

## **Sacramental Worship, Sacramental Preaching: Treasures of our Lutheran Church**

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When we gather together to consider the Lord's work together and in our own fields of work, there are many questions we ask ourselves and each other about how things are going, about the status of our work, the church in the world, and how we can be faithful to the Lord's calling to preach the Gospel to all nations. It is easy for us to get caught up in numbers: budget, membership, attendance. Those numbers are important and do tell us, humanly speaking, something about what we are doing and how we are doing, though Jeremiah and Elijah are good reminders for us of how we should approach such reports. *"The Lord knows those who are His"* (2Ti 2:19). He calls on us to be faithful. We look at reports of the work in our synods with deep humility, true gratitude to the Lord, and with prayer that the Lord will bring salvation to lost souls through us, His earthen vessels, despite our failings, and only by the power of His holy Word and His Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life. Where we have been unfaithful or not done as we should and the Lord says: "You have been foolish", there we say: "Lord, have mercy." Where the Lord sees our meager efforts through the merits of Christ and says: *"Well done, good and faithful servant"*, then we say: *"We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do"* (Luke 17:10), and we thank God for the undeserved blessings He has bestowed upon us.

In our materialistic society, it is easy to turn our minds also to earthly things. In a day when "evangelical" is a term used more for law-preachers than gospel-preachers, in a day when the beloved names Lutheran and even Christian seem so empty, it is easy to become discouraged, to be distracted from our real treasures, to wonder why our churches aren't like other churches. The Lord wants us to be faithful with what has been given to us. The Lord has given us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, purchased by the holy blood of His only-begotten Son, and distributed to us through His precious Word and Sacraments. In our Lutheran church we have so rich a treasure for which to thank the Lord. Not only do we have the rich doctrinal heritage of the gospel, restored by Luther and sustained by the Formulators and dogmaticians, but we also have the most beautiful tapestry of liturgy and hymns, so that the Lutheran church is called the singing church. Only in the Lutheran church do the Sacraments find the central place given to them by the Lord of grace. Only in the Lutheran church is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel

regarded so highly that it is an inseparable part of our dogmatics, homiletics, catechetics, and (so importantly!) our pastoral care.

## Sacramental Worship

40        When I am asked if the Lutheran church is high-church, I can't help but tend to answer in the positive. Though among us there are what some might call "high-churchmen" and "low-churchmen", I'm sure that all of our pastors want to do the works of God in a churchly and dignified manner. In the New Testament we are free from prescribed ceremonial rituals, yet the pattern of Old Testament and New Testament worship suggests solemnity and dignity, and directs order and decency.<sup>1</sup> The design of the structure and services of the Tabernacle and the Temple must strike us with awe by their beauty, glory, and refinement. An American protestant<sup>2</sup> preacher would not feel comfortable in the elaborate robes of the high priest, or even presenting incense or blood before the LORD. A Lutheran clergyman understands that when he stands before the altar or in the pulpit, he is to be speaking the oracles of God, he is handling holy mysteries, he is dispensing forgiveness and eternal life. One modern "evangelistic" preacher might work his crowd to an emotional frenzy, calling them to repent and live right, giving their lives to the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Another will pump up his followers to be successful and happy.<sup>4</sup> What have we learned from them? Do we try to imitate them? It surely can be tempting. Have we studied them and analyzed what they are really saying? How does a Lutheran service differ? How does the task of the Lutheran preacher differ? Can "Evangelical" style (here referring to those groups who today call themselves "Evangelicals") coexist with Lutheran substance, as the title of David Luecke's book suggests? I would say: "No." Harold Senkbeil gives the same response in his *Sanctification: Christ in Action*, published by Northwestern Publishing House.

60        A Lutheran service should be different and distinct. It will of necessity have elements in common with Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Protestantism; but it will be distinct from

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:36.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of protestant used in this paper is non-Roman Catholic, non-Lutheran, western Christian. The term Reformed is often used, but is not complete or accurate. This is an attempt also to show the distinctiveness of Lutheranism within Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> This seems to be the tone of Jimmy Swaggart and Kenneth Copeland.

<sup>4</sup> Just the names of some of the "ministries" of such preachers show us their goal: Robert Schuller's "Hour of Power"; Kenneth Copeland's "Believer's Voice of Victory"; Mac Hammond's "The Winner's Way."

all three as well. Our ELS fathers were concerned about this, and for that reason included Chapter 1 in our Synod's By-Laws which states:

In order to preserve unity in liturgical forms and ceremonies, the Synod recommends to its congregations that they use the Order of Worship based on the Danish-Norwegian liturgy of 1685 and agenda of 1688, or the Common Order of Worship, as each congregation may decide.<sup>5</sup>

The Lutheran Divine Service will usually be the Mass, but not the Roman sacrifice of the mass. It will have hymns, but not hymns that are simply emotional filler<sup>6</sup> or lofty language, rather hymns that are strong in musical and poetic quality and, above all, that glorify the Triune God and teach the faith, as the Augsburg Confession emphasizes:

Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass, for the Mass is retained by us and celebrated with the highest reverence. All the usual ceremonies are also preserved, except that the parts sung in Latin are interspersed here and there with German hymns, which have been added to teach the people. For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone: that the unlearned be taught (AC 24).

A Lutheran service will not be without emotion, for the proclamation of the gospel inevitably draws an emotional response, but not a frenzied trance-like *ecstasis* (an ecstatic state; *literally, standing outside oneself*). A Lutheran service will be beautiful, because of the rich treasury of hymnody and liturgy that has been passed on to us: from Moses, David, Paul, Ambrose, Bernard of Clairvaux, Luther, Bugenhagen, Gerhardt, Kingo, and so many others.<sup>7</sup>

The "genius" of Lutheran worship is in understanding how God deals with us lost sinners: through the means of grace.<sup>8</sup> In the Old Testament God put His name on the people through His covenant, through the services of the Tabernacle, through the Aaronic blessing: "*In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you*" (Exo 20:24, Num 6:24-27). The Lord also promised to put His name in the Temple that Solomon would build, and at the Temple dedication the Lord said to Solomon: "*I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have sanctified this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually*" (1Ki 9:3). Today God continues to put His name where we gather together around His Word and Sacraments, where He has promised to come to us. That is the emphasis of God's Divine Service, not from man to God, but from God to man. It is a false view to say that the Divine Service (a better designation than "Worship

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<sup>5</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Synod Constitution and By-Laws* (Revised 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Lathrop in *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, p. 288: "Hymns are not just a nice thing to do before one gets on to the sermon. They belong to the core of any Lutheran liturgy."

<sup>7</sup> See the Appendix for a letter from C. F. W. Walther regarding singing Methodist hymns in the Lutheran church.

