

# The Place Of The Fine Arts In Lutheran Worship

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by: *Carl F. Bolle*

At the suggestion of a travel agent friend my wife and I spent three days of a recent vacation in New Orleans. Having arrived in our hotel room, we found ourselves confronted with stacks and stacks of brochures suggesting what to see and hear, as well as where to shop, where to dine and where to relax in this southern metropolis. Many of these had been mentioned by our friend, some, however, were omitted—no doubt for good reason.

As I thumbed through one of the more attractive brochures, incidentally, a piece of fine art, I came to a section devoted to the churches of the city, five of which were given a full-page spread. The Cathedral of Saint Louis dominated the page. Gathered around this, like chicks around Mother Church, were an Episcopal, a Presbyterian, a Baptist and a Lutheran church. Except for the latter all churches were attractive, distinctive, unique. The Lutheran Church, however, was a horror. Contemplating it, the words of Jacob rushed to mind: “Oh, how dreadful is this place!” As I continued to study this Lutheran church in relationship to the four others listed, all of which were beautiful, I wondered why it had been selected. Certainly there were other Lutheran churches in New Orleans of far better design to choose from and there were.

It occurred to me that the creator of this brochure probably did this for personal reasons, and that he regarded this particular church as a typical representative of Lutheranism. Be that as it may, the average southerner thinks of the Lutheran church, if he has heard of it at all, as a rather drab and dreary fellowship which would naturally have little regard for culture, or art, or for the fine arts.

My own opinion, however, is that this monstrosity in which these particular Lutherans of New Orleans are now worshiping, were not responsible for this building at all. My feeling is that they undoubtedly purchased it from some Reformed group which had erected it originally, but which had since abandoned it, in order to relocate in some other area of the city. I am also convinced that as soon as these Lutherans have the means to do so, they will tear it down and replace it with something which will more honestly and beautifully reflect the radiance of their faith. For the Lutheran Church far from frowning upon art and the fine arts, accepts these as gifts of God and uses them. She is by no means averse to giving beauty an eminent place in her worship.

It is in the nature of humans, not only of Christians, or of the Lutheran Christians to seek to improve and to enhance that which they have made. Man is innately creative. He is bound to be so! When God made him, He said, “Have thou dominion! Have thou dominion over the fish of the sea and over every living thing!” To the end that this might be accomplished, God endowed him with reason, and intellect. And man, using these, is constantly creating things and instruments of one kind or another to serve him. When these no longer adequately do so, he either improves them or discards them. When he discards them, he replaces them with something more practical, more functional and more serviceable.

It is also interesting to note that almost as soon as he creates something, man begins to embellish and to enhance that which he has made. Thus the potter takes the cups, the platters and the vassals he has fashioned, glazes them and covers them with designs of all kinds. The woodworker is not content simply to create a chair. To be sure he wants it to be functional, but he desires it to be decorative and artistic as well. Of course, he does not always succeed here. Sometimes he goes overboard. Here I think of an architect who had not only designed the

building in which a certain firm was to be housed, but all of the fixtures and furnishings as well. One day the Chairman of the Board called the architect to complain about a chair in his office. The architect said he would be right over to have a look. When he arrived he found the executive seated deeply in the "chair." "See what I mean?" he said. "My dear man," replied the architect, "you happen to be sitting in the waste-basket!" Incidentally that is precisely where many plans and designs of many modern architects should be filed. However, be that as it may, almost as soon as man creates something he finds himself dissatisfied with it. He is not content to have it be merely practical or functional. He seeks to make it more artistic as well. In other words, he endeavors to express himself not only creatively but artistically. He desires to give that which he has made a lilt-to make it sing. And what he seeks for the house in which he lives, that he yearns especially to do for the house in which he worships his Lord.

