

Chapter Eight: The Mass as the Gospel

The Identification of the Lord's Supper with the Gospel

When a Lutheran is asked what the Gospel is, it is not unusual to hear something akin to a recitation of the fourth article of the Augustana. Justification is regarded as the key to expressing the good news. Yet, repeatedly Luther answers the question of what the Gospel is in a different way. Rather than turning to the third and fourth chapter of Romans or to John 3:16, he turns to the Words of Institution. He finds in them a full summation of the Gospel, indeed the Gospel itself.

In the 1521 treatise *The Misuse of the Mass*, he writes:

For if you ask: what is the Gospel? You can give no better answer than these words of the New Testament, namely, that Christ gave his body and poured out his blood for us for the forgiveness of sins. This alone is to be preached to Christians, instilled into their hearts, and at all times faithfully commended to their memories.¹

Indeed, the Words of Institution gather up the entire Gospel into themselves: “Therefore these words, as a short summary of the whole Gospel, are to be taught and instilled into every Christian’s heart.”²

He repeats the same thought two years later in *The Adoration of the Sacrament*:

Everything depends on these words....They are words of life and salvation, so that whoever believes in them has all his sins forgiven through that faith; he is a child of life and has overcome death and hell. Language cannot express how great and mighty these words are, for they are the sum and substance of the whole Gospel.³

¹ *AE* 36, p. 183.

² *AE* 36, p. 183.

³ *AE* 36, p. 277.

For Luther, the Gospel is always the power of God at work for salvation, thus he says of the Words of Institution:

That is, you should hold it to be a living, eternal, all-powerful Word that can make you alive, free from sin and death, and keep you so eternally; that brings with it everything of which it speaks, namely, Christ with his flesh and blood and everything he is and has. For it is the kind of Word that can and does do all these things, and therefore it should be so regarded.⁴

Indeed of the words, ‘Take and eat, this is my body,’ Luther makes the bold declaration: “This word is the whole Gospel.”⁵

This is not hyperbole.⁶ The Words of Institution embrace in themselves the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God, his self-sacrifice, and the consequent remission of sins, not as an idea, but as a present reality, a gift delivered into the mouth by the express command of the Lord Jesus himself. In the 1528 *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, Luther unpacks the way in which the whole Gospel is embraced and delivered by the Words of Institution:

See, then, what a beautiful, great, marvelous thing this is, how everything meshes together in one sacramental reality. The words are the first thing, for without the words the cup and the bread would be nothing. Further, without the bread and cup, the body and blood of Christ would not be there. Without the body and blood of Christ, the new testament would not be there. Without the new testament, the forgiveness of sins would not be there. Without forgiveness of sins, life and salvation would not be there. Thus the words first connect the bread and cup to the sacrament; the bread and cup embrace the body and blood of Christ; body and blood of Christ embrace the new testament; the new testament embraces the forgiveness of sins; forgiveness of sins embraces eternal life and salvation. See, all this the words of the Supper offer and give us, and we embrace it by faith. Ought not the devil, then, hate such a Supper and rouse fanatics against it.⁷

⁴ AE 36, p. 278.

⁵ AE 36, p. 288.

⁶ Indeed, the Lutheran Church’s insistence on the Sacrament as the Gospel alone explains the manner in which she has been unwilling historically to yield to the Reformed Church’s demand that their disagreements over what is confessed of the presence need not be church divisive. For the true Lutheran Church, the Sacrament is itself the Gospel and without unity in the Gospel there can be no altar fellowship and so no church fellowship.

⁷ AE 37, p. 338.

This understanding of the Words of Institution as the Gospel itself is not to be taken as a private opinion of Luther. Its inclusion in the Large Catechism makes it the doctrine of the Lutheran church. “Now, the whole Gospel and the article of the Creed, ‘I believe in the holy Christian church, the forgiveness of sins,’ are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the Word.”⁸

Does such a lively apprehension of the Words of Institution and the reception of Christ’s body and blood in faith as the Gospel itself find a corresponding liturgical confession? Indeed it does. Already in the Latin Mass, Luther introduced what sounded to his contemporaries like a novel idea: the Words of Institution were to be sung aloud. The people actually got to hear them. In this service they were grammatically fused into the Preface, though they were to be separated from the Preface by a brief pause and sung to the Lord’s Prayer tone.⁹ What the Latin Mass began, the German Mass carried further. The Words in this service were also to be sung, but without being joined to anything else; they stood by themselves.

