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On Liturgical Uniformity

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daraus, „daß vor einem nach Knoblauch riechenden Juden auch wilde Tiere sich scheuen könnten“.¹²⁾ Aber Darius bekennet: „Das ist mein Befehl, daß man in der ganzen Herrschaft meines Königreichs den Gott Daniels fürchten und scheuen soll. Denn er ist der lebendige Gott, der ewiglich bleibet; und sein Königreich ist unvergänglich, und seine Herrschaft hat kein Ende. Er ist ein Erlöser und Nothelfer, und er tut Zeichen und Wunder beide im Himmel und auf Erden. Der hat Daniel von den Löwen erlöst“, B. 26. 27.

Damit schließt die Geschichte Daniels. Wir hören nichts weiter über ihn. Aber alle diese Erzählungen sind hochtröstliche, ermutigende Beweise der Ohnmacht der Weltreiche gegenüber dem Königreiche Gottes. Gott der Allmächtige weiß diejenigen, die sich auf ihn verlassen, zu schützen und zu erretten, auch wenn es bis zum Äußersten kommt. Der Name Daniels bewährt und erfüllt sich wieder und wieder: Gott richtet mich. Und darum wiederholen wir Luthers so treffende und schöne Worte: „Also ist Daniels Leben nichts anderes denn ein feiner reiner Spiegel, darinnen man sieht des Glaubens Kampf und Sieg durch Gottes Gnade wider alle Teufel und Menschen und seine große Frucht und Nutzen, den er durch Geduld und Kreuz schaffet beide vor Gott und der Welt.“¹³⁾

L. Fürbringer

On Liturgical Uniformity

It is a good thing to have liturgical uniformity. There is something of confessional value in a uniform liturgy. Also away from home the worshiper feels himself spiritually akin to his brethren of the faith where liturgy is familiar. In fact, if that liturgy preserves the traditional forms, he will feel himself akin to the Church of the past and will grow in appreciation of the Church Universal. Conversely, a lack of uniformity in liturgical forms is a cause of bewilderment in worship and a testimonial to a lack of that brotherly consideration which will lead units of the Church, also in adiaphora, to yield to the common good.

Thus we reason concerning uniformity of worship. The reasoning is correct. It is, however, incorrect to draw the inference that all lack of uniformity in worship is therefore unworthy of the Church and off the track of sound planning in worship. To draw this incorrect inference is to lose sight of the essence of the liturgy and of worship itself. The liturgy is not to be viewed as a sacred deposit that is tampered with only by impious hands. But rather

12) L. v. Gerlachs Bericht bei Bachmann, E. W. Hengstenberg, sein Leben und Wirken. 2. Band. Beilagen, S. 31.

13) Zitiert im 18. Synodalbericht des Kansas-Distrikts (1913), S. 60.

is it a valid principle that the liturgy is to be accommodated to the given parish situation. For this principle of liturgical accommodation Luther himself may be regarded as an illustration. In voicing this principle, he draws attention to basic needs of congregational life in a fashion that is applicable also to modern conditions.

We cannot, of course, make Luther the spokesman of chaos in liturgy. He is conscious of liberty as the dominant principle of the Church also in matters liturgical. But under this ideal of liberty, he sees Christians yielding also in liturgical matters to one another for the sake of the general good. "We are to see to it that liberty is the servant of love and our neighbor. . . . We should strive to be of one mind and, to the best possible extent, to be of the same manner and demeanor, even as all Christians have one Baptism, one Sacrament, and to no one God has given a particular kind."¹⁾

Yet we find that in the very tract in which Luther expresses this general principle he lays down broad lines for the accommodation of liturgical practise to special needs within the Church. He suggests three "orders"—ideas, and even forms, of liturgy—applicable to varying problems in the Christian community. He realizes, to begin with, that liturgical uniformity is *eo ipso* unattainable. "It is not my opinion that all Germany must accept our Wittenberg order."²⁾ He is not daunted by any metaphysical concept of liturgy. He is face to face with the problem in liturgy created by the overthrow of a system of doctrine and worship and the need for supplying apt forms in the place of the old. He feels that there will be variation, and variation on purpose, in the forms that are to be introduced. The *Deutsche Messe*, five years after Worms, recognizes widely divergent areas of religious attitude and assumes that liturgy will be modified accordingly.