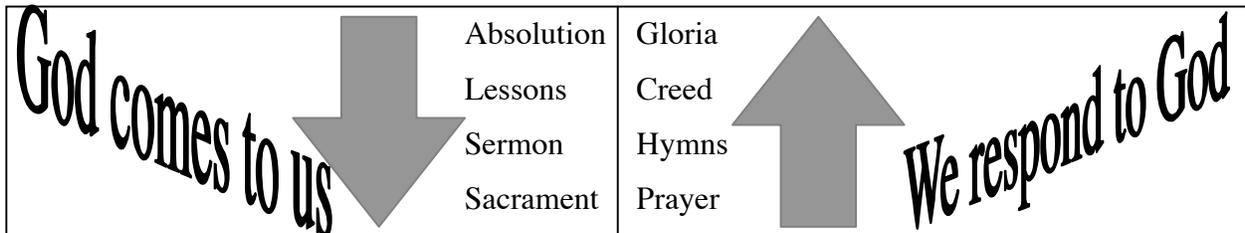
Service”) is the “work *of* the people”, a mistranslation of liturgy (ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ).<sup>9</sup> Rather it is a “work *for* the people”, performed by God Himself through His chosen servant. Liturgy is not a work done by the people as a service to God as in the Protestant tradition, nor a work done by the priest on behalf of the people to God as in the papist sacrifice of the mass. It is God’s Service to us: *Gottesdienst, Gudstjeneste*.

In a similar way, our Lutheran Catechism lays this out so plainly that we should never waver from it.

100 Confession embraces two parts: the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor, as from God Himself, and in no wise doubt, but firmly believe, that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven (*Small Catechism* V 16).

Here in the simplest terms is the distinction between sacramental and sacrificial parts of the Divine Service. Do our people know this distinction? Do we teach it to them? It is as essential as an understanding of the distinction between law and gospel. In fact, it is the same distinction. The sacrificial elements of the Service are our works, which are always of the law, though for Christians they are motivated by the gospel: in confession, hymns, and prayers. The sacramental elements of the Service are God’s works, in other words, the gospel: in absolution, Scripture lessons, sermon, sacrament, and benediction. These elements must be foremost in the Divine Service. Even in a Service where the Sacrament is not celebrated, reference to it in the sermon will help to hold it central to the faith of the believer.

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<sup>8</sup> Gordon Lathrop in *Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship*, p. 287: “We cannot live, we certainly cannot be Christians, without them [the means of grace]. So there is no ‘Lutheran worship’ in which these ‘means of grace’ are not central.”

<sup>9</sup> “This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, 1 Cor. 4, 1: Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e., of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled to God. Thus the term ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ agrees aptly with the ministry. For it is an old word, ordinarily employed in public civil administrations, and signified to the Greeks public burdens, as tribute, the expense of equipping a fleet, or similar things” (Ap 24:80-81, *Triglotta*).

At the same time we must realize that these two elements, though distinct and separate, cannot always be easily or artificially “separated.”<sup>10</sup> As preachers, we must work diligently to present law and gospel, sacrifice and sacrament, in proper distinction. But in the hearts of the people this is the work of the One who searches the heart, truly to tear down and to build up at the proper time, the proper place, and the proper way. It must remain an unfathomable mystery that the cross is both stumbling block and salvation at the same time, as Paul makes so clear to the Corinthians: “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*” (1Co 1:18). But God confounds the wise and makes use of us in our faltering simplicity.

There are probably two extremes in Lutheranism regarding the Divine Service, both of which are based on a false understanding of liturgics and our Lutheran heritage. There is the spirit that says one must follow only the words printed on page 15 or 41 (or whatever page begins the liturgy) and not waver a jot or tittle. In actuality there is no one who can do this, because no one follows the text and order exactly as printed, and even if they tried, rubrics at so many turns call for the use of one of several choices (even if it is the choice of speak or chant). Thus the liturgy becomes once again almost a Roman canon, ruled by jurists schooled in their own opinions. At the other end of the spectrum one might find those who wish to throw out the Lutheran liturgy altogether as being too archaic and not speaking to today’s people. Such people would start with the premise and guiding principle that, since all this liturgical stuff is adiaphora<sup>11</sup>, therefore it is unimportant or not necessary to keep at all. Their services quickly become like those of the Protestants and Pentecostals: shapeless, anthropocentric and self-flattering for their authors. I suppose Luther might have made the same claim about liturgy being “unimportant” and might have discontinued the use of the Mass for his Renaissance Saxons. But he saw that the basic text of the Mass is timeless and Scriptural, and so his reforms were informed and conservative, excising only the canon because it was false. If we were to study the liturgy and hymns of our church, we too would discover their timelessness and Scriptural source and content, and we would not want to venture off into inflexibility or uninformed informality. Though liturgy and church ceremonies fall into the category of adiaphora, that does not mean they are unimportant or that one

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<sup>10</sup> “The Cross of Christ can, in the wrong hands, become an object of sentimental, irrational, uncommunicative adoration; it can be used to induce in believers sentimental despair and elaborate, sterile quietism.” *The Divine Formula*, Erik Routley, page 47 ¶ 101.

<sup>11</sup> “Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be the same everywhere.” Augsburg Confession, VII.

can and should throw them away whenever we feel like it. The traditional liturgy and ceremonies of the Lutheran church are Christocentric. Most attempts to devise “new” liturgies week after week have tremendous difficulty keeping that Christocentric character. Hermann Sasse urges us to study and learn the liturgy.

150 Why do we not explain the liturgy to our congregations, especially to the youth? That naturally presumes that we know the teaching of our church regarding the divine service, that we ourselves study the old church orders with their liturgical treasures, that we understand the Lutheran way of combining loyalty to the old liturgical heritage with the great Gospel freedom of which Article 10 of the Formula of Concord speaks. We do not mean liturgical arbitrariness but authentic Gospel freedom. We have to face the fact that a heritage that has been lost over 250 years cannot be restored quickly. We must have several forms of the divine service, just as the Roman Church has and practices in the preservation of unfamiliar rites. We need small circles and congregations in which the old liturgical heritage is preserved along with confession—*confessio* always means confession of the faith, confession of sins, and praise of God all in one—as is done in such an exemplary way, a way that puts us all to shame, in the “Brethren” congregations of Braunschweig. Moreover, in the large congregations we need extensive instruction in the liturgy. We need preaching services and special services of Holy Communion. We particularly need the divine service in the sense of the Lutheran Mass with both preaching and the celebration of the Sacrament. The sermon will then need to be short, but above all it must be authentic proclamation of the Gospel. 160 There can be no renewal of the Lord’s Supper without renewed preaching, preaching that is not just the pious talk of a man but disciplined exposition of Holy Scripture that strikes the heart. Such preaching grows out of serious study of Scripture, plumbing the depths of the divine Word. It should not be that the hearer of the text will always know exactly what is coming next because he has already heard it a hundred times.<sup>12</sup>

Part of knowing and learning the liturgy is knowing and learning new hymns or relearning “old” hymns. Even old hymns can be used in fresh ways. How many pastors spend as much time picking hymns as they do preparing their sermon? No, that probably isn’t the right way to put that. But consider that the congregation often spends more time singing hymns on a Sunday 170 morning than listening to the sermon. We would never use the criterion “This is what they want to hear” when preparing a sermon; there’s something Paul said about tickling itching ears (2Ti 4:3). And yet how often don’t we hear that regarding choosing which hymns to sing in church: “Oh, but people like to sing that one!”<sup>13</sup> What then becomes of our concern for the distinction

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<sup>12</sup> Sasse, p. 34. On page 110 he also says: “Our people should know the meaning of the Gloria, the Preface, the Sanctus, the Benedictus and Hosanna, the Consecration as it is expounded in the Formula of Concord, the Agnus Dei, and the Communion. We can explain it to them in special lectures, but we can also do it in sermon and Bible class.”

