

The Continuing Relevance of the Formula of Concord: *Article X and the Lutheran Worship Wars*



MATHIAS FLACCIVS
Theologus Tenensis.

Matthias Flaccius



MARTINUS CHEMNITIVS
Superint: Brunswicens.



1526
VIVENTIS POTUIT DIVERTIVS ORA PHILIPPI
VALENTIA NON POTUIT PINGERE DOCTA
MANVS
JDL

Philip Melancthon

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Formula of Concord
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“I can do what I wanna do. It’s my prerogative.” Those were the words of a popular song in the 80’s. Rugged individualist Americans loved the tune, but also the message. That was the “Me” decade, and not much has changed since. Really, the 80’s was not a break with a previous American *Weltanschauung*, but an expansion of the long-glorified ideal of the self-reliant, self-made American man. Each man is and almost always has been in American culture an island, at least when it comes to opinions, preferences, and freedoms.

How has this translated into the American church scene, in specific, the American Lutheran church scene, which quite logically is made up of Americans? This student, at least in his own ruggedly individual view, thinks that this individualism in the above-mentioned matters has in a large part fed the modern Lutheran worship wars, wars which some would say have wreaked more havoc than the infamous “Battle for the Bible” waged in the last century. Why? Because worship is what the man in the pew sees, hears, and speaks. It is what grandma memorized in the hymnal, or that in which baby-boomer mother wants to find something to make her feel “spiritual.” But worship is bigger than you and I. It is an expression of something more than emotion and taste. It is more than a question of style and method, standing and kneeling, crossing one’s self and praying with open arms. Worship, *lex orandi*, is the concrete expression, in so far as this can always be concrete, of the faith (*fides quae*), *lex credendi*, by, to, and for those who express that faith (*fides qua*), who are this side of heaven always *simul iustus et peccator*. For that reason, worship is intrinsically important to the life and vigor of the church visible as it gives birth, through the Word and sacraments that it contains and upon which it is best founded, to the Church invisible.¹ For that reason, namely, that it is by, to, for those who are *simul iustus et peccator*, it is also subject to our human weaknesses, ignorance, selfishness, and personal motives. A glance at church history will prove just that. Any movement that seeks to change the teaching of the church will almost without exception at some point be compelled to change the worship of the church to meet that end. Anywhere that Scripture is not understood or taught with all clarity, in that place worship will also as a result suffer inconsistencies. Anywhere selfish tastes and preferences, and not humble submission to and love for

¹ Former president of the LC-MS, A.L. Barry wrote an interesting essay entitled “Lutheran Worship: 2000 and Beyond,” which can be found at <http://worship.lcms.org/2000theses.html>. He writes in Thesis I:

I am not sure whether we have adequately emphasized this important truth. God gives His gifts. We receive them. That is the main purpose of Lutheran worship. He does this as His Gospel is proclaimed, as His Word is read, as His forgiveness is announced and sinners are absolved, and as we receive our Lord's body and blood in Holy Communion. In these wonderful ways, God is present with us, His people, drawing us to Himself and giving us what we need so much--His mercy, forgiveness, love, joy, peace, power and comfort! The purpose of worship, therefore, is to be gathered by God around His gifts.

the Scriptures, dominates a worship committee, there will be strong, even predominant currents of subjectivity that overshadow the universal and objective reality of the gospel in Word and sacrament.

One glaring example of the aforesaid is seen in the adiaphoristic controversy, one of the most bitter and disastrous controversies the Evangelical Lutheran Church has suffered to this day, which ultimately led to Article X of the Formula of Concord, which by God's good grace settled the issue for a majority of Lutheranism, and which by Satan's wicked scheming is in desperate need of our attention today.

To many, this may seem a pointless task or a needless delving into nonessentials and indifferent things, things that just don't make a difference anyways. However, as David Scaer notes:

Adiaphora is a Greek word that means "things morally indifferent" or "nonessentials in faith or conduct." It would hardly seem that the church would need an article of doctrine on things that *really do not matter* [italics mine]. But it was a controversy over adiaphora that precipitated the first recognizable split in Lutheran ranks after Luther's death.²

When improperly employed, these nonessentials can become essentially sinful and thus will matter immensely. Through proper employment, these nonessentials may work as vehicles for gospel proclamation in the divine service, and thus will be, in the layman's mind at least, in a way connected with the gospel, and in this way also of immense importance. It is telling that those who sought to excuse any and every practice not commanded or forbidden as indifferent—almost always failing to regard the logical consequences of these ceremonies, the agenda³ behind them, and the impression they left on the Hans and Margareta in the pew—were labeled as "indifferentists." Something that is in and of itself an adiaphora may be anything but indifferent. As our own synod's premier theologian wrote in the *Quartalschrift*:

Accordingly it is highly needed that the Christian recognize the proper understanding of adiaphora so that he may, not only know that all stands free for him, but also that not everything is beneficial for him and the danger that he may fall into through the employment of adiaphora in ungodliness.⁴

As our Seminary's statue of Luther declares in the memorable words of the same, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

May God grant that in the following study of Article X of the Formula and its application to the Lutheran worship wars being waged today we may remember the words of these men and faithfully unravel what the confessors, and most importantly the Scriptures which they faithfully and

² *Getting into the Story of Concord*, David Scaer, pages 90-91.

³ How ironic that the very same word used for the book that gives liturgical details and explanations for worship is also the word commonly used for a hidden motive or goal.

⁴ *Quartalschrift*, 9.1, part three of a three part series on adiaphora. This is my translation of the German.

properly confessed, have to say. To this end, we must first define adiaphora (*Mitteldingen, res media et indifferentes*).

Adiaphora Defined

Webster does not define adiaphora as it is a term largely familiar only to confessional Lutheranism. Hoenecke in his three part work *Von den Mitteldingen*, does not define adiaphora rigidly but allows Scripture, the Confessions, and of course Luther, to describe what it is and is not.⁵ In Bente, we read, “Ceremonies which God has neither commanded nor prohibited are adiaphora (*res mediae, Mitteldinge*) and *ceteris paribus* (other things being equal), may be observed or omitted, adopted or rejected.”⁶ I would conjecture that that phrase, “ceremonies which God has neither commanded nor prohibited,” would be close to the definition one would solicit from the average Wisconsin Synod pastor in the parish, and it is a good one, for it is the same as what our Fathers employed in the Formula: “Concerning ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but have been introduced into the Church for the sake of good order and propriety, a dissension has also occurred among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession.”⁷ This will be the definition employed by this study as well: “ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word.”

