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## Practical Theology.

### PUBLIC WORSHIP IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH.

#### I.

#### The Nature of Public Worship.

Religion is the relation between God and man wherein God confers upon man his spiritual blessings and man accepts and enjoys those blessings and in his turn devotes himself to the perpetual service of his God. This relation was ordained and established when God created man in his image, as St. Paul writes 1 Cor. 8, 6: *Ἐὶς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν*, which the English Bible renders, "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him" or, in the marginal reading, *and we for him.*" Man was made *for* God as well as *of* God. God was in the very beginning of mankind the *cause* of man and of all the perfections and blessings with which he was endowed, and at the same time the *end and aim* of man. Balduin pertinently comments upon the clause, *καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν*, "In elliptical speech he indicates the purpose of man whereunto he was created of God, namely the glory of God and the participation of eternal bliss in God."<sup>1</sup>) Man was created a *religious* being, designated for union and communion with God.

But the fall of man, which resulted in a total corruption of his nature, also resulted in a termination and utter perversion of his primeval relation to God. Natural man after the fall is *ἄθεος ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, "without God in the world." Man's iniquities have not only "separated be-

1) Notat elliptica oratione finem hominis, in quem sit a Deo conditus, nimirum gloriam Dei et salutis aeternae in Deo participationem. *Comment. in omnes ep. Pauli, ad loc. cit.*

tween him and his God," Is. 59, 2, but "the carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. 8, 7, the very reverse of religion, and what passed under the pretense of religion, the rites and ceremonies of pagan worship, was in fact "changing the truth of God into a *lie*, worshiping and serving the creatures rather than the Creator," *παρὰ τὸν κρίσαντα*, Rom. 1, 25.

And yet, God loved the world, John 3, 16., and *love* in God was his longing for union and communion with the objects of his holy desire. Though a woman may forget her sucking child, Is. 49, 15, God did not forget fallen mankind. He gave his only begotten son, John 3, 16, and God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, 2 Cor. 5, 19. The word there employed, *καταλλάσσειν, vi vocis* signifies a change, and a *thorough* change (*κατὰ*), of the existing relation. This is still more explicitly stated when St. Paul says that God "made peace through the blood of Christ's cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself," Col. 1, 20. And here the word *ἀποκαταλλάσσειν* is used, which by virtue of the preposition *ἀπὸ* indicates the *reestablishment* or *restitution* of the *former* relation. And it is, furthermore, remarkable that *καταλλάσσειν* and *ἀποκαταλλάσσειν* are never employed with God, but always with man, as their object.<sup>1)</sup> Man had been estranged from God; man was reconciled to God by the redemption in Christ Jesus. And now in him, in his name, man may again appear before his God with acceptable sacrifices. The Gospel whereby sinners are "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God," 1 Thes. 1, 9, is the Gospel by which the benefits of Christ, the Mediator, are appropriated to the individual sinner. God would bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ* only, according as he has chosen us *in him*, having predestinated us unto

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1) Rom. 5, 10. 1 Cor. 7, 10. 2 Cor. 5, 18. 19. 20. Eph. 2, 16. Col. 1, 20. 22.; also *καταλλαγῆ*, Rom. 5, 11. 11, 15.

the adoption of children by *Jesus Christ* to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted *in the beloved*, in whom we have redemption through his blood.<sup>1)</sup> "It is from eternity decreed of the Father, that whom he would save, he would save through Christ, as he himself says, 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me,' and again, 'I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.'"<sup>2)</sup> Thus also, we are "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*;"<sup>3)</sup> all our worship with praise and thanksgiving is vain, unless it be offered up "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>4)</sup> Religion, or communion with God, and the exercise of religion, true worship of God, is possible only in union with Christ, and through Christ, by whom we are children of God.

Into this relation, man, who is by nature a child of wrath,<sup>5)</sup> can enter only by regeneration,<sup>6)</sup> which is, essentially, the bestowal of faith. By faith in Christ Jesus we are the children of God,<sup>7)</sup> and by the washing of regeneration,<sup>8)</sup> we have put on Christ, having been baptized *into* Christ,<sup>9)</sup> and are now "alive to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord."<sup>10)</sup> Every Christian may and should appropriate to himself the words of St. Paul, "God, whose I am, and whom I serve."<sup>11)</sup> The word here employed in the original, *λατρεύειν*, as also *λατρεῖα*, is, in the N. T., used exclusively of religious service. These two things, to be God's, and to serve God, must always go together. Without the *εἶναι θεοῦ*, there can be no *λατρεύειν θεῷ*, and where the former

1) Eph. 1, 3—7.

