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The Character of Christian Worship

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Introduction

Worship – it's what we as Christians engage in on a regular basis. But a lot of questions come to mind when we start talking about worship. But then again, we've noticed that maybe the big discussions about worship are already past. People seem weary to even bring up the topic because we know it's going to be controversial in one way or another. Maybe we've arrived in the post-worship-war era. Maybe there's now a cold war-like scenario in regards to worship. Or maybe we've actually found a way of putting a round peg in a square hole so that what, for many years at least, seemed like mutually exclusive approaches to worship could coexist in the church in a peaceful, and perhaps even mutually enriching manner.

This is pretty much why Pastor Strawn and myself are here with you today. We're not experts in worship in the sense of having doctorates in liturgics. We're not experts in worship in the sense of regularly contributing studies on intricate historical questions regarding worship to respected publications on the liturgy. Still, as those participating and leading worship in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, we've grown increasingly suspicious because of the increasing peace and quiet on the worship front.

This is not because we dislike peace and quiet in church but because we found the paths to peace and quiet in worship that have been proposed in recent years to be theologically misleading: There are, on the one side, the 2009 *Eight Theses* on worship that were unanimously adopted by the LCMS Council of Presidents and later commended by the 2010 Synodical Convention to all LCMS congregations.[1] There is, on the other side, the proposal by Pres. Harrison which he, to our knowledge, first outlined in a Q&A at the June 2012 NW District Convention and which he restated in his column for the October 2014 *Lutheran Witness*.[2]

The *Eight Theses* claimed that, according to Lutheran theology, human additions to the worship service are ok so long as they are theologically sound. Pres. Harrison, going beyond that, asserted that so long as you use our common order of service, you can use a variety of music. – We think, as we'll elaborate in the next nine sections of our presentation, that the Eight Theses and similar approaches are flawed in that they do not take seriously the specificity of the forms of the gospel (i.e., the means of grace) and do not address the need for love when it comes to worshiping in a churchly manner. We think that Pres. Harrison's proposal underestimates the power of a certain type of music to overwhelm even the best

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[1] Cf. http://blogs.lcms.org/2009/cop-adopts-worship-theses.

[2] Cf. http://vimeo.com/44944195, at 1:22:35 (the 2012 Q&A) and http://blogs.lcms.org/2014/music-in-service-of-the-gospel (the October 2014 column). On one confessional Lutheran blog, *Steadfast Lutherans*, Pres. Harrison's 2012 Q&A was discussed from a variety of angles. However, his statements on worship, which declared the worship wars almost over, were neither mentioned in the blog's rundown of the Q&A nor discussed by the bloggers (http://steadfastlutherans.org/?p=21156&cpage=1#comments).

order of service and to promote a different theology, one in which the means of grace have no place.[3]

So, we speak to you today not as those equipped with the latest liturgical insights and models, but as pastors who, by virtue of their ordination vows, are bound to teach and confess the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as it is set forth chiefly in the Christian Book of Concord and the writings of Martin Luther. This is why we will address questions of worship from this doctrinal basis, not from any inherently "liturgical" logic.

To set the stage, let's just review a few points regarding the development of worship and the course of the debate on worship over the last 150 years or so. Around the middle of the 19th century, as a fruit of the confessional revival among German Lutherans that eventually led to the formation of the Missouri Synod in the US, we also see a renewed interest in the old Lutheran orders of worship from the 16th and 17th centuries that had fallen into disuse as a result of the Thirty-Years War and other developments in church and society. The old orders had been replaced by more spontaneous creations that basically expressed what the leading lights actually believed at the time.

This liturgical renewal created two products that are of interest for us: There is, first of all, Wilhelm Löhe's 1844/53 *Agenda for Christian Congregations of the Lutheran Confession*, which is a synthesis of about 200 older church orders reviewed by Löhe. It was dedicated to Frederick Wynecken, one of the early Synodical Presidents of the Missouri Synod. It contained the first order of service used by the nascent Missouri Synod until, in 1856, it was replaced by the Missouri Synod's own *Church Agenda for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession* that was based on the old Lutheran church orders in Saxony.

Influenced by Löhe's work of synthesis, there is secondly what is known as the "Common Service," published a generation after Löhe's *Agenda* by English-speaking American Lutheran theologians for English-speaking Lutherans in 1888. This project of liturgical restoration was also the fruit of a renewed interest in the theology and confession of the old Lutherans among English-speaking Lutherans in America which represented a sharp rejection of the modes of thought just a few decades earlier.

To translate the German texts these men used the English of the 16th-century *Book of Common Prayer* of the Anglican / Episcopalian Church and also adopted the music found in there. This Common Service came also to be the service of English-speaking Missourians, first in the form of the 1912 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn Book*, which is the direct predecessor

[3] So, in a sense, we agree with T. Wilken, "Behind the Music: The Real Worship War," *Issues, Etc. Journal*, Fall 2012 (http://issuesetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/FALL-2012.pdf): The music is just another red herring in the debate. The issue is, of course, doctrine. However, a certain type of music is regularly used as the potent instrument of choice to establish, and then later to confess and sustain, a certain non-Lutheran theology in a given congregation.

of the 1941 *Lutheran Hymnal* or *TLH*, which also served as the hymnal of the WELS and some congregations of the ELS.

Let's stop right here for a brief moment of reflection. What we saw here in the 19th century was this: Only a few still had "sound" Lutheran liturgies in actual use since the time of the Reformation. German Lutheranism was racked by the spirit of unionism that sought to bring together the Lutherans with the Reformed, also when it came to appropriate orders of service. American Lutherans were faced with essentially the same problem.

Surprisingly, what the liturgical reformers did to remedy this situation was not really what Luther had done. While Luther "made the best" out of what his people were used to by adding necessary things and leaving wrong things out, as we'll see later, these men basically rejected what their people were used to as irreformable and went back to the 16th century and, at least as far as their people were concerned, started over from scratch. In the process of liturgical synthesis, they also, at least in their intentions, standardized the liturgical landscape in an unprecedented way: No longer did you have variant orders of service in each of the various Lutheran territories in Germany or synods in America. Now you had potentially "national" orders of service that had been created with a historical-critical, comparative mindset.

Perhaps this was what needed to be done, in keeping with the spirit of confessional revival at the time, as the 19th-century leaders were confronted with a situation of radical theological and also historical *discontinuity* in worship. And liturgical *continuity* to the early church was also an important theological consideration for Luther. At the very least, this goes to show that one reformation of worship does not look like the other. At any rate, both the 16th and 19th century saw the renewal of worship *follow after* the renewal of doctrine, not the other way around. Those who believed the same way desired to worship in the same way, according to their newly rediscovered confession.

The 1950s saw a new, ecumenical agenda rear its head in the LCMS and other American Lutheran church bodies that resulted in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, *Lutheran Worship*, and the *Lutheran Service Book*. Löhe's work and the Common Service were chiefly based on *inner*-Lutheran precedent. This newer ecumenism is of a broader scope. Now the other liturgical traditions – i.e., the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic – are used as sources, not just for some interesting footnotes as in Löhe's *Agenda*, but also for the main rubrics of the main service. The purpose seems to be to restore some ideal worship service Lutheranism had to do without for *at least* 500 years – depending how the medieval Western liturgical tradition is viewed.

The historical-critical thinking we saw at work in the 19th century now is applied even to what, back then, were considered the "doctrinally pure" 16th-century orders of service: They may be doctrinally pure but, compared to the "riches" of other traditions, they are certainly liturgically poor. So they needed to be enriched.

Others, who identified more with the low-church American revival style when it came to worship, also became engaged in a similar kind of ecumenical sharing, just that their sources for creating the "ideal service" were not St. Gregory the Great, St. John Chrysostom, or St. Basil, but the Jesus People or, these days, Hillsong or Rick Warren's Saddleback Church. But they too believed: The traditional Lutheran service could not possibly be that "ideal service" that needed to be restored to Lutherans so that they too would finally get the benefits of "real worship."

What are we to do now? Pick and choose a side according to cultural preference or evangelistic potential? How about this radical idea: Let's look to the theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as we have it in the Book of Concord and in the writings of Luther and see which kind of worship embodies that theology best.

This is what we'll do. So it'll be "theology-heavy" today. We won't talk much about rubrics as such but seek to outline the main points of a Lutheran theology of worship. Pr. Strawn will address the broader issues. I will hone in on what Lutheran theology has to say about them in view of worship. We'll use as the basis of our presentations the 46 theses[4] that summarize the main points of our longer discussion of Christian worship in response to the 2009 *Eight Theses* on worship that were adopted by the LCMS Council of Presidents and later commended by the 2010 Synodical Convention to all LCMS congregations.

[4] See Holger Sonntag & Paul Strawn, *Christian Worship: Apology of the Unchanging Forms of the Gospel*, Questions in Lutheran Theology and Church 2 (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2014), pp. 99-102.

I What Really is Christian Worship?

1.1. Why Do Christians Worship?

P. Strawn

Man, whether he is Christian or not, worships. Man habitually attributes to something "other" higher power, higher intellect, higher authority than himself. Man by nature is religious. Both Scripture and experience demonstrate this.

Throughout Scripture the religiosity of man in general is repeatedly noted. Having been expelled from the Garden of Eden, offerings were made to God (Gen. 4:3-4) and man began to "call upon the name of the Lord" (4:26). It is to this same Lord that Noah sacrificed after the flood-wrought destruction of the earth (8:20) and Abram "called upon" (12:8) after himself being called by God (12:1), and after the self-same God appeared to him (12:7). Descendants of Noah other than Abram, however, would begin to call upon different gods. So not surprisingly, when Jacob is sent by his father Isaac, to Laban, his uncle, for a wife, Laban was the possessor of "household gods." These gods Rachel, Jacob's wife, stole from Laban (31:19) when Jacob was told by the Lord to return the land of Canaan (31:3). It is only when he is on the cusp of arriving in Bethel, to build an altar to "the God who answers [Jacob]" (35:3) however, that Jacob declared to his household and servants to "put away the foreign gods that are among you" (35:2). God's power would be recognized by the Pharaoh in Jacob's son, Joseph (41:38-39), to the extent that Joseph would be given in marriage to Asenath, the daughter of a priest of On—an Egyptian city which was the center of the worship of the Egyptian sun god Ra. During the time of their captivity in Egypt, the descendants of Jacob were undoubtedly exposed to the gods and goddesses of the Egyptians, to the extent that when God

appears to Moses, the Almighty must identify himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). Speculation is common that many of the ten plagues which God directed toward Egypt were meant to refute the perceived powers of the Egyptian gods and goddesses.[5] The reason given by Moses to the Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites from their captivity was the worship of the Lord (5:1, 3) whose name had been revealed to Moses (6:3), and of whom the Pharaoh had never heard (5:2). Upon their arrival at Mt. Sinai the first and chief commandment given the Israelites was "You shall have no other gods" (Ex. 20:3). Indeed the remaining commandments are understood to be elucidations of the first. Well known, however, is the worship of the Egyptian golden calf at the base of Sinai (32:1 ff.). Nevertheless, a worship structure (tabernacle) would be erected (Ex. 26, 40), a priesthood established (Ex. 28-29; Lev. 8), and daily, weekly, monthly and yearly worship shaped (Ex. 23:10-17; Lev. 23; Num. 28). God would dwell visibly in the tabernacle with the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night (Ex. 40:34-38). Upon entering the Promised Land, however, worship so established would be neglected. The gods of the native peoples would not be destroyed as commanded (Deut. 12) but be embraced (cf. Num. 25:1-4), gods such as Baal (1 Kings 16:31; 18:18-46), Ashtoreth (Judg. 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 12:10; I Kings 11:5), Chemosh (Num. 21:29; Jug. 11:24; 1 Kings 11:7, 33; Jer. 48:7), Ammon (Zeph. 1:5; Jer. 49:1; 1 Kings 11:5, 7, 33), Molech (Judg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 5:2-7) and Dagon (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-25). Worship aberrations in the temple in Jerusalem would occur, like the worship of the bronze serpent (2 Kings 18:4). The visible presence of God would eventually abandon the tabernacle, returning for only a short period, with the dedication of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 7:1-3). At the death of Solomon, however, Israel would split into two countries, Judah in the south, and Israel in the north. Worship in the temple in Jerusalem would continue, but two new worship centers in the north, in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:25-33) would be established, at which once again, the gold calf of the Egyptians would be worshiped. Victories over the religions so-embraced, liked that of Elijah (1 Kings 18), and worship reformations, like that of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29), would be short-lived. Eventually the north would be destroyed by the Assyrians (1 Chron. 5:26), the south, taken into captivity into Babylon (2 Kings 25) and the temple in Jerusalem destroyed (2 Kings 25:13 ff.). Upon the return of the captives from Babylone, worship in a hastily reconstructed temple in Jerusalem would resume (Ezra), and would continue until the time of Christ.

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[5] Cf. "The Plagues and the Gods of Egypt" in John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament, Revised and Expanded* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 85.

Between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, Alexander the Great (356-323) would conquer the known world, spreading Greek language, culture and religion around the Mediterranean basin and as far East as the Indus river. The Roman Empire would eventually follow, conquering and controlling a territory of even greater size, and promoting and supporting a pantheon of over 600 gods and goddesses, many of which were adopted from the peoples they had conquered. So the veracity of the Apostle Paul's opening comments to the Greeks of Athens is truly without doubt: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious" (Acts 18:22). The gospel of Jesus Christ was therefore being proclaimed in a world already full of religion. And so it is today. The religions of the gods of Egypt, of the Canaanite peoples, of the Greeks and the Romans are no longer practiced, but have been replaced by those of Hinduism, with its hundreds of thousands of gods and goddesses, Buddhism, Islam, Mormonism, and a whole host of other smaller nativists religions around the world. All of these religions have forms of worship. Most have prayers, most have music, many have sacrifices, all have devotion. As do the legions of sports fans of individuals and teams who bedeck themselves with team paraphernalia, music fans who idolize musicians similarly, and hobbyists of all sorts, who dedicate their lives—their time, their talent and treasures—to the pursuit of their chosen interest.

So what of Christian worship? Why do Christians worship? Merely because of an innate religiosity in man? No. But because Jesus of Nazareth, was proven to be both the Lord and the Christ (Acts 2:36), the long awaited Messiah, the Anointed One, of the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his ascension to the Father, precipitated the outpouring the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33)—the Spirit that would convict the world of sin, and righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-11), of the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. Thus Christian worship is not simply a matter of religion, nor even a matter simply of the Spirit, but Christian worship is worship of the true God "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). It is the fulfillment of the First Commandment. That being so, Christian worship took place daily, initially, in the temple of the true God, the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46). It also involved fellowship with and the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:42) that Christ himself had chosen (Matt. 10:1-4), and to whom he had given special authority (Matt. 10:1). Christian worship also involved the "breaking of the bread", the New Testament, the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17). Eventually, Christians were driven from the temple in Jerusalem, and as a result of a great persecution which arose there (Acts 8:1), were scattered through Judea, and throughout the Roman world. Worship would then take place in houses (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 1:2), or in secluded places around the towns and cities of the empire. Public worship in a shared, dedicated space would not be possible for another

300 years! And it is not that the "house churches" were without problem. Jewish converts to Christianity wondered how much of the Old Testament—the rites and rituals of the books of Moses—were essential to Christianity (Acts 15; Gal. 3:1-9). Greek and Roman converts would raise the question as to whether or not they could still participate in pagan rites, and a pagan lifestyle, and still be Christian (1 Cor. 8; 10:1-22). Worship, at least in one city, Corinth, had become a fiasco of confusion and abuse (1 Cor. 11-14). Essential to all such discussions was the simple idea: How you worshiped was what you believed. With the rise of numbers of Christians within the Roman Empire, and its eventual adoption as the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great (272-337), public worship would be allowed, and uniformity of worship practices established.

And so what of the Christian church today? Does it continue in this uniformity of practice? Obviously not. Two events are chiefly to blame here: The ending of fellowship between the Latin-speaking Roman Catholic church in the west and Greek-speaking Byzantine Church in the east in 1053 can be noted. But even more important was the Reformation of the Church in the 16th Century. At that time, Christian worship in the west ceased to be held solely in Latin, and solely under the authority of the pope in Rome. Instead, throughout the kingdoms of Europe, Christian worship began to take place in the language of the people of the kingdom (German, French, English, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, etc.), and in the theology of the Reformation the city, principality, duchy, electorate, or kingdom adopted. Consequently, Christian worship in the west found itself divided into five basic expressions: Roman Catholic (following Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)), Lutheran (after Martin Luther (1483-1546)), Calvinist (after John Calvin (1509-1564)), Baptist (after the term *Anabaptist*-"to baptize again") and Pentecostal. All would find a basis for Christian worship in Scripture, but to a greater or lesser extent, and with varied interpretation. Roman Catholicism, for example, would see expressed in its worship the history of the church of Rome as well as the authority of the Roman bishop over the entire Christian church in the western world, granting access to the highest and best and most God-pleasing work—participation in the Lord's Supper—to those who were admitted into fellowship. Thus vestments and ritual reminiscent of the Old Testament high priest were the order of the day, along with liturgical minutia, as the high point of the service was ultimately a sacrifice, a taking part in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus Christ. An Anglican (Calvinist) service would look almost the same in vestment and ritual, but no sacrifice would take place. Henry VIII (1491-1547), in overseeing the founding of the Church of England, had succeeded in gutting Roman Catholic ritual of theology, and replacing it with Calvinism. Instead, a memorial meal was offered similar to that of the Passover. By participation in that

meal, a Christian's standing in the church was affirmed, and the conviction of their eternal election confirmed. In contradistinction to both, Baptist worship found its primary expression in a rejection of churchly authority. There, the supremacy of the individual Christian was championed, as sacraments and vestments were jettisoned, all other trappings of spiritual authority were removed, and a general atmosphere of spiritual equality and independence reigned. Here exemplary may not be the high priest of the Old Testament, but Zacchaeus of the New Testament (Lk. 19:1-10)—the common man, who of his own accord, his own will, comes to Jesus. Featured prominently in the Baptist service nowadays is the altar call, the moment when a person can step forward and offer himself to Jesus. Of course, for the Pentecostal, the day of Pentecost itself was informative. The utmost goal of the Pentecostal was the personal experience of the Holy Spirit, primarily in the ability to speak in tongues—not other earthly languages, but the "tongues of angels" (1 Cor. 13:1). Other supposed manifestations of the Holy Spirit (healings, "holy drunkenness" (Acts 2:13); "holy laughter"; etc.) were also sought. Whatever the manifestation experienced, it was taken as acceptance of the believer by God and eternal security. Consequently, worship was shaped to create the opportunity for such experiences.

More than curious is the concept that is common to all of these traditions, and that is: Man's innate ability to turn to God. Yes, it is expressed in different ways, but at the end of the day, Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Baptist theology and Pentecostalism all accept the idea that man is not only innately religious, but can, if prodded and pushed in one way or another, of his own volition, seek out and find the worship which brings him, in some way, to God. The reward varies—credit for a good work, a better life, a manifestation of the Spirit—but the assumption upon which the approach is built is the same: Man can do it.

So it would seem like Christian worship, in the 21st century, is, at the end of the day, indeed based on the innate religiosity of man. All traditions refer to Scripture in one way or another, one preferring this passage, while another prefers something else. Sure, in Acts we read of the teaching of the Apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of the bread. And Jesus Himself spoke not only of worshiping in Spirit, but in truth. But does it really matter? As long as we agree that what is happening in worship is somehow Christian, can't we just leave it at that?

H. Sonntag

> *Christian worship – that is, worship after man's fall into sin and after the giving of the promise of the Savior in Gen. 3:15 – is fundamentally rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For every Christian activity, in order to be truly pleasing to God despite man's sinfulness, must flow from faith in this gospel. Such faith is created by this gospel itself. In that this faith rightly acknowledges God as truthful and Savior, and thus lets God be God, it is the highest worship (First Commandment). Genuine faith is active in love of God and neighbor. Praying to God as well as praising and thanking God in worship, as well as studying and following his Word, are the chief works of love of God after faith itself (Second and Third Commandments). Serving the neighbor in one's vocations according to the remaining Ten Commandments is, because it is a fruit of faith in the gospel, also part of the Christian's worship and thanksgiving to God.*[6]

When it comes to worshiping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it seems logical to say that the highest worship we can give him would aim at, and take hold of, what sets him apart from all the other gods in the world. According to the bible, this is not the grandeur of creation. It is, instead, the salvation which he won for the whole world in Jesus Christ, his only Son, and which he gives us in the gospel. By the gospel, we recognize that our God – objectively, that is, regardless of how we feel about him – is a gracious God who has pardoned the ungodly for the sake of his Son. We recognize that, in relation to us, he is a Giver at heart, not a taker. We recognize also that, as sinners, we are first and foremost takers, not givers, in relation to him.

The highest praise, then, that we can possibly give to God is not thanking him for that salvation in word and deed, as that would already be a form of giving. It is, first of all, simply *taking*, receiving, from him by God-given faith what is special about him as the one true God, grace upon grace, for Christ's sake (cf. Rom. 4:20). First after we've taken from God the best he has to offer, that is, first after we've taken hold of Christ by faith in the heart, that is, *in an outwardly imperceptible way*, we then also come to giving him thanks and praise in word and deed according to the Ten Commandments *in an outward manner*. In fact, it is our taking that first makes our giving pleasing and acceptable to him.

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[6] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 99.

Without the external word of the gospel that reveals to us God's gracious disposition toward all sinners for Christ's sake, this kind of worship does not take place. Without the external means of grace, therefore, the one true God is not worshiped and glorified as he ought to be.

Three problems arise at this point: First, faith in the promises of the gospel is not a way of worshiping God that comes natural to us as sinners. We are born enthusiasts, that is, we are bound to look inside of us to learn about God's will and disposition toward us. This is to say, we draw conclusions about God based on his gifts to us and in us: When we are rich, healthy, and successful; when we feel good, pumped up, or virtuous, we conclude: God loves us. When we are poor, sick, and failing; when we feel bad, sluggish, or sinful, we conclude: God hates us.

