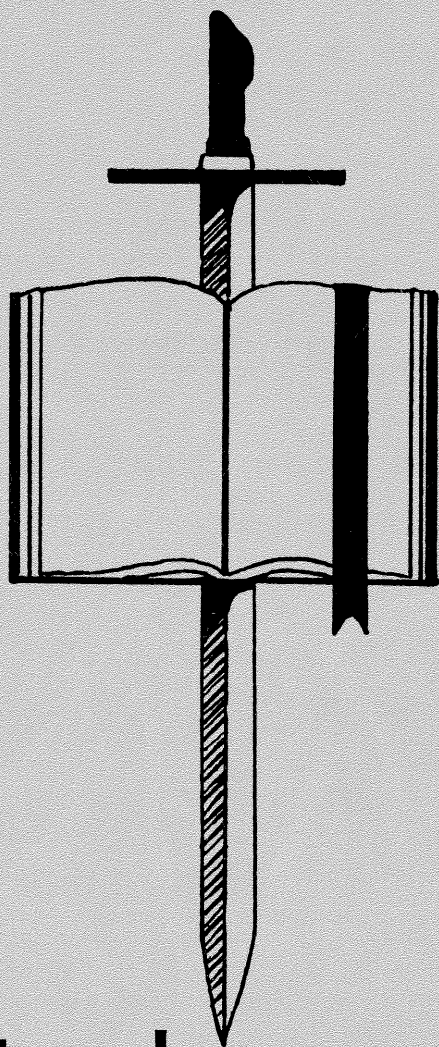


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FOREWORD

This issue begins with an essay entitled BAPTISM IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH, by Pastor Gaylin Schmeling, which was delivered to the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on October 15, 1990. Rev. Schmeling is pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Okauchee, Wisconsin, and also serves as chairman of the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

HOW CAN THE LITURGY AID THE CHURCH'S MISSION? was presented by Rev. Michael Krentz to the ELS General Pastoral Conference which met in Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 25-27, 1990. It is printed in this issue of the Quarterly by resolution of the pastoral conference. Pastor Krentz serves Holton Lutheran Church, Holton, Michigan.

We are also pleased to begin a series of chapters from a doctoral dissertation entitled ORTHODOX LUTHERAN DISTINCTIONS by Pastor Ernest Bartels of Wahpeton, North Dakota, where he serves Immanuel Lutheran Church. The first chapter is an historical introduction to Lutheran orthodoxy.

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BAPTISM IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

I

The Scriptural Basis for the Sacrament

A. Old Testament Pictures of Baptism

1 Baptism is a glorious creative act of the entire Holy Trinity in which we were born again through faith in the Savior and thus incorporated into His body, the church, receiving all the blessings of salvation. This Sacrament the Risen Lord instituted shortly before His Ascension. He commanded His followers, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20) Here the Lord gave His church the command to baptize. Yet already in the Old Testament there were many pictures and types of Baptism.

2 St. Peter connects Baptism and the flood in his first epistle. He shows that as Noah and his family were saved by the waters of the flood so Baptism now saves us. (I Peter 3:21) The whole antediluvian world was destroyed by the flood waters. In the same way, our old sinful flesh was drowned in the waters of Baptism. Yet those very waters which destroyed the ancient world raised up the ark saving Noah and his family. Likewise in Baptism we were raised to new spiritual life because here faith in the Savior was worked in our hearts.

3 In I Corinthians 10:1-2 the Apostle writes, "I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers

were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." St. Paul here compares Israel's going through the Red Sea with Baptism. Like Israel in Egypt we, by nature, were hopefully enslaved in sin. Satan, that cruel Pharaoh, so controlled us that we did his every bidding and even did it willingly. So terrible was that bondage that we even lusted to do those things which could only harm ourselves and those around us. Yet Jesus, the Valiant One, came to our defense. In the battles of the ages on the cross He suffered all that we deserved for sin so that He might crush the old evil foe, our cruel task master, and free us from his tyranny.

4 Now as Israel became God's people passing through the waters of the Red Sea, so we became a part of spiritual Israel, the Holy Christian Church, passing through the waters of Baptism. Israel was liberated from slavery in the waters of the Red Sea. In the same way we were delivered from the bondage of sin, death, and the devil in the waters of Baptism. Here we received saving faith in the Redeemer and our sinful flesh was drowned as Pharaoh's host in the sea. At the baptismal font, all the blessings of Christ's redemption flowed to us personally. We were assured of the promised land of heaven with milk and honey blessed. This is the reason that milk and honey were at times given to the newly baptized in the Ancient Church. Luther refers to this baptismal exodus theme in The Babylonian Captivity of the Church:

The children of Israel, whenever they turned to repentance, remembered above all their exodus from Egypt, and remembering turned back to God who had brought them out. Moses impressed this memory and this protection upon them many times, and David afterwards did the same. How much more ought we to

remember our exodus from Egypt, and by this remembrance turn back to him who led us through the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5), remembrance of which is commended to us for this very reason! (LW 36:60)

5 The third Old Testament type of Baptism clearly identified by the New Testament is circumcision. St. Paul especially emphasizes this connection in Colossians 2:11-12: "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Circumcision at its institution was designated as a means of grace. (LW 35:65) God established circumcision with Abraham as "My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants." (Genesis 17:7) God promised to be Abraham's gracious God. He covenanted to grant forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation by means of the rite of circumcision. (LW 40:288)

6 In Colossians, St. Paul shows how Baptism is superior to the Old Testament type in three ways. First, Baptism is "a circumcision made without hands." St. Paul emphasizes that Baptism is God's activity. Baptism is not a poor, human, handmade thing. It is God's hand creating His people anew. Second, Baptism is the "putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh." In circumcision only the tiny foreskin was removed picturing the putting off of the Old Man. But in Baptism the whole body of the flesh, the whole sinful nature, is stripped away and set aside. The sinner is

declared to be a saint in the water. Third, Paul calls Baptism "the circumcision of Christ." Christ Himself is the one who has instituted Baptism. It is His Baptism. Christ brought the new covenant which superseded the old and replaced circumcision given to Abraham with Baptism given by Christ. In Baptism we participate in His death and resurrection and thus we die to sin and rise to a whole new kind of life.

7 Another illusion to Baptism in the Old Testament is the reference to the ritual washings for cleansing and purification. (Leviticus 12:1-5, 14:8-9, 15:16-27; Numbers 19:11-13) This is especially true of those passages speaking of a final cleansing of God's people in the Messianic age like the beautiful words of Ezekiel, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you." (Ezekiel 36:25-27; see also Isaiah 44:3 and Zechariah 13:1) In the Messianic era we indeed receive a new heart through new birth by water and the Spirit. (John 3:5) Christ the Messiah won complete cleansing for all through His blood and now sprinkles us with pure water washing away our sins. (Acts 22:16; Hebrews 10:22)

B. The Use of Proselyte Baptism

8 A form of purification even more akin to Christian Baptism developed in the intertestamental period. This was Proselyte Baptism. (תבילה "Tevilah" from טבול "to bathe, to dip oneself") "Baptism" is the Greek derived equivalent

of tevilah, Proselyte Baptism. It is important to note that the terminology of Christian Baptism is derived from Hebrew origins. This is true even of the verb "to baptize" (βαπτίζειν) and its derivatives, which were not used in non-Jewish Hellenism in a technical ritualistic sense. These terms originated among Greek-speaking Jews. Likewise, the use of the middle voice, "to let oneself be dipped, to let oneself be washed" (βαπτίζεσθαι, Acts 22:26; ἀπολουεσθαι I Corinthians 6:11) was just as bad Greek as it was good Jewish-Greek. (J. Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 29)

9 There was no biblical requirement for Proselyte Baptism but some time before the birth of Christ it became a prerequisite for a Gentile to enter the Jewish faith. The subject of Proselyte Baptism was debated by the rabbinic schools. The school of Shammai stressed circumcision as more important, while the Hillelites emphasized Proselyte Baptism because it portrayed spiritual cleansing and the beginning of new life. Ultimately the Hillelite view prevailed as reflected in the Talmud. Proselyte Baptism is important for the question of baptizing infants because Gentile children were baptized in Proselyte Baptism. Also the Rabbis used the terminology of rebirth in reference to Proselyte Baptism not unlike the New Testament. (W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, pp. 119 ff).

C. The Baptism of our Lord

10 Christ's Baptism was a Baptism by John. Questions have arisen at various times in church history concerning the purpose and effect of John's Baptism. Some have held that John's Baptism did not have the same benefit as Christian Baptism.

However, the Baptism of John is expressly described as a "Baptism of repentance for the remission of sin." (Luke 3:3; Mark 1:4) If John's Baptism gave the forgiveness of sin then it surely was a means of grace as Christian Baptism. Chemnitz sees no essential difference between the Baptism of John and Christian Baptism. (Ex. 2, 125-138)

11 Christ's Baptism was His entry and consecration into His threefold public office of prophet, priest, and king. In the Old Testament these offices were consecrated with oil as when David was anointed to be king by Samuel. Jesus, however, wasn't merely anointed with oil symbolizing the Spirit. Rather, He was anointed in full measure by the Spirit Himself, for at His Baptism the Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove and remained with Him. At our Lord's Baptism the Father said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) These words connect Jesus to the prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 42. Jesus was God's servant, His Elect in whom He delighted. On Him God placed His Spirit. (Isaiah 42:1-2) These words of the Father indicate that Jesus was the Suffering Servant destined by God to fulfill the vicarious sin-bearing mission of Isaiah 53. The Lord would lay on Him the iniquity of us all. He would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. By His stripes we would be healed.

12 The Baptism of our Lord began His redemptive ministry for our salvation. Thus there is a definite connection between Jesus' Baptism and our own as was seen already in the Ancient Church. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "He (Christ) was born and was baptized that by His passion He might cleanse water." (Epistle to the Ephesians, 18) This connection is confirmed by Luther in a number

of his sermons. (LW 51:318; St. L. XI, 2124-2125; St. L. XIII, 136-146) Because John didn't think it was right that he baptize Jesus the Messiah, Jesus said, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15) Jesus' Baptism culminated in His death and resurrection, through which He fulfilled all righteousness, winning righteousness for all by His active and passive obedience. His Baptism began the Baptism of His cross and death, as He spoke of it. (Luke 12:49-50; Mark 10:38-39) His Baptism, which began His redemptive ministry, is the source of the blessings of our Baptism. It puts the power into Christian Baptism. Jesus' Baptism, culminating in His death and resurrection, is the basis for our Baptism so that in it we participate in Christ's death and resurrection. The connection between our Lord's Baptism and our own, Luther summarizes in his chief baptismal hymn:

To Jordan came our Lord, the Christ,
To do God's pleasure willing,
And there was by Saint John baptized,
All righteousness fulfilling;
There did He consecrate a bath
To wash away transgression
And quench the bitterness of death
by His own blood and Passion.
He would a new life give us.
(ELS Hymnal Supplement, Hymn 111)

13 Because Jesus was baptized for our salvation, we are baptized unto salvation in His name receiving all the benefits of the Baptism of His cross and death. We are united with His death and resurrection becoming spiritually alive. As the Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove and remained with Him, so in our Baptism we receive the Spirit in all His fullness with all His many

gifts. At His Baptism the Father declared, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) Likewise in our Baptism we become the beloved children of God, joint heirs with Christ.

