Treasures Old and New

Prof. James Tiefel

[Presented at "A Conference on Creative Excellence in Worship," South Atlantic District, January 23-25, 2008]

Treasures Old

> "Falsely are our churches accused of abolishing the Mass; for the Mass is retained among us, and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved" (*Augsburg Confession*, Art. XXIV).

We live in a throw-away society. The average person discards between three and four pounds of garbage every day. A typical family produces between 80 and 150 pounds of trash every week. If you or I are average, we throw away 500 pounds of glass every year. The green voices of our society are warning us of a national junk crisis.

Does that surprise us? Our entire economy exists on the theory of obsolescence. Manufacturers do not produce things with an eye to making them last. The elderly complain that "they don't make things the way they used to," but even the elderly are happy they don't. From automobiles to cell phones, we make things that are designed to break or break down, and the ultimate destination of almost everything we own is a landfill.

Don't blame industry for this. Industry is simply meeting the needs of America's consumers. America is a consumer nation, and Americans are obsessed by what is new. What was in last year is out this year, whether music, clothes, or cell phones. The English (and maybe New Englanders) save old buildings; Americans tear old buildings down and put up new ones. The American dream is nothing more than a desire to have more of what is new. "Go west, young man, go west" was an economic formula before it was a social phenomenon. A mousetrap is a mousetrap, but since there is always the possibility of a better mousetrap, Americans design and manufacture better mousetraps. Why? Because other Americans will buy better mousetraps whether they have mice in the house or not.

What to do with the old mousetrap? Toss it in the trash, of course, and not only the mousetrap. The rule of thumb when cleaning the attic or the basement is: If you haven't used it in a year, toss it. We live in a throw away society. But I said that already.

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. Not all Americans are afflicted with the obsession to toss the old. The auction houses and antique shops have identified a market for old things. There is a certain small group of rummage sale aficionados looking for more than hand-me-downs and a smaller group of people willing to part with millions for a Manet or Monet. But they are a decided minority in America. In our minds, perhaps a rather odd minority.

We pastors and teachers certainly see the dangers of consumerism. What God says about responsible stewardship enables us to realize the awfulness of violating his beautiful earth with trash and refuse. We lament the obsession with things we see in adults and children, and are saddened by the wastefulness of it all. We realize how this tragic use of God's gifts affects our ability to carry on the ministry of the gospel.

But whatever our intellectual and spiritual concerns may be, they do not necessarily lead to action, even in our own lives. We fall into many of the same traps as the people we serve, personally and professionally.

We cannot live in America without being Americans, and we cannot consume goods without occasionally taking up the attitudes of American consumerism. And, like most Americans, we tend to treat the savers and the preservers with subtle condescension. The Lutheran middle class value system we inherited from our parents (to say nothing of our desire to fund the parish program) is not much impressed by the idea of spending perfectly good money on *objects de art*, and old *objects de art* at that. We hear about the selling price of some old painting or ancient pot at Sotheby or Christie (and, truth be told, most of you have no clue as to

what Sotheby and Christie are!) and we're aghast at the waste. We probably have a few antiquers here today, but the American pragmatism most of us have up to our eyeballs scoffs at the idea of spending time (let alone money) searching through someone else's junk for old glass or moldy magazines. Of course, we feel nothing but pity for the poor packrat.

Sumus quod sumus, Garrison Keillor would say; we are what we are. We are both the beneficiaries of American culture and the victims of it. We are in the world and we are of the world more often than we like to admit. And because this is so (the professor is ready to make the point--finally) we are not always so sure how we feel about our so-called "Lutheran heritage." It's a phrase we use, and it's something we know we have. What isn't always clear to us, however, is what our Lutheran heritage is. What is perhaps less clear is how we're supposed to use our Lutheran heritage. And if we are somewhat unsure of our Lutheran heritage, we are perhaps more unsure about our Christian heritage.

What is our Heritage?

