

“I Desire to Make No Law”

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Presented at the Colloquium
of the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America
on April 25-27, 2022
at Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Malone, TX

Doctor Martin Luther in his liturgical writings says that no law should be made regarding the use of the Mass. If this is true, is it right and proper for a diocese, or any other Lutheran Church body, to require the use of a certain order; to establish set rites and forms; to establish set guidelines for the use of the parishes within a diocese? Is a rule for establishing the use of the Common Service within our diocese in line with what Luther says about establishing no law? This paper will examine this statement of Luther, showing why he made such a statement to begin with, and contrasting it with other statements he has made on the topic. This paper will also show how the Lutherans followed, or did not follow, the recommendations of Martin Luther, and how that led to the development of the Common Service.

First, let us look at this comment in context. Luther is known for writing three liturgical works: the *Von Ordnung Gottesdiensts in der Gemeinde*¹ (early 1523), the *Formula Missae et Communionis pro Ecclesia Wittembergensis*² (late 1523), and the *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung Gottesdienst*³ (1526). Even though Luther is only credited with three liturgical writings, of which only two are actual Orders of Service, in many of his writings from 1516 to 1545 he speaks on

¹ “Concerning the Order of Divine Worship in the Christian Congregation.” *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 6, pp. 47-50. This was published sometime between Jan. 29 and the Tuesday before Pentecost (May 19, 1523).

² “Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg.” *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 6, pp. 66-81. This work was inscribed to Nicolaus Hausmann, to whom Luther sent a copy on Dec. 4, 1523, and which he received on Dec. 11. Hausmann was the pastor *primerius* of the *Marienkirche* of Zwickau and a devoted friend of Luther.

³ “The German Mass and Order of Service.” *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 6, pp. 123-137. Although officially dated 1526, the official publication date, this liturgical work was first introduced in the parish church at Wittenberg on Thursday, Oct. 29, 1525. Beginning after Christmas, it was used, at least in parts, on Sunday mornings. At this time the *Formula Missae* became the Service used on Weekdays.

liturgical matters. One should not understand Luther's liturgical position by considering only these three writings. Luther's liturgical guidance can only be informed by the historical context in which these writings were first introduced. As the saying goes, if one does not learn from history, he is doomed to repeat it. He will especially make the same mistakes that were made in the past. Therefore, let us examine Luther's comment that no law should be made regarding the liturgy in these three writings, and look at these writings within their historical context.

In the first liturgical writing of Martin Luther, the *Von Ordnung*, he lays out three abuses that have led him to begin to address the need for an "Evangelical" Service. First, the Word of God had been silenced; then it was replaced by unchristian fables and lies; and then the Mass was turned into a work done in order to merit God's favor. The restoration of the pure Word of God, and the restoration of the Sacraments according to Christ's institution became the driving force behind everything that Luther did liturgically. But he also was concerned about making corrections too fast that would confuse the laity.

As early as 1519 there had been those who desired Martin Luther to provide an Order of Service. Andreas Carlstadt at that time had begun to slowly make changes in Wittenberg. However, Carlstadt's understanding of "reformation" and Luther's understanding differed greatly. Luther sought to purify what was corrupt, but did not desire the complete abrogation of everything that came before. This attitude can be seen in his Preface to the Small Catechism, where he urges his readers to continue to use a single form of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the other parts, year after year, without changing a single syllable, because he understood that changing the words only leads to confusion. With this attitude Luther has in mind the benefits of the Liturgy to the laity. If everything was changed, or if some things were changed too quickly, this would not benefit the laity. He also understood that the Liturgy was not the only consideration

to make in bringing about the reforms for which he advocated in his writings. The Church's year with its saints' days; the traditions the people were used to; as well as the rites and ceremonies, all had to be given consideration. Luther therefore moved slowly when it came to liturgical reform.

Andreas Carlstadt, at least according to his actions, understood "reformation" to be an exercise in "cleansing the Church and its cultus of all that offends, clutters and enshrouds the pure worship of God in one grand gesture."⁴ While Luther was still in Wittenberg, Carlstadt had made some changes to the Mass in Wittenberg.⁵ That Luther, at this time, did not publicly object to the changes, suggests that he either approved, or he did not feel up to the task of refuting it. Luther did not consider himself to be a liturgiologist. In fact, when he began to write his vernacular Mass the *Deutsche Messe*, he asked Justus Jonas and Johannes Bugenhagen⁶ to assist him. He also requested the Elector to send him Johann Walther and Conrad Rupff to work on the music for the German Mass. It could also be that Carlstadt did not truly reveal his radical spirit until after the Diet of Worms when Luther was forced to go into hiding at the Wartburg Castle.

