

# Romans 14 and Adiaphora in the Lutheran Confessions

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## Introduction and Definition

This paper is not a part of my Romans 9-16 commentary. However, I propose it makes a valid application of the argument Paul develops from Romans 14:1 through 15:7. It also aligns well with the theme of this conference. The “judgments over convictions” (14:1) addressed in that section of Romans focus on different views regarding foods and festivals. Paul writes, “<sup>2</sup>On the one hand, [there is] one who believes [it is lawful] to eat all things, but the one who is weak is eating vegetables.... <sup>5</sup>Indeed, on the one hand, [there is] one who judges a day in preference to a day, but [another] who judges every day [alike]” (14:2, 5). Käsemann correctly points out that “Paul is not formulating a doctrine of adiaphora here” regarding things “in daily Christian life” neither expressly commanded nor forbidden by Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The precise reason is because the OT clearly teaches a distinction between clean and unclean foods; it repeatedly discusses when and how the Sabbath and other holy days should be observed.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Romans 14:1-15:7 deals primarily with *hermeneutical issues regarding ... whether or not OT commands regarding foods and holy days continue to apply* now that the NT era has dawned.

These five factors summarize Paul’s discussion:

1. Paul repeatedly reinforces the Gospel as the essential foundation upon which these issues should be handled. The relationship believers have with Jesus Christ and, through him, with each other permeates life now and extends even beyond death itself (**14:7-9**). God’s Kingdom consists in his gifts of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (**14:17-18**). Paul’s climactic point in 15:7 encapsulates the message of the entire section: “Therefore, receive one another to yourselves, *just as the Christ also received you to himself* to [the] glory of God” (also 14:3-4; 15:3).
2. Now that Christ has come, OT requirements regarding diet and days have come to an end *as requirements*, and may not be imposed or judged (e.g., **14:1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13a, etc.**).

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<sup>1</sup> Käsemann, *Romans*, 375-76; however, his conclusion seems to be based on a false ascetic notion that “there can be no neutral ground ... between the lordship of Christ and that of the antichrist. If the world of things is to a large degree profane, it is not the creatures of God that move in and use it.” For a rebuttal of that view, see 1 Cor 10:23-26 and 1 Tim 4:1-5. It is possible, however, to utilize his broader application of “adiaphora” to encompass all of “daily Christian life,” including non-religious activities; see Middendorf and Schuler, *Called by the Gospel*, 157-59.

<sup>2</sup> The comparable discussion regarding meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-10 similarly involves the *possibility* of idolatry contrary to the First Commandment (Ex 20:3; Deut 5:7; e.g., 1 Cor 8:7, 10; 10:14, 21-22); see Lockwood, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 337-46.

3. Within the arena of Christian freedom, they still present a legitimate lifestyle option for Christians to follow (e.g., **14:5-6, 22**).
4. A person's own conviction may mean he ought not engage in the behavior if he views it as being contrary to his own faith (**14:14, 22-23**); Paul characterizes those with this viewpoint as "weak" (e.g., **14:1, 2; 15:1**).
5. Finally, the "strong" (15:1) recognize their freedom in regard to these OT regulations (14:14, 20), but they ought to be more concerned that their exercise of it does not cause a weak brother in the faith to stumble (e.g., **14:13b, 15, 20-21; 15:1-2**).

The Book of Concord references Romans 14:1-15:7 fifteen times. The Formula of Concord contains eight of them. It also defines the term "adiaphora" specifically as "ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden by the Word of God" (FC SD X 1). The issues Paul addresses in Romans 14 are certainly comparable to adiaphora and his treatment of them serves as the basis for this paper. This is because both deal with matter of *religious conduct which are optional for NT believers*. At the same time, since Paul deals with topics which were, in fact, required in OT times, "adiaphora," as defined by the Confessions, generally represent a somewhat *lower* threshold. As a result, the contentious situation regarding worship forms and format within any number of churches and denominations seems perplexing. This is so not only because of what Paul states about our freedom in regard to actual OT biblical commands, but also due to a debate over worship rites, traditions, and ceremonies which took place among Lutherans already in the late sixteenth century.

## The Lutheran Confessions

### The Basis of Unity

The foundational statement of Lutheran belief and practice, the Augsburg Confession, asserts,

<sup>2</sup> For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. <sup>3</sup> It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. <sup>4</sup> It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4, 5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (AC VII 2-4).

