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Pietism and Liturgical Worship: An Evaluation

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Introduction

Traditional historiography has often assumed an antithesis between scholastic Orthodoxy and Pietism: the former stresses the forensic, grace-oriented nature of justification, and the latter emphasizes the human response to God's offer of salvation. Tradition also assumes that this tension between Orthodoxy and Pietism extends into the realm of public worship. Pietists, we are told, have no concern for the historic liturgy of the church, downgrading the sacraments and formal worship in favour of preaching, free worship and the Inner Light. Conversely, from some quarters we hear that the Orthodox are "chancel-prancers", more concerned with correct vestments, posture, gesture, lights, and paraments, than with proclamation of the Gospel and the salvation of souls.

This anti-Pietistic attitude has been evidenced by our most respected liturgical scholars. Luther Reed evaluates Pietism in this way:

So far as ordered public worship was concerned, Pietism's influence was unfavorable. Beginning with the attempt to supplement the regular services and usages of the church, it soon supplanted these by meetings in private houses which included religious discussions and administration of the Sacrament. As its spirit entered the established church, the services of the latter became more and more subjective and emotional. The struggle for personal consciousness of conversion and regeneration led to an undervaluation of the objective means of grace. The historical and the formal in liturgical worship gave way to expression of individual ideas and emotions. The liturgy and the church year were too objective and constraining. The formal common prayer of the church gradually

disappeared under a flood of extempore utterances by ministers and laymen [sic]. Hymns based upon objective facts of redemption were discarded for others expressive of immediate, personal experience. New and emotional tunes displaced the more vigorous chorales...Orthodoxy, though cold and intellectual, had respected objectivity and preserved formal dignity and reverence. Pietism with its intensely personal limitations neither understood nor long used what remained of the restrained and polished forms of the church's historic liturgical system.¹

Carl Schalk claims that "Pietism's lack of intellectual strength and vigor resulting from the strong emphasis on human feeling, soon left the field open for the movement known as the Enlightenment or Rationalism."² And Frank Senn adds his voice to the chorus of criticism:

The fixed liturgical element was made to yield to the subjective element; extempore prayer was substituted for church prayers; the objective church hymn gave way to hymns descriptive of the soul's changing conditions, experiences or feelings; the hymnbooks were arranged according to the Order of Salvation instead of the Church Year; new melodies suited to the emotional character of the new hymns displaced the vigorous old church tunes;... the order of the Christian year was broken in the choice of texts. ...What Pietism set out to do finally resulted not in bringing about again a proper union between the objective and the subjective, but in the overthrow of the former and the triumph of the latter.³

This stereotyped view of Pietism has at times been reinforced by those who claim the Pietistic heritage in North America. In an undated tract which appears to come from about 1942, Dr. Jacob Tanner criticizes various developments in the Lutheran Church of his day, including the adoption of the Common Service, use of the cassock, the shifting focus from pulpit to altar, the use of liturgical colours and the sign of the cross, bowing before the altar, ascription of the title *Bishop* to the superintendent of pastors, and the Bishop's increasing authority in congregational affairs. Tanner summarizes his criticism:

There are two tendencies in our church that to many of us look dangerous to the true welfare of our church. One is an excessive ritualism and all that goes with it. The other is misuse of authority by officials of the Synod. An evangelical church can profitably use only a minimum of symbolic ceremonies and furnishings.⁴

It is a question of spiritual life and death for the Lutheran Church to maintain evangelical simplicity and to keep as close to the New Testament norm as a people's church (*folkekirke*) can do it.⁵

Robert Overgaard, adding his voice to the defense of low-church Lutheran worship, points out in a more pastoral fashion to the prospective inquirer the distinction between Pietist and Orthodox Lutheran worship:

As you first enter our church, you may be surprised by what you see and hear! Why does the preacher not wear a clerical robe? Why is the ritual of Common Service not practised here? Why are common Gospel songs used together with traditional hymns? Even the furniture arrangement of pulpit and altar seems different. Do not all Lutheran Churches have the same worship service? These striking differences, which surprise many, are all part of a form of worship which is often referred to as low-church worship.⁶

Overgaard goes on to point out that low-church worship is committed to the restriction of ritual and symbolism, and the enhancement of preaching. He denounces worship without preaching as un-Lutheran. "When Lutherans publicly propose worship services without preaching, we object..."⁷ Then, after a conciliatory gesture toward symbolism, he reaffirms the basic principle of low-church Lutheran worship. "There will never be an easy answer to how much ceremony and how much symbols [sic] we should have in worship services, but the low-church form of worship is definitely committed to restricting them."⁸

This is the tension between Pietistic and non-Pietistic worship within North American Lutheranism today. It is manifest in the tension between high-church formal liturgical worship, and low-church informal non-liturgical worship. At the extreme outer poles, blame is laid by each group at the feet of the other, and positions are taken which are claimed to be biblical, confessional, and based on the teachings of Luther.

