liberty. Nothing should be changed in the accustomed rites without good reason, and to foster harmony those ancient customs should be kept which can be kept without sin or without great disadvantage. (Apology XV:50-51)

(Confessional quotations are from *The Book of Concord*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert [Fortress Press, 1959]. “NAB” Scripture quotations are from *The New American Bible* [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1970]. “NASB” Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible* [Lockman Foundation, 1971]. “NIV” Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* [International Bible Society, 1978]. “NKJV” Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* [Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982]. “RCRV” Scripture quotation is from *The New Testament, a Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version* [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1941]. “RSV” Scripture quotation is from *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version* [Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1952].)

## **APPENDIX I:**

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

According to the Brunswick Agenda of Duke Augustus, 1657, the pastors went to the altar clad in alb, chasuble, and mass vestments. Sacristans and elders held a fair cloth before the altar during the administration, that no particle of the consecrated Elements should fall to the ground. The altar was adorned with costly stuffs, with lights and fresh flowers. "I would," cries [Christian] Scriver, "that one could make the whole church, and especially the altar, look like a little Heaven." Until the nineteenth century the ministers at St. Sebald in Nuremberg wore chasubles at the administration of the Holy Supper. The alb was generally worn over the Talar, even in the sermon. [Valerius] Herberger calls it his natural Sätuch [seed-cloth], from which he scatters the seed of the Divine Word. The alb was worn also in the Westphalian cities. At Closter-Lüne in 1608 the minister wore a garment of yellow gauze, and over it a chasuble on which was worked in needlework a "Passion." The inmates and abbesses, like Dorothea von Medine, were seen in the costume of the Benedictines. The "Lutheran monks" of Laccuna until 1631 wore the white gown and black scapular of the Cistercian order. Still later they sang the Latin Hours. The beneficiaries of the Augustinian Stift at Tübingen wore the black cowl until 1750. The churches stood open all day. When the Nuremberg Council ordered that they should be closed except at the hours of service, it aroused such an uproar in the city that the council had to yield. In 1619 all the churches in the Archbishopric of Magdeburg were strictly charged to pray the Litany. In Magdeburg itself there were in 1692 four *Readers*, two for the Epistle, two for the Gospel. The Nicene Creed was intoned by a Deacon in Latin. Then the sermon and general prayer having been said, the Deacon with two Readers and two Vicars, clad in Mass garment and gowns, went in procession to the altar, bearing the Cup, the Bread, and what pertained to the preparation for the Holy Supper, and the Cüster [Verger] took a silver censer with glowing coals and incense, and incensed them, while another (the *Citharmeister*?) clothed and arranged the altar, lit two wax candles, and placed on it two books bound in red velvet and silver containing the Latin Epistles and Gospels set to notes, and on festivals set on the altar also a silver or golden crucifix, according to the order of George of Anhalt in 1542. The *Preface* and *Sanctus* were in Latin. After the Preface the communicants were summoned into the choir by a bell hanging there. The Nuremberg *Officium Sacrum* (1664) bids all the ministers be present in their stalls, in white *chorrocken*, standing or sitting, to sing after the *Frühmesse* [Morning Mass], "Lord, keep us steadfast." The minister said his prayer kneeling with his face to the altar, with a deacon kneeling on either side. He arranged the wafers on the paten in piles of ten, like the shewbread, while the *Introit* and *Kyrie*



were sung. The responses by the choir were in Latin. Up to 1690 the Latin service was still said at St. Sebald's and St. Lawrence's. Throughout this (eighteenth) century we find daily Matins and Vespers, with the singing of German psalms. There were sermons on weekdays. There were no churches in which they did not kneel in confession and at the Consecration of the Elements.

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

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

## **APPENDIX II:**

Just over a century ago, a colleague of C. F. W. Walther offered a defense of a synodically promulgated English liturgy which gives his successors food for thought:

Church usages, excepting the case when confession of a divine truth is required, are indeed adiaphora. But they are nevertheless not without an import of their own. Congregations that adopt the church usages of the sects that surround them, will be apt to conform to their doctrines also, more easily and quickly than those that retain their Lutheran ceremonies. We should in Lutheran services, also when held in the English language, as much as possible use the old Lutheran forms, though they be said to be antiquated and not suiting this country. We will mention here the words of a pious Lutheran duchess, Elisabeth Magdalena of Brunswick-Lüneburg. Her court chaplain Prunner relates as follows: "Although her ladyship well knew that the ceremonies and purposes of this chapter (at which Prunner officiated) must have the appearance and repute of popery with some people, she still remembered the instructions which that dear and venerable man, Luther, had once given to her father concerning such ceremonies. I remember in particular that her ladyship several times told me that she did not desire at these present times to commence discontinuing any of those church usages, since she hoped that so long as such ceremonies continued, Calvinistic temerity would be held back from the public office of the church."

(John R. Stephenson, "A Log in One's Own Eye?", in *Confessional Lutheran Research Society Newsletter*, Number 4 [Reformation 1986], p. 6. The quotation is from C. F. W. Walther, *The Controversy Concerning Predestination* [translated by August Croll] [Concordia Publishing House, 1881], pp. 77-78.)

