

WORSHIP AND
OUTREACH:
AN OBSERVABLE
SYNERGY

“The Gospel Goes to Work”

Pastor Aaron L. Christie
9/20/2010

JESU, JUVA!

*For Pastor Doug and Kelly Tomhave and my nieces and nephew:
Your mission labors are loved by the Lord!*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In 1590, the faculty of Jena, Germany in the preface to Chemnitz’s classic *De coena Domini* lamented the literary excesses of their age. “A double calamity has befallen our age in the form of an overabundance of literary production.” The double calamity had two sides to the coin. “In the first place, the frightful maliciousness of the writing wears out most readers, and the pens of many are so contentious that they scarcely understand their own writing – and yet for them to know something is to write about it.” Calamity part deux? “And then add to this evil a second pest, the love of novelty. For the zeal for something new has so blinded the eyes of many that they show their loathing for the writings of great men by simply referring to them as old-fashioned, and they seek out those emerging authors who must be read not on the basis of how well they have written but how recently” (Chemnitz 13).

The double calamity that befell theological publication 400 years ago is even more calamitous today. The theological divide between liberals and conservatives in American Christianity has never been so wide – and it continues to grow. Whole denominations find themselves at war with themselves in the area of worship. Splintered denominational groups publically tolerate each other – and then privately bash each other. Sadly, some of these “contentious pens” have been at work within our synod from time to time. On the other hand, there is also a certain fascination with the new in our circles – new books and music, insights and paradigms. This can be good. And it can be bad. “They seek out those emerging authors who must be read not on the basis of how well they have written but how recently.” This is most certainly true: far too many Luther’s Works volumes are in far too good of shape on our shelves! And Warren probably shouldn’t have left the shelves of Walmart...

Now today an organist from Waukesha, WI presumes to stand before the Seminary and the WELS Ministerium and pontificate on the Scriptures and the first 1,500 years of the Church’s history. Instead of dismissing the Fathers, I hope to impart to you a “new” paper that stands solidly upon old shoulders. What I bring today is nothing new, but the time is ripe in our circles for a renewed determination to put these “golden oldies” into practice in our contemporary setting. As I attempt a fresh presentation of the old, I hope to keep away from contentiousness and warring about words.

The title of the essay assigned to me by the seminary faculty is “*Worship and Outreach: An Observable Synergy.*” This sounds terribly simple. Every one of us worships every weekend. We are certainly FOR worship. Check. A quick trolling through of our synodical alphabet soup (BHM, BWM, LWMS, PSI, etc.) will certainly lead one to the conclusion that we are FOR outreach. Check. Now let’s move on to “generous appetizers” in the commons! But not so fast. We are FOR worship, yet worship attendance in WELS remains obstinately flat at unflattering levels. We are FOR outreach, yet 521 of our congregations (40%) didn’t reach a single adult confirmand last year.

There are two overreactions that one might have to the negative factoids at the end of the last paragraph. Overreaction #1: hunker down under a false application of the theology of the cross. *“People just don’t want to hear the truth these days!”* May I invite you to tell the Lord of the Church something he doesn’t already know? But this is also most certainly true: “All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth” (Col 1:6). The theology of the cross is no theology of defeatism in the face of difficulty! Overreaction #2: engage in a caffeinated preoccupation with finding just the right silver bullet to make God’s kingdom come in power, at least by the publication of the next statistical report. New methods and insights all come with glowing reports of success attached. Soon, however, the newness wears thin and we are forced to face the same old Old Adam. He refuses to be edified by music with a beat just as he refused to be edified by the Lutheran chorales that previously bored him so.¹

The Old Adam is addicted to over-reaction. Elijah under his broom tree (1Kg 19:4) and Simon the Sorcerer seeking greater gifts with cold cash (Acts 8:18) should convince us that we have unlimited potential to overreact to the world around us. What should we do? Continue to preach Christ and expect the worst? Continue to preach Christ and fret that you do it in just the right way? No. Repenting of our unbelief in the gospel’s power would be a great place to begin. Immersing ourselves in the daily remembrance of our baptism provides a much-needed gospel drink. Biting into the Bread of Life is much-needed daily bread. The gospel of Christ – the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through him – was, is, and always will be the cure. The gospel of Christ is always the crux of worship and evangelism issues in the Church of Christ as it ministers in and to the world.

A SYNERGY DEFINED

¹ It is my personal observation that whenever we are under the spell of overreaction #1, we tend to passively withdraw from outreach efforts and actively seek to reprimarize our life of worship. *Why bother reaching out? They won’t believe it anyway. I’m persecuted enough within my own congregation, why paint another target on my back for the world to aim at?* We then gradually begin to look around for a time and place where things were “good” – or at least not awful - for the church: Wittenberg ca. 1530, Leipzig ca. 1725, Synodical Conference ca. 1941, WELS ca. 1978, etc. There is a double danger here. On the one hand, we cease to actively and regularly engage the world with the Word of Truth. On the other hand, we retrench to a time and place that is distinctively out of step with the world in which we live – making engaging the world with the Word progressively more difficult, not more difficult for the Word, but more difficult for us. A logical conclusion of overreaction #1 is a complete cleaving of worship and outreach in our pastoral practice.

It is also my observation that whenever we are under the spell of overreaction #2, we tend to blur the topics of worship and outreach. Baby boomer megachurchism has institutionalized the confusion of worship and evangelism. “There is incredible persuasive power in the witness of a crowd of believers worshipping together. For this reason, the larger your seeker service grows, the greater an evangelistic tool it will become” (Warren 246). No one in WELS will go as synergistically far as Warren. There remains, however, an inherent desire in us to change things, sometimes dramatically, so that we can reach out better. It is quietly hoped that just the right mix of technology, musical variety, and casualness can make our services more outreach oriented. I’ve heard those sentiments literally dozens of times consulting with leadership groups that have attended our WELS Schools of Worship Enrichment. Every single time I follow up with the question: “How many unchurched people have your evangelism visitation teams located who say a worship overhaul will get them off the couch and into a pew?” The answer without exception? Evangelism visitors? A logical conclusion to overreaction #2 is a complete blending of worship and evangelism to the detriment of both. If worship becomes synonymous with evangelism, then a regular, personal evangelism practice can easily languish.

So what is a synergy? Synergy has its root in the Greek *sunergos*—As members of a *synod*, we have a good sense of *synergy's* meaning. Synergy is working together. Webster defines *synergism* as the “interaction of discrete agencies or agents such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects.” Synergism is a sin when it teaches that God and unregenerate man work together for man’s conversion. Synergism is a blessing when it joins various gifts of God into unified action toward a common goal or greater good.²

How strange it is to focus on the individual parts of worship *or* outreach to the exclusion of the other. How odd it is to view either worship or outreach with some suspicion (or at least caution), rather than focus on putting the synergy of worship and outreach to work. On one side of the coin are the issues of worship relating to outreach. Can the Common Service’s old Scottish chant (1762) attract the common American any longer? Can the Western Rite speak to people in the Far East? These are good questions. As for the less-than-good, I have fielded plenty of opinions from dearly-loved brothers on the *catholicness* of a service, the *highchurchliness* of a procession, or the *artsiness* of a musical offering. There is a latent suspicion that some “worship guys” are more interested in how to genuflect properly than reach out to the lost passionately. Some of this, perhaps, is just criticism of some “worship guys” who have been less than pastoral in their tone and approach. Some of this, definitely, comes from our pietistic roots. Can the “worship arm” of Christ’s body be of any real use when it comes to reaching the unchurched?

On the other side of the equation are the issues of outreach relating to worship. We are right to note that the unbeliever can sing a hymn, but he cannot praise his Creator with cleansed lips. The unbeliever can participate in the liturgy, but he cannot offer true and faithful service. Because the unbeliever can only come on Sunday and offer the sacrifice of fools, it is an easy step to deem public worship as the peculiar domain of the churchd NOT the unchurched. Should we then actively design worship to be “outreach friendly?” What about a more “casual” approach to worship that will be more comfortable to the average American? When I discussed the topic of this paper with a dearly-loved, elderly brother (a “worship guy”) he simply said that “worship and outreach aren’t related.” If there is a synergy of worship and outreach, then it is like two rails on a railroad. They end up in the same place someday, but never shall the twain meet here! Can the “outreach arm” of Christ’s body really be a blessing to the Church at worship?

And then the devil wins. He wins by cleaving two great activities of Christ’s Church in the world. The Church at worship and witness becomes the church at worship vs. the church at witness. The worship wars that have wracked the unity and vitality of almost every Christian denomination in our land really are not so much about worship as they are about the relationship of evangelism and worship. What should we DO in worship if we take Jesus’ GO seriously? Inquiring minds and declining churches want to know!

² WELS pastors will easily spot a synergy in homiletical work: *biblical theology* is presented using rules of *human logic and communication*. If a preacher is chronically illogical, unable to be followed by his hearers, we might finally deem our brother “not apt.” God’s Word and the principles of human communication work in synergy for the greater good of communicating the Gospel to the people of God.

What should we do? We should go back to the crux of the issue, the hinge of the worship/outreach synergy, the holy gospel.³ The gospel of Jesus Christ is the holy ground in which both worship and outreach are rooted and from which they spring! Through both, the gospel goes to work in the world: publically in worship and privately at kitchen tables, through fine arts that exhilarate and through personal conversations that clarify, through the Church that worships in the world and through the Church that reaches out into the world. The reverse can also be true. Where two are gathered in a hospital room for Word and sacrament, there is Christ with them in worship. Where two or three hundred are gathered for worship on Easter Sunday and there happens to be found “an unbeliever or someone who does not understand” is it not possible that he may be led to exclaim “God is really among you” (1Co 14:24-25)?⁴

The point? Worship and outreach work together to the greatest possible good: the glorification of God and the salvation of man. Don’t take my word for it. Take the apostle’s Word for it. Romans 15:15-16 is a key passage that opens a window to seeing the synergy of worship and outreach. In it, Paul speaks in priestly/liturgical terms of his missionary task of proclaiming Christ to the nations: “by God’s grace, he is a minister (λειτουργὸν) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a priest (ἱεροουργοῦντα) the gospel of God, so that the offering (προσφορά) of the Gentiles may be acceptable (εὐπρόσδεκτος), sanctified (ἡγιασμένη) by the Holy Spirit” (Wainwright 7). This synergy of worship and outreach, between worship and evangelical witness recurs in the closing doxology of Romans 16:25-27: “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery⁵ hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him-- to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Wainwright 8).

³ “On this article stands all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubt about it. Otherwise everything is lost, and the pope and the devil and whatever opposes us will gain victory and be proved right” (SA II, 5).

⁴ Professor Valleskey taught us the middle road. He articulates the lively synergy of Word and witness that is uniquely ours in confessional Lutheranism. It is time for us to dedicate ourselves to this synergy with much energy! “Lutheran liturgical worship, because it is full of the gospel, offers what people need, not just to grow as Christians but to become Christians. From the opening greeting to the parting blessing the liturgy proclaims the Christ who was born, lived, died, rose, and ascended “for us and for our salvation.” The full reality of full forgiveness is announced in the absolution, the sermon, and the words of institution. The cause of forgiveness, the finished work of Christ, is reviewed in the appointed lessons from the Word. The person of Christ is taught in the songs of the liturgy. It is obvious that the public worship of the church sets a full table of the gospel. And the gospel is what the Holy Spirit uses to convince and convert the lost” (Valleskey 187).

⁵ “Mystery” does not here refer immediately to God’s incomprehensible transcendence, though that – “the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light” – is the infinite horizon of Christian worship (1 Tim. 6:15-16). Mystery here denotes the divine purpose and plan to bring human beings to salvation which has now been brought to light as never before though its embodiment in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son. Christ himself is “the mystery of our religion: manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, take up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). In the Christian liturgical assembly, that mystery is conveyed not only in “the prophetic writings” but also, and more directly, in the apostolic gospel and preaching, as Old and New Testaments are read, expounded, apprehended, and implemented, and in what came to be called “sacraments” (Wainwright 8).

That same ‘mystery’ has been unfolded thousands of times in our circles on legal pads at kitchen tables. God is glorified and man is saved through it! Man’s false dichotomy of worship OR outreach is instead biblically blended by God into worship/outreach synergy. We will be a stronger synod as we forsake old pigeon holes of “worship guys” or “outreach guys” and instead put the two to work in powerful synergy. To paraphrase Psalm 133 to the extreme: “How good it is and how pleasant when musicians and missionaries live in unity and peace!”

Allow me two further clarifications before proceeding. When it comes to *worship*, please be aware that I am using a narrow definition of that word for the remainder of this essay. In doing so, I do not doubt or diminish the fact that the entire life of the believer is an act of worship (Rom 12:1). Nor am I minimizing the major truth that the Confessions teach: “The woman came with this conviction about Christ: that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from him. This is the highest way to worship Christ” (Ap IV, 152). The focus is upon public worship simply because it is the primary point of debate in current worship/witness discussions.

Conversely, I am opting for a broad definition when it comes to the word *outreach*. It has been helpful in WELS circles to observe a theological difference between *outreach or pre-evangelism* and *evangelism*.⁶ This paper will, for the sake of discussing several millennia where this distinction was not always observed, combine both *outreach* and *evangelism* under the heading of *outreach*. For example, the Crusades might have been considered a Christian “outreach” effort by some at the time. They struggled, however, when it came to genuine evangelism work. (A missionary with a mace is perhaps the ultimate *Absetzung* of the gospel!) It is with a narrow definition of worship, and a broad definition of outreach, that we proceed to take a drink from the fountain of Israel.

A SYNERGY PROPHESED

The Prophets Foresee the Conversion of the Nations at the Temple

“Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’” (Mar 11:17)?

Dedication days are magnificent days of celebration. The dedication day of our new sanctuary in Antioch, IL five years ago was perhaps the finest day in my ministry to date.⁷ David hoped to have his own dedication day experience. He had it in his heart to build a temple for the LORD. He even began stockpiling resources for that great effort (1Ch. 22:2-5). The blue prints were done. It was an

⁶ “Some include under the term evangelism ‘the total work of the church as it relates to the proclamation of the gospel.’ This would embrace not just verbal but non-verbal witness, e.g., the appearance of a church’s property or a Christian letting the light of his faith shine by his deeds. While one could conceivably call this evangelism in a very broad sense, it appears to be better to use some other term, e.g., pre-evangelism, to describe such non-verbal witness and to reserve the word evangelism for the verbal proclamation of the good news of salvation. It is the message and the message alone which is ‘the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes’ (Romans 1:16)” (Valleskey 16).

⁷ So much time, research, energy, and prayer-filled effort goes into the building that is dedicated. As we entered a new sanctuary and looked out upon a super-sized crowd, the truth of Grundtvig’s classic hymn was palpable: “Surely in temples made with hands God, the Most High, is not dwelling; High above earth his temple stands, All earthly temples excelling. Yet he who dwells in heav’n above Chooses to live with us in love, Making our bodies his temple” (Christian Worship 529 s.1) I pray that the Lord blesses many of you with a similar experience!

inspiring design, delivered by the inspiration of the Spirit of God (1Ch 28:12). Like Moses of old, David was brought within sight of the finish line but the actual privilege of building would go to another. (David may have been a man after the Lord's own heart, but he was also a man of war.) Instead, great David's great son, Solomon, would be given the privilege of undertaking this great building project. Solomon put his hands to the work with gusto (2Ch 2:5). The one who would make silver as common as stones in Israel saw fit to make gold the building material of choice for God's temple.

As Solomon stood upon his bronze platform to pray his dedication day prayer, he stood at a key point in worship history. Behind him stood half a millennium of sacrificial lambs and scape goats, Passovers and Days of Atonement. Before him stood a golden age of temple worship. He had built "big." When it came time to dedicate the new temple, he took the opportunity pray big. One of Solomon's petitions intersects exactly with the topic at hand: "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm--when he comes and prays toward this temple, ³³ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name" (2Ch 6:32-33).