These reforms took place throughout 1521 and 1522. The first change was changing the Consecration and Distribution⁷ from Latin into German. The next change was the use of readings using the German language. During this time Luther, in the Wartburg, made no public objections. He was kept aware of the situation in Wittenberg by other people there, though. The tipping point for Luther was on Christmas Day of 1521 when Carlstadt celebrated the Mass completely in German, and in his street clothes. He also made a general call for all to come to Communion,

⁴ Strodach, Paul Zeller. *The Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 6, Introduction to "Concerning the Ordering of Divine Worship in the Congregation." p. 40.

⁵ Carlstadt was Archdeacon at Wittenberg and Chancellor of the University.

⁶ Justus Jonas would end up writing four other Church Orders, and Johannes Bugenhagen would write seven. The Church Orders of Bugenhagen and Johannes Brenz (who wrote five) became the foundation for all Lutheran Church Orders that led to the development of the Common Service. All of these find their root in the two Church Orders of Martin Luther.

⁷ The Sacrament was still offered only in one kind at this point.

denouncing Private confession and fasting as a prerequisite for the Sacrament. He distributed the Mass in both kinds placing the host in the hands of the communicants and allowing the communicants to grasp the Cup. All attendant ceremonies were omitted (particularly the Elevation and the Canon of the Mass).⁸ These things were copied by the Augustinian monks in Wittenberg led by Gabriel Zwilling. Andreas and Zwilling went even further after the Christmas Day Mass by abrogating the daily masses⁹, masses for the dead, and denuding the churches of pictures, ornaments, statues, etc. Similar things were done in Alstedt by Thomas Münzer. His influence also reached into Zwickau. Ulrich Zwingli was also highly influenced by the reforms Carlstadt made and introduced them to Switzerland.

It was these events, and one other, that led to Luther's first two liturgical writings which were both published in 1523, and also led to his statement that he desired to make no law. The second event was a meeting between Luther and the town of Leisnig in September 1522. He was sent there to confer with them about the administration of the parish treasury. A formal regulation was adopted to which he wrote a preface.¹⁰ Since Luther had handled that problem well for them, when some questions arose concerning their pastor the town again sought Luther's advice. It was this situation that led them to also request Luther to appoint an Order for them according to which they might sing and pray. Luther agreed to their request and wrote the *Von Ordnung* in the early part of 1523.

All of this is ultimately a result of the radical reformation of Carlstadt, Münzer, and

⁸ You will note that many of these things are common practice among Lutherans today.

⁹ Getting rid of the daily Mass does not mean they opposed having Mass every day. These masses were to serve as a daily sacrifice for the people. In this sense it was like the Old Testament sacrifices that were done daily morning and evening for the sins of all the people. This was also one of the first things that Luther abolishes in his first Church Order. However, Luther disliked that the doors to the Church were locked up during the week. This led to the establishment of the daily Offices of Matins and Vespers in the place of the daily sacrifice of the Mass. Daily preaching and prayer for the benefit of the people was the desire of Luther.

¹⁰ This Preface, "The Ordinance of a Common Chest," is recorded in *The Works of Martin Luther*, Vol. 4, pp. 68-73. A. J. Holman Company. Philadelphia, PA. 1931.

Zwingli.¹¹ In all the places where the radical reformers spread their influence, those territories were subjected to the changes to the Mass that were prevalent in that movement. There were certainly some practices abrogated by the radical reformers with which Luther in previous writings had expressed agreement.¹² Besides the changes with which Luther disagreed, one of his major contentions was the way that Carlstadt and the others made those changes. They allowed no Christian freedom in the matter. Those who would not go along with their radicalism were not considered true reformers. They demanded these changes by law.¹³ So, one can see why Luther is reticent to make laws regarding the liturgy. It was not on account of conservative reformation, but on account of the radical reformers who demanded churches denude themselves of everything associated with the Roman Church, including some things that were still good and salutary. Luther could not abide the legalism, and use of force and violence, with which the radical reformers upset the Church by demanding these changes be made.