Here, of course, one cannot but think of David, king of Israel. This sweet-singer of Israel had just moved into his new house. One may be sure of it, artist that he was, that he had utilized the skills of the finest craftsmen available to create it. We may be certain, too, that it was a veritable psalm of a building. Now let us turn to Second Samuel, chapter seven, where we have this: "And it came to pass that when King David sat in his house and that the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the Lord dwelleth within curtains..." The rest of the story is well known to all of us, namely, how the Lord sent Nathan to remind David that he, the Lord, King of the universe, David's King and David's Lord, as well as Israel's Savior, was in need of no house or temple of special elegance to serve as His dwelling-place, and that He had been and even now was perfectly content to dwell in a tabernacle, which, after all, was of His own design and choosing. The point we wish to make is this that when David had come into rest and affluence and had surrounded himself with things of utmost beauty, he decided to build a house of comparable elegance, or even of superior elegance, for his Lord. David undoubtedly felt that the greatness of His God the only true God, should have a temple far more impressive than the temples which the pagan people round about Jerusalem had built for their idols, some of which undoubtedly were edifices of considerable magnitude and beauty. To make a long story short, the Lord granted David's wish and acquiesced to the building of a temple. However, this was to be done not by David, but by his son, Solomon. Well, we all know what a magnificent edifice this turned out to be. Designed by God Himself, it was a thing of exquisite beauty and great art--one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Now there are those who frown upon beauty and elegance for their churches. In fact, there are those who seize upon the incident related above to point up the Lord's displeasure at David's suggestion of building Him a temple. Placing the accent heavily upon the Lord's statement that He was perfectly satisfied to dwell in a tabernacle, they argue that churches built for the Lord should be in the manner of a tent or tabernacle. For further support of their contentions that churches should be humble dwellings, they also call attention to the fact that our Lord's first dwelling place was a lowly stable in Bethlehem. They also make much of the fact that neither Jesus nor His apostles built churches nor gave directives of any kind for the building of them. Their argument here is that if the Lord had wished His followers to erect beautiful churches, He would have said so. Thus there are those who frown upon the beautiful and the artistic in church architecture as well as in all areas and phases of Christian worship. The church at New Orleans would undoubtedly win favorable approval from these people.

It is true that our Lord gave no directives nor direction for the building of churches! But neither did He say anything about flying airplanes, or smoking, which, incidentally was an

answer I was compelled to give recently to a woman who wished to become a member of our church. However, before taking this step, she wanted to know how I felt about smoking, and did I smoke, “No!” I said, “I gave up smoking years ago.” Then pursuing the subject, I contended that there is nothing immoral or sinful about smoking. “Of course,” I continued, “like anything else, whether it be eating or drinking, or whatever when one goes to excess then smoking too becomes sinful.” The Bible simply advocates moderation in these areas.” But I had not convinced her. In fact, she was certain that she had me when she asked: “Have you ever seen a picture of Jesus smoking a cigarette?” But I wiggled out of that one by stating that I was quite certain that I had seen no picture of Jesus riding an airplane either. Whether she ever took up smoking, or changed her mind about it, I cannot say, but she did join our church.

Incidentally, it is utterly amazing how people use the Scriptures to seek to point out the sinfulness of smoking, or drinking, etc. Several years ago while making a tour of the Holy Land, we repeatedly found ourselves among members of a Pillars of Fire group out of Denver. Sitting in a bus immediately behind a minister of this sect, I could not help but overhear the conversation which went on between this man of the cloth (ministers of this group wear clericals) and his seat-mate whom he tried to convert.

Minister: “By the way, do you drink?”

Seat-mate: “Yes, I take an occasional drink. In fact, I enjoy a cocktail before dinner.

Minister: “Don’t you realize that you will go to hell if you drink?”

Seat-mate: “Then how about Timothy? Wasn’t it Paul who advised Timothy to drink some wine for his stomach’s sake?”

Minister: “Is your name Timothy? And do you have stomach trouble?”

I don’t recall what else was said but I do know that the minister did not succeed in making a convert. Later that evening before dinner we encountered him in the lounge of our hotel enjoying a Manhattan before dinner.

But we are digressing! What we have been saying is that there are those who affirm that if God had wanted us to have beautiful churches and if He had wished us to have them filled with objects of art, He would have said so.