The second problem only makes the first problem worse: There are not just the world's religions that encourage you to look nowhere else but your navel to find out about what God thinks about you. There is also the great majority of Christian denominations that are quite in agreement with the world's religions on this point: You can't just look to the gospel by "faith" to know for sure what God thinks about you, because then everybody would take the easy way out and choose the gospel (as if clinging to the gospel were easily within the grasp of man's natural powers of choice, when the law or our conscience condemns us, when we feel horrible about ourselves). Instead of going the "easy" route of the objective gospel, you must look to your feelings, moods, and to your life's ways and circumstances to determine what God thinks about you at any given moment in your life.

The third problem makes all this worse yet: Not only do we all naturally gravitate to looking for God inside of us. Not only are there many religious service providers out there who urge you forward on the journey to God through our feelings and moods. What goes on in us is also subject to our natural powers. In other words, we can, by our own reason or strength, manipulate how we feel about ourselves and therefore about God. Approaching God based on what's in us is thus doubly unreliable: It not only changes all the time, but it's also well within our natural powers to produce those changes in us and others.[7]

What does all this mean for the worship service? If you believe that the most certain way to know about how God really feels about you is to look no further than the objective word of the gospel, then you will

[7] Cf. F. Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik* (St. Louis: CPH, 1920), III:142-143, 154-155, 169.

want that gospel and the correlated faith to be front and center in your worship service. In fact, you easily grasp that faith in the gospel is the highest worship.

If you think that the most reliable way to find out about God's thoughts about you is to look to your own life, to its moral progress, to its emotional states, then you will want to pack the service with the tools that you deem necessary to generate or display that moral progress or to establish or display a certain emotional state to deduce a positive evaluation by God and others. Then that progress or these emotions will – no-brainer! – be the epitome of worship.

This is precisely what is going on in worship outside the Lutheran Church. On the one hand, you have Reformed worship, that is, the worship of all who, with Zwingli, cannot believe that the Holy Spirit should need any external means such as the word and the sacraments to convey God's grace to the sinner. Their worship services consist of instruction in the truths of God's word and of the praise and thanksgiving offered to God by those touched by the Spirit.

But how do you know you've been touched in this way, that your faith in Christ is really a gift of the Spirit, not just the "temporal" product of your own imagination? In other words, how do you know that you are one of the few for whom Christ truly *intended* to die, one of the elect? Because you're part of the church; you're offering praises to God. You're increasingly doing the right thing in worship, and in your life. You've got this growing feeling of peace and assurance in your heart.[8]

A powerful variation of that model is the so-called contemporary service, where emotion-packed music forges your essential emotional connection to God in an almost instantaneous way. Dan Wilt, one of its top practitioners in the Vineyard movement, wrote a few years back:[9]

> *When most of us think about "contemporary worship," we think about the music that defines it.* What is it about music that makes it such a central topic in worship discussions? *Why have the worship enactments of the Eucharist, the public reading of Scripture, and the celebration of other sacraments stood in the shadows while contemporary worship music gets the spotlight? Music has a way of bypassing the mind and engaging the heart.*

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[8] Cf. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, new ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), II:394, 397f., 426-428, 460, 462-463, 469-474, 502-503, 505-507, 537, 608-612, 616-619.
[9] Dan Wilt, "Contemporary Worship," in L. Duncan et al., *Perspectives on Christian Worship: 5 Views*, ed. M. Pinson (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 146, 188.

> *Music has the capacity to stir deep passions and harness the energies of zeal.* ... Contemporary worship *music* is saying in hundreds of ways, 'God is near, He loves you, and He knows you.' If the musicians are truly the orators of our day, *unbelievers may never hear the sermon—but they will hear the song.*

How do you know God loves you? Don't you feel it deep in your heart, from where your love for him regularly breaks forth in exuberant, emotional worship? Besides, emotional music will also power any number of special good works such as mission trips to the far corners of the world. Can there be any doubt, then, that God loves you? Who needs the gospel *word* to find out about what God thinks about you, if you already have all this powerful evidence of his love for you?

It has been observed by Lutherans that contemporary songs are often "all law,"[10] while they still have a gospel-effect in that they make people "feel" God's love, care, or, to use the old-fashioned term, *grace*. This suggests strongly that contemporary worship is not about the words of those songs at all, even if they at times are quite nice gospel proclamation. For the average attendee will not look to those words to find out about God's will toward him. He's being told, most powerfully by the emotionally overwhelming music itself, to look within himself for that. He feels uplifted, pumped up, passionate for Jesus. Thus, God must love him.

On the other hand, you have the Roman Catholic worship. It is, in a sense, a two-way street: God does something for man, and man does something for God. The sacrament of communion is the focal point of this worship service as here God grants the gift of grace to man so that man might correctly offer Christ's body and blood in an unbloody sacrifice to God. In other words, grace is what's at work in you, creating this moral progress or that emotional state. Grace is not God's mercy for Christ's sake that is always there for you outside of you in the means of grace.

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[10] E.g., T. Quill (LCMS) in his response to D. Wilt, cf. *Perspectives on Christian Worship*, 208.

Questions

1.2. How do Christians Worship?

P. Strawn

In and of itself, Christian worship is not distinctive among the religions of the world. Other religions, false religions, contain many of the same elements of worship that are found in that of Christianity: A regular assembly in a building dedicated for that purpose; an ordered progression of events; a leader of some sort; shared simultaneous movement (bowing, sitting, standing, or even genuflection); the vocal reading of revered texts; public commentary on the same; prayers, contemplation, music and sacrifice. The uniqueness of Christian worship is not in the fact that it occurs, but in the One whom is worshiped, and how. From meager beginnings, how Christians worship would come to be defined, at least outwardly, by how they viewed the authority of the church within the world over against existing worldly authorities.

After being expelled from the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), Christian worship, as noted, took place in the homes of Christians (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 1:2) for the first 300 years of the New Testament era. Again, it involved the teaching of the Apostles (Acts 2:42), the continuance of their traditions (1 Cor. 11:2) and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 1 Cor. 11:20). It also involved readings from the Old Testament, prayer, thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:2), the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), preaching (1 Tim. 4:1-5) and offering (Cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Gal. 6:6). Worship was not to be chaotic (1 Cor. 14:33), but conducted decently and in good order (1 Cor. 14:40), for the mutual edification of all (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:4, 12). It was not to be a matter of the spirit of the individual Christian alone, but his spirit and his mind (1 Cor. 14:15). The language used was to be intelligible, even to non-Christians (1 Cor. 14:24-25). Perhaps the earliest extra-Biblical description of Christian worship is that of Justin Martyr (c. 100-165), a Roman convert to Christianity, who in his *Apology*, would defend Christianity to the Roman emperor Antonius Pius (reigned 138-161). There it is affirmed

that Christians met in homes on Sunday, read from the writings of the prophets and apostles, were preaching, and practicing baptism and the Lord's Supper.[11] More is not known. It is with the advent of Emperor

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[11]From Justin's *Apology* (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm) **"Chapter 65. Administration of the sacraments.** But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to γένοιτο [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion. **Chapter 66. Of the Eucharist.** And this food is called among us Εὐχαριστία [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, This do in remembrance of Me, Luke 22:19 this is My body; and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, This is My blood; and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn. **Chapter 67. Weekly worship of the Christians.** And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the

Constantine the Great (reigned 306-337)—who not only legalized, but promoted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire—that Christian worship gained a social, political and economic importance it had not enjoyed previously. Understood to be the religion above all religions, large churches would be built using public funding, bishops would be given legal and political responsibilities, including their own private security forces, and uniformity in worship practice and theology would be sought as overall political unity throughout the Roman Empire would be desired. Thus it was Constantine who called for, underwrote, and attended the Council of Nicaea (325), from which the Nicene Creed gets its name. Bishops found themselves not only enriched personally, but of great importance politically. Consequently, Christian worship began to take on the trappings of kingly courts. In both the Holy Roman Empire in the West, and the Byzantine Empire in the East, court dress and ritual would be adopted, reflecting not just the theological position, but the political power church leaders had been granted by the state. It is at this time that liturgies grew in complexity. Relics began to become significant, eventually being required in every altar and every processional cross. It is also at this time, that monasticism—the desire to live apart from a society over which Christianity had come to dominate—flourished. So for the next 1000 years a duality of Christian worship would exist: 1) The complex and ornate liturgical worship of the official religion of the state; 2) The more austere but often equally complex worship of the monastic communities. And curious as well, the sacraments would take on legal significance: Baptism would become a requirement for citizenship in the Holy Roman Empire and the withholding of the Lord's Supper from entire regions of people would become a political tool for accomplishing governmental goals and desires.

It would be a monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546) who would introduce reform of Christian worship in the Western church. Those reforms would not for be their own sake, but flowed from a rediscovery of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the true meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus worship—long held in a language the common person could not understand (Latin)—would be in the vernacular. Congregational participation would increase from simply a reception of the bread in the Lord's Supper, to a reception of both bread and wine,

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president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration."

to singing, responding, and praying. The massive church buildings in which such services were held—whether state-financed or not—bedecked with the artwork, the tradition of centuries, were to remain untouched. And the state itself—the Holy Roman Empire—would be encouraged to adopt such changes over time. And those changes were adopted, slowly, from region, to region, from principality, to duchy, to town or city, mostly in the northern part of the Holy Roman Empire. In the southern part of the Empire, in Switzerland, a lawyer, John Calvin (1509-1564), took a different approach, as a reformation of the church became also a reformation of the state. Calvin's theological role in Geneva was to preach three times a week, and twice on Sunday. His political role was to sit on the town council of city of Geneva insuring the imposition of the law of Christ. In that both the pope and the emperor had effectively been "thrown off" by the city, the worship reforms reflected that reality. Churches in Geneva were stripped of all artwork, of all stained glass, all color. The only ornamentation allowed was a copy of the Ten Commandments. The only music allowed was the unaccompanied singing of psalms. All liturgical movements and gestures were forbidden. The various Anabaptist groups would go even further, being clergy-less gatherings of the faithful in homes, barns or other spaces, at which communion, when practiced, would be administered by the group, to the group. The expounding of Scripture could be done by anyone, and infant baptism—among other things—was rejected, as was music other than the singing of hymns. Perhaps most curious is the history of the Anabaptist John Beukels of Leiden (d. 1536). The illegitimate son of a Dutch mayor, a tailor by trade and part-time actor, he succeeded at the age of 25 in becoming the so-called "King of Münster," the "awakened David" (Cf. Jer. 23:2-6), even king over "New Israel"—the entire world—establishing a short-lived polygamous theocracy in that city, emphasizing the imminent coming of the end of the world. Unlike other Anabaptists, who were separatists, in Münster the church, state and society and community became a single entity. The towers of the many churches of Münster were torn down and worship was held in the town square. The Lord's Supper was administered there by John and his "queen" Divara of Haarlem (1511-1535) after a communal "agape" feast—a messianic banquet.

One last development within the history of the church, which is informative for how Christians worship today, is the Azuza Street revival of 1906. It is name after the street in Los Angeles, where the Pentecostal preacher William J. Seymour (1870-1922) began a series of meetings in a rickety wooden building which quickly transitioned into a Charismatic phenomenon that would continue until roughly 1915. The revival was given world-wide press coverage with people travelling from all over the globe to experience what went on 24 hours a day. One witness described worship there as sporadic singing "a cappella or occasionally in tongues" followed by "periods of extended

silence;" there would be those "slain in the Spirit," testimonies would be given, prayers for tongues prayed, preaching brake out spontaneously—as would altar calls—while "many people would continually shout throughout the meetings."[12] Although not well-known outside of the Pentecostal community, the Azuza Street revival is commonly accepted as the beginning of the worldwide Pentecostal movement.

How Christians worship today continues to be defined by all of these historical developments within the church. Roman Catholics, for example, hearkening back to the time of the church's ascendency within the world during the time of the emperor Constantine, continue to use intricate and extensive liturgies, set within meticulous court ritual, replete with costly vestments, processionals and even thrones. Worship takes place, especially where the seat of a bishop is located, in massive cathedrals that rival in size and grandeur of buildings erected by the state. Probably no better example of this practice can be found—apart from the Vatican in Rome—than in St. Paul Minnesota, where the capitol building, placed upon a high hill in the middle of the city, and finished in 1905, is challenged by the cathedral of St. Paul, on an opposing, somewhat higher hill, begun in 1906. The image of the two buildings is striking for anyone who visits the city: The church in its authority ultimately is higher than that of the state. Similarly the *Hagia Sophia*, the largest church building in the world for over 1000 years, towered over the skyline of Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey) as the focal point of the Byzantine Empire, hosting massive worship services of extensive liturgies. Here also the iconic Saint Basil's Cathedral on Red Square in Moscow could be noted—both its size and location. When Henry VIII (141-1547) took over the Roman Catholic church in England, "nationalizing" it, and causing himself to be named its head, he gutted the worship service of Roman Catholic theology, replacing it with Calvinism, but retained the ritual, due his person, as the head of both the state and the church. Thus the extensive liturgies and rituals there and commensurate architecture—and the continued interest today among Anglicans (Episcopalians) in liturgical worship.

The austerity of Calvin's reforms of worship in Geneva are continued in the worship of Presbyterian and Methodist churches. Instrumental usic—organ playing and other—has long been a part of the worship which nonetheless, usually takes place in Spartan-like churches of white or off-white interiors with no stained glass. Prayers are said, hymns are sung, a sermon preached by a minister, and the sacraments administered—according to Calvin's understood them. But the location of the buildings themselves can be of interest, reflecting somewhat, Calvin's, Geneva. Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon is to be found in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where the town square is dominated

[12]Http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azusa_Street_Revival.

by two buildings: City hall and next to it a massive Presbyterian church. But throughout the southern United States, in states like Arkansas and Georgia, a common occurrence is a small town, with just one church, a Baptist church of Calvinist influence, right in the middle of town. In the "north," a more common experience is of a Baptist church of Armenian influence, which is in an out of the way location, and built to look, literally, like a large house. There music is also now found, as well as pastors, but a very simple order of service, from which has been removed all elements which smack of any authority. Pastors sit with the congregation, wearing no vestments or anything designating an office of some sort, altar calls are common, but so is "group communion", that is, everyone communing everyone else. Most modern mega-churches copy this model, using the same type of worship, but in a massive building, which does not look like a church, but does recreate within its walls the intimate setting of a house. This is done by the usage of a stage which juts out into the seating, and so surrounded by seating on three sides, so that not only can the entire body of the one on the stage be seen in three dimensions, but also so that those who are watching can also see each other. It was the revivalist Charles Finney (1792-1875) who stumbled on this concept of church architecture when he obtained a theater in a rundown section of New York City in 1831 to use for a church. The structure was so effective for his purposes, and the purposes of Baptist theology in general, that it has become the staple of such structures to this day. Of course, modern Pentecostal worship remains much like that of the Azuza Street revival, occurring in any given space. One example of note is that of the so-called "Toronto Blessing" that took place in the 1990s at a public school being used by a Pentecostal group near the airport. Music is a key element of such worship, as the global popularity of the praise-band Hillsong United, from the Pentecostal megachurch in Sydney, Australia, Hillsong, is well documented, being the source of close to 25 percent of all popular contemporary Christian music today.

So how do Christian's worship? Some with the trapping of court rituals symbolizing the authority of the church over the kingdoms of the world. Others without such trappings, but still with the emphasis that the church should structure society in some way. Others worship in a format that suggests a complete rejection of both the authority of the world, and that of any official church. And still others, seeking some sort of direct experience of specifically the Holy Spirit, gather together, and with the help of a popular song, see what happens.

H. Sonntag

> *In the age of the New Testament, the gospel has been instituted by Christ in the specific forms, rites, and ceremonies of the NT's specific ceremonial law, namely, the means of grace: the word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. The pastoral office has been established by Christ to administer the gospel in these forms also in the public worship service. Administering and partaking of the gospel according to these forms are acts of love which, when proceeding from genuine faith in the gospel, are also acts of worship pleasing to God. When considered as God's saving work for us, the means of grace take on a "sacramental" meaning. When considered as our serving actions for God and neighbor, the means of grace take on a "sacrificial" meaning. Due to the alone-saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, the only legitimate function for sacrifice in the Christian worship service is to express the Christians' praise and thanksgiving for their being saved by Christ.*[13]

The gospel in the spoken word is almost as old as the world. The proto-evangel is that verse in Gen. 3:15 that speaks about the divine-human Seed of the woman who crushes the head of the devil. This gospel we encounter in many and various forms in the bible. Critical for us today are only those forms to which Christ himself has directed us by instituting them for our use until he returns in glory – the word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Yet Christ has also directed us to the pastoral office, not as a co-equal means of grace or as something that first gives "real power" to the other means of grace, but as that office instituted specifically for the *public* administration of the word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, as we witness it also in the Christian worship service.

Letting Christ direct us to these forms of the gospel puts us in the right time and age. These means in their specific form with their specific rites and ceremonies ensure that our service doesn't have an OT flavor or a heavenly flavor, but give that service its decidedly contemporary form.

As was stated above, the heart's invisible faith that believes and thereby receives what God gives by the means of grace is the highest worship because it takes hold of what uniquely makes the one true God who he is, a gracious Giver. In other words, faith, created and sustained by the Spirit in the gospel as it is, can be considered in two ways: as the

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[13] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 99 f.

passive act of receiving the full salvation earned by Christ alone on the cross (justification); and as the active act of giving to God alone the glory that is due his name (sanctification). Considered as our (passive / active) *act*, faith itself is also a form of love, the fulfillment of the First Commandment.

What is true of faith is, in a way, also true of our other receptive acts in worship: Hearing is a passive act of letting yourself be told what God has to tell you in law and gospel. We could call this passivity hearing's "faith" aspect. Yet as such, it is also an active act that glorifies God in that it listens to what God wants us to listen to. We could call this activity hearing's "love" aspect. Being baptized and receiving Christ's body and blood with our mouths work in the same way: by receiving passively God's gifts in a bodily form, they also actively give to God glory by acting according to his command and institution.

In other words, these simple acts we all perform many times in the worship service are acts where we not only passively receive goods from God. They also glorify and worship God as such, without anybody needing to say or do *anything else*.

We can say more yet: We can look at the means of grace from God's perspective – he gives, we receive. We can, and should, also look at them from the pastor's perspective. It's true, the pastor, as Christian, also receives these saving gifts. Yet as pastor, acting in the stead and by the command of our Lord, Jesus Christ, he also gives. In other words, the pastor worships God not only by faithfully receiving, but also by faithfully administering the means of grace – especially by preaching the gospel – by which faith in Christ is created and sustained, the highest worship of God. This is why the Lutheran Confessions call the preaching of the gospel "the chief worship of God," Ap. XV, 42.

Taking this together, the means of grace have a dual aspect: They function in a "sacramental" way (God's saving gifts to us) and in a "sacrificial" way (our praising gifts to God). Evidently, since we are saved by faith in the one bloody sacrifice of the Redeemer, our sacrifices to God are not there to complete, or compete with, this vicarious sacrifice of the cross. All they can do is to thank and praise God for Christ's suffering and death in our place.

It is precisely this duality that sets the Lutheran Church apart from other Christian denominations. Let's first look to Rome real quick: The main thing about the sacraments is that they bestow God's grace on those who receive them worthily. Yet this grace is not God's saving grace, that is, God's favor and forgiveness on the account of Christ. This

grace is an infused grace, a good quality and power poured into man for the sake of Christ, which enables him to do his part in the process of salvation.

One element of this part of grace-powered man is to offer up the sacrifice of the mass for the living and the dead by means of the ministrations of the properly consecrated priest. No need to go into all the details here. For our purposes it suffices to say that this sacrifice is the ultimate good work of love a member of the Roman Church can possibly perform. Within the Catholic system of confession and absolution, it, as a virtuous act, serves to blot out our sins after baptism. In other words, it is a required work of satisfaction and in this way complements Christ's sacrifice on Golgotha.

As an aside, a key difference here between Catholics and Lutherans – already made by Luther and the Lutheran Confessions – is this: While the latter understand *their acts of participation* in this sacrament (as well as the other means of grace) as pastors and Christians as "sacrificial" offerings in praise and thanksgiving of God, the former understand *the sacrament of the altar itself* as a sacrifice, to be offered to God by the priest to make satisfaction for sins.

On the Reformed side of the house, it looks as if simply two offensive aspects of the Catholic understanding were removed: the sacrifice of the mass as atonement and as a created "channel" of grace. As seen above, the Spirit does not need any created vessels. He pours grace directly into the hearts of the elect. What remains are the sacraments (especially the Lord's Supper) as sacrifices of thanksgiving – as "Eucharist" – and as external marks and badge of the Christian Church. We don't receive anything from God the Redeemer in the sacraments. We only give thanks to him by partaking of them.

What does this mean for worship services in particular? It's like the old heathen religions have come back into the Christian church: men worship the one true God by giving things to him, not first and foremost by receiving things from him. What God meant as a dialogue, a two-way street of communication and exchange between him and us – he gives and receives; we receive and give – here has degenerated to a one-way street from us to God, where it really doesn't matter whether our acts of giving are said to be empowered by God's grace or not. It's the giving alone that's here seen as worship, not already the receiving itself.

This has important ramifications for how the worship service as a whole is understood outside of Lutheranism – not primarily from the gospel as God's work for the people, but from the law as the people's

work for God. Lest we equate "law" with "bad," however, let's be careful here: Some in our circles, taking faith as the highest worship of God as their point of departure, have a hard time with anything that we might offer to God during worship or otherwise because everything that we offer to God is right away perceived as trying to buy God's favor by good works ("law = bad").

Now it's true, the Confessions take a strong stance against offering sacrifices to God to merit his favor, especially when those sacrifices haven't even been commanded by God – such as the sacrifice of the mass. Yet let's be clear here: the sacrifices that are frequently rejected are those self-chosen ones and those offered to God to merit forgiveness. That's it. The sacrifices that are offered in accordance with God's word by those who believe in Christ's all-availing sacrifice for them are explicitly praised as sacrifices of thanksgiving that are well pleasing to God in heaven, because they're offered to God by faith in Christ. They are the necessary fruit of our highest worship – and they include, first and foremost, the preaching and hearing of the gospel as well as the administering and receiving of baptism and the Lord's Supper. They should not be played off against the highest worship. "Highest" does not mean "only." "Law" does not mean "bad."

So, then, how do Christians worship? By faith and love, by receiving and by giving – beginning with faith itself and the faithful use of the means of grace in the worship service by pastor and people. This is how Christians worship and glorify their God and Redeemer in faith and love. This pattern, established by the very means of grace instituted by Christ himself, is a basic pattern of Christian worship and life.

