

Introduction from *An Explanation of The Common Service; with Appendices on Christian Hymnody and Liturgical Colors and a Glossary of Liturgical Terms*. 5th ed., rev. and enlarged (Grand Rapids: Emmanuel Press, 2006), 9-15.

1. What is Divine Worship? Divine Worship in its widest significance includes the observance of every rite or ceremony whereby man believes that God communes with him, and he with God.

2. Distinguish between the true and the false worship of God. True worship of God is only such as conforms in spirit and expression with God's revelation of Himself. Read John 4:24.

All worship is false which seeks communion with God in ways other than those which He has appointed. False worship is either

(a) The paying of divine honors to false gods, such as idolatry (the Hindoos), nature-worship (the Greeks), ancestor-worship (the Chinese), or

(b) The false worship of the true God. Such is the worship of the hypocrite. Read Matt. 15:7-9; Matt. 7:21-23. Such has become all Jewish worship which was abrogated by the Advent of our Lord.

3. Distinguish between the true worship of God before and after Christ. Before Christ, the true worship was that of the Jews, temporary, typical, a shadow of good things to come. Since Christ, the true worship is that of the Christians, final, perfect, and the very substance of those things. Read Heb. 1:1, 2; John 1:17 with Heb. 7:18, 19. Also Luke 16:16; Heb. 9:11, 12, 23-26, and Heb. 10:9.

4. What is Christian Worship? It is the outward expression, by the power of the Holy Ghost, of the communion of man with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

5. Of what elements does Christian Worship consist? Christian Worship consists of two elements--the sacramental and the sacrificial.

In the sacramental acts of worship, God speaks to us. In the sacrificial acts, we speak to God. In the sacramental acts, God's grace is exhibited, offered and conveyed. In the sacrificial, man offers to God the service which is due Him.

6. Which are the chief sacramental acts in The Service?

The Declaration of Grace.

The Lessons.

The Sermon.

The Distribution of the Holy Supper.

The Benedictions (The Votum, The Pax, "The body of our Lord," etc., "The Lord bless thee," etc.).

7. Which are the sacrificial acts?

The Confession.

The Prayers.

The Hymns and Canticles.

The Creed.

The Offerings.

Note.— The Introit is both sacramental and sacrificial. The Words of Institution are regarded

by some as sacramental, by others as sacrificial.

8. *In view of the above, what is the proper attitude of the Minister when he conducts the various parts of the worship?* While conducting the sacramental parts of worship, the Minister should face the people, because at such times he stands as the Lord's ambassador and addresses them in His Name. Read II Cor. 5:20 (Revised Version).

While conducting the sacrificial parts, the Minister should face the altar, as do the people, since he now addresses the Lord on their behalf and as their leader.

9. *Distinguish between private and public worship.* Private worship is the communion of the individual soul with God. Public worship is the common and united worship of believers in the unity of the Body of Christ, as they are assembled in the church.

10. *Is this distinction important?* Yes, for there are indispensable elements of true worship in which no one can engage except in common with others. Public worship is, moreover, an Apostolic rule, a permanent institution, and accords with the universal practice of the Church. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews most beautifully exhorts to common worship in chapter 10, verses 19 to 25.

11. *How did Christian worship become corrupted?* As the teaching of the Church became corrupted, the worship of the Church naturally shared that corruption. Men were taught that their works and prayers, their pilgrimages and fasts atoned for their sins. Christ's work of atonement, and faith in Him were lost to sight. This inevitably led to the perversion of the sacramental element of worship, and the undue exaltation of the priesthood; and the whole service, even the Lord's Supper, came to be regarded as a sacrifice offered to God by the priest on behalf of the people. This was the fundamental error of the Romish Church of the Middle Ages.

12. *How did it come to be purified?* The Lutheran Reformers led the way in this work. Just as false teaching developed a corrupt worship, so the restoration of pure doctrine effected the restoration of pure worship. The New Testament teaches that we are saved by grace, not by works. Therefore, as Luther maintained, in true Christian worship the Divine Word and the Holy Supper are not a sacrifice which man offers to God, but means of grace in which God comes to man. Hence the sacramental should be the chief element in the Service, as it is with us.

