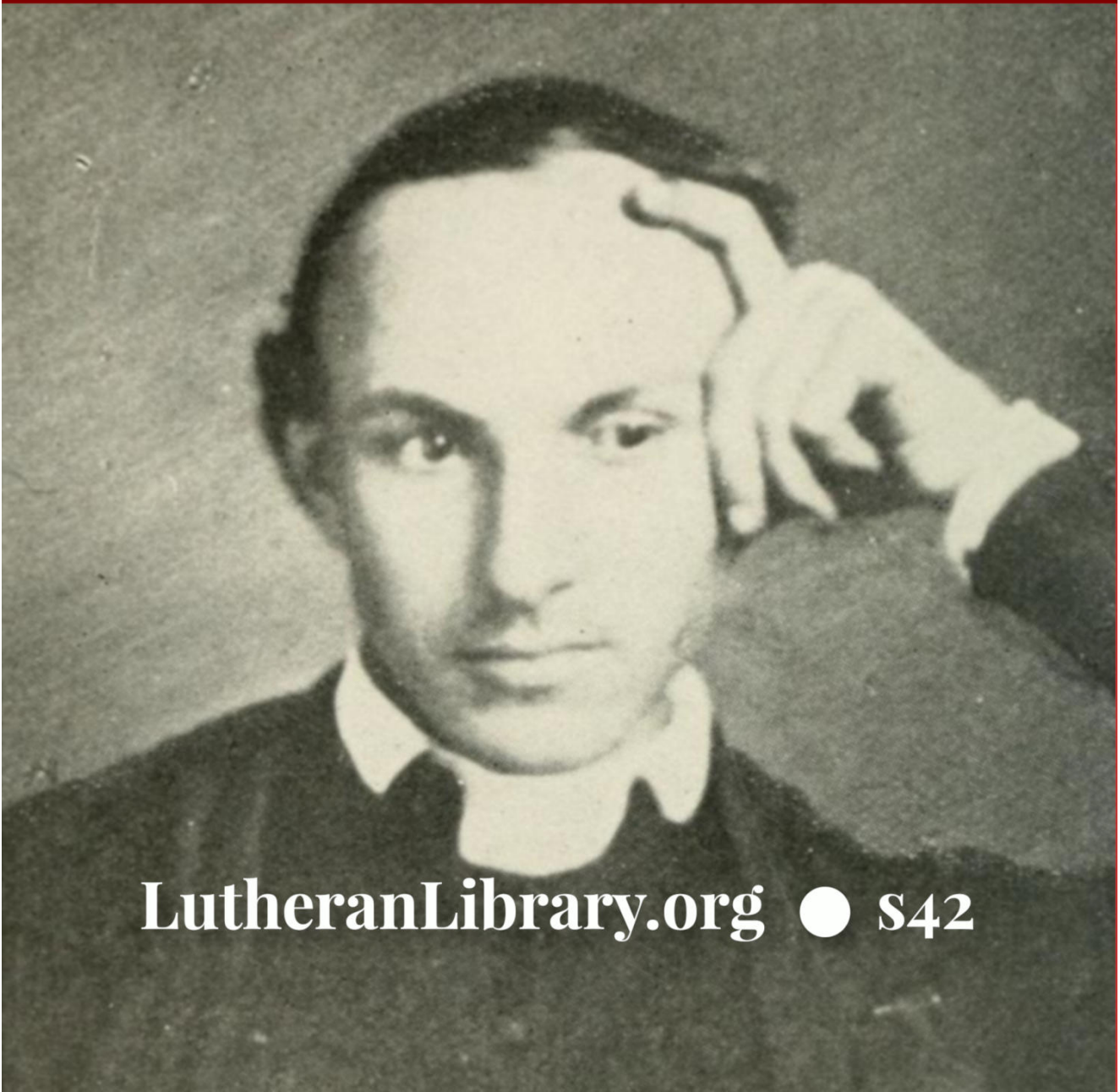


# Matthias Loy

## Lutheran Worship



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# Lutheran Worship

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# Lutheran Worship

By Matthias Loy

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# The Lutheran Cultus.

**By Rev. M. Loy. Pastor of the Lutheran Church, Delaware, Ohio.**

AT A TIME like the present, when Christians everywhere are earnestly inquiring after the old paths, the church's cultus, or public services generally, which is so intimately connected with her life and spirit, cannot be deemed unworthy of notice. Latterly the subject has, as is natural when so much is thought and said about Zion's past, present and future, been exciting no small degree of attention; and to many minds nothing, which may be said in elucidation of the questions involved in it, comes unseasonably. Old liturgies are eagerly sought and purchased, as well as old theologies; and the interest manifested, in various parts of the country, in the liturgical and hymnological movements, is proof sufficient that the subject is not looked upon with utter indifference by those who think much, and mournfully, and hopefully still, of the wars and woes and prospective weal of our holy mother.

We look upon this interest as a not inauspicious sign of the times. In proportion as the devotion to the faith of our fathers increases, do we expect the yearning after the forms in which this found its proper utterance, in worship, to become deeper and more general. The old spirit will look fondly and wistfully toward the old body, and long to inhabit it once more as its appropriate home. The awe inspiring, solemn, tranquilizing old service becomes more and more ideally present, as we gaze upon the past, and our souls, passing around and around the old structures, desire, with the feelings of the banished, to look in — to be permitted to worship there as brethren. But we must take our shoes from off our feet, for that place is holy ground. Whilst we muse upon it sadly we become more fitted for it. It breathes upon us with its balmy, chastening breath. Old memories crowd upon us, "pleasant and mournful to the soul," but commending themselves the more to our hearts the thicker they cluster. Do we hope against hope when we trust that our eyes shall yet see, and our hearts shall yet rejoice

while participating in, the glorious old liturgical service of the Lutheran Church, making her glad throughout all her bounds? It maybe: be it as the good Lord, who knows our wants and loves us better than we do or can ourselves, will and please; but to us it appears as a “thing of beauty,” and who shall blame us for hoping that it may yet prove a “joy forever?”