Even a superficial look at the German Mass is enough to give most liturgiologists pause. Liturgiologists tend to concern themselves with liturgy as *text*. There is text, to be sure, in the German Mass, but a vast quantity of the work is dedicated to *music*. Psalm tones for the Introit, music for the Kyrie, musical instructions for the collect and extensive (and confusing!) instructions on the chanting of the epistle and the Gospel readings, a musical setting for the Words of Institution and the German *Sanctus*. The fact that there are no corresponding musical instructions for the Latin Mass is simply due to the fact that the Latin Mass was only a set of instructions in how to use the missals and other liturgical books already on the altars and in the choirs in an evangelical manner.

⁸ Tappert, *LC* VI, 32, p. 450.

⁹ See *AE* 53, p. 28.

What is the meaning of the music in the German Mass? Was it simply artistic filler? For Luther it was clearly more than that. It is true that in *Against the Heavenly Prophets* he expressed his concern for what today would be called inculturation:

I would gladly have a German mass today. I am also occupied with it. But I would very much like it to have a true German character. For to translate the Latin tone or notes has my sanction, though it doesn't sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection, otherwise all of it becomes an imitation in the manner of the apes.¹⁰

But Luther did not stop with his concern that the service music be authentically German for the German people. He listened to the tones for chanting and interpreted them. Johann Walter, the court musician who helped Luther with the composition of the music for this Mass, says that Luther chose the Gospel tone he did “for Christ is a kind Lord and his words are sweet.”¹¹ To Luther the tone then matched the Words and expressed their content. Thus when the tone Luther chose for the setting of the Words of Institution is examined, their theological significance is revealed.¹² The tone Luther used was simply the Gospel tone: “Luther used the same melody for them as for the Gospel. The cadences are the same, and here as there Luther uses a different reciting note for the narration and for

¹⁰ AE 40, p. 141.

¹¹ “Introduction, The German Mass” AE 53, p. 59.

¹² One must in this, however, beware of reading more into the music than Luther intended. The words of Paul Nettl, *Luthera and Music* (Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, 1948) which Spinks cites in his *Luther's Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass* are likely pushing the data beyond what it will carry: “As with other texts which deeply stirred him, this too begins with a high note, ‘C’, stressing the first syllable, *Unser*. Then the voice, as though in humility, drops a third and plays around with ‘A’, then to sink down to the ‘F’ at the second syllable of the word *Verräten*, as though expressing deep despair at the misdeeds of His disciple. There, where Jesus himself speaks, *Nempt*, the melody starts in with a low ‘F’ with concise simplicity, moves around this repercussion tone, to rise at the phrase, *fur euch*, as if to give melodious expression to salvation by the Saviour’s death. What we experience in this simple sequence of tones, full of symbolism, is that deeply personal, sorrowful, yet consoling devotion which radiates from the mystery of the communion as Luther felt it.” *Spinks*, p. 34. Luther would likely have been amazed at such a romanticizing and might well have replied: “No, I just used the Gospel tone according to the rules of chant which I borrowed from the Passion stories, which tone I rather find sweet and consoling.”

Christ.”¹³ Such a use was a distinct musical confession that these words are nothing less than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their being sung to such a tone remains a unique feature of Lutheran liturgy.¹⁴

This setting of the Words to the Gospel tone is carried out in Herzog Heinrich and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Both orders simply prescribe that the *verba testamenti* be sung in German and with clarity.¹⁵ Obviously the musical confession would be severely lessened if the readings were not chanted to their distinctive tones. While Herzog Heinrich does not indicate one way or the other whether the readings were sung, we find in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel the preference given to singing. “Then the priest turns to the people and sings or reads the epistle....Then the priest sings or reads to the people in German the Gospel.”¹⁶

The musical confession of the Words of Institution as Gospel encapsulated is not the sole expression of the mass as Gospel itself. The exhortations invited that they be heard as the good news which they are: words that hold out forgiveness, life, salvation to those who receive them worthily and in faith.¹⁷ The communion hymn “Let God Be Blest” likewise finds in the gift of the mass a distinct link between incarnation and redemption as present reality:

By thy holy body without blame which from thine own mother Mary came,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ It is quite amusing in this regard to listen to the complaints of congregational members against that “catholic” chanting of the Words of Institution. Rome has never done so! It is a solely Lutheran practice.