We are not yet at Matthew 28:18-20, but we certainly see an outreach awareness within the context of temple worship. The temple had a gravitas of *place*. It was *here* that the Lord was pleased to reveal his Name to the nations. It was *here* that sacrifices would be offered and psalms would be sung. It was *here* that foreigners would come. (Later Solomon would marry several hundred too many of them!) They would learn of his Name. They would learn to fear, love, and trust in God above all gods. Here we find a fascinating dichotomy: there is no doubt that the temple was to be the center of *Israel's* worship, yet as this distinctively Israelite house of worship is dedicated the salvation of the nations is prayed for. Israel, especially at worship, was to be a light for the nations.

So what were the major ingredients of Israel's temple worship? What would the people of the nations experience when they went up to Jerusalem? Timothy Maschke divides the worship that revolved around Mt. Zion into three distinct areas:

- 1) "Sacrifices or burnt offerings were made by the people (the Hebrew words *zebach and olah* in, for example, Leviticus 7 and 2 Chronicles 2:4; 31:3)
- 2) Major festivals were celebrated by the people, including Passover (Exodus 12; Numbers 2 and 28; Deuteronomy 16; Ezra 6:19) and the Day of Atonement (Exodus 30; Number 29; Leviticus 23). During these occasions, the people or priests presented sacrifices (Leviticus 4-9), offered incense (Exodus 30 and 40), and pronounced blessings (Numbers 6:23-26)
- 3) Public prayers and praises were offered that expressed the people's love and gratitude to God" (Deuteronomy 11:13) (Maschke 28).

Edersheim articulates the theological thread that binds temple worship together. He discusses sacrifices in particular, but what he says about the sacrifices really covers the entire *Christocentric core* of the worship of those who eagerly waited for Israel's redemption:

The fundamental idea of sacrifice in the Old Testament is that of substitution, which again seems to imply everything else – atonement and redemption, vicarious punishment and forgiveness. The firstfruits go for the whole products; the firstlings for the flock; the redemption-money for that which cannot be offered; and the life of the sacrifice, which is in its blood (Lev 17:11), for the life of the sacrificer ... Such sacrifices, however, necessarily pointed to a mediatorial priesthood... In short, all this was symbolical (of man's need, God's mercy, and His covenant), and typical, till He should come to whom it all pointed, and who had all along given reality to it; He whose Priesthood was perfect, and who on a perfect altar brought a perfect sacrifice, once for all – a perfect Substitute, and a perfect Mediator (Heb 10:1-24) (Edersheim 76).⁸

In our “causal” culture, rites and rituals are often dirty words, but not in God’s vocabulary. It was he, after all, who both chaired and comprised the original commission on worship. The LORD’s ceremonies were intended to be visible, audible, tactile and edible testimonies of Christ. Christ was “hidden” in the rites and rituals of the temple. All these worship rites and rituals were in reality shadows of redemption in Christ (Col 2:16).⁹ Levi’s priests could only point to their own insufficiency and point ahead to the One who ministers for us day and night in the true tabernacle (Heb 8:2). The temple was designed by the Lord to glorify God and promote the salvation of man – Jew and Gentile alike.

⁸ What follows is a brief summary of the various sacrifices gleaned from Edersheim’s *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*. Chapter 6, “The Burnt-Offering, the Sin- and Tresspass-Offering, and the Peace-Offering” is most helpful.

עֹלָה - There was the *Olah*. Ederheim writes “The derivation of the term Olah, as wholly ‘ascending’ unto God, indicates alike the mode of the sacrifice and its meaning. It symbolized the entire surrender unto God” (93). The *Olah* was the regular morning and evening sacrifice. It was also offered with other sacrifices on Sabbaths and other festivals. The *Olah* was always a male animal without defect. (Second best has never been particularly impressive to Almighty God!) After removing the inner parts, the entire sacrificial victim was consumed by the fire. Interestingly, the burnt-offering was the only sacrifice which non-Israelites were allowed to bring. Emperor Augustus daily sacrificed two lambs and a bull; “and ever afterwards this sacrifice was regarded as indicating that the Jewish nation recognized the Roman emperor as their ruler” (94).

חֵטְאֵת - The *sin-offering* was the most important of the sacrifices. It was offered to make atonement for the *person* instead of the *trespass offering* which was to make atonement for a special offense “The trespass-offering may be regarded as representing ransom for a special wrong, while the sin-offering symbolized general redemption” (Edersheim 94).

הֶאֱשָׁמֶה - The *trespass-offering* or *guilt offering* was provided “for certain transgressions committed through ignorance, or else, according to Jewish tradition, where a man afterwards voluntarily confessed himself guilty” (Edersheim 98).

לֶזְבַח שְׁלָמִים - The *peace offering* or *fellowship offering* always followed the other sacrifices and was known as the “offering of completion.” “This was indeed, a season of happy fellowship with the Covenant God, in which he condescended to become Israel’s Guest at the sacrificial meal. Even as He was always their Host” (Edersheim 99). “In peace-offerings the sacrificial meal was the point of main importance... It is this sacrifice which is so frequently referred to in the Book of Psalms as the grateful homage of a soul justified and accepted before God (Ps. 51:17; 54:6; 56:12; 116:17, 18)” (Edersheim 99). The peace offering is a prelude to the ongoing offering of praise that God’s people offer him for Christ. “Thus *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus*, 9.7, declares that in the age to come all sacrifices would cease, except the offering of thanksgiving. So, after Christ’s great sacrifice of atonement, the church has no sacrifice to bring to God the Father except the sacrifice of praise” (Kleining 173).

⁹ Instead of rites and rituals being a rote performance of vain repetitions, the confessions rightly note, “all ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ” (AC XXIV, 2-3).

Solomon built and prayed big. He prayed for the synergy of worship and outreach – knowing that the *goiim* would come to Jerusalem and come to faith in the LORD. Sadly, the golden age of temple worship would fall far short of the עולמים that Solomon prayed for. His descendents would learn the hard way that the Mosaic Covenant was a *conditional* covenant (1Kg 9:6-9). Rites and rituals without faith in Messiah could not please the One who desired mercy and acknowledgment of God rather than sacrifice and burnt offerings. An Asherah pole in the temple courts was simply not part of God’s covenantal plans (2Kg 21:7). (With an Asherah pole in the temple courts, one winces to think what was happening in the store rooms, stables, and back alleys of Jerusalem.) Babylonians would batter down the gates of Jerusalem and the temple. The glory of the Lord would quietly take its leave for it cannot remain where righteousness does not rule. The glorious place of burnt offerings would itself become a raging holocaust, not as an offering of faith, but as a smoking symbol of a people’s apostasy and a smoldering object of God’s wrath!

Yet it was this very temple, eventually rejected by the Israelites, that the Prophets used to preach a synergy of outreach and worship. When we think of the relationship of the Prophets with the nations, we usually think of fire and brimstone long before we think of faith in God and fellowship with his people. Isaiah knew how to thunder the law against the nations. According to his Word of law, God will scatter, plunder, and pillage the nations – Israel included.¹⁰

What an amazing demonstration of gospel grace, then, to see precisely the opposite also prophesied! “The mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it” (Isa 2:2). “Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths’” (Mic 4:2). The result of this teaching? “...the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). The scattered will stream into the temple. The plundered will offer their offerings. The pillaged will present their gold: “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the arm. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD” (Isa 60:3-6). The riches of the nations will make Solomon’s gold look common in comparison. All of which pales in comparison to the riches of God’s grace that is found in Messiah: “It is too *small* a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6).¹¹

¹⁰ Babylon will be overthrown by God just like Sodom and Gomorrah of old (Isa 13:19). The Assyrians would be crushed and trampled on Israel’s mountains (Isa 14:25). The Philistines are invited to “Wail...! Howl...! and Melt away...!” (Isa 14:31). Incestuous Moab is wished “a lion upon her fugitives” (Isa 15:9). Isaiah does not spare Damascus, Cush, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, or Tyre either. To make certain that no nation is left out of a brush with God’s wrath, Isaiah condemns the earth itself “See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants... The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word” (Isa 24:1-3). Thus far the law.

¹¹ August Pieper summarizes the mission message of God’s prophets – a mission message often dressed in the language of temple worship: “The Servant is to accomplish more than just the deliverance of Israel. The Lord made Him to be a

While the world labored on in obscurity in far away corners and continents, the Lord was preparing a rich banquet of food - the entry payable only with money without cost - for the peoples of the earth. Unknown to them, God was prophesying their redemption and planning for that day when the time would fully come for Jesse's Branch to spring up in real flesh and blood!

A SYNERGY ENACTED

Apostolic patterns and influence

"All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing..." (Col 1:6)

Dedication days are great days of celebration. Great David's *greater* Son had an even larger part to play in the dedication of a new temple, no, the dedication of a New Covenant. The foundation would be laid that very night as body and blood were distributed to be eaten and drank for the forgiveness of sins for the very first time. On the night he was betrayed, the Son of God and the Son of Man could look back on an Old Covenant overthrown by paganism, ossified by ritualism, and contorted by legalism. As he looked at Jerusalem and the beautiful stones of Temple Mount, he could only weep. Before Jesus, however, there stretched a New Covenant completed and a whole new way of worship that would overthrow pagan establishments! To that amazing end, Christ our Great High Priest begins by praying for the glory of the Father:

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (Jn 17:1).¹²

Jesus then prays for his disciples and their up-coming apostolic activity:

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (Jn 17:18).¹³

Light unto the Gentiles to bring His salvation to the ends of the earth. This is that mighty prophecy, already contained in Noah's blessing, in the promise to Abraham, and which was confirmed to David and Solomon, repeated and expanded by nearly every prophet, but especially by Isaiah, that the Gentiles should be received into the kingdom of God. This prophecy is the basis of the mission command of the risen Savior (Matt. 28; Mark 16) who gave His gospel to us of the Gentile world. This is the promise in which Paul found support for his mission and on which he based his majestic hymn, the Epistle to the Ephesians" (Pieper 360).

¹² "How did this glorification take place? In no other way than that the Father again raised Him from the dead, cast the devil beneath His feet, and made Him King and Lord over all creatures, and caused this to be shouted forth publicly through the Gospel, to make it known in all the world. For just as it happened once on Easter, so it must be preached continually until the end of the world and made known to children and children's children." (Luther, *The Seventeenth Chapter of St. John, on the Prayer of Christ*, 22).

¹³ "I kept them corporeally with Me long enough after I had brought them together and engrafted the Word in them that it took root and remained, yet I did it with the intention that through them it should advance farther and be spread throughout the world... But now it is time for Me to return to You, take possession of My kingdom, and through them extend it and press the Word forward into all the world. For this reason I commend them to You, and for this reason also I come to You, so that through Your Holy Spirit and divine power You might strengthen and keep them" (Luther 82).

Jesus, the Lord of the Church, prays for all of his people of all time:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message” (Jn 17:20).¹⁴

Jesus was mission-minded on that very night that he blessed us with the Supper that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions! The synergy of worship and outreach receives both its energy and end (*terminus*) in Jesus. The synergy of worship and outreach would be put into motion most powerfully in the immediate future. Jesus would offer up his life unto death the very next day. Angelic messengers would preach a short but shocking sermon from a damp, stony pulpit: “He is risen!” The disciples would feel the breath of Jesus’ peace. They would receive Jesus’ great gospel commissioning along with the keys, not to a new chariot, but to the kingdom. They would see the Son of God ascend to where he was before. And then they would wait... Their waiting came to a windy, fiery, linguistically-charged end on the Day of Pentecost just ten days later. The rest of Acts, and most of the New Testament, is the story of a *synergy enacted*. We will take a large portion of our time to note several apostolic patterns and influences on worship and outreach.

The Gospel Goes Out To the World

There is an inherent tension in the early days of Christianity. Jesus was born a Jew, in an empire that was Roman, but in a culture that was generally Greek in its leanings. The political will and rule of Rome was absolute, but the parts of the Empire varied. What else could one expect for an empire that stretched from the mists of Scotland to Ur of the Chaldeans with roughly one-third of the world’s population living within its shadow?

Christianity was at first seen as a sect of Judaism for obvious reasons. One does not sense that men of Pontius Pilate’s ilk were terribly interested in getting to the nuances of difference between the two. But if Christianity was at odds with the Judaism from which it sprang, how far removed was Christianity from the paganism that it would eventually conquer? Christianity was surrounded by a panoply of polytheism. The majority of the Mediterranean’s gods remained.¹⁵ Rome was not so much interested in ruling men’s hearts as it was interested in ruling people’s affairs and pocketbooks.

¹⁴ “We might well inscribe this text in letters of pure gold, as one that refers to us in particular. For all that He had said before might still sound as if He had only His apostles in mind, even though He had indicated that it was to extend further when He said, “As You sent Me into the world, so I am sending them into the world” [John 17:18] Yet so that a fainthearted conscience might not have any occasion to doubt and say, “To be sure, He prayed for the apostles and the Jews (to whom they were sent); but where does that leave me? Therefore, He anticipates this question and so names and includes us Gentiles as well and embraces all Christendom until the Last Day in the prayer, so that it extends throughout the whole world, wherever the apostle’s Word and preaching reaches and is received in faith, no place or person excluded. This is our confidence and comfort, treasure and jewel. For us Gentiles there is surely no more comforting passage in Scriptures than this one” (Luther 101-102).

¹⁵ The gods remained, but by the time of Christ their daily influence on peoples’ lives were on the wane. Nature abhors a vacuum, however. The so-called “mystery religions” sprang up from eastern soil. Little is known about these mystery cults, precisely because much of their worship was secret. What bits and pieces we do know are certainly colorful. There was, for instance, the Magna Mater cult where followers would emasculate themselves at the climax of a wild dance. Later they would bathe in the blood of a bull as a symbol of rebirth (Latourette 25). The appeal of mystery religions lay in their quest for immortality and the sense of community and brotherhood they provided for many uprooted people.

The God who later saved the Lutheran Reformation by a great sense of timing with the Turks showed himself the masterful Lord of History in the early spread of Christianity. There were several things working in the early church's favor. For the first time in world history, there was a wide-spread and enduring political unity. Paul's Roman citizenship, for example, was something that he put to good use for the gospel. The *Pax Romana* provided for relatively safe travel by land and sea. The gospel traveled on *Roman* roads. There was the gift of common languages. We hear of many different languages in Acts 2, but the gospel could be heard in Greek all the way to Gaul in the first century. Latourette also notes a general "religious and moral hunger which characterized much of the populace of the basin of the Mediterranean" (22). Finally, while millions of people lived in slavery and want, the message of Christianity – where old categories of slave and free cease to exist (Col 3:11) – struck a deep and profound chord. It was a "new" faith that turned things (slaves) into people (sons)!

It was into this complex yet coherent world that Jesus sent out his apostles as his witnesses "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The rock of the gospel was thrown into the pond at Jerusalem. It rippled out into the world in ever wider waves. While a detailed commentary on the Acts of the Apostles is beyond the scope of this paper, the following summary of the gospel's progress in the Roman Empire is entrusted to you for future reference.

Extent of Activity	References in Acts	Specific Details
Jerusalem	1 – 6:7	Pentecost, the outbreak of persecution
Palestine and Samaria	6:8 – 9:31	Samaria, Jaffa, Caesarea, Ethiopian Eunuch
Antioch (Syria)	9:32 – 12:24	Raising of Dorcas, Cornelius and Peter, Peter's dream, first called Christians in Antioch, Peter's miraculous escape
Asia Minor	12:25 – 16:5	First Missionary Journey: Cyprus and southern Galatia
Europe (Greece)	16:6 – 19:20	Second Missionary Journey: Asia Minor, Troas, Macedonia, and Greece.
Rome	19:21 – 28:31	Third Journey: Province of Asia especially Ephesus, finally Rome. The gospel has now gone to the center of the then-known world.

The first half of Acts features a synergy of worship and outreach with a distinctively Jewish flavor. Acts 2 paints a picture of a church that is zealous for worship and outreach, yet still centered in Jerusalem around the temple courts: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,"⁴⁷

praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42, 46-47). The rest of the Book of Acts will be a flowering of this worship/outreach seed. This seed took root and sprang up so powerfully that we even hear of a large number of priests who became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).