Must the ceremonies of worship be alike everywhere? Is unity in worship rites and traditions determinative of, necessary for, or even an expression of church unity? In keeping with Scripture passages such as Eph 4:3-6 and Jn 17:20-23, Article VII explicitly rejects such assertions. Rather, the *basis for the church's unity* rests on the essentials of the church. AC VII identifies it as "the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (AC VII 1). These two criteria provide the essence of the church and serve as the foundation for its unity. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession brings the teaching of Romans 14 and the Augsburg Confession together as follows:

It is evident that human traditions do not quicken the heart, are not works of the Holy Spirit (like love of neighbor, chastity, etc.), and are not means by which God moves the heart to believe (like the divinely instituted Word and sacraments). Rather, they are customs that do not pertain to the heart and “perish as they are used.” Therefore we must not believe that they are necessary for righteousness before God. He says the same in Rom. 14:17, “The kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Ap AC VII and VIII 36).

When a dispute arose shortly thereafter, the Formula of Concord sought to resolve the issue under Article 10 titled “Church Usages, called Adiaphora or Indifferent Things.” What was the issue of controversy? The *Epitome* states:

There has also been a division among theologians of *the Augsburg Confession* concerning those ceremonies or church usages which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but have been introduced into the church in the interest of good order and the general welfare (FC Ep X 1; emphasis added; note, therefore, that this was not a wider ecumenical discussion but one among Lutherans).

A specific area of dispute involved the reintroduction of a number of Roman Catholic rites and ceremonies into worship based upon the Leipzig Interim agreement which was initially supported by Philip Melancthon.<sup>3</sup> Matthias Flacius, who opposed the compromise, included among “public” adiaphora hymns, chants, lessons, the hour and location of the service, the person participating, vestments, and the ringing of bells.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Extent of Adiaphora**

Precisely what individual authors of the Formula of Concord would categorize as adiaphora in our day may be debated. However the Apology of the Augsburg Confession had already rejected the notion of making gradations among them, and defined their scope quite broadly. In response to the Roman Catholic Confutation’s statement regarding AC VII and VIII, the Apology dismisses a purported distinction between “particular” and so called “universal” traditions, rites, and ceremonies as follows:

Our opponents also condemn the part of the seventh article in which we said, “For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere.” If we mean “particular rites” they approve our article, but if we mean “universal rites” they disapprove it. We do not quite understand what our opponents mean. We are talking about true spiritual unity, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God. For this unity, we say, a similarity of human rites, whether universal or particular, is not necessary. The righteousness of faith is not a righteousness tied to certain traditions, as

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed (though biased against Melancthon) summary, see Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Triglot Concordia*, 107-12.

<sup>4</sup> Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 612, n. 2.

the righteousness of the law was tied to the Mosaic ceremonies, because this righteousness of the heart is something that quickens the heart. To this quickening human traditions, whether universal or particular, contribute nothing; nor are they wrought by the Holy Spirit, as are chastity, patience, the fear of God, the love of our neighbor, and the works of love (Ap AC VII and VIII 30-31).

Therefore, when dealing with religious traditions, rites, or ceremonies *other than* the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, a Lutheran asks, “Is this ‘commanded or forbidden by the Word of God?’” If the answer is “no,” the Confessions identify it as an adiaphoron. In other words, the Confessional Lutheran position contends that *unless there is a Scriptural command for, or injunction against, certain worship practices, all other rites, whether perceived to be “particular” or “universal,” are, in fact, “ceremonies instituted by men” and reside in the category of adiaphora* (AC VII 3; Ap AC VII and VIII 31).

To be sure, worship itself is *not* an adiaphoron. Jesus reaffirms the words of Deuteronomy 6:3, “You will worship the Lord your God” (κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις, Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8). Therefore the NT calls believers together in order to hear the Word of God/Christ and receive instruction in it, to practice Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and to offer communal prayers and praises to God, all in Spirit and truth (e.g., Mt 28:19; Jn 4:23; Acts 2:42-47; Rom 15:4; 1 Corinthians chapters 11 and 14; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16; 1 Timothy 2; Heb 10:24-25; 13:15-16). Paul also urges the churches to use “Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16; cf. Ps 150), though the NT is otherwise silent on matters of instrumentation and musical style.