¹⁵ See Sehling, I,1, pp 271,272 and VI,1, p. 149. One of the great defects of Sehling’s monument work was that it omitted all the music. For this the original orders must be examined, but such an examination bears out the continued use of a setting based on the Gospel tone, though with minor variations. See for example the splendid copy of the 1581 Herzog Heinrich Order in the library of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis or the copy of the Cassimiriana of 1626 in the library of the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

¹⁶ Sehling, VI,1, p. 143.

¹⁷ See the citations from the exhortations provided above.

And by thy holy blood
Help us Lord, from all our need.
Kyrieleison!¹⁸

Here indeed is the whole Gospel: The Son of God who assumed flesh from the Virgin Mary and shed his blood on Calvary now offers to us that self-same flesh and blood as our help in every need. Thus in the texts, as in the music, the mass is proclaimed to be nothing less than the Gospel of Christ.

¹⁸ *AE* 53, p. 253.

Conclusion

An Evaluation of the Current Liturgical Order

The foregoing chapters have demonstrated the manner in which the liturgy of the Lutheran church in the 16th century provided an explicit public confession of the doctrine of the Lutheran church regarding the Sacrament of the Altar. Those who attended such services were regularly exposed to the joyful reality of the mass as testament of Christ, real presence, bestowing action of Christ, anamnesis, eucharist, communion, sacrament of faith, and, indeed, as the Gospel itself. How does the current liturgy of the Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod fare in this regard? What does it confess regarding the Supper? How faithfully has it preserved the heritage to which it is heir?

In regard to the mass as testament of Christ, *Lutheran Worship* carries forth its heritage quite well. In the first order of Divine Service, the prayer of thanksgiving prior to the Words of Institution, asks: “Grant us faithfully to eat his body and drink his blood *as he bids us do in his own testament.*”¹ Further, whereas many modern orders completely eliminate the word “testament” from the Words of Institution, replacing it with covenant², *Lutheran Worship* continues to use a form of the *Verba* that says: “this is my blood of the new testament,” and this in all its orders of divine service.³ In addition, *Lutheran Worship* restored to use the “Admonition to Communicants” in the third order of Divine Service. Here the old words from the German Mass still ring out: “I exhort you in Christ that you give attention to *the Testament of Christ* in true faith.... Let us then in his name, according to

¹ *LW*, p. 149, emphasis added.

² See for example *LBW* or *CW* or the proposed *Book of Common Prayer*, and even the post-Vatican II missals.

³ *LW*, p. 150, 171, 191.

his command, and with his own words administer and receive *the Testament*.”⁴ Thus the doctrine of the Lutheran church that the mass is indeed Christ’s own last will and testament is faithfully maintained in the current liturgy.⁵

The mass as action of Christ is, perhaps, best witnessed to in *Lutheran Worship* by its adherence to the old Lutheran practice of not including the Words of Institution in any prayer formulation. They stand alone as Christ’s words, Christ’s action. He is the one who is speaking in them, causing the bread to be his body and the wine to be his blood. This confession is made also in the first order of Divine Service where the pastor prays: “as he bids us do in his own Testament.” The present tense “bids” certainly is a confession that Christ remains the speaker in the Words of Institution. The restoration of the *Pax* is also to be noted as a further confession of Christ’s activity, at least in the first order of Divine Service. There the answer to the peace is not “and also with you” (a mutual exchange and greeting), but faith’s word “Amen!”⁶ Here the peace is received as that public absolution Luther spoke of in the Latin Mass, an absolution spoken by Christ through the instrument of his minister.

The mass as communion is certainly a theme not lost on *Lutheran Worship*. The concluding sentence to the proper preface serves as a reminder to the assembly that in its praise and thanksgiving it is joining the angelic and heavenly church: “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven.”⁷ But this is not the first reminder of the communal reality of the church’s worship. In a curious displacement, the

⁴ *LW*, p. 197, 198, emphasis added.

⁵ It should be noted in this regard that *Lutheran Worship* represents an advance on *The Lutheran Hymnal*, whose only reference in the Order of Holy Communion to the “testament” was in the Words of Institution themselves.

⁶ Compare *LW* p. 51 with p. 171. Regrettable as the confusion is that results from two responses to the same words, yet it is significant that the Missouri Synod was unwilling to lose the idea of peace as action and word of Christ.

⁷ *LW*, p. 148.

framers of *Lutheran Worship* moved the prayer which in the Berlin 1955 *Agenda* followed the Words of Institution to the conclusion of the prayer of the church.⁸ Even though moved away from the immediate context of the Lord's Supper, this prayer confesses the larger communion of which the assembly is a part: "Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the lamb in his kingdom, which has no end."⁹ Thus even prior to the eucharistic service proper, there is a confession of the communion which will be realized in the Supper itself.