It had started in Wittenberg with Carlstadt, but quickly spread to Alstedt and in Zwickau (where M nzer’s influence was), and also spread in Switzerland by Zwingli. Luther’s response began with his eight Wittenberg sermons preached the week of *Invocavit* in 1522. He had left the Wartburg, risking capture, to preach against these abuses in the *Invocavit* sermons.¹⁴ These

¹¹ Schwarmerei, Enthusiasts.

¹² In his opening to the *Formula Missae* he writes to Nicolaus Hausmann, “Thus far I have tried by means of books and sermons among the people to call their hearts away from godless opinions of ceremonies, thinking I would be doing something Christian and salutary if I would be the cause whereby the abomination, which Satan has set up in the holy place through the man of sin, might be removed without violence.” “Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg,” *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 66. The key phrase is “without violence” which is what the radical reformers had been doing.

¹³ In “Against the Heavenly Prophets” Luther wrote, “That the Mass is now held in German, pleases me, but when he [Carlstadt] would make it a law, he goes too far.” *Luther’s Works*. American Edition, Vol. 40, p. 141.

¹⁴ These sermons can be found in *The Works of Martin Luther*, Vol. 2. A. J. Holman Company. Philadelphia, PA. 1915. Pp. 288ff. A summation of the eight sermons: 1) is about the Mass. 2) is about things necessary and things free. 3) is a continuation of the second, especially addressing the marriage of priests and nuns; and images. 4) is a continuation on images, and fasting. 5) is how to observe the Sacrament; its reverence. 6) is a continuation on the reception of Communion; who is worthy and who is not. 7) is the fruit of the sacrament: love for God and for our neighbor. 8) is about confession.

sermons had two effects: they caused a further divide between Carlstadt and Luther,¹⁵ and it caused Gabriel Zwilling to repent of his previous siding with Carlstadt.¹⁶ These sermons stopped the radical reformation in Wittenberg. But where Carlstadt and Münzer had influence, it affected both clergy and laity in those areas. Luther was being asked by several people and towns to provide a Church Order, in order that they might have something to contradict and respond to the radical reformers.

One such individual was a good friend of Martin Luther's named Nicolaus Hausmann in Zwickau. Münzer's influence in Zwickau had caused problems for Hausmann, therefore he wrote to Luther and asked for an "Evangelical Mass." This was provided to Hausmann in Luther's first Church Order, the *Formula Missae*. Luther had been hesitant up to this point to write a Church Order, but the influence of the radical reformers was growing, and it required a response. This liturgy was the perfect answer to the radical reformers who wanted to cast away anything that came from the Roman Church; who wanted to make those changes a law to be followed. Luther addresses this in the introduction to the *Formula Missae* where he writes,

"I have undertaken nothing either by force or command; nor have I changed old things for new, always being hesitant and fearful on account of those souls weak in the faith from whom the old and accustomed is not to be taken away suddenly or among whom a new and untried method of worshiping God is to be introduced; and especially on account of those light and fastidious spirits who, without faith, without reason, like unclean swine, rush wildly about and rejoice only in the novel, and as soon as the novelty has worn off forthwith become disgusted with it. A species of men than whom, as in other things, nothing is more troublesome than their sort; so, too, in sacred things they are most troublesome and intolerable."¹⁷

¹⁵ Carlstadt would eventually usurp a call in Orlamünde, a town near Wittenberg, and Luther would write "Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments" (*Luther's Works*, The American Edition, Vol. 40, Church and Ministry II. Pp. 65ff. Muhlenberg Press. Philadelphia, PA. 1958), a polemic against Carlstadt.

¹⁶ Zwilling and Luther would become very close friends.

¹⁷ "Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg," *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 66.

From this we see Luther's liturgical mindset. He expresses his distaste with those who would introduce something new. He expresses his concern for the "souls weak in faith" because that which is tried and true best serves these ones. He also writes that it is his desire, "to cleanse that which is in use, which has been vitiated by most abominable additions, and to point out a pious use."¹⁸ In short, he shows he is not in agreement with the radical reformers who wanted to get rid of everything by force and violence. He would prefer to cleanse rather than abrogate. He would prefer to do this also by not forcing innovation on the laity which they would resist.