Questions

1.3. Does Christian Worship Have a Unique Character?

P. Strawn

What ultimately is the character of Christian worship? Joy? Awe? Fear? Terror? Enlightenment? Or Ecstasy? And what of reverence? For clarity's sake a definition of worship should be given, and Wikipedia does not disappoint with that which is both informative and succinct:

> "Worship is an act of religious devotion usually directed towards a deity. The word is derived from the Old English *weorþscipe*, meaning worship, honour shown to an object, which has been etymologised as "worthiness or worth-ship"—to give, at its simplest, worth to something. Worship asserts the reality of its object and defines its meaning by reference to it."[14]

Still, the Scriptures do not present worship so-understood as having some sort of monolithic character, of those worshiping doing so with exactly the same attitude or comprehension. Often when the term "worship" (in Hebrew: Barak, Halal, Shachah, Tehillah, Todah, Yadah, Zamar; in Greek: προσκυνέω (pros-kü-ne'-ō); λατρεύω (lä-tryü'-ō); or σέβω (se'-bō)) is used, nothing at all is said about the attitude of the one worshiping, but simply that worship took place. Here we can note Abraham, when he was preparing to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:5), the children of Israel when they saw the pillar of cloud at the tent of meeting (Ex. 33:10), or the prohibition of the worship of false gods (Deut. 8:19). In fact, the most common usage of terms in Hebrew or

[14] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worship.

Greek by far which are translated as "worship" note simply, that worship took place, with no further elaboration as to how, are with what attitude or emotion. Yet not unfrequently the qualifier "bow the head" or "bow down" is used in conjunction with the term for worship most famously in Psalm 95:6: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" Here mention can be made of Abraham's servant (Gen. 24:26; 48), the children of Israel in Egypt (Ex. 4:31; 12:27), Moses (Ex. 34:8), the children of Israel at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron. 7:3) and at their return from captivity in Babylon (Neh. 8:6). Such worship is also described as being accompanied by sacrifice (Ex. 32:8), service (Deut. 8:19), thanksgiving (2 Chron. 7:3); singing, trumpet playing and burnt offerings (2 Chron. 29:28); the singing of psalms (2 Chron. 29:30); confession (Neh. 9:3); the ascription of the Lord's glory (Ps. 29:2); the singing of praises (Ps. 66:4); the glorification of the name of the Lord (Ps. 86:9); trembling (Ps. 96:9); with sacrifice and offering (Is. 19:21); and with fasting and prayer (Lk. 2:37). Expanding the question of the character of worship to encompass the word 'praise' and more information is garnered, but perhaps more clarity is not achieved. In its simplest form the word means "to say good things or express approval of someone or something." For example, having been rescued from the pharaoh's army, Moses and the children of Israel "praise" God (Ex. 15:2). David declared that the Lord is "worthy to be praised" (2 Sam. 22:4), and those praises could also be sung (2 Sam. 22:50). When he caused the ark of the covenant to be brought to Jerusalem, David also declared that the Lord was "greatly to be praised" that is the Lord's "wondrous works" were to be told (1 Chron. 16:9), and yet also, "he [was] to be feared above all gods" (1 Chron. 16:25). So David appointed certain Levites "to invoke, to thank, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel" (1 Chron. 16:4). Harps and lyres were to be played, cymbals sounded, and trumpets blown by Asaph and his assistants (1 Chron. 16:4-7). Thus the psalms of David and Asaph are full of such invocations, thanksgivings and praise. When Nehemiah would later reestablish such praise in the second temple built after the Babylonian captivity, it would thus be according to "the commands of David" (Neh. 12:24, 46). Yet there was a larger context for such praise. The actions, the words of man, were not understood to be that which alone could praise the Lord, but also the creation itself, the heavens, and earth, the seas, and all that is within the seas (Ps. 69:34), mountains (Ps. 89:12), sun, moon, and stars (Ps. 148:3). The first fruit of a new tree could be described as a "praise" offering (Lev. 19:24). So perhaps more helpful is the concept of rejoicing, of feeling of happiness or joy, or expressing great joy. The father-in-law of Moses rejoiced when the Israelites were saved from the Egyptians (Ex. 18:9). During the Festival of Tabernacles, the children of Israel were to rejoice before the Lord for seven days (Lev. 23:40). The tabernacle and then temple were the specific place[s]

where the children of Israel were to rejoice (Deut. 12:18). So Psalm 32:11: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" In short then, if there were to be a character of worship, it was to be one of happiness, of rejoicing—but a happiness and rejoicing of a profound nature. So the prophet Habakkuk: "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no heard in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation (3:17)." And in general, before the destruction which was to befall Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians, as such rejoicing in worship took place, offerings for sin were continually being made: Burnt offerings (Lev. 1) for sin; meal offerings for thanksgiving (Lev. 2); peace offerings for fellowship (Lev. 3)—encompassing thank offerings, vow offerings, and freewill offerings (cf. Lev. 22:18-30)—sin offerings for purification (Lev. 4) and guilt offerings (Lev. 5-6:7). Therewith we are reminded that worship, the general character of which was that of rejoicing, encompassed much more than just praise, but prayer, thanksgiving, repentance and humility. And it would take place in a cycle of special worship days: The weekly Sabbath, and the annual Passover on 14 Nisan (Ex. 12), Pentecost on 6 Sivan (Deut. 16:9-12), Day of Atonement on 10 Tishri (Lev. 16), and Feast of Tabernacles on 15-12 Tishri (Neh. 8). Also of note were rites such as purification (Lev. 12) and circumcision (Gen. 17:10-23).

At the incarnation of the Son of God, and thus the advent of the Christ, the Messiah of the children of Israel, the question of the character of worship shifts from that around the tabernacle and then the temple in which God initially dwelt, to that of God Himself dwelling among man *as man*. Mary acknowledges the momentousness of this development asserting "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk. 1:46-47); Zechariah, his mouth once again opened said "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people" (Lk. 1:68). The announcement to the shepherds by the angel was of "good news of great joy for all people" (Lk. 2:10) and the message of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest" (Lk. 2:14). Wise men appeared from the east to worship Him (Mt. 2:2). The great temptation of the incarnate Christ would be to worship the prince of this world, Satan (Lk. 4:6-8). The disciples of Jesus would, upon witnessing miracles, worship Him, and proclaim Him to be the Son of God (Mt. 14:33). The result of raising the widow's son from the dead was the glorifying of God, and fear (Lk. 7:16). Christ's own pronouncements concerning worship was that what was taking place in the temple—His Father's house (Lk. 2:49) and a house of prayer (Mt. 21:13)—was of no use, for it had become dominated by "doctrines of men" (Mk. 7:7) and coincidentally, had become a "den of robbers" (Mt. 21:13). With the incarnation, God dwelling with man in Christ—instead

of the temple in Jerusalem—worship would no longer be a matter of specific location but in "spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23). Indeed, such worship *must* be in "spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). The night He was betrayed Christ instituted the New Testament saying "do this in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19). After His resurrection, that worship would include a taking hold of His feet (Mt. 28:9), and also "great joy" (Lk. 24:51). Upon His resurrection He would also charge the disciples with "teaching all nations" and baptizing "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19) as well as forgiving sins (Jn. 20:22).

The Holy Spirit having been poured out upon them—apart from worship! (Cf. Acts 2:1)—the disciples of Jesus did just that: They preached, taught, baptized, observed the Lord's Supper and forgave sins. Worship in the temple soon became not an option for those in Jerusalem, and was never an option for those living outside of Jerusalem. Christian worship would therefore, as noted, take place in households. Its character in the form that it took seems to be one of order, peace, love and joy, expressed in readings from the Old Testament and the Apostles, prayer, singing, preaching, the Lord's Supper, and baptisms. These would be under the auspices of bishops, pastors (Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:2), elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5 ff.). "Spiritual worship" would be the "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5) of the body of the Christian being "holy and acceptable to God" both in and outside of worship. Abuse of worship would occur (Cf. Cor. 11-14). Even, perhaps, a turn toward sensuality, as is noted in Jude (4). There talk is found of the following of dreams (8), defiling of the flesh (8), the rejecting of authority (8) and even rejection of the prophets and apostles (8), a blasphemy of "all they do not understand" (10). So in short, the character of early Christian worship in Apostolic times was not that of the temple in Jerusalem, but that of small peaceful gatherings which nonetheless, would face very fundamental problems of fallen human nature.

Significant is the fact that Christian worship did not occur within a vacuum. Jews who became Christians were familiar with the temple in Jerusalem—even if they had never been there!—and Jewish males would understand worship in view of the local synagogue (Cf. Acts 13:15)—a phenomenon which developed after the close of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament. Pagans would be familiar with the temple worship of their local deities. Thus oxen are brought by the priest of Zeus to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas at Lystra after Paul had healed a man crippled from birth (Acts 14:13). A distinction would therefore be drawn between the worship of the pagan temples, and Christian worship (1 Cor. 8; 10:14 ff.). Worship in the temple in Jerusalem would end with its destruction in A.D. 70. Music would be a part of Christian worship but musical instruments would not be. Instrumental music was believed to have an inherent power and the

use of musical instruments in pagan temple worship, theater and the circus was common. It was not until the 7th century, when, for all intents and purposes, there were no more pagan temples and worship, that musical instruments were introduced into Christian worship with the usage of the pipe organ. It was used tentatively until the 15th century, as an assistance to chant, psalm and hymn singing in unison. To this day, many Christian churches—Eastern Orthodox, Conservative Presbyterian and Baptist (Mennonites, Amish)—refrain from using instruments in worship services altogether. Thus the character of worship, was not initially defined by instrumental music. With the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire in the early part of the 4th century, and state support, the increased authority of bishops, the increased size of church structures in the major cities, the character of worship might be described as one of awe and reverence there. The bishop, after all, had come to be granted real earthly power and behind his churchly authority, was that of the state. Or, conversely, the bishop could be understood to represent the real authority within the world—the church—which upheld the state. Today such a worship service can still be witnessed in various places around the world. Of course the worship in small communities, and at monasteries would be less so. The traumatic 13th century would witness the rise of mysticism, of somehow through prayer and contemplation causing one's self to enter into the presence of God. There the character, the goal of worship, would be that of revelation and wonder. With the reform of worship in the 16th century, the awe and reverence for the authority of the church and the state would be greatly curtailed in Christian worship. In Calvin's Vienna and Zwingli's Zurich especially such was replaced by a reverence for God in general, who does not necessarily reveal Himself through the existence of the state, nor the offices of the church, but simply exists in His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Utmost then would be humble obedience to God's commands. And whatever was not commanded by God when it comes to worship, was forbidden. Thus the observation of baptism and the Lord's Supper in those cities were ordinances to be obeyed, not sacramental gifts to be received. Pentecostal worship of the Azuza-Street type has become known for its often music-induced ecstasy that continues in unbridled expression. A more mild form would be the Armenian Baptist mega-churches with their roots in the so-called Second Great Revival of the early 19th century. In both cases, music played a major roll in creating a "worshipful" environment of praise and thanksgiving in which the evangelist could then preach effectively. Obviously, the character of worship in any given church is dictated by its theology.

> *The forms, rites, and ceremonies of the gospel have a specific God-given character in that they are not only unchanging but also humble and simple in nature. For they offer God's almighty grace and power under the simple, humble, weak forms of human words, water, as well as bread and wine. When considered by the old Adam without God's word, this humility and weakness is despised as utter foolishness. When considered by the new man according to God's word, this simplicity and weakness is recognized as God's wisdom and power. The pastoral office shares in this humble form in that it faithfully and simply proclaims the word of the cross in its divinely instituted forms, the means of grace.*[15]

Jesus Christ did not only institute the gospel in its specific, unchanging NT-era forms as word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. He also gave this form a certain character. Not glorious, not exuberant, not fancy, not "conspicuously religious," not appealing to a variety of senses or emotions – none of these. He gave the NT-era forms of the gospel a very simple and very humble character.

Simple words are spoken: "Your sins are forgiven." And it is so – by virtue of Christ's institution. Simple words are connected with simple visible, every-day elements, with water, bread, and wine: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He who believes and is baptized will be saved." And it is so – by virtue of Christ's institution. "Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Take, drink. This is my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." And it is so – by virtue of Christ's institution.

As we know, just from the history of the means of grace *within the church itself* – this earthy simplicity is perceived by a vast majority of Christians as scandalous and foolish. There are the fast growing churches that are growing on the anti-creational heritage of Zwingli and Calvin, ranging from Congregationalists and Presbyterians to "flaming" Pentecostals. They all uphold Zwingli's assertion that the Spirit needs no created vehicle, that it is, in fact, "below" the Spirit as uncreated God to use created stuff to accomplish his saving purposes.

Yet, also those churches we typically describe as having "sacraments" as God's tools in this world – we typically feel some affinity to them, especially when confronted by massive amounts of folks getting their marching orders from Zurich or Geneva. But, really, what do we see

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[15] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 100.

there? Some type of operation by God through these means, even some sort of "presence" of Christ in these means is affirmed. However, this presence is no longer affirmed as a *gospel* presence, but only, in the case of the Lord's Supper, as something to heighten the value of our sacrifice to God. This turns the whole purpose of the means of grace on its head.

Full pardon of all sins, even salvation itself – the near-total agreement *in Christendom* seems to be that these precious gifts must not be contaminated by being issued by God through such humble means of grace. It can't be that easy. It can't be that simple. It can't be that humble. After all, then everybody could get saved!

Apparently not everybody will get saved – not those who maintain: salvation needs to be a more glorious, less mundane, more complicated process that involves feelings of rapture, hard labor, or something similar on man's part – something that all world religions could identify as "religious" or having to do with God.

This "something" would be something the old Adam, religious as he is in the ways of the law, could identify as such. The history of Christian worship can also be described as the attempt to cover up, make palatable to natural man the very gospel Christ established in an embarrassingly simple, "unreligious" way.

The bible never said the gospel would be, or should be, recognizable to natural man without the Spirit. It does say that the gospel in the humble forms in which Christ willed and instituted it would be foolishness to those without the Holy Spirit (cf. AE 5: 42-43; 36:336-337; 40:197, 258-259), that it would be known as gospel only by the Spirit working through that very gospel – that only the new man would know: While the external form is humble, simple, mundane, here the almighty, living God himself is at work, rescuing sinners from the depth of hell.[16]

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[16] In one his last sermons, on Rom. 12:3, Luther stated about a month before his death (AE 51:376-377): "Therefore, see to it that you hold reason in check and do not follow her beautiful cogitations. Throw dirt in her face and make her ugly. Don't you remember the mystery of the holy Trinity and the blood of Jesus Christ with which you have been washed of your sins? Again, concerning the sacrament, the fanatical antisacramentalists say, 'What's the use of bread and wine? How can God the Almighty give his body in bread?' I wish they had to eat their own dirt. They are so smart that nobody can fool them. If you had one in a mortar and crushed him with seven pestles his foolishness still would not depart from him. *Reason is and should be drowned in baptism, and this foolish wisdom will not harm you, if you hear the beloved Son of God saying, 'Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this bread which is administered to you, I say, is my body.' If I hear and accept this, then I trample reason and its wisdom under foot and say, 'You cursed whore, shut up! Are you trying to seduce me into committing fornication*

God's strength is hidden under, and communicated to, weak external forms so that those who only know the ways of the world would not find it. What's more, when we look at the men who held the apostolic office – these were not famous and renowned world leaders, members of the in-crowd at their time, culturally savvy all around. These men were outcasts: Jewish fishermen in the Roman Empire – think about that! They certainly could not possibly be the emissaries of someone claiming to be the God of all peoples. Sure seemed like a losing proposition. And in a sense it was, considering the amount of beating just Paul took for the gospel of the crucified.

Yet in another sense, it wasn't, because those whom God had chosen in Christ to be saved by the gospel – they all were saved in this most humble, simple, and unreligious way. By the work of the Spirit, they realized: these are the very means of salvation of the living God, by which he acts and saves in this fallen world that is so proud of its intellectual and religious accomplishments.

This pride first needs to break or, rather, be broken. This is the work of the law. And in a way, the humble form of the means of grace itself can function as law for those who are still proud of their human knowledge and wisdom concerning God. Yet God clearly also has other ways of driving his law home to sinners so that they would be humbled, made ready for his humble gospel and its foolish messengers.

As we know, properly understood, the gospel is not for everyone. The gospel is to be preached only to those who've been humbled by the law, not to the proud sinner, but the humble sinner. Yet this humble sinner needs a humble gospel, spoken gently by a humble man. A glorious, flashy gospel he might confuse with the law. Think of what

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with the devil?' That's the way reason is purged and made free through the Word of the Son of God.

So let us deal with the fanatics as the prophets dealt with the spiritual harlots, the idolaters, the wiseacres, who want to do things better than God does. We should say to them, 'I have a Bridegroom, I will listen to him. Your wisdom is utter foolishness. I destroy your wisdom and trample it under foot.' This struggle will go on till the last day. This is what Paul [in Rom. 12:3] wants; we are to quench not only the low desires but also the high desires, reason and its high wisdom. When whoredom invades you, strike it dead, but do this far more when spiritual whoredom tempts you. *Nothing pleases a man so much as self-love, when he has a passion for his own wisdom. The cupidity of a greedy man is as nothing compared with a man's hearty pleasure in his own ideas. He then brings these fine ideas into the Scriptures, and this is devilishness pure and simple. This sin is forgiven, but when it reigns in one's nature, not yet fully purged, then assuredly the true doctrine is soon lost*, however willingly one preaches and willingly one listens. Then Christ is gone. Then they fall down before the devil on the mountain and worship him (Matt. 4 [:8–10])."

accompanied the revelation of the law on Mt. Sinai: Lightning, clouds, thunder, a voice that was earth-shattering; sinners not able to bear it after the first few words. Think of the different scene when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper: peace, quiet, the very Son of God speaking simple words of true comfort face to face to sinners as to his friends, even serving and cleansing them as a slave, giving them his own body and his own blood to eat and to drink under simple bread and wine.

Advocates of contemporary worship in particular and of low-church worship forms in general make much of the "simplicity" of their forms of worship and their songs and hymns. And simplicity is equated with accessibility for the average Joe: You don't need a doctorate in liturgics to participate in our worship. Come as you are! Sing right along. For God loves you as you are. And we love you too. The popular music, style, clothing, demeanor, buildings, you name it – they all proclaim this gospel of accessibility loud and clear.[17]

The thing to do for Lutherans, I think, is not to blink at this important point. Let's not talk here about the long and complex traditions of "the historic liturgy;" let's not talk here about high culture as the only way to express high theology. Let's make this discussion about simplicity. But let's make it about the simplicity of the gospel as Christ instituted it in the means of grace, not about how we conceive of it in our own minds.

In other words, there are basically two kinds of simplicity: There's the simplicity of the world, as represented in contemporary worship. It seeks to express the access to God we have through Jesus Christ by forms that are considered generally accessible and even attractive. To borrow a term from contemporary German theologian, Oswald Bayer, we could call this a "natural theology of the cross."[18]

What I mean by this expression is that here one feature of the biblical theology of the cross, the simplicity in which Christ gave the gospel, is transformed into a reasonable principle and thereby disconnected from Christ and his concrete institutions, so that this simplicity "works" *without him and his Spirit.*

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[17] See again Dan Wilt, as quoted in the first chapter (*Perspectives on Christian Worship*, 188): "Contemporary worship *music* is saying in hundreds of ways, 'God is near, He loves you, and He knows you.'"

[18] Cf. O. Bayer, *Gott als Autor: Zu einer poietologischen Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 258-259. See also Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, ed. and tr. J. Silcock and M. Mattes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 110, 191-192.

For the actual means of grace instituted by Christ, while certainly very simple, are by no means attractive or accessible to the reasonable person. In fact, they're unattractive, totally inaccessible, as was stated, to those who do not have the Holy Spirit – regardless of when and where they live.

To avoid creating natural theologies of the cross, we must exclusively stick to Christ's institutions in their specificity to communicate access to God. We must not try to establish new means of grace based on those institutions to make God more accessible than Christ made him. In other words, the means of grace must not become mere figures of God's action in the world, based on which we, having "figured out" the proper point of comparison (*tertium comparationis*), then create other, similar ways in which God acts today, perhaps in an especially powerful way. This is what the medieval church did and what the Reformer rejected.

Given that already the distributing and receiving of these simple, humble means of grace in faith represents the core acts of Christian worship, here we then have the unique external character of Christian worship. The peculiar simplicity it has by Christ's institution sets it apart from all religious worship in the world, no matter how simple or complex it might be.

Questions

II What Does Christian Worship Have to do With Christ?

2.1. How is Christian Worship Like Christ?

P. Strawn

A common symbol for the Christian church in Egypt is Joseph leading a donkey carrying Mary and the baby Jesus. This does not make much sense to Christians outside of Egypt until Matt. 1:14-15 is considered: "And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod." Thus what most Christians take to be an aside in the Christmas account is definitive for those now living it Muslim controlled Egypt: Jesus as a baby visited their country. How this is represented in the worship of Egyptian Christians has not been ascertained. It does raise the question, however, as to how a specific understanding of Christ, or one specific aspect of Christ, can come to define more narrowly Christian worship.

There would be many such aspects of Christ from which to choose. The Gospel of John, for example, begins "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (1:1) In Greek the term translated as "Word" is λόγος, by that time a word already in common use in Stoic philosophy. John continues: "He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him, was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1:2-4). Christ being identified as that λόγος, it would be easy then to ask the question: "How is Christ the life of men?