Let's get a few issues out of the way. God's Word is our great heritage, but I'm not going to identify our Lutheran heritage with the Scriptures. In fact, it may be that Gruntvig's popular hymn has done more to confuse the issue of our Lutheran and Christian heritage than any other single factor. The Bible is an old book passed down to us from generations of Christians, but it is also the living voice of God. The living voice of God in his Word is more than a heritage, more than an inheritance from our ancestors. In his inscrutable economy the Holy Spirit was just as determined to give us his Word in this time and this place as he was determined to give our ancestors his Word in their time and place. Had the Spirit not used our parents or pastors or synod to give us his Word, he would have found some other means. The proclamation of the gospel and the transmission of the Scriptures are always miracles and never only fortunate circumstances of history and culture. God's Word may be our heritage, but it is more than our heritage. Our Lutheran and Christian heritage may carry God's Word, but it is less than God's Word. We have no choices when it comes to holding to God's Word. "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples," Jesus said. He does not say the same thing about the liturgy, the Luther Bible, or the cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach. I make the same disclaimer about the word treasure. When I speak this morning about treasures from the past, I am not talking about Jesus, our priceless treasure. The treasures in our focus today may proclaim Jesus or symbolize him or interpret his work, but they are not our priceless treasure.

Right at this point some among us might place the Lutheran Confessions in a similar category with the Scriptures, i.e., that the Confessions, though received from the fathers, are more than our heritage. While they are not *norma normans*, we subscribe to them because they are *norma normata*. No one can reject the confessed teachings of the Scriptures or the Lutheran Confessions and hold a place in the public ministry of WELS.

But neither you nor I would place the Lutheran Confessions in the same category as the Scriptures, and neither would the seminary's church history department under which a study of the Confessions falls. We subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions because they are a correct exposition and exhibition of the teachings of God's Word, but they are still a 16th century confession of God's Word. Because we qualify our subscription to the Confessions by not subscribing to incorrect exegesis or 16th century ministry and worship practices, the Confessions must be considered a part of our Lutheran heritage in the same way the ecumenical creeds are part of our Christian heritage. No one can be saved without the living and enduring Word of God, but many will be saved without our creeds and confessions. This says nothing as to their value, but it says something about their status.

This mention of creeds and confessions provides, I think, the first example of the difficulty we have in dealing with our heritage. I might be willing to suggest that it is precisely at the Lutheran Confessions that we begin to detect the subtle influences of American consumerism and of the theory of obsolescence in our midst. We all study the Lutheran Confessions, and both pastors and teachers subscribe to them publicly. But is the concern unfounded that once we graduate from MLC or WLS, we don't really read or study the Confessions

with any degree of regularity? When is the last time teachers amplified their knowledge of the Small Catechism by reading the Large Catechism? Does a study of the Confessions join itself to a study of the Scriptures in our regular devotions or in our sermon study? What catches more dust on our bookshelves: our methods-for-ministry paperbacks, our set of various commentaries (all recommended by John Brug!) or our copy of the Lutheran Confessions?

Yes, yes, we understand, but it is an old book in old English, columnized for us pastors with Latin and German texts we are no longer obligated to learn or understand. And even if we read the Confessions in Kolb-Wengert (or Tappert, for that matter), they are not the Bible, but only a part of our Lutheran heritage. They are not what we mean when we say SOLA SCRIPTURA.

But I will ask this: If our allegiance to the Scriptures leaves a study of the Confessions in the dust, have we created a caricature of the Lutheran understanding of SOLA SCRIPTURA? Are we actually being faithful to the Scriptures when this happens or have we become victims of the American theory of obsolescence? One hesitates to even raise the same question about the writings of Luther or of the other Christian and Lutheran church fathers. But it is likely Hoenecke and Walther fare little better than Chemnitz and Selnecker. And I sometimes wonder if Satan has sensed he can use what is a strength among us in the WELS for our disadvantage. I worry that he may be taking our strong allegiance to the inspired and inerrant Word of God, sifting it through his notorious set of half-truths and our own sinful nature's tendency to create caricatures of what we learned in school, mixing it with the prevailing attitudes in our consumerist society, and leading us to disdain the Church's historical confessional voice because, we say, it is only our heritage, and our heritage is inferior to the Scriptures. And more, I fear that Satan is leading us to conclude rather haughtily that we are the better for it.