This struggle between what Luther writes is his desire, and his actual practice can be observed in the *Formula Missae*. He had written that he wanted to do away with the abuses, but when he witnessed how Carlstadt, and the other radical reformers, went about it, he drew back from that position. It made him reluctant to change anything. However, he also understood that since these practices were out there, they needed a response, which is why he wrote the *Formula Missae*.¹⁹ Luther also wanted to make clear that this Church Order was not meant to be used universally. This is why part of the title says "For the Church at Wittenberg." This understanding is really a product of Luther's humility, because he understood that he was not the expert in this area, and he knew that something better could be arranged by someone else.²⁰

In response to the radical reformers Luther writes, "...it is not now, nor has it ever been, in our mind to abolish entirely the whole formal cultus of God, but to cleanse that which is in use, which has been vitiated by most abominable additions, and to point out a pious use."²¹ Carlstadt

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁹ He writes, "since the matter itself demands that the scandals be removed from the Kingdom of Christ, something must be dared in the name of Christ." Ibid., p. 67.

²⁰ In fact, something better did appear one year later by Johannes Bugenhagen. His Church Order of 1524, "An Order of Christian Mass, as it is held at Wittenberg" (see bibliography for reference) became the standard by which all other Church Orders were judged. Bugenhagen's Church Order does show influence from the *Formula Missae* of Martin Luther, as do all of his Church Orders.

²¹ "Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg," *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 67.

and the others wanted to abolish everything that they had received from the Roman Church. Luther believed that not everything they had inherited was bad and needed to be done away with. He only desired to get rid of the “abominable additions.” In the *Formula Missae* he then gives a list of all the parts of the Liturgy that were right and salutary, which had been handed down from the Church Fathers.²² Luther attributes the corruptions that crept in, including the Canon of the Mass, to “sacerdotal ambition.” He writes, “when there was license to add and to change as it suited anyone, then because of the tyranny of avarice and sacerdotal ambition, those altars and images of Baal and all gods began to be placed in the temple of the Lord by our impious kings, that is, the bishops and pastors.”²³

These additions Luther believed resulted in the corruptions in the church of his time. Everything was done as a work to be followed that earned some merit. This detracted from the only merit that was necessary for man, the merit of the Lord Christ, Who offers His gifts freely to all those who cling to Him in faith. This is another reason why Luther rejected making things in the Liturgy, which were meant to be gifts, into laws that were to be observed to earn favor with the Lord God. The Liturgy is not done so that a person can perform a good work. It is there as a vessel to hand out the gifts of the Lord God. He explains it in this way:

“Wherefore it is not right that one should either require or establish some indispensable form as a law in this matter, by which he might ensnare or vex consciences. Whence also we find no complete example of this use in the ancient fathers and in the primitive Church, save only in the Roman Church. But if they have appointed something as a law in this matter, it should not be observed; because these things neither can nor should be bound by laws.”²⁴

The key phrase here is “ensnare or vex consciences.” The Roman Church had made these observances into laws designed to merit grace. They were holier than others because of their

²² Ibid. p. 67-68.

²³ Ibid. p. 68.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 74.

ceremonies. What the radical reformers were doing was not much different, either. They were getting rid of what the Roman Church did, and making the abrogation of these things an ensnarement and vexation of consciences. If one did not get rid of these things, they were not really Evangelicals. They were holier than others because they did not have the practices of the Roman Church. Luther did not see it this way.

Luther saw the Liturgy as the vehicle to hand out the gifts of the Lord God; to bring the promises of the Lord Jesus into the ears and hearts of the people of God to give them comfort and aid. While Luther did abolish the Canon of the Mass and the “Little Canon,” the Offertory,²⁵ he retained that which gave the people the pure Word of God. The structure of the *Formula Missae* is very similar to the structure that we have inherited in the Common Service. This is why it is considered to be a “Liturgical Classic.” It is also the foundation, along with the *Deutsche Messe*, for all the Lutheran liturgies that became the Common Service. We will look at that development later in the paper.