Because the Word of the Lord was on the grow and on the go, it does not surprise us to read of prison and persecution, flogging and stoning (Acts 5-6). Jesus had prayed about this too on the night he was betrayed: “And the world *hates* them...” (Jn 17:14).¹⁶ The outreach efforts of the Apostles faced steady opposition. Would we have expected Satan to do otherwise?

On the Jewish side of the equation, the major stumbling block was Jesus’ *person*. He claims to be I AM before Abraham, one with the Father, yet dies under the curse of God on a tree? (Green 31). This is blasphemy to Jewish ears without the aid of the Spirit’s enlightenment. Then there was the matter of the temple and its worship. Stephen notes that Solomon built a *house*, but that “the Most High does not live in houses made by men...” (Acts 7:47-48). Finally, there was the issue of the Law of Moses and what roll it was to play in the plan of salvation. When it came to the Jews, the object of Christian worship, Christ, and the place of Christian worship, non-temple were cherished reasons to remain hard-hearted and stiff-necked.¹⁷

The Gentiles would also find their own reasons to remain pagan. The Romans were generally tolerant of other nation’s gods. They simply tended to equate foreign gods with gods in their own deck of deities (Zeus/Jupiter, etc.). The Romans, however, did hold to a distinction between belief (a private matter) and worship (a public matter). Good Romans were expected to participate in the state cult whether they truly believed in the gods or not (Green 35).¹⁸ The peace and security of the state depended upon it!¹⁹ Christianity had two major problems in this Roman view of religion: 1) Christianity was not an ancient *national religion*, a *religio* in the Roman way of thinking. It was a

¹⁶ “This is our title and the true livery of Christians that we wear on earth. If you are a disciple of the Lord Christ and hold His Word dear, do not be ashamed to bear this epithet on earth for His sake, and cheerfully accept that you must have the world as your enemy.” (Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 17-20*, 85). Simply put: “Where the devil builds a church, the devil builds a chapel next door” (Luther).

¹⁷ Green comments on the ultimate division between synagogue and Christianity: “...Judaism was a *religio licita*. They were a nation whose right to its worship was recognized at Rome. Why should they tolerate Christians spreading heresy under their auspices? Why should their hard-won protection be extended to these miscreants who were no nation but rather a mixed bag of renegade Jews and credulous Gentiles? Had they lifted a finger to help the national cause of Israel in the dark days of the Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70) or of the Great Rebellion under Hadrian? No. Then they would utterly disown the Christians. Indeed, they would denounce them in their public worship. The split between the Church and the Synagogue had become complete.” (Green 34)

¹⁸ “Plato, in the fourth century B.C., when arguing for theism, says to his young agnostic friend, ‘I can tell you that no one who has taken up in youth the opinion that the gods do not exist ever continued in the same till he was old,’ and counsels him meanwhile, though still an agnostic, to make sure that he offers sacrifice and prayer and to beware of committing any impiety against the gods!” (Green 35) Things have not changed in the last 2,000 years. How many of us have met a non-member father who was insistent upon a “Christian” education for his child? “I want my son to have some morals!” *Fides quae creditur* is dismissed. That Johnny learns to DO the right thing is of paramount importance.

¹⁹ It seems as if the Church of Rome’s propensity for *ex opera operato* rites and ceremonies comes naturally.

superstitio.²⁰ 2) Christianity opted out of the official Roman cult of the emperor. This was treason and was often treated as such in the great persecutions that would pepper the first 300 years of Christian history.²¹

There were also societal reasons for Gentiles to reject Christianity; it was simply too upsetting to a distinctively Roman way of life on the home front!²² Now mix in a little bit of social snobbery: Christianity was a fool's religion for slaves and women. Add a dash of societal peer-pressure: the Roman guilds and "clubs" were rank with idolatry and fornication. It would have been terribly difficult to be a tradesman and a Christian at the same time. Finally, Christianity was deficient of chronological gravitas. The Romans loved their antiquity! The average Roman of any standing would quickly pan Christianity as a religion for the "kook fringe" of the empire. The cross was foolishness to those who were perishing and none more so than the Romans. Green summarizes the Apostle's situation well:

At whatever level in society it was attempted, evangelism in the early church was a very daunting undertaking. It was a task involving social odium, political danger, the charge of treachery to the gods and the state, the insinuation of horrible cries and calculated opposition from a combination of sources more powerful, perhaps, than at any time since (Green 47).

If we were alive in 50 A.D., we would not have expected Christianity to survive. In spite of the tremendous opposition of the devil, the Roman world, and apostolic (yet still sinful!) flesh, the gospel powered synergy of worship and outreach made steady inroads into Roman society. Apostolic patterns of outreach began to emerge.

²⁰ "(Christianity) could not be described as a link binding any particular nation to the gods. For Christianity was a faith which embraced men of all races and backgrounds, barbarian as well as civilized. It was a *superstitio*, private belief, coming from none too savoury a quarter at that; it must be judged, like other *superstitiones*, on its merits" (Green 35-36).

²¹ The most important religion in the story of Christianity's early years was the cult of the emperor. Imported by Caesar Augustus from the East, it was the ultimate "In God We Trust" civic religion. Latourette notes that "It called forth little personal devotion. However, it was regarded as a safeguard of law and order and important for the preservation and prosperity of the realm. Dissent from it might well be interpreted as treasonable and anarchistic" (24). When later Christians refused to offer a pinch of incense to the emperor they placed themselves into a terrible catch twenty-two: shall I be guilty of treason against God or treason against the emperor? The fire of hell in the future or the fire of torture in the present was a choice that many Christians had to make.

²² The always-colorful Tertullian illustrates the terrible situation that many Christians, particularly women, found themselves in: "On all the memorial days of demons...she will be agitated by the smell of incense. And she will have to go out by a gate wreathed with laurel and hung with lanterns, as from some new consistory of public lusts; she will often have to sit with her husband in club meetings and taverns. What husband will put up with her Christian work and worship? If there is a morning service to be attended, her husband makes an appointment to meet his wife at daybreak at the baths. If there is a fast to be observed, the husband that same day arranges a supper party. If a charitable journey has to be made, never is family business more pressing. For who would allow his wife, on the pretext of visiting the brethren, to go round from street to street to other men's homes, and, worst of all, to the poorer cottages? Who will willingly put up with her being away from his bed at nightly meetings? Who will, without anxiety, endure her absence all night long at the Easter Vigil? Who will, without suspicion, send her off to attend the Lord's Supper of which so many defamatory things are said? Who will allow her to creep into prison to kiss a martyr's bonds? Who will allow her to meet any of the brethren to exchange the kiss" (Tertullian *Ad Uxorem*, 2.6 and 5. Quoted in Green 41)?

To the Jews, Paul became as a Jew. In freedom, he could circumcise Timothy and participate in a rite of purification (Acts 21:26), and yet refuse to circumcise Titus when the freedom of the gospel was at stake (Gal 2:3). The cornerstone of outreach to the Jews, not surprisingly, was the appeal to the prophetic Scriptures. They are the Scriptures that testified about Christ and were fulfilled by Christ (Lk 24:44-45)! Whether before the Sanhedrin or synagogue, in a centurion's home or a eunuch's chariot, the prophetic Scriptures were preached and Christ – hidden in them – was clearly revealed to them!²³ Jesus Christ was clearly proclaimed as Israel's ultimate prophet, priest, and king. A pastoral willingness to continue observing Jewish religious customs (when permissible) combined with an apostolic zeal to preach the Word of Truth was the worship/outreach synergy that won the day for so many Jewish hearts.²⁴

But the question remains, how was the gospel brought to the Gentile nations? Paul and his companions preached solid law and gospel content²⁵ in any number of *public* venues. The gospel went to work in both the synagogues and the market places of the empire.²⁶ The faith was publicly proclaimed through “teaching evangelism.”²⁷ One can only wonder how far the faith was spread through St. Paul taking over the lecture hall of Tyrannus for three years in influential Ephesus (Acts 19:9)! The “public option” was often opted for in the early days of the church. This would gradually change as the fires of persecution grew hotter.

²³ Concordist Jacob Andreae knew that a one could preach and teach Christ using only the Old Testament as this unsavory episode clearly demonstrates: “A Jew by the name of Ansteet was sentenced to die by hanging from his feet. His crime - robbery. Roman Catholic priests were present at the hanging, attempting to convert the Jew to the Christian faith. He stubbornly refused, so two dogs were hung by their feet, one on either side of him. They began to assuage their pain by snapping at the Jew, biting off his ears and gnawing at his elbows. He begged for mercy but the priests admonished him to believe in Jesus. He refused. Finally Andreae was summoned from the crowd of onlookers to try his skill at converting the condemned man. At first Andreae refused since he felt the priests had sufficiently and correctly enough preached Christ to the Jew. But at the insistence of his friends he relented. He preached Jesus Christ to him but did so restricting himself entirely to the Old Testament. This method met with success and the Jew asked to receive Christian baptism. He was baptized while hanging in the upside-down position, confessing Jesus as Messiah. Then he was hung properly by the neck and so died saved, as all hoped, by his faith in the Lord Jesus” (Jungkuntz 24).

²⁴ “In the early days, however, before the War of A.D. 66, and even more so, presumably, before the Antiochene church began to preach with such startling results to non-Jews, the gospel did make considerable headway among the Jews of Jerusalem, Syria, Egypt and Rome” (Green 108).

²⁵ Green notes a consistency of message that flows through Paul's sermons in Acts: “These were an attack on idolatry, a proclamation of the one true God, and the moral implications that flow from this” (Green 125). Whether in backward Lystra or cosmopolitan Athens, the call went out to turn from “worthless things” (Acts 14:15) and an “Unknown god” to the One who created heaven and earth who raised his Son from the dead (gospel).

²⁶ “Irenaeus was accustomed to preaching the market places not only of the city of Lugdunum but also of the market towns and villages round about. Cyprian even dared the authorities to arrest him as he preached in the market place during a period of persecution” (Green 197).

²⁷ Green notes that “both in rabbinic Judaism and in early Christianity there was no such clear-cut distinction between the work of the evangelist and the teacher. This is, in fact, apparent throughout the period from St. Paul to Origen. Both of them evangelized through teaching in the Christian faith. Origen's school at Alexandria was originally intended to inculcate basic Christian teaching. At the age of eighteen he was already leading this school ‘for elementary instruction in the faith’” (Eusebius, *H. E.* 6.4. Quoted in Green 204).

The faith was spread through the dissemination of *literature*. Some of this literature was literally inspired. The gospel accounts themselves were written “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:31). A century later, the Apologists would be writing literary defenses of the Christian faith in an age where misinformation and ridicule ruled the day. Sadly, the literary tone of the Apologists, scorn and ridicule, were often at odds with tone of the gospel. Green’s appraisal of the Apologists’ work is worth remembering: “To launch a full-scale and at times bitter assault on a man’s cherished beliefs is not the best way of inducing him to change them” (Green 233).

Personally, the gospel went out from door to door. Houses weren’t canvassed; instead they became a hub of outreach activity. The privacy of homes provided a “safe” environment for deep discussion without the interference of hecklers. It would have been a more relaxed atmosphere that would allow Christian love and hospitality to flower. The homes of Christians were alive with the gospel in Acts: Jason, Titus Justus, Philip, Cornelius, Lydia, the Jailer at Philippi, Stephanas, etc. (Green 208). It is important to remember that the “household” of the empire was a complex institution. The *Pater familias* led a large body of blood relation, household servants, friends, and even business partners (Green 209). The personal homes and lives of Christians would become increasingly more important in reaching out as the age of persecution made public outreach more dangerous.²⁸

The gospel was going to work, most powerfully, though personal witness and Christian example in life and in death.²⁹

The World Gathers Around the Gospel³⁰

²⁸ Aspirants to Christianity in the second century expressed interest in the church due to various influences. In Justin’s case, a combination of study, conversation and martyrs inspired him (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 3-8). But Christianity probably spread best by word of mouth (Turner 18).

²⁹ In life: A bit of graffiti dating from the third century has been discovered in the quarters of the Imperial Pages on the Palatine Hill in Rome. The etching on the wall shows a person kneeling down and saluting a man on a cross – a man with an ass’s head. The words next to the picture state what some Imperial Pages thought about Christianity: “Alexamenos worships his god.” Here in the epicenter of Roman power young Alexamenos was known, and ridiculed, for his Christian faith. What is written next to the ridicule makes one choke up: “Alexamenos is faithful.” Whether that was written as an *apologia* by Alexamenos himself or if it is the testimony of a faith-filled friend, we do not know (Green 174). What we do know is that the boy Alexamenos was in the world, but not of the world. This shouldn’t surprise us, because the gospel was going to work in the world!

In death: “Blandina was full of such courage that her torturers fell exhausted from their exertions and did not know what else they could do to her. They could not believe that she still breathed, even though she was full of gaping wounds and her body was a mangled mess. They thought that one of their tortures would have been enough to kill her and could not understand how she had survived. Ignoring her great sufferings Blandina still uttered the words, at the end of the day, “I am a Christian. I have done nothing to be ashamed of” (*Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs*, 138).

³⁰ “Thus we come upon the term which in the New Testament expresses what we today, in a special sense of the word, call “service” or “worship” (*Gottesdienst*). Among the New Testament terms, “to be assembled in the name of Jesus” (*synagethai* - □□□□□□□□; cf. Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4; in the same meaning Acts 4:31; 20:7 f.; and others) of “to convene in the *ekklesia* or as *ekklesia*” (*synerchesthai* – □□□□□□□□; cf. 1 Cor. 11:18, 20; 14:23; in the same meaning 11:17, 33, 34; 14:26) reproduces the common meaning of our word “worship” most aptly. At all events, “worship” is the essential event in those gatherings of the Christians. Therefore the worship with which our investigation deals is *ekklesia* – assembly” (Brunner 18).

The break between Christianity and the synagogue would come slowly over the course of the Church's first generation. The break between Christianity and temple would be violent and total with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Outreach in the marketplace was spotty depending upon the whim and convictions of civic leaders. Outreach in the marketplace became deadly during the great empire-wide persecutions in the last half of the third century.³¹ The common course of worship and outreach tended steadily toward the home – personal evangelism and house church.³²

The kernel of the Christian worship rite can already be seen in Acts itself. “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).³³ This early Christian worship happened in the courts of the temple. It spilled over into synagogues. It became enshrined in the house church model. Christian worship was something completely new that unleashed the power of the gospel in the world!

We obviously don't have an altar book or *Christian Worship: Manual for The Ev. Lutheran Church of the Holy Apostles, Jerusalem*. What we do have is the outline of the synagogue service that the church adapted for Christian use from the earliest days of worship. (See Appendix) This was especially so of those churches that had sprung up in areas of Jewish influence. Brunner notes the early form of the Christian service:

Literally, its basic lines are recognizable to us already in Justin in the middle of the second century.³⁴ Its roots in the apostolic congregations can hardly be questioned... If any form of worship may lay claim to ecumenical character, it is the one in which

³¹ Aland notes that the first wave of empire-wide persecution broke out in 250 under the emperors Decian and Valerian. It happened as part of the “festivities” leading up to the 1000th anniversary of the founding of Rome when national pride and “old-time religion” were at a height. This great persecution was officially ended in 260. After forty years of relative calm, the greatest and most violent persecution of Christians began under Diocletian in 303 and lasted almost a decade (Aland 75).

³² “It was not that the church did not desire converts; she was ardently missionary to all who would hear, as Jews and pagans were quick to complain... They were confined to the announcing of the Christian message by the reading of the scriptures and oral instruction, and then all who were not already of the ‘laity’ by baptism and confirmation – even those who were already convinced of the truth of the gospel but had not yet received those sacraments – were invariably turned out before prayer of any kind was offered, let alone the eucharist. Thus Christianity was able to dispense with the erection of any sort of special buildings for its worship for at least a century and a half, and centered itself instead in those ‘house-churches’ which meet us everywhere in the N. T. and the 2nd century” (Dix 17-18).