But is it really true that our Lord has remained utterly silent about such matters? To be sure, He did say that those who worship Him should worship Him in spirit and in truth. And there is no question about it, that this can be done in a stable, in a tent, or even in a church as drab as the one in New Orleans. But when our Lord declares that He is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth, He does not mean thereby to cancel out the use of such things which can give a lift to the spirit. God has filled the earth with things that quicken the heart. To mention just a few: The smell of freshly cut grass, the fragrance of the woods after a warm summer rain, the roar of the ocean as one walks barefoot along its sandy shores, the chirping and chanting of birds, the beauty of a rose, flying above the clouds and catching the first glimpse of a sunrise or the last rays of a setting sun, etc. What beauty and artistry there is in the realm of nature and what power they possess to thrill the soul. And there are many Scriptures whose mere references to the realm of nature tend to refresh one’s spirit, the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the mountains round about Jerusalem, the eagle in flight, etc. Consider the following from Psalm 139: “If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand hold me” or these from another psalm: “I will lift up mine eyes to the hills,” or these, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,” or these, “He leadeth me beside the still waters, etc.”

As for those who frown upon the use of art in worship, or who fear it, as Augustine did, and who interpret our Lord's silences as prohibitions, may we call attention to the words of Saint Paul, spoken by inspiration of God, namely, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos or Cephas or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come, and ye are Christ's and Christ's is God's." All things are yours, (namely to enjoy) and that certainly includes the fine arts, and the use of them in worship. Incidentally while it is true that the temple of God in early Old Testament times was a tent, let us not suppose that it was a drab affair. On the contrary it was rich, colorful and a thing of significant beauty and artistry. Luther with fine discrimination declared that all of the arts could be employed to the glory of God. Efforts have been made to identify the Reformer with the Iconoclasts but to no avail. Luther was as uncomfortable among these as was David when King Saul tried to fit him into his coat of armor. Luther argued that all art which aided worship should be retained. He did insist, however, that anything in the house of God, or in the worship of God, which in any way hinted of idolatry should be removed.

Luther's position and that of the Lutheran Church was very forcefully and succinctly enunciated by the late Dr. Abbtmeyer, who said: "The Lutheran church, in the matter of seasons, decorations, and ritual, with true conservation and in the exercise of true Christian liberty has avoided the idolatrous and heretical mummeries of Rome, as well as the extreme and unbecoming coming bareness of many Reformed Churches, and in order to bring the knowledge of God's grace to men's hearts has preserved the usages of the past, relating to the season of the church-year, the appointments of the church-buildings and the liturgical church service, which being "good" and serviceable, suit the true church in all ages. To confess its faith it did not hesitate to enlist the aid of pure and beautiful art forms, not only in the harmonies of poetry and music, but also in the architecture, sculpture, painting, bronze-work, wood-carving and embroidery, so long as these aided the purpose of instruction and edification. In this it followed the lead of Luther, who said with reference to the Iconoclasts (to counteract whom he left the safe precincts of the Wartburg): "I do not believe that art is to be overthrown by the Gospel, as some hyper-spiritual people maintain. I should like to see all arts placed in the service of Him who made them." So then, the Lutheran Church, in the spirit of the Reformer, far from looking down its nose at art, or grudgingly granting it a place in its worship, welcomes it and uses it as a handmaiden to faith. Such, at least, is its expressed attitude.

In the early days of Lutheranism in America, concerns about art were minimal. The energies of the church then were devoted almost entirely to shepherding immigrants into the church, and to a contending for the faith. Then, too the people were poor. They were compelled to work hard just to keep body and soul together. They had little formal education, and, as for culture--theirs was primarily agriculture. There was little time for the pursuit of the arts. Circumstances today, however, are quite different from what they were in the days of the pioneers. Lutheran people, late arrivals on the American scene, have now come into considerable wealth and affluence. And now, in the spirit of David of old, they, too, have a desire to do things beautifully and elegantly for their Lord. They now have the resources to do so.

But just now when we have the where-withal to do such things, and a wealth of artists in all fields of the arts standing by, there is a general breakdown of the faith. At a time when artists have perfected techniques and have acquired facility of expression, they have nothing to say. What is being said by theologians, is being reiterated by artists as well. That "God is dead" is being reflected in the realm of painting, sculpture, literature, music and architecture.