So far one should be able to see why Martin Luther made the comment about not making a law in regards to the Order of Service. It was on account of the radical reformers demanding the abrogation everything from the Roman Church in the Mass. It was also on account of the inherent works-righteousness of the Roman Church, that made everything a law to be followed in order to gain favor with the Lord God. Luther was addressing these two extreme understandings of the Order of Worship. Let us now observe where Luther seems to be stating the opposite position;

²⁵ This is was not like the Offertory that we have in our Liturgy, which is a song of thanksgiving for forgiveness of sins. The Offertory of the Roman Church was where the priest would say several prayers that were designed to set the bread and wine apart for holy use. In essence, the bread and wine were blessed before the Consecration. The chief prayer was the *suscipe sancte Pater*: “Receive, O Holy Father, Almighty Eternal God, this spotless Host which I, Thy unworthy servant, do offer unto Thee, my living and true God, for mine own countless sins, offenses and negligences, and for all here present; as also for all faithful Christians living or dead, that it may avail for my own and for their salvation unto life eternal.” This blessing of inanimate objects is the kind of blessing to which the Reformers objected. See Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 292-293 for more information on the Offertory.

where he seems to demand that certain things be done in a certain way.

Luther concludes the *Formula Missae*, which is addressed to Nicolaus Hausmann, by giving him this advice, "...if it pleases you and others, you may imitate. If not, we will give place to your wisdom, being prepared to accept what is more fitting from you and any others."²⁶ Luther understood that there were smarter people than him in the area of liturgics. Where Luther had knowledge and authority, however, he readily made suggestions on how things were to be done. His *Formula Missae* was written with the intention to be used in Wittenberg. Unlike what Carlstadt was doing, making his Service completely in the vernacular—in the German Language. The *Formula Missae* was mostly in Latin, with German parts interspersed. The entire Church Order is done with the understanding that this is how things are going to be done in Wittenberg, and everyone else can do what they desire. Others who wished may follow Wittenberg's lead, but it was not required. However, after stating that different people are free to follow different rites, and no one should judge or despise another for different rites, he writes, "...let each one's rite be agreeable to the other, lest diverse opinions and sects yield diverse uses, just as happened in the Roman Church."²⁷ In other words, different rites are allowable until they produce "diverse opinions and sects."

Luther believed that external rites could not be done away with, as Carlstadt and the radical reformers were doing. External rites were as necessary as food and drink.²⁸ As necessary as they are, one should never believe that doing, or not doing them, commends one to the Lord God. Rites serve to teach the unlearned what they need to know of the Christ.²⁹ Improper rites teach the wrong

²⁶ "Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg," *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 80.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁹ Augsburg Confession, Art. XXIV.3.

things about the Christ. As can be readily seen from the contemporary worship crowd. They make salvation anthropocentric. These are clearly the descendants of the radical reformers.

With this understanding Luther is not afraid to give some guidelines on the Order of the Mass. In all three of his liturgical writings Luther is giving guidelines on how to conduct the Mass. Even if he says on the one hand to make no law; do as best fits your own situation, he is still giving one way in which to Order the Mass. His guiding principle was the purity of the Word of God. He did not want works-righteousness of any kind remaining in the Order of Service, which is why he removed the Offertory and the Canon of the Mass, because these things made the Service a work designed to please God.

For examples of his guidance from each of the three liturgical writings consider first what he writes in the *Von Ordnung*. The first rule Luther establishes is: "...the Christian congregation never should assemble unless God's Word is preached and prayer is made, no matter for how brief a time this may be."³⁰ This he establishes by giving a plan of Divine Worship on a daily basis. Morning and evening a chapter, or two, or half a chapter, from the Bible is read from both the Old and New Testaments, and then preaching on that text is done for a half hour or so. This is followed by prayer, using the Psalms, antiphons and responsories (the ones that are pure). This whole Service should be brief lasting only about one hour. This limit of time is done so that souls might not become "weary and bored" as was the case in the cloisters and institutions.³¹ These daily Services, however, were not to be abandoned if the entire congregation was not able to attend. Everyone should be encouraged to attend, but not out of compulsion, or because one's attendance would merit him an eternal reward. These were to take place solely for the instruction and

³⁰ "Concerning the Ordering of the Divine Worship in the Congregation," *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 47.