However, to attribute this tension to the original genius of Pietism in seventeenth and eighteenth century Germany is a false accusation. To support this argument, we will look at the situation in Lutheran worship following the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), examine what the Pietist patriarchs Philip Jacob Spener and Hermann August Francke said about Lutheran worship, and finally look at comments on worship in the diaries of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, a Halle Pietist who deeply influenced the early Lutheran worship tradition in North America. To demonstrate how easily the old stereotypes can be broken down we will restrict ourselves to readily available English translations.

The Period of Lutheran Orthodoxy

Until 1547 Lutheranism gained ground, but then suffered military defeat and began to implode through internal conflict. The *Peace of Augsburg* (1555) ended the military threat against Lutherans and established the Lutheran states; after twenty more years of theological in-fighting, the *Formula of Concord* (1577) united the churches of the Augsburg Confession. From this period until the Thirty Years' War there was a time of relative quiet during which strong Lutheran traditions of worship, liturgy and church music were established. Local princes filled the gap left by the Emperor, and ruled city and state councils which appointed both clergy and church musicians. The churches rapidly developed a positive relationship with the political jurisdictions in which they found themselves. In fact, as time went on Lutheranism almost ceased to recognize that there could be any conflict or difference at all between sacred and secular art and life. The period from about 1580 to 1618 has been called the "Golden Age of Lutheran Worship and Music". The precise forms of liturgy varied somewhat from city to city, but the demand for liturgical worship, art, and music of high quality was invariable.

However, beneath the surface of this impressive liturgical, artistic, and musical development, all was not well. Despite all attempts to establish a vernacular agenda for worship, in practice Latin continued to play the greater role. Latin was retained for most of the Ordinaries, and many Mass movements were still replaced with musical compositions by Roman composers. There were various complaints about this even in the 1550s and 60s: Latin choral and organ music was dominating the liturgy and competing with the spoken word; Gospel motets were replacing the spoken biblical text; choral music was pushing aside the Epistle, the *Credo*, and the Lord's Prayer; the congregation was being treated like an Italian opera audience rather than as participants in a worship service.

There was also a growing fear that orthodox worship was assigning an efficacy to priestly functions and the sacraments in a fashion like that which Luther had condemned in the Roman Church. People also reacted against the low morality of some of the clergy, who often functioned only as state officials. The preaching could be cold and academic, and the Reformation

doctrine of the priesthood of all believers had been exchanged for a new clericalism! Helmut Blume describes the evolution of the role of the worshiper: "From responsible member of the congregation and participant in the service, the individual proceeded to entertained listener and private worshiper, from 'doer of the Word' to 'hearer alone'—and beyond that to contemplative observer."⁹

The consequence was increasing liturgical indifference from the worshipers who lost touch with the liturgy and from the clergy and musicians who would introduce any text into a service in violation of the pericopes.

Things finally collapsed during and after the Thirty Years' War. Whatever the true origins and causes of this war were, many in the Lutheran territories blamed the war on the political and dogmatic attitudes of their Orthodox leaders. The church suffered irreparable loss. Pastors were slain or driven into exile. Worship was carried out in barns, sheds, and forests. Reed states, "Ordered church life was disrupted, churches were closed, wrecked, or defiled. Liturgical books, music, and sacred vessels were destroyed, together with vernacular translations of the Scriptures."¹⁰

After the restoration of peace, the Lutheran Church emerged from the ashes, but its worship showed an even more severely mechanical and legalistic character. Credally and liturgically the church was intact; musically it still managed to thrive. But more and more, people realized that something essential was missing. Most persons, demoralized by the effects of war, were not as responsive to the Gospel as they had been. The clergy, in response, were gripped by a new scholasticism, and laid great emphasis on rigid obedience, precise definition of beliefs, the objective efficacy of the sacraments, and a legalistic definition of worship.