A Brief History of the Adiaphoristic Controversy

The adiaphoristic controversy was a result of the Augsburg (1548) and Leipzig (1552) Interims. The Emperor, victorious after the Smalcaldic War, bolstered by newfound political stability and eager to throw around his quickly gained weight, sought to reunify his territories under the auspices of the Roman Church through measures intended to lead to an eventual reconciliation and reunification of Rome and the Church of the Augsburg Confession. The first Interim, the Augsburg Interim, did not find much acceptance as many territories rejected it outright and took their chances as far as reprisal was concerned. Maurice, the Judas of Meissen, unhappy with the Augsburg Interim, put his theologians, many of whom were the same men who had studied under and labored with Luther, to work on a new Interim, the Leipzig Interim. This Interim drew even more ire within Lutheranism, especially from the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans (Flacius, Wigand, Amsdorf, Westphal, and Aurifaber, some of whom would end up entwined in further controversies resulting in Formula articles, some for better and some for worse). The arguments of the Interimists, as they came to be called, were based on convenience and syllogisms, not on Scripture. The reality was that the compromises were made and tolerated for fear of persecution or personal losses. The opening

⁵ This series appeared in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* in 1910.

⁶ Bente, 109. This appears in Bente’s description of the anti-Adiaphorists’ position.

⁷ *Triglotta*, 829. Epitome, X.1.

paragraph of the Leipzig Interim is more telling than its authors probably ever realized when read in retrospect:

Our concern is based upon our desire to be obedient to the Roman Imperial Majesty and to conduct ourselves in such a way that his Majesty realize that our interest revolves only around *tranquility, peace and unity*. This is our counsel, made in good faith; it is what we ourselves want to serve and promote wherever possible. For in contrast to what some say and write about us—without any basis—our concern and our intention are always directed not toward causing schism and complications, but rather toward *peace and unity*. We testify to that in the very presence of God, to whom all human hearts are known. Our actions will demonstrate that.⁸ [italics mine]

How much more should the fact that they “testify...in the very presence of God, to whom all human hearts are known” have led them to confess the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in which all real “tranquility, peace and unity” is found, even in the most violent tribulations this world can produce. The “tranquility, peace and unity” they sought was not of God, but of men, which is a mortal, transitory, and fallacious “tranquility, peace and unity” doomed to inevitable destruction. Like Judas, they betrayed our Lord, in the form of His Church, whose marks are His Word and sacraments, into the hands of the temporal powers of this world (a Holy Roman Emperor instead of a Roman governor), to be mocked, mistreated, and defiled.

The resultant controversy led to a disastrous and extremely personal division within the Church of the Augsburg Confession, and between two stalwarts of Lutheranism, Philip Melanchthon and Mathaias Flacius in particular. Eventually Melanchthon would admit his opponents were correct in their stance, though he would deny he erred doctrinally. However the divisions, both territorial and interpersonal, resultant from the adiaphoristic controversy, would begin the demarcation of clear lines within Lutheranism according to which to a great extent various other controversies would split (e.g. Crypto-Calvinistic, Majoristic, Synergistic, etc.). Melanchthon, or perhaps more accurately, Melanchthonians, his followers who would go further than their professor and mentor ever did, would oftentimes find themselves on the wrong side of the fence in this and other battles, while the *Gnesio-Lutherans*, in their zeal to preserve Luther’s Reformation and Scripture’s truth would at times err as well (e.g. Flacius on original sin and Amsdorf on good works).

Permit two short interesting accounts from this controversy. Persecution was rampant throughout Germany as those—especially pastors—who refused to accept the Interim were threatened with removal from office, exile, and even in some circumstances death. John Frederick, the deposed elector of Saxony, was one in particular who was persecuted by the emperor for refusing to accept the Interims. “The emperor, infuriated at him, intensified his imprisonment and robbed him of Luther’s writings and a printed copy of Luther’s translation of the Bible. However it was in vain.

⁸ *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, 184

‘The books,’ the elector said, ‘one can very well take from me; however what I have learned from them, one cannot tear out of my heart’” (476). And:

In Northern Germany, the common man among the active Lutheran Christians also straightaway perceived that in the reception of the Interims a denial of the evangelical truth was involved and that they wanted to gradually bring back into the church, through a back door, the entire papacy. They received those who distributed the Interims as crucifiers of Christ, and the saying ran:

Blessed is the man,
Who can rely on God
And does not accept the Interims;
For it has the scoundrel behind it.⁹

Thanks be to God for such resilience on the part of His children, in the face of even the most venomous threats of the enemy.

The Formula itself defines the essence of the controversy as follows:

Concerning ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but are introduced into the Church with a good intention, for the sake of good order and propriety, or otherwise to maintain Christian discipline, a dissension has likewise arisen among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession: the one side holding that also in time of persecution and in case of confession [when confession of faith is to be made], even though the enemies of the gospel do not come to an agreement with us in doctrine, yet some ceremonies, abrogated [long since], which in themselves are adiaphora, and neither commanded nor forbidden by God, may, without violence to conscience, be reestablished in compliance with the pressure and demand of the adversaries, and thus in such [things which are of themselves] adiaphora, or matters of indifference, we may indeed come to an agreement [have conformity] with them. But the other side contended that in time of persecution, in case of confession, especially when it is the design of the adversaries, either through force and compulsion, or in an insidious manner, to suppress the pure doctrine, and gradually to introduce again into our churches their false doctrine, this, also in adiaphora, can in no way be done, as has been said, without violence to conscience and prejudice to the divine truth.¹⁰

This was the question: In adiaphora, may one submit to the demands of the enemy—whether emperor or pope—to restore, by coercion, ceremonies which are now no longer in use or which are associated with a church body that denies the gospel as well as campaigns against the clear preaching of it? FC X provides the all-important answer.

The Formula’s Answer

In approaching the Formula’s answer to the challenges and questions raised by this tumultuous time in Lutheran history, it would perhaps be best to first look at the Scripture on which Article X stands and from which the confessors mined what has now become this confessional

⁹ Translation from this book is my own. *Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche fuer Lutherische Leser Nordamerikas ausgewaehlt und bearbeitet*, by E.A. Wilh. Krauss was published by CPH in 1911. The poem appears as follows in the German:

Selig is der Mann,
Der Gott vertrauen kann
Und willigt nicht ins Interim;
Denn es hat den Schalk hinter ihm.

