

Does Old Lutheranism Lead to Rome?

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"God be praised! I have become so certain, that I would go so far as to say that if a pastor (*Seelsorger*) does not see himself as diametrically opposed to the pope, the bishops and their human doctrine and commands with everything in his power, and set himself against them, whether it means his dying or remaining alive, there is no way that he can be saved." Luther to Nic. Hausmann in the year 1521. (See *L.W. Halle*, X. 1880.)

We live in an age that calls itself the enlightenment, but in which such astonishing ignorance dominates in the area of religion. This can even be said of those who call themselves Lutheran. For example, these days if a Lutheran is asked what sort of difference exists between Lutherans and the Reformed, what is the usual answer given? Most say, as far as they know, the difference consists in that Lutherans pray, "Father ours" and the Reformed, "Our Father," that the former use hosts in the holy LORD's Supper and the latter use plain bread. So naturally few are also able to explain these day how so many Lutherans can possibly not desire to unite with the Reformed or want anything to do with the union movement taking place everywhere. For if there were truly no great differences between Lutherans and the Reformed, and most people, in their ignorance, think that way, then obviously people would have to be crazy to want to break fellowship for such insignificant reasons. But the differences between the Lutherans and the Reformed have nothing to do with those reasons, that is, it involves the most holy sacraments, Baptism and the LORD's Supper, the Office of the Keys, the person of JESUS Christ, the Decree of God unto Salvation, etc., which means, as every Lutheran can see, even from his *Small Catechism*, it involves "Chief Parts" of the Christian religion. But since these Churches are both at odds over this, true unification between them is impossible so long as the Reformed won't acknowledge their heresies that mitigate against God's Word. When, despite this, pastors establish an external unification with them (only in order to substantially increase their membership), they are, first of all, sinning greatly against God, whose truth they are denying, and also against those whom they are thereby strengthening in their heresy. Yet we have already spoken of this elsewhere and will come back to address it again if we have an opportunity to do so.

Another proof to show the extent of the ignorance among Lutherans is this: If many people now hear the doctrine of the Old Lutheran Church preached by a few pastors, that has been silenced for so long, and observe external worship conducted as it was done in the Old Lutheran Church, many then say: "Oh, that's half - Catholic!" Yes, in America that's gone so far that even Lutherans who call themselves pastors and newspaper writers are so ignorant that they preach and write this: Old Lutheranism leads to Rome, which means, whoever accepts the Old Lutheran doctrine and the Old Lutheran ceremonies must be on the road to becoming a subject of the pope in Rome, to becoming a so-called Catholic or papist.

In previous ages Luther and Lutherans were not so easily dismissed since everyone knew that it had just been by Luther that God had uncovered the mystery of lawlessness to those groaning in Christendom, of course, revealing to them the Antichrist in Rome and leading them out of the Roman Babel (cf. 1 Thess. 2.1-12 and Rev. 14. 6-11). It's certainly true that all the heretics and enthusiasts who founded Protestant sects asserted the Lutheran Church was still clinging to remnants of the papacy, so God had not called Luther, but them as the true reformers to foundationally reform the church. Among others was Dr. Andreas Carlstadt. That is, as Luther was absent from Wittenberg for a whole year in 1521-22 and had to hole up at the Wartburg, Carlstadt incited a terrible

tumult there, declaring that everything that arose under the papacy was godless and must be destroyed, and the Reformation was going too slowly. That's why he had images and the alters in the Churches smashed and discarded, abolished private confession, commanded that the bread and the cup in Communion be taken in the hand, disdained those who had become doctors and magistrates and those who were educated in general, and, therefore, consorted with the uneducated, simple laborers and asked them to explain difficult Scriptural passages. (Now when these people objected: How can a learned doctor seek instruction from simple, unschooled laymen, he replied that it had to be that way, for Christ said: God has hidden his mysteries from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to the babes. Mt. 11.25.) This enthusiasm spread to many students who now abandoned study as a fleshly disgrace. The university precipitously declined. Yet, upon Carlstadt's counsel, the boy's school there was completely disbanded and its structures made into counters for the baker. Thereupon Carlstadt stormed into the country to stir up farmers and wouldn't let them address him as anything but "neighbor Andreas."

This crazy Carlstadt was the first to charge Lutherans as being semi-papists because they retained ceremonies and, later, also because of doctrine, that in the holy LORD's Supper the body and blood of JESUS Christ were truly present and that through the reception of the same one was given the seal of the forgiveness of sins.¹ Luther mentions this in his last confession of the LORD's Supper from 1544, where one of the things he writes is that Carlstadt had chided the Wittenbergers for the sake of the elevation, that means, since they still lifted the host up high with the consecration, according to the ancient custom, as "neo-papists." We also find this in Carlstadt's extant writings. Among other things, Carstadt writes in his *Explanation of the Words of Christ: This is my Body*, from the year 1525, the Lutherans and their pastors are "doubly neo-papists, who act like unreasoning asses and horses." But he called Luther and his retention of images and the crucifix and the like "a patron of idolatry," and, for the sake of the doctrine of the holy LORD's Supper, a "neo-papist sophist, a kissing cousin of the Anti-Christ, a sign maker just like the devil who directs people to walk on glare ice," etc. Already the year before Carlstadt had written in his paper *On the Anti-Christian Abuse of the LORD's Bread and Cup*: "if there are some who seek forgiveness in the sacrament, probably ranting and raging as do those papistic parsons...those who have the expectation of receiving Christ with the sacrament would be better off munching

¹It is worth noting that Carlstadt states that he had arrived at his doctrine on the LORD's Supper in a similar manner as did Zwingli (See *The Lutheran* V.1 # 13. P. 3, note). That is, Calstadt writes the following in his *Dialog on the horrid idolatrous abuse of the most worthy Sacrament of Jesus Christ*, from the year 1524: "He learned it from a voice he heard, but had not seen nor known if the voice had come from him or to him." - Already a year before this Carlstadt had written the following by what manner the truth is to be sought and found in his pamphlet: *How should it be read?* "A well read person must also read the holy Scripture, but not learn it according to the letter, etc. If one not understand something, he must listen intently, desiring its meaning from God, what God wants to tell him, so sudden ideas will occur to him and he must defend these thoughts with the witness of the Holy Ghost." - Isn't that what all our present enthusiasts (*Schwaermer*) do as they seek and find the truth? Whatever suddenly pops into their heads from their prayer they regard as God's revelation, and then to confirm it they grab Scripture by the hair to force it to say just that.

on figs.” By the way, when Carlstadt later got into big trouble, he recanted and wrote: “If he had known the great perils of the times he would never have published a book with his likeness pressed in it, and he would have to pass away in misery because of it.” Yet he fell again into his heresy and finally died in Basel in fear and terror as the plague gripped the city in 1541.

There’s the first impious enthusiast who wanted to foundationally reform the church and accused the Lutheran Church of being a holdover of the papacy. The Anabaptists, the so called heavenly prophets, Nic. Storch, Marcus Thomae, Marcus Stuebner, Martin Callarius and Thomas Muenzer followed him in this, the latter becoming the leader of the Peasant’s rebellion in Schwabia. As Luther did not let himself be blinded by the great brilliance of holiness they were constantly putting out but, much rather, removed their mask, declaring as inspired by the devil what they were asserting to be divine revelations and having no desire to join them in their rejection of infant Baptism. These enthusiastic spirits also slandered the work of the Lutheran reformation and asserted that by Luther’s “insisting upon the external, literal meaning of the Word” he was introducing “a new papacy” as they called it. – Now, finally, included also among those heretics who were critical of the Lutheran Church, is Zwingli, who, just as in the case of Carlstadt, was opposed to the Lutheran retention of innocent ceremonies, the crucifix, the sign of the cross, images, altars, priestly vestments and the like, as well as the doctrine of the presence of Christ in the holy LORD’s Supper, declaring them all to be remnants of the papacy. In order to quote just one witness of this, among many, Zwingli issued these words as a caveat to his presentation to the Emperor of his disagreement with the *Augsburg Confession*: “The Lutherans were looking back to the flesh pots of Egypt.”² Therefore this is also one of those points of contention which has been leveled for over three hundred years by the Reformed Church against the Lutherans, even though the Lutheran Church has freedom to retain her ceremonies, though she had to abolish them if they were at all related to the Anti-Christian nature of the Roman, papistic Church. For example in the Reformed Heidelberg Catechism, to question 98: “But may images not be tolerated in the Churches for the instruction of the laity?” the following answer is stated: “No. For we must not be wiser than God who wants to have his Christianity instructed by the lively preaching of his Word, not by dumb idols.” By this statement the Reformed assert the images that we Lutherans retain in our Churches are idolatrous images. They hereby deny us our freedom to use them and, therefore, judge us as having the same idolatrous worship as the papists.

From this historical overview, which we felt we had to give before responding to the above question, the attentive reader will observe what sort of people are making this charge, that Old Lutheranism has remnants of the papacy even today, that’s being raised everywhere, of course, by our enemies. . . .

In the previous issue we saw who has been accusing Lutherans of what for three hundred years now, namely, that she still has many papistic hold overs, being charged in part by enthusiasts who are obviously people with corrupt minds (2 Tim. 3.5-9), as by a Carlstadt, Muenzer and the whole army of the so-

²We see how far this truly crazy and ridiculous Zwingli’s zeal for reformation usually took him with respect to churchly ceremonies as he did everything in his power to ban singing hymns in Church. In order to do so, he prepared a petition for the city counsel in Basel that he did not read, but sang, in their presence. As the counsel expressed astonishment as to why he would bring his request to them in that way, Zwingli responded that he did it to witness by his actions how distasteful it must be to God when people sing to him and petition him in that way. That just goes to show how low one can sink when he goes with the first impressions of his ruined heart without testing it.

called heavenly prophets; in part by stubborn heretics as a Zwingli; and even by sworn enemies of the Lutheran Church and doctrine, as by the Reformed, etc. So then, first of all, this must at least raise suspicion that there is nothing to this charge, since no one has made any great progress in our highly enlightened age to uncover the flaws in the Lutheran Church that the Old Lutherans had not recognized in their naivete. Further, it’s clear enough from all of this what to think about people who renew this accusation these days, yes, who even go beyond all bounds and assert that Old Lutheranism leads directly back to Rome again and who still want to be considered good Lutherans! Namely, that is just what Mr. Weyl, the publisher of the so-called “*Lutheran Shepherd’s Voice*” in Baltimore does. The same writes the following in that paper of his:

“But it is proven that this sect (the Old Lutherans) leads back to Rome 1. by the liturgy received by Pastor Wyneken in Baltimore from Pastor Loehe in Bavaria, since it gives instructions to employ catholic customs for example: the making of the three fold cross over the baptized child, calling upon Mary at the consecration of the hosts, erecting a crucifix in the Church, and burning wax candles on the altar in the light of day at the time of holy Communion, etc. etc. Doesn’t that reek of Rome? We are not saying that these things are explicitly commanded in this liturgy, but they have made their appearance in one Church where these have been introduced as what is American had been suppressed. The time for child’s play is past and worship of God in spirit and truth have been ordained to us. And who can still remain in doubt where this sect will end up when we remember that Pusey, Newman and Consorten ended up even singing their thesis, “We eat flesh and drink blood in the LORD’s Supper”? And where are these men now? They have converted back to the papacy. It doesn’t matter where you start, as that saying goes, whoever remains on this path and follows it must inevitably arrive at the same goal. We’re giving fair warning.”

This method and line that Mr. Weyl is pursuing here is sad proof of the depth to which a man can finally sink if he stubbornly opposes the witness of the Holy Ghost in the Word of God, which he still has to acknowledge as God’s Word. He ultimately sinks to the level of being a common liar and into pure hypocrisy.