³³ 1800 years later Wilhelm Loehe would draw attention to the four major components of public worship in the passage: God speaks (“doctrine”); God acts (“breaking of bread” – Holy Communion); the Church speaks (“prayers”); and the Church acts (“fellowship” – sharing, offerings). The Church's speaking and acting is, of course, in response to God's Gospel words and works (Marquart 81).

³⁴ “On the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president urges and incites us in a discourse to imitate these noble things. Then we stand up together and offer prayers. After prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly offers up prayers and thanksgiving to the best of his ability. The congregation assents, saying the Amen. The distribution and reception of the consecrated elements by each one takes place and they are sent to those who are absent by the deacons” (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Petry 22).

the following basic order is observed: After an introductory invocation, God's Word is presented to the congregation by the reading of Scripture and by the sermon; the congregation submits its petitions to God; it collects the thank offerings; and amid thanksgiving it celebrates the Lord's Supper. (Brunner 234).

The basic structure of the Apostolic service was two fold: *synaxis* (Greek for "gathering")³⁵ and *Eucharist* ("thanksgiving"). We would call this a Service of Word and Sacrament. "These were separate things, which had a different origin. The synaxis was in its Shape simply a continuation of the Jewish synagogue service of our Lord's time, which was carried straight over into the Christian church by its Jewish nucleus in the decade after the passion" (Dix 36). The Lord's Supper was, of course, the distinguishing mark of distinctly Christian worship. Its roots were in the Passover celebration on the night our Lord was betrayed.³⁶ One curious note about the early celebration of *synaxis* and *Eucharist* is that they could be celebrated separate from each other, although this was not the rule.³⁷

So what was the basic rite of the Christian synaxis? It will look and feel very much like page 38 in the front of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. What is surprising is how stable the *synaxis* was throughout the church's early years in all areas of the empire. Dix calls what follows "The original unchanging outline of the Christian synaxis everywhere..." (Dix 38).

- 1) Greeting by the officiant and reply of the church "The Lord be with you", or "Peace be unto you"
- 2) Lesson
- 3) Psalmody³⁸
- 4) Lesson (or Lessons, separated by Psalmody).³⁹

³⁵ "We are confronted with a very significant fact. Not any of the terms used by the Greeks or those used in the Old Testament for the specific adoration of the Godhead in the worship service is able to express the experience of Christians assembled for worship. What happens in this worship of Christians is manifestly something radically new" (Brunner 17).

³⁶ The development of the various rites for Holy Communion are a story much longer, detailed and varied across the empire. Their story is simply beyond the scope of this paper.

³⁷ "Originally synaxis and eucharist were separable, and either could be and frequently was held without each other. It happens that our earliest account of Christian worship in any detail, in S. Justin's *Apology* (c. A.D. 155), describes the the eucharist twice over. Once (67) it is preceded by the synaxis, and once (65) it is preceded only by the conferring of baptism. The next earliest witness, S. Hippolytus, in his *Apostolic Tradition* (c. A.D. 215) also describes the eucharist twice, once preceded by the consecration of a bishop (ii. And iii.) and once preceded by baptism and confirmation (xxi. And xxii.), but in neither case accompanied by the synaxis. In the fourth century they were still distinct and easily separable...From the fourth century onwards the two were gradually fused, until they came everywhere to be considered inseparable parts of a single rite" (Dix 36-37).

³⁸ Dignity and attractiveness were given to this musical side of the service by entrusting much of it to special singers who sang elaborate solos. But the corporate nature of the rite was not lost sight of, and a part was usually reserved for the whole congregation to join as chorus in a simple refrain. Until the fourth century the psalmody appears always to have been in this form in the church, elaborate solo and simple chorus, and never, as it is usually with us, by two alternating choruses. The earlier Christian form was that which had been employed in the synagogue, where the signal for the people's refrain was the cantor's cry 'Hallelujah', whence the 'Alleluias' still found in the gradual at the liturgy" (Dix 39-40).

- 5) Sermon⁴⁰
- 6) Dismissal of those who did not belong to the church⁴¹
- 7) Prayers
- 8) Dismissal of the church
- 9) On occasions a collection for the poor, the expenses of the church, etc., was made.

In item number six we see a pastoral decision that was going to be an issue in worship/outreach synergy throughout the first three centuries of the church. St. Paul seems to assume that unbelievers will be part of Christian worship assemblies (1Co 14:23). Later, as persecution began to impact local congregational life more dramatically, even the “hearers” of the Word would be scrutinized before being allowed admittance to even the Christian synaxis.⁴² Communion was always closed except to the communicant members of the congregation.

Dix sums up the interesting tension that was inherent in the early churches:

We regard Christian worship in general, not excluding the eucharist, as essentially a *public* activity, in the sense that it ought to be open to all comers, and that the stranger...ought to be welcomed and even attracted to be present and to take part. The apostolic and primitive church, on the contrary, regarded all Christian worship, and especially the Eucharist, as a highly *private* activity, and rigidly excluded all strangers from taking a part in it whatsoever, and even from attendance at the Eucharist. Christian worship was intensely corporate, but it was not ‘public’ (Dix 16).⁴³

³⁹ “In large gatherings at least, if not always, the lessons were chanted to a simple inflection rather than read. This was partly in order to secure that they should be heard distinctly, and partly to give them solemnity as the Word of God to the church, and through the church to the world. This custom also had been known in the Jewish synagogues...” (Dix 39).

⁴⁰ “He (the bishop) preaches therefore, in his official capacity, *sitting* upon the throne behind the altar which was his ‘teacher’s chair’, as the representative of God revealing Himself to the world” (Dix 41).

⁴¹ “The church is the Body of Christ and prays ‘in the name’ of Jesus, *i.e.* according to the semitic idiom which underlines the phrase, ‘in His *Person*.’... The world had a right to hear the gospel; but those who have not yet ‘put on Christ’ by baptism and thus as ‘sons’ received His Spirit by confirmation *cannot* join in offering that prevailing prayer. All who had not entered the order of the laity were therefore without exception turned out of the assembly after the sermon.” (Dix 41)

S. Sarapion (c. A.D. 340) “The deacons now proclaimed: ‘Let the catechumens depart. Let no catechumen remain. Let the catechumens go forth’; and when these had gone, cried again: ‘The doors! The doors!’ as a signal to those of their number, or their assistants, who guarded the doors, to close and lock them against all intrusion. Then the church corporately fell to prayer” (Dix 42).

⁴² Origin wrote in *Against Celsus* 3:51 “Christians as far as possible first test the souls of those who want to become their hearers, having instructed them in private. When they appear sufficiently to have the desire for a virtuous life, and not before, Christians introduce them to the community. They form a separate group of those who are beginners and are receiving admission, but who have not yet received the sign of complete purification” (Turner 33).

⁴³ Note that Dix is writing about an “open” communion common in the Church of England.

What do we know about the specific sights and sounds of worship in the age of the Apostles and Apologists? We know that there was no distinctive Christian architecture until the 300's, because the house church was THE setting for the Christian synaxis and Eucharist.⁴⁴ The seating arrangements of the participants were well defined. The bishop sat upon his *cathedra*⁴⁵ with a white cloth draping it. He faced the people who sat across the altar from him. The presbyters sat in a semi-circle with the bishop. The deacons would stand to the immediate right and left of the bishop. The laity stood facing the bishop, men on one side, women on the other. The hearers and strangers (if allowed) stood by themselves at the back of the room.⁴⁶

We usually think of the house churches as being simple and plain. The reality might be something far different. Dix lists the items that were confiscated from a house church in Citra, North Africa in 303 at the beginning of the last great persecution. Citra was no major metropolis, yet the list of liturgical items confiscated would cause many WELS altar guilds covet. Luther's worship principle "Let all God's gifts be used for worship" was alive and well in Citra.⁴⁷

Finally, what were the sounds of house church worship? We know that the early Christians sang. Paul encourages the Colossians "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). Unfortunately, I have heard – more than once – WELS presenters says that *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs* refer to different *styles* of music. I know of no credible exegete nor trained musicologist that would agree with them. Paul is writing of what we would call *textual types* rather than *musical style*.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ A house church dating from 232 in Dura-Europas on the Roman-Persian frontier where a Roman garrison was stationed. "In the plan of this house church, a wall was knocked down to make a room for a gathering of about sixty people. The bathroom had been converted into a baptistery with the walls decorated by mosaics of the three myrrh-bearing women. One room connecting the baptistery and the assembly hall could have been used for teaching catechumens; another room adjoining the assembly hall could have been used as a sacristy. The title churches in the city of Rome (*tituli*) also go back to the time when titles to private houses were turned over to the church" (Senn, *The People's Work*, 22).

⁴⁵ "The bishops 'throne' is not so much a seat of government (he is not the 'ruler' but the 'watchman' of his church according to Hippolytus' definition above) as a 'teacher's chair' 'for the *cathedra*', says Irenaeus, 'is the symbol of teaching'" (Dix 31). "As teacher of the church the bishop presided throughout the synaxis from his throne. As high-priest (not priest) he presided over the eucharist at the altar" (Dix 32).

⁴⁶ Dix sees this seating arrangement already reflected in the Revelation of St. John (Dix 28). Could we, as believers in an inspired and inerrant Bible, assume that the seating of the Christian assembly was shaped on earth by the realities that John saw in heaven?

⁴⁷ 2 golden chalices, 6 silver chalices, 2 silver dishes, A silver bowl, 7 silver lamps, 2 torches, 7 short bronze candlesticks with their lamps, 11 bronze lamps with their chains, 82 women's tunics, 38 veils, 16 men's tunics, 13 pair of men's slippers, 47 pairs of women's slippers, 18 pairs of clogs.⁴⁷ (Dix 24)

⁴⁸ The apostolic church sang *psalms*. This is natural for the Psalms had been the "hymnbook" of both temple and synagogue alike. Included in Psalms may be the so-called *Lucan Psalms* – the great canticles of Luke 1 and 2 (Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis). The early church sang *hymns*. Biblical exegetes have spotted several of these hymns in the text of the New Testament. (Colossians 1:15-20, Ephesians 2:6-11, 2 Timothy 2:11-13, the hymns of Revelation, etc.) What precisely were the *spiritual songs*? Perhaps they are a specific musical genre. More likely, it is an over-arching prerequisite

THE musical “style” of early Christian worship was chant – carried over from the synagogue. It seems as if the early church deliberately left the “harmonic” music of the theater out of Christian worship, opting instead for the entire Body of Christ to be united in singing literally the same notes. “The unison song... of the early church was more than a musical phenomenon. It was ‘an image of the unity and harmony of all Christians,’ as Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch also indicate” (Westermeyer 63).⁴⁹ The point? If WELS worship planners want to utilize various *styles* of music (and they ought to), then please do so out of good principles of biblical stewardship, not a bad understanding of church history!

The synergy of worship and outreach was young and vibrant in the church of the Apostles and the 150 years that followed. The gospel was going to work in the world. Outreach began public and then tended toward the personal. Worship was always a corporate activity, but would slowly become less *public*. Evangelistic efforts were bringing people into a relationship of worship with the Holy Trinity. Conversely, worship was evangelizing too.⁵⁰ Subsequent history will show that the church either refined the apostolic patterns of worship and outreach, rejected them, or recovered them. The next era of church history will demonstrate a remarkable refinement of worship/outreach synergy with the maturing of the *catechumenate*.

A SYNERGY REFINED

The Catechumenate

“They must hurry to enter the bath if they will have sight in their eyes.” - St. Augustine

Contemporary Context

for all the church’s music making: “It is ‘spiritual’ in that it sets forth ‘the Word of Christ’” (Col 3:16). The parallel in Ephesians, ‘be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs’ (Eph 5:18b-19a), indicates that the adjective ‘spiritual’ denotes music through which the Holy Spirit works via Christ’s Word” (Deterding 147).

“The method of psalmody to which we are accustomed (antiphonal) may have been used in the Jewish temple, but it did not come into Christian use apparently until A.D. 347-48, when it began to be employed by a confraternity of laymen at Antioch, and from there spread rapidly over Christendom. The use of the psalter ‘in course’... Christian services is one of the by-products of the monastic movement of the fourth century” (Dix 40).

⁴⁹ Clement of Rome, *I Corinthians 34*, c. 96 AD: “Let us, therefore, gathered together in concord by conscience, cry out earnestly to him as if *with one voice*, so that we might come to share in his great and glorious promises” (Westermeyer 62). Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-c. 107), *Ephesians 4*, states “... and having received the godly strain in unison, you might sing *in one voice* through Christ to the Father, so that he might hear you and recognize you through your good deeds as members of his Son...” (Westermeyer 62).

⁵⁰ This can be seen, perhaps best, through a negative example of the hymn’s use. The Council of Laodicea (363-364) would eventually ban privately composed hymns in Christian worship. Why? “It was precisely hymns and their music that provided the point of entry for Gnosticism” (Ratzinger 144). The Gnostics knew the power of textual and musical synergy. Mom always said you are what you eat...

The sun was slowly setting on Rome and her empire. Rome's borders, as it turns out, were too broad and the armies that guarded them too expensive. Soon the once proud *Roman* legions would be populated by mercenary Germans, the very Germans who were pouring through borders of the empire. The empire would be permanently divided into East and West after the death of Theodosius in 395. The East would continue as Byzantium and carry on under the shadow of Islam until 1453. The West would be battered by barbarian invaders, Hunnish and Gothic, until Romulus Augustus abdicated his throne in 476. Eternal Rome, as it turns out, was mortal after all.

As the empire crumbled around her, the church was on the ascendency. As late as 303-311, Christianity was being brutally persecuted under Diocletian.⁵¹ Suddenly, the church's standing in the world would change with an edict issued by Emperor Constantine at Milan in 313. Constantine's edict granted toleration of Christianity and restoration of the church's property. Within a few years, church lands would become exempt from taxation. Sunday would become an empire-wide holiday. Bishops, so important as guardians of orthodoxy in the early church, began to assume less and less the role of teacher and administrator of sacraments and more and more the roll of sacred and secular administrator of the church and surrounding cities.⁵²

The church was maturing, changing, and growing. Estimates of the church's growth vary widely. It is thought that between 20 to 50% of the empire was Christian by the year 250. Personal evangelistic practice and house church assemblies had obviously worked in synergy extremely well. In order to deal with a growing stream of converts, the church developed and refined a vibrant practice of preparation for and reception of Holy Baptism called the catechumenate.

Baptismal Beginnings

The One who graciously underwent St. John the Baptist's baptism to fulfill all righteousness is the very One who bestows his baptismal righteousness (Gal 3:27; Rom 6:2-4) upon the Church then and now! When we look to the New Testament, we have a gospel imperative to baptize the nations. This baptizing was to be done in conjunction with teaching everything that Jesus had commanded and commended to his Church (Mat 28:18-20). Sometimes this happened in a sermon, at other times, this instruction took place in a eunuch's chariot (Acts 8) or a jailor's home (Acts 16). Unfortunately, we don't have an "*Apostolic Baptismal Book*" the likes of which Luther provided in the second edition of his *Small Catechism*, so we don't know what the "Order of Holy Baptism" consisted of in the apostolic age. Rather than prescribing a rite, the Scriptures simply describe the Apostles baptizing

⁵¹ Aland comments on the church's relative strength at the point when she went from *illicita* to *licita*: "The persecutions were not able to break the power of the church; instead, the Christian church was purified by the persecution of Diocletian and his successors and emerged from it with new strengths because the persecution rid it of those who were weak and indecisive. We see the church after 312 or 324 confronting the emperor with self-confidence" (Aland 77).

⁵² It is the fourth century, when the peace of the church and the immense growth of numbers had made it impossible for bishops in most places still to act as the only ministers of all sacraments to their churches, that we find the real change taking place in the functions of the presbyter... The bishop absorbs more and more of its (a diocese) administrative authority, but in return parts with his liturgical monopoly" (Dix 34).

Several hundred years later, St. Bernard could only warn about the inherent temptations that came attached to the bishop's mitre: "...remember that love covers over a multitude of sins. I want this to be a warning against that twofold temptation with which the devil assails men in religious life: to covet the fame of a bishop's status, and to pass rash judgment on his excesses" (Bernard of Clairvaux 85).

and teaching their way across the Mediterranean world. Worship and outreach were working in synergy as the Apostles went and did the very things that Jesus commanded them.

