

The Anthropology of Worship: Understanding Ritual as Humanity's Innate Quest to Know God and the *extra nos* Revelation of the True God in Lutheran Worship

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Abstract

The subject of structured (liturgical) worship/ritual has mostly been treated as a theological topic. While the structure of *ritual* and human behavior in ritual/worship has been studied by anthropologists, theologians focus on the innate reason behind worship. Together they aid in understanding (1) that the *need* for worship/ritual is not unique to a specific religion or ethnicity; it is essential to all humans. (2) that worship/ritual *structure*, as well as the elements used in worship, are nowhere universally prescribed. While anthropology theorizes the structure of ritual/worship, theology alone gives an answer to the *why*.

This paper examines the structural nature of, and the ontological need for, ritual worship as a human phenomenon (anthropology) used to transcend mundane earthly existence, as part of an innate quest to know the Creator veiled in the surrounding nature (theology). May the reader appreciate the greatness of how the Almighty and Gracious God of the Universe has chosen to be one with His creation, sharing in their depraved condition, to ultimately assure an eternal future life of wholeness in His presence. In the conclusion to this paper, I offer guidelines for consideration among missionaries and pastors preparing worship structures in differing cultural contexts.

Introduction

In the discipline of theological anthropology, worship emerges not as a peripheral religious practice but as an innate expression of human existence. Created in the *imago Dei* (Gn 1:26–27), humanity knew, trusted, and related naturally to the Creator. The Fall, however, destroyed this orientation. With the essential human need to once again know God, and with the capacities given by God remaining as part of human nature to know Him, humanity's essential need to worship His creator, redirected into a quest to find Him in the surrounding world. Martin Luther incisively captures this universality in his *Large Catechism*: "A 'god' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and to which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart."¹



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This paper contends that worship behaviors are present in *all* human activity. Rites and rituals, employing common cultural objects and language, attempt to achieve transcendence, yet in the fallen state these gestures remain under the Law, lacking knowledge of the true God. The Gospel enters through God's self-revelation in the incarnate Christ, who, as true man, speaks the language of culture and, as true God, reveals the Father *extra nos*. Believers then echo this revelation by their confession (ὁμολογέω) of sin and faith. This Lutheran framework illuminates the anthropology of worship as both diagnostic of the Fall and prescriptive of redemption, underscoring mission as the restoration of created relationality.

The *imago Dei* and Innate Worship Capacity at Creation

Lutheran theology understands the *imago Dei* not primarily as rational faculties or dominion (though these remain) but as original righteousness.² As the *Formula of Concord* affirms, humanity was created “in righteousness and true holiness,” possessing unmediated communion with the Creator.³ That is to say, before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in perfect *Shalom* (שָׁלוֹם).⁴ In Hebrew, *shalom* means “wholeness, completeness, lacking nothing, grounded” in eternal communion with God and with one another.⁵ In the Gospel of John, Jesus expresses this shared wholeness in terms of His redeeming mission: “...just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us...” (Jn 17:21). In this pre-Fall relationship, worship flowed from the essence of the creature: the heart trusted God alone.

Luther, in his Genesis commentary and catechetical writings, describes pre-Fall humanity as walking in intimate trust and praise without mediation or fear.⁶ This original state entailed worship as natural behavior: the heart trusted God alone (First Commandment), the mouth invoked His name (Second Commandment), and daily life sanctified time through His Word (Third Commandment). The Creed's articles—creation, redemption (foreshadowed), sanctification—were lived realities, not doctrinal propositions. The Lord's Prayer's address “Our Father” and petitions to hallow the name and usher in the Kingdom reflected unbroken filial dependence. Worship, therefore, was not ritualized effort but the spontaneous outflow of creaturely dependence upon the Creator.

Common objects (garden, animals, fruit) served as evidence of God's provision; language named reality in perfect alignment with divine truth. Thus, trust, invocation, relational cultivation were good and perfect gifts at creation, innate to human anthropology. They constituted the structural capacity for transcendence to relate beyond the self to the divine source of all good. Lutheran anthropology, therefore, insists this capacity persists post-Fall as a formal remnant, though materially corrupted, explaining why no culture lacks worship forms. Humanity *must* worship; the question is which god.