In his "The Arts and Religion" Prof. Albert Edward Bailey poses this question: "What does religious art do to us-to us who are not creators?" His answers "In the first place it can

challenge us! It can make the great affirmation that religion is worth our attention and that art is an authentic expression of it.” Then he goes on to say: “In these days both these appreciations are doubted. It is smart to deny the claims of religion. A materialistic philosophy, endeavoring to interpret a material universe, has bypassed some of the most essential goods of humanity, and has led their generation into cynicism and atheism. Santayana straddling the gulf between his philosophy and his Roman Catholic inheritance does so by saying: “There is no God, and Mary is his mother!”

“Contemporary artists also assert that there is no god by simply refusing to have anything to do with him. In many modern exhibitions of art the religious subjects can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The proper subjects of art today are bananas, one-eyed or three-eyed women flattened by a steam roller and hung up to dry; distortions, fragmentations, montages, Freudian nightmares, in which a horsefly on a plate is Salvador Dalis’ reminiscence of his father! The modernisms of art belong really in the category of technical experiments. Through them the artist is feeling his way to a more pungent mode of expression. But unless he has something to express, what’s the use? I have often envied a dragoman I used to hire in Smyrna. He could speak eighteen languages! But he had nothing to say in any of them.”

In this connection one might also consider the words of Finley Eversole in the preface to his “Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts.” Drawing from the writings of Graham Greene, he writes, “The human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is this fact which is reported and interpreted in the art of our time. Our art is an art of anguish and guilt, of isolation and emptiness, of doubt and damnation. For centuries we have witnessed a gradual despiritualization and, finally, a dehumanization of man’s life. Modern art with its loss of God and the human image is the drama of the age. Here we see what is really happening to men, to society, and to man’s faith in God. Contemporary art gives us the image of a lonely, anxious, and sometimes diabolical humanity. This image, however, is not of the artists’ own making. It is the image which society itself offers to the discerning eye.

At this point Mr. Eversole declares: “The Christian may well ask why he should give attention to an art so much of which is antithetical to his faith. Indeed, if Robert Penn Warren is right, that art reawakens “the lusts of the eye and the imagination of the heart,” why should a Christian submit himself to the temptations of art, especially modern art?

To be sure, all of this poses a problem to the church of our day. And yet, at the same time, what a tremendous challenge is laid at its doorstep. At a time when it is being said that God is dead, and when great efforts are being made to slay the Christ child, it needs to be affirmed in every way possible that God is not dead, but radiantly alive, that it is not God who is dead, but man. If ever the church needs to be busy, it is today! And the church, with fervor and zeal and imagination ought to confront the world with every resource at her disposal--with the preaching of the Gospel, by way of the fine arts, architecture, music, painting, sculpture and drama. Our God is alive and alive to save to the uttermost all that call upon Him. The church needs to be like her Lord, a veritable Hound of Heaven pursuing man-- refusing to give him up.

Permit me to read the lines of that moving poem of Francis Thompson (incidentally a piece of fine art):

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind;  
And in the mist of tears I hid from Him,  
And under running laughter!

Up vistaed hopes I sped;  
And shot, precipitated, adown Titanic glooms  
Of chasmed fears from those strong feet  
That followed, followed after.  
But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbed pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
They beat - and a Voice beat  
More instant than the Feet - !  
All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.

Through these moving lines the Lord is represented as a Hound on the heels of the sinner who is fleeing from Him. At last when man is overtaken, we read these words,

Oh fondest, blindest, weakest  
I am He Whom thou seekest!  
Thou dravest love from thee - who dravest Me!

Like the Hound of Heaven, the church today needs to keep close on the heels of those who are running from one well to another in their search for the water of life but who are not finding it. I am sure that Luther, were he to be confronted with our modern situation would not merely say, "I should like to see all the arts placed in service of Him who made us, but I insist that this be done!"

Nor is the picture as dreary as some of the writers quoted above have painted it to be. The majority of artists may have little to say. However, there are still fine artists around who recognize that their skills and artistry are gifts of God and who stand ready to give their best to the Highest. There are those around--artisans of deep sensitivity and dedication--who can grasp what a distinctively Lutheran church should be and what it should say, and who are able to combine truth with beauty, so that the space in which the congregation worships does not only sing, but inspires those who worship there to sing also.