The animating force of creation? That through which things are created?" In stark contrast is the assertion of fact with which the Gospel of Matthew begins: Jesus Christ is David's son, that is, a descendant of David (1:1), and therefore legitimately the heir of David's throne and consequently the Anointed One, the Messiah, the "King of the Jews" (2:2), even God Himself (1:23). Here is not the question of the Giver of life, but of an earthly Messianic kingdom, the "kingdom of heaven" (4:17). The gospel of Mark would emphasize the fact that Jesus is the Son of God (Mk. 1:1) who has authority even over demons (1:27) and religious observance itself (2:23 ff.). The Gospel of Luke highlights the reappearance of the apocalyptic angel Gabriel who appeared to the prophet Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 8:16; 9:21), his visits to Zechariah (Lk. 1:5-23) and Mary being documented (1:26-38), as well as the appearance of the angel chorus at Christ's birth (2:8-14). With the appearance of Gabriel the End Times have begun and the meaning of birth of a child whose Father was God and mother Mary is similar to that of Matthew: A messianic kingdom upon the throne of which would sit Jesus forever (1:32). Hebrews brings all of these themes together: Christ was more than an inspired man, or even an angel (1:4), but the very Son of the God of the children of Israel through Whom God spoke to mankind: "In many and various ways God spoke to His people of old by the prophets; but now in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son" (Hebr. 1:1). It is through the Son that the world was created (1:2). Having "made purification for sins," He is now seated at God's right hand (1:4). Thus He is a greater prophet than Moses (3:1 ff.), the great high priest (4:14), after the order of Melchizedek (7:11 ff.), but also the once-and-for-all-time sacrifice (10:1 ff.), the Founder and Perfecter of the Christian faith (12:1 ff.). The One who will come to judge the living and the dead is described not just in the gospels, but in the Revelation to John. There the resurrected and ascended Jesus is standing amidst seven lampstands (1:12), clothed in a long robe, and golden sash (1:13). As Scripture relates: "The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edge sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength" (1:14-16). Later on in the revelation Jesus appears on a throne surrounded by a rainbow (4:3), and then on a white horse, making war and judging in righteousness (19:11-12). He is the "alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end,"(22:13) as well as "the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star" (22:16).

When searching for aspects of Jesus Christ that inform Christian worship, the actual identity of Christ is supplemented, perhaps even supplanted by his actions, what Christ actually did. Here we can think of the virgin birth in a stable in Bethlehem (Lk. 2), the angel choir, the

shepherds, and later, the wise men (Mt. 2:1-12). Also His baptism (Mt 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11;) around the age of 30 (Lk. 3:23), his 40 days in the wilderness (Mk. 1:13) and subsequent temptation by the devil (Mt. 4:1-11); the calling of common men to be his disciples (Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20); his naming of apostles (Mk. 3:17-19); his teaching in the synagogues and temple (Mk. 6:2, et al.; Mt. 21:23 et al.;); the casting out of demons (Mt. 5:1-20 et al.); the healing of diseases (Lk. 5:17 ff. et al.); the granting of similar authority to his disciples (Mt. 10:8; Lk. 9:1-2); the confrontation of earthly authority (John 6:32 ff. et al.); the controlling of nature (Lk. 8:22 ff. et al); his complete grasp of the Law and the Prophets (Mt. 5-7 et al.); his teaching authority in general (Mt. 22:46); great wisdom and knowledge (Lk. 4:22; John 7:46 et al); his ability to know the hearts and minds of others (Mt. 9:4; John 2:24-25; et al.); the transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36); the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Luke 22:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25); his arrest by temple authorities, suffering, death and resurrection (Mt. 26:47-28:15; Mk. 14:43-16:13; Lk. 22:47-24:43; John 18:1-20-29); the sending out of his disciples to teach and baptize (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:45-49; John 20:21); the authority to forgive sins and the granting of that authority to others (John 20:22-23); his ascension into heaven (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11); the sending of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; John 16:7-14). And of course there are the names, descriptors, which Christ uses of himself: the Door (John 10:7), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11,14), the Light of the World (John 8:12), etc.

Although the resurrection of Christ from the dead would be proclaimed by the apostles as that which specifically signified that he was in fact the Messiah (Acts 2:31-32) and he was to judge all nations on the Last Day (Acts 17:31), the crucifixion of Christ, the foolishness (1 Cor. 1:25) of the cross, would be the key aspect of his life that would be the content of the gospel: "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23) Paul would write the Corinthians, as well as "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup of the Lord's Supper was also a proclamation specifically of the Lord's death until he would return (1 Cor. 1:27). Thus the crucifixion of Christ, and the sharing of its benefits in the Lord's Supper would for the Jews who had become Christians, supplant the Passover lamb sacrificed in the temple and memorialized in the Passover meal. For the Greeks, the proclamation of the crucifixion of Christ and an attendant meal would hearken back to sacrifices in pagan temple, and the consumption of the food offered there (1 Cor. 10:14-22). Thus the simple, profound point: Christian worship proclaimed the death of Christ and included the observation of the Lord's Supper. So Christ was, as John the Baptist had first proclaimed: "The lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), the same Lamb that the apostle John would behold in

Revelation (Rev. 14:1) even as a lamp lighting the New Jerusalem (21:22).

Already in Apostolic times, however, rejection or modification of Scriptures, of the teachings of the Apostles, would most definitely changed worship. The basic idea: Christ was not the incarnation of God, or at least, not the final revelation of God. In the first instance, Greek-speaking Christians of Jewish origin imported ideas of the philosopher Plato (428-323 B.C.) and so began to teach a radical separation between heaven and earth that even Christ himself could not bridge. Dubbed 'Gnosticism' in the 19th century, this hybrid of Christianity and Platonism asserted that knowledge of God ('gnosis' in Greek) is achieved only by direct revelation by what Christians called "The Father". Not much is known of gnostic worship other than it varied from that of Apostolic Christianity.

Another movement arising a bit later in the second century, was that of a certain Montanus (????-????), who claimed to receive direct and new revelations from the Holy Spirit which completed the teachings of the apostles. Worship among the Montanists, as they were called, was not a matter of congregation and pastors, of readings and sacraments, but it involved watching Monatanus, or his two female assistants Prisca and Maximilla, utter ecstatically and wreath here and there. A major theme of their prophecy: Christ was soon to return to the towns of Pepuza and Tymion in modern-day Turkey, to reign for 1000 years.

With the advent of Constantine in the 4th century, and consequently, the governmental and public support of Christianity, what had been occurring in private homes, could now occur publically and in a much grander scale. In that Christ was believed to have brought Constantine to power, Christ in worship became less the Lamb of God, and perhaps, more, *Christus Pantokrator* (Παντοκράτωρ), Christ the "All-Powerful" or "Lord Almighty" (Cf. 2 Cor. 6:18) or "Ruler of All". Depictions of Christ, his chest and his head with right hand raised symbolizing his right to speak, his left hand holding the Scriptures, would come to dominate the half-domes of the apses of the churches in the eastern Roman Empire. In the west, in Rome, *Majestas Domini*, "Christ in Majesty", Christ sitting on his throne as the ruler of the world, would become similarly ubiquitous. The effect on worship must have been dramatic, as the government-backed bishops, standing in front of and under the image—reminiscent of the images of Greek gods and goddesses in pagan temples—would have been view as possessing much of the authority and power represented by it. In the East, the concept of Christ as the not just the power of God, but also the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24,30) would also gained import, as the church in the Constantinople would be named "Hagia Sophia" "Holy Wisdom" referring to Christ himself as providing true knowledge of God. This occurred as the Eastern Church took a decidedly mystical turn in the 6th century due to the popularity of the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius

the Areopagite. In the west, the image of Christ as judge emerged at the end of the Middle-Ages, sitting on a rainbow, the sword of Revelation 1 protruding from his mouth. It is this image in part, that caused Martin Luther to seek the righteousness of God in Scripture. And not surprisingly, the worship of Luther's day had become one of appeasing the righteous judge Christ. Mass was attended, but being in Latin, not understood. The Lord's Supper was received, but as the highest and best work for which man could gain credit before God. Supplication was made to the saints for their good favor and credit, while their bones—relics—were venerated for the same purpose. All was overseen by priests, making sacrifices—the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ on the cross.

The argument could be made, that the gutting of the churches during the Reformation of such images of Christ provided a proper corrective, of ridding the churches of images of Christ which were accurate, but came to overshadow the proclamation of the gospel itself. But in view of Christ, what ultimately did barren worship spaces represent? What was proclaimed to the Christian in a room where no image of Christ was present? Well for the followers of Calvin in Geneva and Zwingli in Zurich it was clear: Christ was not present within them, at least, according to His human nature—the nature that could be represented artistically. Christ was, after all, in heaven. The only representative of the Christ was the Christian. And the only way that the Christian, who had been directly illuminated by God, could be known, was by 1) how they lived, or 2) how they felt. So the two strains of Calvinism that dominate the Evangelical (Baptist) mega-churches devoid of any images of Christ, offer (almost in gnostic type fashion) assurance through the action of a Christian (Calvin), or assurance through the feeling of the heart (Arminius). Worship services therefore concentrate not on preaching and sharing Christ the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, but right-action (by doing the right thing) and right feeling (through the usage of music, and light, and now modern imagery!). Eastern orthodoxy has gravitated somewhat away from *Christus Pantokrator* just as Rome has moved away from *Majestas Domini*, "Christ in Majesty," embracing instead Mary, who since the Vatican I council of 19th century is proclaimed to have ascended into heaven. Anglican worship seems to take place in ornate settings, often void of images of Christ, presumably evoking the idea of a realized presence in heaven by the congregation. And of course, Pentecostal worship hearkens back to that of Montanus, of the awaiting of divine utterances from inspired leaders in barren facilities.

> *The humble nature of the gospel and the pastoral office reflects the humility of Christ's life on earth. While he always possessed all the attributes of his divine nature, he only rarely used them openly. For the most part, he kept them hidden under his servant form. His humble external form as well as the humble external form of the gospel serve the key purpose of his mission: to bring his forgiveness to sinners terrified and humbled by the law. For such sinners need to be approached in a humble, gentle manner lest they be terrified further.*[19]

Paul's verses to the Philippians (2:6-8) summarize Christ's humble life on earth in a few words: "... though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but *made himself nothing*, taking the *form of a servant*, being born in the *likeness of men*. And being found in *human form*, he *humbled himself* by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

The key thing to understanding these verses from the epistle reading for Palm Sunday correctly is to read "form of God" not in view of Christ's divine nature, as if Christ had set aside his divine nature or its powers for the duration of his earthly life. That would be kenoticism.

It is equally wrong to say that, while "form of God" does indeed mean his appearance as God, his divine works and words, the incarnation itself is Christ's humiliation, as the Reformed say: Because the human nature is incapable of receiving divine attributes, it automatically, as such, works like what Calvin calls a "veil" (Comm. on Phil. 2).[20] For the Reformed, therefore, Phil. 2 could be the epistle reading for Christmas; and indeed, you can find many a Reformed sermon preached on this text in the Advent / Christmas seasons.

When it comes to the means of grace, a different kind of "union" between what is heavenly and what is earthly exists than the *personal* union of the two natures in Christ. Besides, the means of grace are not all of one kind but must each be understood based on their own specific

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[19] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 100.

[20] Cf. Puritan theologian, Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686), in his commentary on qu. 27 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, *A Body of Divinity*: "'Q-xxvii: WHEREIN DID CHRIST'S HUMILIATION CONSIST? A: In his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross.' – *Christ's humiliation consisted in his incarnation*, his taking flesh, and being born. ..." Inconsistently enough, Christ's exaltation is then not equated with the undoing of his incarnation, but with his resurrection (qu. 28).

"words of institution." However, what is evident is that they, like Christ, are more than what meets the eye or ear. God's almighty grace and majesty are clothed in a humble, weak creaturely form – whether that be human words, bread, wine, or water – that is administered by a humble man in Christ's place and that appears foolish to natural man, just like Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 1-2).

This is why God's grace can only be apprehended there by the heart's faith in the word, not by the eyes or even by the ears per se. Just as the mouth does not know what it eats and drinks in the Lord's Supper (Christ's own body and blood); just as the skin does not know what touches it in baptism (grace-filled water of life), so the ear also does not know what it hears. The heart, however, as the seat of faith, does know from the word it hears and believes; and it is comforted by the fact that so many parts of its body have been touched by God's grace in view of the future resurrection of the transformed body.

Perhaps surprisingly, Christ instituted the two outwardly lowly sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper and sent his lowly apostles to preach his weak gospel to all creatures near the end of his life on earth – that is, right before and after his death.

Given that the resurrection of Christ is viewed as his transition from the state of humiliation to the state of exaltation – now that his earthly mission to die for sinners is complete, the humiliation of his human nature is no longer needed – some might wonder: shouldn't Christ in his exalted state have instituted some more, well, "exalted" means of grace that would make our mission on earth easier?

Evidently, Christ's exaltation does not place Jesus into some automatic "glory-trap" where he must appear the way he appeared on the mount of transfiguration (Matth. 17). So, instead of walking around with a shiny face and bright clothes, he's easily mistaken as a gardener or some random stranger, even a ghost. What is more, his voice doesn't sound like the trumpets of Jericho or like the noise surrounding Mt. Sinai when God gave the law to Israel. It's still the same voice he had before his death and resurrection, which he continues to use to speak to his disciples in a friendly, humble manner. Before and after his resurrection, it is still the voice of divine authority (Matth. 7:29; 28:18-20).

We've already talked about the two states of Christ – humiliation and exaltation – so let's also talk about the three offices of Christ, his prophetic, high-priestly, and royal offices! Especially important when we talk about the means of grace are his prophetic and royal offices:

Christ teaches with divine authority and knowledge and in this way gathers and governs his holy people, the church. Because he is God and man in one person, he teaches not based on the authority or knowledge God gave him *from the outside*, but based on the authority and knowledge he has *in himself*, that is, based on his own divine omnipotence and omniscience.

To the extent they were necessary for the accomplishment of Christ's redeeming work on earth they were already communicated to his human nature before his death during the state of his humiliation, so that to that extent he taught with divine authority and divine knowledge in, with, *and also through* the human nature. In the state of his exaltation, both divine attributes are communicated fully to the human nature so that they are exercised in, with, and through the human nature *at all times*.

This means that the transition from the state of humiliation to the state of exaltation is not readily perceptible when it comes to Christ's teaching and governing in the kingdom of grace, the church. There is no "lowly" teaching before the resurrection and "glory" teaching afterwards, with flashes of lightning and claps of thunder to boot. Instead, there is always authoritative and true teaching in a lowly, humble form.[21] This is why there is no change in the means of grace, whether they were instituted before or after his resurrection.

Christ instituted the means of salvation the way he did for a purpose. What is their purpose? A good way to answer this question is asking a more basic question: What was Christ's purpose? As we've seen, Christ humbled his human nature so that he could make atonement for our sins on the cross (Phil. 2). We also know from the gospels that he humbled himself for those who know themselves to be heavy laden by sin – to them in particular he revealed himself as "gentle and lowly in heart" (Matth. 11:29); in particular to those who were not proud like

[21] During his earthly life, miracles, performed by the divine omnipotence residing in *and through* his assumed human nature, accompanied Christ's teaching, to attest to its divine authority and truth. For the same purpose, there were also, during the lifetime of the apostles, miracles performed by them, Hebr. 2:3-4. These were performed, not by their own omnipotence or by the omnipotence residing in them, but by Christ who accompanied them, Matth. 28:20; Mark 16:20. Evidently, these signs, consistent with the message and not empty demonstrations of "power," only were believed as done by God's power by those who believed the word they accompanied; the others saw in these miracles works of the devil, Matth. 12:24. These signs are no more "self-evident" than Christ or his word.

the wise of this world but humble like little children, he revealed the Father (Matth 11:25-27; 18:3-4; 1 Cor. 1).

The purpose of the gospel fits right here! For its purpose is to deliver Christ's cross-won grace to sinners terrified by the flashes of divine glory that shine forth in God's holy law, reflecting, as it were God's majesty from Mt. Sinai. This means, the gospel cannot be such. Here the divine glory must take on more and different covers than in the law, lest the terrified and humbled be humbled and terrified further – humiliated and scared away from their gentle and lowly Savior.

As we've seen already, the gospel in its humble forms is not appreciated by the unbelieving world. These forms are recognized as what they truly are only by faith in the word of God who instituted them for our good, for the good of all sinners humbled by the law. This fate is shared by Christ – he is only recognized as the Son of the living God by divine revelation in God's word (Matth. 16:17). Without this revelation and the faith that grasps it, the Lord of glory is counted as a common criminal and ends up crucified (1 Cor. 2).

He made himself nothing, we heard from Phil. 2 above. He chose this unappealing, even repulsive form for himself and for the means of his salvation. On the standard religious radars of every time and place and culture, Jesus doesn't register. His gospel in its divinely instituted forms doesn't register. It takes an act of God to change this. This act takes place by means of the very forms that are unappealing to the world by nature. There is no way to God's grace, to knowing God, that bypasses the means of grace the world of unbelievers must find so unappealing to the point of their being a stumbling block.

And why should God's saving grace be delivered in a form fundamentally different from the form in which it was acquired? Since it was acquired by a man who made himself to be despised by men who looked for majesty and beauty in their savior (Is. 53:2-3), should it not also be distributed in such a form no one by nature will seek out – so that the world's wisdom and understanding might be put to shame twice, in the act of acquisition of saving grace and in the act of distribution of saving grace?

In the end, this is all about Christ's mission to save sinners. In order to save those terrified of their sins by the power of the law, and only such he *can* save by the gospel, he had to take on a form that would not frighten them away from their Savior, speaking to them in a kind and gentle way. He also had to give his means of salvation such a form that

would not frighten such sinners away, but that would allow those sinners to hear the kind and gentle voice of their Savior in them clearly.

Questions

2.2. So What About Christian Freedom?

P. Strawn

Since the appearance of Martin Luther's *The Freedom of the Christian* in November of 1520, a small work also known as *A Treatise on Christian Liberty*, the idea of the individual Christian enjoying some sort of freedom from some sort of authority or tyranny has become part of the general conscience of Christianity—especially in the United States which defines itself by the individual political and religious freedoms and liberties established by its own Revolutionary (1775-83) and Civil (1861-65) wars. The point of Luther's little book, however, is frequently, if not almost always, misunderstood. For Luther, Christian liberty was this: The fact that since the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation are all by the free grace of God through faith in Christ, no law or ritual or practice could be established by the church or the state which could be enforced, or even control the Christian's conscience, *with the threat of eternal damnation*. In other words, the Christian was not freed of the laws, rituals and practices of the church or state, but was freed from the idea that obedience to them warranted eternal life. For Luther's day, this idea was indeed revolutionary, for that is exactly what the Holy Roman Empire, a conglomeration of state and church, had been doing. It had kept its subjects under its control politically, socially, economically, and theologically, by the threat of eternal damnation (or at least a very long time in purgatory). But if the Christian could not be threatened with eternal damnation as a result of disobedience to the church or state, how could Christians possibly be controlled? Luther's answer: The Christian, as a result of faith in Christ, was obligated to love and serve his neighbor, and even the church and state, with a love defined by the Ten Commandments. Christian freedom is thus a freedom of the conscience, an inner freedom.

Here Luther was simply following what is found in Scripture, especially in the New Testament, in the Words of Jesus : "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and

the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:31-32), and "...if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (8:36). Thus the Apostle Paul would declare to the Corinthians: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17) and to the Galatians even more bluntly: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (5:1). It does not take much digging in Scripture to understand that Paul here was not talking about slaves in the Roman Empire who somehow, through Christ, had achieved their freedom. Instead, Paul, a Pharisee by training himself, was exhorting the Christians of Galatia not to fall back into a life of following the 613 pharisaical laws of the oral tradition, or at a minimum, the ceremonial Law of Moses as found in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy—including circumcision (1 Cor. 7:18-19; Gal. 5:2,3,6; 6:15) and Passover—as the surety that they remained in God's favor. In other words a life in Christ was not a reliance upon the flesh to fulfill the Law, but of faith in Christ who fulfilled the Law for them (Phil. 3:3).

But at the same time, Paul had to caution that this new life of freedom in Christ did not mean a life of immorality, a life of lawlessness, of knowingly and continually breaking the Ten Commandments in the freedom of the Gospel. Indeed, Paul delighted "in the Law of God in [his] inner being" (Rom. 7:22). A freedom from sin did not mean a freedom to sin. It also did not mean a freedom from the Law, but a freedom from the condemnation of the Law and even a freedom to fulfill the Law. "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:13). Thus those who called themselves Christians, but were "guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or [were] an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler" were to be avoided and even to be "purged" from among the Christians (1 Cor. 5:11-13). Peter also cautioned: "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (1 Pet. 2:16).

Still other abuses of Christian freedom which were to be avoided included unnecessary judgment over indifferent matters (Rom. 14:12) and causing unnecessary offense. In the first case, a fellow Christian is judged to be doing something wrong when they are not, and in the second case, the Christian himself is judged to be doing something wrong by other Christians (Rom. 14:13-23). Here is not a matter of the Ten Commandments, but of an individual Christian's understanding of what should be eaten, or what holy days were to be observed or not observed. In such instances those "who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please [them]selves" (Rom. 15:1). But in Corinth, so it seems, the strong were in fact asserting themselves. The end result was division (1 Cor. 11:18). Repeatedly Paul calls for the up-building not simply of the individual (1

Cor. 14:17), but of the entire congregation (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 26), not for confusion, but for peace (33), and thus that "all things should be done decently and in order" (40). There should be no divisions, but "the members should have the same care for one another" (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

So simply put, the Christian freedom of faith in Christ was expressed in a slavery of love to the fellow Christian (cf. Rom. 6:22). Thus the freedom of the Christian did not result in a free-for-all in worship. Love demanded the consideration of the neighbor, and a voluntary orderliness for his up-building.

From the scant evidence that exists detailing Christian worship practices from the time of the Apostles to the ascendency of Constantine at the beginning of the 4th century, it is impossible to track how Christian worship developed in the major cities of the Roman Empire at that time. Here we can name Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Corinth. That Jewish converts to Christianity had returned to such cities after having been baptized on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) is almost certain. Listed in the Acts of the Apostles are Jews from the region of modern Turkey (Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia) from Libya and Egypt, and from Rome itself (Acts 2:8-11). These would return to their synagogues—most probably Greek-speaking—in places such as Damascus (Acts. 9:20), Salamis (13:5), Pisidian Antioch (13:14), Iconium (14:1), Thessalonica (17:1), Berea (17:10), Athens (17:17), Corinth (18:4), and Ephesus (18:19). Thus the introduction of Christian worship in those places by the Apostles was not something started upon a blank slate. Jesus was, after all, the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ of the Old Testament (John 5:39 et al.) who had instituted a New Testament (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). The discussions in the synagogues listed above were primarily about this point: Was Christ the Messiah or not? If He were, how would Christian worship affirm that fact? The basic assumption of liturgical scholars is that the New Testament, the Lord's Supper, was simply appended to the Old Testament, that is, the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the singing of the Psalms, preaching, and prayers. But it is not as if every synagogue throughout the Roman Empire embraced Jesus as the Christ. In Thessalonica, for example, the Christian congregation was forced to develop outside of the existing synagogue (Acts 17:1-9). The same thing occurred in Corinth (18:1-11) and Ephesus (19:8-10). The core group of believers, however, were Jews from the synagogue, shaped, we could say, by the highly prescriptive worship of the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Ex., Lev., Deut.).