Universal Corruption by the Fall: Relational Incapability, Language Failure and Worship Distortion

The Fall inverted the *imago Dei* into what Luther calls an *imago diaboli*—the heart now trusts created things or self as ultimate good. Original righteousness and knowledge of the true God lost, yet the behavioral structure remains. Luther's First Commandment exposition universalizes worship: “Anything on which your heart

relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.”⁷ Whether mammon, power, or self, all humanity exhibits this behavior. The Second Commandment reveals the name: we are commanded to use God’s name “in the service of truth and of all that is good... Call upon Me in the day of trouble.”⁸ Fallen humanity will always invoke some name (thing, action) when in distress in search of refuge. The Third Commandment, reinterpreted by Luther as sanctification through God’s Word rather than ceremonial rest, exposes the relational void. In spite of rituals, non-Christians worship “without keeping a single day holy, because they neither preach nor practice God’s Word.”⁹ Yet all cultures set apart times, spaces, and objects for “holy” activity—festivals, shrines, meditations—to cultivate an ongoing relationship with what/who is worshiped as *God*.

The Creed’s articles expose the inability to know the true God without His *extra nos* revelation. The Lord’s Prayer’s relates directly to the first three commandments: the introduction addresses (confesses) God as Father. The first petition “hallows the name” in agreement with the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed and the Second Commandment. The third petition echoes the need to “sanctify the day” through His Word (Third Commandment) and confesses that this is the word of the Holy Spirit (Third Article of the Creed). These confess and reveal by faith precisely what fallen rites cannot deliver.¹⁰ Thus, all worship behaviors persist: having a god (trust), naming it (invocation), relating through ritual (worship).

The impossibility to know, love, and trust God above all things is easily noted in post-Fall humanity’s language. Human language is void of vocabulary to describe or discuss the nature of the true God because “the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14). Luther’s *theologia crucis* emphasizes that reason knows that God exists but not *who* He is—*deus absconditus* in majesty terrifies; only *deus revelatus* in Christ comforts.¹¹ Under the Law, humanity experiences only wrath; the Gospel relationship—unmerited grace—remains unknown. This relationship is contractual fear, not filial Gospel trust. Rites using common objects (stones, trees, money) or cultural language (myths, proverbs) achieve fleeting liminal experiences but never the true God. All attempts at transcendence—whether shamanic trance or philosophical mysticism—remain self-projections, trapped *intra nos*.

Rites, Rituals, and Cultural Vessels for Transcendence

Anthropologically, that is, *by nature*, humans employ symbols to bridge immanence and transcendence in ritual (worship). Noted anthropologist Émile Durkheim (in 1909) argued that all religions divide the world into the sacred and the profane: sacred things are set apart, protected by interdictions, and revered as embodying collective representations that bind society into a moral community.¹² Rituals reinforce this division, generating social solidarity through shared effervescence in communal rites. This effervescence is indispensable in achieving the transcendent quality of the ritual.

A contemporary rival of Durkheim, anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, regarded ritual differently. Whereas Durkheim focused on how ritual created *social solidarity* to maintain the identity of a social group, van Gennep focused on *change and movement*; particularly, how ritual provided a rhythmic framework for individuals to cross over boundaries from one status to another. His tripartite model of rites of passage (separation, transition, aggregation) has become the cliché definition of ritual.

In the ritual performance, van Gennep focused on the change and movement (social status) of the individual from before to after the ritual performance.¹³

During the 1960s, however, within van Gennep's tripartite division of rituals, anthropologist Victor Turner concentrated on the transitional phase, which he called the *liminal phase*. He emphasized this phase as the "betwixt and between"—the transitional stage wherein social structures dissolve, allowing for ambiguity and equality, leading to *communitas* (a spontaneous, homogenous fellowship, the apex of transcendent feeling).¹⁴

Turner's distinctive contribution locates the power and purpose of rite and ritual *not* primarily in the final reintegration phase (the restored social structure) but in the liminal moment itself. In this "betwixt and between" state, familiar words, objects, and symbols of everyday culture are deliberately "played with"—stripped of conventional meanings, recombined, inverted, or exaggerated—so that they acquire new, transcendent purpose. Ordinary elements (a stone, a loaf, a spoken proverb, a gesture) cease to function as mundane tools and become vessels for a transcendent re-signification that points beyond the visible and the structural. For Turner, the express reason rites and rituals exist is to transcend mundane structure—albeit momentarily—creating a temporary anti-structure in which participants explore "what is not seen."