The "first order" which he suggests is the Latin one, already outlined in the *Formula Missae* of 1523. This order of worship, he feels, is to be preserved for the sake of communities where schools are in vogue, i. e., Latin schools. "One ought to alternate Sunday for Sunday in all four languages, hold mass, sing and read in German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew."³⁾ It is noteworthy that the issuing of a Latin liturgy he regards as a device not for preserving the continuity of Latin in worship but as an emphasis upon "the languages," of which Latin was only one. This opinion results from the humanist's glory in language, from the Reformer's sense

1) *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdienstes*. 1526; St. Louis ed., X, 226.

2) *Op. cit.*, 227.

3) *Op. cit.*, 228.

of need for an instructed ministry, and from Luther's own peculiar view of language as a medium of divine instruction in the Word, partaking of a divine character itself, and therefore a purpose as well as a means in worship. Only as an exception did Luther view the humanistically trained individual as being of service outside of the ministry of the Church.⁴⁾ "I should like to know where in three years we are to get pastors, teachers, and sextons? If we remain idle, and if the princes in particular do not see to it that both preparatory schools and universities are properly maintained, there will be such a want of educated persons that three or four cities will have to be assigned to one pastor."⁵⁾ For the sake of the young, then, services in Latin were to continue.⁶⁾

The languages, reasons Luther, the humanist Christian, are the means by which, originally or in translation, the Word of God was conveyed to men; if we despise the languages, then we despise the Word behind them. "If through neglect we lose the languages (which may God forbid), we will not only lose the Gospel, but it will finally come to pass that we will lose also the ability to speak and write either Latin or German."⁷⁾ It was a simple inference which made Luther view Latin, then, as a valid language for liturgy and the liturgy as a valid instrument for preserving the language. Latin was to be a language of worship for scholars in order that they could worship God aright also in foreign countries.⁸⁾ If it is correct to foster that ability when acquired, then the liturgy may do its share in the acquisition of the language ability.

Akin to the humanism of Luther's liturgical thinking is his interest in art. Commonly we think of the Reformation as restoring to the laity, to the congregation, a part in the worship. And yet the real lagged behind the ideal. Where there were organs, for instance, in the Reformation age, they were used not for accompanying the singing of the congregation, but "struck into" the *chorale* two or three times in every hymn with a solo rendition of the tune,⁹⁾ the congregation continuing in unaccompanied unison singing thereafter. These *chorales* were regarded as a concession to the folk-song trends of the vernacular music. Luther's church

4) *Sermon on the Duty of Sending Children to School*, 1530; in F. V. N. Painter, *Luther on Education*, p. 234 ff.

5) *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

6) Cf. *Deutsche Messe*, X, 228.

7) *To the Mayors and Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools*; in Painter, p. 186.

8) Cf. Karl Mueller, *Kirchengeschichte*, II, 2, p. 44.

9) Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach*, Newman tr., I, p. 27; quoting Geo. Rietschel, *Die Aufgabe der Orgel im Gottesdienste bis in das 18. Jahrhundert*.

chorale-book, *Geystliche Gesanck-Buechlein*, published by him and Walther at Wittenberg in 1524 and containing thirty-eight hymns, has the *cantus firmus* in the tenor, offering four- and five-part settings, indicating that the book was designed for the choir.¹⁰⁾ Jonas's *Erfurt Enchiridion* of 1524 was issued particularly for the home.¹¹⁾ "Where a choir existed, the congregation took little part in the singing, being restricted to the *Credo*—sung between the reading of the Gospel and the sermon—and perhaps a Communion hymn. In Wittenberg—so it appears from the account given by Musculus—the congregation as a rule did not sing, but left even the *chorales* to the choir. In other places—Erfurt, for example,—it was customary for the people to sing alternately with the choir, between the Epistle and the Gospel, in such a way that the choir sang the sequence and the people joined in with a German *chorale* appropriate to the time of the year. . . . On closer inspection we get the impression that the congregational singing, instead of gaining ground, was in the course of the sixteenth century driven back by the art-singing and by the organ."¹²⁾ Much to the delight of the musician, Luther was quite willing, because of his love of polyphonic music,¹³⁾ to preserve choral, non-congregational art forms in worship, although in theory he regarded the congregational *chorale* as the ideal for the church service.¹⁴⁾ It was not until the Italian melodic trend overcame the contrapuntal style in vogue in German composition that the congregation began to get its chance.¹⁵⁾