<sup>13</sup> *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, p. xii-xiii. “The songs of Lutheran children and youth should be essentially from Lutheran sources. The Lutheran Church is especially rich in songs and hymns of sound doctrine, high poetical value and fitting musical setting. They express the teachings and spirit of the Lutheran Church and help one to feel at home in this Church. Of course, there are songs of high merit and sound Biblical doctrine written by Christians in other denominations also, and some of these could and should find a place in a Lutheran song treasury. But the bulk of the songs in a Lutheran song book should be drawn from Lutheran sources. We should teach our children to remain in the Lutheran Church instead of to sing themselves into some Reformed sect.” See also Lundquist, p. 65: “Many American Lutheran churches do not sing Lutheran church hymns at all. How deplorable! We often attend Lutheran church services where not a single Lutheran church hymn or Lutheran chorale is sung. Here is a serious flaw in American Lutheran education and leadership. How about the hymn singing in our American Lutheran Sunday schools?”

between law and gospel, since often those hymns are devoid of such clear distinction or attain to teach neither? If we had only such generic hymns from which to choose, their use might be more easily tolerated, but with the vast wealth of Lutheran hymns and other good hymnody, how can we defend the too-frequent use of weak hymns? Not every hymn has to be *Salvation unto us is come*, but an old Lutheran hymnbook gives us pause to consider when they included the phrase: “*For our children only the best is good enough.*”<sup>14</sup> C. F. W. Walther, along with many other Lu-  
180 theran fathers, has some strong words for us to consider as well, about singing Methodist hymns in the Lutheran church (found in Appendix A). We would hope that our congregations are familiar with more than 50 to 100 hymns. The hymns they know and the hymns the pastor chooses should reflect our Lutheran heritage very strongly. The hymns of Luther and other Lutheran authors should be very familiar to Lutheran people, more familiar than hymns of Wesley and Watts. Of course, many hymns by Wesley and Watts are worthy to be sung in our churches, but not to the neglect of hymns by Luther, Decius, Spengler,<sup>15</sup> Selnecker, Gerhardt, and Kingo. The old dictum *lex orandi lex credendi*<sup>16</sup> (the law of praying is the law of believing) is two-pronged. It works both ways: we believe what we pray, and we pray what we believe. Our doctrine establishes our practice; it determines what things are appropriate or not in the services of the church.  
190 At the same time, what we do in the service is what people learn to love and to believe. “*We should teach our children to remain in the Lutheran Church instead of to sing themselves into some Reformed sect.*”<sup>17</sup>

What we hold before the people of God on Sunday morning is eternally important. “Favorite” hymns and “praise music” will not do.<sup>18</sup> What suffices for the people of God is the pure Gospel of forgiveness through the blood of Christ, delivered to them in the means of grace. In other words, the hymnody and preaching of the Lutheran church presents not a warm and fuzzy

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Would it not be well to sing at least one Lutheran church hymn each Sunday? Or shall we permit Lutheran hymnody to die? Is great Lutheran hymnody a thing of the past?”

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in the Preface to the *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, p. xvi, ascribed to a German Lutheran Sunday School Hymnal.

<sup>15</sup> Especially since Spengler’s hymn “By Adam’s Fall” (ELH 430) is quoted in our Confessions (Formula of Concord I 8).

<sup>16</sup> Also stated “*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*” [“that the law of praying establishes the law of believing”] by Celestine I, quoted in Sasse, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> *Lutheran Hymnary, Junior*, p. xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Prof. James Tiefel gives this insight also: “A few churches here and there are using praise choruses and Christian contemporary music, mostly in youth-oriented alternative services and Sunday evening services, although sometimes also in Sunday morning services. The use of this music is restricted because WELS Lutherans want to avoid worship that resembles entertainment. They are cautious about both overly subjective elements in worship and the use of music not quite worthy of divine worship. The musical arguments generated, in part, by the church growth movement have not been as painful for WELS Lutherans as for other Lutherans. But at least we thank the church growth movement for reinforcing the common-sense insight that we must offer quality worship planned with care.” *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*. Volume 4: Music and the Arts in Christian Worship, p. 78-79.

Jesus who is buddy and friend, but Jesus, the Son of God, who shed His blood on the cross and gives us in His Sacraments and Word the salvation He won on Golgotha once for all. In this way we come as prodigals back to the Father's welcoming arms; and in the embrace of our heavenly Father we come to long for the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit that brings forth fruits of faith in our lives.

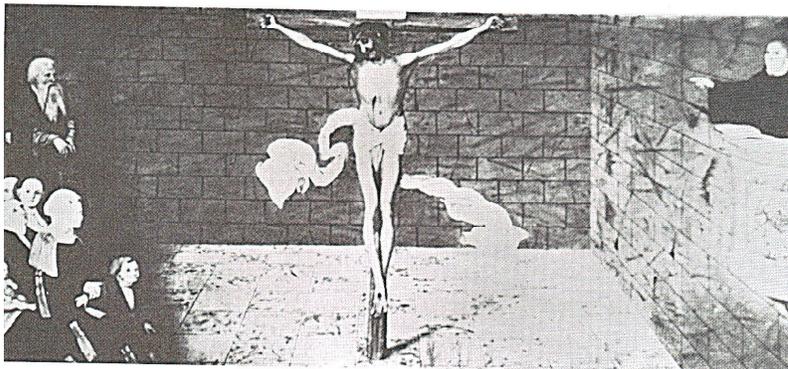


Hebrews 11

MN District Picture Catechism



Dürer woodcut of the crucifixion



Cranach altar



Logo of the LBK



## Sacramental Preaching

Perhaps in the area of homiletics is where the Lutheran church has been the strongest in its understanding of the sacramental character of worship in the Holy Christian Church. The Reformation of the 16th century restored preaching to its rightful place of importance in the church. And the church today in all denominations has been affected positively by this restoration. The Roman Catholic council, Vatican II, is in some senses a 20th-century response to the Reformation, with many liturgical reforms including emphasis on better preaching. The early Lutheran reformers' emphasis on preaching and teaching the Gospel had far-reaching effects throughout Europe, and today, through the world.