Although not referring specifically to the ritual process, I believe this is what St. Paul means when in 2 Cor 4:18 (NIV) he writes, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." The liminal experience itself, that experience to move beyond the temporary to the unseen spiritual. It is not the post-ritual status, but the liminal period when objects, words, gestures, are set aside to be used in a way that transcends their *worldly* cultural referents and vested through the ritual process to the *other-worldly*. This process generates the experience of transcendence, reflexivity, *communitas*, all of which are the purpose of ritual/worship.

This liminal dynamic is a common, universal feature of human rites and rituals across cultures. Turner, drawing from ethnographic evidence in Ndembu society, viewed liminality as an innate human capacity and quest embedded in the very process of social and cultural life. Liminal areas (rituals, carnivals, pilgrimages, dramas) generate new models, often fantastic, that refresh or challenge normative structures. Liminality thus represents an existential "bending back" upon the self, a reflexive anti-structural moment inherent to humanity's need to breathe, generate novelty, and encounter possibilities beyond the constraints of structure. Far from being an anomaly or a Christian-specific phenomenon, this liminal quest for transcendence through anti-

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structure is an anthropological constant. In the liminal phase, the liminal space becomes a *sacred space*.

A colleague of Turner's at the University of Chicago, Mircea Eliade, focusing on world religions, universal myths and symbols, describes this sacred space as an irruption of the transcendent into the profane, often centering on an *axis mundi* (cosmic axis) such as a mountain, tree, or pillar that connects heaven, earth, and underworld.¹⁵ This manifestation of the sacred enables communication with the divine. Common objects—stones, trees, altars—become vessels for this breakthrough, transformed from profane utility into sacred conduits.

Lutheran theology neither dismisses nor sacralizes culture *per se* but critiques its fallen deployment. Luther observes that God himself appoints “places, times, persons, and the entire outward order of worship” for the sake of the Word.¹⁶ Yet fallen humanity perverts this: idols crafted from wood or stone (Is 44) or modern equivalents (wealth, technology) become “gods” via ritual. In addition, using local proverbs, stories, songs, etc., human religious rituals elevate and encode cultural myths through culturally recognized speech forms that produce a *speech narcosis*,¹⁷ bringing about transcendence in the liminal phase, but ultimately reveal post-Fall bondage to language.

In Christian worship (ritual), however, the same universal liminal principle functions redemptively and eschatologically. Sacraments employ everyday cultural objects (water, bread, and wine) joined to Scripture; God's real presence irrupting through common cultural elements. In Lutheran worship, however, worshipers do not utilize cultural objects and nuanced speech forms to invent or project God's presence (*intra nos*). Within this liminal phase (worship), God's presence irrupts in, with, and under cultural objects by way of His Word (*extra nos*) in accordance with His specific command: that is, in bread, wine, and water **in union** with His Words.¹⁸ What anthropologists here see as shared human phenomenon becomes, for me, theologically incarnational: God uses human forms precisely because fallen humanity can only encounter Him through tangible, cultural means. Rites achieve genuine transcendence not by human technique but by God's Word, transforming cultural vessels into Gospel conduits.

Christ Himself embodies and perfects this liminal dynamic as the incarnate Word. Not limiting His presence specifically in the Sacraments (*intra sacramentum*), during the worship ritual, He irrupts into human existence through the recited Word of Scripture, the preached Word, the sung Word, and the confessed Word within the ritual but outside the sacrament context (*extra sacramentum*).¹⁹

This is not a fleeting liminal experience that dissipates upon reintegration into structure; it is the permanent establishment of a new creation in which the liminal becomes eschatological reality. Christ, as the true Light (Jn 1:9; 8:12), becomes present and fulfills the innate human quest for transcendence by making the “unseen” visible and tangible in His own person, words, and Sacraments. Thus, while all human rituals reflect the created capacity for projecting and achieving liminal transcendence, only Christ's incarnational presence through Word and Sacrament transforms that capacity from a momentary glimpse into an eternal, Gospel-grounded communion with the true God *extra nos*.