In Romans 14 Paul insists one may or may not observe the Sabbath and other OT holy days according to their own convictions (Rom. 14:1, 3, 5, 6). Yet he does not even broach the subject of *how* one observes them or suggest what would appropriately take their place. This represents the overall content of the NT well. As Maschke summarizes, “During the time of the New Testament, Christians worshiped in various ways, though little is actually recorded in Scripture.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, the NT does not command or even model a specific liturgical form or format. For example, it does not mandate the use of an Invocation, corporate Confession and Absolution, liturgical elements surrounding the Verba when celebrating the Lord’s Supper, or a formal Creed in public worship. The NT also does not specify the *content or sequence* of what has come to be called the “Divine Service.” Thus that form is appropriately titled, and regarded as, a “tradition-al” order of worship. Similarly, since the NT says nothing about a lectionary system of readings or a church year calendar, Christians are not bound by Scripture in these matters either. While the Lutheran Confessions express preferences on such issues (as we will see below), they are *all adiaphora*. Therefore they ought not be [READ NUMBERS]1) viewed as the basis for or an expression of church unity, 2) put forth as legalistic requirements, 3) used as the basis for judging others, or 4) become issues which cause division and burden consciences.

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<sup>5</sup> Maschke, *Gathered Guests*, 72; he then proceeds to discuss, 72-75, two general sets of practices categorized as “The Jerusalem Type” and “The Gentile Type” which may well explain some of the diverse practices among the various Roman house churches.

In areas where no biblical mandate or prohibition exists, NT believers throughout the ages and within a wide variety of cultures and contexts have developed an extensive number of traditions, rites, and ceremonies to use in worship,<sup>6</sup> and they remain free to do so. The best of these utilize words found in Scripture in order to “echo back” to God what he himself has first spoken,<sup>7</sup> and have, therefore, admirably stood the test of time. But all such practices which “are neither commanded nor forbidden by the Word of God” (FC SD X 1), belong in the realm of human tradition. Thus, as illustrated by the citation from the Apology above, the Lutheran Confessions consistently maintain the distinction which Jesus himself makes in Mark 7 between matters that are actually “the commandment of God” (τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ) and those which involve “the traditions of men” (τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Mk 7:8; see Mk 7:5-13; Ap AC VII and VIII, 30-31 and 36 cited above).

### **Application to Adiaphora: The Formula of Concord and Paul**

Who then decides whether or not to use traditions, rites, and ceremonies which reside in the realm of adiaphora? The Formula of Concord states:

We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every locality and every age has authority to change such ceremonies according to circumstances, as it may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God (FC Ep X 2).

The Lutheran Confessions contend the local community or congregation (*Gemeinde/ecclesia*) is the place where determinations are made about these matters.<sup>8</sup> Such authority does not reside with popes, bishops, or synods. Neither is it the purview of one person or group, whether they be “weak” or “strong,” clergy or laity. According to the Formula of Concord and in harmony with the teaching of Paul, the criterion remains that which “may be most profitable and edifying to the community of God” (FC Ep X 2).

According to the Apostle, whether the first-century house churches in Rome observe the Sabbath Commandment and other OT holy days at all now resides in the category of adiaphora, issues about which different believers could properly arrive at different convictions (Rom 14:5-6). The same applies to OT food laws as well (Rom 14:2, 6). Since these are no longer matters of “right” or “wrong,” Paul repeatedly admonishes those who judge others regarding them to cease and desist (e.g., Rom 14:1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13; cf. Col 2:16-17). This statement from the Formula of

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<sup>6</sup> See Maschke, *Gathered Guests*, 75-85, which discusses “Christian Liturgy before the Reformation,” and, 87-100, for “The Origins of Lutheran Liturgy.”

<sup>7</sup> The literal meaning of the verb ὁμολογέω is “to say the same thing.” BDAG (3) offers, “to concede that something is factual or true, *grant, admit, confess*.” (e.g., Rom 10:9; 1 Jn 1:9). As the Introduction to *Lutheran Worship*, 6, aptly states, “Saying back to him what he has said to us, we repeat what is most true and sure. . . . The rhythm of our worship is from him to us, and then from us back to him.”