At the same time, the Lutheran church has an understanding of preaching that is distinct from other denominations as well. The Lutheran church recognizes the sermon as one of the sacramental parts of the Divine Service through which God offers and gives forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith. It is not an emotional tirade, a means to change society, nor a pronouncement of church law. We should not fall into the misuse of preaching that typifies the protestant "Evangelicals" who elevate preaching to the highest "sacrament" and yet so abuse and misuse law and gospel that their preaching does much harm to their hearers. Moving the pulpit to the center of the chancel does not reflect a Lutheran understanding of the gospel or the Divine Service, for it would give the impression that the sermon is the *most* important or the *only* important element of the Divine Service. Rather, the sermon finds its place alongside and in harmony with the Absolution, the Scripture lessons, and the Sacraments, as sacramental elements of the Service that deliver the blessings of the Gospel from God to His people. These elements fit together as means of grace. "*The sacrament is the verbum visibile (visible Word); the Word is the sacramentum audibile, the audible and heard sacrament.*"<sup>19</sup> Neither should we fall into the denigration and neglect of preaching often encountered in the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches where the sermon becomes a list of church laws or traditions and a reminder of the obligations on the faithful in the week to come. Thanks be to God that there are exceptions to this in those communions, and that fine Christian preaching of the gospel is found in their churches at times. But in general, the distinction between Law and Gospel is not well known there.

Luther's understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel shines forth clearly in the preaching done in the Lutheran church. Of course, that statement is a bit idealistic because we all at times fall short in making this distinction, but we would hope that all Lutheran preachers strive to keep this distinction clear for themselves and for their hearers. The preaching in our Lutheran congregations should be neither the "dreary preaching of the Puritans"<sup>20</sup> nor the legalism or mysticism of the papists, which both so easily go along with a lack of understanding concerning Law and Gospel and the means of grace. Lutheran preaching will be evangelical in that the Gospel predominates, and it will be sacramental because that Gospel emphasis proclaims "the wonderful works of God" (Act 2:11), "that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:19-20). Consider also the Augsburg Confession's statement regarding preaching:

Article V

The Office of the Ministry

That we may obtain this faith, the office of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel. That is, God, not because of our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ's sake.

We condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes without the external Word but through their own preparations and works.

At Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary one of the textbooks used for homiletics is Walther's *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*. And I hope it always will be. I know that this distinction is also stressed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Pastors of both our synods are concerned and should be concerned that the Law and Gospel are properly preached among us. We must always be alert to this essential of Lutheran preaching and not think that as Lutheran preachers we automatically do it. It is the most natural way of our sinful flesh to confuse these two teachings. Falling into moralizing or into preaching the theology of glory or success is too easy and too dangerous for us to take our work for granted.

Just to take one example, it is easy, when preaching, to give a false description of a Christian. Walther warns against this in Thesis XVII: "God's Word is not rightly divided when believers are pictured in a way that does not fit all believers at all times with regard both to strength of

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<sup>19</sup> Sasse, p. 24.

faith and to the feelings and the fruitfulness connected with it.”<sup>21</sup> And he gives this as part of his explanation:

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Sometimes Christians are described as being perfectly happy all the time, while non-Christians are pictured as being most unhappy. I have often noticed this in your sermons, but neither of these descriptions is true. Many thousands of Christians are filled with fear and inner turmoil and feel acutely unhappy, while many non-Christians appear to have no worries at all.

You may treat topics like “The Blessedness of a Christian,” but remember well: *This blessedness does not consist in having nothing but happy emotions*. Even in the midst of bitter feelings he can trust God to accept him and take him to heaven when he dies, and that is blessedness indeed.<sup>22</sup>

The simple change from “Christians aren’t afraid of death” to “Christians do not have to fear death” or even “Christians, don’t be afraid of death, because Christ has conquered it for us” makes all the difference in the world.

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A correct understanding of preaching in liturgical churches is that it is not primarily to be done for evangelism, for most of the hearers are Christians already, nor is it primarily to be a lecture in Christian theology, but it is to fit within a grand continuum of godly devotion of God’s faithful people. It is to be a part of the liturgy and proclaim the Gospel as clearly as does the *Gloria in excelsis* or the *Te Deum laudamus*. There is no finer preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Trinity than in these two canticles of the Church.

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Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men.  
We praise You, we bless You, we worship You.  
We glorify You; we give thanks to You for Your great glory.  
O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.  
O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
You take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us;  
You take away the sin of the world, receive our prayer.  
You are seated at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.  
For You only are holy, You only are the Lord,  
You only O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father.

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Who can improve on that wondrous hymn begun by the angels at Christ’s birth? It is a marvelous confession of the nature and work of the Triune God. Though we use the *Gloria* as a sacrificial part of the Service, its message and character is sacramental, what God has done and still does for us. And if we and our people truly learn and understand the *Te Deum*, which Luther lists among the Creeds of the Church, then we have a proper understanding of Law and Gospel.

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<sup>20</sup> As Schiller states it in his play *Mary Stuart*.

<sup>21</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 156-7.

<sup>22</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 155.

When You took upon Yourself to deliver man,  
You humbled Yourself to be born of a virgin.  
When You had overcome the sharpness of death,  
You opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
You sit at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.  
We believe that You will come to be our Judge.  
We therefore pray You, help Your servants  
whom You have redeemed with Your precious blood,  
make them to be numbered with Your saints in glory everlasting.

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This text clearly describes the Person and work of Christ our Savior, and the promise of everlasting life to all believers. Our preaching can draw from these wonderful familiar texts of the Church and strike a familiar and resonant chord in the hearer, and make both our sermons and the liturgy more understandable and accessible, and joined together as a unit. It will both teach and reinforce the work of God as Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter.

The usual task of the Christian preacher in the Divine Service is not to proclaim the gospel for the first time, but to proclaim the gospel to people who are already Christians, who are at the same time saints and sinners. There are many opportunities for preachers and laity to introduce the gospel to others, but the Divine Service is not the usual place for this. Erik Routley, an English Congregational preacher known for his work in Christian hymnology, puts it this way:

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[The] main task of the preacher ... is 'preaching to the converted.' He hopes to arouse in each hearer some form of 'YES!'<sup>23</sup> which is personal to that hearer. He is not presenting the gospel for the first time when he is preaching within the liturgy. He is reminding people of it. He is nourishing in them a hunger which constantly comes week by week. It is not that they have fallen badly short of Christian standards during the week, but rather that they are engaged in a process of gradual growth, which is nourished by the periodic proclamation of the Gospel. This kind of preaching can be done only in the House of Faith; it must presuppose a certain deposit both of faith and of knowledge in the hearer. For this reason it can be presented quite briefly. A sermon as part of the liturgy should not run the length of the main address in an evangelistic crusade, and indeed the American custom of holding campus services which, slotted as they are into a busy academic timetable, provide for addresses of from four to seven minutes, can be an admirable example of the value of brief liturgical addresses — besides being a most salutary discipline upon preachers who normally claim the right to be more expansive.<sup>24</sup>

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As Lutherans we would state even more strongly that preaching is not only reminding people of the Gospel, but proclaiming it to them again from God Himself. It is a sacramental, effectual work of God. A few years ago, Prof. George Kraus related similar thoughts at the annual Reformation Lectures at Bethany. Not in his written text, but in the discussion he made this statement, which I must paraphrase: «*Grandma Schmidt* [and for us Norwegians he added, *or Grandma An-*

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<sup>23</sup> Consider 2Co 1:18-20: "But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."