¹⁰ *Triglotta. Thorough Declaration, X.1-3.*

treasure of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Following are some of the passages quoted by the Formula with brief comments when beneficial.

Matthew 15:9: *“They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”* See also Isaiah 29:13. The Roman Church of Melanchthon’s day had not changed its stripes from the days preceding Luther’s passing to glory. It was still a church wrapped in Pharisaical systems of work righteousness, leading only to self-righteousness or despair. In permitting Rome to invade Wittenberg in the form of rites and rubrics, the adiaphorists betrayed the cause of the very man buried beneath the pulpit from which they preached every Lord’s Day.¹¹ The lay person’s eyes, which Luther had labored so tirelessly by the grace of God to pry from an unbroken fixation upon works, relics, novenas, processions, and blasphemous sacrifices, were now, whether by the intention of the adiaphorists or not, being once again directed to the ceremonies and superstitions that had once before transfixed them. Christ’s warning once again needed to be sounded. Ceremonies, even when instituted for good order, with fine intentions, and used in a beneficial way, are nevertheless, “in and of themselves no divine worship, nor even a part of it.”¹²

1 Corinthians 8:9: *“Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”* Was any congregation in the New Testament any more embroiled in an adiaphoristic controversy of its own than that at Corinth? Paul lays down this principle for the congregation there. Here we see Paul’s care for the weak, which is echoed in Romans 14:13: *“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.”* The Epitome echoes Paul’s call for care in regard to the weak in faith: *“Herein all frivolity and offense should be avoided, and special care should be taken to exercise forbearance towards the weak in faith.”*¹³

¹¹ E.A. Wilh. Krauss writes in *Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche fuer Lutherische Leser Nordamerikas ausgewaehlt und bearbeitet*, which I have translated as follows:

Was perhaps Wittenberg the place from which the Lutheran people began their struggle against the will of the emperor? Unfortunately, no. Indeed, in the beginning, when the Augsburg Interim appeared, Melanchthon especially had still recognized that the eyes of the Lutheran Church after Luther’s death rested on him more than on any other, and he had written against the Interim. Not so sharply, not so clearly as a Luther would have done it, not so decisively; however it had nevertheless happened; he still had said: “If they will also threaten us with battle and destruction, we should still regard the Word of God more highly and not deny the revealed truth of the gospel.” However, as he reported, Emperor Charles V was especially enraged against him and regarded him as “one out of the *fuernehmsten Laermblaesern*,” then he became weak and worked in association with his colleagues at Wittenberg to produce a writing wherein he indeed denied the truth not as coarsely as had been done by Johann Agricola, but nevertheless still indicated one could for a time tolerate the papist ceremonies forced upon them, recognize the pope as the ruler of the Church, and employ ambiguous language in the contested doctrines. In December of 1548 this writing was received in a meeting of the provincial diet in Leipzig, and this writing now was called the “Leipzig Interim.” It was terrifying that Melanchthon could sink so low, and that Paul Eber, George Major, and the Leipzig Superintendent Pfeffinger could support him, and that also the old Bugenhagen could find no decisive word of opposition to make against it. (479)

¹² *Triglotta*, 829. Epitome, X.3.

¹³ *Triglotta*, 829. X.5.

Galatians 5:1: “*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*” Precisely when rites and practices excepting of course the sacraments, which are by nature mandates,¹⁴ are commanded, as though they were necessary to please our God or merit salvation, those rites and practices become an affront to the gospel, robbing the Christian of the freedom Christ has won him.

Galatians 2:5: “*We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.*” Flacius, Chemnitz, Andreae, and all the Anti-Adiaphorists could confidently profess this with Paul.

2 Corinthians 6:14: “*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*” Where there is no commonality in teaching (*lex credendi*), there should be no impression of commonality in teaching presented through the *lex orandi*. Church rites are to be rejected:

Namely, when under the title and pretext of external adiaphora such things are proposed as are in principle contrary to God’s Word (although painted another color), these are not to be regarded as adiaphora, in which one is free to act as he will, but must be avoided as things prohibited by God. In like manner, too, such ceremonies should not be reckoned among the genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference, as make a show or feign the appearance, as though our religion and that of the Papists were not far apart, thus to avoid persecution, or as though the latter were not at least highly offensive to us; or when such ceremonies are designed for the purpose, and required and received in this sense, as though by and through them both contrary religions were reconciled and became one body; or when a reentering into the Papacy and a departure from the pure doctrine of the gospel and true religion should occur or gradually follow there from [when there is danger lest we seem to have reentered the Papacy, and to have departed, or to be on the point of departing gradually, from the pure doctrine of the gospel].¹⁵

Why?

¹⁴ Chemnitz teaches in this regard (Examination of the Council of Trent, Part II, page 109:

When therefore the question is asked whether the administration of the sacraments ought to be made without any certain and particular external rites, the answer is clear and obvious. For the very name and definition of a sacrament embraces the presence of some visible and external element to which the Word must come and includes this, that the whole action is performed and administered in a certain way and with a specific divinely instituted ceremony. How this ought to be done has been stated in Scripture and traced beforehand for the church in a sure and clear word of God, namely, that those signs and those words should be used which God himself instituted and prescribed at the institution of each sacrament and that they should be performed and used as the institution ordains and directs. These rites are essential and necessary in the administration of the sacraments, for they carry out the institution. Furthermore, it is clear from Scripture that the apostolic church in the administration of the sacraments carefully observed this, that they should not be mute spectacles but that the doctrine concerning the essence, use, and efficacy of the sacraments should faithfully be set forth and explained to those present and about to receive the sacraments, from the Word of God and in a language to which they were accustomed and which was known to them, and that those who were about to use the sacraments, having been rightly instructed, should be diligently admonished concerning their lawful and salutary reception. The Acts of the Apostles and Paul (1 Cor. 11:23 ff.) describe the administration of Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper on the basis of their institution: “Preach the gospel!” Likewise: “Whoever believes.” And: “Do this in remembrance of Me”; “You proclaim the Lord’s death”; “Let a man examine himself,” etc. That also prayers were used, and thanksgivings taken from the institution of the sacrament itself, Scripture clearly testifies. For the institution testifies that Christ gave thanks and that He commanded the church to do it: “Do this.” And Paul says: “You proclaim the Lord’s death.” Likewise (Acts 22:16): “Be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of Jesus.”

¹⁵ *Triglotta*, 1053. Thorough Declaration, X.5.