The Cultus of the Church has not had its importance overrated in the attention which it has received. It merits more, perhaps, than has lately been given. It is the expression of the Church’s life and spirit, and bears, therefore, in some sense, a confessional character. So far as it does this, it requires the same vigilance and care on the part of churchmen to preserve its purity, as the confession generally. But it is also an important means of propagating that life and spirit, and therefore, we shall not go amiss if we make it a subject of prayerful concern. Towards the illustration of this, as an incentive to further inquiry in this domain, the present article is directed.

## **Forms and Order of Public Worship Are Not Adiaphora**

The forms and order of public worship, are not, in every sense, adiaphora (things indifferent). No one, beyond the Romish pale, presumes that they are absolutely necessary to salvation, as they exist at any particular period. The Augsburg Confession guards sufficiently against any such errors, when it says in Art. 7, that “for the true unity of the Church nothing more is required, than agreement concerning the doctrines of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments, nor is it necessary that the same human traditions, that is, rites and ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere observed.” The greatest variety might possibly exist in the same Church and with the same faith. Heresy and schism are not inseparable from differences in this field.

Still, we cannot look upon it as altogether immaterial what form of worship the Church possesses. Nor was the Lutheran Church altogether indifferent, notwithstanding the principle of her confession just quoted. Such passages as the following in the old Church regulations were never suspected of a departure from the spirit of Lutheranism. "Although the Christian Church is not built upon the uniform order of ceremonies, but upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, which is our Savior Jesus



Christ, and upon His holy divine word, yet, as God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, and desires that all things should be done decently in the congregation and that unity should be sought, (1 Cor. 14), there can be no doubt, that the adoption and preservation of uniform, spiritual and useful ceremonies, so far as possible, is a service highly acceptable to His Eternal Divine Majesty, which, apart from the many other purposes of utility which it subserves, tends to preserve the unity in His doctrine and to prevent many offenses to the common man, who observes the external ceremonies and judges the doctrines, sacraments, and the whole ministerial office by them. Therefore, the prescribed order in hymns, lessons and ceremonies shall be observed in our churches. And where it has hitherto not been done, the pastors shall be governed by this regulation; they shall not, without very weighty reasons, depart from it, but in free Christian charity subject themselves, that strifes and offenses among the people may be avoided. No one shall be allowed arbitrarily to oppose this order, or make alterations according to his own pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

No, it is not altogether indifferent. The spirit of the Church must manifest itself in some form: without a Cultus she cannot exist. The form will stand in an organic relation to herself; if no extraneous cause prevents it, the form will harmonize with the spirit, and bear its impress. Gross wrong may be done by laying such obstructions in the Church's way as prevent the development of her worship according to her internal life; and in spite of let and hindrance she will work her own way at last to a full expression outwardly of what she cherishes within her bosom. Of this we are the more confident as the conviction deepens and strengthens, that the Cultus stands in a more intimate relation to herself than the dress to the body, which may be changed or wholly dispensed with, without essential injury; although even in this view it would not be wholly without its importance. The queen must not appear in rags — the king must not be addressed in doggerel — the place appropriated for a habitation of God, in an especial sense, must not be a stable, whilst men are shown into parlors. But the relation of Church and Cultus is rather the organic one of soul and body, the former influencing the latter always and adapting it to itself. The life and spirit of the Church must ever stamp itself upon the forms and order of her public worship, and make the latter a general confession of her faith.

A glance at the cultus of several of the chief branches of the Church, and the principles according to which it is arranged, will convince us of the

correctness of this position.

## **The Papal System: Rigid Ecclesiasticism**

One of the principal features of the Papal system is its rigid ecclesiasticism. The Church is put in the place of Christ. The cultus is evidently influenced by this throughout, and could scarcely stand any length of time without it. A different spirit would soon produce for itself a different form. We hear but little there of the divine word; its place is supplied by legends of saints. The heroes and martyrs of the Church leave but little room for prophets, apostles and evangelists. The Holy Supper even appears in her pageantry rather as a sacrifice of than a sacrament by the Church. She presumes to be in possession of all already, and need not stand before the Lord as poor and needy. She gives to the Lord offerings and sacrifices, and seldom thinks of receiving. Her sacrifices are acceptable to God, and every individual member, in virtue precisely of his membership, makes them also when the Church makes them through the priest, without much concern about his own spiritual condition. The laity have very little to do, therefore, with the public worship; they need not participate with song and response; it is not even important that they should understand the language: the Church can speak as well, by proxy, in Latin. The power of the priest, upon whose will the relation of the individual to the whole, and therefore, each one's salvation depends, is conspicuous in doctrine and cultus; he is an important part of the Church, which the cultus must glorify. She prays to herself in her saints; she preaches herself in her saints' legends; she commemorates herself in her saints' holy days. As performed by the holy Church the rite and ceremony has moral worth in itself, apart from the laity's subjective condition, and forms and ceremonies are therefore multiplied to an enormous extent, while the individual often remains a mere wondering spectator as the gorgeous pageantry passes by.