But it is not as if the pagans were not religious, nor superstitious, nor had their own prescriptive worship practices. Here we can mention the priest of the temple of Zeus in Lystra would wanted to sacrifice oxen to Paul and Barnabus (14:8-18). The pagan worship at that time was

"essentially conservative in nature," and "based on time-honored observances."[22] Accordingly:

> "The central ritual act in ancient Greece was animal sacrifice, especially of oxen, goats, and sheep. Sacrifices took place within the sanctuary, usually at an altar in front of the temple, with the assembled participants consuming the entrails and meat of the victim. Liquid offerings, or libations (1979.11.15), were also commonly made. Religious festivals, literally feast days, filled the year."[23]

So in other words, pagan worship was much like the worship in the temple in Jerusalem in outward appearance. In gathering together for Christian worship, both Jewish and Gentile Christians shared similar ritualistic backgrounds. Significant alteration of early Christian worship would not take place on the basis of Christian freedom, but only on the basis of a change in theology, in groups influenced by Gnostic ideas (Platonic philosopy) and the Pentecostalism of Montanism mentioned earlier.

With the ascendancy of Constantine, worship practice throughout the empire would become more uniform, although more complex, with the bishops of the major cities having some leeway as to exact formulation and structure of worship. The monastic communities that developed simultaneously would also develop along similar lines. In other words, the major aspects of the Christian worship service would remain the same while minor regional derivations would be common. A common liturgical calendar would be adopted with major holidays being celebrated simultaneously throughout the empire. Sundays would be declared the official day for such worship. Complexity would increase as time went by, and historic events and personages became part and parcel of the church. Still, basic Christian worship involved the reading of texts from the Old and New Testaments, the singing of psalms, prayers, preaching, and the administration of the Lord's Supper. Christian freedom did not seem to affect matters much in this period either.

And the same, oddly enough, could be said about the reformation. There in the 16th century, first Lutheran and then Reformed (Calvinist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.) orders of worship, were modified on the basis of Christian freedom, but retained the basic outline of the worship service of the early Christian church. Disagreement centered on their meaning, but not on their necessity. One group, however, did depart from what had been done in the Church for so many centuries, and that is the Anabaptist movement. There the celebration of the Lord's Supper was for all intents and purposes abandoned as a constituent part of the worship service. Mentionable in

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[22] Cf. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/grlg/hd_grlg.htm.
[23] Ibid.

this regard are the Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites. Their counterparts in England would eventually birth groups such as Pilgrims, Puritans, and Quakers—who would wait in silence for direct revelation—or Shakers, who incorporated ecstatic dancing into their worship. And although these groups differed in worship practiced from the "established" churches and from each other, within their own derivation of Anabaptist theology, worship was uniform.

And this still holds true today. The worship within the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian churches differs somewhat from each other, but within a single confession, there is an imposed, or voluntary, uniformity of worship. This is usually reflected in the form of a commonly used liturgy, or hymnal. Claims that modern mega-churches of the Baptist tradition have a freedom of worship are somewhat disingenuous, in that a comparison of the worship of such churches, demonstrates that they all follow a similar or even identical form of worship. With the advent of multi-site campuses, of a mega church such as Willow Creek in Chicago spawning dozens of offsite viewing facilities to which sermons are beamed every week, there is even more of a lack of freedom there then in traditional churches, for not only is the sermon the same everywhere, but the music offered is dictated from the main church as well. So that which is proclaimed as the advantages of such churches—their freedom to worship as they wish—is actually simply a traditional Baptist worship services, the content of which is dictated by an inspired leader.

But perhaps the most problematic aspect of the concept of the freedom of the Christian, when applied to worship in particular today, is this: Since the church has existed for 2000 years, there is basically nothing that can be done in worship that has not been done before somewhere, at some time. And what so what often turns out to be the case, is that the freedom that justifies some sort of new worship practice, is simply the freedom to abandon the theology of the congregation in which the worshiper finds himself, and to turn to another theology.

> *After the end of the comprehensive ceremonial law of the OT, Christians are free to add humanly devised ceremonies ("adiaphora") to the ceremonies of the gospel Christ has established already. Lest these ceremonies contradict the ceremonies of the gospel itself, they must conform to the gospel in both content and form. This means, they need to proclaim the gospel and be humble and simple in nature. By doing so, they agree with the Christian faith (doctrine) and further faith in Christ as the highest worship. By doing so, they also agree with the simplicity of worship in paradise before man's fall into sin.*[24]

Dwelling on the means of grace as the divinely instituted forms of the gospel for so long has the purpose of driving the point home: as far as worship is concerned, they are the bare minimum that must occur for the essence of Christian life and worship – i.e., faith and love – to occur and be sustained. We realize that, while baptism is a means of grace, it is not reoccurring in the life of the Christian. However, the other two means of grace we should enjoy more than once in our lives. They are also featured prominently in the weekly worship service that has developed over the past two millennia.

Yet what is the foundation for their prominence in worship services? Why are there even worship services to begin with? Is it all just tradition, or is there some definite biblical basis for Christian worship services to be done in one way and not another way? Typically, you hear in our circles that there is no "order of worship" or "liturgy" in the NT that we can just copy and paste into our modern worship bulletins. That was the OT, we hear, where the ceremonial law determined everything comprehensively. The NT is different. The NT is about freedom, especially when it comes to worship.

And there is some truth to this position. The fact that someone in the bible said at some point in time, "Lord, have mercy" (cf. Ps. 123:3; Matth. 15:22; 17:15; 20:30-31), does not make this exclamation a necessary part of worship. After all, the Lord did not say: when you come together for worship, you must call on me for mercy at this point in the order of service, using these words: "Lord, have mercy."

But then how do we get from the Lord's Supper to an order of service? Here's what Luther did: After realizing from Scripture that the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ alone needs to be at the center of the

[24] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 100 f.

church's activities on earth for there to be a church gathered by the Holy Spirit on earth to begin with, he looked at the regular gatherings of the church at his time, the regular worship services. He realized: What Christ had instituted as gospel proclamation of his work for mankind – the word and the sacraments – had become totally covered, marginalized, and even replaced by man's works for Christ. The gatherings of the church needed to be reformed for there a church to be gathered once more by the gospel in the power of the Spirit.

In other words, when Luther was faced with the task of coming up with a standard that allowed him to weed out the unchristian additions to the worship service that had crept in over the centuries before his time, he started with what the Lord had instituted. He started with the means of grace, in particular with the Lord's Supper. In other words, he didn't look to the OT sacrificial services, to what David or Solomon instituted for the temple. He also didn't look to the heavenly worship that we may, or may not, see revealed in the Revelation of St. John ("This is the feast of victory..."). He also didn't look to the bible for (divine) commandments regarding practices that we've come to associate by tradition with the worship service.

Based on the preparatory work we've been doing so far that focused us on the means of grace as our primary means of worship, it's not surprising that, for Luther, the sacrament Christ instituted and administered for the first time on the night when he was betrayed was already a worship service that, despite its seeming austere simplicity, was complete. In fact, Luther considered the simplicity of *the first Christian worship service* to be something we should always keep in mind – "the closer our services are to this first worship service, the better" (cf. AE 35:80-81).

This service in the Upper Room, specifically, consisted of the administration of the Lord's Supper to the disciples and of the kind of preaching that extolled and praised Christ for his suffering and death, as modeled by Christ's own preaching (see John 13-17!): Christ commanded us to eat his body and drink his blood "in remembrance" of his giving and shedding these for us. As so often, Luther found the correct interpretation for what Christ meant in Paul, specifically in 1 Cor. 11:26, where he translated the Greek form *katangéllete* as an *imperative*, not, as we're used to, an *indicative*, so that the verse reads: "for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, *you should*

proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" instead of "..., *you proclaim* the Lord's death ..."[25]

If you translate the word in question as indicative, then observing the Supper is already a proclamation of the Lord's death. No sermon needed. If you translate it as an imperative, you must have a sermon with the observance of the sacrament of the altar. In the first case, the indicative, the traditional Catholic Mass without sermon but with the sacrament would be a complete service according to Paul, and Luther would be unjustified in saying that Christians should not gather when there is no preaching. In the second case, the imperative, Trent would be wrong and Luther would be right. Ok, now you decide.

If you follow Luther, you'd not only get clarity about whether our worship is primarily about Good Friday or Easter. You'd also get as a helpful byproduct the insight that two key elements of our standard worship services are based, not on traditional arrangements, early Jewish practices, or early Christian examples, but on a direct command of the Lord: When there is the Supper, there must be preaching or, to say the same the other way around, when there is no preaching, there must be no Supper. In fact, without preaching, there must be no gathering for worship!

Since we've harped on the external form on these two means of grace already, the rest will be relatively easy. By noting the difference between Christ's biblical institution of the Supper and the pre-Tridentine mass Luther applied the fundamental distinction of Scripture and tradition to the worship service. Noting the difference between the exclusive ceremonial law of the OT and the divine institutions of Christ in the context of the freedom of the children of God in the NT era prevented him from forcing his congregation back into the Upper Room, as it were.

In other words, he saw how little of the traditional worship service was actually commanded by Christ. He also realized, however, that much was also not forbidden by God's word so that it *had to be excluded* from the worship service. Instead, it was added over time *for good purposes.* In other words, Luther discovered that there are "indifferent things" or "adiaphora" in worship.

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[25] Cf. AE 36:349-351. Luther's entire 1526 sermon referenced here is available in an accessible format under the title, *How Is Christ There?* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2011).

I know this concept gives many people a headache, to the point of wanting to ban the thing altogether. But the headaches have come, I submit, only from not examining carefully what the Lord has given us and what "adiaphora" means. The Lord has given us means of grace that are not only saving but have a specific external form. "Adiaphora" are those church practices neither commanded nor forbidden in the bible which were introduced "for the sake of good order and decorum or else to preserve Christian discipline." (SD X, 1).

Luther is very clear when he comes to evaluating the human additions to what is mandated in worship by Christ's command: When something, in a simple way, proclaimed or fostered the gospel or its antecedent, the law, or its consequent, our sacrificial lives of thanksgiving and praise, it was often retained. Luther didn't create a new order of service from scratch, but the basic criterion of the simple form of the gospel provided him with the standard he needed to evaluate what had been added by men to Christ's original gospel-centered worship service.

He retained many of the traditional additions, not because he found some biblical verses justifying them as a necessary ingredient of the worship service (that would be liturgical legalism), but because they promoted, and were in keeping with, the simple worship service Christ had instituted in the Upper Room. (Besides, these ancient ceremonies show the doctrinal continuity between the "Lutheran" church and the church that existed in the age of the early church, cf. AE 41:196.) But he removed what contradicted it, in particular the "canon of the mass" that remade what Christ had instituted as God's gift to man into man's sacrifice to God.

He also noted that, historically, human additions flourished and increased in number when, after repurposing the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice for the living and the dead, church leaders started to compete for customers who would buy the sacrifice to God they offered for sale. Of course, when our sacrifices to God, and not God's sacrifice to us, are at the center, we need to make our sacrifices stand out at the expense of God's – for God and for our prospective customers.

In other words, compared to God, when blinded by sin we abuse our freedom to go in the opposite direction: To offer the fruit of his sacrifice to us, God instituted very simple means. To offer our sacrifices to God, we establish very pompous means. In reality, however, our sacrifices should not outshine God's before men but be of the same humble form. This should be the case especially because the faith at the heart of our

sacrifices is already our highest worship. It is itself *humble* in the sense of receiving what God gives and being *imperceptible* before others.

Questions

2.3. And Christian Love?

P. Strawn

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone does not love, does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). So wrote the Apostle John years after having heard Christ Himself tell him and the other apostles: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12) and "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (John 15:9-10) and "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (John 14:23). And there is also this: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). Admittedly, the post-hippy western world seems a bit "loved out." As a concept, love seems more and more to have slipped out of the general consciousness. Once a staple in popular music, love is now rarely mentioned, as anger and despair and disappointment are more the emotions of the day in what has become a divorce culture. Oddly enough, the Christian church seems to have followed suit. Who hears of love anymore, even in a sermon? Personal enrichment and betterment yes, but love? No. And yet love, from the very beginning of the Christian church, was to be its chief hallmark—especially love between fellow Christians. Simply put, faith in Christ was to result in love for God and love for our neighbor. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit was love (Gal. 5:22). Summarizing the effect of this love in the first few centuries after the resurrection of Christ, Judith Herrin,

Professor Emerita of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies at King's College London, recently noted:

> "Unlike their contemporaries, the followers of Jesus were confident that death was not the end: they would rise again into a heaven of peace and light. This belief motivated them to behave in a correct Christian fashion, avoiding sin and encouraging faith, hope and charity [love!], so that God would judge them worthy of eternal life in the next world. It set them apart from the Jews, polytheists and members of other cults that flourished in the early centuries AD."[26]

Of course the more obvious and simple expression of such a love was in the initial communal sharing of goods (Acts 2:44; 4:32) among the Christians in Jerusalem and assistance to those in need (2:45; 4:35), which resulted in their "favor with all the people" (2:47). Such assistance would be carried out beyond Jerusalem in the care of widows (1 Tim. 5:16; James 1:27), and of the taking up of a collection among the churches to help the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15; Rom 15:14–32). But the Christians were to "do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10), by walking in love (Eph. 5:2; 2 John 1:6).

So "If I have not love" the Apostle Paul wrote "I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up may body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." Rarely noticed are the fact that these comments were made, the "great chapter on love" occurs, right in the midst of instructions on Christian worship: On the use of head coverings during prayer or preaching at home (1 Cor. 11), spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11), church offices (1 Cor. 12:12-31), preaching, tongues, singing and praying (1 Cor. 14:1-25), and orderly worship (1 Cr. 14:26-40). Obviously, then, Christian worship was to be the place where such love was expressed in mutual up-building for the common good, decency and good order. But even more significant is the love that would be expressed in the practice of worship. After all, if love were not expressed there, how could it be expected to be expressed anywhere else? It is there then, in worship, where we would expect to see on display patience, kindness, a lack of envy, boastfulness, arrogance or rudeness; an absence of self-centeredness, irritability or resentfulness (1 Cor. 14:4-7). But overall, the love expressed there, as in the common life of the Christian, was of abdicating Christian freedom for the sake of Christian love. In other words, the Christian refrained from doing that which he or she was entitled to do, for the sake of a fellow Christian. Lawful things were not always helpful nor did they build up the fellow Christian (1 Cor. 10:23). And it was the good of the neighbor that was to be sought (24). So when it came to eating meat offered to idols, and

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[26] *Byzantium. The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 33.

then sold later in the marketplace, doing such was lawful, for food was food. But if it became known to the Christian before he bought it that such food had been offered to idols, he was to refrain from eating it, not for the sake of his own conscience, but for the sake of the conscience of the person who informed him! (28-29). Now it is just this issue that the Jerusalem council addresses in their letter to the Gentile Christians (Cf. Acts 15) and there states plainly that the Gentiles "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols" (15:29). This was seen as a "burden" they would need to bear (15:28), i.e. perhaps the thought was that they would be forced to obtain their meat elsewhere than the pagan temple market. But the main point is clear: As Christians they were asked voluntarily to give up the freedom which they have in Christ for the sake of fellow Christians who would be offended by what they were doing. So Paul would write to Timothy in Ephesus: "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5).

What then became what could be called "Christian practice—how Christians expressed their love for each other within a world dominated by paganism—took on a level of uniformity throughout all the churches around the Mediterranean basin. Concerning the question of head coverings, for example, Paul remarked that it was the *common practice throughout all of the churches*: "If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no [other] practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16). Concerning marriage Paul makes a similar assertion of church-wide uniformity: "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. *This is my rule in all the churches*"(1 Cor. 7:17). "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace" Paul wrote the Corinthians, "*As in all the churches of the saints*" (1 Cor. 14:33). In other words, as Paul went from church to church to church, visiting and revisiting the Christian congregations the Holy Spirit established through him, the expression of love in each place was to take on similar contours.

And what then of worship? Was love the ultimate determiner of practice? If we take 1 Corinthians 11-14 as an example it would seem to be so. There love even addresses speaking or praying or singing in tongues, for if such manifestations of the Spirit turn out not to edify others they are not to be done in worship (1 Cor. 14:13-19). Love trumps everything (1 Cor. 13:8-13). And so we can speculate—and only speculate—that the expression of love for the brethren that led to common worship practices in the early Christian church. How else were pagans raised on temple ritual, Jews raised in the synagogue and journeys to Jerusalem, and others steeped in nativist religions to live together in peace and harmony, especially when it came to worship? Thus the scant evidence which exists from the period displays a type of uniformity of practice in general: Christians would meet once a week on Sundays; they would confess their sins, pray, hear Scripture

readings and sermons, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and receive the Lord's Supper; they would be instructed in the Christian faith and also share a common meal not unfrequently. More we don't know. But any uniformity at that times truly does seem to have flowed from love.

With what could be called the secularization of the church under Emperor Constantine, love may have been less a consideration when it came to worship as the political expedience of uniform religious practice. If a common practice established in the Christian church on the basis of love (like abstaining from meet sacrificed to idols) was beneficial toward creating harmony within the church, why would it not be beneficial to the empire itself? So the interesting statement in Canon 20 of the first ecumenical council, when 318 bishops met in the town of Nicaea in the Roman province of Bithynia in May and June of A.D. 325, sponsored and hosted by Emperor Constantine himself: "Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, *to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere* (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing."[27] Also in the name of uniformity, Easter was to be celebrated on the same day in the East as it had been in the west. The first nineteen canons (laws!) did not address worship, but various aspects of church practice. But the point was the same: Such practice was to be the same everywhere. Forgotten by modern Protestant scholars who mine the canons of not only Nicaea but of all the succeeding councils for theology, is that the pronouncements of those councils were to dictate church practice, which included on occasion, worship. Was love as a determinative practice therefore forgotten? The same could be asked of the rules of the various monastic communities which came into existence at that time, and then with ever increasing numbers throughout the middle ages. Were the orders under which the monks lived considered to be based on love? That both the state-church and monastic communities somewhat lost their way can be discerned by the heavy scrutiny under which both the decrees of the councils in matters of church life and the rules of the monasteries fell under heavy criticism. Luther's own criticism of such matters was far reaching: They shaped the conscience to such an extent that love itself was forgotten.

Luther's liturgical reforms would therefore involve not just faith, but love for the fellow Christian. For Rome, however, if love were expressed, it would be in obedience to the church. Latin would continue to be used both for liturgy and Scripture until the last great church council, Vatican II in the 1960's. The most significant act of love in worship would be participation in the mass. For the Anglican, love in worship would be expressed by obedience to the detailed liturgical life

[27] Cf. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm.

found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549 et al; 1662-present). For Calvinism outside of England, love in worship would be expressed by obedience to what God had commanded in worship (the so-called "regulative principle of worship"). Thus nothing could occur in worship that had not been explicitly commanded by God. For Anabaptists, love in worship would be expressed ultimately in obedience to an inspired leader. Here there is a parallel between the late medieval monastic communities (Dominicans, Augustinians, Benedictines, etc.) and groups such as Mennonites (followers of Menno Simons (1496-151)), Hutterites (followers of Jakob Hutter (ca. 1500-1536) Amish (followers of Jakob Ammann (1644–ca.1730)), whose established way of life would be the model for the entire community.

The same concepts and ideas of love in worship persist to this day. Most important, however, is the idea that love for the fellow Christian is that, which one way or another, confirms and maintains the worship practice. But relatively recently, the question has arisen whether or not Christian worship should be dictated, or controlled, or kept in check by love for fellow Christians, or by love for non-Christians? Worship practices are thus justified by a confessed "love for the lost"—often times with a complete disregard for the conscience of the fellow Christian. Much like meat that had been offered to idols in the 1st century, many Christians have a difficult time understanding how the ultimate cultural symbol for rebellion against authority, drug usage, illicit sex, and the unencumbered pursuit of wealth, that is, the rock band, has come to be the heart and soul of much Christian worship today. Considering the fact that musical instruments were not even a part of Christian worship for hundreds of years, due mostly to an aversion to their usage in pagan temples and rituals, and that many Christian churches today still do not use any musical instruments whatsoever, such a development is truly remarkable. And it begs the question: Is what is happening in such a situation a demonstrable love for the world? For the worldly? For worldliness in general?

> *However, these ceremonies also need to be in agreement with Christian love, the chief fruit of faith and the fulfillment of the law, as one of their chief purposes is to serve the neighbor. These ceremonies will be in agreement with Christian love when they are created and observed jointly by churches sharing the same confession. In that such is the way of humility and service, ceremonies created and observed in this way conform to the humble form of the gospel also by the very way they are created and observed. In that such humility is also in keeping with Christ's humble life of service on earth, they are part and parcel of the Christians' humble way of life and service that puts the needs of the neighbor first. In this way love restrains the freedom that is indeed ours by faith in the gospel.*[28]

The human additions to the first Christian worship service Christ held with his disciples in the Upper Room are acceptable when they agree with the gospel in form and content, that is, they must be simple and *promote* the gospel of Jesus Christ instead of *marginalizing* it by their powerful nature or sheer numbers. By promoting the simple gospel they promote humble, invisible faith as the only path to salvation and the highest worship of the one true God. This is what I call human additions agreeing with the Christian faith.

Even if the form-aspect of this assertion hasn't always been given its due among us, we're agreed, typically, that what men add to what Christ instituted must not contradict it by making salvation dependent or co-dependent on our love for Jesus, including our experience of Jesus. And for the most part, we've stopped right there, at the agreement in faith.

After all, that's all that's needed for Christian unity, no? All the while we're scratching our head that there is so much disunity in our Synod, especially, or most fundamentally, when it comes to worship. The reason why there is so much disunity in our Synod is that we've forgotten another key ingredient to being the church of Jesus Christ on earth, Christian love.

Evidently, if I make "the Christian faith" the only criterion for human additions, there are still a number of ways, in which I could either design human additions or choose from the variety of already existing ceremonies. It could still be entirely orthodox, gospel-centered

[28] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 101.

worship, not just in content but also in its simple external form. And as you have your preference, I have mine. So, while we might be in agreement in doctrine, we're not in agreement in our form of worship.