D. The Command and Institution of Baptism

14 The many pictures of Baptism in the Old Testament and our Lord's own Baptism are extremely beneficial in helping us understand Baptism, but in these references alone we have no command and institution for Baptism. This is to be found in the Great Commission. After our Lord completed His redemptive atonement sacrifice for the sins of all men accomplishing reconciliation, after the Crucified and Risen One who conquered death had received all power and authority in heaven and earth and was about to ascend to the right hand controlling all things in the universe, He gave the Great Command. Jesus said to His disciples, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20) Likewise He said in the Gospel of Mark, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16) The divine institution of Baptism is also evident from apostolic practice. The apostles administered Baptism already at the first Pentecost. In his Pentecost sermon St. Peter urged, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

15 According to the institution of Baptism, disciples are to be made by means of baptizing (βαπτίζοντες) and by means of teaching (διδάσκοντες). These two Greek participles express means or instrument. They indicate how all nations are to be made disciples: by baptizing them and by teaching them. This Baptism is to be "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κ. τ. λ.). The use of the preposition εἰς (in, in reference to, with respect to) seems to come from Jewish baptismal terminology; a rendering of $\alpha\psi\chi$ a formula by which, in rites of all kinds, the intention of the rite was introduced. From the Second Commandment and the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer we see that the name of God means God Himself and everything about Him. To be baptized in the name of the Trinity means to be baptized in reference to the Trinity being connected and united with the Trinity in such a way that the individual becomes God's possession and is dedicated to His service. In this institution the Lord commands His church to baptize all nations. This shows that Baptism is meant for all people--no age group excluded. Finally the baptismal command concludes, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," reminding us that the Lord will be with us in Baptism not only in His omnipresence, as He is in all things, but in such a way that we are saved according to the Father's mercy, united with Christ and His death and resurrection, and born again by the Spirit. (MWS 113)

II

The Sacrament in Church History

A. Baptism in the Ancient Church

16 From the church's very beginning Baptism was considered to be an indispensable means through which an individual participated in the salvation of

Christ and was received into Christian fellowship. It was not a mere outward symbol of conversion but a powerful Sacrament which gave forgiveness and rebirth.

Justin Martyr (100-166 A.D.) wrote: Then we lead them to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. In the name of God, the Father and Lord of all, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ said: "Unless you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Apology I, 61, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 6, p. 99)

17 One of the earliest sources of information concerning the practice of the Ancient Church is found in the Didache: The Teachings of the Apostles. It is dated from the last third of the first century, possibly around 90 A.D. The Didache was a manual of church discipline. In regard to Baptism it gave these directives:

Regarding baptism, baptize thus. After giving the foregoing instructions, "Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" in running water. But, if you have no running water, baptize in any other; and, if you cannot in cold water, then in warm. But, if you have neither, then pour water three times on the head "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." But, before the baptism, let the one who baptizes and the one to be baptized fast, and any others who are able to do so. And you shall require the person being baptized to fast for one or

two days, (Didache 7, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 1, p. 177)

The writer of the Didache was not dogmatic about the method of supplying water in Baptism. He preferred Baptism in running water, that is, in a river or a stream. However, if that was not possible, simply pouring water over the individual's head three times would be legitimate. Notice also that the baptismal formula commanded by Our Lord in Matthew 28:19-20 was used here. For the Ancient Church a valid Baptism was the application of water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

18 Most of the Baptisms referred to in the New Testament and in the Early Church were adult Baptisms. This should not surprise us because many people in those years were received into the church as adults. The church was a missionary church facing a missionary situation. While the reception of these large numbers of adults was emphasized in various writings, this emphasis should not be understood as implying that there was a lack of infant Baptisms. It was only natural that the Baptism of the adults or leading members of the family be stressed and the children simply be considered part of the household. Already in the New Testament the OIKOS formula was used showing that whole households were baptized which surely would have included children. (I Corinthians 1:16; Acts 16:15; Acts 18:8) St. Ignatius indicated that children were included in the household formula when he says, "I salute the households of my brethren with their wives and children and the virgins who are called widows." (Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 13) St. Irenaeus of Lyons (born between 130-140 A.D.), the most important theologian in the second century, wrote, "For He (Jesus) has come to save all of them by Himself: all those, I say who through Him are

reborn into God, infants, young children, boys, the mature and older people." (Adversus Heereses, Book II, 22, 4, Roberts and Donaldson, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 391) St. Irenaeus here stated that babies are reborn into God which was the established terminology of the Church for Baptism. Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.) who lived in Rome bore witness to infant Baptism and presupposed it as an unquestioned practice of the church from apostolic times. (Apostolic Tradition, 21, B. S. Easton, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, p. 45) Origen (185-254 A.D.), speaking for the eastern end of the Mediterranean world, wrote approvingly of infant Baptism, "The church received from the apostles the tradition of baptizing infants too." (Commentary on Romans V. 9 on 6. 5-7, J. Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 65) These great theologians from the various different geographical areas of the Ancient Church indicate that infant Baptism was considered to be an apostolic practice and not a later development of the church. (For a full discussion of infant Baptism in the Ancient Church, see J. Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries.)

19 The only major church father before the fourth century to criticize infant Baptism was Tertullian (150-220 A.D.) who lived in Carthage. He, however, never rejected the apostolic origin of infant Baptism. He desired to postpone Baptism except in cases of emergency because he felt that infant Baptism placed too much responsibility on the shoulders of the sponsors and because he seems to have believed that infants were innocent until they reached the age of reason. But in the fourth century a crisis arose in the matter of infant Baptism. The belief became common that Baptism forgave only those sins committed before Baptism.

Therefore Christian parents began to postpone the Baptism of their children until they were through the rebellious and stormy years of youth. In fact, many tried to delay Baptism until the hour of death as was the case with Constantine the Great. This same view influenced St. Augustine's mother Monica. When her son, who was born in 354 A.D., became very ill around 365 A.D., she asked that he be baptized but then postponed the Baptism again when he suddenly recovered, "because the guilt incurred in the filth of sin would be greater and more perilous after the washing than before." (The Confessions I, II) This improper practice of the fourth century was corrected by the beginning of the fifth as is seen in the Synod of Carthage (418 A.D.) which anathematized anyone who said that newborn infants should not be baptized.

20 The postponement of Baptism in the fourth century has been interpreted by some to mean that infant Baptism was not of apostolic origin but a more recent innovation that only became universal at the beginning of the fifth century. This is not the case. Infant Baptism began with the apostles on a sound scriptural basis and can be documented throughout the Ancient Church in the second and third centuries. The postponement of Baptism practiced by some resulted from a misunderstanding of the doctrine of Baptism.

21 A lengthy period of catechization before the Baptism of an adult (2 years or more) was established by the beginning of the third century. Intensive preparation of the candidates began at Lent with the actual Baptism at the Easter Vigil. During Lent they were taught the baptismal creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the other treasures of the faith which were otherwise withheld from profane

ears. On Easter Eve Hippolytus reports in the Apostolic Tradition that those to be baptized were brought to pure flowing water together with their sponsors and others. They removed their clothing, picturing the putting off of the flesh. First the infants of those who went through the catechumenate were baptized and then the adults. They were asked to renounce Satan and all his works. Then each individual would go into the water three times. Before each time, the catechumen would confess that portion of the baptismal creed referring to the particular person of the Trinity in whose name he was about to be baptized. After the catechumen was baptized he received the laying on of hands and was anointed with oil signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit received in Baptism. The climax of the catechumenate was the celebration of First Communion at dawn on Easter Sunday. Catechumenate became less common as the number of infant Baptisms increased and adult Baptisms decreased. (Apostolic Tradition, 16-20, B. S. Easton, The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, p. 41-49)

22 The liturgy of Baptism was embellished with many different ceremonies and symbols to help explain the significance of Baptism. The sign of the cross was made on the forehead and breast showing that one was united with Christ's death and resurrection. The newly baptized were given milk and honey indicating their possession of the heavenly Canaan with milk and honey blessed. Salt was placed in their mouth (Mark 9:50) and their eyes, nose, and tongue moistened with saliva with the words, "Ephphatha this is 'Be opened'" alluding to Mark 7:34. At times the newly baptized received a pure white garment symbolizing their putting on of Christ (Galatians 3:27) and a burning candle indicating that Baptism was the Sacrament of enlightenment. (Hebrews 6:4)

23 These outward symbols were a great benefit in explaining the meaning of the Sacrament. But they also at times tended to blur the meaning of Baptism as was the case with the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil. Originally this ceremony symbolized that the Holy Spirit was received in all His fullness in Baptism. But slowly the idea developed that Baptism only bestowed the forgiveness of sin, while the laying on of hands and the anointing in and of itself gave the Spirit. In the latter part of the fourth century in the Western Church the laying on of hands was separate from Baptism and it developed into the unscriptural Sacrament of Confirmation. Baptism was performed at infancy by any local pastor but Confirmation was administered later in life by the bishop. In the Eastern Church this laying on of hands and anointing called Chrismation was never really separated from Baptism but was considered a second Sacrament performed immediately after Baptism.

24 In the middle of the third century a question arose concerning the value of Baptism performed by ministers of a schismatic church. Cyprian of Carthage would not accept such Baptisms while the bishop of Rome recognized them. One hundred fifty years later, with the help of the great North African bishop St. Augustine, the Roman view prevailed. In his controversies with the Donatists Augustine emphasized that the validity of Baptism does not depend on the character or faith of the individual performing the Sacrament. If the proper form is used, Baptism is valid even when administered by immoral pastors or heretics. He explained that it is the Word of God that makes a Sacrament. If the Word be joined to the element, it becomes Sacrament. (*Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum*) Finally, in his conflict with the

Pelagians, Augustine's understanding of original sin was deepened and thus his stress on the necessity of infant Baptism increased.

B. Baptism in the Medieval Church

25 Building upon the systematizing of Augustine the theologians of the Middle Ages like Thomas Aquinas developed the medieval system of the seven Sacraments. The Sacraments were believed to confer grace simply by the performing of the rite (ex opere operato) independent of the psychological state of faith of the minister or recipient. Baptism was the door to the other Sacraments and to the kingdom of heaven. It was essential to salvation except for persons who desired to be baptized and did not have the opportunity to do so. Baptism was to confer grace which infused into the essence of the soul, deleted all sins, placed one into a state of grace, and bestowed supernatural virtues. Those baptized were imprinted with an indelible character marked as belonging to Christ.

26 The medieval theologians confirmed the view developed by some in the Ancient Church that Baptism was not beneficial for the entire life, rather it only removed original sin and those sins committed before Baptism. For those sins committed after Baptism, one was to look to the Sacrament of Penance for help. This became standard Roman dogma in the Council of Trent where it is stated, "If anyone says that all sins which are committed after Baptism are either remitted or rendered venial solely through the remembrance and faith of the Baptism once received, let him be anathema." (Ex. 2, 150)

C. Baptism in the Reformation

27 The medieval doctrine of Baptism was far more acceptable to the Lutheran fathers than the medieval doctrine of the Lord's Supper. However, Luther had definite concerns about the scholastic view of Baptism. Influenced by Semi-Pelagianism, Baptism was seen as an infusing of grace which enabled one to finish the work which Christ began. Baptism was believed to be able to annihilate all sin within the individual. Luther rejected these ideas. Baptism was not an infusing of grace which was to help the individual live a holy life thus winning salvation. Rather, it was a distribution of the full forgiveness of Jesus won for all on the cross. Baptism did not delete sin, making it vanish, nor did it neutralize concupiscence for the flesh continued to rage. Luther quoted Augustine approvingly, "Sin is altogether forgiven in baptism; not in such a manner that it is no longer present, but in such a manner that it is not imputed." (LW 35:34-35)

28 Contrary to the Ex opere operato view of the Medieval Church, Luther showed that faith was needed to receive the blessing of Baptism, "For unless faith is present or is conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing; indeed, it will become a hindrance to us, not only at the moment when it is received, but throughout the rest of our lives." (LW 36:59) While Luther emphasized that faith was essential for receiving the benefits of the Sacrament, still he confessed that the efficacy of the Sacrament does not depend on the faith or merit of the minister or recipient but alone on the Word and command of Christ. (LW 40:246, LC IV 53, p. 443)

29 Luther believed that there was no greater

comfort on earth than Baptism. (LW 35:34) It bestowed the complete forgiveness of sin, new spiritual life, and the confident hope of salvation. Therefore he rejected the unscriptural teaching of the Medieval Church that Baptism only removed original sin and the sins committed before Baptism. This deprived Christians of wonderful comfort. He vehemently denied that Penance was a "second plank" to rescue the Christian whose Baptism had been shipwrecked by subsequent sin, for the ship of Baptism remained solid. (LW 36: 58-61) The Christian life was a daily Baptism once begun and continued. (LC IV, 65, p. 445) Repentance, therefore, was nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism. (LC IV 70, p. 446) Here one continued daily the dying to sin and the rising to new life of Baptism. For Luther Baptism was the continual unfolding of the Christian life reaching its full consummation at the last day.