There were also practical problems: church orders had been destroyed, along with missals, sacramentaries, breviaries, introit and gradual books, and other pre-Reformation volumes which had been kept in the churches. Much of this material had also only been kept in the memories of pre-war clergy and musicians, who were now dead or had fled. The resulting rigid scholasticism resulted in an awkward and unevangelical relationship between clergy and worshipers. Reed describes the situation:

Attendance at the service and Holy Communion was insisted upon. Fines were imposed for non-attendance. Civil offenders were sentenced by the courts to come to confession and receive the sacrament. The church became more and more a department of the civil government. With the hardening and narrowing of its intellectual life went externalization of worship and neglect of spiritual quality in everyday life and conduct.¹¹

Pietism

At this point the spiritual movement known as Pietism enters the stage. Pietism was, among other things, a postwar reaction to spiritual conditions in Germany. Many of the established churches had become stately, formal, and impersonal. Their worship adhered to ancient tradition, but left little room for personal faith and devotion. With its focus on the recovery of personal devotion and holiness, Pietism represented a demand for a less formal and more personal religion. Confessionally, it called for a renewed emphasis on the Third Article of the Creed.

The champion of this movement was Philip Jacob Spener. His book, *Pia Desideria*, published in 1675, came at a moment when conditions were ripe for its reception. Spener presented in it a six-point program for spiritual reform:

- 1 A new stress on Bible study.
- 2 Reaffirmation of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.
- 3 The confession of Christ by deed rather than by knowledge.
- 4 Re-emphasis on the life of prayer.
- 5 Reform of theological studies to stress personal piety and devotion among the clergy.
- 6 Insistence that preaching be devotional and edifying rather than polemical and rhetorical.

Of these six points, only the last appears to have a direct relationship to worship; however, Spener's reforms were aimed at the worship life of the church as much as at its other aspects. Theodore Tappert has given us a revealing description of worship habits in Spener's time:

Most of the people, even in the cities, were regular in their attendance of Sunday services. That they were not always attentive is suggested by regulations which prohibited walking to and fro and gossiping during prayers and hymns. Sleeping during sermons,

which were not only long but often beyond the comprehension of the auditors, was so common that the distinguished theologian John Gerhard was expressly praised at his funeral for never having slept in church. People attended church partly because they were required to do so by law, and attendance was sometimes thought of as a good work whose mere performance gave them credit in God's sight. Even more was the participation in the Lord's Supper regarded as an act which had a mechanical effect on one's relation to God, and most people were regular communicants, whether once a year, once a quarter, or occasionally once a month. In spite of the outwardly flourishing condition of the church, there seemed to be little evidence of genuine Christian life.¹²

This description of the spiritual condition of worship at the time is not particularly encouraging! Another citation, from Spener himself, gives us *his* perspective on the state of worship in the established churches:

... there are not a few who think that all Christianity requires of them (and that, having done this, they have done quite enough in their service of God), is that they be baptized, hear the preaching of God's Word, confess and receive absolution, and go to the Lord's Supper, no matter how their hearts are disposed at the time, whether or not there are fruits which follow, provided they at least live in such a way that the civil authorities do not find them liable to punishment. The illusion of these people is described by John Arndt in his *True Christianity*. "I am baptized into Christ, I have the pure Word of God and hear it, I receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and I also believe and confess all the articles of the Christian faith. Therefore I cannot be lacking in anything, my actions must be pleasing to God, and I am in the right way to be saved." This, alas, is the false reasoning of many in this day who regard their outward performance as constituting true righteousness.¹³

Aside from this, Spener makes no other critical comments on worship in his book. In fact, the only other references to worship are those which support the traditional view of Word and Sacrament. Following an affirmation of justification by faith, and a disclaimer of any possibility of salvation through good works, Spener claims:

We also gladly acknowledge the power of the Word of God when it is preached...

Nor do I know how to praise Baptism and its power highly enough...

Not less gladly do I acknowledge the glorious power in the sacramental, oral, and not merely spiritual eating and drinking.¹⁴

Thus it is safe to conclude that Spener advocated no program of reforming or tampering with the Lutheran liturgy, but

only wished to revitalize worship in people's lives and experience. His only open criticism of contemporary worship was of *preaching*: it was too polemical and rhetorical, and too far above the heads of the people.