### **APPENDIX III:**

Primarily through the work of synod president Johannes Bading and seminary president Adolph Hoenecke, [the] Wisconsin [Synod] moved “to the right” of its pietistic doctrinal position and came to stand side by side with the confessional voices in [the] Missouri [Synod].

Wisconsin’s move away from Pietism was neither smooth nor swift, however, and its halting steps often can be observed in its worship practices. The constitution of [Johannes] Muehlhaeuser’s Grace congregation in Milwaukee, for example, includes this paragraph:

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

The pastors and people who were attracted to the Wisconsin Synod tended to have similar attitudes about worship forms. Now and then convention speakers in the 1850s and 60s asked the synod to adopt an order of service that was more Lutheran in its orientation and history, but no acceptable rite could be found or produced. ...

The leading theologian of the Missouri Synod and the president of its seminary, C. F. W. Walther, was the undisputed American champion of a confessional worship rite and hymnody. The use of historic Lutheran worship practices was Walther’s legacy from orthodox Lutheranism in Germany. ... Walther’s *Kirchen-Agenda*, containing the main Sunday order, arrived on the scene...in 1856. Visitors to the St. Louis congregations, where Walther served as senior pastor, would have experienced not only an elaborate liturgical rite based on Luther’s Reformation revisions, but chasubles, chanting, candles, and crucifixes as well. ...

The decided difference in worship practices in the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods is easily seen if one compares the following words of Walther with the paragraph Muehlhaeuser inserted into the Grace Church constitution:

We refuse to be guided by those who are offended by our church customs. We adhere to them all the more firmly when someone wants to cause us to have a guilty conscience on account of them. ... It is truly distressing that many of our fellow Christians find the differences between Lutheranism and papism in outward things. It is a pity and dreadful cowardice when one sacrifices the good and ancient customs to please the deluded American sects, lest they accuse us of being

papistic.

Indeed! Am I to be afraid of a Methodist, who perverts the saving Word, or be ashamed in the matter of my good cause, and not rather rejoice that the sects can tell by our ceremonies that I do not belong to them?

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

(James P. Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," in *Not unto Us* [Northwestern Publishing House, 2001], pp. 147-50. The quotation is from C. F. W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, Vol. 1 [Concordia Publishing House, 1992], p. 194.)

#### **APPENDIX IV:**

My sainted grandfather, Jacob Aall Ottesen, always celebrated the Communion, robed in the colorful, and, as it seemed to me, beautiful vestments of the Lutheran Church. On ordinary Sundays he wore the narrow-sleeved cassock, with its long satin stole, and the white "ruff," or collar. But on "Communion days" and on all festival days he also wore the white surplice or cotta. As he stood reverentially before the Altar with its lighted candles and gleaming silver, the old deacon, or verger, placed over his shoulders the scarlet, gold embroidered, silk chasuble. This ancient Communion vestment was shaped somewhat like a shield. As it was double, one side covered his back and the other his chest. Upon the side, which faced the congregation when he turned to the Altar, was a large cross in gold embroidery; upon the other was a chalice of similar materials. As a child I instinctively knew that the most sacred of all observances of the Church was about to be witnessed. As grandfather turned to the Altar and intoned the Lord's Prayer and the words of consecration, with the elevation of the host and the chalice, I felt as if God was near. The congregation standing reverentially about those kneeling before the Altar, made me think of Him who, though unseen, was in our midst.

... The so-called "Lutheran gown," a black robe with a shirred back and closed front (sometimes worn with two white bands below the collar), is only about 150 years old. Its origin, tradition, and history is primarily Calvinistic. Because of the unfortunate decision after the Thirty Years War, that the religion of the people should be that of the reigning house, untold doctrinal and practical difficulties arose. I make a few quotations from [P.] Severinsen[, *De rette Messeklæder* (1924)] -- [J.]

Madsen's ed. page 26 ff.:

It was a Reformed king who declared war against the Communion vestments of his Lutheran subjects. The royal house of Brandenburg, Prussia, was Reformed while the population was largely Lutheran. The war against the Communion vestments was declared by the peculiar soldier-king Frederick Wilhelm I, who ruled in a very autocratic fashion. Through a decision of 1733 (*Note the year*) he prohibited copes, Communion vestments, candles, Latin song, chants, and the sign of the cross.

There was much opposition. From a Lutheran plea to the king, printed in 1737, we quote:

These things (i.e. vestments, etc.) are admittedly not any inner necessity, but they have become *no insignificant mark of our Church*, and must therefore be safeguarded under these circumstances. The king gives the papist and the Jews full liberty of worship. Should then the Ev. Luth. Christians not be able to obtain the same protection and liberty?

It is worth noting that the pietists, with their dread for externalism, did not, as a rule, support the royal command. "Some obeyed, but a number of places protested." Frederick [Wilhelm] I was succeeded in 1740 by his son, Frederick II, who rescinded his father's injunction. But the years in which Lutheran usages had been prohibited, had their effect. The time of Frederick II was the time of rationalism. And rationalism completed what the Reformed king of Prussia had begun.