At this point may I say just a little bit about our own Saint James church. I do this with considerable reluctance. But I believe it can be helpful at this point. By the grace of God we have a good church. Shortly after it was completed A. R. Kretzmann dropped in to have a look. He called it a thoroughbred and promptly wrote it up in *Cresset* magazine. It was also listed in the *Encyclopedia Americana* a few years ago as one of the distinctive church edifices in Saint Paul. And, I suppose, if this had been solicited, our church might have received the imprimature of the late Archbishop Brady who was very fond of it. He frequently conducted Building Committees through it promising them that if they would build their churches along the lines of ours he would be willing to grant them loans. On one occasion as we talked together about the church, he made this comments "You know, there is just one thing wrong with it!" "What's that?" I asked. With a twinkle in his eye, he answered: "It isn't ours!"

Now then with our building thus dubiously endorsed, we may call attention to certain things which are obviously right about it. The style of architecture might be described as modern Romanesque. The building itself is of rugged native Kasota stone salvaged from the old Ramsey County Court House. The facade which is three feet thick and which rises to a height of forty-five feet glorifies Christ. A huge figure of our Lord, sixteen feet tall and weighing ten tons, dominates the facade. Incidentally, the head of Christ rises up into the rose window above. This serves as a sort of halo for our Lord. An interior light shining through the window gives the head of our Lord a rich, warm glow. The entire figure is illuminated throughout the night. Since the

Lutheran Church is the church of the Word, we selected two powerful Scriptures relating to the Christ and had them engraved into the arms immediately above the two portals. The portal to the left carries these words: "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the father which hath sent Him." The other to the right, taken from Hebrews 7:25 reads: "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." So then, even the exterior, the facade, can be made to sing and to preach.

On entering the church by either door, the eye is stopped by the narthex screen, where it may linger momentarily to consider the symbols carved therein. Then it is beckoned upwards to the open ceiling above. It is interesting to note various comments we have overheard. People have said: "One is sort or overpowered with a feeling of the majesty of God!" or "You are compelled to remove your hat!" Again: "It makes one feel small and insignificant" All of which is good.

As one comes to the central doorway at the head (foot) of the main aisle the eye is drawn forward. The Romanesque arches separating nave from side aisles running directly through transepts carry the eye right up into the chancel and to the altar which is an exquisite piece of Rojo Alicante marble imported from Spain. Pulpit and lectern are of pink Kasota marble. The interior walls of brick are almost monastic in their rugged simplicity. Except for the twelve plaques imbedded in the walls above pillars carrying symbols of the apostles, six on either wall, there is nothing to distract the eye. The chancel area, however, is dramatic. A dorsal curtain, of beige textured cloth, eleven feet in width rises from floor to ceiling giving a tremendous pull and lift to the spirit. As I dug out our dedication folder, bearing the date August 22, 1943, I came upon these words of our architect, Mr. Frank Abrahamson, "Saint James church is entirely modern in design. Height, attenuated window openings, ruggedness, unaffectedness characterize the style. Churchliness, solidity, simplicity, genuineness and individuality were qualities given foremost consideration." His article closes so: "To give them beauty for ashes! These words of the prophet are indeed applicable to Saint James congregation in its recent experiences."

That which has been accomplished at Saint James can certainly be achieved in any church and, no doubt, even more effectively. The question has been asked: "If you were to build another church, would you be inclined to duplicate your present structure?" My answer to that would be: "No!" For one thing, cost of building such a church would be prohibitive. I wonder, too, whether we would want it to be Romanesque in style once again. I also believe that we would desire it to be less fortress-like as it is now, and that it should impart a greater feeling of airiness and weightlessness. This could be achieved a greater use of glass in doorways, walls, window areas, etc.--however, not in roof.

It is at this point that Saint Peter's Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, which is crowned with a glass dome comes to mind. In speaking about his church, Pastor Harold Schweigert has this to say: "You see, we are undoubtedly living in the last times! Judgment Day cannot be far away. Such being the case, I want my people to look upward and heavenwards in anticipation of the Lord's return. Now to be sure the glass dome of Saint Peter's permits one to look out upon the heavens, but there are other things that come into view also--birds flitting about, squirrels chasing each other, airplanes streaking to and fro, some of which bear streamers announcing bargains at nearby car lots, hamburger and pizza joints, etc. all of which can be rather distracting. Then, too, glass has a tendency to get soiled. And dirt has a way of making meticulous housewives squirm, like the dust which accumulated on the trusses of the Lutheran Church at Fish Lake, and which the women of the church insisted had to be removed regularly during the

annual church clean-up week, a hazardous operation which was usually left to the men to perform, while the women breathlessly held the ladders. This problem was finally solved some time ago, when the women got their husbands to put up a false ceiling. Now the dust on trusses cm no longer be seen, but that is true also of the beautiful trusses.