Such a positive evaluation of Spener's view of worship is supported by various comments found elsewhere in his writings. His view of the ordained ministry appears to be orthodox and even "high". He allows that only those called and ordained may preach:

Are then all Christians preachers, and are they to exercise the preaching office? No. To exercise the office publicly in the congregation, before all and over all, requires a *special call*. Hence if anyone were to arrogate this to himself as a power over others, or were to encroach upon the office of the ministry, he would commit sin. (Romans 10:6, Hebrews 5:4)¹⁵

This high view of the ordained ministry extends also to the Sacraments, and here Spener reflects the traditional Lutheran view that emergency baptism by a layperson is valid, but that presidency at the Lord's Supper is the particular prerogative of the ordained clergy.

As to baptism... in a case of necessity, when no minister can be had, any *pious Christian* may perform the baptism, and such a baptism, if otherwise administered according to divine ordinance, is a true, valid, baptism. But as to the Lord's Supper, no case of necessity can ordinarily arise, because, when an ordained minister cannot be had, a person desiring comfort may be referred to the *spiritual communion* of faith.¹⁶

Spener even gives provisional approval to the use of written prayers. His remarks presumably refer to personal devotions, but would certainly also be applicable to public, liturgical prayer. "Certainly it is not improper if one reads prayers from books or prays by means of such prayers which he has learned by memory whenever they fit his own situation and himself specifically: indeed even a practised prayer often needs such encouragement."¹⁷ His only criticism of written prayers is not of the prayer, but of those who pray "... merely of the custom, without consideration, saying the words which they have learned or which they read from a book, and not thinking about them."¹⁸

The development of conventicles, small groups of Christians which met at a time and place apart from the public assembly of the congregation, has often been seen as a development

detrimental to public worship. This may have been the case. However, Spener makes it clear that this was not and should not be the intention of these gatherings.

... it cannot be wrong if several good friends sometimes meet expressly to go over a sermon together and recall what they have heard, to read in the Scriptures and to confer in the fear of the Lord how they may put into practise what they have read. Only the gathering should not be so large, so as not to have the appearance of a separation and a public assembly. Nor should they, by reason of them, neglect the public worship or condemn it, or disdain the ordained ministry.¹⁹

These passages point out what this study claims, that Spener had no intention of changing or reforming the content and shape of public worship and liturgy, other than to improve preaching; he had no intention of demeaning or setting aside the sacramental life of the church, nor of subtracting from the liturgical responsibilities of the ordained ministry.

Spener's successor, and the leader of the next generation of Pietism, became the second great figure in the development of this movement within Lutheranism: August Hermann Francke (1663–1727). Founder of the Halle School of Pietist theology, Francke has been described as more radical than Spener, more of an iconoclast, and less tolerant of Orthodoxy.

Here again, there is little evidence in Francke's writings to support any strong criticism of contemporary worship. Francke certainly shared the Pietist critique of orthodox formalism and emptiness in worship, and in a tract entitled *Pure and Unblemished Worship*, he defines this title as "... a threefold duty toward oneself, toward one's neighbor, and toward God, and consisting in the practise of the same through the power of the Holy Spirit."²⁰ Francke goes on to castigate those who worship without feeling or piety:

What help is there for us, then, if we always consider our worship to consist in going to church together, listening to one sermon after another, looking around in our prayer books at a certain time or praying some thoughts or another from our hearts, and at a certain time going to confession and the Lord's Supper, and yet always living according to our old manner?²¹

One may interpret this not as an attack on formal worship *per se*, but simply as an attack on its *abuse*, and as a call to *reform* such worship.