By such [untimely] yielding and conformity in external things, where there has not been previously Christian union in doctrine, idolaters are confirmed in their idolatry; on the other hand, the true believers are grieved, offended, and weakened in their faith [their faith is grievously shaken, and made to totter as though by a battering-ram]; both of which every Christian for the sake of his soul's welfare and salvation is bound to avoid, as it is written: *Woe unto the world because of offenses! Also: Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea* [Matt. 18, 6, 7].¹⁶

Paragraph 7 of the Thorough Declaration also reflects 1 Corinthians 10:23, though they it is not cited. In this verse Paul answers those who cry “Freedom. Freedom. Freedom” regardless of profit and benefit for the flock of Christ, “*Everything is permissible for me’-- but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me’-- but I will not be mastered by anything.*” We read in the Formula: “Likewise, when there are useless, foolish displays, that are profitable neither for good order nor Christian discipline, nor evangelical propriety in the Church, these also are not genuine adiaphora, or matters of indifference.”¹⁷ No smells just to have smells, or bells just to have bells, but also no touchy-feely song, no performance, or some special little order detached from Law and gospel, detached from Christ himself, just because “people like it.” Both ditches, that of Romanizing and that of mimicking the Evangelicals,¹⁸ end up with “foolish displays,” foolish because they are built on the foundation of men, whether they be liturgicists or “Spirit-filled worship leaders,” and not on the Rock, that is, Christ.¹⁹ The question for the confessors is always, “Is it beneficial?” “Is it permissible?” is merely the steppingstone to that point. J.P. Koehler’s second thesis on adiaphora makes a similar contention: “The employment of adiaphora among accompanying circumstances will not depend solely upon Christian freedom, but also upon concern for one’s own edification and love towards the neighbor.”²⁰ Luther, as he is wont to do, puts it all in perspective:

Other matters will adjust themselves as the need arises. And this is the sum of the matter: Let everything be done so that the Word may have free course instead of the prattling and rattling that has been the rule up to now. We can spare everything except the Word. Again, we profit by nothing as much as by the Word. For the whole Scripture shows that the Word should have free course among Christians. And in Luke 10 [:42], Christ himself says, “One thing is needful,” i.e., that Mary sit at the

¹⁶ *Triglotta*. Thorough Declaration, X.16.

¹⁷ *Triglotta*, 1053, X.7.

¹⁸ David Scaer states, “Questionable is whether any liturgies copyrighted by Maranatha are really *creations ex nihilo*. (‘Formula of Concord X: A Revised, Enlarged, and Slightly Amended Edition,’ page 31, from *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, vol. 6, number 4, 1997). He also notes in the same article, page 29:

Rites—call them liturgies—are never randomly chosen, but flow from the character of the organization. Rites inform us about the nature of the organization and how its members relate to one another. The rites of societies are there marks. The inauguration of the American president is noticeably less elaborate than the British coronation. Each rite carries its own message. One cannot be substituted for the other without indicating a significant change. A McDonald’s franchise would immediately be taken away if its proprietor offered its products in the Burger King wrappings.

¹⁹ The Evangelicals of American Protestantism.

²⁰ *Der Gebrauch der Mitteldinge haengt um der begleitenden Umstaende willen nicht nur von der christlichen Freiheit, sondern auch von der Rücksicht auf die eigene Erbauung und von der Liebe gegen den Naechsten ab*. This was presented at Synod Convention, June 24-30, 1896 by *Joh. Koehler von Watertown*. It is on page 48 of those proceedings. The paper begins on page 20. So far as I know, it is not translated. This is my own rough translation.

feet of Christ and hear his word daily. This is the best part to choose and it shall not be taken away forever. It is an eternal Word. Everything else must pass away, no matter how much care and trouble it may give Martha. God help us achieve this. Amen. (AE 53, page 14)²¹

Scaer aptly summarized Article X's answer to the challenges and questions raised by this tumultuous time in Lutheran history:

The answer given by Article X was the one adopted by Flacius, who refused to tolerate the reintroduction of Roman Catholic customs. Christians have freedom to practice or to avoid customs and rituals which are neither forbidden nor commanded in God's Word, but they are duty bound to resist where compliance in customs would give the impression that they were complying with false doctrine. Should a human ordinance be given the stature of a divine command or be viewed as necessary for salvation, it must be resisted.²²

Article X Today and the Lutheran Worship Wars

Rolf Preus gave a presentation on The Lutheran Worship Wars at our 2002 National Conference on Worship, Music & the Arts. In it he said:

I don't think that I overstate matters when I say that the worship wars in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod have resulted in greater bitterness and frustration during the past two decades than did the controversy over biblical inerrancy of the previous two decades. What happens on a Sunday morning in their own congregation matters more to people than what theologians in a distant city are arguing about. People expect that when they go to church certain things will happen. Certain words will be said. Certain actions will be followed.²³

Lutheran worship wars, however, are not a new concept. From the earliest days of the Lutheran Church in America, Lutherans have been bickering over worship. Nelson comments on revivalism and American Lutheranism:

In addition to the language difficulties there was the controversial issue of revivalism. When, in the wake of the revolutionary war and the subsequent westward movements, individuals and groups frequently became detached from their churches, revivalism offered a means to renew and reawaken spiritual life. Protracted meetings and enthusiastic and emotional outbursts were often employed in attempting renewal. Some Lutherans were not immune to such methods and considered them spiritually vitalizing. In fact, sometimes Lutherans rivaled the Methodists, Baptists, and Finneyites in employing the techniques of the revivalistic system.²⁴

Not more than two paragraphs later, Nelson notes the logical result of the adoption of such measures. As is common in Lutheran churches that have in our day immersed themselves in Church Growth Methodology, the Lutherans who adopted revivalistic methods soon began to walk, talk, and believe like the American Protestants they mimicked. Nelson notes:

²¹Luther, M. (1999, c1965). *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53 : Liturgy and Hymns* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

²² *Getting into the Story of Concord*, David Scaer, page 91.

²³ This paper also can be found on www.christforus.org.

²⁴ *The Lutherans in North America*, Nelson, page 215.