That is, Mr. Weyl here makes himself a common liar when he writes that in Loehe’s agenda an instruction is given to “call upon Mary at the consecration of the hosts.” Here Mr. Weyl obviously is following the maxim (principle) of all master liars: “*Calumniare audacter, semper aliquid haeret; etsi enim canctur vulus, manet tamen cicatrix*, that is, in slander, just get to it, something will always stick, for even the wounds (when your lies are exposed) will heal, and all that’s left is a scar.” – Yet, let’s see what the words in Loehe’s agenda say that Mr. Weyl refers to in this accusation that it demands calling upon Mary. Only one prayer in the whole Order of Holy Communion contains the name of Mary, that is, according to said agenda the following verse should be sung by the congregation immediately before the chanting of the Words of Institution, according to the ancient usage of the so-called *Sanctus*, which says:

“Holy, Holy, Holy LORD God of Sabaoth,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory,
Hosanna in the highest,
Blessed be { Mary’s Son } who comes in the
{ the Passover Lamb } Name of the LORD.
Hosanna in the highest.

So now who is being blessed here, or whom are the people here invoking? – Whom has this lying spirit not so blinded to the point that he can no longer properly explain this most simple of all sentences (perceiving the consistency of these words)? Hopefully

he will at least acknowledge that it's clear enough that not Mary, but Mary's **Son** is being called upon, as in, for example, that hymn: "We all Believe in One True God," which says: "Born of the virgin Mary, Word made flesh," which, of course, is not saying that we believe in the holy virgin, but that we believe in the One she bore in Bethlehem, Christ. Of course the ancients, by common custom, often also expressly called the Son of God the Son of Mary, since there had been heretics who either directly denied that the Son of God had received a true human nature or who still asserted that he had not received the same from Mary but had brought it with him from heaven, or even that Mary had only given birth to a man and not the Son of God, so therefore Mary was certainly the mother of the man JESUS, but that she could not be or be called the mother of God. The latter were called Nestorians. Now since the Loehe agenda gives instructions to call upon Christ and to confess with the ancient church that he who is blessed and worshiped by angels as the Son of God, is also Mary's Son, Mr. Weyl uses this to spread the rumor that the so-called Old Lutherans commit what is regarded by all Lutherans to be the most despicable idolatry, as they, like the papists, call upon the holy virgin. Therefore we hereby declare in the presence of the whole Lutheran Church in America that so long as he has not retracted this, Mr. Weyl is a liar who blasphemes God, who has entirely lost his credibility with every honorable person (to say nothing of every Christian).³

Yet Mr. Weyl not only reveals himself here to be a bald faced liar, but also, as said, proves he's a hypocrite. He promises here to prove that the so-called Old Lutherans are a new sect that leads to Rome, so what does he do? – He takes the field against the ancient, true Lutheran Church. That is, he accuses the so-called Old Lutherans of observing, or at least justifying, ceremonies (except for their prescribed invocation) and confessing and defending doctrines which Luther and all orthodox Lutherans have observed, or at least justified, and have confessed and defended for three hundred years! Now what does this mean that Mr. Weyl has now just flatly stated that he considers the Lutheran Church, with her doctrine and ceremonies, to be the vestibule of the pope's Church and a bridge that leads out of Protestantism to the kingdom of the Anti-Christ? The reason for this remarkable game that Mr. Weyl is playing is easy to see. Namely, Mr. Weyl does not want to lose the appearance that he is amiable to the Lutheran Church, yes, that he is much rather one of the true watchmen for the same. We see that Mr. Weyl really wants to wear this mask not only by the title of his article, but he also explicitly asserts this in said issue of the same where he writes: "They (the Old Lutherans) are not people who hold fast to the purified doctrine of Luther from the Reformation of the 16th century, for we, also along with the whole Lutheran Church, yes, the Protestant (!?) Churches of America and Germany also have that honor." Yes, in what follows Mr. W. writes that the Old Lutherans cause division, "and everything that is best for us in the names Lutheran and Old Lutheran are most dear to us. . .that we take to heart as what is honorable and good for the whole Lutheran Church in America . . . that's why we're sounding the warning. Or should we not, as watchmen, sound the alarm?"

Truly one doesn't know if he should laugh or weep about what this man's doing. We ask, can a person act as a more blatant hypocrite than this show he's put on? First he writes: The doctrines

³In this situation Mr. Nast has started in a more clever way. That is, in his apologetic to Pr. Wyneken he refers to "a calling upon, or naming of the blessed virgin Mary." By the addition: "or naming of" he assured himself of a way out if someone caught him in the lie. So now if it comes up in conversation Mr. Nast can say: I didn't mean any harm by using the word "call upon" as it may sound, for this addition shows that I only was thinking of her "being named" in that. The latter is actually what I was accusing Pr. Wyneken of. A child once burned fears the fire!

of the Gospel were only taught in the *Augsburg Confession* "in a general purity" (For it taught specific doctrines impurely that must be excluded, see: *Shepherd's Voice* IV, 21.). **The ceremonies of the Lutheran Church and her doctrine of the presence of Christ in the holy LORD's Supper lead back into the papacy (see above).** In holy Baptism a person is in no way born again as the Lutheran Church teaches in the *Small Catechism*, only dedicated (see issue 18 of the *Shepherd's Voice*). "It is high time that no evangelically minded Christian ever again say, 'I am of Apollo, I am of Paul, I am of Luther,' etc. (see the same V, 4.) and the like. Yes, first Mr. Weyl declares that those who would rather lose everything than intentionally seek to depart from a single letter of Lutheran doctrine as the greatest enemies of the church, and calls them, because of their holding fast to the Old Lutheran Confession, a new "dangerous sect" – and then – he, with Pilate, washes his hands in innocence, seizes us and says he also has the honor of being a good Lutheran, that he certainly preserves the doctrine of Luther and the reformation of the 16th century like everyone else, that the names Lutheran and Old Lutheran are such a "beautiful and dear name" that he would never surrender it. In sum, everyone will have to bear witness of him that he is a true watchman on the bulwarks of the Lutheran Zion, who is obviously gazing with the eyes of a falcon so that nothing un-Lutheran in doctrine or in ceremonies will invade. – So we ask once more, can anyone play the hypocrite more unabashedly than does Mr. Weyl here?

Oh! How has Lutheranism in America come to this, that a man who blasphemes the characteristic doctrines and practices of the Lutheran Church as papistic, and who wants to publicly brand as Puseyites, which means, as crypto-Catholics, those who still want to faithfully preserve this Church with her doctrine and her confessional ceremonies, even in these last times of apostasy and, for that, horribly slanders and persecutes them as founders of fanaticism and destroyers of the Church, who thus reveals himself as an (albeit impotent) enemy of the Lutheran Church – how, as we've said, has it happened that such a man with no shame at all, while still publicly calling himself a Lutheran, can try to assert that he steadfastly preserves the doctrine of Luther and the reformation, and act according his calling as if he had the right to do all that by the office of watchman entrusted to him?! Does not Pastor Weyl have to believe that all the Lutherans in America have either utterly lost their minds and their understanding, so they won't notice how he has blasphemed it under the new, infamous name, "Old Lutheran," as he was hypocritically praising the ancient name of Lutheranism, or that those who are now still called Lutheran in America only act unanimously out of hypocrisy, even as he does?⁴ O you Lutherans, if you still want to remain with the faith of your fathers, you'd better open your eyes! For if you still let yourselves be duped by wolves that are no longer wearing their sheep's clothing, but rather have openly appeared in their wolf's skin and who are mocking both God and you by crying out: Are we

⁴Even the Reformed in our present country are beginning to become ashamed of this category of Lutherans, even as the latter would be all too glad to become one Church with the former. One of the things a Reformed theologian writes in the *Chambersburg Christian Paper of the German Reformed Church* is the following: "It can't be denied that the Protestant Church departed completely in this (in holy Communion) from the doctrine of the Reformer. In Europe this happened through rationalism (faith in reason). But this took place no less in America. This is especially conspicuous in the Lutheran Church of that land. Here (that is, in a book of that excellent Reformed Theologian, Dr. Nevin) striking passages are produced from the so-called *Lutheran Observer* (a periodical in English, like the *Shepherd's Voice* in the German language) from most recent issues that all too clearly expose the shame of this most lamentable spiritual and creedal laxity. O Luther! You man of God, full of power and might, the bastards are making themselves fat on your name!" – Thus writes one of the Reformed about the so-called American Lutheran Church, and, indeed, based upon undeniable truth. – Oh, Shame! – Why? You Lutherans, isn't it high time we learn to be ashamed and finally turn round?

not faithful shepherds? Aren't we not vigilant watchmen? – but you – with men like Mr. Weyl at your lead – who have, up until now, called yourselves Lutheran, yes, have insisted upon that name, while they have at heart and in words rejected the doctrine of the Lutheran Church as laid out in her confessions, how can you want to continue to stand before the eyes of all reasonable and honorable men in such despicable hypocrisy? Won't you just once remember how God, who is a God of truth, has threatened hypocrites and liars in his Word? Do you want to know the fate that you will meet if you do not repent, then open to what is written in Job 8.13-14, Ps. 5.5-7, Jer. 23.15, Rev. 22.15. If that applies to you then at least be honorable men and lay the name aside, and just flatly announce that you don't want to be a Lutheran and that you have only wanted to defraud the people with that name, and beg both God and man to forgive you for it. That's the path you must follow should you want to become respectable men again. Then call yourselves what you want, and to us Lutherans it's none of our business. You see already that you may not be allowed to call yourselves Reformed since these already have as much as told you "no thanks" to fellowship with you. Just recently we heard of a huge "World - Convention" that will be on the rise in modernism. We think perhaps if you knock at that door, you'll be welcomed. But if you persist in continuing to wear your mask of hypocrisy and to name yourself after Luther, then we want you to know we'll also continue to witness against you to uncover your hypocrisy to the poor misled people and day and night cry out to God in heaven for help against your lies, so long as our tongues work! What good will that do? God will see and your reward will be disgrace! Cf. Ps. 12.

But now enough of this! – We had to publish this, primarily to protect even our readers from this misunderstanding, as if we were promoting some newly established sect when we advocate for certain doctrines and practices that are now disparaged as remnants of the papacy. Hopefully, by what has already been stated, it will be clear to every reader that it's not a matter of whether a new, so-called "Lutheranism" leads to Rome, but if it's ancient, true Lutheranism, which Mr. Weyl really has in mind. We will now go on to answer that question.

First, in regard to the ceremonies of the Lutheran Church, for which it is charged that she is related to the Roman Church and has inclinations towards the same, every reasonable person must admit that if the Lutheran Church has a few things that are also found in the Catholic Church, this, in and of itself, could not prove that the former has inclinations towards the latter. For, if that were so, this charge would apply to every Christian denomination. For don't all parties in Christianity also have the same Bible, the same Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, the same Baptism, the same preaching office, the same Sabbath observance, etc., as the Romanists? Don't even other so-called Protestants also have church buildings with steeples on them, bells, organs, the custom of folding hands, kneeling, uncovering the head when praying, and the like? Who would charge the Reformed, the Methodists, the Evangelicals, etc. with Catholic tendencies for those things? Certainly no one. Whoever regards the mere acceptance of certain innocent ceremonies (even if he perhaps like Mr. Weyl considers them monkey play) as papism cannot possibly know what papism actually is and no one would be happier with that than the papists themselves, as they would be asserting that the mystery of lawlessness of the Anti-Christ consists in the use of wax candles, in priestly vestments and in the priest standing behind the altar and the like? . . .

In previous issues we have remembered, and every impartial reader will agree, that the Old Lutheran Church, indeed, has a few

ceremonies in common with the Roman Church, but that a certain uniformity of these Churches in a few external ceremonies can exist without them necessarily having a direct inward relationship with each other.