³¹ Ibid. p. 48. Luther referred to the Services of the cloisters to be "ass' labor."

enlightenment of the people, especially pastors and those desiring to be pastors. Luther also instructs that the daily masses³² were to be abolished, even as Carlstadt had done. Luther, however, wanted the doors to the churches to remain open during the week, and if there was a desire for the Lord's Supper during the week, this was allowed, as time and devotion permitted.

In the *Formula Missae* Luther explains that everything should be tested in the Liturgy, and those things that are good should be retained. Referring to the Mass as a sacrifice or work was no longer to be tolerated. It was to be referred to as "Sacrament, or Testament, or Blessing as in Latin, or Eucharist as in Greek, or the Table of the Lord, or the Lord's Supper, or the Lord's Memorial, or Communion, or by whatever pious name you please."³³ Some of the "good things" that were to be retained were the *Introit*, the *Gloria in Excelsis*, the *Kyrie Eleison*, the Collect, the Epistle and Gospel, the *Gradual* with Alleluia, and the Nicene Creed. Anything that was not the pure Word of God, however, was to be done away with. Some of the Collects, some of the *Graduals*, and most of the Sequence hymns were not retained. In much of the rest of the *Formula Missae* Luther deals with how to handle the abrogation of the Offertory and the Canon of the Mass. The Words of Institution were to remain unchanged. He also gives guidance on giving the Lord's Supper to the laity.

One thing that was to be retained with which Carlstadt had dispensed was the practice of announcing to the bishop one's intent to come to the Lord's Supper. The bishop was to be able to know both the name and manner of life of the communicant. Luther also establishes the practice of closed communion by writing,

“...let him not admit those seeking, unless they should give a reason for their faith; and being questioned, should answer, whether they understand what the Supper of the Lord is; what it stands for; and of what they wish to become partakers by its use;

³² See footnote 9.

³³ "Formula of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg," *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 68.

to wit, if they are able to recite the Words of Consecration from memory and explain that they come because of the consciousness of sin, or the fear of death, or, troubled by some other evil of the temptation of the flesh, of the world, of the devil, they hunger and thirst for that word and sign of grace and salvation from the Lord Himself through the ministry of the bishop by which they may be consoled and comforted, such as Christ out of priceless love gave and instituted in this Supper when He said: Take and eat, etc.”³⁴

Luther does make provision that this examination need only take place once a year, or less, if the person is particularly knowledgeable. The purpose is to guard against both the unworthy, and worthy, from blindly going to the Sacrament, which was done in the past where the only thing sought by the communicant was to be communed, regardless of whether they understood what they were doing.

Luther also instructs that the Sacrament should now be given in both kinds. The Gospel had been taught them for two whole years, and sufficient sympathy had been granted to people’s objections. Therefore, Luther states that those who are ignorant are to remain ignorant, for they will probably always remain ignorant. For one, out of Christian love, should bear with a person’s infirmity in the hope of leading them to where they should go, but there will come a time when doing so will only “nourish obstinacy and result in proscription contrary to the Gospel.”³⁵ Luther would stress patience and catechesis, but he also understood that there was a time when, in order to promote the Gospel, “something must be dared in the name of Christ.”³⁶

Luther in the opening of his *Deutsche Messe* writes, “I want to make a request, in all kindness, and in God’s name, too, that all who see this Order of Service or desire to adopt it, shall not impose it as a law or cause anyone’s conscience to be distressed or bound by it, but shall use

³⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 77.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

it in Christian freedom as they may please, as, where, when, and as long as conditions warrant or call for it.”³⁷ He makes this statement partially because there were already several other Church Orders in use that were good and beneficial Orders, and mostly because he viewed the *Deutsche Messe* as a step along the way to a truly Evangelical Mass. This is clear when he states that they continue to use the Latin Mass, the *Formula Missae*, in Wittenberg,³⁸ and when he states that Latin should continue to be used in the Services “until enough German hymns become available.”³⁹

Luther can say on the one hand no law should be made of his Service, but he also makes clear that there is a time for uniformity. In the *Deutsche Messe* he writes, “...it would be well if in every jurisdiction public worship were uniform and neighboring towns and villages observed the same ceremonies as the city. Nor should there be any constraint or reproof if in other jurisdictions they wished to observe the same ceremonies or make additions of their own.”⁴⁰ He also states,