In regard to the anamnesis, *Lutheran Worship* again fares well. By the addition of the small prayers of thanksgiving in Divine Services I and II, a form of anamnesis was restored¹⁰: "...we praise and thank you for having mercy on those whom you created, sending your only-begotten Son into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior.... Gathered in the name and the remembrance of Jesus...."¹¹ Again, "Blessed are you...for you have had mercy on us children of men and given your only-begotten Son so that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life....prepare us joyfully to remember our Redeemer...."¹² The anamnesis in the third order of Divine Service is provided in the declaratory form to the communicants: "that you take note of and give thanks for the boundless love that he showed us when he saved us from the wrath of God, sin, death, and hell by his blood."¹³ Further, in the displaced prayer mentioned above, the

⁸ See Reed, p. 758. This *Agenda* was published by the VELKD. Due to the prayer's relocation in *LW*, the words which specifically join the "communion" of the church to the "communion" of the Lord's body and blood were lost. The original reads: "*Und wie wir alle durch die Gemeinschaft seines Leibes und Blutes ein Leib sind in Christo, so bring zusammen deine Gemeinde von den Enden der Erde, auf dasz wir mit allen Gläubigen das Hochzeit des Lammes feiern mögen in seinem Reich.*"

⁹ *LW*, p. 144.

¹⁰ Restored, because by the loss of the exhortations the anamnesis of the Lutheran Liturgy was diminished greatly, for example in *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

¹¹ From the first order of Divine Service, *LW*, p. 149.

¹² From the second order of Divine Service, *LW*, p. 190.

¹³ *LW*, p. 198.

anamnesis is quite explicit: “O Lord, heavenly Father, we here remember the sufferings and death of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Praising his victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from his ascension before you, where he ever stands for us as our own high priest.”¹⁴ Were this prayer to be restored to its original location, it would follow most fittingly on the words of Christ: “This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.” Yet, even as the conclusion to the prayer of the church it provides a fitting memorial of the redemption that Christ has accomplished. Thus in each of the orders of Divine Service, the mass as the memorial feast of Christ is confessed, either in prayer to the Father or in exhortation to the people.

Whereas the hymns for the distribution in the first two orders of Divine Service are not prescribed, in the third order we find the old hymns from the 16th century in place.

Here again the anamnesis of Christ continues:

Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior,
Turned away God’s wrath forever
By his bitter grief and woe
He saved us from the evil foe.¹⁵

Your holy body into death was given
Life to win for us in heaven.
No greater love than this to you could bind us;
May this feast of that remind us.¹⁶

Finally, in the second option for the post-communion collect we find a prayer that is itself a brief anamnesis of the blessings of God in Christ: “O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in lovinkindness sent your only-begotten Son into the flesh....” Thus the mass as the perpetual memorial of Christ is witnessed to in *Lutheran Worship*.

¹⁴ *LW*, p. 144.

¹⁵ *LW* #236.

¹⁶ *LW* #238.

In *Lutheran Worship*, the mass as real presence of Christ in his body and blood is powerfully confessed. First, in the prayers prior to the Words of Institution, we find the petitions, “Grant us faithfully to eat his body and drink his blood...”¹⁷ and “receive him as he comes to us in his body and blood.”¹⁸ Again, the exhortation from the third order of Divine Service, provides a parallel confession: “that you then externally receive the bread and wine, that is, his body and blood....”¹⁹ The retention of the German Sanctus, “Isaiah”, following the Words of Institution in the third Divine Service, serves to heighten the confession of the presence of the “holy, holy, holy” One in his body and blood.²⁰ All three orders likewise retain the Agnus Dei, with its strong confession of Christ as the Lamb of God present to bestow his gifts of mercy and peace. The distribution formula in *Lutheran Worship* also carries forth the confession of the real presence in unambiguous language: either, “Take eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ given into death for your sins. Take drink, this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins.” Or “Take, eat; this is the very body of Christ, given for you. Take, drink; this is the very blood of Christ, shed for you.”²¹ And again, at the dismissal of the communicants, the objective reality of what they have received is confessed. Peculiarly Lutheran is that this is not expressed as a wish, but as fact, in the indicative: “The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the

¹⁷ *LW*, p. 149

¹⁸ *LW*, p. 171. This represents a marked strengthening of the original prayer from the *Missale för Svenska Kyrkan*, which read: “receive Him as He comes to us in His Supper.” See, Reed, p. 758

¹⁹ *LW*, p. 198.