Francke shows some ambiguity with respect to preaching. On one occasion he shares in his *Autobiography* a clearly non-liturgical manner of choosing his text for preaching. Reflecting on a trip to Luneburg in 1687, he recalls:

I had hardly arrived when I was asked to present a sermon in the church of St. John's, and I was asked to do so a good time before the sermon was to be presented. My mind was in such a state that I was not only concerned with the mere preaching of a sermon, but chiefly with the upbuilding of the congregation. Thinking on this, the text came to me, "This is written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).²²

Yet elsewhere Francke seems to indicate that he also disciplined himself by using the traditionally appointed pericopal texts for preaching:

The Holy Scriptures treat of [spiritual discernment] very frequently, but nowhere more largely and clearly than in the second lesson of the morning service for this day [Romans 6].²³

[commenting on 1 Peter 2:21-25] Now then let us consider this matter carefully, so that we might properly learn to practise and to understand the words "Follow me". These words are found in the Epistle for today.²⁴

Although he advocated the cultivation of free prayer, Francke, like Spener, recognized the value of fixed prayer forms: in instructing their parishioners, ministers will find it useful, he says, "... to assist and furnish the more ignorant with words and fit expressions."²⁵ Presumably what is appropriate for private devotional prayer would also be appropriate in the public liturgy.

And so one finds that the perceived tension between Orthodoxy and Pietism in the area of worship was not something intended by the early Pietist leaders. In fact, there are clear indications that Spener and Francke adhered to some of the oldest traditions of Lutheran liturgical worship: in the areas of disciplined liturgical preaching, sacramental theology, the prerogative of the clergy to preside at the celebration of the sacraments and to preach, the use of written prayer forms, and the importance of outward duties such as confession.

We find no evidence of any intent here to abolish liturgical worship. The intent rather seems to be to re-vitalize what had become formalistic, external, and spiritually empty with

a sense of God's presence in and through worship. The only strong critique is reserved for preaching. But even here, there is no call to abolish preaching or the sermon, but simply to reform and renew it. There is also criticism of the scholastic approach to the Sacraments which appeared to the Pietists to border on *ex opere operato*. This too does not result in an attempt to abolish the sacraments, but simply to restore to them the meaning intended by Luther himself.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg

The most influential figure in the early history of Lutheranism in North America is without doubt Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711–1787). Muhlenberg's influence extended also to the worship life of Lutheranism in this period, as it was he and his associates who introduced the first common liturgy to the colonial churches. Muhlenberg was a Pietist of the Halle school.²⁶ He has left us with a fascinating account of his years of ministry in Pennsylvania through his diaries.²⁷ As Luther Reed reminds us, "His diaries, correspondences, and catechetical methods all indicate Pietistic strains and influences."²⁸

In the various congregations of colonial America in which he worked, Muhlenberg encountered a bewildering array of hymnals and service books, brought by the Lutheran settlers from Europe. This created considerable conflict and division among the churches. So Muhlenberg resolved that the formation of a common liturgy and hymnal was one of the top priorities in his task of uniting the congregations. Together with his colleagues, he prepared a liturgy which was adopted by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania at its first convention in 1748. An excerpt from Muhlenberg's diaries outlines the process which went into shaping this liturgy.

To adopt the Swedish liturgy did not appear either suitable or necessary since most of our congregations came from the districts of the Rhine and the Main, and considered the singing of collects to be papistical. Nor yet could we select a liturgy with regard to every individual's accustomed use, since almost every county, town, and village had its own. We therefore took the liturgy of the Savoy church in London as the basis, cut out parts and added to it according to what seemed to us to be profitable and edifying in these circumstances. This we adopted tentatively, until we had a better understanding of the matter, in order that the same ceremonies, forms, and words might be used in all our congregations.²⁹

Our first official North American Lutheran liturgy, then, came from St. Mary's Lutheran Church, a German congregation in London. Luther Reed has demonstrated³⁰ that the liturgy of *this* congregation (which was established in 1692) was based on a Dutch order of service, the so-called *Antwerp Agenda*, of 1567. In addition, Muhlenberg and his colleagues drew on other sources, mainly from memory, which they were familiar with from Germany. In spite of their Pietism, this order of service was an historic Lutheran Agenda of the conservative North German/Scandinavian type. It had five chapters in German (Public Worship, Baptism, Marriage, Confession and the Lord's Supper, and Burial), and two in English (Baptism and Marriage, borrowed directly from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer).

Carl Schalk has given us a fascinating reconstruction of worship in Muhlenberg's congregation at Providence, Pennsylvania.

They celebrated communion only infrequently: on Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and "at other times, as the necessities of the congregation might demand." Several Sundays before such a celebration, the pastor would announce from the pulpit when Holy Communion would be celebrated, and indicate the time when those who wished to commune should report to him and have their names recorded on the register of communicants kept by the congregation.