This multiplication of ceremonies is also connected with the Pelagianizing tendency of the Romish church, in accordance with which there is something meritorious in all her acts. But also in another view is the depreciation of grace and the undue exaltation of nature, in Pelagian fashion, manifested in her love of pomp and display. She uses them for their influence upon our fallen nature, without caring to ascertain whether this

influence is exercised by the Holy Spirit, using art merely as an occasion for applying the word, or whether it is the merely natural result of its operation upon the imagination and passions. Whether it is divine grace that inspires us with reverence and awe, or human genius, when architecture and sculpture, and music and painting combine their magic charms, is not material, the only thing of importance is, that the effect be produced, whether it be the effect of divinely-wrought, abiding faith or humanly-excited, transitory feeling. The evils and errors of the Romish system of doctrine are also the evils and errors of that Church's cultus.

## **The Reformed Churches: Start Fresh**

The Reformed churches, as distinguished from the Lutheran, were actuated by different principles. Their religious system will not easily be confounded with the Romish; but just as little will their cultus, which is controlled by a spirit of its own, giving it a distinctively Reformed character. The formal principle of the Reformation, that the Bible is the only rule and norm of faith and practice, was not received by those churches altogether without endangering the material principle. To them the Bible was rather a new starting point, from which the Church and all her appurtenances must be developed anew. What she already was and had was of little consequence. They thought it not sufficient to sift and try the old possessions by the Bible; from it rather new ones must be drawn for the occasion. Their cultus showed and shows the effects of this. Nothing was left of the church-edifices but the blank walls, devoid of all ornament — mere lecture-rooms in the most simple style of architecture. There could be no enthusiasm for the “frozen music” and “petrified religion” of the ancient domes. Among them no architect was raised up to sing a psalm to God of which a Freibourg cathedral should come. Altars became mere tables in the plainest dining room style. The ministerial dress must be abandoned as preserving a merely superstitious awe. The baptismal laver was not convenient, besides reminding too much of certain superstitions connected with it. The organ's deep swell and soul-stirring peals of beauty and majesty must be hushed. Bells must cease their mystic sound. Statues, paintings, crucifixes and crosses must vanish. Bowing at Jesus' name, folding the hands in prayer, making the sign of the cross, and all such symbols, must disappear as

unnecessary childish ceremony and form. Music, in general, is respected but little. Even poetry is a field left fallow, the psalms serving all their purposes. What they have in this domain is undoubtedly borrowed or, at least, learned from the Lutherans. All this is accounted for by the principle mentioned above: those things are not commanded — they cannot be produced immediately from the Bible. The process by which they are ruled out is thoroughly unhistorical, but, in the sense of the Reformed, thoroughly biblical. They are not to be looked upon as possessions of the church, to be retained precisely because they are so, unless the Bible, prohibits them; the question with them is simply whether the Bible enjoins them as necessary, and then, of course, they are dropped, because there is no churchly prejudice in their favor. Whether the departure from these principles observed occasionally at the present day in the cultus of Reformed churches, betokens an approximation toward Lutheranism, or whether it is the result of the indifference which prevails so extensively in all churches, we will not presume to say; but the fact does not militate against the views here presented, because it may be accounted for in either of these ways.

With regard to holidays, fasts and festivals, these churches have certainly not relaxed their rigidity in the application of their biblical principle. Not only has the ecclesiastical year, among them, become a nonentity; but, in late years, even the Christian year with the epochs in Christ's history, are, at least in some denominations, dwindling entirely away. Even Christmas, Good Friday and Easter are falling into oblivion as high days for the Church: as if men feared they might show their Lord an honor, which He has not required in so many words, while the feeling of fitness and propriety is sufficient to secure a celebration of civil festivals, without law. The minor holidays, as belonging to the history of the Church, distinguished thus from those which refer directly to the earthly life and death of our Savior, never could be respected or relished by those who had no sympathy with the history of the Church — no appreciation of the Lord's life continued in His Mystical Body. To all this the Episcopal Church, of course, forms an exception, as a Church altogether *sui generis*, with her Reformed articles, Lutheran Prayer-Book, and traditions not altogether free from the Romish spirit.

Add to this the rejection of the sacramental element in the Reformed churches, and their bald worship will be sufficiently accounted for. They do not believe in the real, active presence of the Savior in His Church. They do

not assemble to receive from the Lord, so much as to bring to Him their offerings. Their cultus is altogether sacrificial. Even the Lord's Supper and Baptism are memorials. Whatever they have in the house of the Lord they are expected to bring with them. The whole cultus partakes, therefore, rather of a stirring, awakening, than of a quiet, solemn, soothing character. The sermon is more excited and exciting. So are also the prayers, and for this reason mostly extemporary. Thus, with all their endeavors to do away with all art and pomp as influencing the imagination, and to suit everything to the naked understanding, they fall into the Romish error again of trusting to natural enthusiasm, and this unquestionably from the unsacramental separation of the Holy Spirit from His chosen means of operation upon men's souls. This depreciation of the sacramental exerted its influence also in preventing a proper development of the sacrificial. They received little, and therefore, had little to give. Hence the sermon, in time, became not only the center, but almost the sum of their cultus. Upon their principles could it or can it ever be otherwise?

We are now ready to appreciate the thesis, that the Lutheran Cultus is also distinctively Lutheran. If the genius of our Church were not evident in its parts and their arrangement, it would be an exception to the rest. But it is not: her cultus is an expression of her principles and faith. With her the word of God was paramount also; but this led her not to despise the customs of the Church, but rather to respect them. No one, who has the least acquaintance with her history, supposes that she went to work upon radical principles. She was strictly conservative from the start. The Bible was to her the touchstone and test of all doctrines and practices; but she did not, in a destructive, revolutionary spirit, overturn all existing doctrines and forms for the purpose of constructing others anew from the Bible in their stead. The Bible was her norm and measure, and she applied it, as such, to things as they existed. She cut off excrescences, because they squared not with her rule; she supplied deficiencies for the same reason. Thus she reformed the old cultus as she did the old doctrine. She proved all things and held fast what was good.