²⁰ *LW*, p. 198. By referring to the presence of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity as confessed in the *Trisagion*, there is no intended neglect of the presence of the Father and the Spirit. Where the Son is, there is also Father and Spirit as well. Likewise where Father and Spirit are, there is the Son. The *Trisagion* thus gloriously confesses the “real presence” of the Holy Trinity.

²¹ *LW*, p. 172.

true faith to life everlasting. Go in peace.”²² Finally, *Lutheran Worship*, by its use of the Nunc Dimittis, confesses that in the sacrament just received the communicants have had the experience of old Simeon, who saw with his own eyes the Salvation of Israel and the Light for the Gentiles when he held the baby Christ in his arms; he was ready to die then in peace. The particular placement of this canticle, which has only slight Reformation antecedents,²³ and comes into Missouri Synod practice chiefly from the adoption of the *Common Service*, is nothing less than a confession that a genuine encounter between Christ and his people has taken place at the altar. It is thus a confession of the real presence.

In regard to the mass as eucharist, thanksgiving, *Lutheran Worship* is faithful indeed. In the first two orders of Divine Service, the preface and proper prefaces retain their historic positions as the “foreword” to the mass itself: the great thanksgiving occasioned by the gift of the Lord’s body and blood. But rather than the limited scope that the proper prefaces had in the 16th century church orders, *Lutheran Worship* provides additional thanksgivings for Advent, Lent, Passion, Apostles and Evangelists, and All Saints.²⁴ The preface for the general Sunday in *Lutheran Worship* grounds the thanksgiving of the service in the paschal mystery, highlighting that every Sunday is a return to the joy of Easter, “who on this day overcame death and the grave and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.”²⁵ Nevertheless, it is sad that the beautiful general preface which the Saxon heritage handed on has not been preserved in current usage:

²² *LW*, p. 173.

²³ It does indeed show up in the Petri Order of 1531. Following the distribution, there is the following rubric: “Then is sung or read for the Communion a Swedish hymn or the Nunc dimittis in Swedish.” *Yelverton*, p. 41. Among the chief German orders it shows up in Nuremberg [1525] and Strasbourg [1525]. See *Reed*, p. 379. Given such slight antecedent, its remarkable strong position in American Lutheranism is most likely to be found in it being included in Loehe’s *Agenda*. The early Missouri Synod books never list it, since it was not part of the Herzog Heinrich tradition.

²⁴ See *LW*, pp. 145-148.

²⁵ *LW*, p. 146.

It is very meet and right, becoming and salutary, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom Thy majesty is praised by the angels, worshipped by the dominions, feared by the powers, celebrated with unanimous rejoicings by the heavens, the powers of all heavens, and the blessed Seraphim. With them let us also join our voices, worshipping Thee and saying: Holy, etc.²⁶

The inclusion of the brief prayers of thanksgiving prior to the Words of Institution in *Lutheran Worship* serve as a bridge to connect the particular thanksgiving that is being celebrated on that given day to the cause of *all* thanksgiving in the church: the salvation obtained by the incarnation and passion of Christ, which salvation is distributed in the body and blood of Christ in the Supper.²⁷ “Lord of heaven and earth, we praise and thank you for having had mercy.... With repentant joy we receive the salvation accomplished for us by the all-availing sacrifice of his body and his blood on the cross.”²⁸ “We give you thanks for the redemption you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.”²⁹

The second Divine Service furthers the eucharistic confession by the first option it provides as a post-communion canticle: “Thank the Lord and sing his praise....He recalls his promises and leads his people forth in joy with shouts of thanksgiving. Alleluia, alleluia.”³⁰ Each of the Divine Services has the final word that the church speaks to the Father in the Supper be a word of thanksgiving: “We give thanks to you, Almighty God....”³¹ or “O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness...we thank you that for his sake you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament....”³² Thus *Lutheran Worship* continues and furthers the eucharistic confession of the Lutheran church.

²⁶ Translation of the German is from the Synod’s 1881 *Church Liturgy*.

²⁷ See *LW*, pp. 149, 171.

²⁸ *LW*, p. 149.

²⁹ *LW*, p. 171.

³⁰ *LW*, p. 173.

³¹ *LW*, p. 153.

³² *LW*, p. 154.