<sup>8</sup> According to the *Triglot Concordia*, 828, the German term translated community is *Gemeinde*; the Latin word is *ecclesia*, a transliteration of the Greek word for the church. The Greek word ἐκκλησία in Paul’s Epistles usually refers to the local congregation, but not always; see Barclay, *The Mind of Paul*, 231-37; Barrett, *Paul*, 121-22.

Concord is consistent with Paul's view, with a well-known Church father, and with the basis of church unity expressed by Article VII of the Augsburg Confession cited previously:

We believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the familiar axiom, "Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith" (FC Ep X 5).<sup>9</sup>

While Paul contends that those in Christ are now *free from* OT regulations regarding foods and holy days, they are equally *free to continue observing them*. The freedom goes both ways (Rom 14:5-6; cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23). Similarly, the use of rites and ceremonies which have developed in the tradition of the church are not binding. Yet, at the same time and as each community determines, they may well be beneficial to use in a given context. As a result, the Formula of Concord states,

We also reject and condemn the procedure whereby matters of indifference are abolished in such a way as to give the impression that the community of God does not have the liberty to use one or more ceremonies at any time and place, according to its circumstances, as may in Christian liberty be most beneficial to the church (FC SD X 30).

So what criteria should be employed "by the community of God" in order to determine which traditions, rites, and ceremonies are used? Here are

### **Six Guidelines from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions**

*First*, in keeping with the teachings of Jesus and Paul, as well as the criterion of *solā Scripturā*, it is faithfulness to the word of God which is *the* standard to be applied. Those contrary to Scripture are not, in fact, adiaphora at all. Therefore the Formula warns,

We should not consider as matters of indifference, and we should avoid as forbidden by God, ceremonies which are basically contrary to the Word of God, even though they go under the name and guise of external adiaphora and are given a different color from their true one (FC SD X 5).

*Second*, a situation may occur when traditions, rites, and ceremonies which are matters of indifference according to the Scriptures have *been commanded or prohibited* as legalistic requirements (see FC SD X 10-14). In the sixteenth century, the Formula of Concord addressed issues involved in reintroducing Roman rites and ceremonies in worship.<sup>10</sup> Paul faces a similar situation in Galatia when dealing with circumcision. It is true that "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is something that matters" (Gal 5:6; cf. 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19). But when it was put forth as a *requirement* for righteousness and salvation (Gal 6:12; Acts 15:1, 5),

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<sup>9</sup> Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 494, n. 6, identifies the quotation as "Irenaeus, 'Epistle to Victor,' quoted in Eusebius, *Church History*, V, 24, 13."

<sup>10</sup> Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Triglot Concordia*, 107-12.

Paul insisted that one could not yield to such legalism without cutting oneself off from Christ (Gal 5:2-4).<sup>11</sup> The Formula of Concord captures the distinction as follows:

Thus Paul yielded and gave in to the weak as far as foods, times, and days were concerned (Rom 14:6). But he would not yield to false apostles who wanted to impose such things on consciences as necessary, even in matters that were in themselves indifferent (FC SD X 13; cf. also Col 2:16-17).

This is because “Paul considered certain matters pertaining to the gospel to be basic and nonnegotiable ... (cf. Galatians).”<sup>12</sup> In a similar state of controversy (*in causa confessionis*), where it is argued that something in the realm of adiaphora *must* be done a certain way, the Gospel is similarly at stake and the requirement must be rejected. Article 10 of the Formula of Concord asserts this very clearly because

as soon as this article is weakened and human commandments are forcibly imposed on the church as necessary and as though their omission were wrong and sinful, the door has been opened to idolatry, and ultimately the commandments of men will be increased and be put as divine worship not only on a par with God's commandments, but even above them (FC SD X 14; cf. Mk 7:5-13).

However, as long as rites and ceremonies cannot be demonstrated as contrary to the Word of God or a matter of accepting a legalistic requirement which compromises the Gospel, they must be allowed and cannot be judged. The Formula declares, “No one should assume lordship or authority over the church, nor burden the church with traditions, nor let anybody's authority count for more than the Word of God” (FC SD X 21; quoting the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 11).