30 In opposition to the teachings of the Reformed, Luther confessed that Baptism was "God's own act." (LC IV 35-37, p. 441) It was not a mere human action done in obedience to Christ nor was it only a picture of what occurred when an individual was brought to faith, but it was a powerful, creative act of God which distributed all the blessings of Christ's cross and worked the faith to receive them. When the Anabaptists arose Luther staunchly upheld infant Baptism especially in Concerning Rebaptism of 1528 and in the Large Catechism. Luther believed that God supplied faith in and through Baptism to the infant. Thus He could say, "Even if infants did not believe, which, however, is not the case, as we have proved, still their Baptism would be valid and no one should rebaptize them." (LC IV 55, p. 443) "Thus we also say that the child is indeed brought to Baptism through another's faith and work.

But when they have come and the pastor or the baptizer deals with them in Christ's place, He blesses them and gives them faith and the kingdom of God since the words and actions of the pastor are the words and works of Christ Himself." (St. L. XI, 492-493; See also LW 40: 243; LC IV 75, p. 445)

III

The Essence of the Sacrament

A. The Nature of Baptism

31 The essential parts of Baptism are the water and the Word (Ephesians 5:25-26). The visible element in Baptism is the water. The question may be asked why was water used in the Sacrament and not some other more dignified substance. The Lord probably chose water because it is one of the most common elements found in our world. In this way, the church would never be without the earthly element needed for a valid Baptism. Also, water is used throughout the Old Testament and in our secular world as a method of cleansing and refreshment. Water is vital to physical life.

32 The water used in Baptism is ordinary water like that which one could drink or in which one could bathe. We do not have to obtain the water from a special place like the Jordan. Nor is the amount or manner of applying water expressed in the Scripture. Some today believe that the word "baptize" denotes only immersing. However, the Hebrew word **בָּטַח** from which the word for Proselyte Baptism is taken and which is translated by the Greek verb **βαπτίζω** means "to bathe, to wash" and not necessarily "to immerse." The Proselyte Baptisms were not only performed by

immersion and the New Testament seems to suggest that at our Lord's Baptism Jesus and John went down and stood together in the Jordan and John poured water over Jesus. In Mark 7:4 the verb βαπτίζεω is used to speak of "the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches" showing that this verb simply means "to wash." When we wash pitchers, vessels, and couches, we do not ordinarily totally immerse them. (See also II Kings 5:10-14, Numbers 19:18, Sirach 34:25, Judith 12:7 in the LXX where βαπτίζεω is used in the sense of "wash or bathe.") The Didache dated around 90 A.D. allows any form of baptizing. (Didache 7, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. I, p. 177; See Paragraph 17 above) Thus we see from the Scripture that we may apply water in Baptism in any manner.

33 The Water in itself does not make Baptism.

Luther says in the Small Catechism: "Baptism is not just water but it is water used according to God's command and connected with His Word." As the waters of the Jordan in the days of Elisha had no more power to cleanse Naaman without the divine command, than did the waters of Damascus, so Baptism becomes a powerful means of grace only when God's Word and command are connected to the element. The Word that is to be connected with the water and which makes it a gracious water of life is found in the baptismal institution: "Go therefore...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The baptismal formula used is: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." (LC IV 17 ff, p. 438) Chemnitz summarizes the essential parts of Baptism thus:

1. The element of water (Jn 3:5; Eph 5:25-26; Acts 10:47).

2. The Word of God (Eph 5:26; Cleansing with the washing of water by the Word--namely the command of Christ regarding the conferring of Baptism, Mt 28:19, and the very promise of grace, Mk 16:16). For that word of the command and promise of God is a true consecration of sanctification by which Baptism becomes a clean water (Eze 36:25), in fact a water of life (Eze 47:9; Zch 14:8) and a washing of regeneration (Tts 3:5). (MWS 112)

B. The Effectual Cause of Baptism

34 Christ's almighty Word is the effectual cause of the Sacrament. Nothing we do causes Baptism to be a divine, heavenly, holy and blessed water which saves, but alone the Word and institution of Christ. If the Word be joined to the element, it becomes a Sacrament. (Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum) This indeed agrees with the central article of our teaching, justification by faith alone. What Althaus says concerning Luther certainly holds true for all confessional Lutherans, "Luther's doctrine of baptism is basically nothing else than his doctrine of justification in concrete form." (P. Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, p. 356)

C. The Rite of Baptism

35 Water and the Word are essential to the Sacrament of Baptism. It has become customary to pour the water over or immerse the individual three times for each person of the Trinity but this is only custom. The baptismal formula of the Western Church is: "I baptize you in the name, etc.," while in the Eastern Church this formula

is found: "The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Either baptismal formula is proper and allowable.

36 Nearly all Lutheran baptismal rites contain a reminder of original sin, the reading of Mark 10:13-16, the renunciation of Satan, the Lord's Prayer, and the baptismal creed, the Apostle's Creed. The baptized is usually marked with the sign of the cross sealing him as belonging to the Crucified and united with His cross. This custom was well attested already at the end of the second century. Certain of the Old Lutheran agendas include an exorcism in the baptismal liturgy: "I adjure you, you unclean spirit by the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit that you go out of and depart from this servant of Jesus Christ. Amen." (Kirchen-Agenda, p. 4: see also LW 53:96) The exorcism explicates the idea that in Baptism one is removed from the sphere of Satan's power and brought into the kingdom of God. The Order of Baptism found in Lutheran Worship has these rubrics: "A white garment may now be put upon the candidate" showing that he is covered with the righteousness of Christ, and "a baptismal candle may now be lighted" showing that in Baptism the individual comes to the light of Christ. (Lutheran Worship, p. 203) The Order of Baptism in the Lutheran Book of Worship has this rubric. "The minister marks the sign of the cross on the forehead of each of the baptized. Oil prepared for this purpose may be used." (Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 124) This anointing with oil is to symbolize the sealing by the Spirit which occurs in Baptism.

37 Another long-standing custom is the use of sponsors in Baptism. Sponsors originated in

connection with adult Baptism in the Ancient Church where the sponsor literally sponsored the person to be baptized, assuring the church of the person's faithfulness. The purpose of the sponsor was to prevent the infiltration of such who were hostile to the church during the times of persecution. The sponsors' purpose was as it is today threefold: 1. They are witnesses to the fact that the child was baptized in the name of the Trinity. 2. They are to encourage the parents to give the child a Christian training and to give the child that training themselves if the parents should die. 3. They are to pray for the child. One of the more positive aspects of some modern Lutheran baptismal liturgies is that parental responsibility is emphasized while less importance is placed on the custom of sponsors.

38 All these customs and symbols connected with Baptism are a benefit as long as they help explain the meaning of the Sacrament. But there is always the danger that they can confess its significance as was the case with the custom of the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil. (See Paragraph 23 above) Because this custom caused confusion in the Ancient Church and is still misunderstood by churches today, it does not seem advantageous to reintroduce it into the rite of Baptism as was done in the Lutheran Book of Worship. Various customs and symbols have been used in Baptism with benefit but when there is the danger that they will obscure the understanding of Baptism they must be rejected.

IV

The Blessings of the Sacrament

A. Baptism as Full Forgiveness

39 .Baptism is not a mere rite which we must perform because of God's command nor is it only an action by which we symbolically show what happened to us when we came to faith, as the Reformed teach. Rather, Baptism is a divine work apart from all human action. Here God offers and gives full forgiveness of sins, (Acts 2:38; 22:26) St. Peter says that Baptism saves us. (I Peter 3:21) This does not mean that there is another way to be saved besides trusting in Jesus' forgiveness won on the cross. Rather, Baptism unites us with Christ's cross. Baptism is a means through which the treasure of salvation is brought to us. On the cross Jesus won forgiveness for all people. Yet that forgiveness will do us no good unless it is brought to us who are living in the twentieth century. This is the purpose of Baptism. Baptism works like a pipeline bringing the forgiveness of sins from its source, the cross, to each of us personally at the baptismal font. (LW 40:213-214)

40 Luther at times pictures the baptismal font as a fountain filled with the Messiah's blood. "This is not a common bath of water ... but it is a Baptism of blood or a blood bath (Blutbad) which Christ alone, the Son of God Himself, prepared through His own death." (St. L. XII, 538: see also St. L. VII, 707 ff.; LW 51:324-326) Because Baptism offers and gives the forgiveness won on the cross through Christ's blood, Luther sees Baptism as a bath in the rose-colored blood flowing from the dear Savior's veins. It can indeed wash away each stain and mark, each spot and wrinkle. Though our sins are as scarlet, they are as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they are as wool, for here we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, having received His full forgiveness at the font. This beautiful comforting

picture language Luther uses in his great baptismal hymn:

The eye of sense alone is dim
And nothing sees but water;
Faith sees Christ Jesus and in Him
The Lamb ordained for slaughter;
It sees the cleansing fountain, red
With the dear blood of Jesus,
Which from the sins, inherited
From fallen Adam, frees us
and from our own misdoings.
(ELS Hymnal Supplement, Hymn 111)

41 Because Baptism effects the forgiveness of sin, it delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation. Death no longer has any power over us for it has lost its sting. (I Corinthians 15:56) Death as a terrible monster tried to swallow up Christ, but this food that monster could not digest for Christ ripped him apart; He tore him to pieces. Thus he had to spew Him out again the third day as the great fish did Jonah. Now united with Christ, the Death Slayer in Baptism, death for us is no longer the terrible end of everything, but it has become a restful sleep and the gateway to eternal joy in the mansions of the Father. (John 11:35-26, 14:1-6) As certainly as Baptism brings us into communion with Christ's redemptive death, giving us forgiveness, so certainly it unites us with His resurrection, giving life and salvation. (Romans 6:3-11) Concerning Baptism's power to conquer death and give eternal life Luther concludes in the Large Catechism.

Suppose there were a physician who had such skill that people would not die, or even though they died would afterward live forever. Just think how the world

would snow and rain money upon him!
Because of the pressing crowd of rich
men, no one else could get near him.
Now, here in Baptism there is brought
free to every man's door just such a
priceless medicine which swallows up
death and saves the lives of all men.
(LC IV 43, p. 442)

42 Baptism delivers us from the devil. On account
of our sins Satan has power over us. We are
by nature his slaves doing his every bidding. But
when our sins were forgiven in Baptism we are
freed from his domination. To emphasize this
liberation certain of the old Lutheran agendas
include an exorcism in the baptismal liturgy.
(See Paragraph 35 above) This exorcism indicates
that in Baptism one is removed from the sphere of
Satan's power and brought into the kingdom of God.
Because we are liberated from Satan's bondage and
united with Christ in Baptism we are united with
His body the Church as St. Paul says, "For by one
Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free,
and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit."
(I Corinthians 12:13 [NASB])

43 In Galatians we are told, "For you are all the
sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
For as many of you as were baptized into Christ
have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26-27) Here
Baptism is pictured as being clothed with Christ.
We were all born into this world as an unclean
thing covered with the filthy rags of sin.
(Isaiah 64:6) But in Baptism we are covered with
the glorious garment of Jesus' blood and righteous-
ness. Through that wonderful wedding garment of
salvation, the Father sees us as His spotless
children and we are prepared to stand forever in

the wedding feast of the Lamb. (Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:11) This imagery is the basis for the costume of the baptismal gown.

44 The ultimate purpose of Baptism is eternal salvation. Baptism indeed saves us! (I Peter 3:21) In Baptism we are marked with the holy cross and sealed as the Lord's. As cattle in the Old West were branded showing ownership, so in Baptism we are marked with the holy cross indicating that we are the possession of the Triune God. We become the children of God, heirs of heaven. Our Baptism shows that the Father is always extending His loving arms to us that we may repent and return to Him. The confession "I am baptized" assures us that the Lord is with us all the way in this life, never leaving nor forsaking us, and that at last He will carry us home to the heavenly fatherland above." In Baptism we indeed become "partners in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) joint heirs with Christ sharing in His divine glory, eternal life in heaven.