13. *What was the attitude of the non-Lutheran Reformers in revising the Service?* Zwingli, in his first Order of Worship, which he introduced at Zurich, followed Luther's Form of the Mass rather closely; but later he aimed at eliminating from the service all forms which were not directly traceable to New Testament usage. Calvin sought in every way to simplify the Service. He appeared to think that the spiritual and churchly development of fifteen centuries could be swept away by simply ignoring it. His aim was to go back to the foundation principles of the Church as it existed in the days of the Apostles. With this in view, he abandoned everything that could not be justified from Holy Scripture as Apostolic or early Christian. Accordingly, he made of the church a mere house of prayer; the altar became a simple table; statues, pictures, and even the cross had to disappear from the church; music was barely tolerated in the form of simple psalm-singing. Thus, besides the Lord's Supper, the only component parts of the Service were psalm-singing, preaching and prayer. John Knox prepared "The Book of Common

Order" for the English congregation at Frankfort, and it afterwards became the established order of worship in Scotland, and remained such for nearly a century. This order was approved by John Calvin, and was used by the English congregation at Geneva.

14. *Is the Lutheran conception of worship held by the other Protestant churches also?* No, for in those churches chief emphasis is laid upon the sacrificial elements. This is done to such an extent, that even such sacramental ordinances as the Lord's Supper and Baptism are regarded as the Christian's own acts of worship, rather than as means through which God offers and bestows His grace.

15. *What is the Anglican (Episcopal) conception of worship?* It varies with the High and Low Church tendencies. The High Church is Romish, while the Low Church is Calvinistic.

16. *What was the relation of the English Reformers to the Lutheran in the work of revising the ancient Service?* The Lutheran edition of the Service, issued in many editions, in many states and cities, had been fully tested by more than twenty years of continuous use before the revision made by the English Church, first issued in the Prayer Book of Edward the Sixth, 1549. The Latin Missals, from which the English translations were made, agreed almost entirely with the Missals from which the German translations had been made. Archbishop Cranmer, the head of a commission which prepared the first English Prayer Book, spent a year and a half in Germany in conference with Lutheran theologians and princes, and was thoroughly familiar with the Lutheran Service. Two Lutheran professors, who were called to the English Universities, took part in the formation of the Prayer Book. During the years 1535 to 1549 there had been many embassies and conferences between the English and the Lutheran rulers and theologians concerning these matters.

17. *In the reformation of the Service, who led the Lutheran movement?* Luther, who in the year 1523 published his treatise "Of the Order of Divine Service in the Congregation," and later in the same year, his "Form of the Mass"; and John Bugenhausen, chief pastor at Wittenberg, who published an "Order of Christian Mass," in 1524. For other early Lutheran Orders, see the Preface to The Common Service.

18. *What were the principal changes which the Lutheran Reformers introduced?* While the Lutheran Reformers retained all that was deemed sound and Scriptural in the Latin Mass, the work of purification required some radical changes. The chief change was in the view which was taken of the Mass. What had been wrongly regarded as a sacrifice, was now understood in its true significance as a sacrament. The Liturgy was translated into the language of the people; the Sermon was assigned greater importance; all that was contrary to Scripture was removed; church song was given a new and higher place; a few things were added, such as the General Prayer and the Exhortation before the Communion.

19. *What is the Common Service?* It is the typical Lutheran Service of the Sixteenth Century, adapted for the use of English-speaking Churches.

20. *Why is it called the Common Service?* (a) Because it embodies the common worship of the pure Christian Church of all ages.

(b) Because of the rule which governed its preparation, namely, "The Common Consent of the Pure Lutheran Liturgies of the Sixteenth Century."

(c) Because it was prepared in common by three of the general bodies of the Lutheran Church in America, namely, The United Synod of the South, The General Synod, and The General Council. These bodies are now united and known as "The United Lutheran Church in America." It is also used in common in all parts of the English Lutheran Church.

21. *What obligation is there upon Lutheran Congregations to use a Common Service?*

According to the Lutheran Confessions, there can be no binding obligation, but there is a strong moral and churchly obligation; for these same Confessions say: "It is pleasing to us that, for the sake of unity and good order, universal rites be observed."

22. *What forms of worship are included in the Common Service?*

The Service or The Communion.

Matins.

Vespers.

23. *What are the distinguishing marks of these several Services?* The Communion is the chief Service of the Lord's Day, and by common consent its most appropriate time is near the middle of the day. Matins for the morning, and Vespers for the evening, are minor services for daily use.

The Communion we trace directly to our Lord's institution of the Holy Supper, and to the obedience of the first believers as "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Matins and Vespers we trace to the daily worship of the early Christians, which they in turn inherited from the Synagogue of the Jews.

[Note: The Common Service is the liturgy embodied in The Lutheran Hymnal (1941), in common use for over half a century among conservative English-speaking Lutheran synods around the world.]