<sup>24</sup> Routley. *The Divine Formula*, p. 74-75, ¶162.

340 *derson] doesn't come to church to **learn** the Gospel or because she doesn't know the gospel. She comes to church because she **loves** the Gospel and because she loves to hear it.» And if we preachers don't preach it to her, we have failed.*

As the Divine Service is a wonderfully-arranged presentation of Holy Scripture, the sermon should also breathe with Scriptural language and allusion in all its parts. As part of the Divine Service the sermon will also fit itself into the order of service by referring to parts of the service appropriate to the text and theme of the day. Consider the following description of Anglican Evensong and whether it is an apt description of the Divine Service as celebrated among us.

350 Evensong in Coventry Cathedral is a very tiny fragment of something else: it is a fragment of the worship which is offered to God by Christian people, every hour of the twenty-four, in every part of the world. When you come to Evensong here, it is as if you were dropping in on a conversation already in progress — a conversation between God and men which began long before you were born, and will go on long after you are dead. So do not be surprised, or disturbed, if there are some things in the conversation which you do not at once understand.

Evensong is drawn almost entirely from the Bible. Its primary purpose is to proclaim the wonderful works of God in history and in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Its secondary purpose is to evoke from the worshiper a response of praise, prayer and obedience.<sup>25</sup>

360 The Lutheran Divine Service, like Evensong, is drawn almost entirely from the Bible, and so should the sermon be. One of the geniuses of traditional worship in the Christian Church is the balance of repetition and variety, of comfortable familiarity and ever-new understanding and appreciation of the Gospel. Here is where I will make my pitch for the use of the historic one-year lectionary.<sup>26</sup> Any lectionary has its good and bad points. The historic lectionary is no exception. Let me mention just a few of the benefits. The people hear the same lessons every year so that they become part of their life and their Christian devotion. They almost become part of the liturgy, in that the very wording is so familiar that we can almost recite sections word-for-word. Another benefit, which I feel is too often overlooked or diminished, is that we have centuries of sermons to study on these lessons, not only from earlier Christianity, but even within Lutheranism. Who can find a better teacher of Law-Gospel sacramental preaching than Luther or Chemnitz or Bugenhagen or Gerhard or Laache or Walther or Koren? The pastors of the Ft. Wayne conference of the Missouri Synod 125 years ago felt that Chemnitz' *Harmony of the Gospels* was 370 so valuable for homiletics that they translated sections of it and arranged it according to the Sun-

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<sup>25</sup> Canon Poole in the booklet "Evensong in Coventry Cathedral" quoted in Routley, *The Divine Formula*, page 95, ¶ 211.

<sup>26</sup> For further study I refer you to Pastor Alexander Ring's excellent essay presented at the 1998 ELS General Pastoral Conference, available on the Internet through a link at: <http://www.blc.edu/comm/gargy/gargy1/M.DeGarmeaux.html>

day Gospel lessons and published it in 7 volumes.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Fürbringer of Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) also put together a wonderful book of homiletical helps on the Gospel lessons. They were invaluable tools in my first years of ministry. Unfortunately they are both still only in German and/or Latin, but it would be a laudable service to the Church if we would dedicate ourselves to bringing them into English for our pastors and seminary students today. Koren's sermons and Laache's *Book of Family Prayer* also provide healthy direction for Lutheran preachers.

Another benefit of the traditional lectionary is that it provides for proclaiming the whole counsel of God and avoiding the pastor's pet topics. Very rarely have I preached on free texts.  
380 Very rarely have I had to preach on free texts. Even when asked to preach for special occasions or under special circumstances, the Church Year has provided an astounding source of material appropriate to the occasion.<sup>28</sup> Remember that Walther said our preaching should *fit all believers at all times*.<sup>29</sup>

Sacramental preaching also emphasizes the Means of Grace. Lutheran sermons will have frequent reference to our state as baptized Christians, who constantly receive the Lord's absolution, and who are regularly<sup>30</sup> refreshed with the Heavenly Feast of Christ's Holy Table. We will preach about prayer (Rogate, Easter 6) and about good works in their proper understanding (Trinity 25), as well as evangelism and mission work (Epiphany season), Christian education (Epiphany 1), and many other topics. The Church Year itself provides ample opportunity and  
390 direction for this. But the sermon will always direct God's people to the source of their comfort and strength for this life and the life to come: the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. Truly sacra-

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<sup>27</sup> *Perikopen*. St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode Missouri..., 1872.

<sup>28</sup> Routley (*The Divine Formula*, p. 19-20 ¶ 42) relates a story about St. Chrysostom and preaching from the lectionary: "I am reminded of the great story of St. John Chrysostom, the great fourth-century preacher in Asia Minor whose sermons remain classics of their kind and always will. The people of his city and his church were in a condition of deep emergency. For some supposed offence against the will of that headstrong through often inspired emperor Theodosius they were in danger of being massacred by his troops. By some means a message got to the Emperor that caused him to stay his hand until their envoy had consulted with him. Tradition has it that the envoy was the aged priest Flavian, who journeyed all the way to Rome and back, and of course whose news of life or death could not be communicated to Chrysostom's congregation until the double journey had been completed. The story is that during the time of profound anxiety Chrysostom, by preaching without deviating at any point from the prescribed lectionary, kept his people calm, dissuaded them from violent action against the troops of the Emperor, and preserved the peace until the news (which in the end was good) was delivered. There is no reason to disbelieve the substance of that. It was not necessary to preach a special series of sermons 'on national emergency'. The message was received and *translated*. The ball was caught; people who could have degenerated into an angry and irrational mob stayed civilized."

<sup>29</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 156-7.

<sup>30</sup> Wouldn't it be wonderful if today we could say as boldly and honestly as our Lutheran fathers did: "Article XXIV (XII): Of the Mass. At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord's Day and on the other festivals, in which the Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things" [Apology of the Augsburg Confession, *Triglotta*].

mental preaching declares the wonderful works of God, creates in us clean hearts, and prepares for Christian life on earth and eternal glory in heaven. Walther states this also in Thesis IX:

God's Word is not rightly divided when sinners, struck and terrified by the Law, instead of being directed to Word and sacrament, are instructed to strive for the state of grace through prayer and struggles, that is, to keep on praying and wrestling until they feel that God has pardoned them.<sup>31</sup>

400 Here is where the Lutheran church shines so brilliantly in holding out to lost sinners the almighty and saving works of God. Whereas the Reformed churches turn the sacraments into works of man (such as "believer's baptism") and the Roman Church rests the power of the sacraments in the power of the priest endowed at ordination through his "indelible character" and in their mere performance (*ex opere operato*), the Lutheran Church relies on the words of our Lord:

"Make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them... and teaching them"<sup>32</sup>; "He saved us by the washing of regeneration"<sup>33</sup>; "This is My body... My blood... shed for many for the remission of sins"<sup>34</sup>; "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."<sup>35</sup>

410 Preaching that directs people to God's promises delivered to us in the Word and Sacraments is proper Christian preaching and "*strengthens the weak hands, and makes firm the feeble knees.*"<sup>36</sup> It directs the bruised reed and smoldering wick to the only One who can restore it and fan it back into a glowing flame.<sup>37</sup>

420 Our preaching should also be in accord with the one Holy Christian Church. The Reformation of the 16th century has had an enormous impact on the preaching done in the church since that time, but we make a grave error if we think that there was no true preaching before 1517 or before 1850 or 1971. The early church had remarkable preachers as well, whose works and reputation are still preserved and honored: Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril of Jerusalem, and John of Damascus. There were also Bernard of Clairvaux, Savonarola, Wycliffe, and Hus. We do well to study their works and learn from their words and their style. This does not mean that our preaching should be exactly like theirs, but we can learn from their work how to understand the doctrines of Scripture and how to draw on the whole of Scripture to proclaim the whole counsel of God. In the Middle Ages there were preaching monks who went around proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, especially as summarized in early Catechisms. Besides

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<sup>31</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 28:19.

<sup>33</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 26:26-28.

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 55:11.

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 35:3.

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 42:3.

the monastic office services, like Matins and Vespers, there was also a preaching office called Prone.<sup>38</sup> If the hymns *Jesus, The Very Thought of Thee* and *Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts*<sup>39</sup>, ascribed to Bernard of Clairvaux, is an indication of his preaching, then the Gospel was proclaimed clearly by some even in the Middle Ages. Concerning Bernard of Clairvaux, Luther says: “*If there ever has lived a truly God-fearing and pious monk, then St. Bernard was such a one, whom I rank higher than all monks and popes in all the world, and I have never heard or read of anyone that can be compared with him.*”<sup>40</sup>

430 Besides learning from the early church fathers and the preachers and hymn-writers of the Middle Ages, certainly every Lutheran preacher should frequently and regularly read sermons by sound Lutheran teachers: Luther, Gerhard, Laache, Walther, Koren, etc. And especially a regular reading of Walther’s *Proper Distinction Of Law and Gospel* will keep our preaching focused on Law and Gospel, and keep it sacramental in nature, not legalistic, but truly evangelical, genuine preaching of the Gospel as Christ has sent us to do.

We must avoid all mingling of Law and Gospel. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that we are preaching the Gospel if we simply use the word “Gospel” or “Savior” in our sermon. If we preach only about how we have the Gospel and are to share it with others, but do not clearly expound what the Gospel is and apply its sweet medicine to our hearers, then we have  
440 preached *about* the Gospel, but we have not preached the Gospel. The Gospel points the believer to Christ as Savior who takes away all our sins. Preachers of the Gospel direct people to the means of grace to receive the blessings of the Gospel: forgiveness, spiritual strength, and eternal life. The Gospel is all promise, all blessing, all giving from God—offering and delivering life and salvation—making no demands at all. Walther’s Thesis V states:

The first and most glaring way of mingling Law and Gospel is the teaching of the papists, Socinians, and rationalists that makes of Christ a new Moses or Lawgiver and turns the Gospel into a doctrine of works and, conversely, like the papists, condemns and anathematizes those who teach the Gospel as a message of God’s free grace in Christ.<sup>41</sup>

450 Yes, we should teach good morals. Yes, we should encourage people in sharing the Gospel. But that is not preaching the Gospel. The Explanation of the Catechism gives us the most basic distinction: “*The Law teaches us what we are to do and not to do; the Gospel teaches us what God*

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<sup>38</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>39</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, 315 and 318.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in John Dahle’s *Library of Christian Hymns*, a commentary on the *Lutheran Hymnary*.

<sup>41</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 50.

*has done, and still does, for our salvation.*”<sup>42</sup> When Christians are urged to do good works, the motivation comes from the Gospel, but the works are still according to the Law, “*what we are to do and not to do.*” It is the same distinction between sacrificial and sacramental acts, our works and God’s works. Along with Thesis V, Walther then gives an example of preaching the Gospel:

460 Jeremiah 31:31-34 tells us that God will make a *new* covenant, not a Law covenant like the one at Sinai. On the contrary, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” That is the sum and substance of Christ’s Gospel, forgiveness of sins by free grace for Christ’s sake. Anyone who thinks Christ is a new Lawgiver, bringing us new laws, crosses out the whole Christian religion. For that is what distinguishes Christianity from all other religions of the world. They all say, “This is how you must be and what you must do to get to heaven.” But the Christian religion says, “You are indeed a lost and condemned sinner who cannot save himself. But do not despair. Someone has obtained salvation for you. Christ has opened the gates of heaven, and He invites you: ‘Come, everything is ready. Come to the marriage feast!’”<sup>43</sup> ...

470 Examine the whole life of Jesus, and you will discover that He does not go around like a proud philosopher, a moralist surrounded by so-called “decent” people whom he teaches how to attain to the highest degree of philosophical perfection. On the contrary, He goes after the lost sinners and even says that harlots and tax collectors will get into the kingdom of heaven before the proud Pharisees. Here He shows clearly what His Gospel is, and all apostles say the same thing. (See John 1:17; John 3:17; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Timothy 1:15.)<sup>44</sup>

Our people through our preaching should know themselves to be sinners who deserve nothing from God, but they should also see God’s grace in Christ and know that He has forgiven all their sins and opened the gates of heaven to them. That is His pure Word and promise. That is His Gospel, His good news, that Grandma Schmidt and Grandma Anderson love to hear and need to hear every Sunday.

480 Above all, Walther’s final thesis (XXV) must be kept in mind when writing every single sermon: “*God’s Word is not rightly divided when the preacher does not let the Gospel predominate.*”<sup>45</sup> Here Walther draws from sermons in Scripture itself:

490 The first preacher of Christ after His birth was the angel who told the terrified shepherds: “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people” (Luke 2:10). Not a syllable of Law, not a trace of prescriptions and God’s demands upon man, but the very opposite, God’s grace toward all people. The heavenly hosts sing joyfully: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” [v. 14 KJV]. ... God asks nothing but that people will accept His gift with joy and be comforted by this Child. There a heavenly preacher gave us an example of how we should preach. We must let the gospel predominate. We must indeed preach the Law, but only as preparation for the gospel. Else we are not true servants of the Gospel.<sup>46</sup> ...

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<sup>42</sup> *An Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism*. Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1981, p. 31 §14.

<sup>43</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 51.

<sup>44</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 189.

<sup>46</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 189.

1 Corinthians 2:2: The sole topic of his preaching, said Paul, was “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Day and night he thought about how he could bring Christ to the people and lead them to faith in Him. Jesus Christ was the Core and Center of all his message. This was written also for our sake. ...