The day before Holy Communion would be celebrated, the communicants would gather at the church for a service of confession and absolution. Beginning with the singing of a penitential hymn by the congregation, the pastor, speaking from the pulpit, exhorted the people to repentance. After the Lord's Prayer, the pastor read aloud the names of all who had announced their desire to commune. Those who for good reason were unable to announce previously their desire to commune, did so during the singing of a hymn stanza, the pastor writing down their names.

Then calling first on the male communicants to come forward, he addressed several questions to the congregation regarding their confession and intent to lead a holy life. As the communicants knelt, one of them led the congregation in repeating aloud the words of confession, the pastor adding a few words of prayer. After the absolution by the pastor and the singing of another hymn verse, the service was closed with the benediction by the pastor.³¹

The men and women sat separately on opposite sides of the church,

the boys, apprentices and servants mounting the high-tiered seats in the gallery under the watchful eye of the sexton. . . . Under the gallery were the pews arranged for the elders and *Vorsteher* (a general term for church officers). . . . The sermon was the high point of the service; at least it was the longest, lasting often almost an hour.³²

The tone of such worship is, of course, lacking in the sense of celebration that one expects in eucharistic worship today, and one might be tempted to attribute this to the Pietist background of both clergy and people. However, one might just as easily attribute such gravity and seriousness to teutonic Orthodoxy!

A variety of other entries in Muhlenberg's diaries throw additional light on the worship practices of his day. There are indications that the Church Year was observed in a much more complete fashion than we have thought.

January 5, 1743. We celebrated the Festival of Epiphany in Providence, and I preached to the congregation, again in a barn.³³

March 6, 1753. . . . We sang a portion of Psalm 22 and Psalm 32, and I delivered a didactic sermon in English on the first two words of Christ on the cross. The people were very attentive.³⁴

Muhlenberg gives several indications that he practised disciplined liturgical preaching.

May 4, 1769. . . . It was a pleasure to conduct the service, and I preached on the Gospel for the Ascension of our Lord.³⁵

May 24, 1770. Rode four miles off to one side, to Barren Hill. There I found a numerous gathering, baptized three children, preached on the Ascension of Christ, etc.³⁶

June 11, 1775. . . . I preached on today's lesson, John 3:1ff.³⁷

We often hear how infrequently the Lord's Supper was celebrated in times past, and are told that this is an effect of the Pietist influence. There is strong indication that Holy Communion was not shared frequently. Muhlenberg indicates this in his summary of ministry for the year 1748:

November 5, 1748. In this past sixth year of my Pennsylvania pilgrimage, I administered the Lord's Supper twice in each of my regular congregations and outparishes, omitting only two Sundays when I was absent.³⁸

However, given the shortage of clergy in the colonies, perhaps this infrequency was due more to the number of congregations and the difficulty of travel than to neglect. Elsewhere,

Muhlenberg seems to indicate a more frequent celebration of the Eucharist than we have recognized:

October 30, 1774. I preached morning and afternoon in the local German Lutheran church. . . . They use the Halle hymnbook and sing well, but the pastor himself must lead the singing because they do not have a cantor. They are furnished with the Means of Grace every six weeks by the Rev. Mr. Rabenhorst.³⁹

Furthermore, there are several indications in the diaries that Muhlenberg was accustomed to carry the Sacrament to the elderly and ill in their homes.

Late in life Muhlenberg was given the task of preparing and editing a hymnbook for use in the colonial churches. He gives evidence of being aware of the tension between Orthodoxy and Pietism even in his choice of hymns. But his Halle background and training appears to be no barrier to bringing a balance in the choice of hymns to be included. He respects the formal and liturgical tradition in Lutheran worship, while also remaining sensitive to the Pietist sensibilities of his parishes and people.

Those (hymns) which expect the last judgment of the world in the too-near future and mention the signs that precede it I have left out. I also have not included those which, inspired by the Song of Solomon, are composed too close to the verge of sensuality, and also those that dally with diminutives—for example, “Little Jesus”, “little brother”, “little angels”, etc. These appear to be too childish and not in accord with Scripture, even though they were intended to be childlike and familiar. The ancient and medieval hymns, which have been familiar to all Lutherans from childhood on, cannot well be left out: even though they sound somewhat harsh in construction, rhyme, etc., they are nevertheless orthodox.⁴⁰

Summary

In this brief study we have tried to show that the perceived conflict between “Orthodox” Lutheranism and the Pietist tradition in the realm of public worship is not as profound as often imagined, at least in the case of Pietism’s original and most highly-respected leaders. Their purpose was to reform the church spiritually, and this appears to have involved no fundamental challenge to the historic form of Lutheran liturgical worship.