## **True Reformation Is Never The Destruction Of A Church And The Creation Of A New One**

If a reformation consists in the entire destruction of a church and the creation of a new one from the Bible, as some seem to think, the Lutheran Reformation never was completed and, in the spirit of the Lutheran Church, never can or will be. She had no heart for any such work, and we trust she never will have. This conservative, historical principle is manifested in her order of public worship, as well as in the various parts of which it is composed, both as to the form and the contents. The *Kyria*, *Litany*, *Gloria*, *Creed*, *Sanctus* *Agnus Dei*, *Benedictus*, *Magnificat*, *Nunc Demittis* and *Te Deum* were as much her property, and are now, as they were the possessions of the Church before, receiving only, wherever necessary, a greater adaptation to her own spirit and her paramount purpose of instruction. The communion remained for her an essential part of every full worship, and of this the capital. By the word mankind was called to the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, in the Holy Supper this was received and enjoyed. Around these chief parts of the cultus all the others collected, as the forms of reception and thank-offerings for gifts received. Without either word or sacrament there can be no public worship in the Lutheran sense; without the communion there can be no complete worship. The spirit of our Church requires weekly communion.

The Church-year, upon the same principles, had her profound respect. She honored the festivals and holidays, with their appropriate lessons, giving them something more than a mere commemorative character in her eyes. Not only was the Lord's day, with the scripture texts which gave distinctive character to each in the year's revolution, and which were therefore, also the texts for her sermons, considered a high day, as the weekly festivals of the Lord's resurrection; she had a love for all that were rendered sacred by their associations with our Lord's history. The old Christian year, with its sunless saints' days and saints' legends, required reformation; but she did not find it necessary to abolish it entirely. She had a sure rule in her Bible, to guard against superstition and dishonor of God by giving honor to man. The festivals, at whose foundation lay a work and word of the Lord could stand, and the word made present the work. Not only the days of the highest order, as associated immediately with Christ's work, were to be sacred. Christ works in and through His people also, and the work in them and through them hallow certain days. There were festivals of a subordinate rank, therefore, retained as the apostles' days,

Mary days, etc. Her historical principle necessarily prevented such from falling into contempt.

## The Church and Its Furniture

The Church and its furniture did not require destruction and reerection and arrangement. She honored the old domes of the past, through whose “long drawn aisle and fretted vault the pealing anthem swelled the note of praise.” “Once ye were holy — ye are holy still!” The wondrous organ — how could she else than love it warmly, since it praises God with such deep solemnity? She loved the old statutes and pictures too, with a perfect love: they are a “visible word” that speaks when all around is silence. She did not fear that the Lord would be displeased by offering to Him the beauty and glory of earth; for all things fair and bright are His. Art belongs not to the devil, though often abused to serve his dark purposes; it may and should be baptized in Christianity and offered to the Lord, and then it will be an acceptable offering. The Lutheran Church thought it beneath her dignity to bring it into her service merely to please and invite ungodly artists by its natural charms; she well knew how to distinguish between nature and grace — between the operations of human art and the Holy Spirit. She steered clear of the Romish Charybdis in this respect; but she shunned the Scylla on the other side just as well. Her object was to instruct even in the beautiful and sublime, and she reckoned not amiss. She will not, moreover, be suspected of considering Christianity intended solely for the imagination and feelings, and arranging everything accordingly with a view only to influence them; but wrong would be done her just as well by imputing to her an exclusive concern for the intellect. She rather looked upon it as designed for man, in whom the intellect, sensibilities and will are found, than for any one of these taken separately and man thus gained for Christ, he had the right and duty to exercise all his powers and have them exercised: art and science are holy when holy persons use them.

The altar had not the rule of faith and practice against it, but the usage and history of the past for it: it was retained. Nor is this at all improper; her principle required it. It is the symbolical representation of the place where the Lord dwells, who is present in the Church. From this holy place the Lord bestows the Gospel word and the sacrament, and here the

congregation offer their sacrifices of prayer and praise, whence the minister turns, with the people, toward the altar in the latter case. The church retained also a characteristic ministerial dress, there being no word against it, and old usage, beside the propriety of an official dress upon him who really holds an office apart from the general priesthood, for it. She loved the sign of the cross, bowing at Jesus' name, etc. as natural utterances of her emotions, by signs both expressive and impressive. In all these things she had no fears whatever of going astray, for she was sure of her principle: her heart was fixed, and her steps bold and decided.

## **Real Presence In The Church**

From the beginning the Lutheran Church was steady and unwavering in her faith in (he Lord's real presence in His Church. Her members accordingly assembled rather to receive from than to give to the Lord. A distinction was made, and is made still, between sacrifices and sacraments. The former consist of sin-offerings and thank-offerings. The Lord offered Himself once for all for the sins of the world. Man cannot and need not now make a sacrifice for sin. The offerings of the Church cannot be meritorious, and thus atone for our offenses. We must be partakers of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and being recipients of this, we are prepared to make offerings, not of expiation for sin, but of praise for the expiation made by Jesus' blood. We are recipients in the sacraments, we are donors in sacrifices of prayer and praise for gifts received and to be received from heaven. The chief stress is thus necessarily laid upon the sacramental part of the cultus. We are empty and go to receive from Christ's fulness — our poverty is to be enriched by the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Lutheran Church, preserving this dependence upon her Lord, and receiving faithfully the gifts bestowed, became rich. The Savior's gifts to her enabled her to give in turn to Him the offerings required. Making faithful use of the sacraments, she became qualified to make acceptable sacrifices. Though thoroughly sacramental in her principles, no church has, in consequence, a richer store of material for the sacrificial part of the cultus. Nor was she sparing in the use of this material. Her heart was full, and from her fulness her mouth must needs speak, which she did the more cheerfully as the desire of



instructing her members never departed from her, and this object of the cultus was never overlooked.