As church life matured, Christians began to recognize that there are several inherent realities – theological and practical - in becoming a Christian. There is the reality of a person’s *separation* from the world and a previous way of life,⁵³ the reality of *transition*,⁵⁴ and the reality of *incorporation* into the Body of Christ.⁵⁵ These seismic changes in the Christian’s life make up the totality of *Christian Initiation*: “separation/catechesis, transition/Baptism, and incorporation/Supper may be called Christian initiation... The rhythm of the early Christian communities was the rhythm of evangelization, catechesis, Baptism, and Supper” (Just 157).⁵⁶ The catechumenate would serve as the church’s front door, providing a systematic journey through *separation, transition, and incorporation* into the Body of Christ.

St. John the Divine could not have been in heaven too long seeing the fulfillment of his Revelation when the *Didache* (c. 100) was reflecting and directing current baptismal practices. We don’t know anything about the length of Christian catechesis in 100 AD; we simply know that the *Didache* calls for it. We do not know what the baptismal rite looks like, but we do know that baptismal candidates fasted for a day or two beforehand. We don’t know if baptism was followed immediately by Holy Communion or the preferred time of year that baptisms were to take place (Johnson 38). Tertullian would be the first to state a preference for Easter baptisms almost 100 years later.⁵⁷ We do know that the manner of the water’s application could vary.⁵⁸

⁵³ “*Separation* begins when one hears the Gospel and comes to believe through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is the way out of death to life...” (Just 156).

⁵⁴ “*Transition* into fuller communion with Christ and His Church comes at the moment of Baptism - a water bath that brings a deep and complete cleansing within by Word and Spirit. Baptism moves a person across a boundary from one status to another, effecting a transformation from darkness to light, from being a child of Adam and of Satan into new birth as a child of God” (Just 156).

⁵⁵ “*Incorporation* comes most visibly in the Lord’s Supper. The baptized, who are in communion with Christ through Baptism, continue to be sustained and nourished by God in that communion in our very bodies through the holy eating of Jesus’ body and blood” (Just 156).

⁵⁶ “This pattern of Christian initiation continues in our churches today, which is why evangelical Lutheran churches see themselves as evangelical precisely because they are churches that center their life in Baptism, and all activity in reaching the lost and catechizing them culminates in the rite of Holy Baptism and the reception of the Lord’s Supper. How different this is from much of American evangelicalism where Baptism is not perceived as central, even essential, to the mission of the Church” (Just 157).

⁵⁷ Tertullian is the first to mention EASTER as baptismal time: “The Passover [i.e., Easter] provides the day of most solemnity for baptism, for then was accomplished our Lord’s passion, and *into it we are baptized*.... After that, Pentecost is a most auspicious period for arranging baptisms, for during it our Lord’s resurrection was several times made known among the disciples, and the grace of the Holy Spirit first given.... For all that, every day is a Lord’s day: any hour, any season, is suitable for baptism. If there is any difference of solemnity, it makes no difference to the grace” (Tertullian, *De Baptismo*).

⁵⁸ 1) As for baptism, baptize in this way: Having said all this beforehand, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water. Regarding baptism. 2) If you... do not have running water, however, baptize in another kind of water; if you cannot [do so] in cold [water], the [do so] in warm [water]. 3. But if you have neither, pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. 4. Before the baptism, let the

By the middle of the 100's, Justin Martyr begins to describe baptism in creedal language. The practice of confessing the faith before baptism had probably begun.⁵⁹ The practice of receiving the Lord's Supper following Baptism had definitely begun.⁶⁰ Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* (c. 215)⁶¹ is the first complete picture that we have of a fully-developed catechumenate. What follows is a general outline of the catechumenate as it is found in Hippolytus and enacted in the centuries that followed.

A prospective "hearer" of the Word would be brought into the Christian community for *scrutiny* by teachers who would examine both their motives and their lives.⁶² Actors and gladiators, pimps and prostitutes, among other "vocations" that conflicted directly with the Christian faith were excluded. The early church would still teach a woman of ill-repute. She must first, however, become a woman of *better* repute! After a brief address by the bishop or his representative, the candidate was asked if they wished to live according to it. If the answer was yes, the bishop made the sign of the cross on the forehead, blessed the person with a laying on of hands, performed an exorcism, and the so-called "sacrament of salt."⁶³ The individual was now enrolled in the catechumenate - "the customary state of nominal Christians who straddled the demands of the world and the call to discipleship (Senn 148).

person baptizing and the person being baptized – and others who are able – fast; tell the one being baptized to fast one or two [days] before." (*Didache*)

⁵⁹ "The overall ritual pattern he (Justin Martyr) describes underscores that some kind of prebaptismal catechesis preceded baptism, and that this entire process of becoming a Christian culminated in sharing in the prayers, kiss, and Eucharist of the community" (Johnson 39).

⁶⁰ "Upon the person who wishes to be reborn and who repents of his sins, we invoke the name of God the Father and Master of the universe... We call this washing and "enlightenment," because those who are taught as we have described have their minds enlightened... (We also invoke) upon the person who is enlightened and cleansed the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold the entire story of Jesus... (*Chapter 65*) After we have thus cleansed the person who believes and has joined our ranks, we lead him in to where those we call "brothers" are assembled. We offer prayers in common for ourselves, for him who has just been enlightened, and for all... everywhere... When we finish praying, we greet one another with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of wine mixed with water are brought to him who presides over the brethren" (Justin Martyr *First Apology* cited in Johnson, 38-39).

⁶¹ We only have the *Apostolic Traditions* in translation not the Greek original. This is noteworthy, because the baptismal practices described in the *Apostolic Traditions* were widely disseminated through the 300 and 400's. This is also noteworthy, because we are not certain if non-Roman practices from the 300 and 400's were added to the original document.

⁶² "Someone from the community, a kind of sponsor, would give testimony to help the teachers discern the motives of those who came, their freedom to join and their capacity for instruction" (Turner 38).

⁶³ John the Deacon c. 500: "The catechumen receives blessed salt also, to signify that just as the flesh is kept healthy by salt, so the mind which is drenched and weakened by the waves of this world is held steady by the salt of wisdom and of the preaching of the word of God" (Senn 148)

Hippolytus, along with Clement of Alexandria and Origen before him, describes a three year period of catechetical instruction. This was not a uniform practice throughout the church.⁶⁴ (In Syria, we hear of a three month period of instruction.) During this instructional period, the catechumens were set apart in a section of the nave unto themselves, men and women separated from each other. Catechumens were not allowed to share the kiss of peace. This was considered a symbol of membership in the family of believers (Turner 38). After the sermon, the catechumens were dismissed from the sanctuary.⁶⁵

It was during Lent and Holy Week that the catechumenate reached its ritual peak. The catechumens would be presented by their godparents for baptism. The candidates would be presented for scrutiny by the bishop once again. At the height of the catechumenate, this scrutiny was no “going through the motions.”⁶⁶ During the entire season of Lent, the bishop preached sermons particularly directed at living the Christian life. In the middle of Lent, the elect were taught the Creed line by line. The next week they needed to recite it back to the bishop. All of this – fasting and praying, exorcising and exhorting - led up to the Great Vigil of Easter where the catechumens received Holy Baptism.⁶⁷

The catechumenate is a remarkable refinement of the synergy of worship and outreach. The continued willingness of Christians to reach out to family and neighbors – often at risk of life and limb – is simply astounding. The care that the early church took in catechizing the people who were straddling the world and the church is truly commendable. That the entire process was leading the believer to a right participation in the Christian Mysteries, is simply refreshing in our “what does your church have for me” day and age. The rich symbolism that accompanied baptism, while not

⁶⁴ “By the early fourth century, for example, the Council of Elvira in Spain recommended a catechumenate of two years, which could be lengthened to three or five years, or even to the end of one’s life, depending on one’s behavior” (Turner 38).

⁶⁵ “The doors were closed and a porter stood guard to allow entry to no one except the baptized... It suggests, at least, that until one has received the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism one cannot discern what the Lord’s Supper is all about” (Senn 148).

⁶⁶ “During the scrutinies the lifestyles of the catechumens were publicly examined, and they were subject to constant exorcisms... the elect stood barefoot on top of their tunics, repudiating, as it were, the fall of our first parents who made repentance necessary” (Senn 149).

⁶⁷ “On the night of the Lord’s Passover from death to life the catechumens assembled at the font while the faithful kept a solemn vigil waiting for the Lord’s appearing. The catechumens received a final exorcism, renounced the devil, confessed their faith in God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the holy church (an embryonic form of the Apostles’ Creed), were stripped, anointed, and immersed. They emerged from the pool in the same way in which they emerged from the womb: naked. As a sign of their new birth they were clothed in new white garments. They were then led into the assembly of the faithful, still damp and aromatic from their anointing. The bishop laid hands on them, asking for the grace-gifts of the Holy Spirit, and sealed them with the sign of the cross. He then extended to them the greeting of peace, and for the first time the neophytes exchanged the kiss of peace with the faithful. For the first time they joined the prayers of the faithful and offered their gifts as members of the royal priesthood. For the first time they received communion, and the baptism communion included cups of water and milk and honey as well as wine. The cup of water symbolized the internal cleansing of the eucharist. The cup of milk and honey symbolized the promised land to which the neophytes have now come. It was precisely in order to prepare persons capable of living and celebrating the divine kingdom in the midst of this world that the institution of the catechumenate developed as an inseparable part of Christian initiation” (Senn 94).

essential to the sacrament, was a sermon designed to communicate with eyes, nose, and the sense of touch.

Sadly, the preoccupation with Christian living - perhaps understandable in their context where morals were loose, life was cheap, and less-than-committed Christians regularly cracked under the whip of persecution – blunted the beauty of the gospel message. The gospel was still going to work in the world through a powerful synergy of worship and outreach. But all was not well in the church. Hippolytus' (among others) preoccupation with the catechumen's lifestyles would blossom into the bitter fruit work righteousness and indulging the Old Adam by the time of Luther. The synergy refined was teetering on the brink of a synergy endangered.

A SYNERGY ENDANGERED⁶⁸

The Evangelization of Europe

*"Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel - all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal
and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1Kg 19:18).*

Contemporary Context

The gospel had gone to work in the world during the first four centuries in astounding ways! In Germanic territories, Ulfilas (sadly Arian) gave the Goths the Bible in the own language in written Gothic for the first time. St. Martin of Tours (316-397) was establishing monastic outposts in Gaul as far north as Flanders. Clovis king of the Franks would be baptized on Christmas Day 496. Christianity was alive and well in Roman Britannia until the early 400's and made the jump across the Irish Sea to the Green Isle along with St. Patrick in the early 400's.⁶⁹

This "golden age" of worship and outreach synergy began to wane with the demise of the empire. The careful catechesis of the first four hundred years of Christian history was all but lost in an era when the ages were dark. The sun would set on classical civilization in the West until the dawn of the Renaissance almost 1,000 years later. In the east, the remnants of the Roman Empire would live on for another 1,000 years until Constantinople finally fell to the Turk in 1453. "That Christianity was seriously affected by the fatal sickness of the Roman Empire is one of the most palpable facts of history. For more than four centuries the outcome was by no means clear. In the numbers of those who called themselves Christian, in apparent inner vitality as expressed in fresh movements inspired by the faith, in the moral and spiritual quality of the churches which were the official vehicles of the

⁶⁸ "How horrible it is to see how the world fell away from the Gospel and lost the Word not long after the days of St. Paul and the apostles, when everything was going so well in all of Asia and Greece, where now there is not a letter of the Gospel to be found and everything is lost under the Turk and Mohammed amid horrible blasphemy of God. The same has been the case until now under the papacy, and now it has started in German lands with so much sectarianism and deception. Yes, even among us, how few are those who have and keep the true understanding of the Gospel" (Luther 75)

⁶⁹ Further to the east, Christianity was in Georgia by the 300's. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates could boast of a Syriac speaking Christian population as early as the 200's. Further east, within a generation of Attila, the Hephthalite Huns would have three bishoprics in central Asia (Latourette 98-103). The Scriptures were translated. Churches were built. Monasteries were founded. Missions flourished.

gospel, and in its prominence in the total human scene, Christianity lost ground” (Latourette 269-270). Aland comments on the vitality of the Frankish church as one such example “This church did nothing but exist – vegetate is a better word...” (Aland 237). This “lost ground” is perhaps most identifiable in the office of the Roman papacy.⁷⁰

The Synergy of worship and outreach was on life support. The justification of the sinner took back seat to the mortification of the sinner. The sacrament became a sacrifice. Purgatory and prayers to the saints took their seats Catholic theology and personal piety. Genuine mission work continued in town and village, but faux mission work reared its ugly head as entire tribes were conquered and “Christianized.”⁷¹ The quiet blowing of the Spirit where and when it pleased God was often exchanged for the sharp end of a conqueror’s sword. As a result, conversion was usually skin deep and old pagan ways continued on in farm and village for centuries. There were still lights flickering in the darkness. The gospel-powered synergy of worship and outreach continued on in the face of great odds.

St. Gregory

Gregory the Great was pope from 590 until 604. He came from a genuinely pious Roman family. Two of his aunts and his mother were canonized. He would use his family fortune to found several monasteries in Sicily while he acted as civil administrator of Rome. He was acclaimed pope in 590 by the population and clergy of Rome. He took over “the rotten old vessel of which God had given charge” (Latourette 338-339). Gregory is called the “Great” for a reason. He not only kept the “rotten old vessel” afloat; he boldly pressed forward, feeding the Roman population, enriching worship, and engaging in mission work in Britain.

Gregory is perhaps best known for the chant that bears his name. As a theologian, Gregory taught that music was a vehicle for texts (Senn 206). Medieval artists often painted him with the Holy Spirit sitting on his shoulder singing the chants into his ear while Gregory notated them. In reality, Gregory doesn’t seem to have been a musician. The origin of Gregorian chant was found – not in the mind of the Spirit - but in Byzantium. Gregory and his assistants carefully organized the body of liturgical materials they had inherited from previous generations (Westermeyer 102). (Remember that he distinguished himself as an administrator before he became a pastor.)⁷²

⁷⁰ Amid the chaos that followed the implosion of the Roman Empire, the papacy would slowly sink to new depths along with civilization in general. Pope John VIII (d. 882) was said to have been poisoned. Pope Formosus was exhumed from his tomb and tried before a court over which his successor presided and was finally thrown into the Tiber River by the citizens of Rome (Latourette 366). In 963, a Roman synod under the authority of German Emperor Otto I deposed Pope John XII for illegally selling ordinations, ordaining a ten year old as bishop, giving sacred vessels to prostitutes, and turning the Lateran palace into a brothel (Turner 102). The papacy sank to a low point theologically at the very point when civilization, it seems, was on the rebound. As the Middle Ages drew to a close, Pope Boniface VIII was in a position to proudly proclaim “that submission on the part of every man to the bishop of Rome is altogether necessary for his salvation” (Boniface, *Unam Sanctam*, Petry 506). And people believed it.

⁷¹ “At that time (the time of Charlemagne c. 800), subjugation and baptism were virtually identical with each other. In greater numbers the Saxons converted to Christianity; we hear about mass baptisms” (Aland 257).

⁷² Westermeyer notes that the oldest layer of Gregorian chant – roughly 650 melodies – was complete by c. 750 (106). In later years, Gregorian chant would be enriched by the chant of the Frankish kingdom. Gregory began a musical/worship movement that would continue unabated until the 1960’s.

Gregory also had a heart for missions. England would be the special object of his mission zeal.⁷³ The story goes that he met and redeemed several Anglo-Saxon young men from the slave market in Rome. He was so impressed by them that he intended to go to England himself as a missionary. The reality is that in 595 he devised a plan to purchase Anglo-Saxon slaves in the Frankish kingdom, educate those slaves in Italian monasteries, and then send them back home to England as evangelists. The plan never came to fruition, but it showed a broad mind that was willing to work through societal and political red-tape to get mission work done. In 596, Gregory did send a delegation of monks under the leadership of Augustine.⁷⁴ Within a year, Augustine could report his first mass baptism back to Rome. Canterbury became the beach-head of a distinctively Roman Catholic brand of Christianity in England.⁷⁵

It is doubtful that Gregory's missionaries took time and effort to teach Gregorian chants to the Anglo-Saxon blacksmiths they were trying to convert. Rather, Gregory himself stands as an example of a man who was under the influence of the powerful synergy of worship and outreach. The same man that was decidedly a "worship guy" was also most definitely a "man with a heart for missions." The church that is serious about worship tends to be serious about bringing others to worship.