Some will say: that's fine because church unity doesn't rest on worshiping the same way; it rests on believing the same things. Now, what might be surprising to some, this is not the argument Luther and Melanchthon made when it came to human additions to worship. To be sure, they agreed with those who say: church unity doesn't depend on worshiping the same way – in fact, they were the ones who first rediscovered that very crucial doctrinal truth! Yet they also realized from scripture and their own experience that orthodoxy alone is not enough for church unity to be maintained. For that, love is needed as well.

How is that? Is that not some kind of ecclesiological synergism? Well, it isn't. And here is why it isn't: The church is where the gospel is proclaimed in its truth and purity. Faith in the gospel alone makes us members of Christ's church on earth. To be members, we do not need love, which is the flipside of saying: to be members, we do not need the same human additions to the means of grace that constitute what we call a worship service. We only need those means of grace. Because it is by faith that we are declared righteous and thereby enabled to live with our holy God by his own grace.

This is the ecclesiological implication of the biblical doctrine of justification. However, living with God by faith is only one aspect of our being church. "Church," as Luther lamented, is really a pretty meaningless word.[29] It would be better to speak of "a Christian holy people" to get to the full meaning more clearly, especially to that other aspect of being church: For by faith in Christ, we're not only saved. We're also placed in a new relationship with our neighbor. We're made members of Christ's holy people. This new relationship to our neighbors we call "love," the automatic and necessary fruit of faith in Christ.

In other words, "church" is never just about "me and Jesus." It is about that first of all, of course. But then it is also about "you and I together." It's not just about faith. It is also about love. While we're saved by faith alone – made members of Christ's church on earth by faith alone – genuine faith is never alone. It is never without love. So also, we cannot

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[29] Cf. AE 41:143-144. The context of this reference, and Luther's teaching on the church and its outward marks, is now available in a popular format under the title, *A Christian Holy People* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2012).

have Christ as our Savior by faith without serving our fellow redeemed by love.

What does this mean for church unity in general and worship in particular? If, as we said, faith is the highest worship and already reading or meditating on the word of God is an act of worship, then there evidently is a kind of outward worship that can be "performed" by an individual Christian for his or her own edification. In fact, we all need to be engaged in this type of worship at all times for our own salvation!

However, as here our focus is more on the joint worship service, we realize that it is an event where more than just Jesus and I are present. Other Christians are there, even if it is just the small communion service for the homebound or hospitalized Christian. We're doing it together, to put it as simply as possible.

To do one thing together, instead of doing different things at the same time, you need love, because you need the humility to say: let's come up with a plan of what we're going to do together. According to the bible, humility is a key form of love: This is how our Savior loved us all the way to the cross. This is how we love one another, just like Christ, not just when it comes to worship. That's all spelled out in Phil. 2, the epistle reading for Palm Sunday.

This means: we can't play off faith against love, freedom against service to the neighbor by insisting that we're justified by faith alone, set free! This is why we need not consider the neighbor when worshiping God or, for that matter, doing anything. Luther said: Not so! Freedom and faith – that's how we relate to God. Service and love – that's how we relate to the neighbor. And because in worship we definitely relate both to God and the neighbor, we need to consider both faith and love.

Considering faith, as we've already said, ensures that we, first of all, distinguish our human additions from Christ's means of grace and that, second of all, those additions are of a generally simple form and promote the gospel of Christ. Considering love ensures that our human additions to Christ's means of grace not only humbly serve the neighbor by promoting the gospel in form and content, but also serve him by not confusing him by offering a bewildering, ever-changing variety of additions that prevent any kind of learning of the faith. In other words, one of the primary considerations of love is: Hey, let's do this worship thing *together* lest our people get confused, get antagonized, and ultimately are driven from the gospel.

For this is what the absence of love can do: it can create schisms and heresies out of envy or mistrust. It can also, in the very least, give the powerful impression of schisms and heresies to those on the outside and on the inside. Without love, then, the church's unity in the faith is doomed.

That's why Luther, the more experience he gained in leading the church, the more he insisted that churches in one region or area use *uniform* orders of worship in Christian love. Out of love for his people, not because he was antiquarian by nature, he also kept many of the old elements of worship: People were used to them and there was nothing doctrinally wrong with them. So why confuse them with novelty when they could instead be built up in love?

Traditionally, our Synod has acted on this key insight of the Lutheran theology of worship, even though the insight as such was not always clearly articulated. More recently, that insight has been lost, ignored, or possibly even denied, at least in practice. In other words, traditionally we've come together as a Synod and created one uniform order of worship for each kind of corporate service that was to be used by all member congregations and all member pastors: One service of matins, one service of vespers, one preaching service, one communion service. We didn't have – just in our Synodical hymnal alone! – five elaborate communion services and a preaching service; one matins with preaching and a morning service with preaching optional; one vespers with preaching and two evening services with preaching optional.

To put it starkly, at one point in time, we had love for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Today, we don't have it any more. Not surprisingly, all sorts of aberrant doctrines are cropping up here and there – and people are kept in check mostly by appeals to the Eighth Commandment. As Luther said, "in the absence of love doctrine *cannot* remain pure."[30]

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[30] Cf. AE 24:246: "**It does not require such great skill to begin to love; but, as Christ says here, remaining in love takes real skill and virtue. In matrimony many people are initially filled with such ardent affection and passion that they would fairly eat each other; later they become bitter foes. The same thing happens among Christian brethren. A trivial cause may dispel love and separate those who should really be bound with the firmest ties; it turns them into the worst and bitterest enemies.** That is what happened in Christendom after the days of the apostles, when the devil raised up his schismatic spirits and heretics, so that bishops and pastors became inflamed with hatred against one another and then also divided the people into many kinds of sects and schisms from which Christendom suffered terrible harm. **That is the devil's joy and delight. He strives for nothing else than to destroy love among Christians and to create utter hatred and envy. For he knows very well that Christendom is built and preserved**

So then, jointly created and observed orders of service are not just a testament to what we believe together. They are also a testament to our love for one another. This is also true, by the way, for our hymnals. Hymnals also commonly called confessions of faith. That's true enough, but they're also confessions of love! Relying instead on congregationally selected collections of loose sheets, no matter how orthodox those hymns are, is a testament to the absence of love.

Questions

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by love. In Col. 3:14 Paul speaks of love as 'binding everything together in perfect harmony.' And in 1 Cor. 13:13 he calls love the greatest virtue, which accomplishes and achieves most in the Christian realm. **For in the absence of love doctrine cannot remain pure; nor can hearts be held together in unity."**

III What does Christian Worship Have to do with Christians?

3.1. As Old Adam and New Man; Lords and Servants?

P. Strawn

What is man? He is a living creature, made from the dust of the earth, male and female, in the image of God. Succumbing to the temptation of the fallen angel Satan (Gen. 3), man was infected with sin, expelled from God's presence in the Garden of Eden, cursed with pain in his existence and eventually death. Satan destruction was promised as was the redemption of man from sin. Yet man was confronted with his need to acknowledge his sin and control it (Gen. 4). Even so, man initially experienced a lifespan of hundreds of years as he was fruitful, multiplied and filled the earth. His wickedness, however, a continual evil of thought and heart, resulted in mankind's almost complete and utter annihilation (Gen. 6-8). The remnant brought through that judgment against sin would witnessed man's length of life reduced to a mere seventy or eighty years, filled with trouble and sorrow (Ps. 90:10). Man would both know and learn, that sin and rebellion against God would bring destruction and death, such as with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19), while obedience and drawing near to God in faith would bring blessing and success (Gen. 17:1-2, et al.). God's choice of Abraham, Isaac, and then Jacob/Israel would affirm this blessing within the world (Gen. 25:11; 35:9). Job's experience, however, would be somewhat other. Nevertheless, through Moses, God would be revealed to the children of Israel, his Law revealed, and God Himself would come to dwell with them in a tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 40:33-38), and at Shiloh (Ps. 78:60), and then in the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 7:1).

God's presence with the children of Israel could only occur, however, because of the continual sacrifices being made to atone for the sin of the people. For, the Israelites, like all of mankind, struggled with sin. They came to realize that in sin they were conceived, and with sin they were confronted daily, the denial of which was foolish, and the embracing of which was destruction. Still, there would be those, like the Pharisees, who would believe that they "were not like other men" (Luke 18:11) and could fulfill the law. The lesser-known Essences of Dead-Sea-Scroll fame would pursue such holiness through daily bathing rituals. The Sadducees would deny the need for man to think beyond this life, as there was nothing after (Matt. 22:23). Yet when John the Baptist came preaching a baptism of repentance (Matt. 3:1-2), the masses flocked to him (Matt. 3:5-6).

The remedy for man's condition was the indwelling of the Spirit of God (Ez. 39:29; Joel 2:28; John 3:5 ff.; 4:23). It is the Spirit of God who would recreate man from the inside (Ps. 51; Rom. 2:29), causing ultimately the death of the body of sin, and a rising to new life in this world and in the world to come. The Spirit of God would not simply fall upon man. He would only enter man after mankind had been redeemed from sin. This occurred when God became man in Jesus Christ. Jesus "knew what was in man," (John 2:24-25) and was also tempted by Satan (Mt. 4:1-9), but did not fall to temptation, and sin (Hebr. 4:15). He offered Himself as a sacrifice for man on the cross. His resurrection from the dead signaled the acceptance of that sacrifice. Upon His ascension into heaven, Christ sent the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who believed in Him. The end result was that within man, two competing realities would now exist: The Old Adam, also known as the Old Man, or the flesh, which still listens to Satan, and the world, and does nothing but sin, and thus will die; and the New Man, who listens only to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit, and to the Father, and does not sin, and will live eternally with Christ in Heaven. So the Apostle Paul, in Romans 7 (14-25), asserts:

> "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."

Paul asserts similarly elsewhere "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16) and "The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit wars against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17) and "I discipline my body, and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27), and "the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).

The early church seems to have been quite cognizant of this duality within the Christian. Especially in early martyrdoms do we see a great willingness to leave this world behind, much like Paul himself (Phil. 1:20-24; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). The greater reality was the heavenly reality, when man would be free of the flesh, the Old Adam, and would sin, and suffer, and die no more. "None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:7-8). The martyrdoms of all of the apostles of Jesus Christ save John taught nothing other. Interesting is the question as to whether or not this view of man, of the New Man emerging and Old Adam dying begins to fade when the church under Constantine, has suddenly something for which to live in this world. For from being hunted and outcast Christians became the definers of society—so society itself. Or rather the theme of the "otherness" of Christian life within this world fell pray for a felt-need to work within the world, and even to conquer and subdue it. Certainly in the East, with the convening of the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) where Christian order was further codified under the authority of the emperor, it seemed like this was so. But when Rome, the former center of the Roman empire was sacked in 410 by the (Arian Christian) Visigoth Alaric I (d. 410)—the first time Rome had so fallen in 800 years!—the idea of Christianity eventually being able to rule the world engendered by Constantine and his successors, was greatly damaged. After all, if Christ were the only God, and the emperors were Christians, how could Rome fall? In response, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) wrote arguably his most famous work, *The City of God* (426) in which he argued that the true city of God for Christians was not of this earth, but of their ultimate home, in heaven. What type of reception this book received in Constantinople, where the emperor and Christianity was firmly ensconced is a compelling question. Also compelling was the growing popularity at that time around Rome of the conception of man taught by a British-born Pelagius (d. 418) who denied the concept of original sin. According to Pelagius, man was born with the ability to please God in righteous action. Rome had fallen because the Christians within it had

not lived as they were able to live. Perhaps it is in the aftermath of the fall of the "righteous city", that the idea of the "righteous individual" became quite appealing, a type of "every-man-for-himself" theology. Whatever the case may be, even in the fourth century within the church there were competing views of man and his place within the world. Could man by nature do what God wanted him to do? By doing what God wanted him to do, did man conquer the world? Or was man simply doomed to die and therefore get along the best he could within the world, no matter what happened?

At least in the west, in Europe, how man was gradually viewed to be within the church was a being that was born in sin, but who through baptism, went through a type of spiritual repair. When that spiritual repair took place, man was one again, by his own reason and strength, able to do that which God wanted Him to do. Yes, man was weakened by being born in sin, and hampered by living within a world full of sin, but still, through baptism, was able to do that which God wanted him to do, if he just tried. Worship then, over time, in the west, became a matter of clearing the slate, of doing that which needed to be done, for man to once again be considered to be in God's favor. Worship was a weekly ridding oneself of guilt, especially by participating in the highest and best good work, the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Here the issue was not what was received, as much as the fact that participation occurred. The monks, of course, took an even more austere line, giving up marriage, and the private ownership of goods, worshiping seven times a day seven days a week. But the view of man driving the monks' actions was the same: They needed to do what they did in order to win the favor of God. Strangely enough, what seems to have happened in the west especially, was that Christian worship over time, took on the trappings of the pagan worship it had replaced: People would gather in a temple to once again enact a sacrifice to atone for their sins. Why? Like the pagans before them, they believed that they had the capability not to sin, but still daily, found themselves sinning.

With the Reformation of the church came a rejection, at least among Lutherans, of such a positive view of man. For Luther, man was Old Adam and New Man, and thus was in need of rituals to keep the Old Adam in check for the good of the Christian on the whole. Thus Christian worship became the setting in which the Old Adam was forced to "behave" long enough so that he could be confronted with the reality of who he was, and the New Man strengthened so that he could continue daily to keep the Old Adam in check. But for the other traditions, the view of man as having inherent capabilities remained. For the Anabaptists, man was born with inherent capabilities, the ability to choose good and evil. (Nowadays this is called "soul-competency.") Worship was therefore not where man came to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God in participating in the Lord's Supper, but to show an obedience to the 10 Commandments and the simple life of the

early church. For Calvinists (Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists), who did believe man was sinful by nature, worship was likewise, the opportunity to show obedience to Christ, by following His precepts and hearing His word. How else would a person know how to live life daily, and thus affirm through their actions, that they had been predestined for glory before the foundation of the world? For Armenians (Methodists, Assemblies of God, Salvation Army, Volunteers of America), coming together was not simply to affirm a pre-creation election on the basis of right action, but to experience the faith which they professed through music and emotional preaching. That experience, the emotions generated by preaching and singing, was thus equated with faith. And it was also thought that if the Christian worked hard enough, nurturing this faith with right action, he or she could eventually live a life free from sin here on earth.

So to summarize, alteration in worship practices within various Christian denominations yet today belie a different understanding of the spiritual capacities of man. Some believe man to be given the ability to live as God intended man to live through baptism, but because of the left-over effects of sin, struggles to do so (Roman Catholic). Others believe that man is born with such a capacity (Baptist) and must simply use it. Still others believe that man is given the capacity to achieve such perfection, if only he or she works hard enough at it (Methodist). Still others believe man in born in sin, but through right action demonstrate their citizenship in the Kingdom of God (Calvinist). Worship practices unique to each therefore are reflections of these various understandings of man.

> *For the Christian is not only by faith a free lord over all things in his relationship to God; he is also by love a most dutiful servant in relation to his neighbor. Such an approach to worship does full justice to the fact that the Christian is both saint and sinner, both new man and old Adam. For the fact that the Christian is not fully renewed in this life makes love, patience and humility necessary, also and especially when it comes to the joint creation and observing of orders of worship. The fact that the Christian is beginning to be renewed in this life by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace makes incipient love, patience, and humility a reality, also and especially when it comes to the joint creation and observing of orders of worship.*[31]

By faith, we live in Christ and are free lords over all things. By love, we live in the neighbor and are bound servants of all men. We never live in ourselves as Christians. We never live for ourselves. So far, we've looked at what this means for being Christ's holy people in general and the humanly added ceremonies of the gathering of Christians we call the public worship service in particular. On the last point, we've seen: these additions need to conform to the means of grace in form and content so that they might promote the gospel of Christ in conformity to the simple means of grace. And they need to be adopted and observed jointly in humble love, lest the acts of adopting and observing them contradict what they're also about: humble service to the neighbor as the fruit of our highest service to God, faith in the gospel promise.

Considering worship in view of faith and love – that is, in the dual relationship to God and to the neighbor – commends itself based on what we know about the Christian from God's word, the bible. And what we know is, briefly, this: We can look at the Christian in two ways. One way is, how does he look *in God's judgment* – with Christ (gospel / grace / mercy) and without Christ (law / sin / wrath)? The other way is, how does he look *in himself under God's grace*?

The first way of looking at the Christian, that is, looking at him *in relation to God*, yields two totalities: Man in God's merciful judgment is accounted totally righteous, totally holy for Christ's sake. Man in God's strict judgment is totally sinful, totally under God's wrath because he is by nature sinful and unclean. Without Christ's covers, this is what God

[31] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 101.

sees and must condemn into hell. It is by faith that we grab hold of these merciful covers Christ provided by his innocent suffering and death. Without faith, we are without Christ and God's mercy.

The second way of looking at the Christian – that is, looking at him *as he is in himself under God's grace* – yields a partial answer, as it were: there is, in us, an incipient renewal which, however, will not be complete in this life. As Luther put it a few times, the Canaanites have not been totally driven out, but they are in the process of being driven out more and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. So, we could say, we are partially and increasingly righteous and partially and decreasingly sinful in ourselves. We call this growth in sanctification.

It is the second way of looking at the Christ which interests us here the most. Here we see the Christian in the power of the Holy Spirit struggling against the sin in him that, while forgiven and therefore no long able to condemn him before God, is still a force to be contended against, unless the Christian wants to lose his faith and perish eternally. Here we see, in other words, faith hard at work in love, driving out sin more and more, winning back more and more of our behavior and being from the old Adam's occupying force, so that more and more, our members would become instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6).

In other words, while by faith we already triumph in Christ over all our foes, including sin, death, hell, the and devil, by love we're still fighting the good fight of a Christian soldier, waging war against the old Adam who, while drowned for good in baptism's flood of forgiveness, proves to be a formidable combat diver. To pick up the ecclesiological terminology from the last section, we could say that, by faith, we are already in heaven, in the church triumphant, while by love, we are still on earth, in the church militant. While all is already forgiven, not all is purged and pruned away that needs purging and pruning. While we've already put on Christ by faith, we still need to put on the new man by love in our daily interactions with our neighbors, so that also in our actions, God's image in us might see the beginning of its renewal in us.[32]

The fact that we now still also live in the church militant requires us to realize: we stand next to our fellow Christian soldiers who also battle the sin that is in them. In other words, neither are we perfectly

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[3232] Justification, our growing sanctification, and ecclesiology are woven together by Luther in this way in his theses and disputations against the Antinomians, cf. the translation *Only the Decalogue Is Eternal* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2008). A "Cliff Notes" version of this work is available as *Don't Tell Me That!* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2004).

sanctified ourselves nor is our neighbor perfectly sanctified. This means, if we lived only "in faith," as if only God and we mattered, without considering the effect of our actions on our neighbor, we might actually knock our neighbor far, far off course. We might cause offense. We might lead him astray by living in a way he cannot handle for one reason or another. The NT discusses these matters under the heading "the weak and the strong in the faith."

This means, we have to guard lest our faith and freedom spill into our relationship with our neighbor where only love and service are called for. On the other hand, evidently, we have to guard lest our love and service spill into our relationship with God where only faith and freedom are called for.

Currently, our recipe of dealing with conflict in the church, also regarding worship, is invoking the Eighth Commandment. While the Eighth Commandment is most definitely a form of love we owe our neighbor, it must not be the only form of love we show to our fellow Christians. Walking together with them in uniformity when it comes to worship is a very concrete form of love which Luther recommended most strongly in order to avoid conflict, divisions, and confusion among those who are, in themselves, not as sanctified as they are in God's judgment of grace for Christ's sake (or, often, in their own minds for their own sakes).

We evidently are not perfectly sanctified. This is why we need not only Christ's forgiveness daily. Daily, we also need considerate neighbors whose love and forbearance covers our many shortcomings of one kind or another. Still, Christ has already put us on the path of sanctification. This is to say that he has already begun to transform our minds and hearts from selfishness to selflessness and service to the neighbor. The Spirit, since our conversion, has already been creating and sustaining new spiritual impulses in our heart. In other words, he already has begun to "work in us both to will and to work for his pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

As Christ's baptized brothers and sisters, we are not selfish brutes anymore. We have begun to grow in holiness and selflessness by God's grace. In this way, we've become better able to love our neighbors and live with our fellow Christians in the church in peace. Concretely, we are more willing to accommodate them and their wishes in worship, as much as that can be done within the doctrinal, "faith" parameters outlined above.

Evidently, as long as we live here on earth, the flesh will always rear its ugly head and cause dissension and strife and discord in the congregation. This is why Christ and his apostles so consistently admonish us to battle the selfish old Adam, to put on the new man, to love our neighbor, to cover and forgive their faults, to accommodate them, to set aside our own ideas.

By the Holy Spirit, Paul put it better than I ever could in Colossians 3 (vv. 1-14). Let's hear him:

> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
>
> Put to death therefore [your members which are on earth]: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.
>
> But now *you must put them all away*: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another; *put off the old [Adam] with [his] practices and put on the new [man], [who] is being renewed in knowledge after the image of [his] Creator.* Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.
>
> *Put on then*, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And *above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

As we see here, the early Christian congregation was a diverse bunch from all corners of the known world. They all had their likes and dislikes, their past and present experiences. Yet this didn't lead Paul to get excited by all this cultural diversity and let them all congregate in their own homogeneous small groups. Instead, he called them to follow the example of him who saved them in love and humility so that they would, by love, be tied to one another perfectly.