2) Formula of Concord, Sol. Decl. XI, 66.

3) 1 Pet. 2, 5.

4) Eph. 5, 20. Col. 3, 17.

5) Eph. 2, 3.

6) John 3, 3, 5.

7) Gal. 3, 26.

8) Tit. 3, 5.

9) Gal. 3, 27.

10) Rom. 6, 11.

11) Acts 27, 23: θεοῦ, οὐ εἰμι καὶ ᾧ λατρεύω.

is, there the latter is sure to be. As true as the words of Christ are when he says, "Without me ye can do nothing,"<sup>1)</sup> as true are also the words spoken immediately before, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."<sup>2)</sup> Religion, being a relation between God, who is life, and regenerate man, walking in newness of life, must be active, and mutually active, God graciously giving and man willingly receiving; man willingly offering and God graciously accepting the offerings of his children.

The children of God collectively considered are the *Church*. All Christians are said to be "of the household of faith,"<sup>3)</sup> and "of the household of God,"<sup>4)</sup> one great family of the one God and Father of all.<sup>5)</sup> They are united in one spiritual organism, the body of Christ,<sup>6)</sup> who is the one and only head of his body,<sup>7)</sup> and in all of them, "worketh that one and selfsame Spirit,"<sup>8)</sup> the Spirit of holiness, of prayer, by whom they cry, *Abba, Father.*<sup>9)</sup> While "unto every one of them is given grace according to the gift of Christ,"<sup>10)</sup> the various gifts are also intended for "the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ,"<sup>11)</sup> for mutual instruction and admonition,<sup>12)</sup> and for common sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.<sup>13)</sup> Every congregation of Christians is a religious community; and as religion is not a dormant relation, but alive and active, the communion of religion demands or implies common exercise of religion, or *public worship*, worship not of the individual only in his heart or in his closet, but of the household of God, the congregation of children of God,

1) John 15, 5.                      2) Ibid.                      3) Gal. 6, 10: *οἰκεῖοι τῆς πίστεως.*

4) Eph. 2, 19: *οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ.*                      5) Eph. 4, 6.

6) Eph. 4, 16. Rom. 12, 4. 8. 1 Cor. 12, 12—31.

7) Eph. 1, 22. 4, 15. 16. 5, 23. Col. 1, 18. 2, 19.

8) 1 Cor. 12, 11.                      9) Rom. 8, 15.                      10) Eph. 4, 7.

11) Eph. 4, 12—16. 1 Cor. 12, 4—7. 25.

12) Col. 3, 16.                      13) Col. 3, 15. 16.

jointly and in common meeting their God, receiving of him the blessings of his bounty, and offering up to him their sacrifices. Public worship is a manifestation of the life and health and vigor of the Church, the body of Christ, and, likewise, by divine ordinance, an institution intended for and conducive to the perpetuation and extensive and intensive increase of the Church and its members. Whatever is inconsistent with the true nature of the Church, or not conducive to its prosperity, or foreign to the spiritual priesthood of its members, is out of keeping with the nature of public worship.

## II.

### The Agents in Public Worship.

Religion being active communion between God and man, and public worship, the public exercise of that communion, the very nature of public worship implies and demands that in the religious exercises of the congregation, assembled in Christ's name, he being in the midst of them, both God and man be mutually active in a mode and manner peculiar to the exercise of religion. And it has been said by an author not a theologian, that Christianity is the only religion which has no place for human mediators. Christians are all of them priests, 1 Pet. 2, 9. Apoc. 1, 6. 5, 10, having free access to the throne of grace,<sup>1)</sup> and to the holiest.<sup>2)</sup> Our congregations are not by any means usurping rights and privileges not properly their own, but rather exercising their spiritual birthright, when with one accord they voice forth their songs and chants, the incense of their prayers and other sacrifices rising from their own lips to the throne of Majesty. It is in recognition of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians assembled for, and active in, their common worship, that the collects and other common prayers of our public services are according to our Liturgies

1) Heb. 4, 16.

2) Heb. 10, 19.

preceded by the words of exhortation, "Let us pray." Considered from this point of view, the use of a Liturgy or Book of Forms in public worship is highly appropriate, inasmuch as by the acceptance of the Agenda the congregation recognizes the forms of prayer therein contained as its own prayers to be pronounced in the name of the entire congregation, and the minister should not, therefore, without good and sufficient reason change those forms and deviate from them while he is the mouth of the congregation as he reads or chants the forms of the Liturgy.

