

**ADIAPHORA (THINGS INDIFFERENT) drawn from Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, X. Ceremonies and church rites which are**

- A. neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but
- B. which have been introduced into the church with good intentions for the sake of good order and decorum or else to preserve Christian discipline.
- C. The precepts of men (Matt. 15:9) **are in and of themselves no worship of God or even a part of it.**

**The Community of God**

- A. **has the right, authority, and power** to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense
- B. but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for **good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church.**
- C. Paul instructs us how we can with a good conscience **give in and yield to the weak in faith in such external matters of indifference** (Rom. 14) and demonstrates it by his own example (Acts 16:3; 21:26; 1 Cor. 9:10).
- D. **Churches will not condemn each other because of a difference in ceremonies**, when in Christian liberty one uses fewer or more of them, as long as they are otherwise agreed in doctrine and in all its articles and are also agreed concerning the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known axiom, “Disagreement in fasting should not destroy agreement in faith.”

**Things that are not Adiaphora**

- A. Ceremonies which are basically contrary to the Word of God.
- B. Useless and foolish spectacles, which serve neither good order, Christian discipline, nor evangelical decorum in the church,
- C1. Ceremonies which give or (to avoid persecution) are designed to give the impression that our religion does not differ greatly from that of the papists, or that we are not seriously opposed to it.
- C2. Ceremonies intended to create the illusion (or are demanded or agreed to with that intention) that two opposing religions/doctrines have been brought into agreement or will allegedly result little by little from these ceremonies.  
**Note:** As regards C1 and C2, “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Therefore come out from them and be separate from them, says the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:14, 17).

<sup>10</sup> We believe, teach, and confess that **at a time of confession**, as when enemies of the Word of God desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire community of God, yes, every individual Christian, and especially the ministers of the Word as the leaders of the community of God, are obligated to confess openly, not only by words but also through their deeds and actions, the true doctrine and all that pertains to it, according to the Word of God. In such a case **we should not yield to adversaries even in matters of indifference**, nor should we tolerate the imposition of such ceremonies on us by adversaries in order to undermine the genuine worship of God and to introduce and confirm their idolatry by force or chicanery....

<sup>14</sup> For here we are no longer dealing with the external adiaphora which in their nature and essence are and remain of themselves free and which accordingly are not subject either to a command or a prohibition, requiring us to use them or to discontinue them. Here we are dealing primarily with **the chief article of our Christian faith**, so that, as the apostle testifies, the truth of the Gospel might be preserved (Gal. 2:5). Any coercion or commandment darkens and perverts this article because the adversaries will forthwith publicly demand such matters of indifference to confirm false doctrines, superstition, and idolatry and to suppress the pure doctrine and Christian liberty, or they will misuse them and misinterpret them in this direction.

<sup>15</sup> At the same time this concerns **the article of Christian liberty** as well, an article which the Holy Spirit through the mouth of the holy apostle so seriously commanded the church to preserve, as we have just heard. As soon as this article is weakened and human commandments are forcibly imposed on the church as necessary and as though their omission were wrong and sinful, the door has been opened to idolatry, and ultimately the commandments of men will be increased and be put as divine worship not only on a par with God's commandments, but even above them.

<sup>16</sup> Hence yielding or conforming in external things, **where Christian agreement in doctrine has not previously been achieved**, will support the idolaters in their idolatry, and on the other hand, it will sadden and scandalize true believers and weaken them in their faith. As he values his soul's welfare and salvation, every Christian is obligated to avoid both, as it is written, "Woe to the world for temptations to sin," and again, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it were better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."<sup>17</sup> We are to be particularly mindful that Christ says, "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32)....

**AC XXVIII** <sup>-53</sup> What are we to say, then, about Sunday and other similar church ordinances and ceremonies? **To this our teachers reply that bishops or pastors may make regulations so that everything in the churches is done in good order**, but not as a means of obtaining God's grace or making satisfaction for sins, nor in order to bind men's consciences by considering these things necessary services of God and counting it a sin to omit their observance even when this is done without offense....<sup>55</sup> **It is proper for the Christian assembly to keep such ordinances for the sake of love and peace, to be obedient to the bishops and parish ministers in such matters, and to observe the regulations in such a way that one does not give offense to another and so that there may be no disorder or unbecoming conduct in the church.**<sup>56</sup> However, consciences should not be burdened by contending that such things are necessary for salvation or that it is a sin to omit them, even when no offense is given to others, just as no one would say that a woman commits a sin if without offense to others she goes out with uncovered head. (1 Cor 11:5)

**AC V Human Traditions** <sup>38</sup> We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church because they are useful and promote tranquillity, and we interpret them in an evangelical way, excluding the opinion which holds that they justify.<sup>39</sup> Our enemies falsely accuse us of abolishing good ordinances and church discipline. We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than in theirs, and if you look at it correctly we are more faithful to the canons than our opponents are.... But the chief worship of God is the preaching of the Gospel.