This raises a question: **In what cases would it be right to draw the conclusion that those specific ceremonies in the Old Lutheran Church would lead to Rome?** Our answer: 1. If the Luth. Church, along with the churchly ceremony, had also accepted the false doctrine of the Roman Church regarding it, and 2. if the Luth. Church also has retained the ceremonies of the Roman Church that, in and of themselves, are against God's Word, and, indeed, just those that embrace any of the unique character of the Roman Church that are unique to the very essence of the papacy and have been introduced to win their favor and to undergird them. By applying a detailed examination and comparison, please see for yourself that the Luth. Church teaches something much different in her ceremonies than does Rome, the one, the truth, the other a lie. Test for yourself that Lutheranism has only retained the good, salutary ceremonies of the Roman Church according to 1 Thess. 5.21, which are completely free of any tie to the papacy, that actually predate the papacy, having been used during the best age of the church. So also prove for yourself that the charge is obviously false that through her ceremonies Lutheranism leads to Rome, but it only goes to show that the Lutheran Church at the time of the Reformation had not hastily acted in ignorance, or as we Germans say, she did not throw the baby out with the bath water. This all is proved in the examination we will now present.

What does the Roman, the so-called Catholic Church teach about her human institutions, ceremonies, or Church customs?

We find this clearly and plainly stated in her public, universally acknowledged symbols or churchly confessional writings. Among other things, it says this in the resolutions of the council held in Trent: *"Whoever wants to say that the received and approved ceremonies of the Catholic Church, which are observed with the celebration of the sacrament, may either be arbitrarily discontinued without sinning by the servants of the Church or that they can be replaced by each parson by new ones: Let him be condemned."* (Council. Trid. Sess. 7 Can. 13.) In another passage in that same confession it says: *"The holy synod has decided that the bishops. . . shall defend, through written orders and with predetermined punishments, the priests' retaining no other hours for the Mass than those appointed (debitis), not employing other rites or other ceremonies and prayers during the conduct of the Mass than those the Church has examined and have been accepted through frequent and official use. (Sess. XXII Decret. De obs. Et evit. Etc.)* It goes on to say: *"The Church has accepted the same ceremonies into usage as silent declarations of blessing, candles, incense, vestments, and many similar things, according to apostolic order and tradition (summary)." (Sess. XXII. Sacr. Miss. Ch. 5)* Finally, it says: *"Even though Christ the LORD has instituted and entrusted to the apostles the most holy sacrament under the forms of bread and wine, . . . yet she (the Church) has approved and decided to communicate by this tradition (to give the laity only the bread in the LORD's Supper), so that this is to be retained as a law which no one is allowed to reject or to change arbitrarily without the full authorization of the Church herself. (Sess. XXI. Doctr. de comm. ch. 1.2.)*

It is clear to see from these resolutions that in the Roman Church **consciences are bound to their ceremonies**, the discontinuance or changing of the least bit of the same being made a sin and connected with punishments, and the human Church orders with respect to ceremonies are in many ways

placed in the same status as divine commandments, yes, even placed above them. That is also why anyone who converts to the papacy must pledge themselves to the whole lot of the Romish ceremonies. For it says this in the *Professio fidei*, or the Roman Catholic Oath: "I also steadfastly receive the apostolic and churchly traditions and the other remaining customs and orders of the Church. I also accept and submit to the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church with the public conduct of all (seven) of the sacraments."

Now does the Lutheran Church agree unanimously with the Romanists in this doctrine of ceremonies? Far from it! Much rather our Church most strictly distinguishes between human and divine commandments, and stands guard over her jewel of Christian freedom, with a faithfulness that many seek in vain in other Churches, and declares that just this doctrine of the Roman Church on ceremonies is a most horrid abomination.

Among other things she says in the 7th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*: "For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached unanimously according to a pure understanding, and the sacraments be administered according to the divine Word. And it is not necessary for the true unity of the church that ceremonies instituted by man be retained everywhere in the same form, as Paul says in Eph. 4: One body, one Spirit, as you were called to one hope of your calling, one LORD, one faith, one Baptism."

It goes on to say in the 15th Article of that confession: "On Church orders made by men, it is taught that they should be retained so long as they can be retained without sin, and serve for peace and good order in the church, as certain feasts, holidays and the like. Yet instruction should be given in this so that the conscience not be burdened thereby, as if such things were necessary for salvation."

It goes on to say in the 26th Article: "Also of these aspects many ceremonies and traditions will be retained, like the order of the Mass⁵ and other chants, feast days, etc., which also serve for the preservation of order in the church. But, along with that, the people are instructed that such outward worship does not make them pious before God and that they should be retained without making it a burden on the conscience so that one could omit it without causing offense, and would not sin by doing so. The ancient fathers had also retained this freedom in external ceremonies, for in the Orient (in the Eastern Church) the Easter celebration was held at a different date than in Rome. And when some wanted this disparity to be regarded as a schism in the church, others admonished them that it is not necessary to retain uniformity in such traditions. And Irenaeus says this: Differences in festivals do not divide the unity of faith. As also *Distinct. 12* describes such dissimilarities in human orders as not violating the unity of Christendom. And *Tripartia hist. Lib. 9*. draws together many variegated church customs and adds to it this useful Christian saying: It was not the apostles' intention to establish feast days, but rather to teach faith and love.

It goes on to say in Article 28: "Instituting human laws, even doing so against God's Word, since they invent sins in food, in days and similar things, and thus encumber Christianity with servitude to the law...that it should be a mortal sin if one does some work of labor on a holiday, even without causing others offense." – This same article goes on to say: "So then how should Sunday and other similar church orders and ceremonies be regarded? To this our people give this answer, that the bishops and parish priests

⁵As in many writings at the time of the Reformation, mass here means the same as the holy LORD'S Supper.

may create orders so that the Churches are kept orderly, not thereby to receive God's grace, and also not thereby to make satisfaction for sins, nor to bind consciences to them, to regard them as necessary worship, and to consider that they are sinning if they, without causing offense to others, break them. So St. Paul has ordered the Corinthians, as such, that women in the assembly should cover their heads, etc. It was incumbent upon the Christian's assembly to keep this order for the sake of love and peace and to be obedient⁶ to the bishops and parsons in this matter, and to retain the same so as not to offend one another, so the Church would not be disorderly or in disarray."

The Apology says on this: "For this unity (of the church) we are now saying that it is not necessary that human institutions, be they *Universales* (universal) or *Particulares* (one introduced in individual provinces), be everywhere alike. For the righteousness that avails before God, that comes through faith, is not bound to external ceremonies or human institutions. For faith is a light in the heart that renews the heart and makes it alive. External institutions or ceremonies are not enough to aid in this, whether they are universal or particular." (Art. 7)

The Apology goes on to say in the 15th Art.: "Therefore it is the apostles' intention that this freedom should remain in the church, that no ceremonies, neither the law of Moses, nor any other institutions, should be valued as necessary worship."

Finally, the *Formula of Concord* expresses the following on this subject: "We unanimously believe, teach and confess that ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but are only established for the sake of tranquility and good order are, in and of themselves, not worship, and are no part of the same, Mt. 15. 'They worship me with the commandments of men.' We believe, teach and confess that the congregation of God in every place and in every time, according to the situation of the same, has the authority to change such ceremonies, as may be most useful and edifying for that congregation of God." (*Brief Summary. Art. 10*) – –

That's how the Lutheran Church talks about ceremonies. *Now whoever compares this with what the Roman Church teaches about the same will unanimously say with us that the Lutheran Church's evaluation of ceremonies, – far, far from leading to Rome, has raised a permanent wall and an eternal fence dividing the Lutheran and the Roman Churches. For in the Lutheran Church all human institutions in the church, or ceremonies, are aspects of Christian freedom which are retained as thought best or can be changed or removed by each congregation in every time and place. But in the Roman Church the conscience of the Christian is bound in this, as it is bound to those things as if commanded by God himself, which therefore can neither be discontinued nor changed without sinning.*

Perhaps here some might say: But isn't it quite obvious that you Old Lutherans act against this principle of the Old Lutheran Church since you place such a weighty importance on some ceremonies, some of you rejecting certain ones and some clinging tenaciously to certain others, so that you accuse each other of being schismatic for the sake of certain ceremonies? We will answer this question in the next issue. . . .

We demonstrated from the symbols of the Lutheran Church in the previous issue how definitely and decisively these teach that

⁶Read on below to see the remarks shared about this passage.

ceremonies that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, but have rather been introduced by men, are matters of Christian freedom; that, therefore, no conscience should be bound to them as if it were sinful in of itself to use them or not to use them, and as if a Church could not be a true Church if they lacked just these ceremonies.⁷

As already mentioned, **many think that we ourselves have here positioned ourselves with those who are now called Old Lutherans and have proven that Old Lutherans, then, cannot be true Lutherans.** Many will now say to us: Don't you Old Lutherans obviously depart from the 7th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*? That is, from that foundational principle that: "for the true unity of the Christian church it is not necessary that ceremonies invented by men be universally retained"? Don't you seek to preserve, introduce or to universally introduce the Old Lutheran service, with all its ancient ceremonies? Sure, don't you also, at the same time, rebuke some Lutheran preachers as traitors when, for no reason, they serve common bread instead of hosts or they break the bread like the Reformed do, or give the bread and the cup into the hand of the communicants, or hand out the consecrated elements with some innovative formula and the like at the administration of the holy LORD's Supper, as if the Lutheran Church and truth were being violated? So aren't you thereby, most obviously, to some extent turning the discontinuance or the use of certain practices into sins, which the ancient Lutheran Church in her public confessions has declared matters of freedom (*adiaphora*)? So aren't you thereby raising human institutions to the level of divine commands, like the papists? Aren't you hereby denying the pure Lutheran doctrine of Christian freedom?

*This charge, actually being leveled against us from various sides, is no minor issue. **Woe to us if they are well founded! For the heresy with which we are here charged is an earth quake that certainly must topple the pure doctrine of justification.** Yet we shall see – it is quickly shown which side can be charged with heresy, whether it is those being charged or those making the allegations.*

Before anything else we must state: Whoever thinks that, according to this same doctrine, the use or rejection of ceremonies that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God is always totally indifferent or a matter of personal whim, since they are grey areas, really have a poor understanding of the doctrine of Christian freedom. Even reason tells us that even innocuous matters can become most sinful under certain circumstances. Even that famous heathen, Seneca, writes this (*Lib. IV. controu. 25.*): "*Quaedam, quae licent, tempore et loco mutato, non licent,*" which means in English: "Much that's allowed is not allowed in a different context of time or place." **So, of course, situations can always arise where ceremonies that are, in themselves, indifferent, stop being indifferent, situations in which great sin can be committed by either accepting or rejecting the same. That's the doctrine of the Word of God and, therefore, the doctrine of our ev. Luth. Church.** It's certainly true, in his

⁷May the dear readers of *The Lutheran* not become upset with us for going into such depth on this subject. We have noticed that even among those totally committed to the Lutheran Church and truth confusion dominates about this matter, and, for this reason, many here are divided amongst themselves who ought to extend a fraternal hand to each other and work together for their common goal. We might, therefore, like to add something here to learn to come to a common understanding with those who oppose us and – bring peace. We therefore most fervently plead that each and every reader not ignore the importance of this matter but take this matter up for their careful consideration.

conscience a Christian must always assert his freedom in all matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God and suffer absolutely no diminution of the same. The Christian is never allowed to let a single person, or even the whole Christian church rule through human commandments. Therefore, for example, the apostle admonished the Corinthians not to eat of the sacrifices to idols: but he also adds "but not for conscience's sake": "But I do not say this for the sake of conscience but for the sake of others. For why should I let my freedom be judged by another man's conscience?" 1 Cor. 10, 28, 29. But shortly before this passage the holy apostle establishes this important rule: "I indeed have authority to do everything, but not everything is good." v. 23. By these Words it's abundantly clear that even within the bounds of Christian freedom some limitations are drawn that no one who wants to be a Christian may be allowed to transgress. For whenever our use of our Christian freedom does not result in what is good, according to this apostolic passage, we are always then responsible to voluntarily forgo the use of our freedom, lest by not doing so we commit terrible sin. Therefore Luther also treats it this way in his glorious sermon, *On the Freedom of the Christian Man* under the paradoxical (seemingly contradictory) themes: "1. A Christian man is a free lord over all, and 2. A Christian man is a submissive servant of all."