Taken as a whole, the German Lutheran minister appears at the present time in the black Calvinistic cloak handed him by the Reformed king of Prussia. It should therefore be remembered that the Calvinistic "blackness" of the clergy in the present day German Lutheran churches and her daughters, is not only *not Lutheran* -- but is a remnant and constant reminder of a period of the greatest helplessness and degradation of the German Lutheran people. The brutal Prussian king followed by the overwhelming power of rationalism, did accomplish one thing *as far as externals are concerned*: It shifted the German branch of the Lutheran Church and her daughter churches (also here in [the] U.S.A.) from her natural position among the great historic communions of Christendom to a place among the sectarian Calvinistic denominations. ...

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

... The chasuble...I now use was presented to me by the president of our Church, Dr. J. A. Aasgaard. He had used it while pastor at Norway Grove. A former pastor of this congregation, the sainted [Norwegian Synod] President H. A. Preus, undoubtedly regularly used a chasuble at the Communion, as did so many of the fathers of our Church.

(J. A. O. Stub, *Vestments and Liturgies* [n.d.], pp. 3-4, 10-12, 18.)

## **ADDENDUM**

As stated in Thesis I, a “Confessionally Lutheran congregational piety is characterized by the regular proclamation of the Gospel and the regular administration of the Lord’s Supper, within the framework of an orderly, dignified, Scripturally-based and historically-informed pattern of worship.” The sixteenth-century Lutheran Reformation, from which the Lutheran Confessions emerged, took place within a Western ecclesiastical and cultural context. The liturgical principles of the Lutheran Church were accordingly applied then in ways which were in harmony with that context. However, if and when a Lutheran presence arises from, or takes root in, an Eastern ecclesiastical and cultural context, it is natural to expect that these principles would be applied in ways which are in harmony with that context. The desire for a pattern of worship that is orderly, dignified, and Biblically-based would, of course, be the same. In the Byzantine world, however, this pattern of worship would not be informed by the liturgical history of the Latin church, as with the Reformation-era church orders, but by the liturgical history of the Byzantine church. (This was in fact what occurred with the Ukrainian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, which published in its 1933 *Ukrainian Evangelical Service Book* the first ever Lutheran liturgical order derived from the historic Eastern Rite.)

Lutherans recognize that the marks of the church, in their essence, have been preserved in the Greek Church, and that the Eastern liturgical tradition is also essentially sound, or at least easily salvageable (Apology X:2, XXII:4, XXIV:6,88,93). The Confessions quote favorably from the writings of several ancient Greek Fathers, including St. John Chrysostom, after whom the historic Byzantine Liturgy is named (Augsburg Confession XXV:11; Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII:76). The Apology of the Augsburg Confession cites with approval a statement on the Real Presence of Christ’s body in the Sacrament of the Altar by Theophylact of Ohrid, an Eastern Orthodox bishop and theologian (who died around 1108), whom it calls “a sensible writer” (Apology X:2). The Lutheran Reformers gladly identified with the best elements of the Eastern Christian tradition, and were not afraid to embrace those elements in the formulation of their own Confessions. When Confessional Lutherans in a Byzantine setting seek to give faithful testimony to their conviction that “nothing has been received among us, in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is

contrary to Scripture or to the church catholic” (Augsburg Confession, epilogue to XXVIII,5), it is therefore to be expected that their Biblically-qualified theological solidarity with the ancient Orthodox Church will be complemented by a Biblically-qualified liturgical solidarity with the ancient Orthodox Church. In imitation of the liturgical policy of the Lutheran Reformers, as contrasted with that of Carlstadt and Zwingli, the basic structure of the historic Liturgy of that place would be respectfully retained, and the details of its content would be carefully evaluated and thoughtfully revised (if necessary) so as to bring them into harmony with the Gospel. The historic Liturgy would not be rejected in a reactionary spirit and replaced with liturgical forms that are foreign to the devotional experience and heritage of the people.

The liturgical texts, musical styles, artistic representations, and ceremonial expressions that are currently used by most Lutherans are obviously derived or adapted from the Latin Rite tradition. They are nevertheless recognizably “Lutheran,” in that they provide a proper and edifying framework for the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Lord’s Supper. When Confessional Lutheranism is allowed to assume its natural shape in a Byzantine context, it will quite naturally derive or adapt its liturgical texts, musical styles, artistic representations, and ceremonial expressions from the Byzantine Rite tradition, in accordance with sound Reformational principles. Such purified Byzantine liturgical forms will be recognizably “Lutheran” as well, since they, too, will provide a proper and edifying framework for the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Lord’s Supper.

*Compiled and Edited by David Jay Webber*

*This anthology was published in Lutheran Synod Quarterly, Vol. XXXII, No. 2 (June 1992), pp. 6-17. The printed version of the anthology differs slightly from the online version that appears here.*