B. Baptism as New Birth

45 The baptismal font is full of Christ's forgiveness and salvation. It is a wonderful treasure in every day. This treasure is received and made our own by faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Luther says, "Since these blessings are offered and promised in the words which accompany the water, they cannot be received unless we believe them whole-heartedly. Without faith Baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite divine treasure." (LC IV 33-34, p. 440) However, this faith is impossible for humanity by itself since "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (I Corinthians 12:3) Faith

is worked alone through the means of grace.

46 This Baptism which requires faith also creates such faith. Baptism is regenerative. St. Paul writes, "God saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5) Baptism is here called a washing that regenerates and renews because it creates faith making us spiritually alive and thus saves us. Likewise, St. Paul shows that in Baptism we are risen with Christ through faith. (Colossians 2:12) St. John declares that we are born again by the water and the Word which is Baptism. (John 3:5) To be born again means to come to faith in Jesus and His forgiveness for salvation. Therefore, Baptism works faith. Baptism is a means through which a person spiritually dead in sin can be brought to living faith in the Savior. This has always been the doctrine of the Christian Church: (See Paragraphs 16 and 30 above.)

47 Since Baptism brings to us all the benefits of Christ's redemptive sacrifice and creates the faith to receive these benefits, it should not be withheld from our children. They are included in the all nations of the baptismal institution. (Matthew 28:19) If one arbitrarily excludes children under the age of seven from Baptism, then one can arbitrarily exclude any other age group. In his Pentecost sermon, St. Peter specifically says that the gift of Baptism is for "you and your children." (Acts 2:38-39) The blessings of Baptism are meant for children no less than adults.

48 In the baptismal Gospel, Mark 19:13-16, Jesus urges, "Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom

of God." This is not a man merely kindly disposed toward children. He is stating an important point "for of such is the kingdom of God." He does not express a general rule that "the Kingdom of God belongs to children," but that it belongs to such children as are brought to Him. Children are ordinarily brought to Him by faith worked in the waters of regeneration. This is the way the Early Church fathers understood this passage and thus they intimately connected this passage with the baptismal liturgy. (J. Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, p. 48-55)

49 Little children are definitely in need of Baptism. They are born dead in trespasses and sin as all humanity (Ephesians 2:1; Psalms 51:5) and would be lost forever unless they are brought to faith in Christ's redemptive work. Seeing this lost condition of all people, our Lord has provided a means whereby even little children, who too must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated and brought to faith. That powerful means of grace is Baptism. (John 3:5, Titus 3:5) In Scripture Baptism is compared with circumcision. (Colossians 2:11-13) As little children were circumcised in the Old Testament, so they should now be baptized. The Apostles baptized entire households which surely would have included children. (I Corinthians 1:16; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8) Throughout its history the church has maintained on the basis of Scripture that children should be baptized and that through this Baptism children are regenerated and brought to faith. (See Paragraphs 16-20 and 30 above)

50 A question that can arise is this: Is it possible for infants to believe? Jesus says they can. In Mark 9:42 and Matthew 18:6 He speaks of "little ones who believe" in Him. In Luke 18:15,

a parallel passage to Mark 10:13-16, the Greek word "βρεφος" is used when the Lord speaks of infants belonging to the Kingdom of God. (The same word is used for an unborn child in Luke 1:41, 44 and for the infant Savior in Luke 2:12, 16.) Little children and even infants can believe in the Savior.

51 An unbelieving adult is usually brought to faith through the Word, then Baptism strengthens and seals that faith. An unbelieving child is usually brought to faith through Baptism. But regardless of which means of grace the Holy Spirit employs, it is the same almighty miracle. The unregenerated adult can no more come to faith by his own reason or strength than the unregenerated child. Both are by nature dead in sin and need to be reborn.

52 The Scripture speaks of Baptism as the Sacrament of regeneration. (Titus 3:5) The word "regeneration" is equivalent to the word "rebirth." However, in biblical usage it also has a wider meaning of general renewal or re-creation as Jesus uses it in Matthew 19:28 referring to the re-creation in the new age. If anyone is "in Christ," we are told that he is a new creation. (II Corinthians 5:17) Baptism, then, is the Sacrament of re-creation which caused us to be born again through faith ready to live in the new heaven and the new earth. As the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters in the beginning and the first creation was brought forth through His all-powerful Word (Genesis 1:1 ff; II Peter 3:5), so we become a new creation through water and the Word prepared for paradise above. The Christian will indeed return to the dust of the ground, but in Baptism he has the confident hope that he will stand in the re-creation on the last day. He who

became poor and lowly for our salvation, made us anew in the waters so that we might share in His divine nature, having divine life forever in heaven.

53 In Isaiah 9:2 the Prophet writes, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined." This world is covered by the darkness of sin but Jesus the light of the world, has arisen with healing in His wings. He brings light and life to the nations. Influenced by such passages as Hebrews 6:4 and Hebrews 10:32, Justin Martyr and other Ancient Church fathers speak of Baptism as illumination or enlightenment. (φωτισμός Apology I, 61-65, The Father of the Church, Vol. 6, pp. 100 ff.) In fact, the Peshitta Syriac version of Hebrews 6:4 translates "those who were once enlightened" as "those who once descended to Baptism." Baptism is the Sacrament of enlightenment. In Baptism the light of Christ was brought to us who were groping in gross darkness and the shadow of death and we were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Now we have the light of life assured that we will live forever where they will need no created light. (Revelation 21:23)

54 Many today are searching for the gift of the Holy Spirit. They run from one revival to another hoping to experience the Spirit. They claim that we must have the so-called Baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire evidenced by the speaking in tongues in order to be certain that we have the gift of the Holy Spirit in all its fullness. They desire to swallow the Holy Spirit feathers and all as Luther sarcastically writes concerning Karlstadt (LW 40:83). The Scripture, however, tells us the gift of the Spirit will be found in Baptism.

"Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38-39) We receive the Spirit in all His fullness with all His many gifts in water Baptism. The way then that we can have spiritual renewal in the modern church, the way that we can personally be renewed in the Holy Spirit, is by returning to our Baptism in true repentance and faith and by strengthening our baptismal faith-life through a regular use of the Word and the Holy Supper.

55 In Ephesians St. Paul writes, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (4:30) On the basis of this passage and others (II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13) where the work of the Spirit is referred to as "sealing," some of the Ancient Church fathers pictured Baptism as the seal of the Spirit (σφραγίς Shepherd of Hermes, Similitudes IX, 16, 3-5; 2 Clement 7-8). Through Baptism we are sealed by the Spirit as an everlasting possession of the Father. The Spirit has sealed us with Himself, so that hidden in Christ we are kept secure until the last day when all seals will be opened. At the same time in the face of all conflicts, burdens, and even death the Spirit is the quarantee of our full and final enjoyment of fellowship with God.

C. Baptism as Dying and Rising in Christ.

56 The most comprehensive statement concerning Baptism in the New Testament is found in Romans 6. Here St. Paul shows that in Baptism we were united with Christ and His cross. Our old sinful flesh was nailed to the cross and we died to sin. We were buried with Christ in the tomb. Because we have participated in the death of

Christ through Baptism we were freed from sin and delivered from death and the devil. (Romans 6:7) All our sins were washed into the depths of the sea through Jesus' blood. As Jesus arose triumphant that first Easter morning, so we arose to new life in Baptism by the power of Christ's resurrection. (Romans 6:5; Colossians 2:12; I Peter 3:21) Faith in Christ's cross was created in our hearts, we received new resurrection life in Him, and we were incorporated into His body, the church. (I Corinthians 12:12-13) Therefore, our Baptism gives us all of the blessings of Christ's death and resurrection and the absolute certainty of salvation.

57 Baptism is not merely a one-time occurrence in the past without any real meaning for the here and now. No, it has value each and every day of our life. Each day we need to die and rise again in Baptism. Through Christ's resurrection, Baptism is the power source of our new life, our resurrection life right now, so that we can daily crucify the flesh and arise to new life; that is, we can daily put off the old man and put on the new man. Each day in true repentance we will throw our sins of pride, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, and greed back into the baptismal font and drown them. Then through the word of absolution given us in Baptism, our new resurrection life will come forth strengthened to live a more God-pleasing life. This is the daily use of Baptism to which Luther refers in his Small Catechism under the "Meaning of Baptism."

D. Holy Absolution as the Continuum of Holy Baptism

58 Because of our definition of a sacrament, Lutherans do not usually speak of Holy Absolution as a sacrament. Yet as a continuum of Holy

Baptism, we hold it in high regard. "You see that Baptism, both by its power and by its sanctification, comprehends also the third Sacrament, formerly called Penance, which is really nothing else than Baptism. (LC IV 74, p. 445) Absolution continues the dying and rising with Christ in Baptism. In confession we drown our sins in the baptismal font and in absolution we receive Jesus' forgiveness flowing to us in the baptismal water.

59 Absolution is the administration of the Keys, the dispensing of the Gospel of forgiveness, be that to many or to the individual. Christ said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18) Again He said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any they are retained." (John 20:23) This is the wonderful comforting word, "Son be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." (Matthew 9:2) Some may ask, "How can a man forgive sins; isn't that a prerogative of God alone?" On the cross Christ won full and complete forgiveness for all people. (I John 2:2) It was done once and for all. But He did not distribute or give that forgiveness on the cross. He distributes it through Holy Baptism, through the Lord's Supper and through the word of absolution spoken by men in Christ's stead. (LW 40:213-214) He commanded men to speak His forgiveness in His place. (John 20:23; Luke 10:16) Therefore when in the Divine liturgy we hear the pastor say, "I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," we should be absolutely confident of forgiveness, since it is as certain as if Christ spoke the

words Himself. Our Confessions teach, "Our people are taught to esteem absolution highly because it is the voice of God and is pronounced by God's command." (AC XXV, pp. 61-62)

60 This consoling power of absolution has been given to the entire church and to each Christian individually. Therefore, each Christian has the right and responsibility to announce forgiveness to a brother or a sister weighed down by sin. The public administration of absolution in the church is normally carried out through God's called servant, for He has instituted the Office of the Public Ministry, where one speaks in the name of Christ and in the name of the congregation. (Titus 1:5-7; LW 36:155) The pastor offers and gives this forgiveness through preaching the word of the cross, through counseling and evangelism, and through Public and Private Absolution. Regardless of which form the absolution may take, it is always the same comforting forgiveness of Jesus. It is not that the preaching of the Gospel only tells us about forgiveness whereas Public and Private Absolution really bestows it; rather, Christ's forgiveness is distributed to us in all the means of grace.

61 Public Absolution and Private Absolution are preceded by the confession of sins. Thus our Catechism says, "Confession consists of two parts: one that we confess our sins; the other that we receive absolution or forgiveness." The individual must have true sorrow over his sin and faith in Jesus' forgiveness which is given him by the pastor in order to appropriate that forgiveness as his own. Still neither his sorrow over sin nor his faith causes that forgiveness to be present for him. It is there whether he receives it or not, since Holy Absolution is entirely a work of God.

62 Public Absolution, Individual Absolution of our Danish Order, and especially Private Absolution are so important because here the forgiveness of Christ is personalized. In John 20:23, Jesus speaks of forgiving the sins of individuals. He does this because He knows that we need that forgiveness applied to us personally. We can so easily think, "I am just too great a sinner to be forgiven. How can God forgive someone like me? The forgiveness in the sermon is for the other people, not me." Therefore the forgiveness of sin is announced to everyone personally in Public Absolution and Individual Absolution, and the person who is burdened by his sin has the right to go to his pastor for Private Absolution, where he will confess his sins and will receive absolution individually. This absolution is as certain as if Jesus pronounced it Himself. When we make confession to God by ourselves it is at times hard to experience the intended confidence and security of forgiveness, but when the word of God's grace is spoken to us by another it is a powerful assurance of forgiveness. Thus our Confessions say:

Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the Gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences and for the sake of untrained young people who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine. (SA III VIII 1, p. 312)

63 Dr. C. F. W. Walther explains the great benefits of Private Absolution in his sermon on the Gospel pericope for the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. He uses this illustration: the citizens of a city rebelled against their king. They were

defeated and had to flee. First, all of them were condemned to death, but later the king issued a decree granting full pardon. Trusting this general pardon, the majority returned. But suppose that the ringleaders had committed several murders. Might they not think, "Perhaps we are not included in this pardon?" Then would it not be especially consoling if they received a separate pardon, one drawn up especially for them showing that the pardon was theirs? Likewise it is of special comfort for a Christian who is burdened by his sins to hear not only the general word, "All believing sinners, be of good cheer," but also the specific declaration, "You (du, thou) be of good cheer, your sins are indeed forgiven." (C.F.W. Walther, Evangelien Postille, p. 320)

E. Baptism and Eschatology

64 Through Baptism the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ. He gives us a share of Christ's righteousness, holiness, life, and glory. He nullifies the temporal interval which separates us from Christ's cross and the interval which separates us from the return of the Exalted One. He assigns us to the Lord who is present as the One who has come and will come.