St. Boniface

One of the fruits of Gregory's labors in England matured a century later. His English name was Winfrith. After receiving a commission from Rome as a missionary to the German territories, he received the Latin name Boniface (well-doer). He was born c. 672 near Exeter, England. He was educated at the monasteries of Exeter and Winchester. He was a brilliant student and scholar and would have gone very far in the English church. He chose instead to spend his life spreading the faith to the continent. He left his native England for the last time in 718 and began his outreach efforts in the modern-day Netherlands with the aged Willibrord who had come from England almost thirty years earlier. He was elevated to bishop in 722, archbishop in 732, and finally papal-legate to all of Germany in 738 (Aland 249).

It was in Hesse, which would play a prominent role in the Lutheran Reformation, that Boniface had his most enduring success. At Geismar, Germany stood the ancient oak tree which was sacred to Thor the god of thunder. Stepping into the middle of a crowd of hostile pagans, Boniface took his ax to the great oak – "a sign of the gods planted on earth" (Aland 249). A great gust of wind completed the task before Boniface's ax could. Amazed at a lack of thunder from Thor in retribution, many pagans were baptized. Boniface used the wood of Thor's oak to build an oratory dedicated to St. Peter. He founded many monasteries as mission outposts throughout Germany,

⁷³ Christianity in England was in severe trouble after the Roman legions departed and an invasion of pagan Saxons, Angles, and Jutes filled the power vacuum.

⁷⁴ Augustine was provost of the monastery that Gregory himself had founded when he donated his family's ancestral home for that purpose. Gregory was deeply involved in the decisions regarding the mission to England and carried out extensive correspondence with Augustine (Aland 243).

⁷⁵ Gregory's decision to skip over the wilds of Germany and reach out to England affects WELS to this day. It was from newly-Christianized England that missionaries by the name of Wilfrid, Willibrord, and Boniface came to Germany preaching the Catholic faith. We can trace both of our Germanic and Anglican Christian roots back to the Roman administrator who became pope.

especially in modern day Hesse, Thuringia, and Bavaria. He was murdered by a band of pagan plunderers as he prepared to confirm a group of neophytes on a river bank. Within fifty years, the remainder of the Frisians who killed him would be converted to the Christian faith (Latourette 349).

Boniface understood the synergy of worship and outreach. He also had plenty of opportunities to witness the demonic synergy of idolatry and superstition. Boniface was a passionate missionary – a missionary who understood that Belial and Christ have nothing in common. He was willing to put his life on the line to “upgrade” the worship of the pagans one ax-blow at a time! He became a medieval Paul: “We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them” (Acts 14:15). His ministry was no hatchet job, but a careful blend of mission, worship, organization, scholarship, and bold faith. Central Europe was never the same after his mission ministry.⁷⁶

St. Patrick

Of all the other lights in the darkness, St. Patrick is perhaps the best known – or at least the most celebrated. (The worthiness of those celebrations I will leave to others to determine.) Patrick’s Ireland was divided up into roughly 150 different kingdoms or *tuaths* – extended tribes (Hunter 19). None of these petty kings is known to have been Christian. Though existing on the edge of the world and fractured politically, “Ireland was not entirely isolated from Britain and the Continent of Christian and monastic ideas” (Dunn 142). The first Irish bishop we know of is Palladius who was sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine “to the Irish believing in Christ” in 431 AD. It does not seem likely that there was much of an Irish Church for him to shepherd at that time.

Patrick was an aristocratic Briton but Romanized and spoke Latin as his first language. He came from Christian roots with a grandfather who served as a priest. Life changed dramatically for the young aristocrat when he was taken prisoner by a band of Celtic raiders and sold into slavery. It seems, like Joseph in Pharaoh’s dungeon, that his several years in slavery tested and strengthened his faith.⁷⁷ Patrick was finally able to board a ship away from slavery and towards the priesthood. Where these studies took place, England or Gaul, we are not certain.

Tradition says that after a dream, his “Macedonian Call,” Patrick returned to Ireland in 432. Now his years of captivity became a blessing: he knew the Irish people and understood their language. He most likely came to Ireland with a band of a dozen or so priests, monks, and seminarians. Where mission work went well, there a church was raised. A priest would stay behind to serve the new flock “leaving with them a textbook of elementary Christian instruction” (Hunter 22). By the end of his life, Patrick planted some 700 churches and is said to have ordained 1,000 priests. Roughly one quarter of Ireland’s 150 tribes were substantially Christian by the time of his death c. 460.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ “The historian Christopher Dawson estimates that he has had a greater influence on the history of Europe than any other Englishman” (*Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs*, 527).

⁷⁷ “After I arrived in Ireland, I found myself pasturing flocks daily, and I prayed a number of times each day. More and more the love and fear of God came to me, and faith grew and my spirit was exercised, until I was praying up to a hundred times every day and in the night nearly as often” (Hunter 14).

⁷⁸ On the whole, Patrick was rather unique for his time: “In undertaking missionary activity amongst pagans, he was going beyond what most fifth-century churchmen would have considered to be their remit – especially as his story

It is true that Gregory the Great, St. Boniface, and St. Patrick were no Luther. It is true that many monasteries later became horror houses of immorality and workshops of work-righteousness. It is easy to criticize them from a different time and a different age. The big question is this: would we have done any better if we were them? Rather, be amazed that the gospel has always found a way to go to work in the world! The Lord has always reserved his 7,000 who have not bowed down to Baal nor whose mouths have kissed him (1Kg 19:18)! The synergy of worship and outreach was endangered, but survived. And this is our story...

A SYNERGY RECLAIMED

Lutheran Outreach

“Our priests attend to the ministry of the Word. They teach the gospel about the blessings of Christ, and they show that the forgiveness of sins takes place on account of Christ” (Ap XXIV, 48).

Luther is remembered for many things. He was an able debater and a graphic communicator. He had an amazing facility with languages and loved music. He is the father of the Evangelical-Catholic movement!⁷⁹ In our exploration of worship/outreach synergy, everyone – Catholic scholars included

suggests the existence of a mission to Ireland independent of any Christianization produced by settlement and kingship links” (Dunn 143).

C. F. W. Walther opined that “The most faithful Catholics are the Irish, a vulgar people who practice all kinds of knavery and go to confession at Easter, where they recite their wrong-doings to the priest, have a money fine imposed on them, or are told to fast or eat fish on such and such days – and their account is settled. What an abominable practice” (Walther 387)! To the degree that is the case, the synergy of worship and outreach that was so prominent in the early days of Irish Christianity was lost. But it wasn’t always that way! How wonderful to see “St. Patrick’s Breastplate” (a hymn) in the *Treasury of Daily Prayer* published by Concordia Publishing House for the Commemoration of St. Patrick on March 17:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger (*Treasury of Daily Prayer* 1285).

⁷⁹ How sad to hear what Luther is primarily remembered for in history and humanities classes in the universities of our day. Instead of learning that he is the man who freed millions of consciences from servitude to the pope, students are more likely to learn of Luther’s unfortunate literary blast “*Against the Jews and Their Lies*.” Luther penned a breathtaking blast against them: “First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them” (Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, 269). Luther then proposes that their homes be razed, the religious books confiscated, etc. A classmate, Pastor Dan Sims, saw quotes from Luther’s *On the Jews and Their Lies* at the very beginning of a movie at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. We do not defend what Luther proposed. That was patently wrong. Putting Luther into his contemporary context is a tough business in a post World War II world. Let it be simply said: Luther was no Nazi. His invective was raised due to

- will recognize Luther's contributions to worship. Almost no one sees Luther as an outreach man! Gustav Warneck pointed out at the turn of the last century that Luther was "not a man of missions in our sense of the word" (Elert 385). Since then, Luther's "mission reputation" has generally gone from bad to worse.⁸⁰

Elert's defense of Luther's mission-mindedness is classic: "The poor man! Instead of founding a missionary society, accompanying Cortez to Mexico, or at least assuring for himself a professorship of missionary science, he devoted himself, of all things, to the reformation of the church" (Elert 385)! Consider Luther's historical context. The Holy Roman Empire was a political disaster by modern standards, consisting of roughly 150 independent territories and city-states loosely federated under the umbrella of the empire. Germany would not be united into a coherent, colonial power for another 300+ years. Now add to this political situation the doctrinal situation in the Lutheran churches. Doctrinal debates would not be fully decided until the *Book of Concord* a generation after Luther's death (1580). Throw in the blessings and curses of a territorial state-church polity and *bona fide* foreign mission work is all but impossible. In spite of overwhelming issues in both church and state, Lutherans were interested in and doing real mission work.⁸¹

Briefly summarized, Luther saw mission work as a function of the gospel, as "an act in progress – an act that took place and takes place without interruption (Elert 387).⁸² It is the gospel that puts the preaching, teaching, baptizing church into motion for mission. Mission work was a theological

rejection of the gospel. He is equally hard on papists, Turks, etc. who did likewise. As for World War II, many good Lutherans paid the ultimate price for their Christian faith in camps and eastern front of the Third Reich.

⁸⁰ Wendland quotes American missiologist Alfred Mason: "There has been hardly any period in the entire history of the Christian Church so destitute of any concerned effort to spread the gospel in heathen lands than just this period of the Reformation" (Wendland 2). This criticism has even gone to judging the Reformer's hearts. J. Herbert Kane writes: "There is all too abundant evidence that most of the leaders of the Reformation, including Luther... seem to have had no serious sense of responsibility for direct missionary efforts in behalf of heathen or Muslim... Great mission fields lay round about them. Yet for these they did nothing and apparently cared nothing" (Wendland 2).

⁸¹ Lutherans in the Age of Orthodoxy were interested in missions. In 1597, Philipp Nicolai, author of the king of chorales "*Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying*" (Christian Worship 206), wrote the book *Commentarii de regno Christi*. In it, he describes the course of the Gospel around the world. Elert summarizes it in a footnote that stretches for three pages. We hear of the Gospel going out into a 1597 world to places like Mozambique, the Congo, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Mexico, Cuba, Florida, etc. (Elert 391-393). Of special interest to our topic is his coverage of the northern territories. Iceland is Lutheran below the 63rd parallel. The Lapps have been Christianized by Sweden's king. We hear of one German colony, Nelewiki, in Russia who called a Lutheran pastor from Thuringia (Elert 392).

⁸² "Before Judgment Day comes, the rule of the church and of the Christian faith must move over the whole world, just as the Lord Christ also said before in an earlier chapter that there will not be a city in which the Gospel should still be preached and that the Gospel shall move through the whole world in order that they all have a witness over their conscience, whether or not they believe" (Stolle 82).

"Regardless of whether all people believe it, still Christ rules wherever there are people: He preserves His Word, His Baptism and Sacrament, despite all devils and men. For the Gospel and Baptism must come to the world, as they have indeed come and every day come again... The persistence of the Gospel, Baptism, and Christians demonstrates Christ's almighty power over all devils and men among all heathen in all places, as Ps. 110:2 says: 'Rule in the midst of Thy foes!'" (Stolle 101-102).

necessity for Luther precisely because of the universality of the gospel. Practically speaking, the church at large was going to do the work of outreach until Christ comes again.⁸³

Rather than criticize Luther for “not going to Mexico with Cortez,” perhaps Luther’s namesakes could spend more energy and effort utilizing the tools that Luther left to the church. As we do, a powerful synergy of worship and outreach will be renewed among us! In this organist’s opinion, Luther’s chief outreach/mission tools are these: a clear confession of the faith, a gospel hymnody, a purified liturgy, and “clear and practical” sermons.

A Clear Confession of the Faith

The Lutheran Church is a church that is not afraid to proclaim what she believes. The entire *Book of Concord* is a proclamation of the Christian faith which is a gold mine of *habitus practicus* for outreach and worship. It opens with the Three Ecumenical Creeds, creeds with baptismal roots and rich Christological content. Like Paul before Festus, the *Augsburg Confession* is not ashamed to confess the faith before kings – confident of God’s blessing. In the two catechisms, Luther teaches the faith to the next generation and their teachers. Paul’s evangelical activity in the lecture hall of Tyrannus comes to mind.⁸⁴ The *Smalcald Articles* are Luther’s *personal* confession of faith. He offers it with a heart rending question: “And yet, neither bishops nor cathedral canons ask how the poor people live or die – people from whom Christ died. And should not these people hear this same Christ speak to them as the true shepherd with his sheep? (SA *Preface*, 10). Finally, the *Formula of Concord* stands as the great confession of the theologians.

The confessions of our church are not sophistic ramblings about angels dancing on pin heads, but the clearest testimony to the gospel written by man. The care of souls, the health of the church, and contending for the truth are omnipresent in them. A rich synergy of worship and outreach, if not clearly articulated in the confessions, certainly springs forth from them because the gospel is central in them.

Gospel Hymnody

Luther once preached: “I see your idleness, how you fail to learn those sacred songs sung every day and how for nearly two years now you have had no interest whatsoever in those enduring songs of the schoolboys, but rather pay much more attention to popular ditties. Would that you fathers might strive to train those under your care! For such songs are a sort of Bible for the uncultivated, and even for the learned. See how the pious are set on fire through these songs” (Herl 15)! For Luther, music is no “mood setting mechanism.” Instead, words and music join in synergy to sing – no, to

⁸³ “Thus we are also the last movement of the Gospel, which confesses Christ. We call on Christ and praise him still a little longer. After this, the Last Day will soon follow” (Stolle 84).

⁸⁴ Luther viewed the *Small Catechism* as a mission/worship effort before he wrote it: “On them, in the name of God. First, the German service needs a plain and simple, fair and square catechism. Catechism means that instruction in which the heathen who want to be Christians are taught and guided in what they should believe, know, do, and leave undone, according to the Christian faith” (Luther, *The German Mass*, 64)

PROCLAIM – the gospel and confess the faith.⁸⁵ The hymn and its tune enable God’s people to fulfill the Great Commission in a beautiful way.⁸⁶

Luther understood the hymn’s importance in the synergy of worship and outreach. And even his worst enemies recognized that Luther had put his finger on something profoundly powerful – a *teaching hymnody*. Bishop Nausea Blancicampianus wrote Pope Paul III in preparation for the Council of Trent. Something had to be done about Lutheran hymns: “Who can say how many persons have easily been drawn away already from the true religion by these same chants, to which they have already become accustomed for twenty years or more” (Music 42)? Whether the bishop would have written the same about CCLI’s top five, I will leave to the judgment of future historians. But history has already judged this in the affirmative: Christ-centered, Lutheran hymnody helped ensure both the survival and success of the Lutheran Reformation.

Interestingly, one of Luther’s earliest hymns was published along with his first revision of the mass the *Formula Missae*. Missions and masses went well together on the printing presses of Wittenberg:

“May God bestow on us his grace, With blessings rich provide us,
And may the brightness of his face, To life eternal guide us
That we his saving health may know, His gracious will and pleasure,
And also to the heathen show Christ’s riches without measure
And unto God convert them.” (CW 574 s. 1)⁸⁷

A Purified Liturgy

Luther holds back no punches when it comes to the Mass as it was practiced in his day: “That the Mass under the papacy has to be the greatest and most terrible abomination, as it directly and violently opposes this chief article” (SA, II.1). Luther knew that the Mass was the crux of the issue

⁸⁵ “Luther displays a very fine understanding of the original association between *confession* and *hymnus* when he proposed to admit the Te Deum to the early church’s confessions. In his brief characterization of this text he emphasizes that confession of faith and praise of God here merge into one.” (Brunner 139)

Luther’s comment: “...*Es ist gleichwohl ein fein Symbolum oder Bekenntniss, wer auch der Meister ist, in Sangesweise gemacht, nicht allein den rechten Glauben zu bekennen, sondern auch darin GOtt zu loben und danken.*” (Luther, *Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnisse des Glaubens Christi, in der Kirche eintraechtig gebraucht*, St. Louis Edition, X.995) “It (the Te Deum) is indeed a fine Symbol or Confession, whoever the author is, written in the manner of a song, not only to confess the truth faith, but also for praising and thanking God.”