## **Worship Must Be In The Vernacular, And With Active Participation**

But the attention necessary to make the whole instructive to the laity could not be secured as long as they were mere idle spectators and hearers, as is mostly the case in the Romish church. The worship must be in the vernacular tongue, and the people must all participate in it themselves, not worship by proxy. A new feature was thus introduced into the cultus, namely, the active participation of the people in all by song and response. The idea of the general priesthood of all believers, now happily revived, called for this. Without it there was no assurance that the attention would be arrested and fixed, as it must be to accomplish what the cultus designs. The worship is tedious to one, who makes not every part his own peculiar concern; and whenever a transaction has a lively interest for us, nature requires that we should not be passive only, but active. Another consideration made this indispensable. The word and sacraments operate not *ex opere operato*. They require faith. Unto this the people must be exercised and in this they must be rooted and grounded. All must retain the right mind to be worthy recipients of sacramental gifts. All must, therefore, engage in the cultus, whose design it is to establish the faith by giving it the necessary exercise in the way of outward manifestation, and by this expression to propagate it. It is never ripe without its proper utterance, nor can it otherwise exert the earthly influence intended. But neither have sacrifices their effect *ex opere operato*. All are to be prepared to receive the blessings which God bestows in His house; but all are to acknowledge them also and give thanks unto God for them. This requires their active participation in the sacrificial, as well as in the sacramental part of the cultus: the sacrament must be received, the sacrifice must be given, by all to be profitable. The priest cannot hear the word, or receive communion for all, by virtue of his inherence in Christ's body; just as little can he pray and praise for all, apart from any mental and cordial participation on their part. This participation might have place internally, without ever coming to a verbal expression in the way of prayers, praises and responses; but it will

not be questioned that it is much more likely to have place when expressed than otherwise, because the very expression keeps alive the worshiper's personal interest in the subject, and because very few are inclined to act the hypocrite upon motives so feeble as those offered in public worship, where activity is a standing rule, all being expected to participate either sincerely or hypocritically. Besides, the Lutheran Church understood too well the relation of the internal condition and outward expression to, and their mutual influence upon, each other, to be indifferent in these things. In her worship there is, therefore, not merely one priest, who does everything for all the rest, but all are priests, and are active as such in sacrament and sacrifice. ## Liturgy Necessary

To guard against the whims of ministers and congregations, to give the necessary variety of sound words, and to prevent disorder and confusion in the churches, a Liturgy was seen to be necessary, which was rendered altogether indispensable by the active participation of the people in the public worship. There was no disposition to use the glorious liberty of the Gospel in favor of disorder. There is a limit beyond which liberty becomes licentiousness. Accordingly there was no complaint of encroachment upon individual rights, when a certain fixed order of worship was prescribed. The liturgical service was adopted without protest, and retained without murmuring, until the introduction of another spirit made other forms and a different arrangement necessary.

The Church needs a good Liturgy again: not the minister merely, but the Church: a Liturgy in which the rights of the people shall be respected and their devotional wants supplied. "With the heart we believe unto righteousness;" but this is not all, nor sufficient: "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The people have not, according to this principle, performed their duties as worshippers, when they have been unresistingly, passively present at the public worship: they must worship in spirit and in truth, themselves. Nor is it enough that they have faith in their hearts to some extent, they are to possess it to that extent, at which it passes over into confession: they are to be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, that from the fulness of the heart the mouth may speak. The Creed must not be said by proxy, with no participation on the believers' part, any more than we must believe by proxy. It is the people's concern as well as the ministers. Our Church has it in the shape of a hymn, that the people may say it or sing it. But the prayers and thanksgivings for bounties and blessings are just as

little exclusively ministerial business. The word of God, sounding from the holy place in the people's ears, is not mere sound, according to the Lutheran faith; nor is it mere history to be remembered; it is fact and deed, made not only ideally present by the memory and imagination, but really, through the Almighty's almighty word. This must, be received, and the effect of reception is thanksgiving, expressed, not permitted to pass in silence. So in the communion. All are to participate in the sacramental, without any *opus operatum* notions, and thus all are to be qualified for participation in the sacrificial. Every part of the latter, every offering made by the people's minister, must have the people's sanction, if it be merely by a simple "Amen;" just as every offering brought to them by God's minister, must have its reception expressed, if it were merely in a brief "Gloria." But all this would occasion unspeakable confusion and disorder in the public worship, unless there were established forms of response for the laity; and thus the whole would become an abomination to the object of worship, who is a God of order, not of confusion. Not every man could be allowed to say what seemed right in his own eyes, in season and out of season: there must be fixed liturgical forms, which should be the right and proper expression of right and proper emotions. And thus again the purpose of instruction will be subserved by the variety necessary to adapt the forms to the day and its proper lessons, as well as by the confinement of the devotional feelings within their proper limits. That which is generally considered an objection to a Liturgy casts its weight thus decidedly in its favor. Without forms there can be no utterance. It is important that the emotions should be right, originating not in the old, but in the new heart. We want internal states as produced by the Holy Spirit, in word and sacrament, through faith. These must have their appropriate forms of expression. When these are once found they are found for all and forever. Those who do not find them satisfactory must learn to find them so. The right form will rebuke their wrong spirit, and serve to guide them aright. Let the same spirit be in all, and there will be unanimity in the response in the same words; and these words, in turn, will be a standing sermon of instruction concerning the right faith and feeling.