65 Baptism, first of all, unites us with the cross and the Christian life becomes a daily Baptism, a daily dying and rising again in Christ. (Romans 6) Luther writes:

These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of Baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing

· else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. (LC IV 65, Triglotta, p. 749)

Baptism transcends time and space and we are united with Calvary's Cross. We daily crucify the flesh and bury it with Christ in the tomb through true repentance and faith. We throw our sins of the day back into the baptismal font and drown them. Then through the power of Christ's resurrection in Baptism our new resurrection life comes forth strengthened and renewed. The Christian life is indeed a daily Baptism.

66 Baptism not only unites us with Christ's passion but also with the final consummation of our redemption on the last day. The baptized has in Christ already experienced his future death and already has resurrection life. We are a new creation prepared to live in the new heaven and the new earth, paradise above. This new resurrection life is not something we must wait for until the last day. We have resurrection life right now. In Baptism by faith in the Risen One we have resurrection power so that we can live resurrection lives, victory lives, free from Satan's tyranny.

67 Now we don't have to be Satan's slaves any more, doing his every perverted pleasure. Why should we be in bondage doing those very things that we know are going to hurt ourselves and those around us? There is resurrection power for us right now. If that power is dwindling in us or if it is completely gone, we don't have to despair we can return to our Baptism in true repentance and faith and be strengthened through the nourishment of the life-giving Word and the Holy Supper which gives us the power do do all

things through Him. Then our resurrection life will be renewed.

68 This resurrection life, born in Baptism and nourished through the Word and the Holy Supper will climax in the resurrection of the body. Our Baptism is a continual unfolding of the Christian life reaching its full consummation at the last day. Our resurrection life in Baptism is a foretaste of that life that will be ours forever in heaven. It is a seal and guarantee that we will stand glorified in the final resurrection. Because of that gracious water of life, the grave for the believer's body has become a restful sleeping place while the soul is with Jesus in glory awaiting the last day. Then this very body will break forth from the grave glorified as Job of old confessed: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that is my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27) Every Christian casket is closed in sorrow but in confident hope that it will break forth in victory; for death has been swallowed up by the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Baptism indeed saves us.

Soli Deo Gloria

-- Rev. Gaylin Schmeling

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Abbreviations

Lutheran Confessions (all quotes are from the Tappert Translation unless otherwise indicated):

- AC - Augsburg Confession
- Ap - Apology of the Augsburg Confession
- FC - Formula of Concord
- LC - Large Catechism
- SA - Smalcald Articles
- SD - Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

Luther's Works:

- LW - American Edition
- St.L. - St. Louis Edition
- WA - Weimar Edition

Writings of Chemnitz:

- MWS - Ministry, Word, and Sacrament
- TNC - Two Natures in Christ
- Ex - Examination of the Council of Trent
- LS - Lord's Supper

HOW CAN THE LITURGY
AID THE CHURCH'S MISSION?

To many outsiders (for that matter, to many of its own members) the Lutheran Church appears to be hopelessly out of step with our world and out of time with our age. Too liturgical to be easily accessible and too dogmatic to appeal to the diverse religious tastes of our time, Lutheranism is assumed to be incapable of meeting the real needs of our world today without a major overhaul.

Most versions of overhauled Lutheranism look very much like the brand of Christianity that goes today under the heading of "evangelical." Evangelicals have achieved a great deal of success in reaching people in our "me first" age by preaching a subjective gospel, and so Lutherans can hardly be blamed for casting an envious eye in the Evangelical direction.

But, in ridding the Lutheran Church of what they see as the excess ballast of its objectivity, its would-be salvagers have nearly scuttled the ship.¹

We pastors in the ELS also are not immune to the temptations to overhaul and to eliminate what we perceive as excess baggage in our ministries. As of late, the greatest temptations to do just that have surfaced particularly in the area of worship with our traditional liturgical heritage. The temptations are very real, especially as we cast more than a passing glance at the numerical successes of our Evangelical neighbors.

Can our usual and customary Lutheran liturgy truly be appreciated and meaningfully understood by church member and visitor alike? Do we have ample reason to believe that our ELS churches will grow in numbers as we continue to use our Lutheran liturgy? Or more precisely, can our Lutheran way of worship aid the church's mission and if so, how?

In addressing the question, "How can the liturgy aid the church's mission?" which is the specific title of this paper, it will be necessary to examine the essence and Biblical history of Christian worship, the development and significance of our liturgy, liturgy's place in the church's mission, and finally, the influence that Evangelicalism is exerting on the Christian's attitude toward liturgical worship.

Pursuing the essence of worship, we shall start with what might be termed "A Credo of Christian Worship."

I believe that God our Lord and Father in heaven has made me the crown of His creation and gives me everything I need to support my body and life. Before He made the world, He planned to bring me into His holy family so that I could enjoy every good gift from above. He planned this because I am a rebel, which rebellion I inherited from my parents, who in turn inherited it from the very first parents, Adam and Eve. Beside this, I consciously and willfully rebel against God my father countless times each day. For this I am guilty before God and unless someone rescues me from the scrutiny of God's justice I shall suffer an eternity of terror in hell. But God, who made me and gives me everything I need, saw my hopeless predicament and planned my rescue.

And I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only Son from eternity. Being born of the virgin Mary, He became my brother and while living on this earth He kept the Father's law perfectly in my place. Then, by His innocent death on the cross, He paid the penalty for my sins and sinfulness, thus redeeming me from the power of sin, death, and the devil. God the Father has accepted Jesus' sacrifice on my behalf and thereby has declared me forgiven of all my sins. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is absolute proof that the Father has made provision for me to be his own and to live with Him now and forever.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life, who draws me to my Savior by the Gospel through which He deposits the gift of Christian faith within my heart. This same Spirit continues to sanctify and preserve me in the true saving faith through Word and Sacrament until my last day.

How can I respond to such kindness? My heavenly Father has shown me the way in His Holy Word. Man does not win forgiveness of his sin by his own efforts but rather it is bestowed upon him through Christ who went the way of the cross as the supreme sacrifice - "once for all." By revealing this information to me, God has shown me how to walk as His forgiven child. Because of God's great love toward me in Christ, I will offer my whole life as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. My whole life, then, is my worship in the deepest sense; the real worship that God desires from me and all His children.

Our word "worship" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "WYRTHSCIFE," a combination of two words, "WYRTH" meaning "honorable" and "SCIFE" meaning "to make." Thus we arrive at "worthship" or

"worship," which basically means "to reverence with supreme respect."

"Worship" is presented in the Old Testament principally by the word תִּשְׁבֹּד meaning "to bow down, prostrate oneself," as in Genesis 24:26. Other words used are עָבַד "to work, serve, or do," as in Ezra 6:18; נָפַץ meaning "to fall down in adoration, to prostrate oneself," used only of idol worship as in Isaiah 44:15; and תַּחַן meaning "to wait upon, to serve," as in Ezekiel 20:32.

In the New Testament the words used for "worship" are λατρεύω meaning "to serve, to worship publicly," as in Acts 7:42; σέβομαι meaning "to venerate," stressing the feeling of awe or devotion as in Matthew 15:9; Θρησκεία meaning "Religious observances, worship," as in Acts 26:5; δουλέω meaning "to be a slave, be subjected to, obey, serve," as in Romans 7:6; and συνάγω meaning "to gather together, assemble," as in I Corinthians 5:4. Then there is the combination Θεοσεβής meaning "one who venerates God," and εὐσεβέω meaning "to be reverential, to act piously towards," as in I Timothy 5:4. But principally προσκυνέω meaning "as an act of homage or reverence, fall down and worship," as in Matthew 4:10.²

A study of these words clearly indicates what God in the Scriptures means by "worship." Our life is the real worship. God planned to bring us from death to life: He accomplished it through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we might live holy and blameless before Him to His glory and the welfare of our fellowman.

Thus is laid the scriptural foundation for our life, the real worship, worship in the broad sense.

In doing so, the foundation also has been laid for worship in the narrow sense, that is, formal worship. The four Old Testament prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, declared the usages and customs of public worship to be null and void, however, unless men are at the same time treating their fellowmen with mercy and justice. For unless man's formal worship of God is matched by his just and fair treatment of his neighbor, then ceremonies, rituals, observances, and sacrifices are not pleasing to God. Hear, now, one of these prophets speak to us Christians in the language of our waning 20th century:

You Christians are thinking about your services all the time. Some of you insist on no change. Some of you insist they must have variety and elaboration. But do you live your life according to my Word? Do you so much as read my word, not to mention pondering it in your heart? I take no pleasure in this kind of life! So I must remember your guilt and punish you for your sins. I will rain fire upon your cities and annihilate your lavish housing developments. (Hosea 8)³

This passage clearly shows that worship both in the broad and in the narrow sense have the same foundation. In our daily life God's gracious coming to us not only kindles the spark of faith, but also produces the rich fruits thereof. The same is true in corporate worship. God's coming to us in Word and Sacrament stimulates the congregation of believers to prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

We usually think of worship among believers after the fall as some form of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. There always seems to have been

a recognition among the faithful of a need to pray for mercy, to praise the Lord God for His grace and to thank Him for His gifts (both material and spiritual). When and where the believers used these elements wholeheartedly, they were giving all glory to God alone. This kind of worship we can trace right through the Biblical record.

The first historical section in Genesis ends with the words, "At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord." (Genesis 4:26) It is easy to pass over these words quickly, but they may be the most important words in our study of worship in the Old Testament. They set the stage for what worship should be.

...There is more here than lies on the surface. The "name of the Lord" means all that God has revealed about Himself. To "call on the name of the Lord" is to worship Him according to the whole revealed truth of God. At the heart of the truth revealed thus far stood what was indicated by "the Lord" (Jehovah), the God of free, faithful love, the God of grace toward sinners.⁴

This golden thread of the Gospel we pick up in the expression for worship in the life of Enoch: "Enoch walked with God." (Genesis 5:24) To "walk with God" means to have a close relationship, or fellowship, with God. It is twice stated of Enoch that he lived his life in this intimate communion with God. This was a spiritual walk of life with God centered in His Word, as it does today, or to put it in another way; in the faithful, prayerful use of the means of grace. For Enoch that meant: holding fast the promise of the Woman's Offspring and nourishing his faith with that gospel word.⁵

The same spirit of worship appeared in Abraham (Genesis 12:7), Isaac (Genesis 26:5), and in Jacob (Genesis 33:20).

There is a marked contrast, however, when we view the worship of the Israelites after the time of Moses. When God had Moses forge the ten tribes of Jacob's descendants into a nation by giving them rules, regulations, and statutes for the ordering of their political and social life, He also gave them rules for the regulation of their religious life, particularly with regards to sacrifices, times and seasons, festivals, and the clothing and ritual of the priests and servants in the temple.

During the theocratic period the corporate and ritualistic concept of worship became prominent with offerings and sacrifices for special purposes and occasions.

The Old Testament worship emphasized sacrifices as the essential element of worship; God's method of preparing for the coming of Christ. However, with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, all the Old Testament sacrifices became a thing of the past. The element of Sacrifice was supplanted by the Sacramental; God giving through Word and Act (preaching, Baptism, Lord's Supper) and man receiving by faith.

With the words recorded in Mark 11:17 "and he taught them saying unto them: Is it not written my house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves," Jesus cancels the Old Testament sacrifices and singles out one thought - the significant content of worship is the Word. This is the essence of New Testament Christian Worship.