The Missio-Anthropological Purpose of God's Self-Revelation in Christ

God does not, therefore, abandon humanity's essential cultural tools but redeems them through the incarnation. Jesus **is** Emmanuel— "God with us" (Mt 1:23)—not abstractly but concretely: true man, "confined to humanity under the Law," yet true God who alone reveals the Father. As true man, Jesus speaks the language of Galilee: parables drawn from agriculture, fishing, coins, sheep; He employs objects (water jars at Cana, loaves, fish, temple coins); He engages institutions (synagogue, temple, Roman authority) and history (fulfilling prophets). He uses proverbs and cultural sayings, giving them new meaning— "You have heard... but I say to you." (e.g., Mt 5). In the structure of first-century Jewish culture, unknown realities (Kingdom as grace, not works; God as Abba) become known.

This is missio-anthropological: God enters human anthropology to redeem it from within, reorienting the innate worship capacities toward their proper object. Parables do not merely illustrate; they reveal, creating and calling to faith where none existed. Even the "cross and resurrection"—the cultural tool of Roman execution—becomes the historical nexus between heaven and earth, between the divine and the human.

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The Believers' *Homologia*: Confessing the Revelation Back to God

Faith responds through confession (*ὁμολογέω*). Believers reciting back to God what God has revealed: the Creed is *homologia*^{7.26.26} of the articles; the Lord's Prayer echoes the petitions; the confession of sins (1 Jn 1:9) acknowledges God's diagnosis ("lost and condemned creatures"). Luther ties this to the Second Commandment: "first the heart honors God by faith and then the lips by confession."²⁰

In Lutheran worship, the creedal recitation, absolution, and hymns confess sinfulness under the Law and faith in the revealed God. Confession thus completes the anthropological circle: revelation *extra nos* calls humanity's response *intra nos*, restoring relationship. No longer living in the judgment of the convicting Law, the believer lives in Gospel freedom, using a new language created in Christ to praise the true God.

Conclusion

The anthropology of worship reveals humanity as essentially religious but tragically misdirected in their quest to know the true God. The Lutheran catechetical framework diagnoses the Fall's distortion while pointing to Christ's remedy. Through rites employing common objects and language, fallen humanity quests for transcendence; only the incarnate God-man fulfills the quest *extra nos*, reorienting every dimension by His word, inviting to know the true Father. Believers' *ὁμολογέω* returns the gift, completing the missio-anthropological purpose: creation restored in redemption.

The uniqueness of Lutheran worship is not located in any formal structure of ritual labeled as “traditional” or “contemporary.” Rather, what qualifies worship as true worship of the true God is the incarnational presence of God’s Word in worship: preaching, congregational singing, corporate confessing, the administration of the sacraments, and prayer. Terminology such as “traditional” or “contemporary” often betray human biases that elevate outward media or aesthetic preference over the crucial content and power of the Word. In Lutheran understanding, it is the Word—promising, proclaiming, and delivering Christ—that makes of water baptism, of bread and wine the body and blood, and confessions, songs, and prayers, a proclamation of the true God. Without this Word-centered reality, forms of reverence remain under the Law, mere human attempts at a feeling of transcendence. With the Word, every cultural vessel potentially becomes a living conduit for the transmission of the Gospel, fulfilling the innate human quest in the person and work of Christ. Worship remains *missio-anthropological*: God’s self-revelation *extra nos* continues to encounter and redeem fallen humanity.

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An Illustrative Example: The Liturgical Sequence as Divine Drama of the Salvation Narrative across Cultures

Having examined the anthropological dimensions of human worship, this inquiry offers practical direction for pastoral and missional practice. The question arises: how might an anthropological understanding assist pastors and missionaries in preparing and leading worship that facilitates effective proclamation and affective reception of the Gospel across a diversity of cultural contexts?