Now the question arises: **In what cases can even a Christian not act as he pleases in regards to ceremonies nor appeal to his freedom?** We answer:

1. The individual is bound to observe the ceremonies and to abide by all human orders which have been introduced in an orderly way through the majority of the congregation to which he belongs. This is based upon all the passages of the holy Scripture according to which things taking place in a Christian congregation are to be done in peace, good order and honorably, and all should be subject to one another, especially the young to those who are elder. Cf. 1 Cor. 14. 33,40; 1 Peter 5.5. This divine law, the fulfillment of which is immediately binding on the conscience of every Christian, makes every churchly institution binding for the individual in a way that is, indeed, mediate but yet true. Therefore an independently minded person has no right to say: He won't abide by any congregational order, he will not observe this or that ceremony the congregation has accepted, for human laws are not binding on the conscience and ceremonies are obviously free and indifferent, whose rejection must not be allowed to be considered sinful, and the like. Certainly it is true that if it is demanded of a Christian that he consider a human commandment to be a command of God, he must then rather die than submit to it. But, on the other hand, if he is required to keep a human institution for the sake of love, for the sake of peace, for the sake of good order, then he can in no way presumptuously appeal to his freedom, for his conscience is mediate bound to it, for by overstepping that churchly institution he would be overstepping the divine command: "Let everything take place honorably and in good order. Everyone should be subject one to another." Here applies the already mentioned passage of the *Augsburg Confession*: "Such orders are incumbent upon the Christian assembly for the sake of love and peace, and the bishops and parsons are to be obeyed in these cases, so that people not offend each other, so there will be no disorder or wild behavior." (Art. 28) Luther writes about this in his sermon on good works: "The second work stemming from this (the Fourth) Commandment is honoring and obeying our spiritual mother, the holy Christian church, that we conduct ourselves according to her

spiritual authority, what she commands, forbids, institutes, assigns, bans, frees, even as we honor, fear and love our physical parents, so also we grant the spiritual authority⁸ their rights in all things that are not in violation of the first three Commandments.” (L.W. X. 1649.) Since it is not uncommon that there are members in congregations who believe it is a violation of their freedom that they should be ruled by the majority in matters that are indifferent and not sinful, then let us go on to see what a few witnesses of pure doctrine say on this point. First, Luther goes on to write in his book *On Councils and the Church*: “Concerning such external signs and holy things (sacraments) the church has a number of external rites by which and through which they are not sanctified in either body or soul, and are not commanded and instituted by God, but rather. . . these have an external usefulness or utility and are perfectly good and proper. For instance, a few holidays are observed for preaching and prayer, a few prayer hours, as morning and afternoon, churches are built, or a building is used, an altar, a pulpit, baptismal font, lamps and candles, bells, vestments and the like. Christians would be able to be and remain sanctified without such things, . . . but these are fine things for the children and for simple people, and provide them with fine order so that they have a definite time, place and hour which they can count on, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 14.: Let everything be done decently and in good order. And no one should – as also no Christian does – out of pure stubbornness and with no reason, act alone against this in disorder, and ignore it, but act in good faith towards the flock, retain their good order nor even disturb or hinder it. For they would violate love and hospitality.” (Luth. W. XVI. 2814. 15.) Luther goes on to write: “Between you, as a person, and God there is nothing but pure and perfect freedom, so that before him you will not put up with being forced to do those things he has not commanded. In this, heaven and earth are filled with his freedom, as heaven and earth cannot yet contain it. But between you and your neighbor, or those in authority over you, this freedom does not extend except insofar as it does not harm your neighbor. Yes wherever it can be to his benefit and support, such freedom must not want to be free, but rather give way and be of service to our neighbor.” (L.W. XIX. 1671.) Finally, Heinrich Mueller writes in the appendix to his *Enlivening Hour*: “One is not bound by the institution of the confessional chair to deny a person Communion as a bad thing if he has not first appeared for confession, especially such people who had come from evangelical places where (private) confession had not been practiced, and thus, as he was being raised as a member of the church in this way, he could not yet be prepared to do this, for then such an institution would turn the confessional chair into a compulsion of conscience, even when private confession itself does not have a divine but a human institution and is not universally instituted, but only in part of the church. Even so, thoughtful people, in order to prevent offending in any way the untaught and the weak, are also showing kindness by also being prepared to admonish such people so that they first attend to the confessional chair. For wherever private confession is practiced and is confirmed through church law, it is also binding on a person

⁸“Spiritual authority” does not only mean the so-called spiritual estate, but also not only the congregation of the laity, but the whole church or congregation, as consisting of both teachers and hearers, and either consisting of all adult males, or, in some circumstances, a smaller number of representatives. Therefore Luther writes in the appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*: “Christ gives the final and highest judgement to the church when he says: Tell it to the church.” (*On the Power and Primacy of the Pope*) In the *Apology* it says: “What the bishops and parsons resolve is not also immediately the church’s decision.” In the so called Wittenberg Reformation of 1545 Luther expresses himself even more clearly when he writes: “When our Savior, Christ, says: ‘Tell it to the church.’ with these Words he is commanding that the church must be the highest judge, so it follows that not just one station, that is, the bishops, but also others educated in the fear of God of all other stations, are to sit as judge and have the *voces decisivas* (deciding voice).” (L.W. XVII. 1754.)

who comes there from a foreign place, insofar as he desires to be received in good standing as a member in fellowship with that Church, for these incidental, local, officially adapted rules of the church are no less binding on the conscience than any other laws, to be conformed with, and what Augustine writes in *Epist. 86* therefore applies here: “In those things that have not been firmly established in the holy Scripture, the customs of the people of God or the institutions of the ancient church are to be regarded as law.” We would also add what the church father, Augustine, offers in regard to this point in another place, when one of the things he writes to Jannarius is: “When my mother followed me to Milan, she found that the congregation did not fast on the Sabbath. She began to be disturbed by this and was confused as to what she should do. Indeed, this did not bother me, but for her sake I asked Ambrose, of blessed memory, for some counsel about this, who told me: Whenever I go to Rome, I fast on the Sabbath. When I return here I don’t. So in whatever congregation you enter, you should observe their customs if you don’t want to offend anyone and what they do should not then be regarded offensive by you.”

2.) A second case in which indifferent matters cease to be indifferent or remain matters of freedom is this, when through the use or through the discontinuation of the same the weak would be offended. St. Paul not only expressly writes about this to the Romans (Ch. 14.13 – 22) and to the Corinthians (1, Ch. 8. 9 – 13), but this worthy apostle also shows us this by his example of how a Christian should behave in this case. That is, Paul once wanted to take young Timothy along on his apostolic journey, but since his father had been a Gentile Timothy had not received circumcision. Now since Paul feared this would be taken by the Jews as offensive and thus would hinder the Gospel being brought among them if he would preach the same in association with someone who was uncircumcised, so, as a concession to the weakness of his brothers according to the flesh, he had Timothy circumcised, even though not long before that the decision had been adopted by the whole Council in Jerusalem that the Gentiles, who would become Christians, would not first have to become circumcised. Cf. Acts 16. 1 – 4. Being directed by this doctrine and this example of the apostle, it therefore says explicitly in our symbols: “Our people also teach clearly and plainly that Christian freedom must be exercised in these matters so as not to offend the weak or the uninstructed, and that no one, in any way, abuse freedom so that the weak are frightened away from the Gospel, but rather for the sake of peace and unity customs must be retained that can be retained without sinning and without burdening the conscience.” (*Apol. Art. 15*) But as, by these words, the *Apology* first warns against offending the weak by doing away with the ancient ceremonies that had been used before, so the *Formula of Concord* just as seriously warns against introducing ceremonies from the false believing Churches for the sake of causing offense with the following words: “So also through such concessions and similitude in these external matters, one is first uniting in their doctrine which is not Christian, strengthening the idolaters in their idolatry, disturbing and offending those who rightly believe, and weakening their faith, for both of which every Christian will be responsible to give an account upon his soul’s welfare and salvation, as it is written: Woe to the world for the sake of offense. Or: Whoever has offended the least one who believes in me, it would be better for him that a millstone be hung around his neck and he be drowned in the sea, where it is the deepest.” (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration Art. 10*) Oh that these preemptive woes had been taken to heart by those who wanted to be servants of the Lutheran Church but who, without ever thinking about their offending the weak, set out to abolish

practically every ancient Lutheran practice, and have received in their place the ceremonies of Reformed Churches. They will someday have to give an account before God for that, as through such misleading they cause many Lutherans to wander from their old mother church and have strengthened those who are Reformed minded in their dream that the ancient Lutheran Church had been semi-Catholic and that the Reformed are the truly cleansed and purified Church. Preachers who mislead people like that obviously actually think they're the ones acting thereby on behalf of the weak, but they err badly by thinking so, so it becomes all too clear that there is a third case when we are not free with respect to ceremonies to act as if they were arbitrary.

3.) **That is, ceremonies cease to be free matters of indifference when they are either demanded of us as necessary or made into a sin in our conscience. For in this case it is not being treated at all as an indifferent ceremony (over which mature Christians would be ashamed to debate), but then it must be considered as nothing less than asserting a denial of what is true, especially a denial of that important doctrine of Christian freedom.** In this case, before a Christian should make the least concession, especially to manifest enemies of the truth or even to false brothers, even in matters that would otherwise be innocuous and insignificant, he must rather suffer any consequence to himself. The holy Scriptures teach us this through Word and example. Thus St. Paul chiefly writes: "So don't allow anyone to make matters of food or drink, or of specific holidays, or new moons or Sabbaths matters of conscience. Don't let anyone corrupt your goal, who by their own choice boast in the worship of angels. Why do you allow yourself to be taken captive by their principles as if you still lived in this world? Who say: You must not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things that decay in your hands and are human commands and teachings." (Col. 2.16 – 22.) Further: "So stand firm in the freedom by which Christ has set us free and don't let yourselves again be taken prisoner in a yolk of slavery. See, I, Paul say to you: If you let yourselves be circumcised then Christ is no use to you." (Gal. 5.1,2) Paul has also confirmed this doctrine by his example. *For though under other circumstances, as we heard above, he conceded for the sake of the weak and had Timothy circumcised since the jewel of the pure doctrine was not being endangered thereby yet, on the other hand, he was dead set against letting Titus to be circumcised. The apostle states the reason for this alternative handling of the matter with the words: "For when some false brothers had forced their way among us and infiltrated us to spy out the freedom we have in Christ JESUS, so they might take us captive: We did not give in to them for a moment to submit to them, so that the truth of the Gospel would remain among you."* (Gal. 2.3 – 5) So in keeping with this, our symbols speak in the same way: "We believe, teach and confess when the enemies of God's Word desire to displace the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire congregation of God, yes each individual Christian man, but especially the servants of the Word as representatives of the congregation, are responsible, by virtue of God's Word, to confess the doctrine, and what belongs to the whole religion, freely and publicly, not only with words but in actions and deeds, nor even in this case should they yield at all in matters of indifference to the opponents nor should they allow themselves to adopt anything from the opponents to weaken true worship nor germinate an instituted idolatry, by force or by stealth, as it is written in Gal. 5.1, or Gal. 2.4,5. Paul speaks in the same way of circumcision, which was, at the time, a free matter of indifference (1 Cor. 7.18), as something that was otherwise also used by Paul in spiritual freedom. Acts 16.3. But since the false apostles demanded and