Why begin on such a negative note? "Know thyself," the poet says, and the Savior says, "They that are well need no physician." If we are going to find value in any treasures from the past, if we are going to learn how to handle our Lutheran and Christian heritage, we must ask ourselves, each personally: Is the problem with my heritage my heritage or me?

The Issue of Adiaphora

Let's get something else out of the way. Let's get past the issue of adiaphora. What God does not command or forbid we may accept or reject. No one dare read in the encouragements that follow any sort of law or legalism. St. Paul is our champion in the area of freedom, and Luther rightly imitates him as do all the orthodox and confessional voices of the Church's past. Article VII of the *Augustana* summarizes the biblical truth:

> Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.
>
> And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike (*Augsburg Confession*, Art. VII).

In other words, no one dare obligate anyone to use or even enjoy any part of what is heritage and not Scripture.

It seems to me, however, that lately in our circles the Bible's teaching on adiaphora is sometimes raised almost to the level of the Bible's teaching on justification. Must I teach that Jesus is the Son of God and that he rose from the dead? No one asks such a question because the answer is too obvious. But there are other questions that people don't ask because, to them, the answer is equally obvious. May I set aside the Confession of Sins or the Nicene Creed? May I speak only the Verba and eliminate the Preface and the Sanctus? May I preside without a robe and preach without a pulpit? May I sing Matt Redman instead of Paul Gerhardt? May I have a cross without a corpus?

What does St. Paul say?" "All things are permissible." Yes, he does say that, several times in fact. When it comes to your Lutheran heritage you have freedom to use or not use, the same freedom you have to use or not use an Arminian heritage or an Orthodox heritage or a Judeo-Christian heritage. If the Word of God does not forbid it, you may retain it. If the Word of God does not demand it, you may reject it. Amen, OK?

But St. Paul said more: "But not all things are beneficial." And he says, "Not all things are constructive." And when he says that not all things confer a benefit or that not all things build up, he is speaking about faith. His point is that believers in Corinth had freedom to eat anything sacrificed to idols, but that they needed to temper their freedom with love for others. That places the entire issue of adiaphora into a new context. The issue is not what can I do or not do, but what can I do or not do to benefit and build up faith. Now intersect 1 Corinthians 10 with 1 Corinthians 14. The issue before the court of freedom was ecstatic speech. "You may be giving thanks well enough (all things are permissible)," Paul wrote, "but the other man is not edified (not all things are beneficial or constructive)." There, and not in defensive protests of "All things are free" is the biblical teaching about adiaphora.

When it comes to adiaphora in general or to our Lutheran heritage specifically, the issue is not freedom of choice but love for faith. The question is not "Must we use our heritage?" or "Can we avoid using our heritage?" The question is rather, "How may we use the inheritance handed down to us from Lutherans and Christians who went before us in love--love for them and love for one another? I submit to you that if we ask that question we will have learned how to rightly use our treasures from the past.

Honor the Experience of the Church

"We believe in one holy, Christian, and apostolic Church." What do we mean when we confess those words from the Nicene Creed? Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's 2008 *Symposium on the Church* will answer that question with far more completeness than I can answer it here.

The point I intend to raise here that is specific to the doctrine of the Church is the respect we owe those who have gone before us and left us a legacy. We cannot go to Dr. Luther's study door and beg for five minutes of his time to thank him for all his efforts on our behalf. We can't interrupt Bach from a practice session to speak a word of appreciation. But the debt we owe to both and to others is incalculable. Can we honor them and express our love even though we cannot speak to them directly?

"Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you," one of the early fathers wrote to the scattered Hebrews, "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7). This encouragement has much to say about our heritage even on its surface, but it has more to say if we look more deeply at these words. *Remember*, the Greek says, but it says more. *Keep in mind* it says, and then *mention*. Know what these people have said and done and mention their work in your teaching others. The writer is speaking about people the NIV calls *leaders*, but we might also call *guides*, people who have spoken the Word of God to us to show us the way to go in our spiritual lives; they are the great cloud of witnesses that surround us. And the writer says more than *consider*. *Examine*, he wrote, *consider carefully*. *Consider carefully* the *outcome* and the *result* of their lives, in other words learn to value not only their dying confession but also the benefit they bequeathed to the Church. *Imitate their faith*? It is difficult to copy the faith by which they were saved, but it is not so difficult to *imitate* or *follow* or *use as a model* their *faithfulness* or the *faith which they confessed*, that is, the body of doctrine extent in their writings and work.

Christian liberty casts aside the necessity of using the heritage handed down to us from the fathers, but it does not negate the love and respect we owe to these benefactors. Luther wrote, speaking of the church calendar:

> What about the general precepts of the church, the fast and festival days? Answer: What has been established of old by the agreement of the church and out of love for God and for just reasons must necessarily be observed, not because it is of itself necessary and unchangeable, but because the obedience of love which we owe God and the church is necessary (*What Luther Says*: 903).

How might we honor these benefactors from the past? First, know them. It wouldn't take a graduate of a Lutheran college or seminary too much time to create a "legacy list" of people and things to study, and no person's list has to be the same. Add to your list the hymns of Paul Gerhardt or the set of the Prayers of the Day in *Christian Worship Manual*. Purchase Carl Schalk's little book *Luther on Music* in which Schalk gathers several hundred of Luther's quotations on music and the arts. Sit down and listen to the entire St. Matthew Passion with the texts--better, for those who read music, the score (get it at your local college library). Turn off ESPN on a Saturday afternoon or spend half the time on your lesson plans and learn something about your heritage you didn't know before.

There is something arrogant about a disdain for one's roots, and the arrogance can take a number of forms. The iconoclasts' zeal to destroy the art and the instruments in the Wittenberg churches says more about their pipsqueak egos than about their zeal for the Reformation; Luther called them "fastidious swine" and railed on them from the pulpit when he returned from the Wartburg. Henry VIII was involved in a power struggle with the Roman Church when he devoured the church lands and destroyed the church artifacts in England. Such destruction may have grieved him inwardly, but his ability to produce a male heir was at stake, and he deemed the destruction justified. The sons of J. S. Bach were certainly making a statement about their esteem for their father--and their exalted opinion about their "new and improved" musical style--when they allowed at least one hundred of his church cantatas to be lost. The Pietists discarded the Lutheran hymnody and liturgy they had received from the Reformation, but there was something deeper here. They were not only rejecting their heritage, they were rejecting the doctrines their orthodox Lutheran pastors promoted in this heritage.

One wonders what stands behind the arrogance that rejects with disdain a thousand year old legacy. Is it only ignorance or a lack of training? What causes a pastor to determine that, since one Scripture reading is as good as the next, he will not ask the bone weary worshipers in his church to stand for the reading of the Gospel? Does the reality that the Christian liturgy was good enough for the Reformers make no impression on the man who regularly sets aside the ancient rites of the church for his own "special service" concoctions? Are we really convinced that the latest "Christmas hits" from Agape and Hope are better than the hymns of Ambrose ("Savior of the Nations, Come"), Prudentius ("Of the Father's Love Begotten"), Luther (To Shepherds as They Watched by Night"), or Gerhardt ("O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is")? Is this nothing more than ignorance (I don't know good from bad) or chest-thumping (my way is better than your way) or a power struggle (I can do anything I please)? If that's all it is, then shame on us all. I hesitate to ask now. How much of the fathers' teaching have we come to doubt as we throw away the father's heritage? How much Arminian/evangelical theology lurks deep inside us as we set aside the liturgical, musical, ceremonial, and artistic heritage we have received from the guides who spoke the Word of God to us? I ask the question, but dare not answer it.