Questions

3.2. Being Justified by Faith?

P. Strawn

According to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, when Moses wrote the book of Genesis, Moses wrote of him (John 5:46). So there we read that the patriarch Abraham, "believed the [the promises made to him by the] Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).[33] After the advent of the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, his crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension, the Apostle Paul would emphasized this basis of Abraham's righteousness to both the Christians in Rome (Rom. 4) and Galatia (Gal. 3:6). The Apostle James would do likewise noting as well that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (2:23). The promises made by God to Abraham involved land, and descendants, but most notably Abraham's seed (Gen. 22:18), through whom the nations of the world would be blessed (Gal. 3:8-9). Paul would identify that seed with the Christ (Gal. 3:16), the descendent of David who would sit on the throne of Israel forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 16), and for whom Simeon (Lk. 2:26), and Anna (Lk. 2:38), were waiting, the disciples were looking (Jn. 1:41), and modern Jews believe has not come. The faith of the children of Israel looked forward to the coming of the Christ. The faith of Christians today look back to His Advent, and forward to His return on the Last Day (Acts 1:11; 2 Thess. 1-2; Rev. 22:20). So Christ Himself appeared preaching "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15). All "who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). The signs which Christ performed, were done so that people would "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (Jn. 20:30-31; 6:40; 6:47; 10:38; 14:11). In other words, eternal life (Jn. 3:15-16; 11:25-26), and not eternal condemnation (3:36)—the consequence of the absence of faith (3:18; 5:24; 8:24). The absence of faith would be the only sin not forgiven (John 16: 9). Faith is actually a

[33] So the prophet Habakkuk would remind the children of Israel similarly: "The righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4).

work of God (Jn. 6:29). Whoever believes in Christ possesses the Spirit of God (7:38-39) and believed in the One who sent Him (Jn. 12:44). So the signs themselves did not create faith (Jn. 12:37). And those who had not seen the signs, and yet believed, were considered blessed (Jn. 20:29). Understandably Christ would note the lack of faith of the Jews (Matt. 6:30; 17:37), and the weak faith of the disciples (Mt. 8:26; 16:8; 17:20; 21:21) asking at one point if upon His return to earth He would even find faith (Lk. 18:8). But Christ would commend the faith of the Roman centurion (Mt. 8:10), Canaanite woman (Mt. 9:22), Syrophoenician woman (Mk. 7:29), the blind man (Mk. 10:52) and those who brought the paralytic to him (Mt. 9:2). Just before ascending into heaven Christ spoke clearly and plainly of the centrality of faith for the Christian's existence: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Understandably the disciples would cry out to Jesus: "Increase our faith!" (Lk. 17:5).

But what ultimately is Christian faith? "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebr. 11:1). Such faith was, according to the writer to the Hebrews, expressed by Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the children of Israel as they crossed the Red Sea and stood before the walls of Jericho, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and all the prophets (Hebr. 11). The apostles preached such faith in Jesus Christ. The righteous did indeed live by faith (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-22; Gal. 2:16, 20). Faith is not only that which justifies (Rom. 3:26, 28) but is the means by which God Himself justifies (Rom. 3:20; 4:5; Eph. 2:8). Being justified by faith means that man now has peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Such faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:5) and can be of differing strength (Rom. 12:6, 14:1) and decrease (Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 1:19; 5:12; 6:10) and increase (2 Cor. 10:15; 2 Thess. 1:3). Christians walk by faith, as opposed to sight (2 Cor. 5:7), faith itself making them the true children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7) and sons of God (Gal. 3:26).

So what role to faith play in the worship of the early church? From what little evidence of that period that we have, it would seem like for some, Paul's admonition to the Ephesians to "in all circumstances, take up the shield of faith" (6:16) became quite important. Especially in the situation in which the church found itself after the death of the Apostles, but before the ascendency of Constantine, spiritual survival was a daily reality. Thus faith was a shield, able to "extinguish all the flaming darts of the evils one" (Ibid.), and one was to be faithful "unto death" (Rev. 2:10). So Ignatius (50-108), most probably a disciple of the Apostle John, and third bishop of Antioch, writing to the Christians in Ephesus, while being taken to Rome where he would be martyred in the Coliseum, put these two ideas together:

> "None of these things is hidden from you, if you perfectly possess that faith and love towards Christ Jesus which are the

> beginning and the end of life. For the beginning is faith, and the end is love. [So Paul had written to Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:5): "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."] Now these two, being inseparably connected together are of God, while all other things which are requisite for a holy life follow after them. No man making a profession of faith sins; nor does he that possesses love hate any one. The tree is made manifest by its fruit; so those that profess themselves to be Christians shall be recognized by their conduct. For there is not now a demand for mere profession, but that a man be found continuing in the power of faith to the end" (Chp. XIV).

Many other similar examples from the writings of the second and third century could be given emphasizing this same idea: that faith in Christ leads to love of God and our neighbor. Of course, how that played itself out at that time often was quite profound, particularly in martyrdom. Faith in Christ would lead many early Christians not to do that which the First Commandment forbade, and that is, to commit idolatry. Consequently they found themselves at odds with the surrounding cultures and governments. Sporadic regional persecutions of Christians throughout the Roman Empire would come to a head at the beginning of the fourth century during the the Diocletianic Persecution (or Great Persecution). This was

> "the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman empire. In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding the legal rights of Christians and demanding that they comply with traditional Roman religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and ordered all inhabitants to sacrifice to the Roman gods (a policy known as universal sacrifice). The persecution varied in intensity across the empire—weakest in Gaul and Britain, where only the first edict was applied, and strongest in the Eastern provinces. Persecutory laws were nullified by different emperors at different times, but Constantine and Licinius's Edict of Milan (313) has traditionally marked the end of the persecution."[34]

So what role did faith play in worship, or worship in Christian faith? Obviously, the temporal, extra-worship consequences to Christian faith could be grave. Worship would seem to be, therefore, the place where that faith was strengthened, for there in worship was access given to the Word of God, not only to the writings of the prophets, but to the apostles as well, and in the case of the latter, initially to a limited extent. With no personal ownership of Scripture possible, with the only place for Scripture to be heard being the assembly of Christians in a given

[34] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic_Persecution.

place, the assembly of Christians for worship became vital for Christian faith itself. Nowadays, of course, we have a similar situation with the Lord's Supper. The only place it is available to Christians (normally) is within worship. But with private ownership of Bibles, radio, television and internet to all manner of Christian worship and Bible study, and no threat governmentally to the existence of Christianity, the vital nature of Christian worship as access to that which increases faith—the Word of God—has been lost.

After the rise of Constantine, and the ascendency of Christianity to its social prominence within the Roman Empire, the expression of Christian faith was challenged by affluence and acceptance, the result of which became the founding and flourishing of monastic communities. These were nothing less than the attempt to live the life of Christian faith away from the wiles and machinations of the common, everyday world. It was a martyrdom, a witness, of a Christian faith which freely gave itself up not to physical death, but which freely gave itself up to social, political, and societal death. To do so, there was simple, humble, submission on the part of the individual to a set of arbitrary rules or norms, in order to live within a given community. Within the greater empire, the need for a political cohesion dictated a common confession of what Christians, in fact, were to believe. Eventually, a confession of Christianity in such a way would be a requirement for citizenship within the Roman Empire. It is not that Christian faith, the faith which believes, receded into the background in either situation. The question would eventually be raised, however, as to what in fact, faith actually was. Was is something inherent in man that simply needed to be directed in the right direction? Was Christian faith simply an act of the human will? Was faith created by the Holy Spirit within man? Was faith's role simply to create the love needed within the Christian to win God's favor? These questions would come to the fore during the Reformation of the church in the 16th century, and the various answers that were hit upon, shape Christian worship.

Christianity today is dominated by the idea of man's self-spiritual-determination. In other words, in the Roman Catholic, Reformed and Orthodox traditions, man in some way has a capacity to turn to God from his own volition. This, of course, begs the question as to the role of faith. Within the Baptist tradition, faith then would seem to be an action of man, created by man, an act of the will, which is rewarded by God. In the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, faith is a grace given by God, but it remains unclear as to the role it plays, outside of its need to remain within the church. There the practice of love seems to predominate, as it does in the Reformed tradition, demonstrating man's willingness to live as God would have him live. So in short, faith, however it is understood to exist, is desired to be strengthened to the extent that works of love, demanded by the Law, can be accomplished.

For modern Baptists, with their long Bible-study-like sermons, worship is the place where they can grow in understanding of their personal relationship with Jesus. In contrast, in Roman Catholicism, worship, as far as faith is concerned, would seem to reinforce the idea of the teaching authority of the church, i.e. that faith is correctly formed only through obedience to the authority of the church hierarchy. For Pentecostalism, worship would seem to be the place where faith is experienced, where emotions are created, and identified, as the proof that faith exists. For Calvinism, it would seem to be focused on the assurance that the person has a place in heaven, for they have been chosen before the creation of the world for that position. For the Eastern Orthodox, worship would reaffirm for the Christian that there one finds access to the heavenly realms, much like the location of Jacob's ladder.

In spite of all of these different emphases, there remains the fact that when the Word of God is preached and heard, it works as the Holy Spirit would have it work. If a general understanding of Christian faith would need to be given, perhaps it could be said that faith is that which leads to an expression of love which is found to be acceptable to God. In other words, faith is believed to justify the Christian in that it creates a condition in man, love, which God then accepts.

> *The doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone does not result in antinomianism because it does not militate against such humble works of love and service, but only against the belief that such works contribute to man's justification before God. The doctrine of justification, therefore, does not negate the necessity of Christian love for keeping Christian doctrine pure, which exists due to the Christians' ongoing sinfulness. It therefore does not negate the necessity of love for keeping the church united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. For where the purity of doctrine has been lost, there the unity of the church in the truth has been lost. In heaven, when the Christian will be fully renewed, worship will still be corporate and uniform. For then the Spirit will have fully consumed old Adam's desire to be an individual and do his own thing.*[35]

When we in our church talk about love and sanctification, even growth in holiness, often objections are raised quickly: But don't we believe that we're justified by faith alone, not by any works of the law? In other words, isn't your approach to worship in particular and Christianity in general legalistic? Of course, I could answer that with a counter-question: since you don't talk about love or growth in holiness, isn't your approach to worship in particular and Christianity in general antinomian?

Or I could answer by saying: Ok, instead of throwing labels around, let's just take a look at what the doctrine of justification actually says about love and good works and also about growth in sanctification. Since this is Reformation Day weekend, let's do so by looking at Luther's 1520 treatise on Christian freedom.[36]

Luther there lays out the basics of leading a Christian life in faith and love. You've already heard his basic tenets in this presentation a couple of times: By faith in the gospel, on the one hand, you not only give God the greatest glory and worship possible; you are also the freest lord over all things. By love, on the other hand, you are not free at all. You are bound to serve your neighbor and all men in all things according to God's holy will, the Ten Commandments. By faith, you live with God in Christ. By love, you live with and in your neighbor.

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[35] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 101 f.

[36] Cf. AE 31. It is available in popular format under the title *How to Live a Christian Life*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2006).

In other words, there is really no contradiction between faith and love. They are not mutually exclusive, as Luther points out several times: We are not against good works. We are only speaking against good works taught and done with the intention of earning something from God. Otherwise, we are most certainly for good works, especially in that, by teaching genuine faith, we have identified that which alone enlivens good works and makes them acceptable to God. In other words, in that we teach faith first and foremost, we make good works first of all possible, real, and growing.

In the course of discussing these basic principles and their ramifications, Luther also comes to talking about "ceremonies." Here he applied what he had said about love in general to these specific works in love: We're not against ceremonies. We're against teaching and observing ceremonies with the intention of earning something from God. In this specific application, he also reiterated: just as we're not saved by observing ceremonies, we're also not saved by not observing them, by getting rid of them. Instead, in that we must live with other Christians in the church, we cannot do without ceremonies. In that we are justified by faith, we will also observe ceremonies in that faith. Only ceremonies observed in faith are pleasing to God.

So, here again we see the truth of what sainted Dr. Marquart's said in class at CTS: the doctrine of justification is not a principle of elimination; it is a principle of illumination. In other words, it's not an axe to chop down things we don't like. It is, rather, a powerful light that lets us see how those things should be taught and used properly, that is, without contradicting the article by which the church stands and falls, that is, justification by faith alone through grace alone.

Accordingly, the doctrine of justification correctly understood is also not the royal highway to church unity and peace in the "worship wars" which would elegantly allow us to bypass doing the hard work of love, as in: "if we could just agree in this doctrine, everything would be great" or as in: "since we already agree in this doctrine, nothing else really matters – aren't we free?"

This causal and that conditional statement are results of *elimination* thinking, not of the kind of *illumination* thinking we see play itself out in Luther's writings on the church and on worship. As we saw, Luther began with Christ's specific institution of the Lord's Supper. He used it to evaluate the content and form of what had been added over the centuries to this first and foundational Christian service. Yet he also realized: while we're saved by faith alone and while therefore no

(uniform) ceremonies are needed to make us members of Christ's church on earth, we still live in love and humility with other people, with our neighbors, with our brothers and sisters in the faith. There, when it comes to actually living together with our neighbors in the church – *there* uniform ceremonies are very much called for as love's safeguards of peace and unity of the church in the Christian faith.

By faith alone we relate to God. By love alone we relate to our neighbor in the church and outside the church. This is a correct understanding and application of the orthodox doctrine of justification. So, yes, relating to God we are free, but, no, relating to our neighbor we aren't free at all. We must serve our neighbor according to Christ's humble example or be damned forever.

Talking about the doctrine of justification and its ramifications for worship, consider this: We are saved by simple, invisible faith in Christ alone. In other words, we don't need to draw God's or our neighbor's attention to our good works, to our ceremonies of thanksgiving by their extravagant, pompous nature. We don't need to reinvent the wheel every generation. We can simply do what others have done before us.

Why? Because our thanksgiving doesn't become more pleasing to God by being more extravagant or elaborate on the surface level. Our thanksgiving is pleasing to God if and when it is rendered by faith in Christ, if and when it is a visible and audible expression of our heart's invisible faith in Christ – of that faith in Christ which, in and by itself, is already the highest worship of the one true God there is.

In this way, what is true of our lives as Christians is really also true of our worship as Christians: In that we are justified by humble faith alone, we can do the good old works prescribed since the beginning of the world in the Ten Commandments. We don't need to invent special ones to distinguish ourselves before God and others. We can humbly focus on what God has given us to do. In the same way, when it comes to worship, we can focus on humble ceremonies (and hymns) that are as simple as an infant's baptismal gown and that we, as the church, have jointly given ourselves to do in keeping with the forms of the gospel instituted by Christ. No need to distinguish ourselves before God and others also in this area of our lives as Christians.[37]

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[37] The unchanging humility of the Christian life and worship is highlighted in Luther's book on the church, cf. AE 41:135-136, 175, see also again the popular version of this work entitled, *A Christian Holy People*.

Powerful implications of the doctrine of justification for worship, don't you think? Evidently, those who have a different understanding of justification – the Catholics, the Reformed – will also give outward ceremonies a different purpose and form. As we've seen, if the main thing in the service is what you offer to God or what you experience of God, a different service will result, corresponding to a different vision of the Christian life as a whole.

Earlier, I pointed out that we need to focus on the NT means of grace lest we be out of step with God's timing and our service take on a form not in keeping with the specific age we're in. We're not God's OT people. We're not in heaven yet. We're not in paradise anymore. That said, when we take a birds-eye perspective on all these "seasons" of salvation history, it seems that we can discover not only what distinguishes them, but also what some of them have in common.

One thing they have in common, from paradise before the fall to heavenly worship, there is one kind of worship at one time. There's unity and even uniformity. Now, again, we can't overplay this. After all, NT worship is different from the ceremonially fully defined worship of the OT in the Promised Land.

Still, what is remarkable, the redeemed in heaven will gather around the throne of the Lamb in one big assembly, not in a bunch of small groups, or even as individuals, each with their own creative ways of worshiping the Lamb. In other words, when we don't need uniformity in worship anymore to bear with the weak neighbor, we will still worship uniformly because then the fire of love of God and neighbor will have consumed all sinful selfishness and every sinful quest for individuality. Maybe that's worth our consideration, if we are truly heaven-bound.

Another observation, worship in paradise was very simple, no fancy buildings, no pompous ritual. Had the fall not happened, Adam and Eve's offspring would have just gathered around the tree of knowledge while Adam would have extolled the great gifts of God in creation. Well, that's at least how Luther describes worship in paradise in his lectures on Genesis. Maybe that too is something we should keep in mind when considering what it means to worship the one true God in the age of the New Testament. Should the worship of those to whom paradise has been restored look totally different from the one of our parents before they lost paradise?

Questions

3.3. In Our Relationship to Other Christian Congregations and Church Bodies?

P. Strawn

The "sad divisions" within the church bemoaned in the last stanza of the 12th century Advent hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (LSB 357), are not a modern phenomenon, but have been part and parcel of the church since man's fall into sin. With its numerous genealogies, the book of Genesis details man's division into the descendants of Seth (which Luther identified with the Christian Church, looking forward to salvific Seed promised to Eve), and that of Cain (which Luther likewise identified with the church of Satan). The faithful remnant of the descendants of Seth would be found only in the family of Noah, and then Abraham. But of Abraham's many children (Ishmael, Isaac, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shua), the remnant would be Isaac, and of Isaac, Jacob not Esau. Jacob would father Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Dinah, Joseph and Benjamin. These would become the storied twelve tribes of Israel, who would, being rescued from slavery in Egypt, form first one nation, the Kingdom of Israel, and then two nations, the Kingdom of Israel (ten tribes), and that of Judah (two tribes). Israel would be destroyed by the Assyrians. Judah would be taken off into captivity into Babylon and live there for 70 years, only to be allowed to return to Jerusalem when the Persians under Cyrus defeated the Babylonians. By the time the Christ was born, the remnant that was left was the tribe of Judah, which found itself, after returning to Jerusalem, conquered by first the Greeks, and then the Romans.

Why all of this destruction? Why was the remnant of the true Church ultimately so small? Ostensibly because of the evil of mankind. Throughout the Old Testament the issue confronted again and again and again was that of idolatry—of worshiping false gods. So we are told—as noted earlier—of the "household gods" stolen by Rachel from her father Laban. Of Jacob demanding that his family put away their

"foreign gods". Of the worshiping of the golden calf in the wilderness. Of the reintroduction of the worship of golden calves in Israel after the time of King Solomon—who himself was led away by his wives to such idolatry. Of the prophets of Baal having official sanction of the house of Israel during the time of Ahab and Jezebel. Such worship of foreign gods did not seem to have stopped until after the return of the tribe of Judah to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity.

That does not mean that Jesus was born into a religious situation in which great unity existed. Among the Jews, who all worshiped the one true God, and not the many gods of the Romans, there were theological divisions. The Pharisees, for example, believed that they had been handed down a special oral revelation from Moses that had not been recorded in the Law (i.e. the first five books of the Bible). A Godly life for the Pharisees was defined by 613 laws—365 negative, and 248 positive—not unlike Rick Warren's numerous imperatives flowing from his five purposes. For the Sadducees there was no afterlife, no heaven, so those who followed their theology were—not unlike Joel Osteen—living their "best life then." The Herodians were interested in the political power they would gain by allying themselves with the Roman occupiers—much like the Moral Majority of the 1980's, and the Essenes, mentioned by the first century Jewish Roman historian Josephus (37-100) and made famous by the Dead Sea Scrolls, were living in Apocalyptic fervor—not unlike those who resonate to the *Left Behind* series. There were the temple authorities, Levites, charged with overseeing the worship there—not unlike the purveyors of the modern liturgical movement. There were also the Samaritans, living between Galilee and Jerusalem, who claimed to be the remnants of the northern Kingdom of Israel, destroyed by the Assyrians and left behind by the Babylonians—not unlike the Jews for Jesus. Their worship centered on Mt. Gerazim and was considered more ancient and pure than that of Jerusalem. There were the Jews outside of the region, who spoke no Aramaic, but only Greek, and therefore used the Greek translation of the Old Testament (3rd cent. BC) not the Hebrew original. Thus they were often influence greatly by Greek culture and learning. Taken on the whole then, there was understandably significant disagreement among the Jews as to the nature and purpose of the Messiah prophesied by the Old Testament. Thus the question as to the identities of John the Baptist, and Jesus when they appeared.

The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus did not bring clarity to the matter, as much as did the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and the resultant preaching of the apostles of Christ. To the Jew and to the Greek Jesus was the crucified Son of God, the Messiah, the One through whom mankind would receive salvation through faith in Him. The challenge to the proclamation of the resurrected and ascended Christ to the various theologies among the Jews was obvious. Their division was easily exposed by the apostles.

When the gospel went beyond the Jews, to the Romans through Peter, and the Greeks through Paul, the first church council was called to affirm that what was preached about the Christ was the same by all and to all. Still, divisions sprouted up within the church. Some preached Christ out of jealousy, others for profit. Those well versed in rhetoric and speech followed Paul in Galatia, trying to convince the Christians there to accept pharisaical laws in addition to the gospel. In Corinth, licentiousness flourished, with everyone doing what they wanted to do morally, and when it came to worship as well. In Thessalonica, some proclaimed that Christ had already returned and the Thessalonians had missed it. Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and extended imprisonment in Rome caused trouble for Timothy in Ephesus. Some began to teach that Jesus was nothing other than an angel that had appeared among men. Not surprisingly, the question, by the end of the 1st century became more and more as to whether or not a specific teaching that was received was apostolic, that is, that it had come from one of the actual twelve apostles of Christ.

The second and third centuries witnessed the rise of a Pentecostal-like movement in what is modern Turkey that claimed further direct revelations of the Holy Spirit (Montanism) as well as lodge-like sects in the Levant that claim possession of secret knowledge needed for true enlightenment (Gnosticism). Around Rome, the idea was popularized that the God of the Old and New Testaments, was in fact, two different gods (Marcionism). Also in Rome, in response to what was seen as church corruption, a number of people who called themselves "Purists" broke away from the church, going so far as to practice re-baptism (Novatianism). Similarly in the following century in North Africa, another such group would form, insisting that the effective administration of sacraments depended on the piety of the one administering them (Donatism). Most troubling was the spreading idea akin to modern Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus was divine, a god, but not God (Arianism). Oddly enough, however, with all of these variants of Christianity, and offshoots thereof, present within the Roman Empire at the beginning of the fourth century, the first council called by the emperor Constantine in 325 said very little about worship itself. What is to be made of that? Was worship not an issue? Was there all sorts of variants to Christian worship occurring but it just did not seem to matter? Or, was Christian worship, in general, uniform throughout the empire? What the evidence after Constantine seems to demonstrate, is that worship was indeed uniform within the individual bishoprics of Constantinople, Ephesus, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Rome. And even though there was subtle variations from bishopric to bishopric, Christian worship all across the empire was in general quite similar: It always involved the singing of psalms, prayers, the hearing of the Word of God, preaching, and the reception of the Lord's Supper. Variation in worship

would be adopted, as among the Montanists, Marcionites, Gnostics, Novatians, Donatists and Arians, to show a difference in doctrine from the Christian church. Or, the same forms of worship would be used, but the various rituals given different meaning.