But here it should be noted, that in a visible congregation assembled for public worship those only who are members of the invisible church of Christ, the true believers, are also true worshipers. The songs and prayers of all the hypocrites who may occupy pews among or with the true worshipers are not truly acts of worship, but the mere semblance of what they appear to be. The exercise of religion is impossible without religion. Thus also, the minister, when he pronounces the prayers of the assembled worshipers, is the mouth of the true believers only, not of hypocrites. The *Amen* of the congregation, whereby the worshipers acknowledge as their own the prayer uttered by their minister, is truly Yea and Amen only as it comes from hearts that put their trust and confidence in God through Jesus Christ. The recital of the Creed, spoken by the minister and confirmed by the *Amen* of the congregation, or spoken in concert or sung in the metrical form of a hymn by the congregation, in our public services, is expressive of our recognition of the priesthood of all believers and of true believers only, in our public worship, according to the words of Christ: "They that worship the Father must worship him in spirit and in truth."<sup>1)</sup>

Thus, then, the Christian congregation of believers is on the one hand active in the religious exercises of the

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1) John 4, 24.

church, and though the congregation may, and in a measure does, give utterance to what is in the hearts and minds of all, through the mouth of an individual person, that person is not a mediator between God and the congregation, but a minister in the service of his brethren.

But the minister is also a servant of *God*. God is also active in the public exercise of religion, and that also without the intercession of human mediators beside the one Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ,<sup>1)</sup> in whom God has blessed us and continues to bless us with all spiritual blessings.<sup>2)</sup> And yet God will not deal with us immediately, but only through the means of grace.<sup>3)</sup> In all places where he records his name, he will come unto us, and will bless us;<sup>4)</sup> and the record of his name is in his word and sacraments. The words of St. Paul directed to the church of Corinth apply to all congregations: "Ye are enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."<sup>5)</sup> The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;<sup>6)</sup> it is the hand of God filled with all the blessings intended for the children of God, even as faith is the hand whereby those blessings are received by the children of God.

And not only has God determined by what means he would visit his people in the sanctuary, but he has also ordained in what manner those means are to be publicly administered. "Let all things be done decently and in order,"<sup>7)</sup> says St. Paul, and the "order," the divine *τάξις* for the public administration of the means of grace is that of the ministerial office. The ministers of Christ are to be

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1) 1 Tim. 2, 5.

2) Eph. 1, 3.

3) Augsb. Conf. Art. V. Smalc. Art. P. III, Art. VIII, 3. 9. F. C. Sol. Decl. II, 48. 50. 52.

4) Exod. 20, 24.

5) 1 Cor. 1, 5. 6.

6) Rom. 1, 16.

7) 1 Cor. 14, 40: πάντα εἰσχημένως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω.



stewards of God,<sup>1)</sup> and of the mysteries of God.<sup>2)</sup> Christ has given pastors and teachers for the perfection of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,<sup>3)</sup> and where the church is assembled for common edification, and to receive grace for grace from the fulness of Christ, the ministers of Christ are to exercise their stewardship in the work of the ministry, preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. The Augsburg Confession says, "That no one should teach or preach publicly in the church, or administer the sacraments, except he be rightly called."<sup>4)</sup> And when and where the minister of Christ performs the functions of his office, God by his word and sacrament through his servant offers forth the spiritual gifts of his goodness and mercy, the Father in heaven through his steward dispenses and distributes to the children of the household what they have come to ask and to receive. And since it is God who by his means of grace gives and appropriates what they contain, the faith or unbelief of the minister does not affect the efficacy or validity of the words by him pronounced or the acts by him performed. While the Christian is a member of the church and a true worshiper by virtue of his regeneration, or inasmuch as he is in a state of faith, the minister is a minister of God and of the church by virtue of his call, as the Apology says: "The sacraments, baptism, etc., are not void of efficacy or power because they may be administered by unworthy and godless men. For because of the call of the church such men are there;"<sup>5)</sup> and Luther says: "The call and commission makes pastors and preachers;"<sup>6)</sup> and Chemnitz: "The chief strength of the ministry is this, that it is God's

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1) Tit. 1, 7: *οἰκονόμος θεοῦ.*

2) 1 Cor. 4, 1: *οἰκονόμοι μυστηρίων θεοῦ.*

3) Eph. 4, 11. 12.

4) Art. XIV.

5) Apol. De Eccles. 28. Lat. text: "Repraesentant Christi personam propter vocationem ecclesiae."