Let the People Participate

Over the Christmas vacation, as I planned worship for the church I serve as director of music, I noticed my pastor had selected CW 88 for Epiphany 1. This is Luther's great catechism hymn on Holy Baptism, "To Jordan Came the Christ our Lord." Because I was aware of a perfectly good replacement for this hymn (CW 89, "To Jordan's River Came Our Lord") penned by a theologian with Luther leanings, I asked if he really wanted to sing Luther's hymn. After all, I said, no one knows it, and its Renaissance tune is too difficult for most people to sing. As usual, the pastor won, and we sang the hymn. The people roared it. So what do I know?

But there's the rub. Too many of us have come to the conclusion that much of our heritage is too difficult for the people. The ancient ceremonies are too Catholic, the Lutheran liturgy is boring, the Reformation hymns are hard to sing, and we don't have the musicians who can play them. I am somewhat sympathetic to the latter complaint (especially in your congregations), although to a certain extent we have made our own bed on the musician issue and must now sleep in it. But that's a subject for another day.

I would like to take you sometime to the 6th grade classroom or the 7th-8th music class of the Lutheran elementary school teacher who has accompanied our band of brothers to this conference. 80% of the young people in her classes are African American. In order to give her students some ownership in this learning experience, the teacher allows them to select the hymns they wish to sing. On their list of favorites? "Oh, Rejoice, You Christians, Loudly," "Christ Is Arisen," and a few dozen other hymns most WELS members would consider groaners. I have been to the children's Christmas service conducted under the guidance of this teacher and have listened to 200 African American children sing the heritage of the Church with precise enthusiasm.

How can this be? Mary Prange taught them to sing, that how. Not with some instrumental ensemble gathered from Milwaukee's rich repository of string and brass players, not with the mighty pipe organ in Atonement's balcony, but with her voice. She sings, and then they sing. She sings with enthusiasm, and then they sing with enthusiasm. Children will sing what we teach them to sing. I use the example from Atonement because of the cross-cultural component, but my experience at St. Paul in Saginaw was the same. During the Luther year (1983) the teachers at St. Paul School decided to teach one of Luther's hymns each month, and I will never forget my five year old sitting over his plate of wieners and beans at our supper table belting out "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee" as though it was something from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. Garbage in, garbage out, as well as its obverse, are not axioms we apply only to computers. I am convinced that an on-going effort and an enthusiastic example can teach children to sing their heritage with as much joy as they sing "Noah, He Built Him, He Built Him an Arky-Arky" or "Thy Word Is a Lamp Unto My Feet."

Of course, children don't make up the greater share of our Sunday morning attendance, nor do they make decisions about whether a visiting family returns or a member family begins to stay away. Adults make those decisions, and adults are not going to learn or accept anything simply because we teach them with enthusiasm. Really? I don't know that I would inaugurate Luther's *Deutsche Messe* in just any old WELS congregation (with all its Reformation-era hymns), but I might introduce "We All Believe in One True God" or "Isaiah Mighty Seer" with equal doses of enthusiasm, education, and purpose. The experience at my home church where 60% of worshipers are typically under 30 leads me to suggest that many adults might not agree that hymns have to be easy or ceremonies instantly transparent. Years ago, after describing for a Bible Class a worship ritual I had experienced in a non-WELS church and found edifying, I informed the group I would never do this at a seminary Christmas concert because people would not be similarly edified. An articulate older gentleman raised his hand and said, "What makes you think we would be not be edified by something that edified you?"

In a sermon based on Colossians 3:16 ("Theology Must Sing") Martin Franzmann said:

> There has always been an amazing fascination in *Ersatz*, especially for a sick church, for a church grown so languid that it cannot bear to live in the tension of the last days. And so we have, instead of the splendid picture of the church universal making a full-throated joyful noise unto the Lord, the picture of the weary church sitting in a padded pew, weeping softly into a lace handkerchief (or, in a 21st century picture, the sleeve of a tee shirt).
>
> And the amazing thing is how eloquent men can grow in defense of this shoddy *Ersatz* hymnody. They begin by criticizing the good hymn as "hard to sing." One might ask in return, Why must a hymn be easy? Whoever said that it should be easy? Look at that woodcut of Albrecht Duerer's where he depicts that scene from the Apocalypse in which those that came from the great tribulation, who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, sing their heavenly song. Look at those faces, their intensity of concentration, faces almost contorted with the energy of their devotion, if you would know what singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord really means (*Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets*, CPH, 1994, p. 95).