The extent to which we shall imitate Luther and give way to cultural predilections in liturgical forms must of course be a matter of intense self-discipline as well as analysis of the parish. Where there is a substratum of genuine culture in a parish and its community, the cultural elements of worship, such as niceties of language and musical accompaniment, may possibly prove stimulating. But pastor and organist must remember that they are to a certain degree specialists in ecclesiastical culture. Their enjoyment of the art forms of the liturgy may not be shared to a comparable degree

10) Schweitzer, I, 28.

11) "Bey sich zu haben zu stetter uebung und trachtung geystlicher Gesenge und Psalmen. . . . Mit diesen und dergleichen gesenge sollt man byllich die yungen Kinder auffertziehen." Title-page quoted by Schweitzer, I, 7, 8, 28.

12) Schweitzer, I, 31, quoting Rietschel, p. 49.

13) Schweitzer, I, 29, quoting Luther's preface to Walther's *Lob und Preis der himmlischen Kunst Musica*.

14) *Ordnung des Gottesdienstes in der Gemeinde*, 1523.

15) Schweitzer, I, 39.

by their laity, even if the latter is quite advanced. In architecture we deal with more readily apprehended art forms. More critique is necessary in music. If it is certain that a congregation can assimilate the mood for which music is the evocation through a given musical item of the liturgy, then well and good. If the musical appreciation of the parish is so facile and universal that it can with the cultured musician lay aside the language of later scale-tempering and be stirred directly by the ancient church modes, very well; then the traditional chants will have their ancient appeal. In Luther's day popular tunes, hence also hymn tunes, were all contrived in the seven modes which the Church had developed; every ear was adjusted to these intervals. Since the eighteenth century five of those modes have become extinct outside of sporadic experiments in classical and modern composition; hence it takes the learning of a new musical language to be stirred by them. Furthermore, any music in worship must speak so directly, merge so utterly with the speech of man to God or God to man in worship, that the message remains completely in the foreground, the indefinable mood of the music simply lending its tacit emphasis. The people of Bach's day were offended by the "theatrical" cantatas which he prepared for their services. Musically these critics may have been short of the ideal; but liturgically they were not far from right.¹⁶⁾ There are hymn tunes historically and musically correct that are, even for the cultured, physically and emotionally difficult; hence they obtrude themselves into apt liturgical mood. There is beautiful choral music, rich with emotional values, that becomes unsuitable for the liturgical service because it creates moods for its own sake rather than for the message it is to reinforce. Even for a cultured congregation the choice of liturgical forms must be objective, utterly adapted to religious capacity.

Luther's "second order" was his *Deutsche Messe*, instituted for the sake of the simple layman.¹⁷⁾ The language is to be German. Some of the service sections are translated into metrical or hymn forms—hymns which could be sung by the congregation, but which were quite frequently sung by a choir. In fact, if we deduct the changes necessary for doctrinal reasons, i. e., the introduction of a sermon preceding the offertory and the modification of the ceremonial of the Sacrament, about the only difference from the old mass order is language. "Here we let the eucharistic vestments, altar, and candles remain until they are worn out or we feel like changing them. If any one wishes to deal otherwise in this matter, let him do so."¹⁸⁾ Is this conformity—conformism—due

16) Schweitzer, I, 263. Bach himself called his cantatas *concerti*.

17) Cf. note 1 supra; cf. col. 228.