A dichotomy appeared between “head” and “heart” Christians...Where revivalistic techniques were employed consistently, the central doctrine of justification by faith in Christ was endangered and the theological complexion often became Arminian. The denial of original sin followed and the sinner was granted the ability to cooperate with God in the act of justification. Luther’s catechism fell into disuse.²⁵

Whether or not Wentz would acknowledge a strict correspondence between the aberrant worship practices and the resultant aberrant doctrine of many of the Lutheran churches on the American scene in the mid to late 1800’s, he nevertheless notes:

The predominating influences in the [Pennsylvania] Ministerium were German,²⁶ and they harbored a strong aversion to the remnant of revivalism and Puritanism that still lingered in some parts of the General Synod. The Ministerium was in more direct touch with the Lutheran reaction in Germany and its inspiring literature, made more constant use of Luther’s Catechism and German hymns, and received a larger number of German pastors. All this deepened the Lutheran convictions of the Ministerium beyond those of other synods.²⁷

Observe the role that worship methods, styles, customs, etc. played in the doctrinal leanings of the more conservative Pennsylvania Ministerium.²⁸ Once again, as has happened so often through the annals of ecclesiastical history, a difference in worship “style,” or the *lex orandi*, soon led to a change in the *lex credendi*.²⁹ The maxim was once again proven correct: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, but this was precisely because the *lex credendi* ceased to determine the *lex orandi*.

This last sentence is uniquely Lutheran—and more importantly Scriptural—and sets the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is by its very nature a confessional church, apart from the view

²⁵ *ibid.*, page 216.

²⁶ The following my German friends can take as a compliment, so far as I am concerned.

²⁷ *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, Wentz, page 155.

²⁸ Our Church History notes name several synods influenced by revivalism and the Americanization of Lutheranism. They include: the Hartwick Synod, the Melancthon Synod, and the Franckean Synod. The admission of the latter to the General Synod in 1861 led to that body’s eventual decline, including the withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

²⁹ In the last issue of *Gottesdienst: A Quarterly Journal of the Evangelical-Lutheran Liturgy*, Burnell Eckardt states the following, which may be worth some consideration:

But the criticism [that *Gottesdienst* has gone too far] is generally not quite specific enough for me to be sure whether any given response is applicable. Yet when one considers the possible issues, it always comes to this: we have become known for dealing in the rites and ceremonies of the Christian Church, as well as the rationale for them. But the troubles facing our churches have largely to do with the loss, abridgment, or unseemly alteration of such things, all under the umbrella of *adiaphora*, things indifferent, things which, since Scripture neither commends nor forbids, we may do or leave undone without pain or conscience. But now see what a behemoth the notion of *adiaphora* has become. It is certainly true that some matters are indeed *adiaphora*, such as whether the Creed is said before or after the Sermon, whether the Mass is sung or spoken, whether it is called “Mass,” whether one uses the three-year, the one-year, or some other lectionary, whether the altar is freestanding or not, or a host of other truly indifferent questions.

But since about the middle of the previous century the *adiaphorists* among us have begun to claim much more. They say that the style of worship is *altogether* indifferent, leaving us to wonder how far they will go before they see the lunacy in such a position. What can stop them from drifting to the point already seen in some easy-to-spot churches of the independent or Baptist variety, churches which seem easiest to identify as the true heirs of the revivalists of the nineteenth century. Already we have for some time had churches seeking to rival the entertainment industry with their rock bands, light shows, and flashy choreography...How far off is a rollercoaster that takes you right into heaven’s glory for a close-up of the heavenly host?

For an explanation of their slogan, which will make many uncomfortable, see <http://www.gottesdienst.org/Slogan.html>. As one reads this article, it is also worth mentioning that, as Professor Deutschlander often warned us, in missing one ditch, we dare not swerve into the other. With the proliferation of publications and organizations throughout Lutheranism and even our own circles, it would seem that the ditches are becoming ever more populated.

of every other body. Article X has no use for “we’ve always done it that way,” “whatever works,” “its what the people like,” “must,” “should,” “have to,” or “who cares.” Rather, the confessors look to the one fountain that truly issues “good order,” “Christian discipline,” and “evangelical propriety,” that is, the Word of God.

Armand Boehme writes in his article “But We’ve Always Done It That Way!” which appeared in the latest issue of *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*³⁰:

For early Lutherans, *lex credendi* had precedence over *lex orandi*. They clearly saw the ‘law of believing founds the law of worshipping.’ Central to faith and belief is the doctrine of justification, the article by which the church stands or falls. Therefore the Lutheran Confessions emphasize the fact that “worship is thoroughly grounded in the doctrine of justification and justification becomes the touchstone for liturgical change and adaptation.” The Lutheran Confessions note that the term *liturgy* is not seen as a work or action of the people; rather *liturgy* [italics here are Boehme’s] has to do with God’s working through the office of the holy ministry to grant his grace to sinners. Thus the Confessions’ emphasis is on justification in the divine liturgy, not on the sanctified work of the people in response to God’s justifying grace.³¹

In the same article, which deals primarily with the different approaches to tradition between Lutheranism and Anglicanism, Boehme also explains:

Thus Anglicans and Lutherans view tradition differently. For Anglicans tradition (*lex orandi*) has near (if not equal) authority with Holy Scripture (*lex credendi*). Furthermore, tradition is something that continues to unfold as the Spirit gives insight. For Lutherans good traditions are respected, but all tradition is *subordinate* to Holy Scripture [the last italics are mine]. In fact, if tradition is contrary to Scripture it must be rejected, and all the more so if the tradition conflicts with the doctrine of justification.³²

These comments could also serve well to summarize to the differences in the approach to tradition, namely, as it relates to worship practice, between Romanizing, though perhaps otherwise confessional, Lutherans, and confessional Lutherans committed to the principles of Article X as well.³³

However, do not allow the mention of Romanizing Lutherans to diminish the impropriety of those equally deplorable indifferentist Lutherans and Church Growth enthusiasts³⁴ who would merrily strip their church of any and all traditional Lutheran dress, vestments included, for a clouded, misguided, and unscriptural idea of evangelism. Evangelism springs from the God-given *εὐαγγέλιον*, the Good News of Jesus Christ.³⁵ To separate the two, to make methods into Means, to adopt a Jesuitical approach (“the end justifies the means”) is fundamentally un-Lutheran and

³⁰ This quotation from Boehme is on pages 12 and 13 of *Logia*, vol. XII, number 4.

³¹ Boehme cites the Apology, XXIV, 79-83.

³² *ibid.*, 13.

³³ Why someone does something adiaphoral (e.g. processional crosses, incense, crossing oneself, etc.), and not the fact that someone does it, makes a Lutheran Romanizing. The fact that the Church always did it isn’t a reason to do it. The fact that you have catechized your members and it helps them appropriate the gospel and honor God may be.