**AC XXVI The Distinction of Foods** <sup>40</sup> We on our part also retain many ceremonies and traditions (such as the liturgy of the Mass and various canticles, festivals, and the like) which serve to preserve order in the church.

**AC XXIV. The Mass** <sup>1</sup> We are unjustly accused of having abolished the Mass.<sup>2</sup> <sup>9</sup> Without boasting, it is manifest that **the Mass is observed among us with greater devotion and more earnestness than among our opponents.** <sup>7</sup> Moreover, the people are instructed often and with great diligence concerning the holy sacrament, why it was instituted, and how it is to be used (namely, as a comfort for terrified consciences) in order that the people may be drawn to the Communion and Mass. The people are also given instruction about other false teachings concerning the sacrament....

The historic order of Martin Chemnitz referred to in the Charter is the *Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* (1569) which was co-authored by Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae, both of whom would distinguish themselves as two of the three central authors of the Formula of Concord who, together with Nicolaus Selnecker, formed the inner circle in the creation of the *Concordia* (1580).<sup>4</sup> The finished *Church Order* was completed by Chemnitz and Andreae in twelve days, from October 17 to October 29, 1568.<sup>5</sup> The visitation was then conducted on the basis of this order. The first visitation was completed by November 15, 1568. To fill the depleted ranks of the clergy following the visitation, it became necessary to draw in more clergy from outside the duchy.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the “Agenda, or Church Order: How Ceremonies Shall Be Established and Observed in the Churches of Our Principality,” the principle is enunciated: “Whenever the human precepts of the papacy are rebuked, the church of God shall be thoroughly and prudently instructed that, with such free ceremonial adiaphora, the meaning is not that no order in ceremonies is to be observed. For Paul says, ‘God is not a God of disorder’ (1 Corinthians 14[:33]), but desires that in the assemblies of the church all things shall be done decently, in order, and for building up.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the goal was uniformity in adiaphora in keeping with that which is set forth in the *Church Order*:

And though Christians are not everywhere bound to the same specific ceremonies—for Christian freedom has its place in this article, as the ancients say, “Dissonance in rites does not harm consonance in faith”—nevertheless, because there is still all manner of benefit inherent in keeping ceremonies as uniform as possible, and because this also serves to maintain unity in doctrine, also because common, simple, weak consciences are all the less offended and rather the more improved, it is therefore viewed as good that, as much as possible, uniformity in ceremonies with the neighboring Reformation churches should be achieved and maintained. And for this reason, in the matter of ceremonies, all pastors in the churches of our principality shall henceforth strictly abide by and conform to the order described below, and it shall not be neglected without exceptional and considerable cause.<sup>8</sup>

Every aspect of the services of the Church were very carefully delineated, including the use not only of particular details in the rites, but also regarding vesture and the appointments of the altar. The uniformity with the *Church Order* was stipulated precisely because it was a matter of adiaphora: “And so in all the churches of this principality the ceremonies in the Order of the Mass may henceforth be conducted in all points with decency, order, and uniformity, as much as possible.”<sup>9</sup> (This understanding well comports with Augustana XXVIII [¶53].)

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<sup>4</sup> The creation of this *Church Order* eleven years before the publication of the *Concordia* is the reason why there is a separate *Corpus Doctrinae* published in the *Church Order*.

<sup>5</sup> p. xlvi.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. xlvi.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.

	<b>The Lutheran Hymnal (1941)</b>	<b>The Service Book and Hymnal (1958)</b>	<b>Lutheran Book of Worship</b>	<b>Worship Supplement 1969</b>	<b>Lutheran Worship</b>	<b>Hymnal Supplement 98</b>	<b>Lutheran Service Book</b>
<b>Common Service</b>	Order of the Holy Communion, p.15				Divine Service I, p.136		Divine Service, Setting 3
<b>Common Liturgy</b>		The Service, first setting, p.15	Holy Communion setting 1		Divine Service II, first setting, p.158		Divine Service, Setting 1
		The Service, second setting, p.41	Holy Communion setting 2 Holy Communion setting 3		Divine Service II, first setting, p.178		Divine Service, Setting 2
				The Holy Eucharist I, II, & III			
<b>Deutsche Messe</b>			Choral Service, p.120		Divine Service III, p.197	Divine Service	Divine Service, Setting 4
							Divine Service, Setting 5