If we were to build another church today, I don't believe that we would again structure it to form a cross. In fact, I doubt very much that we would permit ourselves to be influenced by the tendency which seems to be so the fore right now, that of fashioning our church after some Christian symbol such as fish, bee-hive, cross, etc.

Since the church is already a symbol, namely the House of God, fortress, gate of heaven- it need not recall graphically another symbol.

So then, there are various things which we would not do, if we were to build again today, But what kind of church would we build in the year 1966? That is the question which confronts every Building Committee today. In answering that question one needs to get down to basics. One needs to ask the question: "What is the function of a church?" Reducing the answer to the lowest common denominator, I suppose one might say that it is a place where a congregation gathers to hear the Word, to receive the sacraments, and to engage in its devotional practices. In other words, it is simply a place of worship.

But to answer that question most comprehensively is not so simple. What does one do? Where does one begin? Well, since the heart and focal point of the whole church is the altar (for it is from here that the lessons are properly read, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is served and the prayers are intoned), and since the church is really an extension at the altar, therefore the church should be designed from the altar outward. When the liturgical and theological function of the church is creatively solved, the shell which houses the sacred action and the community, will express logically a religious character. In the creation of such a building today contemporary materials can most certainly be used. Concrete and steel and glass, employed with imagination and integrity, are as fitting for God's house as traditional stone, wood and brick. But now to make the whole thing sing, to make it express vitally the spirit of the congregation, that is where artistry is needed.

To be sure, there may be a dearth of Christian artists right now, but they are around, they are available, and they stand ready humbly to use their talents and to do the utmost for the Highest. Yes, they stand ready to open their hearts and minds to the faith which animates a congregation in its worship. Such an architect will certainly go slowly in imposing his own particular tastes, no matter how lofty these may be, upon a congregation. He should be willing to interpret the special moods of his client. In an article which appeared in *Response* magazine in 1964 Pietro Belluschi, certainly one of the great church architects of our time, quotes these words of a Unitarian pastor for whom he designed a church recently: "Our new house of worship needs to enclose us and it needs to free us; it needs to speak specifically to us and needs to carry us beyond all words and details; it must have our ideas, the smell of our ground, and have grown out of the religion in our soul, let our doctrines and our form fit the soul, growing out of it, growing with it. A free people build because they have need to glorify all their best and most precious insights. They build for remembering, for enhancing, for serving, for dreaming. A free people need to refashion their traditions in fresh new shapes and forms that they might speak vitally again." What this pastor was actually saying is "Narrow is the way that leads to excellency." And Mr. Belluschi understood the message. This was not to be the architect's church. This does not mean that an architect must abdicate his duties and prerogatives. But it does mean that he must seek to gain special insights. Then Mr. Belluschi goes on to say (and this



is well stated) “In any case, if the architect is honest, he will soon find that there are no perfect answers, only questions by earnest men; and it may well be that an earnest quest is the most important element in church design

Then he goes on to say (and here we recognize the essence of a great artist) “Having said this much, I should find myself in difficulty if I would try to describe the ways and the means by which eloquent simplicity can be sought. I wonder at times whether all an architect has learned in the span of his career is not more a handicap than a help in designing a church, and whether he is really capable of attaining humility or of shedding altogether the tricks of his trade. Certainly there is need for humility, integrity and restraint when it comes to building a temple for worship. And this applies not only to architects, but to pastors (to pastors’ wives?) and to lay building committees as well. All need to remember that narrow is the way - straight is the gate - that leads to excellency. Architects often complain bitterly of their problem with members of church building Committees. And, believe me, these people can become difficult when they insist, as often they do, that certain pet ideas of theirs, or their wives, must be included. Humility is needed all around.