³⁴ Indeed, enthusiast is often an apt term in this respect.

unscriptural.³⁶ When the Formula says in paragraph 5 of the Thorough Declaration, “Such ceremonies should not be reckoned among the genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference, as make a show or feign the appearance, as though our religion and that of the Papists were not far apart, thus to avoid persecution, or as though the latter were not at least highly offensive to us,” “Papists” could well be changed to “Baptists,” “Presbyterians,” “Methodists,” or any other Protestant sect.³⁷ What is good for the goose is good for the gander. To these Church Growth enthusiasts,³⁸ many of whom have shifted their trust from Means to methods, from Christ to the pastor, building, band, or church sign, one would properly point out Luther’s words, cited by Kurt Marquardt in “*Church Growth*” as *Mission Paradigm*:

If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I dare not run to the cross, for I will not find it given there. Nor must I hold to the suffering of Christ, as Dr. Karlstadt trifles, in knowledge or remembrance, for I will not find it there either. But I will find in the sacrament of gospel the Word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross.³⁹

Or Marquardt’s own words which follow:

In the face of the lunacies now masquerading as worship, one can only admire the wit of the woman who thought it was high time for the church “to stop trying to entertain the goats and get back to feeding the sheep” It was, one must remember, the devil who invented “entertainment evangelism” and tempted the Lord with it (Matthew 4:5,6).⁴⁰

³⁵ Those from the Church Growth Movement camp who harp on addressing “felt needs” as a top priority (e.g. *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren), must be reminded that the last “felt need” the sinful nature (and they are often talking about the “felt needs” of the unchurched, precisely the people who have only the sinful nature to guide their perception of what they need) will recognize or acknowledge is the gospel in Word and sacrament—the foundation of the Lutheran worship service.

³⁶ To my great surprise, after completion of this paper I was perusing the internet and happened upon a review of Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, by an self-avowed fundamentalist. His review sounds almost Lutheran and echoes the sentiments of this student. He writes:

One of the primary problems with the Saddleback approach is that all traditional, conservative forms of music, worship and decorum in the church are abolished and subsequently replaced with new methods and styles designed after the world. The programs of this new “superchurch” are aimed at making the unsaved, or the “seeker,” feel comfortable and entertained and at meeting his temporal needs. Some Christians feel that any method of worship and evangelism is appropriate as long as the lost are being reached for Christ. Thus, they have accepted a pragmatic view of worship and evangelism -- the end justifies the means; if it works, it must be right. But believers and pastors alike must ask, “Is the proper way in which God’s people approach unto their Lord in corporate worship relative?” (<http://www.fundamentalbiblechurch.org/Foundation/fbcSDLBK.htm>)

³⁷ One wonders how wise it is for a WELS organization to offer links to worship or evangelism sites that lack a solid grasp of the Lutheran understanding of the gospel (especially in respect to the Spirit’s operation through means) and of sacramental worship. How much can we as a church learn about proclaiming and administering the gospel from those who do not properly understand it? See <http://www.charis.wlc.edu/cac/links/>.

³⁸ The writings of some of these proponents of CG methods and philosophies call to mind the words of Luther in the Smalcald Articles, VIII (Of Confession), page 495 in the *Triglotta*:

All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualizing and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words. Just as also our enthusiasts [at the present day] condemn the outward Word, and nevertheless they themselves are not silent, but they fill the world with their pratings and writings, as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the apostles, but [first] through their writings and words he must come. Why [then] do not they also omit their own sermons and writings, until the Spirit himself come to men, without their writings and before them, as they boast that He has come into them without the preaching of the Scriptures? But of these matters there is not time now to dispute at greater length; we have elsewhere sufficiently urged this subject.

³⁹ *Church and Ministry Today: Three Confessional Lutheran Essays*, page 58.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 135.

There is not an inherent dichotomy between spiritual/devotional and didactic/homiletical sermons, hymns, and worship forms. Carl Shalk demonstrates this point in “Hymnody and the Proclamation of the gospel,” which appears in *Not Unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*.

Such a view incorrectly implies that proclamatory hymns are merely teaching efforts, at best, or rhymed dogma, at worst. It forgets that the proclamation of the gospel is directed not only to the world as a message of hope and salvation, and to God as the community of faith pleads the good news of the gospel before the Father—just as the Son pleads for us before him—and praised him for it, but to the Christian community itself as it confesses and celebrates the faith.⁴¹

A lot has been said in this section in respect to principles and cautions, while not a lot has been mentioned in specific examples. This is for good reason, because the point here is not simply to expose the error of specific men and organizations within our circles, but, Lord willing, to apply Article X in the contemporary setting. A paper exposing all the individuals and groups who have contradicted FC X and then refuting their error would not only be immeasurably long but also well beyond the capabilities of this student. Rather, I have sought to present Article X in a contemporary light with the prayer that its continuing relevance may be evident and its direction in our ever-increasing Lutheran worship wars displayed. Perhaps as valuable as anything is the tone the Formula adopts. As the polemical ante is continually upped by the various parties involved in the current debate over worship practice, we would be served well as a church body by a call to step back and learn not only from the message of our Fathers, but also from their tone. More groups, more publications, more epithets, more pushing of the proverbial envelope is not the answer. Patient admonition and instruction, faithful exegesis, careful consideration of what worship is and strives to do, and respectful, honest, educated dialogue is. Scripture tells us this. The Confessions in general tell us this. History tells us this. Article X in specific tells us this.

John Donne was not a confessor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church—he was an Anglican convert from Roman Catholicism—but he was a man with common sense, something, as the saying goes, that is not so common any more. He wrote, “No man is an island, entire of itself.” The Evangelical Lutheran Church is a church of individual souls—as our Scriptural distinction between invisible and visible church (TD X.19), or the Church within the church shows—which in a way no other church can or does seek to bring comfort and consolation to individual souls. With this in mind, however, it is important to recognize that in their conviction that “*Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*,” the formulators of Article X are not advocating a reckless

⁴¹ Page 138.

smorgasbord of worship practices. There is a real value in an evangelical conformity in practice; hence, *TLH* and *CW* have been published by orthodox church bodies with God-pleasing and solidly Lutheran motivation and results. Questions will no doubt arise in the mind of Joe Pewsitter who, as he travels from WELS church to WELS church, observes a massive chasm in worship forms between parishes.⁴² These questions, if not answered with careful instruction, will inevitably lead to doubt and a loss of certainty in other areas of the faith. Here too the Article's concern for the weak brother must be expressed. There is always a concern for the benefit of the church as a whole. An answer found on the WELS Questions and Answers web page applies here: "Most people in WELS would feel that this degree of latitude - while being hypothetically "free" to Christians - is not "beneficial" (1 Corinthians 10:23); it may please some people but is not beneficial to the "body" as a whole."⁴³

Professor Tiefel in "The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes," which was published in the aforementioned book, *Not Unto Us*, quotes Walther, which is worth citation in its entirety:

We refuse to be guided by those who are offended by our church customs. We adhere to them all the more firmly when someone wants to cause us to have a guilty conscience on account of them...It is truly distressing that many of our fellow Christians find the differences between Lutheranism and papism in outward things. It is a pity and dreadful cowardice when one sacrifices the good and ancient customs to please the deluded American sects, lest they accuse us of being papistic.