18) *Op. cit.*, 235.

to the ideal that all liturgies must be the same? Hardly. The conservation of the old forms is to be, paradoxically enough, in inverse ratio to the religious stature of the worshiper. "We do not suggest this order of worship for the sake of those who are already Christians. For they do not need such things, nor do we live on their account; but Christians live for the sake of those of us who are not yet Christians, in order that they make Christians out of us; the Christian's service is in the spirit."¹⁹ In keeping with his dynamic view of the Church as invisible, Luther here looks out upon the German Church of his day with the attitude that the true Church was buried in its midst; and he builds his service order with a half-disgusted, half-wistful thought for the lost masses, trained in liturgical forms through generations of churchgoing, yet not aware of the power of the Gospel. He wants the "simple," average, not really Christian "layman," "who only comes to gape," to utilize all the facilities of worship to which he has been accustomed in order that he might possibly be grooved and guided in his devotion to higher things. "Where it would be helpful, I would permit all the clanging of bells and piping of organs and sounding forth whatever can sound forth. This is what made the papal services so damnable, that they made laws, works, merits, out of them and suppressed faith and did not conform them to the youth or to the simple."²⁰ Where forms of worship are customary, they are useful in safeguarding devotional habit and leading to the essence, the Gospel.

If, then, we are dealing with a community of people long acquainted with the traditional forms of worship, it will be well to keep these forms; they are instruments for directing the mind smoothly toward the Gospel. Or, conversely, their omission may come between the individual and the Gospel. Here we must be aware of a further problem, of course,—the retention of forms may result in thoughtless, mechanical worship. Hence every device for variety within a given order of service must be used. The Common Service is an opiate unless its propers are used. Another solution to this problem would be to change the liturgy from time to time; but then the changed elements must fit smoothly into the worshiper's consciousness. These two solutions will indicate that, in dealing with liturgies for congregations accustomed to them, we must use the traditional forms with complete riches or with utter and basic simplicity; compromises are a medium that is not golden.

Luther's attitude becomes clearer when we study his "third order," which he regards as the ideal of the evangelical liturgy. He

¹⁹) *Op. cit.*, 227.

²⁰) *Op. cit.*, 227.

admits that it is visionary. "If we had the people and persons who earnestly desired to be Christians, you could very soon install such an order and mode. But I am not able or willing as yet to arrange such a congregation or meeting. For I do not have the people and persons for it, and I do not notice many urging it." ²¹⁾ This was five years after Worms.

"This order of worship would not be a public affair along with nondescript people, but those who earnestly desire to be Christians and confess the Gospel with hand and mouth would register and gather together, perhaps in a home, for prayer, reading, Baptism, the Sacrament, and the practise of other Christian works. Under such an arrangement you could recognize those who did not regard themselves as Christians; you could admonish, reprove, reject, or ban such according to the rule of Christ. Here you could impose general almsgiving upon Christians, which would be freely given and distributed to the poor according to the example of St. Paul 2 Cor. 9:1, 2, 12. Here you would not need much and grand singing. Here a brief apt manner of Baptism and Sacrament could be in vogue, and everything could be directed toward Word and prayer and love. Here you would have a good brief catechism concerning Creed, Ten Commandments, and Lord's Prayer." ²²⁾ "In the correct mass among actual Christians the altar would not remain as it is, and the priest would always turn to the people, as doubtless Christ did at the Sacrament himself." ²³⁾

It is for the sake, then, of the embryonic, nay, the prospective, Christians that liturgical forms are retained in the Church—retained because, and if, they already know them. The closer the ideal of worship in spirit and in truth comes, the less important are the forms of worship. Thus Luther reasons. It is significant that Luther's *Deutsche Messe*, after offering detailed instruction for the institution of a German order of worship, including German chants with Gregorian tones, gets down to the thing Luther deems basic; and that is not liturgy at all. But it is the inauguration of catechetical instruction. Worship of any kind, he feels, is only a form until the congregation is instructed. This means the installation of a system of religious instruction beginning in the home and carried out through the intensive methodology of question and answer on the principal parts of Christian doctrine—the system which came into being through the Small Catechism, reinforced by the type of preaching exemplified in the Large Catechism.

By virtue of the vigorous religious administration of the Lu-

21) *Op. cit.*, 228.