Whenever and wherever, therefore, God comes to men and faithful men approach God, that is worship. If this special communication from and contact with God is to be shared with others, certain prescribed forms for worship must be agreed upon. This common worship by a group of believers is called "Liturgy."

The word "liturgy" comes to our English language from the Greek word λειτουργία, which literally means "a public work, public service," as that rendered by someone elected to serve in a public office. In our use of the word it means "a religious service," or "a prescribed form of ritual for the public worship of God."⁶

Many others see in the word "liturgy" a different meaning. It refers to all that is unimportant in the worship service. To those who hold this view liturgy is simply recorative, having no theological substance of its own.

How different is the understanding of "liturgy" in Article XXIV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

But let us talk about the term "liturgy."
It does not mean a sacrifice but a public service.⁷

From this it is clear that liturgy is theological content and not just ritual form. Liturgy, then, refers to the church's whole cycle of ordered services. Following the custom of the Eastern Church, the Apology equates "liturgy" with what had come to be called the "mass" in the Western Church of the Middle Ages. In other words, liturgy does not refer to general worship services but more specifically to those services wherein the Sacrament of the Altar was held. This bifocal

liturgical structure of sermon and sacrament forms the heart and core of "the whole worship of the New Testament."

The distinguishing characteristic of public Christian worship is that it focused and centered upon God's sacrifice of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ and His continued intercession at the right hand of the Father. Such was not always to be the case.

Even before Luther's day the Roman Mass had taken on a decidedly different flavor. The Sacrament of the Mass came to be perceived as an expression of man's endeavor to gain favor before God. Luther saw this as a severe distortion in the function of worship. A Reform of the Roman Mass was inevitable.

For Martin Luther the way of reform was clear. First of all, the Word of God (preaching) must be restored to its preeminent place in the service. Secondly, all elements of the service that were contrary to the Word of God and that annulled the life and work of Jesus Christ had to be eliminated, chief of which was the Canon of the Mass. And finally, the notion that acts of worship, solely by their legislative observance, could place one in a more favored position with God had to be rejected.

Though Luther never prepared an official book of liturgical rites for use in the churches, he did establish a precedent that placed the responsibility for worship renewal squarely on the shoulders of the parish pastor who was to make a careful appraisal of the situation and then to implement changes, most of which were based on two outlines prepared by Luther, J. Bugenhagen,

and J. Walther. Luther's pastoral sensitivity led him to suggest one line of liturgical development for the city (academic, multi-lingual) parishes and another for the suburban (vernacular) parishes.⁸

The starting point of the Lutheran liturgical development was thus predominantly a Communion service based on the traditional elements of the Mass, where the sermon had an established and emphasized position. This service was intended to be the regular form of main service every Sunday and festival day.

It must, however, be admitted that reality did not especially well correspond to Lutheran intentions. Getting communicants to every service proved a difficult problem. When and where no one wished to take part in the Communion, it was not possible to hold Mass. So there arose the need for a quite new type of service that was not a Mass. Thus Lutheranism was forced out of necessity into a situation that the Reformed Church had voluntarily chosen: they arranged the normal service as a preaching service and reserved the celebration of the Lord's Supper for a few special annual services. A stern reality had prevented the realization of Luther's ideal that an Evangelical Mass with the Communion of the congregation should be the regular form of service on all Sundays and festival days.

Thus developed a specifically Lutheran form of service, determined by the traditional Mass but without that which made the Mass a Mass, the celebration of the Sacrament. The most common way to solve the liturgical problem of the service when communion could not be held was simply to omit the Eucharistic act itself, but keep the other parts of the liturgy of the Mass. In this

way Lutheranism created its own type of preaching service, where the sermon was framed in the traditional elements of the Mass - Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Collect, Lessons, Creed, and a short final liturgy with Prayer of the church, Lord's Prayer, Benedicimus and Benediction. We recognize this liturgical form as that which is commonly used in Lutheran churches today. It arose very early; we have it for instance in Bugenhagen's 1528 church order for Brunswick, where also parts of the proper Communion liturgy are included (Preface, Sanctus, Agnus Dei). In the church order for Hamburg, Bugenhagen one year later abandoned the latter parts and prescribed some psalms after the sermon. In Denmark, Bugenhagen introduced the Mass-like liturgy for the service without Communion through the Kirkeordinansen of 1539. This liturgy for the service without Communion has prevailed.⁹

Having examined the essence of Christian worship, as well as the historical development of our Lutheran liturgy, we now need to ascertain whether public liturgical worship aids or detracts from the church's "real" mission of evangelism.

I believe it is fair to say that the way we worship today is the result of a new appreciation of the doctrine of the church and liturgical renewal all mixed in with the desire to make the church appealing to the world for church growth. The church is in the world. Preaching is for the church. Every believer is a minister. The church is God's mission. The church is to advance, to be organized for action. These are all familiar but important concepts which shape our worship. What is brand new, though, seems to be the notion that worship is a means of church growth.

It is on this very point that many unLutheran assumptions are verbalized: "Growing churches don't use Lutheran liturgy. Growing churches don't focus on the sacramental aspects of worship. Growing churches make their appeal to people's experiences and needs and levels of comfort as they perceive them. Growing churches meet people where they are and use only modes of expression in worship that are familiar."

There is no easy answer to the tension between worship as the leiturgia of God's people and the desire to bring others to the church. As pastors we will always wrestle with questions like these: Who is the primary target of our worship? How can we make the worship service more meaningful? How much should our changes be influenced by our concern for church growth? And how can we grow and still retain the Lutheran heritage of worship?¹⁰

"Liturgy" we have learned is much more than forms and ceremonies, in themselves indifferent. It is first and foremost a firm theological content, namely the holy Gospel and sacraments of God. Taken in this non-trivial sense, liturgy cannot be in competition with Evangelism. After all, the "Spirit, the water, and the blood" of the liturgy are the very agents ("witnesses") of world evangelization! "Make disciples of all nations," and "this do in remembrance of me" go hand in hand. Ultimately, of course, the worship of God is its own end, while evangelism is a means to that end. The highest worship of God on earth is faith itself -- and "the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God" (Athanasian Creed). There will come a time, however, when the complete will replace the incomplete, and the caterpillar of faith will turn into the glorious butterfly of beatific sight (I Corinthians 13:8-12). Death

itself will then be swallowed up in victory (15:54), and all mission work or evangelism will cease. But the New Jerusalem will make the new heavens and the new earth resound forever with the worship of God. (Rev. 19-22).¹¹

The public worship service, then, is designed to instruct and to edify the body of Christ; the church members and other Christian visitors. As part of that service, God's Word is both read and taught. Sin and grace, law and Gospel are to be the chief elements in every Christian sermon. Where God's Word, specifically the Gospel, is read and taught in its truth and purity, therein lies the power from the Holy Spirit to create faith in the heart of the unbelieving visitor, as well as to strengthen the existing faith of the children of God.

Thus through the use of our Lutheran liturgy in our public worship services the church's "real" mission of Evangelism--both inreach and outreach--is accomplished. Such a view is scarcely held among our Christian brethren whom we shall call "Evangelicals." As a result, "Evangelicalism," the theology and practices of the Evangelicals, is having a tremendous impact on our modern way of worship. Is Evangelicalism an aid to or a detraction from the essence of true Christian worship?

In order to find out, first it is helpful to know the background of the word "evangelical"--the result of sixteenth century name-calling. Opponents of Lutheran teachers thought they stressed the good news (evangel) of Jesus Christ too much, so they called them "evangelicals." The name stuck, and it has been worn proudly by succeeding generations. To this day, most

Lutheran congregations have an "Ev." somewhere in their official title.

What is usually meant by "evangelical" in modern America, however, describes a theology far different from that of the Lutheran Reformation. Evangelical theology today has many positive features: its focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ, its view of the authority and reliability of the Holy Scriptures, and its emphasis on saving souls. However, confessional Lutherans have difficulty with other elements in today's Evangelicalism: its unscriptural emphasis on personal decision in conversion; its spotlight on human experience instead of God's action, and its skepticism about the power of the Sacraments.¹²

As a further aid to understanding today's Evangelicalism, we need to examine its roots. The roots of modern Evangelicalism are varied and complex. Several theological influences have blended together over the years to form Evangelicalism as we know it today.

The first influence upon American Evangelicalism was Calvinism. Calvinist covenant theology simply put was this: "If we keep our end of the bargain, God will keep His. If we act as His people, He will act as our God. If we fulfill His will, He will bless us." More tenacious than this idea was its corollary: "If God is pleased with us, we can see it in His blessings in our lives." The Puritan fathers believed in "experienced predestination." They held that the divine favor of election was demonstrated as the believer's religious experiences. The Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists, together with a sizeable number of Episcopalians, were the theological heirs of the Puritan colonial fathers.

With the "Second Great Awakening," as it was called, the winds of revival began to blow across the ocean to America in the last decade of the eighteenth century. This brought with it a tremendous shift in the focus of preaching. No longer were pulpits dedicated to John Calvin's covenant theology emphasizing What God had done; now the emphasis was clearly on man's end of the bargain.

At one point in its history Calvinism had to counter the Remonstrance Movement and its chief spokesman, Jacobus Arminius. After the revivals of the late 1700's and the early 1800's, the free will of man in conversion was an incontrovertible truth for most American Protestant Christians.

The influence behind these religious revivals in America is found in another century and on another shore. "The Great Awakening" had its source in England, the Netherlands, and primarily in Germany. There, among the theological descendants of Luther, a reawakening of spirituality arose that has come to be known as Pietism.

Pietism arose within the context of a German Lutheran orthodoxy which appeared to have grown too cold and formal to have any effect on the Christian's life. Pietism's focus from the beginning was on the inner life and the subjective experiences of the heart as an aid toward a living, vibrant commitment to Christ that showed itself in action. Its founder, Philipp Jacob Spener, was a pastor in Frankfort who was deeply concerned about the spiritual laxity he saw among Lutheran clergy and laity. Borrowing ideas he had observed in Reformed circles during his student days, he instituted a rigorous discipline in the life of his congregation built around personal Bible study, prayer and mutual exhortation through small groups which met in his home, which he called collegia

pietatis ("assemblies of the faithful").

The main goal of these ecclesiolae in ecclesia ("little churches within the church") is clearly different from that of the Reformation. The focus here is not the external word of the Gospel but the internal workings of the sanctified heart.

Mingling their concerns for the sanctified life with certain strains of medieval mysticism, some Pietist leaders fostered a highly developed devotional life. Prominent among them was Count Nicolas von Zinzendorf. At Herrnhut, his religious colony in Moravia, he developed a tightly woven society with a piety centering on the contemplation of Jesus' suffering. In contrast to Luther's theology of the cross, however, here the passion of Christ was interpreted in a highly emotional and exclusively subjective way.

John Wesley, an Anglican priest, is the important link between European Pietism and American Revivalism. Since his spiritual interest had been first heightened by his interaction with Moravian missionaries while on a trip to colonial America, he journeyed to Herrnhut to learn strategies for renewal from von Zinzendorf.

The sensationalist tactics of the Wesleyan preachers met with great response in America and soon Methodists, as their adherents were called, had built one of the largest church bodies in America.

Coupled with the emphasis on the feelings of the sanctified heart as an assurance for salvation, Pietism in general and Methodism in particular stressed a brand of holiness that strove for moral perfection. The spotlight in pietistic revivalism

had clearly intensified its focus on sanctification, rather than on justification.¹³

Sanctification, therefore, holds the central place in Evangelical Christianity and is the major influence for change in their worship format.

In our consumer society, Christian people tend to shop for a church where they find the right mix of preaching and worship to suit their tastes. Here style is often more important than content, atmosphere more important than doctrine. A church with an appealing style of worship will be more likely to attract the attention of the Evangelical "shopper" in today's church market. And the Evangelical churches are quite adept at finding worship styles that please their constituency.¹⁴

The Evangelical's wisdom on the subject of culture seems to flow fairly uncritically along these lines: (1) all adiaphora should be arranged for their maximal evangelistic impact; (2) cultural differences are theologically neutral, adiaphorous; (3) Ergo, evangelistic faithfulness demands a liturgy in the "cultural idiom" of the "targeted audience."¹⁵

The spotlight in much Evangelical worship today, therefore, is not on God, but on the feelings aroused within the worshipper. To arouse such feelings, Evangelical Protestant worship has borrowed heavily from the musical forms of our modern culture, as well as from our modern advertising and marketing techniques. The end result, Evangelical Worship has now become nothing more than entertainment.