But to prevent jarring and confusion in the public ministrations, it is just as requisite to have forms for the ministry as for the laity, and to put the Liturgy into the hands of the one as of the other. The danger of mere formalism in this is not apparent. The right mind will delight to move

within fixed limits, when these are sufficiently wide for all truly devotional purposes, and will love to express itself in fixed forms, when those forms are good and beautiful, as well as the appropriate utterance of the man in Christ. These are things to be considered in the formation of a Liturgy certainly; but they are no reasons against Liturgies altogether. And undevout men may also read forms in a perfunctory, formal way. But he who would use a prescribed form without the spirit, would unquestionably extemporize one without the right spirit also; for no one supposes that the Spirit comes by extemporizing, or that His coming is conditioned by the resolve to do so. And in case a spiritless prayer must be heard, which is the greater evil of the two? The extemporary prayer will necessarily be spiritless in form and contents, as well as in delivery; the prescribed one may be full of heavenly fire and emotion, in spite of the mumbled, heartless delivery. The one is cold and lifeless, in spite of the extemporizer's attempts to work up his feelings to some appearance of spiritual warmth, by dint of carnal enthusiasm — a form in which the devout cannot pray, and therefore, an impediment to prayer; the other is a form of sound words in which the people can give utterance to their desires, and to which they can give their "Amen" with all their heart and souls, notwithstanding the defect in its delivery. And if the minister is faithful, but unfortunately not just in the right mood — which, however, rarely happens with him who humbly uses his form in his room before going to the Lord's house, on his way thither, in his vestry-room, and at the altar before opening public worship — where would he be more likely to catch the proper warmth than from the live, glowing coals of the old prayers, so full of quiet unction? Certainly not from any operation on his own cold, moody brain and heart by natural means, working himself into a perspiration and ending in a flash, at best, which leaves the darkness thicker and the cold intenser than ever.

Moreover, it is not with ecstasies that we have to deal in the sanctuary. The man who goes to worship in spirit and in truth takes the shoes from off his feet, for the place whereon he stands is felt to be holy ground. The prayers of the New Testament have a subduing, tranquilizing effect. They always soothe, never excite the passions. Springing from meek and quiet spirits, that have found rest for their souls in Christ and peace in believing, they suppress the tempestuous feelings within our bosoms and tame our wild excitement. This tendency to soothe and solemnize, rather than arouse in military style, is experienced by all earnest readers of Holy Scripture.

Few fail to observe it and deem it holy when it is kept in view in the Church's Cultus. The Romish Church is generally felt to have approached nearer a right apprehension of Christianity, in this respect, than the churches that deal in passion's storm and tempest. Hers is the enthusiasm of art, which has caught the spirit of our religion; the other is the enthusiasm of wild, untamed nature, bringing its carnal zeal into the holy place. Who does not feel in the presence of Divine Majesty rather where art, in all its beautiful forms, calms and quiets, than where passion, in all its rude ebullitions, excites and arouses? The one awes, the other shocks the devout heart. Of course, the one is as exceptionable as the other, when substituted for the means of grace; but only the former harmonizes with true devotion; the latter has no right in the Lord's house under any circumstances, whereas, the former, as regenerate man has sensibilities still, which it is right and proper to exercise, is not only allowable, but highly desirable for its tranquilizing harmony with the Gospel. Christianity teaches us neither to shriek in pain nor shout in pleasure. To be with Jesus always — in Jesus ever the same in glory and in gloom, believing, confiding as a child, humbly and continually, whatever our temperament or condition; not hankering after the feeling of penitence and faith — its agony and its rapture — but the thing, leaving the effects to the Spirit of God, who will make them what they ought to be; not struggling ever to feel and enjoy His nearness, and to be in unutterable affliction when the fancy takes us that He is far off, but knowing from His word and believing Him nigh, in spite of the devil and our flesh attempts to drive us into despair, calmly trusting all the while — is this not Christianity? This equable frame, this abiding faith, in storm and sunshine, is expressed in the public worship. Let it not be said that we must pray just as we feel, and must therefore be without liturgical forms. Rather must we feel as we should pray, having forms uninfluenced by temperaments and moods, which shall direct us aright when we feel wrong. This is the only way in which all temperaments and moods, at any time present in the congregation, can unite in prayer. If the minister prays just as he feels, without any curb or check to his unsubdued mind — as they must desire, whom a good tranquil form will not suit — there will certainly always be some who cannot, and very probably never be many who can, follow him in all his spasmodic flights and tortuous windings; and the danger is not small that in the expression: "we feel," many an assertion devoid of strict truth will be borne to the heavens. Better, with calmness and

evenness of mind, lay our petitions and praises before God, in sober, solemn words, according to a good form, which all can pray, without falling into any blustering excitement and irreverence.

## **Objects to Extemporary Prayer**

The objections to extemporary public prayer are many and weighty, and few are the reasons to be presented in its favor, and weak withal. For the people, it is a form at all events, being not extemporized in their minds, and rarely is it a form at all comparable with those to be found in good Liturgies. There is no safeguard, after all, against confused and confusing, stumbling and blundering, doctrinally false and morally unchristian prayers, but that of composing them at home, if they must be original; and then what advantage have they which liturgical prayers have not? In this way abominable English, false thoughts and figures, bad Logic and Rhetoric, “diarrhea of words and constipation of ideas,” irreverence and indecency, outbursts of carnal feeling and passion, historical, doctrinal and metaphysical declamation and argument thrust in to fill out the proper measure, unbecoming personalities and particularities, the unpleasant recurrence of pet phrases, dragged in by the hair to the disturbance of devotion-errors which, together with a host of others, are occurring constantly — may, indeed, be avoided; but why not use an old form, “beautiful exceedingly,” and deep solemn and impressive, which will be admired the more, the oftener it is heard, as most Christians must have observed in the case of the Lord’s Prayer, whose beauty and power few appreciate who do not use it daily? Men of all denominations, who have known a good Liturgy and worshipped where it was used, have felt its calm, quiet force; and from more quarters than one the cry for a liturgical worship is becoming louder and more loud. We trust the Lutheran Church, which is originally and from principle, as we have seen, liturgical, will not bring up the rear in such a movement.