It is when we come to the mass as sacrament of faith that *Lutheran Worship* is deficient in carrying forward a liturgical confession of the Lutheran doctrine. There is not one word spoken in either the first or second order of the Divine Service which declares to the communicants the necessity of faith and the consequences of an unworthy communing. The third order contains the call to the people: “I exhort you in Christ that you give attention to the Testament of Christ *in true faith*, and above all *take to heart* the words with which Christ presents his body and blood to us for forgiveness.”³³ Nevertheless, it does not mention the consequences of a misuse of this sacrament (that is, a faithless or impenitent reception). The recently published *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* does a somewhat better job by its inclusion of the following exhortation:

Dear friends in Christ! In order that you may receive this holy Sacrament worthily, it is good that you consider what you must now believe and do. From the words of Christ: “This is My body, which is given for you; this is My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” you should believe that Jesus Christ is Himself present with His body and blood, as the words declare. From Christ’s words “for the remission of sins,” you should believe that Jesus Christ bestows upon you His body and blood to confirm unto you the forgiveness of all your sins. And finally, you should do as Christ commands you when He says, “Take, eat, drink of it, all of you,” and “This do in remembrance of me.” If you believe these words of Christ, and do as He therein has commanded, then you have rightly examined yourselves and may worthily eat Christ’s body and drink His blood for the forgiveness of all your sins. You should also unite in giving thanks to Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for so great a gift, and should love one another with a pure heart, and thus with the whole Christian Church have comfort and joy in Christ, our Lord. To this end may God the Father grant you His grace; through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.³⁴

It is still to be noted that this exhortation (which *ELH* places invariably between the Sanctus and the Lord’s Prayer) does *not* warn against an impenitent reception (as, for example, Luther’s 1525 Exhortation, all the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel exhortations, and the Swedish exhortation do). Can there be any doubt that a restoration of such an exhortation

³³ *LW*, pp. 198,199.

³⁴ *ELH*, pp. 52,53.

would prove beneficial to the people of God?³⁵ It cannot be said that there is less danger today than in the era of Reformation in regard to a faithless reception. Indeed, in an age of growing permissiveness, at least the occasional use of such an exhortation would provide some sort of liturgical warning to those who might otherwise be eating and drinking to their judgment.

The mass as Gospel itself is witnessed to better in the first and third orders of Divine Service than in the second. The first and third order provide that the Words of Institution be chanted or said, giving preference to the chanting, and in the first Divine Service printing them out with their proper pointing. While not in all details the tone that Luther prescribed, it is clearly based on it, and thus continues the notion that these words are in themselves a summary of the Gospel. Further, *Lutheran Worship Altar Book*, gives the following rubric:

Whether chanted or said these words should be done with particular distinctness, attention, and reverence. This is especially true of the words of our Savior “Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me... Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” “This is not the word and ordinance of a prince or emperor, but of the divine Majesty at whose feet every knee should vow and confess that it as he says [and these words should be accepted] with all reverence, fear, and humility.” (The Large Catechism, V, 11).³⁶

The respect and reverence accorded these words is then the result of their being the sure and certain words of Christ, words that express the whole economy of salvation in a few brief lines.

Thus by and large, *Lutheran Worship* is at one with the 16th century orders in its liturgical confession of the Supper. The one area that is lacking is a liturgical confession of

³⁵ Perhaps the constant confusion in the Missouri Synod in regard to “open” and “closed” communion would be greatly lessened if the liturgy itself contained a reminder every week of why the Supper of the Lord, which is life and salvation itself, can prove to be a danger to anyone who comes to it without living faith.

³⁶ *Lutheran Worship Altar Book*, p. 28.

what constitutes worthy and unworthy reception. This could be remedied by the use of one of the classic exhortations, at least from time to time. The repositioning of the anamnesis in the first order of Divine Service to immediately following the Words of Institution and with that the return of the phrases that immediately connect the Lord's Supper with the communion of all the faithful would also be desirable. The liturgical storehouse of the Lutheran church is exceedingly rich, and each generation is given the privilege of exploring and exploiting that treasure trove for what may best serve the Gospel in its own day and what it may add to the liturgical deposit. As the introduction to *Lutheran Worship* so aptly expresses it: "We are heirs of an astonishingly rich tradition. Each generation receives from those who went before and, in making that tradition of the Divine Service its own, adds what best may serve in its own day—the living heritage and something new."³⁷

³⁷ *Lutheran Worship*, p. 6.

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