*Third*, while the *practice* of the Reformers generally preserved the liturgical tradition of the Roman church, the *doctrine* of the Confessions clearly allows for and insists upon the right to change rites and ceremonies.<sup>13</sup> Article 24 of the Augsburg Confession affirms the former.

We are unjustly accused of having abolished the Mass. Without boasting, it is manifest that the Mass is observed among us with greater devotion and more earnestness than among our opponents ... Meanwhile no conspicuous changes have been made in the public ceremonies of the Mass, except that in certain places German hymns are sung in addition to the Latin responses for the instruction and exercise of the people. After all, the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ (AC 24 1, 2-3).

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession similarly reflects the Confessor's *preference*— “We like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquility” (Ap AC VII and VIII 33).

Therefore, changes in adiaphora should not be made frivolously or arbitrarily imposed. Although not *necessary* for unity, the ongoing use of common rites and traditions generally

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<sup>11</sup> For a full discussion, see Das, *Galatians*, 1-19 and 512-43, his treatment of Gal 5:1-12 is titled, “Stand Firm in Freedom.”

<sup>12</sup> Moo, *Romans*, 882.

<sup>13</sup> See Kleinig, “Lutheran Liturgies from Martin Luther to Wilhelm Lohe,” 125-34.

ought to be maintained for the sake of the weak, as well as to maintain and even enhance “public harmony.” The Apology adds,

We have shown ample evidence of our willingness to observe adiaphora with others, even where this involved some disadvantage to us. We believed that the greatest possible public harmony, without offense to consciences, should be preferred to all other advantages (Ap AC XV 52; also Ap AC XV, 38-42; XXIV, 1-8).

Yet the Apology precedes the *previous* citation with an important clarification. “We believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men” (Ap AC VII and VIII 33). Rather than detracting from unity, such differences lead the Church to focus upon those matters wherein its unity is truly located—not on rites and ceremonies, not on traditions instituted by men, and not on uniform worship practices, but on the Gospel of Christ as it is proclaimed and on his Sacraments as they are administered and received (AC VII). The Confessions, therefore, argue for the *ministerial use* of rites and ceremonies so that a congregation may practice whatever will best “teach the people what they need to know about Christ” (AC 24 3).

More importantly, the Apology recognizes the *same distinction* within the teaching and practice of the *Apostles*. It observes,

<sup>38</sup> Our opponents say that universal traditions should be observed because they are supposed to have been handed down by the apostles. How devout they are! Apostolic rites they want to keep, apostolic doctrine they do not want to keep. <sup>39</sup> We should interpret those rites just as the apostles themselves did in their writings. They did not want us to believe that we are justified by such rites or that such rites are necessary for righteousness before God. They did not want to impose such a burden on consciences, nor to make the observance of days, food, and the like a matter of righteousness or of sin. <sup>40</sup> In fact, Paul calls such opinions “doctrines of demons” [1 Tim 4:1]. To determine the apostles’ wish and intention, therefore, we must consult their writings, not merely their example (Ap AC VII and VIII, 38-41).

Romans 14:1-15:7 serves as a prime place to examine Paul’s instructions on how to handle adiaphora.

Furthermore, Paul’s *personal conduct* exhibits incredibly diverse behaviors, all in service to the Gospel. These verses from 1 Corinthians 9 summarize Paul’s attitude regarding the matters he addresses in Romans, as well as the character of his entire ministry.

For while being free from all, I enslave myself to all in order that I might gain the more. Namely, to the Jews I became as a Jew in order that I might gain Jews. To those under the Law [I became] as under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, in order that I might gain those under the Law. To those outside the Law, [I became] as outside the Law, though not being outside the Law of God, but in the Law of Christ, in order that I might gain those without the Law. To the weak I became weak in order that I might



gain the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by any means I will save some. And I do all things on account of the Gospel (1 Cor 9:19-23a; cf. Rom 15:15-21).<sup>14</sup>

Paul demonstrates and allows for a great deal of flexibility in responding to the context in which he was working. His own conduct was incredibly adaptable in order that he might communicate God's Word most effectively in any and every setting.

The Formula of Concord's assertions regarding adiaphora echo the same sentiments.