At this point permit us to hark back to something that was said earlier, namely that man is creative and that he is constantly seeking to improve and to enhance that which he has made. Now it is just at this point of his creativity - at this point where he is so God-like, that he has his trouble. the more creative he becomes, the more he inclines to assume the role of God. It was the yearning to be as God which got Adam and Eve into trouble at first. And this lust is still very much to the fore in man today. It is found in architects, pastors, building committees. But such should not be the case! “It shall not be so among you, for whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister - your servant.”

Now let me consider briefly the fine act of music in Lutheran worship. Can anyone imagine a Lutheran service without music-- without its hymns and chorales? When I think of Luther and his experiences, these words of Psalm 40 invariably come to mind, “He brought me forth also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my seat upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth – “ With his discovery of the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, Luther could not help but burst into song. He must sing! And he invited all Christendom to sing with him. With his further discovery of the biblical doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers, he insisted that this be done. So then, it was Luther who took the liturgy - the chanting and singing out of the chancel to which it had been confined for centuries - and brought it out into the nave, to be shared by the priests in the pew. It was he who has put a new song into our mouth!

I like the statement here of Dr. Augustine Smith, sometime head of the Music Department at the Theological Seminary of Chicago University. He writes: The astonishment one experiences in the opera Siegfried, comes when Brunhilde is awakened from her sleep by a magic kiss - and she sings! And how she sings! After ninety minutes of Siegfried’s somber soloing and choral intoning, one finally hears a woman’s voice! Here one thinks of what the Reformation has done. It has ushered in a burst of soprano tone! Women singing after hundreds of years of silence! The Reformation gives us congregational singing once again. With his stress upon the universal priesthood of all believers, Luther turned on the current which not only activated but revolutionized society. Among other things, he brought about changes in the liturgy. However, in doing this he did not create disorder, as he has often been accused of doing. What he did was simply to cleanse the liturgy from error.

Then, having activated the believer-priests in the pews, Luther believed that the best way to keep them singing and participating in the service would be by providing them with hymns and chorales. Thus he encouraged plain folk to vie with the hierarchy in composing sacred music for the church. The music that emerged was not all to the good, to be sure, but people began to sing. They exercised their priesthood and lustily gave expression to their faith.

Luther's concern in music was not that it should necessarily be fine art. His primary concern here was that music should be given into the hands of the people and to all people - to Hans and Liesel - so that they could all participate in worship. However, in doing this he actually developed art of highest caliber. He gave to the church hymns and chorales in which Biblical text and music were beautifully wedded together.

Luther's approach to music was quite different from that of the Reformers, and certainly that of Augustine, who believed music to be inherently corrupt and carnal. Augustine, for instance, actually feared music. He felt that music could easily overpower sacred texts. And as for musical instruments, these, he felt, could exert only "defiling and corrupting influences upon worship." Luther, however, had quite a different attitude. He exalted music above all the arts, and called it the most magnificent gift of God to man. In his Table-talk we come upon this: "I have little patience with those who like the fanatics despise music. For music is a gift of God. It can drive out devils and make people happy; it enables us to forget wrath, unchastity, pride and other vices. It teaches us to be amicable, more modest, and more intelligent. Music is a divine revelation. It is the language of angels in heaven and on earth that of the old prophets.

While Luther called for simple music for his simple folk, he by no means frowned upon the elaborate and intricate music which had been created by artists of former days, or which was being written by composers of his day. When a group of ministers complained that their choirmasters were having their choirs sing music of such complex character that their people would not be able to understand it, Luther replied: "What of it? Do people understand everything in our sermons? Do we understand everything the Holy Spirit gives us in Scriptures?" Luther wanted his people to be exposed to all types of music.

Lutheranism welcomes music. It needs music. Luther found in music a congenial ally. As a result Lutheranism rode forward and conquered on the wings of music, biblical doctrine riding on the wings of song!