How and why has this new Evangelical style of worship caused such a stir within Lutheranism?

What is causing so many Lutherans to so quickly depart from their rich liturgical heritage?

The most common criticism leveled against liturgical churches is that they are cold and unfeeling. The liturgical service and its pre-occupation with the sacramental mysteries of absolution, preaching, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and its consequent formal and aesthetic structure are not immediately appealing. Indeed, they cannot be, for their very existence is drawn from the reality of the Incarnation; a reality in which God becomes form and matter for the salvation of fallen form and matter--a doctrine which has never survived because of its popular appeal. The way of worship, then, is rarely as rich, beautiful, or Gospel-oriented as it might be.¹⁶

Does this mean that we have no alternative but to forsake our long Lutheran Liturgical legacy for the modern version of worship as expressed by our Evangelical neighbors? Are the only solutions to our "dull and boring" liturgical worship to substitute or drop parts of the service or to make up or find and use a different order of service for a period of time or use a different order of service every Sunday? Before we should do any such thing we should be certain we know where the real problem lies.

To be sure, there is no virtue in rattling through worship forms as if we were reading the telephone book. Nor is there any virtue in worship conducted in a cold, detached, formalistic way as though there were something distasteful about human emotions.

If our people's adherence to page 5 and page 15 in the Lutheran Hymnal (page 7 in the Lutheran

Hymnary) has gone from a formal order of service to a formalistic service order, then we, the leaders of the worship, may be to blame. When people in church become so familiar with a form and feel so comfortable with it that they can look around and mouth the words without having to follow along in the Hymnal, there is a very real danger that their worship may not be much different from the vain sacrifices of the worshippers condemned by the Old Testament prophets.¹⁷

What then is the remedy for formalistic worship? That is found in variety, involvement, and in the Word. In our Lutheran liturgy the Propers offer their own variety, as does the liturgical church year. Congregational or choir involvement in the Propers also adds variety, as does responsive Psalms and prayers.

In formal worship the most important events took place when God speaks to us in His Word and when He nourishes our faith in the Lord's Supper. God's gracious and undeserved coming to us in Word and Sacrament is the most important part of worship. The proclamation of what God has done for us in our Lord Jesus Christ is the first foundation stone to be laid in worship.

In the Holy Supper God also comes to us; He nourishes us; He communicates to me individually and to us corporately in the Body and Blood of our Lord the forgiveness of our sins and assures us again and again of the complete and perfect cancellation of our debt of sin through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁸

True worship is dependent upon true knowledge of God. Hence liturgy should set forth the essence of the doctrine about the nature of God. This

element is found in truth in our Lutheran liturgies whether we use the Common Order, the Bugenhagen Order, or any one of the other orders that have been in standard use in our Lutheran churches.

The church meets in solemn assembly not to conduct pep rallies for worthy causes, or to boost a religious talk with publicity students, but to transact the awesome and life-giving "mysteries of God." (I Corinthians 4:1) God and His gifts are all-decisive, not man and his moods. The "eternal life" which God has given us, and which "is in His Son" (I John 5:11), reaches us needy sinners, not through our own religious chatter but through God's own appointed witnesses (I John 5:7,8).¹⁹

Which response is, in fact, the most faithful to the Gospel of Christ--the subjective, entertainment atmosphere encouraged in much of what passes for Christian worship today or objective praise of the God who comes to us in his Word and Sacrament?

The Lutheran Church has a rich legacy to offer in its worship. Here is reality, not symbolism. Here we have real contact with God: not as we come to Him, but as He comes to us. He meets us in the proclamation of the Word. Here the Son of God distributes His actual body and blood for the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Here the people of God gather to offer Him their thanks, their praise, and their prayer. This is the real thing!

People are longing for God. Where are they going to find Him? In the shifting sands of their inner life or on the solid rock of the word of His gospel? How are they to offer him their thanks and praise? With trivial methods borrowed from

the entertainment industry or in worship forms which focus on the praise of God's gracious glory? This is the kind of worship which lifts the heart while it exalts Christ! And this is what Lutheran worship does.²⁰

The reality of God is to be found not in its dim reflection of the shifting sands of the human heart, but in objective truth of the Gospel, anchored in the Word made flesh and made available to people of every era through the means of grace. What could be more "Evangelical" than that?²¹

What is at stake is not this or that detail, but the liturgical, churchly spirit as a whole. Will orthodox Lutheranism in America retain (or return to) its historic character as one of the three liturgical churches of Western Christianity, or can all this be safely left behind as Old World cultural baggage, to be replaced with free-wheeling, cheery pop-fests of snappy tunes and upbeat chit-chat?

The historical experience of our own church ought to warn us modern Lutherans to be slow in bartering our liturgical treasures for illusionary promises of huge evangelistic successes. The modern assault on liturgical worship is aimed not simply at a few old-fashioned customs or adiaphora, but at the whole, liturgical, churchly spirit itself, which necessarily goes with a serious doctrine of the means of grace. If the means of grace are to rule, and not just reign ceremonially, then they cannot be combined with all sorts of incompatible, anti-liturgical bric-a-brac like the "Spiritual Gifts" scheme. One must choose either the one or the other, the liturgy or the "new measures," the Gospel or enthusiasm.

The Church's historical liturgical ways, however, are not, as it were, a necessary evil, and evangelical liability, to be endured for the sake of orthodoxy. Quite the contrary, the "liturgical mode" is actually a great missionary advantage, because it is the best, most natural setting for the priceless jewels of the means of grace.²²

Our Evangelical neighbors have now hit upon what they perceive to be the best techniques and styles for worship and evangelism. Though the techniques and styles are meeting with great numerical successes, in and of themselves, techniques and styles do not constitute the foundations of worship. Variety alone will not solve lethargic worship, nor will modern English, nor will new liturgies, nor will new hymns. The idea that there is any lasting solution to problems in worship in these techniques and styles is a grand delusion that we must fight with all our strength. Techniques, programs, machinery, methods, will never enliven faith.

Integrity, not image or cheap verbiage, must draw men to the Gospel (I Peter 3:1,2), and the Gospel itself converts and confirms. No one can doubt the Good Shepherd's missionary zeal and compassion for His sheep. Yet He draws them with a quiet dignity that is entirely free of the breathless pestering and pandering which is mere salesmanship. When multitudes turn from Him in fickle disenchantment, He does not run after them, shouting: "Wait! Just a moment! You've misunderstood my words about flesh and blood. All this can be put differently, too! Let me make it clear to you in cultural forms you will find more congenial!" None of that. Sadly but serenely He turns to His disciples: "You do not want to leave, too, do you?" Peter replies for them and for the church of all

ages: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:67,68).²³

Can our liturgy aid the church's mission? You bet it can! So let's use our liturgy to issue forth the call to repentance in service after service. And let's use our liturgy to proclaim the Word and celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar that the soothing oil of the Gospel of forgiveness may be poured into the wounds left by our sins. When and where this is done, the children of God will not only present their lives to God as a living sacrifice, but they will also go to the house of the Lord willingly to hear the Word and to answer with prayer, thanks, and praise.

We have in our Lutheran heritage of Word and Sacrament, worship and ministry, the robust and thoughtful framework and dynamic we need to edify the church and help her grow! As we, therefore, ponder the awesome responsibility for leading God's people in both private and public worship, let us neither be driven to despair due to apparent lack of success and numbers nor given to pride that any successes are due primarily to our own excellent performance of the liturgy; Word and Sacrament. Rather, in prayerful gratitude, let us thank God for ever nourishing us and our people with the life-giving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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-- Rev. Michael Krentz

NOTES

1. Harold Senkbeil, "Sanctification: Christ in Action - Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response," (Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1989) p. ix, x.
2. Rev. Elton Bickel, "Let Us Focus Our Worship," (WELS Conference Paper: 1989) pp. 14-15, and "Is There Need for Improvement In Our Liturgy," p. 3.
3. Prof. Bruce Backer, "Foundations of Worship," (WELS Conference Paper) p. 4. In his paper Prof. Backer offered two additional Biblical quotes along the same vein:

I loathe and despise your communion services; your Matins and Vespers give me no pleasure. You may bring me the paltry percentage of your income, and I shall not so much as look at it. I don't want to hear the songs of your liturgies; my ears are closed to your organ music. Instead, let justice roll on like a mighty river, and integrity flow like a never-failing stream. (Amos 6)

How shall I present myself before the Lord? Shall I wear a dress or a pantsuit? Will it be a tie or turtleneck? Should I address God as "Thee" or "You"? I wonder what the Synodical percentage of giving is so that I can make the proper contribution. You know well enough, Man, what is good! For what does the Lord require from you but to be just to have mercy and to walk humbly with your God! (Micah 6)

4. Werner Franzmann, Bible History Commentary, Old Testament, (Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1980) pp. 52-63.
5. Ibid, p. 65.
6. "Is There Need for Improvement in our Liturgy?" p. 3.
7. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV, paragraph 80.
8. Prof. Dennis Marzolf, "Luther Among the Musicians," (The Bethany College Bookstore, Mankato, MN) p. 11. As is well known, Luther outlined two forms of the historical Mass, the richer Latin Formulae Missae of 1523 and the simpler, popular Deutsche Messe of 1526. The earliest Lutheran tradition of worship followed one or the other of these Evangelical types of the Mass.
9. Helge Nyman, "Worship from Luther to Lutheranism," The Musical Heritage of the Church, Vol. VII, (St. Louis, MO: CPH, 1970) pp. 14-16.
10. Rev. Lester Zeitler, "Changing Perspectives and Expectations in Worship," (LGMS Conference Paper).
11. Kurt Marquart, "Liturgy and Worship," pp. 5-6.
12. Harold Senkbeil, "Sanctification: Christ in Action - Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response," (Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1989) pp. 2.3.
13. Ibid, pp. 2-52.

14. Ibid, p. 175.
15. Kurt Marquart, "Liturgy and Worship," pp. 12-13.
16. Prof. Dennis Marzolf, "Luther Among the Musicians," Notes #2.
17. Rev. Elton Bickel, "Let Us Focus Our Worship," p. 20.
18. Prof. Bruce Backer, "Foundations of Worship," p. 5.
19. Kurt Marquart, "Liturgy and Worship," p. 3.
20. Harold Senkbeil, "Sanctification: Christ in Action - Evangelical Challenge and Lutheran Response," pp. 178-182.
21. Ibid, p. 18.
22. Kurt Marquart, "Liturgy and Worship," pp. 15-17.
23. Ibid, p. 18.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO LUTHERAN ORTHODOXY

At the dawn of the sixteenth century, the established church had veered very far from its original New Testament foundation. In a number of respects it was a considerably different organization than that which Christ had founded.

For a long time the Scriptural and apostolic truth had been buried under a vast accumulation of falsehood. Corruption was rampant in the church. Gradually the saturation point was reached in such areas as false doctrines, human fabrications, superstition, and worldliness. Immorality was widespread in the papacy, and at its court of cardinals.¹

A few of the doctrinal errors and resultant practices which had accumulated were papal supremacy, purgatory, transubstantiation, penance, indulgences, Mary worship, and prayers to the saints.² Most seriously of all the basic Gospel message had become so obscured that it was virtually lost to the church. The situation in the church was grave. Over a long period of many centuries the Roman Catholic Church supplanted the truth of Scripture with human opinions and pronouncements. Finally, the foundation upheld little but perishing man-made traditions. The precious things were lost in the heap of rubbish.³

As Martin Luther lived, worked, and studied within the framework of the church of his day, he became increasingly aware that all was not well in the church, and with the church. In the midst of the unhappy condition in the church, he tried to cut through the encrustations of centuries

of traditions and false ideas. He clearly saw the need for constructive change and renewal in the church, and sought to restore purity of doctrine and practice to the church. He wished to return the church to its original character.⁴ He believed that the novelties in the Mass, the hierarchy and the papacy, insofar as they were contrary to Scripture, had to be eradicated.⁵

As he endeavored to labor in a constructive way, Luther had no desire to leave the Roman Catholic Church. He had no intention of founding a new church. Rather, he simply urged that "the Word should have free course among Christians."⁶ He felt that the congregations should be put in possession of the pure Word of God, and that this simple Word would, in turn, transform the hearts and minds of men and women.⁷

As Luther spoke out and wrote, he became increasingly aware that a break with the Catholic Church was inevitable. In spite of all his conscience directed efforts, the church refused to make any concessions. In their dedication to the pope, the bishops continued to defend "godless doctrines" and "godless services." They "wrested the jurisdiction from the pastors" and refused to ordain evangelical pastors. Finally, he saw no valid reasons why the evangelical churches should continue to recognize bishops. He concluded that the churches in evangelically disposed communities had to be reorganized on a Scriptural basis.⁸ He came to realize that the building of a new evangelical Christianity was the only solution. The Catholics could not be persuaded from the error of their ways.⁹

The officials of the established church also recognized that they and he were of irreconcilably

different spirits. He had not only gained their attention but also incurred their wrath to the extent that he was declared a heretic and an outlaw, and excommunicated from the Catholic Church.