## **Lutheran Church Has Never Lost Her Original Genius and Spirit**

Whatever relation the past of our Church may sustain to the present in the minds of different persons, and whatever may be our views of the obligations thus imposed upon us with reference to the cultus, one thing is certain, that, as she has never become another church, she has never lost her original genius and spirit. The historical and sacramental principles which exerted so vast an influence upon her cultus originally, must be respected and exert their influence still, confining liberty within the bounds of principle. Her worship must not be mere pomp and gaudy show for the imagination; but just as little can it be a stark, naked, bloodless skeleton for the bare, heartless understanding. In her cultus, as everywhere else, she preserves her character for holding fast tenaciously the *via media* between extremes.

The forms, of which the worship is composed, must necessarily breathe the Church's spirit; and with regard to every part of the cultus, as well as with regard to it as a whole, her members have vigilance for the preservation of their purity made obligatory upon them. The command is given us to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." About this it becomes us to be very jealous; for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." The consequences of a false doctrine are not to be estimated always by the eyes which see it introduced. They may show themselves in all their pernicious power of error fully developed, only many lustrums afterward, when the canker has already eaten too far about it to admit of easy and speedy cure. That there may be danger in the domain of the cultus admits, we presume, of no dispute.

The prayers, hymns, etc. of public worship exert a wider and deeper influence upon the people, than the symbolical books of the Church. They inculcate their spirit upon the mind and control the habits of thought and feeling. The same vigilant care which is confessedly requisite to preserve the integrity and purity of the symbols, is proper also with reference to the cultus. What is acknowledged duty in the one case is duty also in the other; and so far as the retention and propagation of the truth is concerned the duty is the more stringent in the latter case, as its influence upon the mind and heart is greater. To convince us of the influence of a Liturgy in the preservation of a Church's proper life and spirit, in spite of surrounding changes, we need only point to the history of the Church of England, whose general Liturgy cannot be denied to have done much for making her and preserving her what she is. Principles are inculcated by the cultus rather

than doctrines, by easy gradations; but from false principles the false doctrines will be developed, and that in trains. The Liturgy will have its force, as also the Hymn-book, in instilling the right spirit and principles, which will enable the laity to distinguish truth from falsehood immediately, however, ignorant in other respects.

Give us a Liturgy, then, with the old responses, and with prayers that are prayers, not idle declamation and battology. We want no outbursts of wild passion and excitement, no mad shrieks and shouts, of which, if they came before us in still and sober hours, we would be constrained to repent in sackcloth and ashes. We have no fears that forms will quench the Church's heavenly fire; we hope rather that they will tame all her carnal zeal and passion, and subdue all her merely natural excitement — will restrain the human and promote the divine within her borders. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; it may be trusted much too far at the Lord's altar, with the temptation besetting it to offer strange fire. Who, that has been doomed often to hear extemporary prayers offered by different persons, wise and weak, has not at least sometimes wished, for Zion's sake, while shuddering at the lawless liberties presumptuously taken with the King of kings, that the minister were guided in his devotions by a good form, instead of misguiding his people by a homemade, off-hand, bad one? Surely, if the people can be content to pray in the form, often sufficiently wretched, composed for them unpremeditatedly by the pastor, the latter may also learn to pray in a well-approved form of the Church, laying aside all desires to exhibit his piety and eloquence while addressing Jehovah. Prayers may then be had that are really edifying to the Church, breathing her spirit and communicating it to others, and a sweet-smelling savor to Him who heareth prayer. Devout men will then be sure, when with awe and reverence they enter the sanctuary, that they will not be constrained to be mere idle spectators and hearers of a worship altogether foreign from their faith and feeling; and this worship, in turn, will contribute its share toward the preservation of that lowly, child-like spirit, which finds its proper utterance in the fixed liturgical forms.

## **Confession**



We suppose that no one will be disposed to contend that our regular confession of faith must be governed by our ever varying feelings, and, therefore, extemporary, however, much he might prefer the substitution of a self-made form for the Litany and Te Deum. As confession is an undisputed duty, not only once, but repeatedly and continually, a fixed form for this will not be considered formalism. In our latitudinarian age the only difficulty with many would be to concoct a form sufficiently wide to suit every man's "private judgment." The Lutheran Church had no such difficulty and has none now. With her respect for antiquity, as well as for the Providence of God in the Church's history, she never dreamed of asking whether the ancient creeds, brief and pithy, as required in the cultus, suited everybody's fancy; but retained them, with the presumption that those who found them not adequate expressions of their faith would choose the better part by shaping their faith, which was not the Christian faith, according to the confession of God's people in all time rather than by shaping the Church's faith according to their whims. She desired not to stand aloof from the Church of Christ, whose confessions they were. She necessarily had respect for the Church and all that her Lord had done for her and through her. Nor was this at all inconsistent with her view of and reverence for the Bible. The latter was her rule and norm of faith and practice, by which all things were to be proved; but this left ample room for a traditional principle furnishing the things to be tested by the Bible, as the critical principle of faith and life. What was once the unanimous confession of the Church Catholic would not be otherwise to her than sacred. Whatever the Lord had since done, and may yet do, to deepen the Church's understanding of her possessions in its varied particulars, sure she was and is, that these possessions themselves are subject to no change; no development can abrogate or nullify them, how much soever it may expand. She wanted the very words in which millions who are members of the Church Triumphant delighted to give utterance to their heart's fulness; for they were a form of sound words, without all controversy; and the consciousness of a communion of saints, in time and in eternity, excited and nourished by confessing the Catholic faith, which is truth for time and eternity, was too pleasant and important to her to admit of any indifference about the old form. Give us back, then, the adequate expression of our holy faith, as contained in the ancient Creeds, for liturgical use — confessions that have a cloud of witnesses in their favor in the New Jerusalem. How much of the

infidelity to be found around us may be attributable to indifference concerning confessions generally, and to the absence, particularly, of a unanimous confession as part of our regular worship, we know not; but the question is worthy of being considered with earnestness and, so far as we may form an a priori judgment, with alarm.