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It is not enough for you to feel that you are orthodox and able to present the pure teaching. It will be of no help if you mingle Law and Gospel. And the most subtle form of such mingling is when we *also* preach the Gospel but do not let it predominate. As soon as you fail to do so, your hearers will go hungry and many will starve to death spiritually. You give them too little to eat, for the true bread of life is not the Law but the Gospel.<sup>47</sup> ...

If you richly preach the Gospel, you need not worry that the people will forsake your church if some charlatan should come and put on a boisterous performance in the pulpit. The people will say: “Our pastor has brought us what we do not find elsewhere. He is a true Lutheran preacher, who showers great treasures upon us every Sunday.”<sup>48</sup>

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God grant that one day people will say of you: “He preaches well, but his message is too sweet.” Just don’t spend too much time on the Law. Come quickly with the Gospel. When the Law has made the iron red-hot, then come quickly with the gospel to forge it while it is hot. Once it has cooled off, it is too late.<sup>49</sup>



## “Sacramental” Praying

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Here I must proceed with the greatest caution, for, as we all know, prayer is not “sacramental” and must not be confused as or considered a “means of grace.” And yet, our Lutheran theology and approach to worship will also direct our use of prayer in the Divine Service. Prayer is an important aspect of worship in the Christian Church, as we learn from 1 Timothy 2:1-2: “*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*” It is even more striking when we remember that Paul’s encouragement here, and also Peter’s in his epistles, were made under Roman emperors who were already beginning to persecute Christians.

Prayer is a sacrificial part of the service, but properly-worded prayers also reflect the sacramental emphasis of the Lutheran theology of worship. The perfect prayer, of course, is the one taught by our Lord. The Lord’s Prayer has been called the greatest martyr, because it is often said so routinely and without thought. Perhaps we might consider the second-greatest martyr then to be the General Prayer. The larger problem here is not that it is said without thought, but

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<sup>47</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 190.

<sup>48</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 191-192.

that it is not said at all. Too often it is omitted for the sake of time<sup>50</sup> or other various reasons. The  
530 General Prayer is, or is based on, the Litany. This is surely a time in the church and in the world  
when prayer is very much needed.

By skipping the General Prayer, we may also be giving the impression that prayer really isn't  
all that important. The old Church Orders and Church Ritual used prayers frequently in the Di-  
vine Service, even using the Lord's Prayer repeated at several places in the same service: with  
the opening prayer, before the sermon text, after the General Prayer, during the Communion lit-  
urgy, and with the closing prayer. Now it is considered best not to pray the Lord's Prayer more  
than once in a service. It is not vain repetition; it is not done "*thinking that they are heard for  
their many words,*"<sup>51</sup> but it is invoking God's blessings on all parts of our worship. It is ritual  
properly used, but not ritualistic.

540 Some have tried to devise a series of General Prayers for the Church Year. This can be done  
as long as they contain the same thoughts and thrust of the General Prayer. If they become an-  
other collect or Prayer of the Day, then they defeat the purpose of the General Prayer, which is to  
pray for our congregation, the whole Church, and all people. In this prayer we "*pray for the  
Church and for all people according to their needs.*"<sup>52</sup> One pastor comments:

Week after week, I am amazed at how some aspect of the theme of the day is found within the  
General Prayer. Not only that, but the General Prayer also serves as a "prayer primer" for the con-  
gregation; from it, as from the Lord's Prayer, they learn *how* to pray. But this only happens when  
they hear it week after week.<sup>53</sup>

550 There are some congregations and pastors who have continued or reinstated the regular use of  
the General Prayer, for which we can be most thankful. In a day when we hear so much concern  
about the state of the church, our society, and our government and rulers, about other religions  
gaining so much ground in America, we do well to pray for the church, our government and even  
for those in other religions:

Look in mercy upon Your Church. Protect it and sanctify it by Your truth. May Your Word be  
taught in its purity and Your Sacraments be rightly administered. ... In mercy remember the ene-  
mies of Your Church and grant to them repentance unto life. ...

Protect and bless Your servants, the President of the United States, the Governor of this state,  
our judges and magistrates and all in authority. Fit them for their high calling by the gift of Your

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<sup>49</sup> *Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther: Law and Gospel*. Herbert J. A. Bouman, translator, p. 192.

<sup>50</sup> The General Prayer takes about 2 or 3 minutes. There are other, better ways to shorten a service by that amount of time.

<sup>51</sup> Matthew 6:7.

<sup>52</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, page 96.

<sup>53</sup> Pastor Alexander Ring in a personal correspondence. Used by permission.

560 Spirit of wisdom and fear, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.<sup>54</sup>

Professor Bruce Backer also makes a good point regarding the General Prayer:

570 Saint Paul urges his Christians to pray for civic righteousness. Certainly it does not justify. Yet it offers believers a reasonably calm environment so that they can live their lives in peace and worship according to God's word. Therefore the General Prayer should be maintained. If people consider it too long, they should employ the responsive prayers that are available now. Likewise, since the days are very evil, the congregation should by all means pray for individual members of the congregations who seek its help. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16). Think of what the entire community of believers can do.<sup>55</sup>

Using the General Prayer regularly and properly also emphasizes the means of grace in the ears of the hearers. We pray for the Word to be taught in its purity, the Sacraments rightly to be administered, and for a proper reception of the Lord's Supper by the communicants. We pray not only for our own congregation or our own synod, but for the whole Christian Church: "*Grant unto Your Church faithful pastors who shall declare Your truth with power and shall live according to Your will.*"



580 The Lutheran church has been truly blessed by God with a rich treasury of liturgy, hymnody, preaching, and praying. We are not a sect, but we understand and recognize ourselves as part of the Church catholic, the one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. At the same time we realize that there is a difference between our theology and that of other denominations in many ways. Our treasures are in the understanding of sacramental and sacrificial elements in the Divine Service, in understanding the Word and Sacraments as powerful and efficacious means of grace, and in the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. And we look forward to the marriage feast of heaven when the Bride will be joined to Christ Himself and will enjoy the great *sacramentum* of the marriage feast of the Lamb.

590 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev 21:2-3).

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<sup>54</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, page 48.

<sup>55</sup> Backer, p. 63.

1. How lovely shines the Morning Star!  
The nations see and hail afar  
The light in Judah shining.  
Thou David's Son of Jacob's race,  
My Bridegroom and my King of Grace,  
For Thee my heart is pining.  
Lowly,  
Holy,  
Great and glorious,  
Thou victorious  
Prince of graces,  
Filling all the heavenly places.

2. O highest joy by mortals won,  
True Son of God and Mary's Son,  
Thou high-born King of ages!  
Thou art my heart's most beauteous Flower,  
And Thy blest Gospel's saving power  
My raptured soul engages.  
Thou mine,  
I Thine;  
Sing hosanna!  
Heavenly manna  
Tasting, eating,  
Whilst Thy love in songs repeating.

3. Now richly to my waiting heart,  
O Thou, my God, deign to impart  
The grace of love undying.  
In Thy blest body let me be,  
E'en as the branch is in the tree,  
Thy life my life supplying.  
Sighing,  
Crying.  
For the savor  
Of Thy favor;  
Resting never,  
Till I rest in Thee forever.