22) *Ibid.*

23) *Op. cit.*, 235.

theran princes in the north- and central-German groups the "first" and "second" orders of service were promptly introduced, including liturgical chants of clergy and choir, eucharistic vestments, and Latin service elements. In the southwest, owing to less effective prestige of the princes as well as the Calvinistic pattern, the choirs of students were gradually dismissed, the academic *Schaube*, sometimes with a surplice, replaced the eucharistic vestments; and exorcism in Baptism, ordination, and confirmation disappeared.²⁴⁾ But the same accident of good government that retained the liturgy designed for religiously inferior masses also worked for catechetical training in the home; Wuertemberg in 1559, Saxony in 1580, installed systems of supervision of home training of the Catechism.²⁵⁾ The home, then, may be thought of as having attained the ideal of a worship institution as which Luther envisioned it, even though the Church did not. Outside of sporadic correspondence little remains of liturgical significance in his later works. The institution of the congregation and the Christian princes have taken over; let them proceed; but let men know the Word, the doctrine! — thus Luther's attitude to the entire problem may be discerned.

In one respect our twentieth-century problem is similar to Luther's. We are confronted, as our problem of evangelization of the world comes close home to us, with a vast number of people, a small minority of whom we imagine, for sure, to be Christians. But there is a great difference, which is of importance in the approach to the liturgical problem: the great mass is not liturgically habituated. Our problem is not one of retention of liturgical forms but of introducing them to the individual. Each new worshiper in our church is a liturgical problem. He has been, we trust, grounded in the elemental considerations of the faith. Shall he be launched into a complete worship technique? a traditionally complicated service? There is sense to that, Luther would say, if the newcomer had always known the technique and the service. Then it would be a track for his wayward devotion. What would Luther say of a man without liturgical experience? That problem was not one of his.

Liturgy was the stimulus, to a liturgical age, for devotion. For the non-liturgical mind brought into the environment of the Christian faith the church of today must be ready to find new stimuli. The approach, says Luther, lies in the Catechism. The emphasis must first be on instruction. The liturgy does not go beyond that, is nothing without that. This instruction must be rooted outside of the service. It must be psychological. The liturgical sermon

24) Karl Mueller, p. 47.

25) *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

cannot be the one means of instructing a Christian congregation. There is no give and take; there is no checking of results; there is more art than science to it. The church, to keep up with Luther's amazing attitude toward this problem, must today devise plans for instruction in keeping with the modern mind, and swiftly, before it is too late. The family must be penetrated, even though the family is dying. The eye must be reached, even though eyes flit instead of dwell. Loyalties must be built up, of which devotion to worship will be but a symptom; the loyalty must be to the Christ, to the Word of Christ, to the Church of the Word of Christ.

Shall we say that "we do not have the people and the individuals" for the "third order," the simple rudiments of prayer and Word and Sacrament, which Luther suggests? Hardly. We have well-indoctrinated people. We have generations of Christian life to show for our work. Few congregations there are without a nucleus of sound Christians. We shall not be depriving them of anything by simplifying, by adapting, our liturgical forms. The more immediate their expression of prayer and praise, the more apt the conveyance of forgiveness in Word and Sacrament, the happier they. They need no stimuli. The better the child of God, the simpler his conversation with the Father. True, he will speak in his language, accommodated to his level of learning and culture, couched in the imagery of his day. Therefore the liturgist must study also his best Christians to provide apt liturgical expression for them. We are no longer predominantly rural. Hundreds of cultural and educational patterns make up the kaleidoscope of the twentieth-century church. Each parish and community must make its own analysis of its needs in worship language, mood, and tools. Care, decorum, restfulness, otherworldliness, Sacrament and sacrifice, remain essential, and forever, in the programming of worship. But—this is the burden of our interpretation of the *Deutsche Messe*—it is not a sin to adapt liturgies. Liturgy must lead to faith and love, express faith and love. For our day the leading is of minor importance; that must be done by the *Katechismus*.

We need not bid farewell to the things we treasure. If we treasure them, that proves that they have a place. But uniformity is nothing in itself unless it be in the simplicity of the worship that is in spirit and in truth. All else is a tool to that end. He is the master who is not suffocated by his tools but wields them for their purpose.

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