We are aware that, in the 19th and 20th centuries, voices within Lutheranism speaking from the Pietist vantage have

challenged the historic liturgy of the church. And voices representing the high-church viewpoint have spoken out against any concession on the part of historic liturgical worship towards the Pietistic style of spirituality.

Given the sorry state of Lutheranism in the seventeenth century following the Thirty Years' War, one must acknowledge the validity of the early Pietists' call for reform, and also the continuing need for this call to spiritual renewal today. At the same time, the position of Lutheranism within the tradition of the Western Catholic Church indicates that we will continue to identify with the Roman liturgical tradition, the only one of the original five Western Rites to survive.

However, as this study has shown, should the call for spiritual reform include an attack on liturgical worship as inherently inimical to true spiritual renewal, there will be little support to be had from the classic Pietist voices of Spener, Francke, and Muhlenberg. Conversely, should the cause of liturgical renewal try to cast aside the Pietist tradition in Lutheranism as irrelevant, precious little fuel for the fire will be gleaned from these same pastors.

Notes

- ¹ Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1947) 145-146.
- ² Carl Schalk, "German Hymnody," in Marilyn Kay Stulken (ed.), *The Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 31.
- ³ Frank Senn, *Christian Worship in its Cultural Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 103-104.
- ⁴ Jacob Tanner, *The Church that the Fathers Planned* (Moorhead, MN: Hauge Lutheran Inner Mission Federation, no date) 14. I am indebted to Pastor Ken Wilsdon of Bethel Lutheran Church, Elbow, SK, for providing a copy of this tract.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* 15.
- ⁶ Robert Overgaard, *Why Low-Church Lutherans?* (Fergus Falls, MN: Lutheran Brethren Publishing Company, no date) 2. I am indebted to my former teacher, Dr. George Evenson of Camrose, AB, for providing a copy of this tract.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* 6.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* 7.
- ⁹ Helmut Blume, "The Age of Confessionalism" in Helmut Blume (ed.), *Protestant Church Music* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1974) 149.
- ¹⁰ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 141.

- 11 Ibid. 143.
- 12 Theodore Tappert in Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964) 12.
- 13 Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 65–66.
- 14 Ibid. 63.
- 15 Spener, “The Spiritual Priesthood,” in Peter Erb (ed.), *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983) 54.
- 16 Ibid. 63.
- 17 Spener, “God-Pleasing Prayer,” in Erb, *Pietists*, 93.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Spener, “Spiritual Priesthood”, 63.
- 20 August Hermann Francke, “Pure and Unblemished Worship” in Erb, *Pietists*, 162.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Francke, “From the Autobiography,” in Erb, *Pietists*, 102.
- 23 Francke, “Sermon on the Resurrection of our Lord,” in Erb, *Pietists*, 130.
- 24 Francke, “Sermon on Following Christ,” in Erb, *Pietists*, 135.
- 25 Francke, “A Letter to a Friend Concerning the Most Useful Way of Preaching,” in Erb, *Pietists*, 117.
- 26 For discussion of Muhlenberg’s Pietism, cf. John Kleiner’s article in this issue of *Consensus* [Ed.].
- 27 *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1942–1958, three volumes). Our source here is the 1959 condensation of these diaries: John Doberstein and Theodore Tappert (eds.), *Notebook of a Colonial Clergyman* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).
- 28 Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 164.
- 29 Muhlenberg, 25.
- 30 Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 166.
- 31 Carl Schalk, “Sketches of Lutheran Worship” in Carl Schalk and Carl Halter (eds.), *Handbook of Church Music* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978) 77.
- 32 Ibid. 12.
- 33 Muhlenberg, 12.
- 34 Ibid. 70. Presumably, given the March date, this occurred during Lent.
- 35 Ibid. 125.
- 36 Ibid. 135.
- 37 Ibid. 155.
- 38 Ibid. 30.
- 39 Ibid. 146–147.
- 40 Ibid. 225.