⁸⁶ In the terminology of Melancthon and of the Erlangen liturgiologists, the sacramental element predominates over the sacrificial in these songs. The genuine congregation hymn always embraces also the sacramental element. “In it the congregation not only carries petition, praise, and thanks before God, but it also preaches to itself, it proclaims and testifies, it reproves, admonishes, and comforts itself mutually... As the church sings these songs with its lips and its heart, it itself becomes the Preacher Zion on the mountaintop. Here the Pentecostal prophecy of Joel, quoted in Acts 2:17 f., is fulfilled” (Brunner 138).

⁸⁷ The fascinating background of this hymn can be found in *Christian Worship: Handbook*, p. 581. Readers would do well to acquaint themselves with the hymn’s rich story. In 1529, Catholic priests in Leipzig forbade this hymn to be sung by the citizens. A hundred years later just outside of Leipzig, the armies of King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden sang this same hymn before going into battle against the Catholic forces Wallenstein at the battle of Luetzen (1632). The armies of Sweden won the day but lost their king.

from the Catholic's point of view: "They are well aware that if the Mass falls, the papacy falls. Before they would allow that to happen, they would kill us all, if they could do it" (SA, II.10). The confessions repeatedly take the issue of *ex opera operato* to task. The Mass, having been correctly performed, was what counted in Catholic piety.⁸⁸

For all of the problems with the Mass and the invective that Luther leveled at its contemporary use, it is simply shocking to see how conservative Luther's first efforts at liturgical reform were. If anyone would have good reason to throw out the baby and bathwater, it was Luther! Instead, Luther kept the baby and purified the water. In a personal conversation with Frank Senn, he theorized that the laypeople at Luther's celebration of the *Formula Missae* would have noticed nothing new or different in the masses ceremonies. Luther's *Formula Missae* shows great liturgical sensitivity with a pastoral heart for people.⁸⁹

Three years later, Luther would prepare another liturgical order the *Deutsche Messe*. The *Formula Missae* was primarily for use in the cities where some Latin was generally understood.⁹⁰ Matters were different in the villages where ignorance and illiteracy ruled. What would Luther's cautious, pastoral heart do in this context? The *German Mass* was his answer.⁹¹ Reclaiming the synergy of worship and outreach was on Luther's *Deutsche Messe*-mind. The *Deutsche Messe* for the villages was really *Deutsche Mission* in the villages.

Clear and Practical Sermons

Author Thom S. Rainer did a major study of the formerly unchurched. He asked them the question: "What factors led you to choose this church?" 90% of respondents noted pastor/preaching (Rainer 74). From a very different vein of American Christianity, Prof. Kurt Marquart (LC-MS) writes: "First, it must never be forgotten that good preaching, that is 'practical and clear sermons,' constitutes the church's strongest missionary attraction. This major element of the liturgy is the minister's most demanding task." (Marquart, *Liturgy and Evangelism*, 60). We have freely vowed along

⁸⁸ As late as the early 1960's organists would play a recital over top of the celebration of mass at the late services in Paris, France. What counted is that Mass was said and offered, not heard and understood.

⁸⁹ "Therefore, I have used neither authority nor pressure. Nor did I make any innovations. For I have been hesitant and fearful, partly because of the weak in faith, who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one, and more so because of the fickle and fastidious spirits who rush in like unclean swine without faith or reason, and who delight only in novelty and tire of it as quickly, when it has worn off. Such people are a nuisance even in other affairs, but in spiritual matters, they are absolutely unbearable... We therefore first assert: It has not now nor ever has been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use from the wretched accretions which corrupt it and to point out an evangelical use." (Luther, *An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg*, 19-20).

⁹⁰ "I do not agree with those who cling to one language and despise all others. I would rather train such youth and folk who could also be of service to Christ in foreign lands and be able to converse with the natives there..." (Luther, *The German Mass*, 63).

⁹¹ "The second is the *German Mass and Order of Service*, which should be arranged for the sake of the unlearned lay folk and with which we are now concerned. These two orders of service must be used publicly, in the churches, for all the people, among whom are many who do not believe and are not yet Christians. Most of them stand around and gape, hoping to see something new, just as if we were holding a service among the Turks or the heathen in a public square or out in a field" (Luther, *The German Mass*, 63).

with Melanchthon: “Moreover, if we must speak about outward appearances, attendance in our churches is greater than among the opponents’. Practical and clear sermons hold an audience” (Ap, XXIV.50). Was Melanchthon an early father of the church growth movement? No, he was simply correct. “The true adornment of the churches is godly, useful, and clear doctrine, the devout use of the sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like” (Ap XXIV, 51). Preachers and their hearers are generally in agreement: the sermon is critical in the life of the local congregation. It is perhaps the key component in our evangelical gospel/outreach synergy. The beating heart of the Lutheran sermon is Christ himself – Christ and all of his gospel gifts.⁹²

In the sermons of the church fathers, one will read a good statement of the gospel from time to time. Ambrose, Augustine, and Bernard are undoubtedly the best. What is truly amazing, however, is that Luther was able to cut through 1,400 years of homilies and sermons, disputations and lectures and enthrone the gospel once again in the pulpit. Rome has grown on the back of its grandeur. The Anglican Communion has grown on the back of English colonialism. The Lutheran Church, at her best, has grown on the backs of her preachers. Preach the gospel brothers! Preach it like your life depends on it. Because, frankly, it does!

The synergy enacted, then endangered, is the synergy reclaimed. We are living, walking, teaching, preaching proof that this synergy is blessed by God the Holy Spirit – where and when it pleases him!

A SYNERGY ASSESSED

This paper has been heavy on theory as a matter of necessity. At the risk of writing too much or offending just a little, I have also been asked to offer my personal assessment. I will offer a few general observations.

Our Use of History

Saint Paul was not merely assessing when he wrote: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). What Paul writes regarding Israel’s history specifically is also true of man’s history in general.⁹³ Every generation has quipped that those who refuse to learn history’s lessons are destined to repeat them. Wise Solomon seconds that motion: “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecc 1:9).

In spite of this Holy Spirit’s love of history and our liberal arts education that taught us plenty of it, I do not sense that all is well with our use of it. Perhaps this is because we live in a country where can-do pragmatism is a mile wide and our history is an inch deep. It is easy, therefore, to give lip service to history yet never fully ponder its lessons. I have heard it said at WELS conferences that “We

⁹² Our priests attend to the ministry of the Word. They teach the gospel about the blessings of Christ, and they show that the forgiveness of sins takes place on account of Christ. This teaching offers solid consolation to consciences. In addition they teach about the good works that God commands, and they speak about the value and use of the sacraments” (Ap XXIV, 48).

⁹³ The only difference of course is that Heiko Oberman’s brilliant *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* is not verbally inspired.

stand on the shoulders of giants.” We do stand on the shoulders of giants, yet the giants’ lives are rarely studied, their sermons hardly noticed, and their writings barely read. Some in our circles will go back to Lawrenz or Meyer. The greatest theologian of our synod, Adolf Hoenecke, is published in English but remains a closed book for most. Back even further, *What Luther Says* is sometimes used. What Luther says, however, in his 53 volumes (and growing!) in English is less familiar. Gone in our circles is any familiarity with the church fathers. We are simply at odds with the confessions on this point. The confessors were at pains to know and quote the fathers to prove that they were no new sect, but a continuation of *the one holy Christian and apostolic Church*.

Writing this essay has burdened my conscience some. I am a confessional Lutheran without apology. My understanding of the greater church throughout the ages, however, is woefully insufficient. We need to continue practicing a vibrant confessional fellowship. At the same time, we need to be in touch with our roots once again. Otherwise, we will begin to take on the look and feel of a sect and feel ourselves better for being so. In cutting ourselves off from our historical roots, we will find it difficult to identify who we are as confessional Lutherans. This has practical consequences!

Why is it then that we Lutherans with our pure gospel and sacraments have not been firebrands of missionary dynamism? Is it because our faith is drab and old-fashioned, and we haven’t managed to spiff it up for modern tastes? Or is it because we have not been trained in the right ways of saying it? Or perhaps because we care too much about the truth and not enough about people? Or because traditionally only our clergy preach and lead services? Frankly, I think that all such explanations are silly. What is much more likely is that we Lutherans are simply not convinced enough ourselves to go about convincing others (Marquart 121-122).

There are those who neglect history. There are also those who see history as a primary guiding light. In their mind, Bach’s Leipzig becomes the sum and total of what Lutheranism ought to be. If the ancient church did it, then it’s worth paying attention to. The ancient church, the western rite, the Lutheran chorale - these are the golden oldies. But this is also true: you can find a historical precedent for any and every practice under the ecclesiastical sun. I have heard voices opine that we ought to reclaim the practice of dismissing non-communicants before the sacramental portion of the service. It certainly has ancient precedent. Oddly, I’ve never heard any of the very same voices say that we ought to reclaim many of the ancient church’s baptismal practices. Ask your BIC grads to strip down to their boxers or briefs for baptism and let me know how well it goes...

Franzmann takes the repristinators among us to task with good humor:

The ancient liturgy, the primitive church, the ancient fathers! If it isn’t old, it is no good... This precious young man longs for the primitive church. He longs for the ancient fathers. Not too primitive, of course, because then he would be celebrating the Eucharist in somebody’s dining room and would have a fruit cellar for a prayer chapel. But pretty primitive, back there (Franzmann 89).

My point? We are in desperate need of understanding where we came from, but we don’t need a list of historical do’s and don’t’s. *What would Hippolytus do?* is probably not something to burden a brother’s conscience with. Some knowledge of Hippolytus might be helpful, however, if one is determined to write his own rite of baptism. I was impressed, for instance, when one brother was

contemplating calling his new alternative service “The Gathering” after the ancient Christian *synaxis*. I might not share that brother’s choice of music that comes from American Evangelicalism. I greatly appreciate that brother’s willingness to be informed by the church’s history.

Hymns That Sing the Gospel

So what does history say about the church’s music, that gift of God that Luther valued next to theology? What does history teach us about the songs Christians sing? Look at the history starting with Moses in Exodus 15, continuing through the psalms, the Greek and Latin hymnists, Luther, Gerhardt, and Watts. At every point in history you will hear believers singing the story of salvation. Music worked in synergy with salvation’s story and carried it to the heart, but the story was always central.⁹⁴ Medieval musicians considered Gregorian chants to be the perfect church music precisely because the music was understated and thus allowed the Word to predominate.⁹⁵

No one ever denied that music had its own unique power, of course. It is no great secret that music is able to make people happy or sad or anything in between. (You can even earn a degree in *music therapy*.) For the majority of her history, however, the church was not very interested in the power of music apart from the Word. Even instrumental music, often with strong emotional appeal, featured texts or tunes that people knew. The story of salvation remained central.

Revivalism saw something in the power of music that the church had not been particularly interested in before. The early revivalists, pragmatic to the core, discovered that the right kind of music could encourage the right kind of emotion, i.e., the kind of emotion that would move worshipers to revive, repent, and make their decision for Jesus. As Revivalism wound its way through Pentecostal and Charismatic worship, the story in the music became less important than the power of the music. And so the worship and praise (or praise and worship) song was born. Worship and praise songs are the songs of choice in much of Evangelical worship, and they share a common style. The text is invariably simple, often simplistic: simple statements of personal prayer and praise predominate. The

⁹⁴ Consider the music of J.S. Bach as an example. Bach has often been called the “Fifth Evangelist” in confessional Lutheran circles. How can this be? Music is nothing more than a deliberate ordering of sound and silence. How can ordering sound and silence preach the gospel? It can’t by itself. But music working together with the biblical text and the poet’s art preaches the gospel most powerfully. Listen to Bach’s great *Passion According to St. Matthew* this Ash Wednesday. You will discover numerous examples of musical and textual synergy. It is one thing to say “Jesus said...” It is another thing to hear the violins play a musical “halo” every time the Son of God prepares to speak. It is one thing to say “Jesus died on the cross.” It is another thing for Bach to drop the key of “O Sacred Head Now Wounded” each time a successive stanza is sung. The effect of Jesus’ life ebbing away as the music slowly droops down, down, down is heartrending. Theology, the king of disciplines, together with music, the queen of disciplines, powerfully preaches to the whole man: emotion, reason, and will.

Another great example of musical synergy from the golden age of Lutheran orthodoxy would be Heinrich Schütz’s *Auferstehungshistorie* (SWV 50) which features the risen Christ’s words always sung by a duet. The point? Christ remains true God and true man in one person also after his resurrection. Schütz knew his Christology. The Berlin Classics recording (0092052BC) of the famous Dresdner Kreuzchor under the direction of Martin Flämig is a worthwhile recording to own.

⁹⁵ Peter Brunner spoke for the whole of Christianity before him when he wrote: “Without detracting from the intimate association between Word and music, music in worship still remains an element which is added to the Word. Although music is a gift of God, music is not necessary for salvation. This implies that in this intimate association between music and the Word, the former reverently and humbly accords the Word...” (Brunner 274).

structure usually is “call and refrain.” And the purpose is both to influence (some Evangelicals would say manipulate) and provide an outlet for emotional response. In *The Purpose-Driven Church* Rick Warren writes that “today’s most effective worship songs are love songs sung directly to God” (Warren 289). Some of salvation’s story may remain in some of those love songs, but the music is central.

The worship and praise song is finding a place also in Lutheran worship these days where it is offering to some an uplifting alternative to traditional hymns (often played and sung poorly). Some have found the worship and praise song to be an essential component in an outreach strategy. But a look at the church’s past as well as its present leads us to careful assessment of worship and praise music. The story of the church is full of simple songs, and some worship and praise songs, especially those written in the last ten years, have provided fine gospel-centered texts. But the mainstream music of the Evangelical worship phenomenon, the songs people hear on Christian radio most often, the songs that have become almost the “Ordinary” of mega-church worship, the songs even Lutherans like to hear and sing, are songs that are not intended to repeat the story of salvation but to touch the human emotions. To some, the music is more than the medium; it has become the means.

Catechesis That Truly Teaches

The church was careful about catechesis in its early years. It struck me as obvious that early catechesis was always right under my nose. I had just never thought of it as such. What I am referring to are the gospels and particularly the epistles. Paul wrote these letters of instruction to real people, in real mission churches. We have always thought of Romans, for instance, as a compendium of Christian doctrine. Roman pastors instructed their flocks using the Book of Romans. Paul was writing to mission churches, but he didn’t spend inspired ink on the shallow end of the theological pool! We know of no “lowest common denominator” Christianity in the New Testament. We must assume that thorough catechesis was the norm from the church’s earliest days!

It is truly regrettable that catechesis began to focus more on the Christian life and not so much on Christ’s life for the Christian; Christ in us, rather than Christ for us. As a clear understanding of the gospel diminished, so did the church’s ability to draw her strength from it. What is refreshing to see, however, was how the catechumenate centered on worship, especially the sacraments.

Allow one specific suggestion to flow from the catechumenate: perhaps it is time for WELS to have a published Bible Information Class that uses the liturgy as the outline of instruction. Would the flow of back door losses be slowed if we centered them on worship and sacramental life throughout their time in BIC? It is also worthy of our discussion to talk about the *length* of adult instruction. The early church generally settled on two to three years. Can Lutherans really be made in a weekend seminar? It is true: we become a Christian in an instant! It is also true: conversion and catechesis are not the same thing.

The decline of good catechesis in the ancient church eventually paved the way for popery. What is American Christianity’s lack of instruction paving the way for 100 years from now? I predict the collapse of mega-church Christianity within my lifetime. The lack of real catechesis will ensure this. Music with a beat will not be able to prevent this.