Could it be that our members might gain a spiritual blessing if we carefully and lovingly taught them that public worship requires intention and effort, as does preaching and playing a musical instrument? And as

they work at worship, might they be blessed as they experience worship in forms that have edified millions of believers for many centuries? Carl Schalk maintains:

> It is a time-honored Lutheran practice that the needs of people at worship are most effectively met by forms and structures of prayer which draw on the collective experience of the whole Church at worship. For some, such structures and practices--when used for the first time--will be new and, perhaps, disconcerting. Once they become a normal part of the life of worship, however, their richness, strength, diversity, and power to nourish faith and life, and their ability to help Christians praise God and enjoy him forever soon become apparent (*Handbook of Church Music*, Carl Halter and Carl Schalk, editors, Concordia Publishing House, 1978, pp. 16-17).

Think of the seeker, looking for something more, who stumbles upon a church where preacher, musicians, and worshipers are demonstrating an enthusiasm for what they do. He may not know what they do; it may not be a part of his heritage. But is there a chance he may want to know more about a church that takes its heritage so seriously?

Let the Gospel Predominate

Perhaps 15 or 20 years ago Bruce Backer contributed an article to *Logia* which he entitled "Sing With Luther." For a number of years I ran off copies of the article and shared it with students. I've lost it and haven't taken the time to look for it. But any one of us could do the same thing Backer did: work through the hymns of Luther and identify key theological themes. Then one could do the same with Paul Gerhardt, or the Latin hymnists, or some of the other German poets. And finishing the task, one might be led to compare the gospel content of these hymns with some of the worship songs that are finding their way into WELS service folders these days (all legally, through Onelicense.net). The comparison would first make you laugh and then make you cry.

What did the poets and artists of our past have that so many seem to lack today? It isn't saying too much to assert that the fathers (and some mothers) subscribed to an orthodox proclamation of the gospel first, because they had suffered with it and second, because they had suffered for it. In the hour of deepest grief, whether in personal or professional tragedy, they had received comfort from the gospel and could not help but sing about it. For this reason (and a few others) they were courageous to take their stand on the gospel even when kings and princes demanded they recant. One does not easily stop singing or painting or preaching about what he has risked his life for. Why did C. F. W. Walther contend for the liturgical rite and a confessional hymnody if not because he saw the gospel threatened by a Prussian king in his native Saxony and by Pietistic subjectivism in America?

It ought not surprise us that our heritage has so much gospel or, for that matter, that what is being produced today has so little. Thanks to the liturgical emphases of the Second Vatican Council, the American Institute of Architects is perhaps doing the best gospel-promoting work, at least with its focus on Word, Meal, and Baptism. But much of what passes for Christian art these days is confessionally hazy, and hymnody is downright awful. The Hymn Society of American has too many Unitarians and Congregationalists, and the American Guild of Organists is controlled by gays. Artists usually follow the confession of their denomination, and if you look beyond the LCMS and WELS for anything approaching confessional gospel proclamation, you'll have to squint to find it. Considering their confessions, one has low expectation from ELCA and the mainline Protestants, and the expectations are usually met. Walter Stuempfle is an exception (ELCA Gettysburg), as are Fred Pratt Green and Timothy Dudley-Smith (although the latter write better First Article hymns).

The situation with the Evangelicals requires its own paragraph. Some conservative Evangelicals are producing good things; Keith Getty has produced a real gospel gem in "On Christ Alone." But the pickings are slim in the Revivalist/Fundamentalist/Evangelical camp ever since Charles Finney became convinced that

conversion had nothing to do with a miracle but everything to do with appropriate psychology. Those who wait for Christian pop artists to produce worship and praise songs with strong gospel content had better have a lot of time on their hands. The truth is, this strain of Christendom doesn't need gospel proclamation to reach its theological objectives. Its means of grace are the logic of the message, the promise of success, and the medium of music. And so Michael W. Smith penned his popular "Lamb of God" with a compelling tune, a lush accompaniment, and without "who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us." Without our Lutheran heritage, we 21st century Lutherans would have little in the way of art and music that would carry the proclamation of the gospel. There is much these days to move the heart, but not much to touch faith. As someone has said, "Without the everlasting gospel, joy is never lasting."