Having rejected the authority of papal pronouncements and human traditions, Luther recognized only one source of truth. That source was the Bible. He worked with a passion to bring everything in the life and proclamation of the church into harmony with that basis. His balanced approach may be illustrated by St. Paul's picture of the church in I Corinthians 3:11-12. In this regard Charles P. Krauth says that Luther, leader of the conservative Reformation, "accepted the old foundation." He labored to remove "the wood, hay, and stubble that had accumulated." He "carefully separated, guarded, and retained the gold, silver, and precious stones."¹⁰

Luther emphatically stated his commitment to the Scriptures as the only source of truth. He wrote in the Smalcald Articles, "... the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel" (II:II:15).¹¹ He referred to the Bible as "the sole true liege lord and master over all writings and teachings on earth."¹² He said that all doctrine must be "the holy, sure doctrine of the Scriptures."¹³ He commented that "no one will produce for you a doctor of the Holy Scriptures save the Holy Spirit from heaven."¹⁴

Luther considered the Scriptures to be God's own Word. Some who have strayed from Lutheran orthodoxy have made much of the fact that he did not present a theory of inspiration of the Bible. While he did not provide a formal theory of

inspiration, he presupposed everywhere the fact of inspiration, that is to say that the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ He called the Bible "the Holy Spirit's book," and said that "the Holy Scripture was spoken through the Holy Ghost."¹⁶ He designated the Scripture as "the Book given by God, the Holy Spirit, to His church."¹⁷ He said, "one must always keep in view what I emphasize so often, namely, that the Holy Spirit is the author of this book."¹⁸ Luther also stated concerning the Scriptures that "although they were written by men, are not of men nor from men, but from God."¹⁹ In the Smalcald Articles he says that the Old Testament prophets were holy "because the Holy Ghost spoke through them."²⁰

For Luther the Scriptures were the criterion by which all teachings of the church must be attested as evangelical truth.²¹ Luther advised, "In any conflict the superior position of the Scripture must always be kept in mind...the Word once given by the Lord must be held fast."²² He told his Wittenberg congregation,

Whenever you hear anyone boast that he has something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he has no basis in God's Word, no matter what it may be, tell him that this is the work of the devil.²³

When Luther was convinced that he properly understood and interpreted the Scriptures, he would make no compromise with those who disagreed with him. When he was called upon to recant his Scriptures-based writing at the Diet of Worms, he declared,

Unless I am convinced by the testimonies of the Holy Scripture or evident reason (for I believe neither in the pope nor councils

alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures adduced by me, and my conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. God help me.²⁴

He not only said "my conscience has been taken captive by the Word of God," but, on occasion, he stated, "My reason is captive to the Word of God."²⁵ Again he said, "What Holy Scripture teaches, denies, or affirms, that we can safely initiate and teach."²⁶ He also wrote, "I will stand by this Word of God no matter what else may stand or fall."²⁷

Luther considered justification to be the central doctrine of the Bible. The reasons for this emphasis can best be understood in light of the severe soul struggle which he experienced in his earlier years.

As a youth Luther was obsessed by concern for his eternal destiny. He felt deeply a sense of an angry God, of personal sin, and the need for reconciliation. The era in which he grew up was preoccupied with thoughts of death. It was not the prospect of death itself which troubled him so much as dread of the judgment to follow and the eternal damnation awaiting those not reconciled to God.²⁸ When confronted with the prospect of death in a sudden thunderstorm, he vowed to become a monk and entered the Augustinian Order. In the monastery he sought peace with God. "Oh, my sins, my sins, my sins!" he would exclaim.²⁹ He went to excesses in his spiritual exercises and self-discipline. His ascetic approach was to no avail. The more efforts he

made, the more wretched he was. His heart was not at rest. He tried all the works prescribed by the penitential system of the church -- confession, penance, absolution, celibacy, poverty, obedience, ordination, pilgrimage -- but God still seemed to have a wrathful face. He could not attain the assurance that he had done enough, although he had tested all the ways of the medieval sacramental system.³⁰

He was so locked into the system that his ears seemed deaf to the voice of the Gospel. An old monk, who was his novice master, tried to comfort him with the words of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."³¹ His superior, John Staupitz, assured him that the wrath of God caused by his sins was removed by the grace of Christ. He told Luther to find himself in the wounds of Christ.³² But Luther could not rid himself of his fear and sense of guilt.³³ Unable to reach the soul of Luther, Staupitz urged him to read the Bible.³⁴

At the University of Wittenberg, Luther lectured on Psalms in 1513-15, on Romans in 1515-16, and on Galatians in 1516-17. In his preparation for his lectures on the Psalms, he frequently turned to Romans for help and, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he saw the words in Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith," in the same light Paul himself had seen them. Like Paul he made justification by faith the fundamental principle of the Christian life.³⁵ As he studied he realized that justification does not mean the righteousness which God has, but the righteousness which God has given us in Christ, and which we accept by faith.³⁶

Having learned how the wrath of God and the love of God came together on the cross, as God

reconciled the world to Himself, raising Jesus up in victory from the grave, Luther found the peace and joy that were never to leave him, even in the midst of his many trials and labors. He exclaimed,

I feel like one who had been born again. The doors had swung open and I entered into paradise itself.... The passage of Paul (Rom. 1:16-17) became my porta paradisi, a real gateway to paradise.³⁷

The key portions of the Word of God that liberated the soul of Luther and fashioned him into a great Reformer were the entire letter to the Romans, as well as the letter to the Galatians, and many of the Psalms.³⁸ His legalistic religion was replaced by a religion of grace.³⁹

After this Luther saw the entire Bible as being given primarily to bring Christ to us. He went so far as to consider the Scriptures as authoritative and inspired because "the testimony to the great truths of our salvation."⁴⁰ He was concerned with what "brings Christ."⁴¹ Regarding the various Bible books he wrote,

This is the real touchstone by which all books are to be tested, when we see whether they treat of Christ or not, since all Scripture testifies of Christ (Rom. 3:21); and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ (I Cor. 2:2).⁴²

He also stated, "For the sake of the Messiah and God's Son Holy Scripture was written, and for His sake everything that happened took place."⁴³ His emphasis is understandable because the fundamental questions with him were, "How do I find a

gracious God? Upon what rests my confidence that I am righteous before him?" Luther derived his answers and his concept of justification immediately from the Scriptures.⁴⁴ He was more immovable on the article of justification by faith than on anything else.⁴⁵

This doctrine was so central for him that he defined pure doctrine as the doctrine of the Gospel, the "doctrine of faith."⁴⁶ Christ "should and must be preached in such a way that faith may be created and preserved for you and for me."⁴⁷ This happens only when the article of justification is in the center of the message, because this is "the true teachings whereby a man learns to fear and trust God."⁴⁸ Luther said that the Law and Christ, or simply, the remission of sins, "are the chief point of all Christian doctrine."⁴⁹

For Luther, justification was not only the central, but the highest doctrine of Scripture. Other doctrines were important for him (e.g., original sin and the bodily presence in the Lord's Supper), but he felt they had no validity apart from the doctrine of justification. They must be joined with it.⁵⁰

He also believed that error in any part of doctrine ultimately affected the doctrine of justification. In his commentary on Galatians he says, "If I deny God in one article, I deny Him in all of them."⁵¹ In his last writing against the Swiss theologians, he expanded this thought and used the picture of a bell which loses its tone altogether as soon as it is damaged in one place."⁵²

The church that came into being as a result of the courageous struggles and untiring efforts

of the man, Luther, bears his name. It is known as the Lutheran Church.

Lutherans did not desire or choose his name for themselves. In reality they did not see themselves as a new church at all, but only as a movement within the wider church. Had the selection of a name been left to them, they would have chosen the name "Evangelical."⁵³ This name, rather than pointing to a human originator, would have identified this church as one concerned with the glad tidings of salvation in Jesus Christ. It may be fortunate for the broader world of Christianity that the followers of Luther were not able to claim the title "Evangelical" exclusively for themselves. The name Evangelical is now used to describe all those Gospel oriented Christians in all denominations who profess, revere, and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in the right way.⁵⁴

Lutherans have sometimes been called "Protestants." After Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses against the sale of indulgences in 1517, this title was "spit in his face."⁵⁵ The fuller use of the name Protestant has its origin in the Diet of Spires in 1529. At an earlier Diet of Spires in 1526 it was agreed that German princes could adopt the Lutheran position, if they so desired. The Lutherans lost no time in organizing territorial churches, in reorganizing public worship and in establishing evangelical schools. The Elector John engaged Luther and his associate, Philip Melanchthon, to draw up a body of laws relating to the form of church government, the method of public worship, the revenues of the clergy, the education of the young and similar matters.⁵⁶ Then, three years later at a second Diet of Spires in 1529 when the Catholics were

in the majority, the decision was rescinded, and the Catholics revived their policy of repression. Because of the protest of the Lutherans at this meeting, they were called Protestants.⁵⁷ This designation continued to be the diplomatic style of the Lutheran Church in Europe until the peace of Westphalia in 1648.⁵⁸ Today, as in the case of the name "Evangelical," the name "Protestant" enjoys a much wider usage. It is now applied in a general collective sense to all non-Catholics.

The followers of Luther were first called "Lutherans" by their opponents, just as the followers of Christ were first called Christians by their enemies in Antioch of Syria. The name Lutheran was first used as a label of contempt, reproach, and scorn. To be called by the name "Lutheran" was to be ridiculed by the Catholic opponents.⁵⁹ The name was first applied to Luther and his followers at the Leipzig Debate on July 4, 1519.⁶⁰ John Eck, Luther's chief adversary at Leipzig, is apparently the first person to use the name.⁶¹ The name was also used by Pope Leo X in the Bull of Luther's excommunication on January 3, 1521. The intention was to stigmatize them as heretics and separated from the church.⁶²

Luther strongly disapproved of the use of his name, considering himself unworthy of such honor. He used simply the term "Evangelical."⁶³ He said,

It is my doctrine, and it is not my doctrine;
it is in my hand but God put it there.

Luther will have nothing to do with Lutheranism except as it teaches Holy Scripture purely.⁶⁴

Were he living today, the only kind of Lutheran Luther would be would be an orthodox Lutheran.

Lutherans, orthodox and otherwise, would prefer to be called Evangelical Lutherans, rather than simply Lutherans. Most congregations carry also the designation Evangelical in their name (e.g., Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church). The word "evangelical" points to the central position accorded the Gospel in the Lutheran Church with its emphasis on the grace of God in Christ.⁶⁵ On the other hand, the name "Lutheran" serves to distinguish the followers of Luther from the Catholics, and also from the other evangelical churches which grew out of the Reformation.

For Luther the Word of God was absolutely authoritative, and the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ totally central. Only those who believe as he did properly bear his name. Only those who follow him, not merely in name, but in conviction can rightly be called at one and the same time -- Evangelical, Protestant and Lutheran.⁶⁶ They alone are true Lutherans and orthodox in their relationship to him and to the church which carries his name.

-- Rev. Ernest Bartels

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²Ibid.

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²⁰Tappert, 313.

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