abused circumcision to certify their false doctrine as if the works of the law were necessary for righteousness and salvation, Paul then says that he would not yield to them for a moment so that the truth of the Gospel would remain. So Paul gives way and concedes to the weak in food and times or days. Romans 14.6. But he will not also yield to the false apostles who wanted to lay such things as being necessary upon the conscience, even if such matters were, in and of themselves, indifferent. Col. 2.16. And when Peter and Barnabas conceded something in a case like this, Paul rebukes them publicly since they were not walking rightly according to the truth of the Gospel. Gal. 2.14. For here it no longer has anything to do with an outward action that is indifferent, which according to its nature and essence are and remain in themselves free and therefore may not suffer any commanding or forbidding to use the same, or not to do so, but rather it has to do with 1. the high matter of our Christian faith, as the apostle witnesses in Gal. 2.5: "So that the truth of the Gospel remains," which would be darkened and ruined through such force and laws, since such indifferent things would promote false doctrine, superstitions and idolatry, and displace pure doctrine and Christian freedom, either openly, or at least by their thus accepting the abuses instituted by the opponents. In the same way, 2. this also has to do with the article of Christian freedom, which the Holy Ghost has so earnestly commanded us to retain through the mouth of the apostles of his church." (*Formula of Concord. Epitome. Art. 10*) **From this it is manifest if a Lutheran preacher gets rid of the old ceremonies of his Church and replaces them with the ceremonies of the falsely believing parties, since those heterodox bodies condemn the Lutheran ceremonies, turning them into a matter of the conscience and condemning them as sinful, superstitious, idolatrous, papistic, and since they declare that their own ceremonies (as the Reformed for instance with their breaking the bread) are the only right ones and require them as necessary, then such a preacher denies the important article of Christian freedom, lets himself again be caught under an Old Testamental yoke of slavery and thereby even denies Christ himself, who purchased our freedom at such a great cost. It doesn't matter if the preacher had good intentions in this, as if he were misleading them in deference to the weak. Truth cannot give way, nor the purity of the Gospel endangered for the sake of the weak, much rather everything must give way to God's truth.** Therefore Luther writes among other things: "Listen, my brother, you know that we should surrender life and limb for Christian freedom as for each and every article of faith...It is necessary for you to confess and retain Christian freedom, and not put up with the devil making any command or prohibition here, or calling anything sinful or a matter of conscience where God does not want to. But when you allow such to be made sins, Christ is removed who takes sins away. For by such a conscience the true Christ is denied, who takes away all sins. So watch yourself, lest even in these insignificant matters you stand in no small danger, when they thereby are playing games with your conscience." **"Wherever they want to deal with commandments and prohibitions, sins, good works, conscience and endanger whatever God wants left free, and has neither commanded nor forbidden, you must stand fast above all that in freedom and always do the exact opposite of what they demand until your freedom has won the field."** (Writing on the Heavenly Prophets. L.W. XX. 278) Here a Lutheran preacher sees what he's obligated to do if he wants to remain faithful to his Church.

4.) Now we come to the last case, one that is especially relevant to our times, when the acceptance or rejection of an

otherwise innocuous rite is not indifferent. It is this: If, in one way or another the appearance is given as if one is deferring to the opponents of pure doctrine, or as if one is now united with them or as if one is saying orthodoxy and false faith are essentially the same. The sacred duty to be most careful to diligently suspend the use of this freedom in this case is based, amongst others, on the following passage from 2 Cor. 6.14: "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what use has righteousness for unrighteousness? What fellowship has light with the darkness? What agreement is there between Christ and Belial? – Therefore come out from among them and separate from them, says the LORD." Rom. 16.17: "I admonish you, dear brothers, that you mark those who cause division and offenses alongside the doctrine you have learned, and withdraw from them." In this connection confer with 1 Thess. 5.22: "Avoid every appearance of evil." Now, according to these declarations of the Holy Ghost, if the orthodox must sever fellowship with unbelievers and the heterodox, separate from them and depart from them and thus, according to that last passage, also avoid any appearance that fellowship was established between them, then those who receive the sorts of rites that are characteristic of a heterodox faith, that likewise have become trademarks of certain sects by which those who are heretical in faith want to express and confess their heresies with their rites, obviously act against God's Word: For by that the members of the orthodox church give the appearance of having become one (united) with those of that heretical faith, as if they had become one with them, as if they had quit their accusation against the heretical doctrine, and as if they had now become one church body with the enemies of pure doctrine. That's why in this case even our churchly symbols point this out when, among other things, they say: "Also among the legitimate, free adiaphora, or indifferent things, must not be included such ceremonies that give the appearance, apparently to avoid persecution, as if our religion and the papistic religion (or any other heterodox religion) were not far different than each other, or as if that religion were not highly opposed by us: Or if such ceremonies have the purpose and are thus forced to be accepted so that by that means both contradictory religions are integrated (in unam redactae), and made into one body, or again (cum periculum est) rapprochement is being attempted to the papacy by a retreat from the pure doctrine of the Gospel and true religion, or that this should be the final result. For in this case what Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6.14,17 should and must apply: 'Do not be yoked with strangers, for what fellowship has light with darkness? Therefore depart from them and be apart from them, says the LORD.' (Formula of Concord. Epitome. Art. 10) We must not overlook what the Apology expresses, in the following: "The Christian church does not only consist in association with outward signs (externarum rerum ac rituum, sicut aliae politicae), but rather chiefly in the inner fellowship of the eternal wealth of the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God." (Art. 7) By this the Apology clearly explains that even the external ceremonies are not to be completely excluded from that by which the true church takes part in her fellowship.

Now when we apply the doctrine on ceremonies that we have presented here from God's Word and the symbols of our Church to our present circumstances here, then it is not difficult to say that we, who are being favored by being called by the name "Old Lutherans," do not want to diminish the freedom publicly confessed by the Lutheran Church nor again institute a papistic insistence on ceremonies.

We do not deny that we are geared up to retain the external worship service as it has long been retained for centuries by

the ancient Lutheran Church, in its characteristic, constituent parts and to certify it as such to our congregations. We do not deny, however, that we intend to have no connection at all with the other church fellowships, nor to conform to any of the ceremonies characteristic of the Reformed, Methodists or others. Finally, we in no way consider those who nowadays abandon all the distinctive ceremonies of our church and in their place accept those of foreign churchly fellowships to be true Lutherans. But we do not do this because we believe that any ceremony instituted by man is, in itself, necessary for the Church to be true, as do the papists, or that we do not have the authority under every circumstance to use any non-offensive ceremony, whatever it might be. Much rather we only treat it that way because we won't let our freedom in ceremonies be taken from us, we don't want to deny any truth, especially in this important doctrine of Christian freedom, but want to confess it by our deeds, not wanting to offend the weak, nor confirming any seemingly innocuous rite tied to any heretical doctrine, lest we strengthen anyone in his error, or even give the slightest hint that by doing so we agree with the opponents of our Lutheran Church and her doctrine, nor that we were merging together into one church with them. We are dead serious about this. That's what we want to do and what we are contending for. But it has nothing to do with the ceremonies, as such, whose use or abolition in other circumstances we would consider and declare with all our hearts to be a matter of complete freedom. Those who oppose our employing the Lutheran confession of freedom in ceremonies are boxing with shadows against us when they assert these things are, of themselves, free and necessitate no schism. The question they are raising is much rather this, if we now are in circumstances where, according to God's Word and the confession of our Church, we must not concede to opponents even in certain indifferent matters. But since we are now in exactly those circumstances, it is what we believe that dictates our response.

For others, that is, for the Reformed, they want make what a Lutheran Church does a matter of conscience, since Lutherans have altars, images, crucifixes and the like in their Churches, that they use the oblation, or hosts and candle lighters with their administration of the holy LORD's Supper and require people to kneel at the reception of the most holy sacrament, that the pastor chants the Words of institution of the holy Supper, the liturgical verses, collects and the Aaronic benediction at the altar, that at Baptism, consecration, blessing, absolution they like to make the sign of the cross, to bow one's head at the Name of JESUS, etc. On the other hand, the Reformed have insisted, as indispensable for a valid celebration of the holy LORD's Supper, on the use of common bread, breaking it, giving the bread and the cup into the hand of the communicant, etc. But it is just for this reason, partly because they portray these practices of the Lutheran Church as sinful superstition, papistic and idolatrous, and partly because they want to demand that their innovations are necessary, just for that reason the Lutheran Church has not given way to her opponents for a moment, but rather has retained her relief against these lies imposed upon the conscience so that this important article of Christian freedom would not be darkened and that she would not lose it. But has anything changed since then? Are not the innocuous rites of the Lutheran Church still now turned into remnants of the papacy, which now must be completely eradicated to be pure? Don't even the false brothers in our own Church now press the same issues because in their view it's so

obvious that the jewel of ancient Lutheran worship cannot compete with the enthusiastic (*schwaermerisch*), Methodistic movements of the Spirit? – So therefore you must see that we must be diligent and careful in our watchfulness, that for the sake of the false spirituality and pride that now predominates and is being raised against the naivete of our fathers, we not also publicly and disgracefully deny our Christian freedom, if ever we give way to our opponents and our false brothers in their insistence on these things. What sort of doctrine, what take on Christian freedom would we be bringing into the hearts of many thousands of Christians and helping to confirm in them by doing so! It is clearly our responsibility, even right here and now, to lay down a witness by what we practice that a true Christian must not let people call sinful and make commands when God has not called it sinful or placed a command. ***And no one is permitted to say: In my circumstances, for my part, those things don't apply to me. We reply: If you really want to be a servant of the Lutheran Church and want your congregation to be a part of the same, you must not let yourself be satisfied to do what would be right and salutary for the narrow confines of your congregation, as if you stood there all by yourself but, as a member of the whole, you are obligated to act in conscious connection with the whole church. If you want to raise the issue of your prerogatives as a membership in the Lutheran Church, then you must keep this in your mind constantly in all of the work of your office: What attacks the church is an attack against me. Her wars are my wars. What the church does is what I will do. What I do is the church acting along with me. If the church is being led into temptation, I am also being tempted.. If someone falsifies one of the treasures of the church, he is also falsifying that treasure for me. Whenever the church might reject something, I thereby also reject it.*** “If a member suffers, then all the members suffer with it.” 1 Cor. 12.26. Obviously whoever doesn't take his stand being aware of being a part of the great whole of the church will never understand this. –

It would be a different situation if, this issue aside, the Lutheran Church in America had retained pure doctrine and only discontinued her rites for the sake of situations changing over time. It would then be crazy to force a return to ceremonies that have been abandoned. ***But we must bear in mind that most Lutherans, once they had abandoned Lutheran doctrine, have accepted Reformed and Methodistic doctrine instead of the old Lutheran doctrine and only then had also introduced the ceremonies of the latter.*** We remember how the old doctrine vanishing went hand in hand with the old practices disappearing, and the new practices followed directly in the footsteps of the new doctrines into our Churches. Finally, we bear in mind that most congregations who call themselves Lutheran here retained nothing but the name, while the union has already been introduced in them by their practice, since the preachers (just to mention one thing) are receiving the Reformed as members of their congregations, even as they want to remain Reformed, partly because of their greedy bellies, and partly from their complete indifference to religion. – Above all must we not acknowledge here and now that just now it is the most sacred obligation of a faithful servant of the Lutheran Church and of a congregation of that name that they give evidence of it also through her external worship service, so they are visibly distinguished from the congregations that are sectarian and also to publicly and decisively renounce them? Must we not regard it as our most sacred duty, as true sons of our Church, to take great care to avoid any appearance as if we belong to that great party or as if we approve of or even do not abhor with our whole heart the nature of the

same or of what's being pushed by those who are here unfaithful to the Lutheran Church, yes, who already have become members of another Church, and yet hypocritically want to bear the name Lutheran? Must we not regard it as our most sacred duty to seriously see to it that we never by either word or deed make ourselves part of that godless Church and religious syncretism that is always becoming more dominant? To sum it up: **If it has ever become necessary in any country that a Lutheran congregation must not want to bear her name as a show or in jest, retaining the confessional ceremonies of our church and defending herself from the acceptance of Reformed ceremonies and the like– is it not now, more now than in the confusion of Babylon, and just here in America, in this land of sects and of indifferentism?**

In order to make it clear to our readers that **the ceremonies the Old Lutheran Church had preserved did not have their origins in anything that was uniquely characteristic of the Roman Church**, we have, as the attentive reader will remember, proceeded from what we hope is an unquestionable premise, that Old Lutheranism could only lead to Rome: 1. If our Church had accepted the false doctrine that Church connects to such rites; and 2. If she also preserved the ceremonies of the Roman Church that mitigated against God's Word, or even just those ceremonies which embrace anything that is uniquely characteristic of the Roman Church, taking part in the actual essence of the papacy that were introduced to support or make the papacy acceptable.