6) Walch V, 1061.

will to be with the ministry by his Spirit and grace and efficaciously work thereby. And he who is legitimately called to the ministry and duly administers that office, may surely hold that to him also such promises pertain as Is. 49, 2, and again, ch. 51, 16 . . . Luke 1, 76 . . . 1 Tim. 4, 16 . . . 1 Cor. 15, 58 . . . 1 Cor. 9, 9 . . . 2 Cor. 2, 12.'<sup>1)</sup> For this reason we say with the Augsburg Confession: "The sacraments and the word are effectual, by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, though they be delivered by evil men."<sup>2)</sup>

What has been said concerning the agents in public worship is at variance with and in direct antithesis to the doctrine of the Roman church, according to which the only real agent in the public exercise of religion is, in fact, the priest. It is the priest who ever anew offers up unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead and carries before God the prayers of the congregation. In all this there is really no occasion for active concurrence on the part of the congregation. The priest is the mediator between God in heaven and the congregation on earth and in purgatory. The Roman mass with its prayers and other forms couched in words of a language unintelligible to the people and chanted, or spoken in an undertone, in the presence or absence of a congregation, with responses and sequences, Gloria and Credo, sung by a choir in the same foreign language above a silent congregation, is not an exercise of communion between God and man, but a demonstration indicative and variously expressive of a separation between God and man necessitating the intercession of priests not of the people but separated from the people by their or-

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1) Praecipuus ministerii nervus est, quod Deus Spiritu suo et gratia sua vult ministerio adesse et per illud efficaciter operari. Est qui legitime ad ministerium vocatus est et rite illud administrat, illi certe potest statuere ad se etiam pertinere illas promissiones Jes. 1, 76 cet. *Loci theol.* III, m. p. 120.

2) A. C. Art. VIII.

dination, celibacy, chancels, language, and privileges, performing in the gulf between God and man the mysterious rites of an expiatory sacrifice in open denial of the sufficiency of the sacrifice once offered up on Calvary. The Roman mass is, thus, so far from being a form of Christian worship, that it is rather the pomp of Antichrist, an abomination of desolation standing in holy places, which should be shunned by every one who would bear the name of a Christian.

On the other hand, the Lutheran conception of public worship is not that of the Zwinglian and Calvinistic churches. According to the reformed theologies, the word and sacraments are not really the means of grace whereby God offers the gifts of his grace and works in us the acceptance of such gifts. Though reformed theologians speak of "means of grace," their enumeration of what they term means of grace, and their utterances on the work of the Spirit show their position to differ very widely from ours. Shedd, in his Dogmatic Theology, gives the first place among his "means of grace" to "Confession of faith and church fellowship."<sup>1</sup>) In the same sense he terms the Word of God and the Sacraments means of grace.<sup>2</sup>) In another place he writes: "The appointed means of grace are the word, the sacraments, and prayer."<sup>3</sup>) Of the sacraments he says: "They are means of grace, dependent like the other means upon the accompanying operation of the Holy Spirit and consequent faith in the soul of the recipient."<sup>4</sup>) The operation of the Spirit is here conceived as *accompanying* the sacraments, not as exerted *through* the sacraments as the *means* whereby the Spirit mediately performs his work, and as "dependent upon consequent faith," not as an instrumental *cause* of faith, entering in between the efficient cause and the subject in which the effect is to be produced. According to Zwingli, all sacraments are so

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1) Vol. II, p. 562.

3) Ibid. p. 506.

2) Ibid. p. 526. 563.

4) Ibid. p. 564.

far from conferring grace as not even to bring it nearer.<sup>1)</sup> And of "Prayer as a Means of Grace" Dr. Hodge writes: "Means of grace, as before stated, are those means which God has ordained for the end of communicating the life-giving and sanctifying influences of the Spirit to the souls of men. Such are the word and sacraments, and such is prayer. It has not only the relation which any other cause has to the end for which it was appointed, and thus is the condition on which the blessings of God, providential or spiritual, are bestowed; but it brings us nearer to God, who is the source of all good."<sup>2)</sup> This view of the means of grace must result in a confusion of the agencies active in public worship, a shifting of the twofold relation of the minister of Christ and of the congregation, and an utter impossibility of properly classifying the various acts of public worship of which it is our intention to treat in subsequent chapters.

A. G.

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1) Credo, ino, scio, omnia sacramenta tam abesse ut gratiam conferant, ut ne adferant quidem. Zwinglii Fidei Ratio. Ed. Niemeyer, p. 24.

2) Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 708.

*(To be continued.)*

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