“...we must see to it that freedom is and shall ever be the servant of love and of the neighbor. And where men take offense or are led astray by the differences in usage we are bound, in truth, to forego our freedom and, as far as possible, to seek the improvement of the people and not cause offense by what we do or omit to do. Since this external order of service may serve the neighbor and there is nothing here affecting matters of conscience before God, we should seek to be of one mind in Christian love, as St. Paul teaches, and, as far as feasible, have like usages and ceremonies, even as all Christians have the one Baptism and the one Sacrament.”⁴¹

He believed that any Church Order should be used by as many as are in agreement as is possible, but when the Church Order becomes an abuse, that is, something by which people earned favor with God, it should be done away with. “It is no longer an Order, but a Disorder.”⁴²

³⁷ “The German Mass and Order of Service,” *The Works of Martin Luther*, Philadelphia edition, Vol. 6, p. 123.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124. The *Formula Missae* continued to be used on weekdays in Wittenberg. There is also an extant account published by Wolfgang Muskulus, a pastor in Augsburg, of a Wittenberg Service which he attended on *Exaudi* Sunday in 1536. This account shows a combination of both the *Formula Missae* and the *Deutsche Messe* in use at that time in Wittenberg.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Luther also said many other similar things regarding proper use of the Liturgy. In his “Address to Christian Nobility” (1520) he says there are two classes of men: hardened ceremonialists and the weak in faith. To deal with the former one must be the opposite, and for the latter one must bear with them and not change anything until they have been instructed properly. This was a response to Carlstadt when he wanted to make “free things” into laws. This is also why many customs from the Roman Church were retained in Wittenberg, because of Carlstadt’s licentiousness. Wittenberg retained the Elevation of the Sacrament until 1542, after Carlstadt died. Luther also says of ceremonies that impetuous youth need bonds and chastisement. He says also that the righteousness of faith is endangered in the multiplicity of ceremonies. Also, he says, ceremonies are the scaffolding used to erect the building of the Church. And also, when Christians reach perfect faith ceremonies are no longer necessary. He says also, that the strong stir up, move, and inflame the weak, and that these roles are not held by the same person all the time. Luther sees both the good in ceremonies, and the harm in them.

Luther gives four reasons for why he would desire a change in worship: when the authority of the Word of God is crowded out; when it does not provide the opportunity for the worshiper to go before God himself; when the participants are just watching what is happening and not actually participating; and when the worshiper is viewed as a giver or doer, and not a receiver. This is why Luther is not afraid to both speak against the retention of ceremonies and the abrogation of ceremonies. Ceremonies that do not serve the Gospel—serve the Word of God—are useless ceremonies. Ceremonies that give the impression that one is holier for doing them are also useless. The same can be said about those who think they are holier because they are not retaining ceremonies, as was the case with the radical reformers. Luther believed no one had the right to impose anything on anyone without his consent, but once the Church does lay down ordinances

regarding ceremonies they are to be submitted to, as long as they remain pure.

As one can see, Luther is a paradox unto himself. He says one thing in one place, and another completely opposite thing in another place. All of these statements must be observed within their historical context, and not read with our modern understandings of worship, nor our modern prejudices and objections. With such a paradoxical view of worship from the one to whom everyone looked for guidance, it is a wonder how those who came after Luther understood ceremony and the Ordering of Worship. This can be seen in the Lutheran Church's treatment and reception of Luther's *Deutsche Messe*.

Generally speaking, the Lutheran Church as a whole, in its normal and best development in all lands, with occasional exceptions as to this or that feature, particularly in southern and southwestern Germany, had rejected most of the peculiar, and largely experimental features of the *Deutsche Messe*. Such as the omission of the *Gloria in Excelsis*,⁴³ the omission of the Preface, the hymn versions of the Creed and the *Sanctus*⁴⁴, the paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer, the division of the *Verba Domini* and the twofold administration of the Elements, and the retention of the Elevation. Some things that were retained was the transferring of the Lord's Prayer to before the Words of Institution, and the Exhortation to the Lord's Supper. Many of the Church Orders followed Luther in the retention of using both the Latin and German languages in the Mass. This practice was continued among Lutherans until at least 1750.⁴⁵

This brings us to a discussion of how Luther's views on ceremony and the Ordering of

⁴³ There is some debate as to whether Luther actually omitted the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Some believe he considered it a part of the *Kyrie* and so did not specifically mention it, assuming its inclusion with the *Kyrie*. This view is supported by Schumann's Hymnbook (1539) which includes the *Deutsche Messe* and includes the *Gloria in Excelsis* in German.