Now we have proved, first of all, that the Old Lutheran Church has a completely different doctrine of ceremonies than do the Romanists. We've shown, while the Roman Church teaches that her human ceremonies are binding upon the conscience and are essential to the worship of God, so, on the other hand, the Old Lutheran Church teaches that all human ceremonies in the Church that are neither forbidden nor commanded by God are matters of Christian freedom, which may be accepted or abolished, preserved or removed, according to circumstances. We have further shown that the Old Lutheran Church by no means relegates the doctrine of freedom in all ceremonies to mere words, but this Church much rather affirms this doctrine in her actual practice, whenever she decisively rejects a few ceremonies under certain circumstances and has decisively preserved others.

Now the question arises: Even if, indeed, the Old Lutheran Church has a different doctrine in her ceremonies than the Roman Church, isn't she showing that she is closer to the Roman Church than other Protestant denominations, since she has preserved ceremonies mitigating against God's Word since they are ceremonies used exclusively by papists? Thus muses the “Watchman of Zion” in Baltimore. Mr. Weyl asserts this. He writes: “Making the three fold cross over a baptized infant,⁹ mounting a crucifix in the Church and burning wax candles on the altar in daylight at the holy LORD's Supper, etc., doesn't that reek of Rome?”

Now to go on to illuminate this point, we will lead the reader through the ceremonies the Lutheran church has received from out of the Roman Church one by one, to investigate if one or more of them really mitigate against God's Word or could even be referred to as remnants of the papacy. We begin with those Mr. Weyl has proposed, since it's obvious that these raise the greatest objections.

⁹We have omitted his words about invoking Mary, which Mr. Weyl included with these, since we have already squelched the shameful lie this bespeaks in issue number 5.

The first rite of our church that is supposedly papistic is the rite she uses so often, called “making the sign of the cross.” Now it’s certainly true, this ceremony is seldom used nowadays, since even many of the servants of the Church are ashamed of the crucified Son of God, so now even naive, honest Christians, who only see this done when they’re around Catholics come to think it’s a badge designating a vassal of the pope. But we ask, why could it not be an innocent ceremony, when such a lovely message is so clearly given to everyone by it? Even if it were admitted that this ceremony was not put into practice until after the papacy ascended, wouldn’t we still have to say it’s a very lovely and edifying rite to anyone who believes in the crucified Savior, who loves him and, therefore, gladly wants to remember him? Yet whoever is even slightly familiar with the history of the Christian Church must know that this beautiful, meaningful ritual is ancient. It far predates the rise of the papacy, yes, it had even been a common practice in the age of Christianity’s first love, in the age when even hundreds of thousands died as martyrs for the Crucified. Already the first doctor of the Church after the apostolic fathers, Justin Martyr, makes mention of this Christian custom in his second letter of defense in the days of the church father, Tertullian, who was born in the year 160. Making the sign of the cross was so universally practiced that he could write: “Step by step, every time they came in or went out, when putting on clothing and shoes, upon waking, eating, lighting lamps, laying or sitting down, in short, in all our daily activities, we make the sign of the cross upon our forehead.” (*Lib. De corona militis* c. III.) One of the things this same Tertullian writes in giving the details of the rites used with Baptism is this: “The flesh is signed (with the cross), by which the soul is guarded.” (*De resurr. Carnis. Ch. 8*) From this we see that even in the time of Tertullian the sign of the cross was put into service, not only in common life, but also in the Church. And, of course, at that time it had no tie to any superstitious ideas that in the sign of the cross itself lay some magical power as it was later taught in the papacy and is still taught.¹⁰ To the charge that heathen of those days leveled against Christians, that they worshiped the cross, Tertullian responds: “Whoever among you thinks that we worship the cross takes refuge in the same principle we do. Wood is wood. A figure does not obliterate its distinction from what it depicts.” (*Apolog. c. 16*) So, according to that, what must you say about Lutheran preachers and writers of newspaper articles who disparage making the sign of the cross as being papistic? Aren’t they themselves branding a most innocent rite, and a lovely, simple sign for the remembrance of the crucified Savior as an abomination? Aren’t they turning the Christians in the golden age of Christianity, along with many thousands of holy martyrs, into superstitious papists? Doesn’t the Lutheran Church have the right, as no reasonable person can deny, to preserve innocent rites that have remained in the Church, even from the ancient, good times, even through the rule of the papacy, and how may she, then, do away with the sign of the cross, this loveliest of all symbols, that only a believer can have? – Yes, says Mr. Weyl, “the time for child’s play is over and the worship of God in spirit and truth is ordained for us.” We respond: We truly do not begrudge this man his childish and ridiculous thoughts about responsibility

¹⁰In the catechism of the Jesuit, Canisius, so highly regarded by all Catholics, it says: “For what is the sign of the cross useful?” Answer: “Chiefly to drive away evil spirits and to destroy their power, attacks and devilish skills.” Compare this with Eph. 6.16. – The Catholics will say: Don’t the church fathers say these things about the sign of the cross? We answer: Here 1 Thess. 5.21 applies. The Bible is not to conform itself to the church fathers, but the church fathers must conform to the Bible. Besides that, it is also one thing for the church fathers speak of a matter in bold, rhetorical terms but quite another if one would want to forge new doctrines from out of those figures of speech.

and the Spirit. Yes we much rather pity him as an unsaved man who ought to be ashamed of his own explanation of the childishness of what is simply Christian. (cf. Mt. 18.3) But perhaps another might say: Shouldn’t the Lutheran Church abolish making the sign of the cross, since it is used so much by papists in service of their superstitions? We reply: Abuse must not eliminate a proper use. The true Reformation was not the elimination of all existing ceremonies, but the purification of what was good from abuses and of false accretions according to the apostolic rule: “Test everything and retain what is good!” It doesn’t say to abolish, but – “retain.” *But as to why the Lutheran Church retained just this designation, we will let the great Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard explain: He writes thus: “The sign of the cross is made upon the forehead and the breast of the child (to be baptized). This is not done out of superstition, nor for the sake of its supposed supernatural power, but this is to bear witness that the baptized is received to grace and born again unto eternal life through the service of the crucified Christ alone. By this we are also reminded that the child is being received into the number of those who believe in the crucified Christ, that the old Adam in him must be crucified daily through Baptism, Rom. 6.6, and that he will be subject to the cross in this life. According to Genesis 48.14, the patriarch Jacob similarly formed a cross when he laid his hands upon both of his grandsons, Ephraim and Menasseh, reminding them of the cross of Christ. Here we also include that some elders did this on the foreheads of the servants of God in Ez. 9.4 and Rev. 7.3. Christ the crucified was once foolishness to the Gentiles 1 Cor. 1.23. That is why they mocked Christians, calling them cross worshipers (crucicolas), as Tertullian witnesses. Christians designated themselves in that way to show that they were not ashamed of the cross of Christ, placing the same in the middle of their forehead. Cyrill of Jerusalem writes (Catech. 13): ‘Do not be ashamed of his cross. If you want to dispute with unbelievers, then first make the sign of the cross with your hand. . . It is the sign of faith’¹¹. . . Do not deny the Crucified, or the whole host of the witnesses of his crucifixion and his suffering will rise up against you, even the stones which are still visible, which were split at the death of JESUS.’ Augustine¹² writes (Serm. 8 de verb. Dom.) ‘The wise people of the world mock us because of the cross of Christ and say: What are you thinking, honoring a crucified God? The cross is signed upon the forehead, which is man’s disgrace, etc.’ Therefore when catechumens (who had registered to be baptized) give themselves over to the crucified Christ, their forehead and breast is signed with the cross, as a sign of faith and confession of Christ. The sign of the cross comes from the baptism of catechumens, as do most other ceremonies, and is carried over to the baptism of infants.” (Loc. theol. Bapt. § 261.) “Can,” writes Gerhard in another passage, “forming the sign of the cross over the bread and the cup (in the holy LORD’s Supper) be disapproved? Answer: This is a free ceremony if it is used as a sign of the blessing and consecration, but it is to be ascribed absolutely no spiritual power, . . . by it, the remembrance of the cross of Christ is renewed, that is, the suffering of Christ on the cross, which is the fount of all blessing, just as the laying on of hands in the Absolution and ecclesial ordination is used as an external sign. Even Chrysostom*

¹¹It is confessed by Felix of Narcissus that this was such a recognizable sign by the heathen that this is how a Christian was recognized, for they would make the sign of the cross on the hour.

¹²This church father boasts before God in his *Confessions* (v.1; ch.1) that his pious mother, Monica, had consecrated him, even when he had been a baby, with the sign of the cross.

(Hom. 55. in Matth.¹³) and Augustine (Tract 118 in Joh.) mention that the sign of the cross was used back then at the celebration of the holy LORD's Supper." (Loc. th. S. Coena. § 156) – Hopefully this will be sufficient to convince any objective person that nothing is less papistic than making the sign of the cross. . . .

A second practice of the Old Lutheran Church which must lead to Rome, according to Mr. Weyl's judgement, is "the mounting of a crucifix in the Church."

To this charge we must first remind you that, by all means, the Lutheran Church has, from the beginning, also distinguished herself from the Reformed Churches by doing this, as she has permitted images, altars, crucifixes, etc., in her houses of worship, while ever since the days of Carlstadt's smashing statues, the Reformed Churches have, for the most part, rejected them, though even the Reformed have not been perfectly united in that. So, for example, Beza, one of the Reformed, is not shy about saying he abhorred the image of the crucifixion from his heart," (Coll. Moempel. P. 418) but, on the other hand, a Calvinist, Petrus Martyr says, just as staunchly, Christ may be portrayed according to his human nature. (Comment. I. Reg. 7)

We can best see how rightly believing Lutherans regard images in the Church in some statements Luther made about the same. Luther speaks as follows in this regard. In his fourth sermon in the year 1522, after his return from the Wartburg to Wittenberg, he preached against Calstadt's enthusiasm (*Schwaermerei*) and statue smashing, saying: "Therefore we must conclude and must also remain in this, that images in themselves are neither good nor evil. But they should be left matters of freedom, to have them or not, only that no faith or dream be entertained that God is served or placated by venerating images." Further, Luther writes in his pamphlet, *Against the Heavenly Prophets of Images and the Sacrament*, from the years 1524 and 1525: "Not that I want to defend images or judge those who have broken them, especially those who destroy the images of God and venerated images. But images are reminders to bear witness to us, as do the crucifix and images of the saints, and this is even justified by looking to Moses, since even in the law they were certainly affirmed, and not only affirmed, but, inasmuch they were reminders and witnesses, they were also lovely and precious, like the stones of witness in Josh. 24.27 and 1 Sam. 7.12." Another important witness on this topic is found in the Church Postils. In his sermon for the *Invention of the Cross of Christ*, Luther writes: "Therefore where this abuse and heresy occurs in the worship of images and the cross, the cross or image should be removed and destroyed and even the Church building itself demolished. For we have in the Old Testament this figure of the bronze snake commanded by Moses in the wilderness, as you just heard in the Gospel. All who were bitten by the fiery serpents were cured when they looked up to the bronze snake. That is what we also must do to be healed in our sins. We must also look at the crucified Christ in such images and believe on him."

From this the attentive reader sees that even though the Lutheran Church gives so little attention to images that Lutherans don't think such external things are worth disputing over, she

¹³The words say this in Chrysostom: "Everything that is included in our salvation is perfected by means of the same (the cross). For when we (in Baptism) are born again, the cross of Christ is there. When we are fed with the most holy food (in the holy LORD's Supper), when we are ordained to the Preaching Office: always and everywhere the sign of the cross accompanies us. It's unimaginable that Chrysostom would ascribe a power to an outward sign of itself as in the superstition of the papacy, so he yet adds this: "The apostle called the cross something precious which one must not merely make with his fingers over his body, but obviously is made with great faith upon his thought."

merely asserts she has the freedom to use them, and therefore she does not disdain them when they may also serve as a God-pleasing reminder, or as an appropriate, external adornment for public worship.