The normative Western liturgical order can be fruitfully reconceived as a dramatic narrative, a purposefully sequenced divine drama of salvation history. In this paradigm, worship unfolds as an intentional, theologically coherent progression of acts within God’s redemptive drama, wherein the Triune God sovereignly initiates, discloses, and consummates His saving work.

Conceptualizing worship as narrative drama enables the worshipping community in any culture to participate in the liturgical structure holistically. This narrative hermeneutic fosters deeper personal engagement, allowing believers to inhabit the salvation story individually and communally, thereby enhancing both cognitive comprehension and affective transformation. Ritual/worship structures and elements—language, objects, specifically nuanced musical and elocutionary forms,

kinetics and proxemics—should be chosen according to their potential to effectively communicate God’s salvific self-revelation and conform to the Christ-centered reality as the drama unfolds.

Specifically, in *oral cultures* (story-telling cultures or functionally illiterate cultures), conceptualizing worship as a narrative drama invites the community to participate in an already culturally nuanced manner. This holistic, flowing perception of narrative frequently takes on a cyclical character which can be seen specifically in the nature of the order of worship. Beginning with the worshiper’s life in Baptism, we repeat a cycle of renewal and forgiveness, progressing, circling back in confession and absolution, the creed, the reading of Scripture lessons, hymns, prayers, and the Sacraments as the story unfolds. Only with the advent of writing—and later print—did cultures gain the technological ability to freeze a narrative, break it into labeled parts, and subject it to academic scrutiny.²¹ The oral world knew no such fracture. For the singer, the elder, the griot, or the shaman, the story was always a participatory flow, a holistic event, and often a cyclical return that renewed both teller and hearers in the living present.²²

A Structural Model:

Invocation: The initial moment of the liturgical drama constitutes the divine initiative—an opening act wherein God does not summon the worshipers to *remember* their baptismal identity, but to be *ontologically incorporated* into the Triune God. The invocation “in[to]²³ the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” enacts a performative grafting, echoing Pauline language (Rom 6:4), by which the assembly is drawn into the death and resurrection of Christ to be co-heirs and co-participants with Him. It has been customary to refer to this invocation as “making our beginning,” but as a repeated cycle, this can also be the end, since in Baptism, we have “died to sin” being “buried therefore with Him”; we rise with Him. (Romans 6). The invocation is at once a funeral pall to the believer’s former self under the Law, and their robe of righteousness covering the new self, created in Christ (Gospel). Here, the drama commences with the irrevocable act of divine incorporation, through which the believer participates in God’s salvific work.

Confession: The act of confession (*ὁμολογέω*) constitutes a personal and theological articulation wherein the assembly aligns its language with God’s. This is not a mere enumeration of deeds, but an acknowledgment of the ontological reality of sin—an embodiment of the Law that binds the creature to finitude apart from God. There is a new language given *extra nos* that leads the believer to respond through examination (*intra nos*), revealing the impossibility of self-deliverance.

Absolution: The pronouncement of absolution is a decisive moment wherein God, acting *extra nos*, bestows forgiveness and salvation through words that originate outside the human subject. The drama thus progresses from the worshiper’s confession of existential gravity to the liberating act of divine speech, bringing reconciliation and restoration.

Collect (Prayers) Having received absolution and been restored, the assembly is now invited to approach God as a loving Father, calling His name (2nd Commandment). The collect marks a dialogical response, wherein the creature, freed

from alienation, participates in the intimacy of the Garden—reclaiming the primordial communion lost through sin and expressing itself with new words.

Readings and Sermon: The proclamation of the Word constitutes an act of divine self-disclosure. Through the scriptural readings and the prophetic office of preaching, God reveals Himself, granting the worshiping believers application of the divine to their present lived context. They can see the living Word become incarnate in relationship to their lives, especially if the message includes situations familiar to believers' context.

The Creed: The act of confession (*ὁμολογέω*) constitutes a personal and theological declaration; it marks the transformative transition from confession of sin to confession of faith; a positive confession wherein the assembly, having received God's self-revelation in Christ, appropriates a new linguistic and conceptual framework. This revealed vocabulary—Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier—discloses the formerly unknown Triune God, reorienting the heart's trust, the mouth's invocation, and the life's relational dependence toward the God who is truly God.