Indeed! Am I to be afraid of a Methodist, who perverts the saving Word, or be ashamed in the matter of my good cause, and not rather rejoice that the sects can tell by our ceremonies that I do not belong to them?

We are not insisting that there be unity in perception or feelings or of taste among all believing Christians, neither dare anyone demand that all be minded as he. Nevertheless it remains true that the Lutheran liturgy distinguishes Lutheran worship from the worship of other churches to such an extent that the latter look like lecture halls in which the hearers are merely addressed or instructed, while our churches are in truth houses of prayer in which the Christians serve God publicly before the world.⁴⁴

Another Walther gem on the topic, courtesy of the *Semper Reformanda* website, cannot hurt:

⁴² Along these lines, the WELS Questions and Answers site suggests that rather than offering entirely new kinds of services, it may be better to provide variety within the context of the services our churches now offer: "Reflective of unity and consensus in worship? The biggest story in worship (outside of WELS) for the last few years has been 'worship wars.' Rather than exploring 'alternative worship,' most WELS parishes would do better to expand the creativity and variety offered in the regular services." This is found at <http://www.wels.net/sab/qa/chur-music-13.html>.

⁴³ <http://www.wels.net/sab/qa/chur-music-13.html>.

⁴⁴ Pages 149,150.

I found the paragraph preceding this quote at <http://reformationtoday.tripod.com/chemnitz/id23.html>. It is worth reproducing here:

We know and firmly hold that the character, the soul of Lutheranism, is not found in outward observances but in the pure doctrine. If a congregation had the most beautiful ceremonies in the very best order, but did not have the pure doctrine, it would be anything but Lutheran. We have from the beginning spoken earnestly of good ceremonies, not as though the important thing were outward forms, but rather to make use of our liberty in these things. For true Lutherans know that although one does not have to have these things (because there is no divine command to have them), one may nevertheless have them because good ceremonies are lovely and beautiful and are not forbidden in the Word of God. Therefore the Lutheran church has not abolished "outward ornaments, candles, altar cloths, statues and similar ornaments," [AP XXIV] but has left them free. The sects proceeded differently because they did not know how to distinguish between what is commanded, forbidden, and left free in the Word of God. We remind only of the mad actions of Carlstadt and of his adherents and followers in Germany and in Switzerland. We on our part have retained the ceremonies and church ornaments in order to prove by our actions that we have a correct understanding of Christian liberty, and know how to conduct ourselves in things which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God.

The objection: "What would be the use of uniformity of ceremonies?" was answered with the counter question, "What is the use of a flag on the battlefield? Even though a soldier cannot defeat the enemy with it, he nevertheless sees by the flag where he belongs. We ought not to refuse to walk in the footsteps of our fathers. They were so far removed from being ashamed of the good ceremonies that they publicly confess in the passage quoted: "It is not true that we do away with all such external ornaments."⁴⁵

To put it simply, in our study of Article X, which, if read hastily and without historical context, may seem to advocate a sort of rugged individualism and absolute freedom in worship practice (so long as it is not explicitly forbidden by Scripture or coerced by men), one must not fail to call to mind Apology XXIV.1, oft cited by the so-called high church (if we can apply, which we really cannot, an Anglican term to Lutherans), but nevertheless true and important, like all truth not negated by its improper employment by those advocating error:

At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord's Day and on the other festivals, in which the sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things.⁴⁶

The Lutheran Church is not an a-historical church disconnected with those who have gone before her, but rather one rooted in the past.⁴⁷ Hence, the Book of Concord has attached to it a *Catalogue of Testimonies* and such notable Lutherans as Chemnitz, Gerhard, and Flacius⁴⁸ wrote

⁴⁵ The web address is listed above. The site presents the origin of these quotes as follows: (Walther, Explanation of Thesis XVIII, D, Adiaphora, of the book *The True Visible Church*, delivered at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, Beginning August 9, 1871, at the 16th Central District Convention, translated by Fred Kramer, printed in *Essays for the Church* [CPH: 1992], I:193-194).

⁴⁶ *Triglotta*.

⁴⁷ A.L. Barry in the article previously quoted, "Lutheran Worship: Beyond 2000," writes:

Let us examine the flip side of this thesis. If Lutheran worship is a reflection of Lutheran theology, what do you think might happen if we were, for example, to begin to conduct our worship services in a manner similar to what one might find in a Baptist church, a Pentecostal church, or a non-denominational Evangelical church? Do you think it is reasonable to assume that if Lutherans worship like Baptists, it will probably not be too long before they believe as Baptists do? Or, if Lutherans worship like Charismatics, how long will it be before we embrace the doctrine and practices of the Charismatic movement? If we Lutherans recognize our roots and why we worship the way we do, it will probably also be true that we will wish to remain with that basic pattern of worship. As we contemplate changes in this pattern, we exercise restraint, care and caution, for we recognize that genuine Lutheran worship is a reflection of genuine Lutheran theology.
(<http://worship.lcms.org/2000theses.html>)

It should be noted, however, that if Lutheran pastors and lay people are not educated in what worship really is and should strive to be (according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions), they will not appreciate the tradition that they have received from our fathers in the faith. A knowledge of church history, especially in the area of worship practices, will also only enhance our appreciation for why we do what we do. Catechesis, as in every area of the church's work, is essential.