Some years ago when a member of the faculty at the University of Minnesota School of Music, to whom I had been introduced, learned that I was connected with the Lutheran Church, he became thoroughly excited and said: "Yours is the church that has the wonderful chorale." Then he proceeded to enumerate some of his favorites: O Sacred Head; Wake, Awake; Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern, etc. "You may not realize it," he said, but you people have the finest music in the world!" And so we have! We have the chorale which is musical artistry of highest order! And yet there are those who little appreciate them. But we try to improve the tastes of our people by offering them at least one chorale per Sunday. And then just when we think we have succeeded a bit, somebody comes along to suggest: "Pastor, you know what? I wish that once in awhile we would sing some of the good old songs - such as, In the Garden, Sweet Hour of Prayer, etc. Now to be sure it takes some effort and some doing to sing the chorale. But certainly one should be willing to put some effort and energy into one's worship. Doing so, the chorale is bound to grow on a person, and he will be richly rewarded. Eventually he may come to appreciate it as great art.

Perhaps it should be said that what is needed in our churches today is a greater

participation in worship. Worship is not easy. It's work! Occasionally when one travels along a highway one will come upon a sign which reads: "Caution, men at work!" That's the type of sign that should be hung upon the church door on a Sunday morning when the congregation is engaged in worship, namely, "Caution, men, women, children at work!" Worship is hard work! It takes prayerful preparation as well as prayerful concentration to worship. In his refreshing book, *Count-Down*, David Head permits us to break in upon a man who is really himself for worship. Listen to him as he thinks out loud and readies himself for the service which is about to begin. He prays: "Anoint our heads with oil, O Lord, lest overwhelmed with the solemnity of the occasion we come with long faces. Here we are, Lord, not to enjoy ourselves, but to enjoy Thee. Let us! Let the wrappings of worship be worthy Lord, and let them contain the genuine article. Under thy wings we are secure. But Lord, this day we dare to pray: Teach us to fly!" The opening hymn to be sung is "Zion Hears the Watchman Singing". So he prays: "Lord, if our singing cannot be lovely, let it be lusty. If we cannot be harmonious, let us be together. We would not rise late and lethargically to our feet for mindless mutter, but be alert in our places as those who call on the world to wake up. We are singing to the Lord, and if we are not doing that, then what in the world are we doing? Let us lay aside every weight, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Such a preparation for worship, one may be sure, will tend, among other things, to deepen one's appreciation of the chorale.

So then there is need to prepare for worship and to concentrate upon what's going on in the service, which includes what's being offered in the chorale. So then the Lutheran Church has the wonderful chorale. But while that is true, it is not true that all of our people so regard it. In fact, there are those who are completely turned off by the chorale, and who complain that it is unmelodious and unsingable. These people usually are turned off by what they regard as the "good old songs", which, incidentally, are not old at all. These belong in the category of new vintage-hymnody or gospel song.

Now I am quite certain that the majority of our pastors are turned off when it comes to much of the religious music of our day (some dislike the chorale). To be sure, much of it is subjective trash which will quickly fade away, as it should. However, the Lutheran Church, in the spirit of Luther, should at least have an open ear. Sooner or later something may turn up which may very well prove to be of fine and enduring quality. So then, we should seek to be aware of what is going on in the realm of religious music. At the same time we should beware of being prejudiced against the very old (the chorale) as well as the very new (*Amazing Grace*, *How Great Thou Art*, etc). A pastor with the assistance of a good organist and choir can do much to

develop a taste for that which is of fine quality and fine art in music. However, here everything must be done with moderation and with extreme caution. Those in charge of the music program of their church may have some pet ideas of their own which they would like to see introduced into the church program, but here it is necessary to proceed with care. They should give heed to the wise words of Solomon, who said: "Be not righteous over much" (*Ecclesiastes 7:16*). However, this is a topic which should be considered at greater length and depth in another paper.

As we stated earlier, the world today needs some strong alternatives attesting to the wonderful verities of Scripture. Shortly before Easter I had to get a message to my congregation. Since our church secretary was confined to her home because of illness, I determined to take care of things myself. The opening sentence of my message needed an exclamation point. I searched the typewriter keyboard, but for the life of me I could find none. There was a dollar sign and a question mark, but no exclamation point! A question mark but no exclamation point!

The thought occurred to me, how typical and representative of our national situation today. Everybody is asking questions. But people are getting no answers, at least no adequate answers to many of their questions. Well, *we* have the answers! Answers that satisfy the deep yearnings of the soul! Let us give out our affirmatives forcefully and eloquently by way of sermons - gospel sermons, by way of our Christian living – and by way of sermons in stone, in music, sculpture, painting – by way of the fine arts.