With the onset of the Middle Ages, the church would be confronted by the rise of Islam, and the gradual disintegration of the relationship of the Latin western church, and the Greek eastern church. Aristotelian philosophy would be incorporated into Christian theology in the west through Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Platonic philosophy into Eastern Christianity through Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). Worship in the east and west would remain somewhat uniform respectively, but always tied in some way to doctrine. What was done and said in worship was what was believed and taught.

The end result of the Reformation of the church in the 16th century Europe was somewhat of a replay of what occurred in the early church. Religious groups which successfully broke away from Roman Catholicism and were allowed to exist politically within the Holy Roman Empire altered their worship service to demonstrate their new confession. However, there were also groups at that time which, although disagreeing with the theology of Rome, maintained the worship forms of Roman Catholicism, cloaking them with new meaning. Why? In order to enjoy the political benefits which a similar appearance in worship afforded: A nice church in which to preach; social acceptance; a salary; a place to live, etc. Then there were groups who, not conforming, nor being seen to be conforming, but also not being allowed political quarter, left for the New World for opportunity to worship in a way in which they saw fit. Thus wave after wave of Protestants left Europe for America. It may be hard to think of it this way, but many areas of the United States were shaped and formed by immigrant communities who were driven by the question of Christian worship.

With the occurrence of the Vatican II council (1962-65), rife with post World War II optimism but also the fear of communist expansion, unity among all Christian churches in the Western world was sought. The means by which such unity was pursued was through the adoption of a common worship service, and common three-year series of readings among Roman Catholics, Reformed church bodies (Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist) and Lutherans. Baptists and Pentecostals did not participate. For Lutherans, it meant jettisoning the 1 year series of readings that had been used since the time of the Reformation. It also meant abandoning the Lutheran worship service reformed by Luther himself. So the reason for the befuddling worship services in the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) and Lutheran Worship (LW), and to a greater extent the new Lutheran Service Book (LSB). Such official ecumenical efforts have since been abandoned.

But a similar movement has, somewhat unobservably sprouted up, and that is what most call, "contemporary worship." Driven by the easy access to a plethora of materials available on the internet, and the 60's generation that grew up with the popular music industry itself, congregations of a variety of denominations have adopted a similar style of worship, which seems to be somewhat of a hybrid of a late night talk show and a rock concert. This description is not meant to be pejorative. Who can argue with the "success" of thousands of people attending such worship services every Sunday? Granted, they are unashamedly Armenian Baptist/Presbyterian in format, following very much the format established by the revivalist Charles Finney (1792-1875) in the latter part of the 19th century.

The compelling question therefore becomes: If a Lutheran church adopts the worship practices of other traditions, such as those of Roman Catholicism, or of Baptist theology, what is actually occurring? Are they cloaking such practices with Lutheran content? Choosing freely to depart from worship practices that have been understood to reflect and teach Lutheran theology for centuries? Embracing those theologies? And how are Lutheran congregations and pastors to relate to each other within such a context? If, for example, a few churches in a given circuit, adopt contemporary worship, a few higher liturgical practices of Rome or Canterbury or Constantinople, and the others shape their own services in whatever way they see fit, how is it to be understood? How can it be understood? As each worship tradition is the tip of its own theological iceberg, as pastors and congregations chose one practice or another, it simply seems like the only result that can ultimately be is that they drift apart theologically, gravitating toward the theological traditions of the worship which they have adopted.

> *In that ceremonies of worship traditionally have been observed jointly by those sharing the same confession, ceremonies of both human and divine origin play a role as boundary markers of those communities. Differences and changes in ceremonies therefore always give the impression of a changed and hence different confession. This is why changes in (humanly devised) ceremonies must be theologically warranted lest the wrong impression of theological agreement is given where no such agreement exists.*[38]

When we look at the orders of service shaped by Luther himself – his 1523 Latin order and his 1526 German order (cf. AE 53) – we notice that they are different from what had been there before. Sure, the basic "structure" of word and sacrament is still there for the main service on Sunday. However, two major changes signal the presence of a radically different theology of both word and sacrament.

First of all, the word was not only to be read in the service. The word was also to be expounded and applied to the hearers in the service. In other words, the sermon was no longer optional. In fact, while the word of God in any of its forms – printed bible, liturgical lection / psalmody, or sermon – was somehow present in the medieval Western church, it was not viewed as one of the sacraments. In other words, it was not an efficacious "means of grace," regardless of its form.

This neglected Word of God was reinstituted as the main, the foundational means of grace (cf. AE 40:21). Luther admonished Christians not to gather for worship without the preached word of God. This is only the liturgical flipside of this coin, as it is meant to correct the "hypocritical corruption" and restore the worship to its genuine Christian beginnings (cf. AE 53:11).

As a result of, or at least concurrently with, this silencing of the Word in the church, the Lord's Supper was turned from a tool that delivered God's favor in Christ to sinners into a tool that delivered the perfect gift of sinners to God to make up for some sin of theirs. The chief liturgical expression of this theology was the "canon of the mass." If the Lord's Supper is a form of the gospel announcing God's grace to sinners for the sake of Christ, then the canon had to go.

This is what happens in Luther's orders of service: the canon of the mass is removed in its entirety because it encapsulates everything that

[38] Sonntag & Strawn, p. 102.

is wrong with the medieval-Catholic understanding of the Lord's Supper.

So, then, two big differences in theology between Lutherans and Catholics are consistently and clearly expressed by Luther in the orders of worship for which he was personally and directly responsible in Wittenberg. Luther did not claim "Lutheran substance" but went "Catholic style" to connect, albeit in a subversive manner, to the predominant culture of the day. He did Lutheran substance and Lutheran style, so that people realized when they entered a Lutheran service that this was not your grandfather's church. Of course, Luther did not set out to reinvent the wheel by discarding everything that had been added to Christ's institutions in the intervening 1500 years, but he did give two of his signal biblical rediscoveries a clear liturgical expression by rectifying both a fatal omission and a fatal addition to the traditional worship service.

As we saw earlier, in worship we not only relate to God by faith. By love, we also relate to other Christians who believe as we do. Now we see we also relate to others who do not believe as we do. We can call this also as a form of love – not the love of a casual embrace of error, but the love of speaking the truth so as to call those in error to repentance.

As far as the faith is concerned, we saw there is some freedom in what we add to Christ's means of grace, so long as it all conforms to their simplicity and expresses our doctrinal continuity with the early church – unlike the OT, the NT does not contain a comprehensive ceremonial law. As far as our love toward others is concerned, *service* – not freedom (certainly not individual or congregational freedom) – is the watchword: We serve our neighbors of the same faith properly by observing orders of worship jointly and uniformly *with them*, refraining from theologically unnecessary change, and adopting change jointly and uniformly *with them* in order to preserve our unity in the faith and avoid confusion and strife.

If we do this, our worship services can serve also as a public banner of the true confession of God's Word that is recognized as such by both friend and foe alike. Given that the first encounter with our congregations of many who are new to the area happens in worship, this is certainly not to be underestimated: Those who believe as we do will recognize "their" worship service because they will encounter the same confession in worship. Those who do not believe as we do will recognize the differences between their and our worship and thereby at least get a sense that there is a difference between our confessions.

(This can be a great starting point for our conversation with them about the faith once delivered to the saints by explaining our worship service by pointing to God's word and the Small Catechism.)

In other words, only if we properly love the members of the household of faith who believe as we do and present a unified "front" to those on the outside can we also properly love those who are not yet members of our churches and call them to repentance, without giving them some mixed message culminating in "open communion."

The recent ecumenical movement had the idea that worshiping in the same way is the path toward believing in the same way and therefore to church union and fellowship. You can see that reflected on a "high church" level in thinking that was behind the creation and the adoption of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (and, therefore, to an extent in *Lutheran Worship* and *Lutheran Service Book*, both of which build on the worship revolution that is the LBW):[39] What Luther had "clearly botched" by his liturgical ineptitude must be corrected by filling up the "gaps" in his orders of service. The simplicity of his orders must be brought back to the complexity of pre-reformation times – if not via borrowing from Rome, then by borrowing from Constantinople. The loss of confessional distinctiveness of the Lutheran service is a calculated result in this process of "ecumenical leveling."

Yet I submit we see the same thinking espoused even by those who'd never attend an ecumenical gathering at a posh Swiss resort. In other words, besides the high liturgical ecumenism we see in the most recent official church hymnals in American Lutheranism, we witness a popular liturgical ecumenism in the ceremonies in contemporary and blended worship services and in the songs on Christian radio stations. Ceremonies and hymns that emphasize what is doctrinally distinctive about a given church body are explicitly *discouraged* in favor of the kind of a music that draws people from all sorts of faith traditions together in worship because it limits itself to conveying "truths that all can affirm."[40]

Both the high and low church movements seem to operate under the assumption that the truths not all can affirm must be denominational specialties that need not inconvenience believers from other Christian traditions. Lutherans in America should remember that here we see once again the specter of "American Lutheranism" by which we

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[39] See the incisive brief study by O. Olson, *Reclaiming the Lutheran Liturgical Heritage*, intr. G. Grindal (Reclaim Resources: St. Paul, 2007).

[40] Cf. D. Wilt, *Perspectives on Christian Worship*, 196-197.

commonly mean a form of Lutheranism that, enculturated in its proper setting, casts aside all "Lutheran specialties."

What the popular forms of "American Christianity" with their Reformed bias find objectionable are the distinction between law and gospel, the means of grace, the ministry, and the centrality of the means of grace for Lutheran worship and the Christian life. What the higher forms of "European Christianity" with their Roman or Orthodox bias find objectionable is the centrality of the Word of God in worship, the distinction between law and gospel, as well as the gospel-character of the Lord's Supper, as well as the simplicity of traditional Lutheran worship as a whole.

Those who are students of the 1580 *Christian Book of Concord* – a.k.a. "the Lutheran Confessions" – know that we've been here before. In the years immediately following Luther's death in 1546, the nascent Lutheran churches were racked by what is called the Adiaphoristic Controversy that pitted Philip Melanchthon and his followers (the "Philippists") and Matthias Flacius and his followers (the "Gnesio-Lutherans," i.e., the "genuine Lutherans") against one another. It broke out when Melanchthon found that we can compromise with Rome in the "indifferent ceremonies" of worship so long as we maintain our doctrine intact.

Indeed, some might think today, if we could only go along with what everybody, or at least *almost* everybody, else is doing in worship, would we then not have ended the "worship wars" in our denomination? We might have done so but, according to the *Christian Book of Concord*, we would also have betrayed Christian faith and Christian love. Both faith and love compel us to express simply, clearly, and accurately our Christian confession by means of our worship service for the glory of Christ our one Redeemer and for the salvation of those who believe like we do *and* of those who believe differently.

Biographies of Speakers

Holger Sonntag

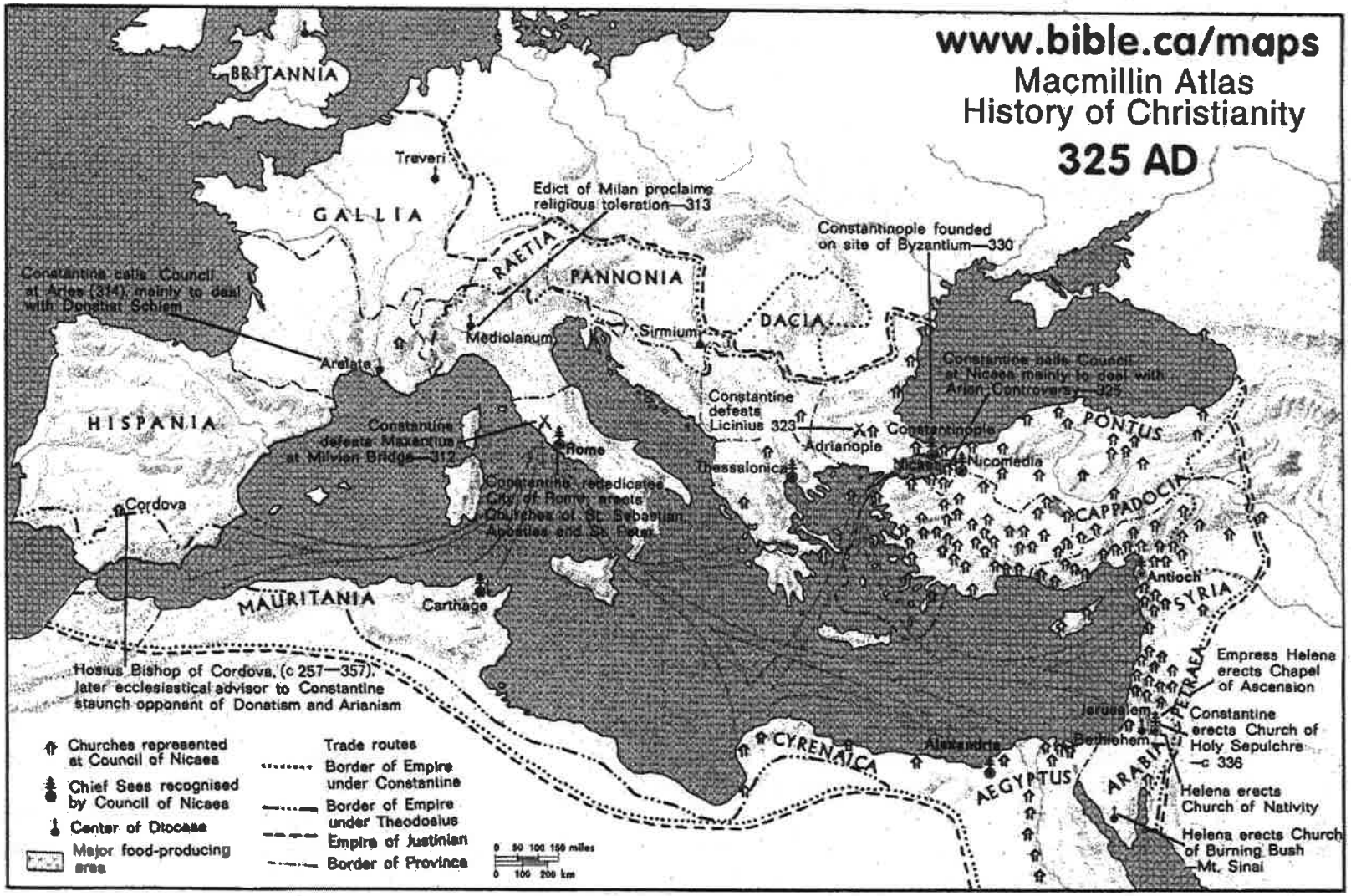
Rev. Dr. Holger Sonntag was born in Germany and raised in the Lutheran territorial church. After earning his Master's and Doctorate in theology at the University of Heidelberg, he emigrated to the US. Disappointed by the theological direction of the ELCA, he joined a congregation of the LCMS in Columbus, OH, and went on to study at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN. His vicarage and pastorate followed in Minnesota. After moving back to Ohio, he joined the U.S. Army and served for six years on active duty, including two deployments to Afghanistan. While serving as pastor and even during his time in the Army, Dr. Sonntag was able to speak at various regional, national, and international conferences on a variety of theological topics. Also during that time, he, in collaboration with Lutheran Press of Minneapolis and the Confessional Lutheran Education Foundation, managed to translate a number of works by Martin Luther into English, among them Luther's Antinomian Theses and Disputations, his book on Christians serving as soldiers, a sermon addressing the work of the Holy Spirit, as well as a sermon on the Lord's Supper and Confession. His most recently published translation is a compilation of two of Luther's sermons on Christian marriage based on Hebr. 13 and Eph. 5. Forthcoming works include a translation of the 1583 Apology of the Book of Concord as well as Luther's sermons on alms, prayer, and fasting according to Matth. 6 and church discipline according to Matth. 18. Dr. Sonntag has been working on the issue of worship in Lutheran theology somewhat reluctantly for the past five years. At the beginning stands his essay published in LOGIA in 2009 on distinguishing faith and love in Luther's theology of worship, which concluded with a brief review of the most recent LCMS Convention resolutions on worship in light of Luther's teachings. In the following year, he published a critical review of the LCMS's Council of Presidents' 2009 *Eight Theses* on worship (the 2010 Convention commended these theses to LCMS congregations) under the title, *The Unchanging Forms of the Gospel.* Later, he co-wrote with Rev. Paul Strawn a follow-up volume on Christian worship that discusses responses to *The Unchanging Forms.* His presentation is based on the 46 theses that summarize the main points developed in this follow-up volume that just before this conference became available in print.

Paul Strawn

Rev. Paul Strawn currently serves as pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Spring Lake Park Minnesota. Prior to his service at Prince of Peace, he also served Immanuel Lutheran Church in Silver Creek, MN and as vacancy pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Middleville, MN. A graduate of Concordia College, Ann Arbor, MI and Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN, Pr. Strawn has been a research fellow at the Institute for European History in Mainz, Germany and doctoral candidate at Philipps University in Marburg, Germany. In 2003 he founded Lutheran Press in Minneapolis, overseeing the production of a number of new translations of Martin Luther's works for personal and group study, as well as making available for the first time in English, Luther's *Antinomian Theses and Disputations*. During that time Pr. Strawn also spear-headed the production of Albrecht Peters' *Commentary on Luther's Catechisms*, the first volume of which was published by Concordia Publishing House in 2009. In 2010, he oversaw the launching of a new series from Lutheran Press entitled *Questions in Lutheran Theology and Church*. The first volume, written by Dr. Holger Sonntag, was entitled *The Unchanging Forms of the Gospel: A Response to Eight Theses on Worship* with a second *Christian Worship* just released. Currently Pr. Strawn is editing the second volume of Dr. Oliver Olson's biography of Matthias Flacius, *Matthias Flacius and the Freedom of the Church*, along with the first-ever translation of the *Apology of the Christian Book of Concord* by Timothy Kirchner, Nicholas Selneccer and Martin Chemnitz, due to be published later this year. Pr. Strawn has lectured and been published in journals in both the United States and Germany. In December of 2011 he served as a guest instructor at the Jonathan Ekong Memorial Lutheran Seminary in Obot Idim, Nigeria. In January of 2013 he helped to launch CLEF's *International Lutheran E-Reader Project* by lecturing at the Lutheran Seminary in Accra, Ghana using Kindle e-readers as the primary method for providing access to course materials and resources. Works from Lutheran Press are currently being used by colleges and seminaries in the United States, and by means of the funding and distribution of the Confessional Lutheran Education Foundation, in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Benin. Currently Lutheran Press books are being translated into Spanish for use in Chile, Argentina and Paraguay. Pr. Strawn is married and has six children, and three grandchildren.

Luther's Orders of Service, Common Service, LSB

1523 **Luther-Latin Mass**	1526 **Luther-German Mass**	1888 **Common Service**	2006 **LSB I/II**
		1. Confession	1. Confession
		2. Absolution	2. Absolution
3. Introit / Psalm	3. Hymn or German Psalm	3. Introit	3. Introit, Psalm or Hymn
4. Kyrie in usual form w/ seas. mel.	4. Kyrie (3x)	4. Kyrie	4. Kyrie-Litany
		5. Gloria in Excelsis	5. Hymn of Praise
5. Gloria in Excelsis	6. Collect	6. Collect	6. Collect
6. Collect			7. OT
			8. Psalm or Gradual
	9. Epistle	9. Epistle	9. Epistle
9. Epistle			
8. Gradual	10. German hymn	10. Alleluia	10. Alleluia and Verse
10. Alleluia	11. Gospel	11. Gospel	11. Gospel
11. Gospel			12. Hymn of the Day
	14. "We All Bel. in One True	14. Creed	
14. Nicene Creed	God"	13. Sermon	13. Sermon
12. Sermon	12. Sermon on Gospel		14. Creed
			15. Prayer of the Church
		16. Offertory	16. Offering / Offertory
		15. General Prayer	
	22. Paraphr. of LP; admon.	17. Preface	17. Preface
17. Preface		18. Sanctus	18. Sanctus
			19. Prayer of Thanksgiving
		22. Admonition, Lord's Prayer	
		20. Words of Institution	20. Words of Institution
20. Words of Institution	20. Words of Institution		
18. Sanctus	18. "Isaiah, Mighty Seer"		21. Proclamation of Christ
			22. Lord's Prayer
22. Lord's Prayer			23. Peace
		24. Agnus Dei	24. Agnus Dei
24. Agnus Dei		25. Communion	25. Communion
25. Communion	25. Communion	26. Nunc Dimittis	26. Post-communion canticle
		27. Post-communion collect	27. Post-communion collect
27. Post-communion collect	27. Post-communion collect	28. Benediction	28. Benediction
28. Benediction	28. Benediction		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Macmillin Atlas
History of Christianity
325 AD
BRITANNIA
Treveri
GALLIA
Edict of Milan proclaims religious toleration—313
RAETIA
PANNONIA
DACIA
Constantinople founded on site of Byzantium—330
Constantine calls Council at Arles (314) mainly to deal with Donatist Schism
Mediolanum
Sirmium
Arelate
Constantine defeats Licinius 323
Constantine calls Council at Nicaea mainly to deal with Arian Controversy—325
HISPANIA
Constantine defeats Maxentius at Milvian Bridge—312
Rome
Adrianople
Constantinople
PONTUS
Nicomedia
Thessalonica
Constantine rededicates City of Rome, erects Churches of St. Sebastian, Apostles and St. Peter
CAPPADOCIA
Cordova
Antioch
SYRIA
MAURITANIA
Carthage
Empress Helena erects Chapel of Ascension
Hosius Bishop of Cordova, (c 257—357) later ecclesiastical advisor to Constantine staunch opponent of Donatism and Arianism
Jerusalem
Constantine erects Church of Holy Sepulchre —c 336
Bethlehem
CYRENAICA
Alexandria
AEGYPTUS
ARABIA PETRAEA
Helena erects Church of Nativity
Helena erects Church of Burning Bush —Mt. Sinai
Churches represented at Council of Nicaea
Chief Sees recognised by Council of Nicaea
Center of Diocese
Major food-producing area
Trade routes
Border of Empire under Constantine
Border of Empire under Theodosius
Empire of Justinian
Border of Province
0 50 100 150 miles
0 100 200 km