⁴⁸ Oliver K. Olson writes:

Where Aldus collected the classics, Flacius, having embraced the Reformation, turned Europe upside down searching for medieval manuscripts. As an answer to the reproach that the Reformation was a break with the Catholic tradition of the church, he published texts from his researches in a *Catalog of Witnesses to the Truth*. He was confident that such historical records demonstrated that Luther's reform was faithful to the Catholic tradition. According to his "remnant" argument, derived from 1 Kings 19:8 and Romans 11:4, there had always been a few faithful to the authentic tradition of the church. Catholicity, consequently, must be traced through the *successio doctrinae* rather than in the *successio personarum* of the "historic episcopate. (*The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, 88)

extensive and in many cases authoritative patristic works.⁴⁹ It was Carlstadt, not Luther, who gutted the churches (literally) and rejected wholesale the customs and ceremonies of the church. Luther, like the churches the Reformation inherited, left the majority of the Western Rite intact. Changes were made when the *lex credendi* required it (the canon of the Mass), when ceremonies were misunderstood or irreparably associated with papistic idolatry (elevation of the host in some areas, eucharistic prayer, etc.), and when a superior way of communicating the gospel was available (placement of the Words of Institution within the communion liturgy and their being spoken aloud). Luther and the subsequent Confessors did not have a scorched earth approach to reform, where everything was to be destroyed and rebuilt from the foundation, as was the case to a large extent among the sects, but rather as Charles Porterfield Krauth called it, theirs was “the conservative Reformation.” As Chemnitz states in his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, “And indeed, for the sake of order and decorum it should not be permitted to everyone willfully, without the decision and consent of the church, just because he desires it, either to omit or change anything even in external and indifferent things.”⁵⁰

Freedom, however, does exist.⁵¹ It is Christian freedom, though, and thus a freedom flowing from, grounded in, and governed by the gospel and love for one another, not a willy-nilly permit to

Notice that in Flacius’ view catholicity is found first and foremost in teaching, not ritual. It is this catholic doctrine that will lead to truly catholic ritual, whether or not that ritual has widespread and longstanding precedent. Many widespread and longstanding rituals, however, are found to be vehicles of a very catholic *fides quae* and therefore worth preserving.
⁴⁹ The preface to AC XXII and the subsequent articles “on the abuses which have been corrected,” the Lutheran Church confesses:

Inasmuch, then, as our churches dissent in no article of the faith from the Church Catholic, but only omit some abuses which are new, and which have been erroneously accepted by the corruption of the times, contrary to the intent of the Canons, we pray that Your Imperial Majesty would graciously hear both what has been changed, and what were the reasons why the people were not compelled to observe those abuses against their conscience. (*Triglotta*, page 59).

⁵⁰ Page 108. Please note that this is not some underhanded attempt, common in modern scholarship, to read into the intentions of the Formula by examining the numerous writings of the formulators to which we do not subscribe, but rather an attempt to show the opinion of a revered Father of our church who also happens to be a formulator of the confession and article in question.

⁵¹ Chemnitz writes in the *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, page 115, about the freedom in ceremonies that existed also in the ancient church, which flies in the face of many a modern day liturgicists who hold to the delusion of an utopian ancient liturgical community:

In the seventh place, the observance of these rites was free in the church; neither were such rites similar and the same in all churches; often also some of the most ancient rites were abrogated and omitted, such as the tasting beforehand of milk, honey, and wine, of which Tertullian and Jerome make mention. Some were changed and others newly instituted, as it was judged to serve the edification of the church. For the church used and preserved, not confused license but a godly and wholesome liberty in ecclesiastical ceremonies of this kind, instituted by men, so that by free discontinuance it abrogated, omitted, and changed also the most ancient such ceremonies when it was judged that by reason of circumstances they no longer were very important for piety, or when the cause for which they were first instituted and observed had either been removed or changed and they had thus ceased through the changed times to be useful for edification, or when they had turned aside from the purpose and use for which they had initially been instituted and had degenerated into abuse and superstition. But our opponents are delightful reformers who, when they have *ex professo* instituted a debate about ceremonies of this kind, do not with one word even make mention of these necessary reminders but only seek by their anathemas to burden the consciences, that at least the shadow of such rites, no matter what they are, which seem to have a certain pretext of custom in the Roman Church may be religiously observed, although now there is no true reason why they should be observed, no salutary purpose and use for edification; there are many such in the Canon of the Mass and in the ceremonies of Baptism, in the period of Easter and Pentecost.

carry out one's any and every whim.⁵² As St. Paul warns, “*You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*” This freedom has existed from the earliest days of the Christian Church and will exist until Christ's comes to rescue His bride. *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*, and for that reason it has the freedom and the responsibility to be constantly adapting, improving and appropriating in each successive generation the traditions that have been passed on to it. This adapting, improving, and appropriating, as must always be the case, will be done in accordance with and upon the foundation of the one infallible, unchanging, saving tradition—the Word. With this in mind, perhaps the Formula itself can end this paper best and most succinctly:

Thus [According to this doctrine] the churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, provided they are otherwise agreed with one another in the doctrine and all its articles, also in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known saying: *Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*; “Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in the faith.”⁵³

Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority [in matters truly *adiaphora*] to change, to diminish, and to increase them, without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way, as at any time it may be regarded most profitable, most beneficial, and best for [preserving] good order, [maintaining] Christian discipline [and for *εὐταξία* worthy of the profession of the gospel], and the edification of the Church. Moreover, how we can yield and give way with a good conscience to the weak in faith in such external *adiaphora*, Paul teaches Rom. 14, and proves it by his example, Acts 16, 3; 21, 26; 1 Cor. 9, 19.⁵⁴

⁵² Marquardt quips:

The a-liturgical orientation of our modern Reformed-pietistic environment moreover jumps only too easily to the conclusion that Article X simply consigns everything liturgical to the realm of *adiaphora*, so that as long as Word and sacraments still come to expression somehow, all outward arrangements are free and “indifferent” That too would be a grave misunderstanding. The term *adiaphora* applies only to the strictly circumscribed area of external details neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word. In no way does FC X abrogate Article XXIV of both the AC and the Apology, in which the Lutheran Church officially confesses its doctrinal stand on the nature of Christian worship—including such particulars as the divinely given relation between preaching and the sacrament (Ap XXIV, 33-40, 71-71, 80, 89), and the “right use” of the historic Christian “mass” (AC XXIV 35 German; Ap XXIV 74-77, 87). It would be a reductionist fallacy to confuse all such deeply theological issues with mere *adiaphora*.

(“Article X: The Formula of Concord: Confessions and Ceremonies,” from *A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord*, pages 265-266).

⁵³ *Triglotta*, Thorough Declaration, X.31.

⁵⁴ *Triglotta*, Thorough Declaration, X.8.

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