We further believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church (FC SD X 9).<sup>15</sup>

*Fourth*, both Paul and the Confessions repeatedly categorize those who contend we are bound to one way or the other as the "weak" (14:1-2; 15:1; see below). On the one hand, Paul would surely desire that the weak mature toward the position he himself both practices and characterizes as "strong" (14:14, 20: 15-12; cf. Eph 4:12-16). But until then, those who have the conviction that foods remain either clean or unclean and that days must be either holy or common should be shown due consideration. In fact, the latter half of Romans 14 and 15:1-7 speak more emphatically to the strong and caution them against causing the weak to stumble (14:13b, 15, 20-21). While those "strong" in the faith, like Paul himself (14:14, 20), correctly recognize the extent of their freedom, they ought to be more concerned with how their exercise of it affects others (15:1-2).

Therefore the Apology of the Augsburg Confession appropriately relies on Paul's guidance in order to maintain this appropriate balance:

This subject of traditions involves many difficult and controversial questions, and we know from actual experience that traditions are real snares for consciences. When they are required as necessary, they bring exquisite torture to a conscience that has omitted

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<sup>14</sup> See Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 309-15. Paul is not willing to engage in sin, of course, but is open to living according to Jewish/Old Testament rituals about food, worship, washings, and so forth, and willing to live free from them depending on how he can reach and/or not offend people in different contexts.

<sup>15</sup> An analogy to the sermon may be helpful. The same message could be read aloud or, with modern technology, even proclaimed live by the same person to every congregation in the country. Yet Lutherans have long asserted that a sermon targeted at the unique situation of each community is preferable. Instead of a delivering a "one size fits all" message, the local pastor is called to speak to the specific setting and needs of his congregation(s) (cf. how Paul's pattern message to a synagogue audience in Acts 13:16-41 differs considerably from how he tries to reach those in Lystra [Acts 14:14-18] and Athens [Acts 17:22-31]). In similar fashion, the rites and ceremonies which surround the proclamation of God's Word can also be crafted in a manner which best enhances the worship of God's people in a given context.

some observance. On the other hand, their abrogation involves its own difficulties and problems ... Here Paul is our constant champion; everywhere he insists that these observances neither justify nor are necessary over and above the righteousness of faith. Nevertheless, liberty in these matters should be used moderately, lest *the weak* be offended and become more hostile to the true teaching of the Gospel because of an abuse of liberty (Ap AC XV 49-51; emphasis added).

After reaffirming that it is wrong to assert adiaphora *must* be either practiced or avoided, the Formula of Concord similarly adds,

But in this matter all frivolity and offenses are to be avoided, and particularly the weak in faith are to be spared (1 Cor. 8:9–13; Rom. 14:13ff) (FC Ep X 3).

Paul instructs us how we can with a good conscience give in and yield to the weak in faith in such external matters of indifference (Rom. 14) and demonstrates it by his own example (Acts 16:3; 21:26; 1 Cor. 9:10) (FC SD X 9).

*Fifth*, Romans 14 clearly respects both views regarding foods and festivals. In fact, Paul *expends no effort at attaining a uniform practice*; instead, his concluding assertions in Rom 15:5b-6 strive toward a *mindset of unity amidst the ongoing diversity*.<sup>16</sup> In Rom 15:7 Paul then affirms that Jesus Christ freely and fully received us to himself without insisting that we achieve anything approaching a uniformity of practice with the holy Son of God. On the contrary, while we were still weak and sinful enemies, “Christ died in behalf of us” (5:8; see 5:6-8). Paul then calls us to receive one another in the same manner, “just as the Christ also received you all to himself to [the] glory of God” (Rom 15:7; cf. 14:1).

*Finally*, and to that end, we ought to heed Paul’s repeated admonitions to stop judging and despising each other on matters where the NT does not (e.g., Rom 14:1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 13). The words of Zechariah say it well—in Christ we are now “free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life” (Lk. 1:74-75).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Franzmann, *Romans*, 241, captures Paul’s intended outcome well.

Unanimity is essential to the worship of the new people of God. All must put on Christ and live their lives of faith and love and hope together; there is no room for self-centered individualism. It has already become apparent that this unanimity of the members of the church does not mean that all individuality is suppressed; no monotonous uniformity is imposed ... The unanimity and health of the church are maintained by the functioning of “gifts that differ according to the grace given” to each member of the church (12:6).

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from the Benedictus of Morning Prayer, *Lutheran Worship*, 240.