⁴⁴ "We All Believe in One True God" and "Isaiah, Mighty Seer, in Days of Old." These are retained as hymns, but not as parts of the Service proper.

⁴⁵ This was the year of Johann Sebastian Bach's death. Much of the rest of Lutheran orthodoxy that remained until that time died with Bach.

Worship were observed by the Lutherans who came after him, and how this led to the development of the Common Service. One would think that the desire to make no law, and the desire to have as much uniformity of practice would be at odds with one another. This did not prove to be the case. As was shown in the previous paragraph, the Church Orders took Luther's admonition to freely order their Services as they saw fit, and followed it. What they did not like they did not retain. What they liked they retained. Of these Church Orders there are basically three classes: the central saxo-Lutheran Church Orders, which comprise the largest and most influential of the Orders, and are found in central and Northern Germany; the ultra-conservative;⁴⁶ and the mediating or radical.⁴⁷ The central saxo-Lutheran Church Orders were considered by future generations to carry the "greatest weight." These Orders include Luther's *Formula Missae* and his *Deutsche Messe*. The Church Orders of Johannes Bugenhagen, Johannes Brenz, and Justus Jonas are also in this group.⁴⁸ These Orders eventually led to the development of the Common Service. Between the years 1523 and 1555 no fewer than 135 Church Orders appeared. With so many Church Orders one would think that there would be a wide range of forms and ceremonies, however, with only a few minor differences in some places, there is a unity of plan and purpose. Brenz in his Brandenburg-Nuremburg (1533) Church Order focuses on doctrine and the details of the Services, especially the Lord's Supper. Bugenhagen's Orders focus on Church schools, community chests, and the Offices of Matins and Vespers. The Orders were designed as outlines which left the ministers to fill in the blanks from pre-Reformation Missals.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ These Orders sought to retain as much of the pre-Reformation forms and ceremonies. These comprise the fewest number of Church Orders.

⁴⁷ Some of these Church Orders were in Zwinglian and Calvinistic influenced areas; South and West Germany, but mediating or radical does not mean they were part of the radical reformation, but are considered "radical" from a pre-Reformation standpoint. The Roman Church would have considered Luther as radical as M nzer.

⁴⁸ The Swedish Liturgies of Olavus Petri (1531) and Laurentius Petri (1571) would also be considered in this group, but that would be a discussion for another paper.

⁴⁹ This is why one often finds the frustrating rubric, "we retain the previous custom" and then not giving any indication as to what that practice was.

Although Luther desired to make no law about how to order the Mass, and even though he desired that those who he thought were better skilled and talented in this area would take the lead, Luther's Church Orders became the well from which everyone drew. In many cases, Luther's *Formula Missae* is the Order that is followed by the Church Orders of the "greatest weight." Elements of the *Deutsche Messe* that were retained, the ones listed previously, were combined with the structure of the *Formula Missae*. It is not surprising that two of the individuals who would influence many of the other Church Orders of the post-Reformation era, Bugenhagen and Jonas, were enlisted by Luther to help with his German Mass. These two, with Brenz, would provide a unity of form and ceremony within the post-Reformation era Church Orders.

This is why when the time for the development of the Common Service drew near, it was not a matter of a group of men sitting in a room saying, "I like this element," and "I do not like that one" like modern liturgical committees are prone to do. They instead could point out the unity and similarity of Church Orders, and see the pattern that would be used in the Common Service. This is why the Common Service still stands as the superior Order of Service, for it is not a hodgepodge of Orders; it is not a best of, or top ten, of Church Orders, but it is the legitimate descendant of that which was developed by Luther, Bugenhagen, Brenz, and Jonas in a unity of spirit, and has been handed down to us through the centuries. Martin Luther did not need to make any law; Christian freedom produced the Liturgy that we possess today. It remains pure, because at its heart it serves to promote the Gospel; to promote the pure Word of God, and to offer the benefits of the Sacraments to all those who participate in faith, so that they might receive the free gifts of our Triune Lord God. May it continue to do so for generations to come!

Soli Deo Gloria!

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