The Sacrament: The problematic word accounting for denominational differences in the interpretation and utility of the Sacrament is the Hebrew word (זָכַר) to *remember*. *Remember* is taken as a command, which worshipers have frequently equated to something they must do: "remember." However, *remember* is God acting in accordance with His covenant, the body and blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. His *remembering* is *creating that past event in the present, for the present*. When God *remembers*, He acts in accordance with the covenant He made, "the new covenant in His blood."²⁴ The words, "This do in remembrance of Me," more accurately can be seen as an invitation for worshipers to participate in the covenant that God makes with them, now in their presence, to make them whole. When God "remembers" his covenant, He acts to save (Gn 9:15); when Israel "remembers" the Sabbath, they participate in it. (Ex 20:8).

Here, the gathered assembly encounters God's presence offered for them. The liturgical act of withdrawing the corporal²⁵ serves as the semiotic threshold, initiating an advanced phase of this *divine drama* wherein the congregation transcends the finite to engage in a face-to-face encounter with the Triune God. Christ becomes incarnate through the Word and in strict accordance with the New Covenant, manifesting His ontological presence—specifically His body and blood—in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine. Consequently, the act of removing the corporal functions is an invitation for the communicants to see beyond the temporary, visible realm and participate in the eschatological banquet, an anticipative realization of the "feast to come." This covenantal promise ensures that the assembly does not merely observe an historical symbolic rite but actively inhabits an eternal feast that bridges the temporal present with the celestial future.

Nunc Dimittis: Simeon's "Nunc Dimittis" (Lk 2:29–32) serves as a liturgical "seal" upon the sacramental encounter, effectively recapitulating the assembly's experience of God's covenantal faithfulness. In the petition, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace," the verb *depart* (*ἀπολύω*) functions as more than an ending to the Sacrament; but a beginning to Christian living in relation to God. In its first-century setting, *depart* described the formal release of a bondservant by his master.²⁶ Liturgically, this suggests that through the Sacrament, the worshiper is emancipated

from the ontological “destitution” of sin and restored to the freedom of the children of God.

Furthermore, the departure in *peace* invokes the profound Hebraic concept of *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם): made whole and complete. Having encountered Christ, the believer’s life is redeemed and lacks nothing, as the breach between the creature and the Creator has been mended.

However, a comprehensive sacramental theology must also account for the witness of Anna the Prophetess (Lk 2:36–38). Luke’s genealogical detail—identifying her as the daughter of Phanuel—is significant. The name Phanuel literally translates to “Face of God” (פְּנֵי אֵל)²⁷, and signifies *presence*, evoking the site where Jacob wrestled with the Divine and survived (Gn 32:30). By positioning the worshiper alongside both Simeon and the “daughter of the Face of God,” Luke illustrates the dual nature of the Sacrament: it is a site of unmediated theophany (seeing God face-to-face) and a catalyst for missional release (departing in the freedom of *shalom*).

Benediction: While the worshiper’s quest to transcend and know the true God ends here, the Aaronic benediction sends the worshiper out to live in God’s *presence* (פְּנֵים - *face*) as His child, lacking in nothing (שָׁלוֹם - *peace, wholeness*).

Synthesis: In summary, this liturgical sequence provides a functional “shape” capable of informing preparation for culturally communicative, holistic worship across diverse cultural and missiological contexts. Crucially, this outline remains indifferent (*adiaphora*) toward specific cultural media or aesthetic expressions, with the essential exception of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in which word and element are both mandated. Beyond these instituted signs, liturgical labels are functional descriptors that can convey their theological significance within the local assembly’s vernacular and community.

In this Lutheran understanding, worship is not a static ritual of human performance (*sacrificium*), but the incarnational narrative of salvation history, not as a human work, but the efficacious action of the Word of God, come to dwell among His people, divine service (*Gottesdienst*) of God to His people. God draws all people unto Himself from temporal life into the hidden, yet certain, reality of everlasting life.