If we wanted to expand our heritage dramatically, I suppose we could reach back to the two million-plus hymns that Christians have written over 20 centuries. We could imitate hundreds of worship practices reaching back to the church in Jerusalem or Corinth. We could discover thousands of paintings, drawings, and etchings that pious Christians have created for the adornment of their homes and churches. We could visit and preserve on our digital cameras all the parish churches of England or the cathedrals in France. But that is too much, and it is unnecessary. Old is not necessarily good, and new is not necessarily bad, as Pastor Christie will demonstrate. What has been preserved for us as our Christian and Lutheran heritage are the best and invariably the most gospel-laden of worship forms in song, speech and symbol. If only we would use our extent treasures, our members would be better for it because they would be exposed to what these forms contain--the gospel which the Spirit uses to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth and to keep it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

Let All the Best Gifts Be Used in the Service of the Gospel

Well, what is our Christian and Lutheran heritage? Of what is it composed? I suggested earlier that we make a list and that our lists need not be the same. That works. But I'll make some suggestions, including and expanding on some I've made already.

-- The hymns of the early Latin Church, e.g., those by Ambrose, Prudentius, and Fortunatus (cf. the CW indices and *CW Handbook*)

-- The Christian liturgy and the attendant liturgical arts accepted and promoted by the founders and confessors of the Lutheran Church (calendar, ritual, ceremony, vestments)

-- The services of the Daily Office: Morning Praise, Evening Prayer, Prayer at the Close of Day

-- Lutheran hymnody from Luther to Gerhardt and the resultant set of *Kernlieder* or Hymns of the Day, including Lutheran Christmas hymns

-- The choral and instrumental music of about the same period, reaching from Johann Walter (Luther's companion) at Torgau to Johann Sebastian Bach in Leipzig

-- The wood cuts of Albrecht Duerer, the altar pieces of Lucas Cranach (father and son) and Lutheran church design in the 18th century.

Begin there and you will not run out of something to get to know. Use the internet; it's marvelous for this. Google, google, google.

In the final analysis, it is your obligation as a Lutheran professional to know your heritage. I am tired of hearing academic and athletic excuses. Greek and Hebrew, yes, yes, yes. I'm all in favor of it since God spoke once in those languages. But why stop there (and why do our schools seem sometimes to stop there?) And

bodily exercise is good for something, but must sports consume us so even after we pass adolescence? Carlton Toppe, the old *praeses* of Northwestern College (of blessed memory) told his students:

> The cultured and even the less-cultured men and women in the pew are embarrassed if their pastor gives the impression that he reads little more than the sports page, views little more than TV entertainment, enjoys little more than his car or his garden or his restaurants. I suggest also that the legacy many a pastor has left his congregation in their house of God would have been richer if he had been a man of good taste.

You can't really know yourself until you've known where you've been, and where you've been is identified by your heritage. And your children and your members can't really know themselves until they know their heritage. Learn, share, teach, model, enjoy.

And then we will have given the future of our church a pattern it can follow. If we show them the best of their past, they will be able to produce something very good for their future. In a work previously cited, Carl Schalk observed:

> For Lutherans, the word tradition--in the sense of the gathered experience of the Church at worship throughout its history--is an important working concept. For Lutherans, their worship tradition is always a living tradition, continuously developing and living in a vital parish practice. Building on the experience of the past, the Church moves confidently into the future.

If we can't and won't share the experience of the past, the next generation hardly will be able to move confidently into the future.

So let's be on with it. Enough talk. We have treasures from our past that shine with gospel brilliance. Let's get to know them and then let's start to use them.

"Let the old practices continue. Let the mass be celebrated with consecrated vestments, with chants, and all the usual ceremonies" (*LW, Vol. 36, p. 254*).