

Andrew Chiu Memorial New Testament Theological
Conference, Organized by the Pastoral Conference of the
Lutheran Church Hong Kong Synod (LCHKS) and Concordia
Theological Seminary

Topic: *The Contemplation of Heaven in Lutheran Worship*

Speaker: Edward Naumann (廖诺民)

Venue: Concordia Theological Seminary, 68 Begonia Road,
Yau Yat Chuen, Kowloon

Time: April 20, 2018, 19:30-21:30

Respondent: Andrew Wai Man NG (伍渭文), Divinity School
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Dr. Naumann's paper is divided into two parts.

The first part is a survey of the legitimate tradition of spiritual exegesis of which Nicholas of Lyra of 14th century advocates : *"The letter teaches deeds, what to believe does allegory; The moral what to do and where you'll go does anagogy."* Solomon Glassius sets up the Lutheran hermeneutic principle of one literal meaning in the Scriptural passage without

denial of spiritual interpretation as long as the interpretation is warranted by other passages in the Scripture, not by the living tradition as the Roman Catholic Church insists. However contemporary Lutheran hermeneutic is greatly confined to literal meaning without due respect to its concomitant spiritual meaning in response to the historical criticism of the nineteenth century.

The second part discusses the heavenly contemplation in Lutheran liturgy.

(1) Heavenly contemplation in worship is found at the *sursum corda* or dialogue of the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer at which the Service of the Word passes to the Service of the Sacrament. As communicants approach the table they are exhorted to lift up their hearts in preparation for the Eucharist. The sermon prepares one for the Eucharist.

(2) Dr. Naumann observes that the present Common Service we use today however is not serving good heavenly contemplation. Its insistence on an authentic Lutheran identity and based on the contingent Formula Missae (1523) and Deutsche Messe (1526) are questionable. In the words of Luther Reed Luther made drastic alteration in his liturgical reform

“depriving all prayers of commemoration and thanksgiving and the limiting of liturgical material at the point to the Lord’s Prayer and the Words of Institution.” Dr. Naumann contends that the gauge of a pure Lutheran liturgy is questionable and not in the spirit of the Augsburg Confession (1530). As we know Article VII states that the liturgy and church order are matter of adiasphora. Each region may find respective liturgy and church order that best befit their need.

For further discussion, I put forward the following:

1 Does heavenly contemplation confine to the preparation for the reception of the Eucharist? Isn’t it true that the opening remarks of the Divine Service: *“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* calls for heavenly contemplation? We are baptized in the same Holy Name of the Triune God. The worshippers enter into the presence of God with the heavenly existence. The orthodox worship begins the liturgy with the opening doxology: “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The opening doxology bespeaks not only of heavenly contemplation but heavenly realization. The heavenly journey begins with the openly doxology.

2 The Service of the Word has its own right. It is not only for the promise of the Gospel, as Service of the Eucharist for the fulfillment of the Gospel, as we rightly imagine in the first half of our Church Calendar. The Service of the Word is also for the edification of the Church. *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* (2 Timothy, 3: 16, 17) That is indeed an awesome and formidable responsibility on the part of the preachers. In the Church Calendar, half of the year after the Pentecost is dedicated to the equipping of the saints for their Ordinary life. To Luther, sermon is the audible word while the Sacrament is the visible word. The Sacrament is the testament of God’s promise. As such we may say what we have heard in the sermon is confirmed or testified and upheld by the Sacrament followed.

3 In the survey of history of exegesis in the first part of the paper, Dr. Naumann advises us not to abandon the rich spiritual interpretation of the Bible as long as it is not divorced from literal meaning. Let us return to Nicholas of Lyra’s maxim for the delivery of sermon: *The letter teaches deeds, what to believe does allegory; The moral what to do and where you’ll go does*

anagogy. Indeed these are the three varieties of spiritual meaning. The *allegory* deduces doctrine from the narrative. The *moral* draws lesson for life and behavior while the *anagogy* spells out the heavenly meaning from earthly thing. These spiritual differentiations are helpful for the preachers.

4 Using the story of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24) as an example, the allegory being the story narrative speaks of the dual liturgy of the word and sacrament, an essential doctrine of our faith. The moral talks about the care of the stranger who needs a meal and a shelter, a commandment of charity out of genuine faith. The anagogy reminds us that the we experience the resurrected Christ only in our exercise of charity, the grace of empowerment for good work. The threefold spiritual interpretation of allegory (doctrine), moral (law) and anagogy (gospel). Spiritual exposition is application of the literal meaning of biblical truth coming in life. It is the conjoining of heavenly truth and earthly reality where we find ourselves.

5 Anagogy puts law and gospel together. In serving the needy (charity) we strengthen our faith. Faith is made active in charity. The law and gospel should not put asunder. When we receive the Lord's Supper we are mindful of Christ's words "This

is my body, given for you." These words call for faith and we accept in faith. But we demonstrate our genuine faith when we do the same to those in need: This is my body (representing all we have), given for you at your service. The world of consumerism does the contrary saying "This is your body, taken by me." In preaching we conjoin earthly matter and heavenly matter, seeing the heavenly star in the water of the indented mud left by the caravan of animals in the city of Bethlehem. A sermon comes into being only when the pastoral application arrives. The pastoral application is the spiritual exposition of the text that comes alive.

6. Accommodation of liturgy to secular culture. Dr. Naumann observes contemporary Lutheran hermeneutic being greatly confined to literal meaning without due respect to its concomitant spiritual meaning in 19th Century when historical criticism held sway. This is an internal hermeneutical accommodation on the part of the Church and external domestication on the part of the prevalent skeptical ethos that considered spiritual interpretation not scientific. At present we also witness the Church proves vulnerable to the temptation of success and wealth and feel not so comfortable with the theology of the cross. Or we shun from preaching doctrines and biblical

grand narratives because our people like to see (videre) and to live (vivere) in experiencing faith rather than reason(ratio) and word (verbum) in understanding faith. However there is the freshness coming from the ‘strangeness’ of the biblical truth. The pulpit should deliver truth that are both familiar and strange, not domesticated by the world or voluntarily accommodating to the world.

7. Dr. Naumann deplores the meagre prayers and commemorations at the Eucharistic Prayer in our service book which aspires to an authentic Lutheran tradition derived from the Reformation era. Now we are one year beyond the 500 Anniversary of Reformation. We should reiterate the Protestant principle of sola scriptura, sola gratia and sola fide. At the same time we should revisit the Catholic substance of our rich tradition because the church is One, Holy and Catholic. Luther’s reformation is one of reactionary, out of historical contingency. He needed to cut off and restored the center of the essential. Yet a circle cannot be a circle without the circumference. The Catholic substance is the circumference derived from the center.

We have a rich resources from our Catholic substance if we are mindful of Augsburg Confession VII which states: *1] 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. 2] And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and 3] the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. 4] As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. Eph. 4:5-6.