## The Hymn

There is a charm in poetry and music which renders the hymn no unimportant part of the Cultus. Art in this form has never met with the same opposition which obstructed it in sculpture and painting. Good poetry is allowed, and music is gaining ground even among old iconoclasts. The people love the sacred song. It is a joy to them in health and a comfort in sickness. No part of the cultus exerts a more marked influence upon their habits of thought and feeling. They imbibe the Church's spirit from it. The influence of secular song upon communities and nations is proverbial; the power of sacred song is just as great; poetry loses not its power when appropriated to holy purposes. Heretics knew and know its force, and used it for their own ends; so did the orthodox. False doctrines had not a little influence upon the development of hymnology, being disseminated in pleasant lyrics, and these challenged truth in the same and brighter forms. The purity of the hymns in use is essential to the purity of the Church in life and doctrine; false sentiments in forms of beauty are exceedingly pernicious. The consistency of those who are very jealous for the confessional fidelity of the Church — for its old faith and symbols — and yet indifferent as to the character of the hymns put into the people's hands, is, therefore, not very obvious.

The hymnological part of the cultus may be considered the most difficult to supply in the English Lutheran Church. All who have directed the least attention to the subject have observed the scarcity of good hymns in this language. Few are the good English hymns of any character: a good Lutheran hymn is indeed, a rarity, as under the circumstances, all would suppose without much inquiry. The theory of Dr. Johnson, that the divine is no proper subject for lyric poetry, is put to shame by the rich hymnological literature of the German Lutheran Church. The cause lies not here. But the prevalence of the sacrificial element in the English churches to the great

neglect of the sacramental, has no doubt, something to do with this. The reformed churches, as distinguished from the Lutheran, have ever proved exceedingly barren in this domain when compared with the latter. The Lutheran Church has a very slender literature as yet in the English language, and it is therefore, not strange that she has no fair representation in Psalmody, which generally ripens not earliest. A good Lutheran Hymn-book, so far as we know, has never appeared in English; and, for the present, our hope must be to a great extent, in translations from the German. The attention, however, which the subject is exciting in various quarters, justifies our hope that a better day is about to dawn upon us. And with the blessing of Him, without whom we can do nothing, our Lord and our God, we may, ere long, have a “Lutheran Book of Worship,” containing a “complete Liturgy” and “about one hundred hymns” that breathe the spirit of the Church, with ail whose joys and sorrows we sympathize, because her faith is ours.

## **The Sermon**

There is not much danger, in the present state of the Church, that the sermon will lose its place in the cultus. It has been attended to almost exclusively, whilst the other parts, equally essential, have been treated slightly. All art, in some protestant denominations, has been expended upon it, whilst all art was cried down in the rest of the Cultus; and in our country, we fear, the Lutheran Church has not been uninfluenced by the prevailing false public opinion in this respect. The sermon, of course, admits of the application of art, as well as the other parts of public worship. It admits of art precisely as part of the Cultus, which requires beautiful forms; but not otherwise. It receives not its power from human decoration and ornament or skill in arrangement: its power is the power of God’s word. Not Logic and Rhetoric are the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe; but the Gospel of Christ in the service of which they are used. We fear there is something radically wrong where art is ruled out of the Cultus entirely, upon principle, save only so far as applicable to the sermon; it savors too much of the view according to which the effect of the sermon depends altogether upon the preacher’s human skill: if art were considered merely a human concomitant, it would have its place as such in other parts

of the cultus just as well. But also the concern for the confessional character of the Church has been directed with too much exclusiveness to the sermon. The obligation of our symbols has been considered mostly with an eye to this, without much attention to Liturgy and Hymn-book.

That the minister should explain and develop the faith of the Church, whose minister he is, in that Church's spirit, seems to us a position of plain morality, without any metaphysical subtleties; and hence it is not only right that he should be pledged to the symbolical books, but anything else must be wrong: he is pledged already by his call to be a Lutheran minister, and no Synod has any right to change or modify such call. But the sermon is not the whole cultus, and is, therefore, not all that requires vigilant fidelity. The Church's weal demands our care for the whole, and for every part of which the whole is composed.

The great falling off which is manifest in the sacrificial part of the cultus, stands in an undoubted relation to the falling off in the sacramental. The fact that we have little to give argues another painful fact, namely, that we have received little. Our worship is often a shame where it should be a glory. Alas! too many go only to "preaching" now-a-days; all the rest is tedious and tasteless. Even the immediate word and the sacraments—"what a weariness is it!" In this state of things it cannot be the divine word in the sermon that attracts — it is the human eloquence. Let the people be taught once more to pray, and receive the Lord's gifts with praise, taking an active part in all as worshippers in person, and then we may hope that the Lord will be worshipped once more in the beauty of holiness in our Church. Our sanctuaries will then be no longer filled with yawning, gaping crowds, who never seem to think that they have any duty or privilege in church beside that of hearing a speech. And then too we may hope that our mother will arise and put on her beautiful garments, and be a praise in the earth, while she prepares her millions for glory in heaven.

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1. See "Pommersche Agende."↔

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The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions by Pastor George Gerberding](#)

## Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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