7. Oh, joy to know that Thou, my Friend,  
Art Lord, Beginning without end,  
The First and Last, Eternal!  
And Thou at length—O glorious grace!—  
Wilt take me to that holy place,  
The home of joys supernal.  
Amen,  
Amen!  
Come and meet me!  
Quickly greet me!  
With deep yearning,  
Lord, I look for Thy returning.<sup>56</sup>

4. A pledge of peace from God I see  
When Thy pure eyes are turned to me  
To show me Thy good pleasure.  
Jesus, Thy Spirit and Thy Word,  
Thy body and Thy blood, afford  
My soul its dearest treasure.  
Keep me  
Kindly  
In Thy favor,  
O my Savior!  
Thou wilt cheer me;  
Thy Word calls me to draw near Thee.

5. Thou, mighty Father, in Thy Son  
Didst love me ere Thou hadst begun  
This ancient world's foundation.  
Thy Son hath made a friend of me,  
And when in spirit Him I see,  
I joy in tribulation.  
What bliss  
Is this!  
He that liveth  
To me giveth  
Life forever;  
Nothing me from Him can sever.

6. Lift up the voice and strike the string.  
Let all glad sounds of music ring  
In God's high praises blended.  
Christ will be with me all the way,  
Today, tomorrow, every day,  
Till traveling days be ended.  
Sing out,  
Ring out  
Triumph glorious,  
O victorious,  
Chosen nation;  
Praise the God of your salvation.

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<sup>56</sup> *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, #167.

## APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM C. F. W. WALTHER

Honored Sir,

600 This morning I received your worthy letter, written on the 19th of the month. In your letter you ask for my opinion on whether it is advisable to introduce the singing of Methodist songs in a Lutheran Sunday School. May what follows serve as a helpful reply to your questions:

No, this is not advisable, rather very incorrect and pernicious.

1. Our church is so rich in hymns that you could justifiably state that if one were to introduce Methodist hymns in a Lutheran school this would be like carrying coals to Newcastle. The singing of such hymns would make the rich Lutheran Church into a beggar which is forced to beg from a miserable sect. Thirty or forty years ago a Lutheran preacher might well have been forgiven this. For at that time the Lutheran Church in our country was in as poor as beggar when it comes to song books for Lutheran children. A preacher scarcely knew where he might obtain such little hymn books. Now, however, since our church itself has everything it needs, it is unpardonable when a preacher of our church causes little ones to suffer the shame of eating a foreign bread.

610 2. A preacher of our church also has the holy duty to give souls entrusted to his care pure spiritual food, indeed, the very best which he can possibly obtain. In Methodist songs there is much which is false, and which contains spiritual poison for the soul. Therefore, it is soul-murder to set before children such poisonous food. If the preacher claims, that he allows only "correct" hymns to be sung, this does not excuse him. For, first of all, the true Lutheran spirit is found in none of them; second, our hymns are more powerful, more substantive, and more prosaic; third, those hymns which deal with the Holy Sacraments are completely in error; fourth, when these little sectarian hymnbooks come into the hands of our children, they openly read and sing false hymns.

3. A preacher who introduces Methodist hymns, let alone Methodist hymnals, raises the suspicion that he is no true Lutheran at heart, and that he believes one religion is as good as the other, and that he thus a unionistic-man, a mingler of religion and churches.

620 4. Through the introduction of Methodist hymn singing he also makes those children entrusted to his care of unionistic sentiment, and he himself leads them to leave the Lutheran Church and join the Methodists.

5. By the purchase of Methodist hymn books he subsidizes the false church and strengthens the Methodist fanatics in their horrible errors. For the Methodists will think, and quite correctly so, that if the Lutheran preachers did not regard our religion as good as, or indeed, even better than their own, they would not introduce Methodist hymn books in their Sunday schools, but rather would use Lutheran hymn books.

6. By introducing Methodist hymn books, the entire Lutheran congregation is given great offense, and the members of the same are lead to think that Methodists, the Albright people, and all such people have a better faith than we do.

630 This may be a sufficient answer regarding this dismal matter. May God keep you in the true and genuine Lutheran faith, and help you not to be misled from the same, either to the right or to the left.

Your unfamiliar, yet known friend, in the Lord Jesus Christ,

C. F. W. Walther  
St. Louis, Missouri

January 23, 1883

640 *Translated by M. Harrison*  
*Fort Wayne, Indiana*  
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## APPENDIX B: PREACHING SERVICES IN THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

From *A Handbook of Church Music*, p. 38-39.

While it is true that preaching was not often part of the medieval mass, it is not true that there was little preaching in the medieval Church. But the preaching was seldom done by the parochial clergy. Many of whom were trained only to say mass. It was done by monks, some of whom gained sizable reputations as itinerant preachers; an obvious example is St. Bernard of Clairvaux. These men would deliver series of sermons in a local church much in the style of a present-day preaching mission.

650 Preaching services were part of the Gallican tradition from the sixth century; their roots are uncertain. They were from the pulpit, which in pre-Reformation churches, was in the nave, where people could gather around. Their form was freer than the eucharistic liturgy, and usually they were vernacular services. Latin sermons were preached, of course, where schools or universities offered a learned congregation.

Part of the liturgical reform under Charlemagne was an emphasis on preaching. He ordered sermons to be preached within the eucharistic liturgy, where they were to exert a strong educational influence. For pedagogical reasons the sermon was followed by the Creed, the Our Father, and the Decalog.

660 Out of these elements a paraliturgy called the Prone (*Pronaus*) developed within the mass itself. Into its orbit came also the public confession (as preparation for Communion), the Ave Maria, and hymns that were at first Leisen attached to the Kyries of the Intercessions. A highly evolved form of the Prone is reflected in this outline from Basel: (1) Latin "In nomine...", (2) Sermon text in Latin, (3) German Votum with congregational "Amen," (4) Text in German, (5) Invocation of the Holy Spirit, (6) Sermon, (7) Parish notices, (8) Prayer of the Church, (9) Our Father and Ave Maria, (10) Apostles' Creed, (11) Decalog, (12) Public Confession, (13) Closing Votum. A simpler structure is this form from Biberach: (1) Bells rung, (2) Ave Maria, (3) Reading of the Holy Gospel, (4) Sermon on the Gospel, (5) Parish notices, (6) Public Confession, (7) Giving Holy Water, (8) Hymn, if feast day. [This part is quoted from *Leiturgia*, III, pp. 23-24: Eberhard Weismann, "Der Predigtgottesdienst und die verwandten Formen."]

670 It is not surprising that such a developed service separated itself from the mass. The Prone was often done before the mass; sometimes it was altogether independent. By the 15th century the importance of the preaching service is reflected in the establishment in large churches and foundations of the office of preacher (*Praedikaturen*). Preachers had only minor liturgical responsibilities and were comparatively well trained theologically. In the 16th century, it was through these preachers that the Reformation often made its first appearance.

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