Briefly said: do we see our catechetical efforts as primarily a proclamation of gospel that will lead to a right use of Word and sacraments? Or do we see our catechetical efforts as leading to people

becoming “productive” members of a congregation. Philosophically, I believe the former and have often practiced the latter. The children’s children are depending on us to get it right in the here and now!

Outreach by Ones and Twos

There were opportunities for *public* outreach in the early church. Peter’s Pentecost sermon is one such example. As persecution heated up, outreach tended to gravitate from the public to the private, from marketplace to the home space. It is important to remember that the church’s amazing epoch of growth happened one person at a time.

We live in a day and age that will still tolerate and even appreciate some *public* outreach activities. I want Waukesha to know that we have an amazing pre-school. We will march in the Christmas parade downtown to let people know that we are located one block north of downtown. As Christianity continues to wane in our land, these public displays of Christianity will be less well-received. We will be forced, once again, to put our eggs in the personal outreach basket. The key to doing this will be unleashing the doctrine of vocation.

My dad told me before I left for my Junior year at NWC that he hated going to work every day for 27 years, but he did it because he loved Jess, mom, and me. There was nothing pleasant about the Bay City, Chevrolet plant. Church was a welcome escape from foul mouths and omnipresent pornography. Church became the primary outlet for his Christian life. Lutheran school became my escape from a troubled public school district. MLS became my escape from the drug culture of the mid 80’s. I thank God for my LES education and especially for my four years at MLS. But could it be, just every now and then, that we are so eager to escape from the ugliness of the real world that we forget that Christ is pleased to keep us IN the world as his gospel ambassadors?

Dad needed to be taught that he served Jesus best by receiving the forgiveness of sins from him and then living out his new status as God’s child in all his various callings: father, husband, son, auto worker, friend, neighbor. “Theirs is the priestly labor of turning every useful work into a divine worship or service, and every home, kitchen, workshop, and field into a grand cathedral to the glory of God” (Marquart 76). An assembly line is not the place for a pulpit, but the words and actions and attitudes of God’s people are always preaching something.⁹⁶ We need fewer evangelism committees and more of God’s people out in the world doing their thing. Rest assured: God will take us out of the world when our place is fully prepared for us!

Amen

Worship and outreach are two great activities of Christ’s Church on earth. May the Lord richly bless your work brothers as you seek to excel at both! Why? Because God is pleased to bless us with the privilege of worship and outreach! So away with eloquent excuses for evangelistic inactivity! Away with half-hearted worship that enables lips to move but hearts to remain far removed! Away with

⁹⁶ “Allow them to learn a lesson at least from your works. Be meek when they break out in anger, be humble against their arrogant words, set your prayers against their blasphemies; do not try to copy them in requital. Let us show ourselves their brethren by our forbearance, and let us be zealous to be imitators of the Lord.” (St. Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 10)

poor-us attitudes that see our time and place as a sure and certain indicator of Christ's second coming! Away with the sinful mind that enthrones inertia and ineptitude! Away with all of them!

In spite of us, the synergy of worship and outreach goes on. The gospel is on the grow and go in the Church and through the Church. We, by grace, are members of that Church! The Sun of Grace is still shining brightly in our time and in our place. The gospel powered synergy of worship and outreach found us, converted us, and will keep us until that day when faith will give way to sight and hope loses out to love.

Lift up your eyes in wonder – See, nations gather yonder
From sin to be set free.
The world has heard your story; Your sons come to your glory,
And daughters haste your light to see.

Your heart will leap for gladness When from the realms of sadness
They come from near and far.
Your eyes will wake from slumber As people without number
Rejoice to see the Morning Star. (Christian Worship 81 ss. 2-3)

God grant that we see that bright Morning Star and that our sons and daughters are carried on the arm to see the same!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pastor Aaron L. Christie
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Waukesha, WI
The 16th Sunday after Pentecost 2010

APPENDIX

THE SYNAGOGUE SERVICE

The glowing prophecies of nations streaming into temple light would seem to have met an inglorious end with the Babylonia captivity. The temple would be rebuilt after the Babylonian Captivity, but its glory could not hold a candle to the former. Herod the Great would later build another temple to buy off the Jewish elite at the time of Christ. This temple would be razed by the Romans in 70 AD just a few years after its completion. With the final destruction of the temple, the worship of Judaism was permanently beheaded. All that was left them was a wall at which they could wail.⁹⁷

Necessity, however, is the mother of learning. As temples came and went and peoples were conquered and dispersed, the synagogue became a permanent fixture in Jewish life. At first the synagogue was a place for *study* of the Scriptures. They were led by a Rabbi, a *teacher*, instead of a priest. It would soon become a place of worship - one frequented by our Lord every Sabbath. Interestingly, the only references we have to synagogue worship at the time of Christ come from the New Testament itself and the writings of Josephs and Philo of Alexandria (Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 68). By the second century AD, we know of five liturgical elements that were performed in a synagogue when a quorum of ten adult males was present (Senn, *The People's Work*, 22).

A brief overview of the synagogue service is provided below. It will be of special interest to us as we study the earliest Christian "Service of the Word." It will also help us understand how St. Paul and his traveling companions were worshipping on an almost weekly basis.

Section	Origin	Specifics
Invocation		"Bless the Lord who is to be blessed."
The <i>Shema Israel</i>	Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Num. 15:37-41	Probably from Maccabean times. Two blessings accompanied the recitation of the Shema at both morning and evening services praising God for

⁹⁷ Technically the "Western Wall."

		gifts of light and darkness and the gift of the Torah. It is possible that the Decalogue was spoken before the Shema in the first century.
The Eighteen Benedictions	These benedictions probably came from Levitical communities and were spoken while their representatives were serving in Jerusalem.	Known as the Amida (Standing Prayer) or simply Tefillah (The Prayer). The first three benedictions are called “praises.” The last three are called “thanksgivings.” The middle twelve benedictions/petitions were supplications of varying sorts. ⁹⁸
The Priestly Blessing	Numbers 6:24	The synagogue used the priestly blessing after the Tefillah and before the Scripture lessons. Since the priestly blessing was used at the Temple in connection with sacrifices, the preceding Tifillah was viewed as the synagogue’s sacrifice.
Readings from the Torah and the Prophets		On Sabbaths and holy days, readings were added to the prayers. The principal reading was from the Torah. There were readings from the Prophets at least on the Sabbath.
Homily		The homily was delivered either by the resident or a visiting rabbi.
Psalms	Originally part of the temple liturgy.	The Psalms are sung at the beginning of the synagogue service and between readings.

It was at a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch that the Prophets’ Word would find one example of perfect fulfillment: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed” (Acts 13:46-48). The little synagogues that dotted the map of the Roman Empire would be an early engine that drove worship and outreach synergy.⁹⁹ Through them the prophets’ words would be fulfilled. Nations would begin streaming to the temple – just not the one on Mt. Zion. Its days were severely numbered!

⁹⁸ “Of special interest is the Palestinian text of the twelfth blessing (*Birkat ha-Minim*, dated 90-117 C.E.), written so that Christians and Gnostics could not recite it: ‘For apostates let there be no hope...’ and let Christians and heretics perish as in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous.’ While this prayer was later softened and the specific references to Christians eliminated, it does reflect the definitive break between Christianity and Judaism brought about by the excommunication of Christians from the synagogues sometime after c. 90 C.E.” (Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 69)

⁹⁹ “The success of Jewish missionary activity is abundantly attested. Roman writers referred repeatedly to the presence of Jews and their followers everywhere. Before the Christian era, Judaism had sympathizers and converts throughout the Rom. Empire” (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, IV.908).

Regarding the “followers” in the above quote, it is customary in some circles to divide Jewish proselytes into “proselytes of the gate” and “proselytes of righteousness.” Confessional Lutherans might equate them to “attenders” and “baptized members.” Circumcision was the main point of difference between the two types of proselytes. It also seems likely that

Latourette summarizes the roll of the synagogue in the growth of early Christianity:

Through Hellenistic Judaism many converts were won from the surrounding non-Jewish communities.... They probably had few professional missionaries whose assignment it was to win the Gentiles, but in their intercourse with the non-Jews - the “Gentiles” - many Jews sought to bring the latter to their faith. Their synagogue services were open to all, whether Jew or Gentile.... Eventually, as we are to see, Christianity had much of its early spread through the circles of Hellenistic Judaism, both among those who were Jews by long heredity and those who had either become full proselytes or were on the fringes of the synagogue (Latourette 15-16).

WORKS CITED

- Aland, Kurt. *A History of Christianity. Volume I: From the Beginnings to the Threshold of the Reformation.* Trans. James L. Schaaf. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Bernard of Clairvaux. *Song of Songs I: The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux.* Vol. 2. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1971.
- Brunner, Peter. *Worship in the Name of Jesus.* Trans. M. H. Bertram. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1968.
- Chemnitz, Martin. *The Lord's Supper.* Trans. J. A. O. Preus. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1979.
- Deterding, Paul E. *Colossians.* St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003.
- Dix, Dom Gregory. *The Shape of the Liturgy.* London, United Kingdom: Continuum, 1945.
- Dunn, Marilyn. *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2003.
- Edersheim, Alfred. *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994.
- Franzmann, Martin H. *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets.* St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970.

these two types of proselytes were an “outsider looking in” distinction. Rigorist Jews took an “all or nothing” approach to the law’s demands of the new believer.

- Herl, Joseph. *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Hunter III, George G. *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Johnson, Maxwell E. "The Apostolic Tradition." *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Jungkuntz, Theodore R. *Formulators of the Formula of Concord*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1977.
- Just, Arthur A. Jr. *Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008.
- Kleinig, John W. *Leviticus*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003.
- Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christianity*. New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1953.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: Lectures on Isaiah Chapters 40-66*. Vol. 17. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1972.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: The Christian in Society II*. Vol. 45. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1962.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: The Christian in Society IV*. Vol. 47. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns*. Vol. 53. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 17-20*. Vol. 69. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2009.
- Marquart, Kurt. "Church Growth" As Mission Paradigm – A Lutheran Assessment. Houston, TX: A Luther Academy Monograph, 1994.
- Maschke, Timothy H. *Gathered Guests: A Guide to Worship in the Lutheran Church*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003.
- Music, David W. *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Readings*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996.
- Pieper, August. *Isaiah II*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

- Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000.
- Senn, Frank C. *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1997.
- Stolle, Volker. *The Church Comes from All Nations*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003.
- Turner, Paul. *The Hallelujah Highway: A History of the Catechumenate*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000.
- Valleskey, David. *We Believe - Therefore We Speak: The Theology and Practice of Evangelism*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995.
- Wainright, Geoffrey. "Christian Worship: Scriptural Basis and Theological Frame." *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Walther, C. F. W. *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose-Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.
- Water, Mark ed. *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Martyrs*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.
- Wendland, E. H. "Luther On Missions." An essay prepared for the Nebraska-Colorado Missionaries' Conference, November 6-7, 1984. See Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file.
- Westermeyer, Paul. *Te Deum: The Church and Music*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998.

**Reaction to Pastor Aaron Christie's Essay
*Worship and Outreach: An Observable Synergy***

Pastor Christie, allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation for your work. Last week you commented that this was the largest project you had ever undertaken. That's understandable considering your *modus operandi* for this effort. You dug into and examined some 3,000 years of history as you prepared your topic. It's important that you did. By a careful examination of the past you have established a foundation for this symposium. On the basis of your work others will be able to build.

Since the word *synergy* has a negative as well as positive slant to it, our essayist properly began by pointing out the distinction between the two usages so there could be no misunderstanding. "Synergism is a sin when it teaches that God and unregenerate man work together for man's conversion. Synergism is a blessing when it joins various gifts of God into unified action toward a common goal or greater good" (p 4).

After commenting on the division that some make between worship and outreach, Pastor Christie takes us back to "the hinge of the worship/outreach synergy, the holy gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the holy ground in which both worship and outreach are rooted and from which they spring!" (pp 4-5). Rather than a position on one end of the spectrum or the other, he directs our attention the Lutheran middle course. Although relegated to a footnote (p 5), it is worth the time to review the position laid out by WLS President Emeritus David Valleskey who "articulates the lively synergy of Word and witness that is uniquely ours in confessional Lutheranism" (p 5, footnote #4).

After pointing out that he is using a narrow definition of worship and a broad definition of outreach, our essayist launched into a defense of his thesis by directing our attention to the relationship of worship and outreach through the centuries, beginning with the Old Testament church under the subtitle, *A Synergy Prophesied*. This was followed by the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in his second main section, *A Synergy Enacted*. Using the backdrop of history, we are able to see this synergy in action. In the process we are reminded that worship/outreach working together is not a newly created notion. It is a scriptural concept which was then reflected in the work and words of the Fathers who have gone before us.

In the section where we are taken back to the *Pax Romana* and are reminded that God's plan of salvation was carried "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4), I believe our enthusiastic researcher stretched the facts of history a bit. He states, "We hear of many different languages in Acts 2, but the gospel could be heard in Greek all the way to Gaul in the first century" (p 12). We can say that the gospel made it to Rome in the first century – the scriptural record makes that clear - but I cannot say with any degree of certainty that it was in Gaul at that time. The second century, yes, but I have no reliable way to demonstrate the first century. This is a small matter and one that is insignificant in the scope of this paper. To have to search for such minutiae in order to record a negative comment demonstrates the care with which the author crafted his work.

As our essayist leads us from one example to another in the early church, it is clear that Pastor Christie was paying close attention to the march of history laid out in the seminary's Junior Church History course. I would imagine that Professor Emeritus Balge's buttons were popping as we were referred to the literature which describes worship and outreach at work, as well as the men who promoted that work. Not the least of those examples was the description of the catechumenate (*A Synergy Refined*, pp 21ff) and the

important role it played in the growth of the church. “The catechumenate is a remarkable refinement of the synergy of worship and outreach” (p 25).

Unfortunately, the legalization of Christianity weakened the strong start the church had enjoyed. More dangerous than persecution was the watering down of Christianity as men became Christians out of convenience rather than out of conviction. “This ‘golden age’ of worship and outreach synergy began to wane with the demise of the empire. The careful catechesis of the first four hundred years of Christian history was all but lost in an era when the ages were dark” (p 26). In spite of the darkness that descended in the Middle Ages there were bright spots in the missionary zeal evidenced by the work of Boniface and Patrick. Gregory, known as “the Great,” sent missionaries back to England. At that point it is noted, “Gregory himself stands as an example of a man who was under the influence of the powerful synergy of worship and outreach. The same man who was decidedly a ‘worship guy’ was also most definitely a ‘man with a heart for missions.’ The church that is serious about worship tends to be serious about bringing others to worship” (p 28). There is a comment that is worthy of underlining and additional thought.

In a *Synergy Reclaimed* (pp 30ff) we arrive at the more familiar territory of the Lutheran Reformation. Under God’s guidance Luther’s contributions returned attention to the authority of Scripture. In our essayist’s opinion “Luther’s chief outreach/mission tools are these: a clear confession of the faith, a gospel hymnody, a purified liturgy, and “clear and practical” sermons” (p 31). In response to those who would criticize what appears to be a lack of zeal for outreach, we are reminded of the challenges of the day which made that difficult.

In *A Synergy Assessed* Pastor Christie offers his personal evaluation. He notes that our use of history at times leaves much to be desired. “Perhaps this is because we live in a country where can-do pragmatism is a mile wide and our history is an inch deep. It is easy, therefore, to give lip service to history yet never fully ponder its lessons” (p 35). On the basis of more than 25 years of teaching history I would agree wholeheartedly. We can learn much from those who have gone before us.

The value of the gospel presented in a variety of media and instruction in that gospel are both points which are worthy of greater consideration as we continue to carry out the work the Lord of the Church has given to us, his servants in the 21st century. Time and space do not permit further comments on the wealth of information contained in the footnotes and in the Appendix. I can only suggest that they are worthy of your careful attention as you review this essay.

Pastor Christie closes with, “Worship and outreach are two great activities of Christ’s Church on earth. May the Lord richly bless your work brothers as you seek to excel at both!” (p 39). To that I respond, “Amen!”

James F. Korthals
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

20 September 2010