Now since, on the part of the Reformed, they often want to accuse Lutherans of sinning since they have allowed images, altars and crucifixes and the like in their Churches as they charge this as being papistic, yes, idolatrous, as this, for example, is done in the Heidelberg Catechism (see this year's *The Lutheran*, issue 5), then using or not using these images has taken on a significance beyond what it is in and of itself. That is, since now they have made images a matter of conscience for Lutheran Christians, then between Lutherans and the Reformed it is no longer a matter involving poor, innocuous images, but rather it impacts the high article of Christian freedom, the legitimate understanding of the divine law, the proper distinction between the Old and the New Covenants, and therefore, whether a Christian ought to allow something God has not forbidden to be called sinful. Therefore, against her will, the Lutheran Church has been dragged into this dispute, which truly had to be engaged for the sake of the most important article of faith, yet, at face value, it concerns the kind of matters our Church would let go of in a second without dispute if she didn't want to betray a leaning to Rome. So Luther witnesses how significant this conflict had become in the pamphlet mentioned against the heavenly prophets in the following words: "This has been stated about images being required in the strictness of Moses' law, not because I thought that I should defend the images, as I've sufficiently said, but so that we grant no space for the murdering spirits, since they make sins and matters of conscience where there are none and, thus, needlessly murder souls. For though images are poor, external things, yet if consciences are thereby burdened, as if they were sins under God's law, then that elevates this issue to make it most significant. For that destroys faith, violates the blood of Christ, condemns the Gospel, and nullifies everything Christ has won for us. So also this abomination of Carlstadt is no less destructive to the kingdom of Christ and to a good conscience than was the papacy with its forbidding of food and marriage and whatever else was free and not sinful. For eating and drinking are also paltry, external matters, yet souls are murdered when the conscience is stricken with laws in these matters.

Whoever considers this rightly will not wonder when faithful servants of the Lutheran Church still advocate their congregation's adorning their Churches with images, with a crucifix, an altar and the like. They do this primarily so that, even in this way, God's Word is preached and the places where the congregation of the faithful gather invite their devotion, even externally. But they also do this, and, indeed chiefly do this, so that a public witness be constantly laid down for the freedom of the Christian in all matters not forbidden by God.

So now this brings up another question: Is the use of images, crucifixes, altars, etc. really a matter that is part of Christian freedom?

The Reformed deny this and with this they have always appealed to Ex. 20.4-5 where, in the midst of the enumeration of the Ten Commandments, it says: "You shall not make any image or any likeness, neither of that which is above in heaven nor that which is under the earth, nor that which is in the water under the earth." In order to emphasize these words the Reformed have even declared that this is a separate, that is, the Second Commandment, (so the Reformed number four Commandments on the first table and six Commandments on the second; they combine the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, on coveting, or

lusting, into one Commandment). So the Reformed say: Isn't it clearly forbidden here to make images? We answer: Yes! But what kind of image is forbidden is also stated in this addition: "Do not worship and serve them." That these words must be applied to the word "make" and must limit the same, we see from the 23rd verse of this Chapter where the LORD declares: "Therefore you shall not make anything next to me, you shall not make gods of silver or gold." These Words clearly and plainly show, first, that vs. 4 and 5 are not a separate, Second Commandment, but rather an explanation of the First Commandment and, secondly, that God only forbids making images for worship, as images of idols, in vs. 4 and 5. This is stated so naturally and obviously that it seems inconceivable that anyone on the side of the Reformed could have raised a doubt against it.

Yet the Reformed might object: Those Words: "'Do not worship them, or serve them" stand on their own. It doesn't say "You shall not make them so that you worship them." But even this objection dissipates into nothing when we compare this to Lev. 26.1. There the LORD says: "You shall not make any idols, nor an image, nor any pillars, nor any memorial stones in your land, which you worship. For I am the LORD, your God." Here we have God's own, thus an irrefutable, sure explanation of this addition to the First Commandment (Ex. 20.4,5.) But his divine explanation tells us that making images and having them is only forbidden when it is done "that they be worshiped." Now this also follows from Lev. 26.1, that erecting pillars and setting memorial stones is forbidden, from which it is clearly seen that merely making these things could not be forbidden, but rather making them to worship, for who could deny that they had been allowed to raise pillars and to set memorial stones? This is even more clearly seen in the following passage, Deut. 4.15-19. In this passage God even places next to the prohibition of making images "lifting your eyes to heaven to the sun, moon, stars and the whole host of heaven." Now wouldn't it be ridiculous to assert that according to that it is sinful to look up into the heavens and the stars? Certainly. Everyone sees that here only looking could be forbidden which is accompanied by a veneration of these creatures as it also says at the conclusion of this passage: "and fall down and worship them and serve them." But now if only the kind of idolatrous gazing into the heavens and its stars is forbidden that is idolatrous, then this also applies only to the idolatrous making of images on earth.

So from this it's clear that in the holy Ten Commandments, merely making and using images is not being forbidden. From other passages of Scripture and from the nature of this matter this is clear and self evident.

God willing, we will continue with this in the next issue.

Now we have arrived at the answer to the question: So is it really indisputably beyond doubt that God's Word allows one to make, possess and use images?

First we must point out that we Christians, who live in the New Covenant, are no longer bound to the civil and ceremonial laws of the Jewish people with their shadows and types (Col. 2.16-17), but rather only to their moral ethics. But this ethic is nothing other than the natural law that has been written by God in the heart, of the eternal, immutable norm of his will. Therefore we find if God himself has done something or commanded it, it can't be anything forbidden by moral ethics. But now, as has been confessed, God himself has had images made, sometimes by commanding it and sometimes by affirming them being made. According to Ex. 25.40 God himself had made and shown Moses an image of a model of the tent of meeting. Further, according to Num. 21.8, God himself had commanded that an image of a snake be made and,

according to Ex 35.30f, God filled Bezeel and Ahaliab with his spirit for the very reason to equip them with gifts for all sorts of artfully working with gold, silver and bronze, and the like. According to Ex. 25.18 God had arranged for them to make figures of cherubim and to even place them in the Holy of Holies. Here we also include the images that were found in the temple of Solomon, of cherubim, lions, cattle, pillars, flowery adornments, pomegranates and the like in 1 Kings 6.7. Now none of this, even if it were not specifically ordered by God, is offensive to God as he bears witness. For at its dedication he wondrously filled this temple that was adorned with all sorts of images with his glory, 1 Kings 8.11. So who could now declare that it is forbidden to do what God himself has done and commanded to be done, or has affirmed? It cannot possibly be against the moral precepts buried in the heart of every human being, so obviously, without doubt, it must also be allowed for a Christian of the New Covenant.

But we go on to bring this to a conclusion: What even God himself has established in nature can not possibly be sinful. But what is the whole of creation but a great stage upon which there are placed countless images? We see images in the mirror of a lake, or upon some other glassy surface of a stone, polished metal, etc., so everywhere you see the image of a man throughout the world that surrounds him. The temple of nature that God himself has built has altars everywhere. Every hill and mountain is an altar. And as often as the sun rises and sets, adorning the ceiling of the cathedral God himself built, in which all the children of God worship daily and gather under the heavenly canvas, painted in glorious colors. Yes, doesn't even our own imagination constantly sketch images of all kinds of subjects in the temple of our hearts? Even Mssrs. Reformed, whether they want to or not, are forced by nature itself to suffer images in the temple that God himself has made and, indeed, even in the temple of their hearts, in the way of all good Lutherans. Now isn't it foolish to want to accuse Christians of sin, yes to even waste a word on it, when they adorn the meeting places they construct for themselves with images that can give them reminders of God's blessings? One of the things Luther writes about this against the heavenly prophets is: "So I also surely know that God wants to have his work heard and read, especially the suffering of Christ. But if I must hear and think about that, it is impossible that I not make images of those things in my heart. For, whether I want to or not, if I hear of Christ (the Crucified) an image of a man hanging on a cross is sketched in my heart, just as my face naturally appears in water when I gaze into it. Now if it's not sinful to have Christ's image in my heart, why should it be sinful if I have it in my eyes? Surely the heart is more important than the eyes, as that is the true throne and dwelling place of God!"

Beyond all doubt it is finally established that if, then, God had forbidden images and memorial stones, etc., it was not because those things in themselves were being disparaged, but the idolatrous use of the same, since we observe these things are rejected in some circumstances and have actually been affirmed in others. The calves at Bethel in Dan that were venerated were hated by God, but he affirmed the placing of the bulls in the temple of Solomon, which was now dedicated for worship. And back when the tribes of Ruben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh constructed an altar on their side of the Jordan, they were at first suspicious that said tribes might have been guilty of trespassing the law by doing that. But as it came to light that this altar was only a witness and a memorial monument that by no means would be used idolatrously, then the suspicious brothers were pacified, and they thanked and praised God. Cf. Joshua 22. So it is also only fair that our Mssrs. Reformed along with their

lackies, Mr. Weyl in Baltimore and all the other non-Lutherans, calm down a bit when they hear that we Lutherans have images, crucifixes, altars, etc., not in order to offer sacrifices and the like, but rather merely as adomments and as pious reminders.

Now at this point a few might still respond, certainly all images are not to be rejected, but in any case it is still wrong to make an image of God and to make a likeness of him, since God is by nature invisible and can and must not be depicted (Deut. 4.15) Whoever does that presents God in human terms, which would thereby place a false presentation of God into the heart and thereby institute obvious idolatry, as Aaron did with the golden calf. We reply: In this we are in full agreement with the Reformed. We also reject all images that man himself makes of God as idolatrous. Therefore in the Lutheran Churches and books only images of God's revelations (not of God himself) are permitted. For example, we permit representations of the revelation of God the Father as an ancient man, according to Daniel 7.9; God the Son as the Son of Man according to Daniel 7.13, 1 Tim. 3.16, and according to the whole New Testament; God the Holy Ghost as a dove, according to Mt. 3.16. Included in this are also all of the ways the Bible presents the characteristics of God. These have been given in paint instead of in letters, such as the eye, etc. To reject such things is ridiculous, since obviously no one could keep such images out of his soul. Would to God that had our opponents also made no other images of God than that which the Bible sketches of him in their hearts, then they would quickly unite with us about these external adomments and visual witnesses. But they attack these visible, idolatrous images with fists and axes while the idolatrous images which false doctrine stirs up in their hearts they leave untouched upon their thrones. Compare Rom. 2.22, 2 John 9, 1 Sam. 15.22-23. So if you, you image warriors, would like to practice your trade, then by all means take to your battlefield. Go into your hearts, and you'll have plenty to battle there!

Now what must finally bring us to sum up all we've said about the use of images? It is this: It is not Old Lutheranism that leads to Rome, for according to God's Word, he teaches freedom in these matters. But certainly innovative, modern, neo-Lutheranism does lead to Rome, for it, like good Romanists, commands what God has left free. Luther also came to this conclusion back in his battle against Carlstadt. He writes, "Now notice here who writes on behalf of the Anti-Christ, we or Carlstadt. **We act like the papists, except that we do not suffer their doctrine, commands and force. We also allow what the Carlstadtians do, but we do not suffer their forbidding things. So now the papists and Calstadt are the true pens of the Anti-Christ in doctrine, for they both create doctrine the one by their doing, the other by their prohibiting. But we teach neither and practice both.**" (Against the Heavenly Prophets.) . . .

As it is well known, this also is counted among the signs of an intentional tendency of the Old Lutheran Church to Rome; that in our church, with the distribution of the holy LORD's Supper, small round coins of bread called hosts or wafers are used instead of common bread, and we, therefore, don't break them. We consider it necessary to note a few things about this.