NOTE: It would be remiss not to acknowledge relevant issues of contextualization and syncretism in worship related to cultural media. Investigating the complexity of this problem was not within the scope of this paper.

Endnotes

¹ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* in Kolb, Robert, and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), I.2, 386. (hereafter, KW and LC).

² *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* II, 15–22 (KW, 37–39).

³ *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration* (hereafter FC SD), I.9 (KW, 533); cf. I.10–11, where original sin is described as the loss of this concreated righteousness and the ensuing corruption of human nature.

⁴ Jacques B. Doukhan, “Shalom: The Hebrew View of Peace,” *Shabbat Shalom* (2001); “Shalom: Peace in Hebrew,” My Jewish Learning, accessed March 1, 2026,

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shalom>; cf. also the root *shalam* meaning “to make whole” or “restore” in Torah contexts (e.g., Exodus 21–22), as discussed in FIRM Israel, “The True Meaning of Shalom” (2020).

⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 258n14.

⁶ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1–5*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. George V. Schick, vol. 1 of *Luther’s Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 95, 165–67, 228.

⁷ Luther, LC 1.3 (KW, 386).

⁸ Luther, LC I.64 (KW, 394).

⁹ Luther, LC I.90 (KW, 398).

¹⁰ Luther, LC I.70 (KW, 394).

¹¹ On Luther’s distinction between *deus absconditus* and *deus revelatus*, see Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Translated by Thomas H. Trapp. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 165–80.

¹² Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995 [1912]), 44–47.

¹³ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 15–25. [Note: Page numbers added for consistency].

¹⁴ Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 94–130, esp. 94–7, 126–30.

¹⁵ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), 20–65.

¹⁶ Luther, LC I.94 (KW, 399).

¹⁷ Within discourse theory, “speech narcosis” refers to the lulling nature—a neurological effect—that unique stylized speech uses instinctively within ritual to differentiate between “informational discourse” and “commemorative discourse.” John H. McDowell, “Folklore as Commemorative Discourse,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 105, no. 418 (1992): 403–23.

¹⁸ McDowell refers to the “words” within ritual as *words of the ancestors*. These “words” within specialized speech forms are used to highlight the importance of specific spoken portions of the ritual. These words appear as archaic or antiquated verbiage which, in some instances, may lack translation or transcend lexical meaning to preserve the original “words of the ancestors.” Lexical meaning and translation in the ritual is not as important as fidelity to the original and the rhythmic cadence of the speech form itself, causing feelings of transcendence. (McDowell, “Folklore as Commemorative Discourse,” 403–23.)

¹⁹ I use the term *intra sacramentum* to refer to Christ’s incarnational presence in, with, and under bread, wine, and water—elements where He has promised to be present through His Word. By *extra sacramentum*, I refer to His incarnational presence, by His Word, redefining quotidian objects and language of human culture, revealing the Kingdom of God.

²⁰ Luther, LC I.70 (KW, 395).

²¹ Richard A. Jensen, *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate Age* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Company, 1995), 25–40 (see esp. chap. 2, “The Gutenberg Eclipse,” and chap. 4, “The Electronic Age”). Jensen posits that print culture encouraged “linear, analytical thinking,” causing the church to move away from the *experience* of the Gospel (the Story) and toward doctrinal propositions and systematic theology.

²² On cyclical structures in oral narrative, see Andrew Wiget, "Cycle Construction and Character Development in Central Algonkian Trickster Tales," *Oral Tradition* 15, no. 1 (2000): 39–73; and Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 95–123. Many oral traditions align with seasonal or ritual cycles, rendering narrative a recurring, holistic renewal rather than a one-way linear progression.

²³ The Greek phrase *eis to onoma* signifies entry into a relationship of possession; to be baptized *into* the name implies the person becomes the property of the Trinity and moves from the world into a mystical union. Hans Bietenhard, "Ὀνομα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (hereafter *TDNT*), ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 274–5.

²⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 154.

²⁵ The customary veil used in worship to cover the elements prior to the Words of Institution.

²⁶ Friedrich Büchsel, "Ἀπολύω," in *TDNT*, vol. 4 (1967), 353–54.

²⁷ A. S. van der Woude, "פָּאָנִים (*pānīm*)," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 603–4.