



Formula of Concord Session Eight: Church Practices

- **What do churches have to agree on? Where can they differ?**
- **What circumstances might require more flexibility? What circumstances might require less flexibility?**

Church Practices: Status

The chief question has been about a time of persecution and a matter of confession, even when the enemies of the Gospel have not reached an agreement with us in doctrine. Can some abolished ceremonies (which in themselves are matters of indifference and are neither commanded nor forbidden by God) be re-established by the pressure and demand of the adversaries without harming our conscience? May we compromise with them in such ceremonies and adiaphora? To this question one side has said Yes; the other, No. (Ep X.2, p.496)

- **At first glance, is this a very important distinction/argument? Why or why not?**

Church Practices: Affirmative and Negative Statements

Some ceremonies or Church practices are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but have been introduced only for the sake of fitting and good order. Such rites are not in and of themselves divine worship. They are not even a part of it.

We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God (in every place and at every time according to its circumstances) has the power to change such worship ceremonies in a way that may be most useful and edifying to the community of God.

Nevertheless, all frivolity and offense should be avoided in this matter. Special care should be taken to exercise patience toward the weak in faith. (Ep X.3-5, p.496)

- **Read and discuss:** Matthew 15:9; Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Corinthians 14:26

We believe, teach, and confess that during a time of persecution, when a plain confession is required of us, we should not yield to the enemies in such matters of adiaphora... For in such a case it is no longer a question about adiaphora. But in concerns the truth of the Gospel, preserving Christian liberty, and sanctioning open idolatry... In such a case we have nothing to concede. We should plainly confess and endure what God sends because of that confession, and whatever He allows the enemies of His Word to inflict on us. (Ep X.6, p.497)



As soon as Christian freedom is weakened and human traditions are forced on the Church with coercion, as though it were wrong and a sin to omit them, the way is already prepared for idolatry. (SD X.15, p.600)

- **Read and discuss:** Romans 14:6 compared to Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 16:3 compared to Galatians 2:5 and 5:1

So the churches will not condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them. This applies as long as they are otherwise agreed with one another in the doctrine and all its articles, and also in the right use of the Holy Sacraments. This fits the well-known saying, "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in the faith." (Ep VIII.17 p.493)

- **Application:**
 - What are some examples of practices that are adiaphora?
 - What are some things that are not adiaphora?
 - Under what circumstances do adiaphora become non-negotiable?