There are two things to note as most important concerning the use of these so-called hosts. First, we use them because they are also nothing other than bread. They are prepared from flour and water and baked, and that, and nothing more, is the essence of bread. Now, since Christ has given no command as to what form the bread should have and how big or thick it must be, and since, more than that, the holy LORD's supper was not instituted for our body, but to feed our souls and since,

finally, even from ancient times this was the usual form (even Epiphanius mentions them in the fourth century) as most appropriate for this holy use, so we do not see why any change should be required. **Additionally, since the Reformed have called us sinful for this form of the bread we use and have even often ridiculed it as an abomination of the papacy, and have called the wafers foam bread, fog bread and silver pieces by which Christ is betrayed, and the like, it is most appropriate to do this. For that's how Lutherans take their stand upon their freedom and do not allow their conscience to be bound to innocent things, and retain this as their indifferent custom. Of course, they do not call the Reformed sinful as they use common bread, but since they declare that just this custom of theirs is the only mark of the true church, then rightly believing Lutherans must do exactly the opposite, since what had formerly held no significance has now become a mark of a heretical church. It may certainly be the case that, especially here, the Reformed custom may have been introduced in many congregations, not to instigate Reformed doctrine but out of lack of a supply of wafers. We do think when it is up to a preacher to act with his congregation to confess they are a Lutheran Church, he must then, in this age of the external blending of religions, be determined to also conform to the Lutheran Church in this ceremony of confession and make every effort to avoid syncretism (mixing of faiths).**¹⁴

Now, further, concerning our omission of the breaking of the bread which is not seldom used as a charge against the Lutheran Church, there is more to this complaint than what has just been mentioned.

That is, it is by all means true that the holy evangelists explicitly report to us that before the distribution of the consecrated bread, Christ had first broken the same. From this, the conclusion is drawn on the side of the Reformed that thus it is obviously absolutely necessary for a valid LORD's Supper that the bread be broken with it.

To decide about that, it is first necessary to ask the question about what belongs to the actual essence of the holy LORD's Supper. Of course, it is clear that the holy evangelists have also expressly mentioned a number of circumstances that had obtained at the institution of the holy LORD's Supper, but which no one sees as essential to the valid celebration of the holy LORD's Supper. For example, they explicitly tell us that the first holy LORD's Supper had been celebrated in a guest room, in the evening, at a table, immediately after the evening meal, that all those eating reclined at the table. Now if someone wanted to say that everything that the evangelists relate about the circumstances of this institution is necessarily required for every valid LORD's Supper, then all of the conditions just mention would also have to be deemed necessary. But who would assert that? Everyone much rather perceives that all these circumstances are dictated according to the time and place, when and where any particular holy LORD's Supper is celebrated, and according to the customs and ceremonies that prevail there. Among these circumstances we Lutherans also concede that Christ broke the bread at the institution of the holy LORD's Supper. It is well-known that the Jews had not baked bread that rises as we Germans do in our ovens, but flatbread, so **if they wanted to receive and distribute it, it first had to be broken.** That's why in the Hebrew language breaking the bread means the same as distributing it. For example

¹⁴We want to make good brothers in office, who know of no local sources to obtain hosts, aware that the same can be obtained from the clerk of the local Lutheran congregation, Mr. Graeber, care of our address.

Isaiah 58.7: "break your bread for the hungry." Lamentations 4.4: "The young children crave bread and there is no one to break it for them." Therefore, of course, this is not a direction that the bread necessarily must be broken for the poor, but only, in general, that it should be distributed among them. The means to do this among the Jews was by breaking it. Since back on that night there was bread remaining from the evening meal they just finished, obviously Christ had to also break it as he now wanted to distribute it among the disciples. This was as necessary as a lamp being lit since it was evening. But Christ was in no way thereby giving a command that this method of distribution must be observed at all times and in all places, even where no bread needing to be broken is used. Far from it! Even those Christians who did not practice breaking the bread in the holy LORD's Supper into pieces yet remained therefore, united with the first Christians "in the apostolic doctrine and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread," that is, when the consecrated bread was distributed among them according to Christ's institution and received in true faith, just as those kept that commandment in Isaiah 58.7, if they didn't give the poor bread they'd broken, but a whole loaf. Nevertheless, we Lutherans do not, for that reason, regard it at all as wrong to break the bread, as Christ had broken it, we only regard it, for the reasons just given, as so little necessary as that one recline at table, hold the celebration in the evening, or have a common mealtime beforehand, and the like.

This matter is so clear that everyone can probably see this. Yet we must nevertheless fear that perhaps many, who are not used to making these clear distinctions, may think we are only making this argument to justify our Church. For their sake we want to appeal to the witnesses of two famous Reformed doctors of the church, who, indeed, have criticized Lutherans for omitting the breaking of the bread but, nevertheless, have had to confess that it is neither commanded by Christ nor part of the essence of the holy Sacrament.

The first is Beza (from 1558 a close friend and colleague in office of Calvin in Genf), who writes: "it makes no difference if one breaks it into many pieces during the ceremony of a Mass or if he distributes small round breads, which have been previously separated into parts before the Mass." (*Lib. 99 et resp.* 9.194.) In another passage the same man writes: "it is still the LORD's Supper if only the chief matter and its pure essence be observed, even if the breaking of the bread is omitted." (*Epist.* 2. Vol. 3 p. 169)

The second is Zanchius (from 1553 professor at Strasbourg, later at Heidelberg), who writes: "the breaking of bread is not to be introduced if the greater portion of the Church is against it, so that no division results because of it, since by wanting to break the bread they would break and sever the body of the church by doing so. . . That many imagine that the breaking is commanded for the sake of these words: 'This do in remembrance of me,' is, in my judgment, an error, since it is obvious that this command is not referring to Christ's act: 'he broke it,' but rather to the command to take bread and to eat it. So this is also the case because it would otherwise follow that our preachers are acting wrongly when they alone break the bread since this command, (if he would also understand it to apply to the breaking of the bread) would not only apply to them but to all believers, to all of those to whom he had previously said to take and eat." (*Lib. Epist.* I. F. 238)

So then, how did it come about that, without noticing it, some Reformed are now so earnestly and strictly insisting on the breaking of the bread? The reason is not hard to find. They only regard the sacraments as ceremonies that give no grace, but rather should only point to, signify and represent the same. They

believe of holy Baptism that it does not work the second birth, but only signifies it, that it is not the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, but only points to it. They believe of the holy LORD's Supper, there is no true presence of the body and the blood of Christ at all in it, but rather these heavenly treasures would only be represented in them under the bread and wine. The holy LORD's Supper is actually nothing but a performance, by which the suffering of Christ is presented through all sorts of rituals that must, in that way, be called into remembrance. So, for example, even the breaking of the bread points to Christ's body having been broken. By such doctrine the Reformed obviously must keep breaking the bread, since according to them the chief use of their LORD's Supper rests directly upon their doing just that.

Yet everyone can plainly see how erroneous that take would be since, first of all, the body of Christ hadn't really been broken at all, only figuratively (John 19.36 cf. Exodus 12.46). But had the breaking of the bread been a symbolic ritual, and something ought to have been signified by it, then, of course what was signified could not again be something symbolic, but would have to be something real, thus an actual breaking of Christ's body. But, as said, since such a thing never actually happened, then it is clear that Christ had only broken the bread so he could distribute it, not because he wanted to institute a symbolic act. But, besides that, if that were really the case, then in that same way he would have had to have commanded some of the wine be spilled in order to thereby signify¹⁵ the shedding of his blood on its part. Apart from that, we just want to mention that it would obviously be just blasphemous if a servant of the church would actually want to break the body of Christ, even if it were just symbolically.

Had the Reformed only insisted upon the breaking of the bread because they wanted to impart to the ceremony a meaning which it must not have according to the will of Christ, then that already would be reason and grounds enough to rather omit that ritual, since that would be giving an opportunity to impart a meaning contrary to Christ's own thoughts. But the Reformed have gone even further. **They have even openly declared that the goal of their strictly retaining this ceremony is to remove the biblical doctrine of the presence of the body and blood of Christ from out of the hearts of Christians. The famous unionist, David Pareus, among others, have revealed this. The same was born of Lutheran parents, but through his teacher, by the name of Schilling, he became a crypto-Calvinist, who was rector at the gymnasium in Hirschberg in Silesia, leading him, already in his youth, to the Reformed religion. Finally, he became professor at the Reformed University at Heidelberg in 1584 and now made a great effort to establish a union between the Reformed and Lutherans. The same writes the following in his book on bread and the breaking of bread: "with the breaking of the bread, the idolatrous, false idea of the body of Christ in, with or under the bread and of its oral reception will be most powerfully broken and removed from the hearts of the common, misled people. For what is enclosed for a few hours in 300, 400, 3000, 4000 wafers, could not be the natural body of Christ."** (See. *Amberger Ed.* P. 199.)

After such a public statement on the part of the Reformed, for what honest Lutheran could the omission of the breaking of the

¹⁵That the Reformed feel that these two belong together is clearly seen by the way they speak of it, as they apply this to both, but by this they prove that their thoughts are idiosyncratic. We refer only to one such passage from *The Beginning and Progress of Salvation*, by the Reformed Dobbridge, which says this: "We say how the bread is broken and how the wine is shed (?). Does that not give us a touching portrayal of our Jesus and how his body was broken into pieces in his suffering (?) and his holy blood shed, just as water upon the ground?" (See the edition by the American Tract Society, p. 247.)

bread at the holy LORD's Supper not be a matter of conscience? Here, what St. Paul had once done as false teachers wanted to insist on circumcision, and thereby to insinuate the false doctrine that it was necessary to retain the ceremonial law, is directly applicable. Previously, out of love, Paul had still allowed circumcision for the sake of weak Jews, but as it would now appear as if he were thereby justifying the false doctrine of those heretics, he then says: "since a few false brothers have snuck in, and have infiltrated, to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ JESUS so that they may take us captive, we did not yield to them for an instance to be subjugated, so that the truth of the Gospel would remain with us." Gal. 2.4,5. We think that when a preacher dares to retain this breaking of bread, he must either be a closet Zwinglian, or the money that the reformed minded members of his congregation would bring him is more dear to him than the truth of which he is convinced in his conscience.

But if someone should say that with him it is a completely different situation, that he has nothing to do with the Reformed, so in his case this doesn't apply for him to have to forgo the breaking of the bread for the sake of the confession, – then we reply: After the Reformed Church has separated herself from the Lutherans through her false doctrine and now both churches stand over and against each other, that makes it necessary that each individual congregation also not be at peace with the Reformed, and it would be out of the question for them to join our opponents in doing this, when they are using exactly those ceremonies to try to "remove from our peoples' hearts" the pure doctrine of our Church. But a Christian congregation must avoid every appearance of evil and offense. It is just here in America that every congregation is now hemmed in by the Reformed and they are thus always in too much danger here of this universal, constant mixing of religions, to deny any truth, even through certain rituals.

Besides that, a preacher must always think about the future. If he tolerates reformed ceremonies in his congregation might he not easily be thereby paving the way for his congregation's later departing from the Lutheran Church and falling into the hands of a reformed teacher? What answer will he give for doing so before God someday? Experience has proven that this fear is in no way unfounded.

We will give an example. The reformed Elector George Wilhelm of Brandenburg writes the following in a response to the governors of Cleve from December 18, 1637: "and what is most offensive, the same report is coming to us, as you even have to force Lutheran congregations in other places to use reformed practices (worship) against their will, with the goal of displacing their own, and to that end you even employ some utterly unheard of pretexts (tricks). That is, when a parish pastor would run short of wafers, having too many communicants, he'd be forced to divide and break a few into more pieces, or if a schoolmaster ran short of books for a few students he was directed to read from the Heidelberg Catechism (Reformed), so you have to play such tricks to prove reformed practices are being accepted." (See: *Collection of New and Old Theological Issues*, from the year 1738. Pages 143, 44.) Now by this the Reformed are trying to demonstrate that a congregation may be forced to become Reformed if her pastor is forced by necessity to break the hosts a few times, but how much more will that happen if a person directly introduces this reformed breaking of bread?

(To be continued)