

## **WORSHIP AND WISDOM : ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FOR ACLE 4**

### **Format and delivery:**

A workshop

### **Presenter:**

Andrew Jaensch, lecturer in the School of Educational Theology at Australian Lutheran College, based at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane; teacher and pastor in Lutheran schools over twenty three years

### **Title:**

Wise fools: wisdom, worship and the purpose of Lutheran education:

### **Abstract:**

The workshop invites participants to consider a range of possible rationales for worship within Lutheran schools. It raises questions such as

- In what sense is Christian education about the gaining of wisdom?
- Exactly how does this support the transformation of the whole person?
- What function if any does worship have within this? Is it essential?
- What kinds of participation in worship can serve this function?
- What forms of worship best serve the purpose of growth in wisdom?

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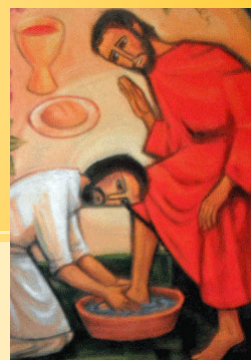
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**Wise fools:**

*wisdom, worship and the purpose  
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ACLE 4  
Brisbane



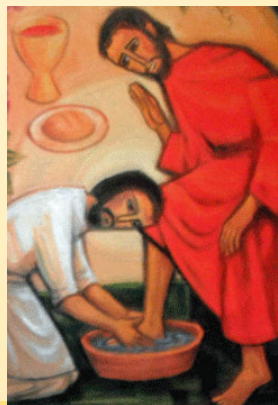
**Today'sMeet**

<http://todaysmeet.com/acleworship>

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## The transformation of the whole person

- What function if any does the experience of worship have within the transformation of the whole person?
- What in this is unique to worship?

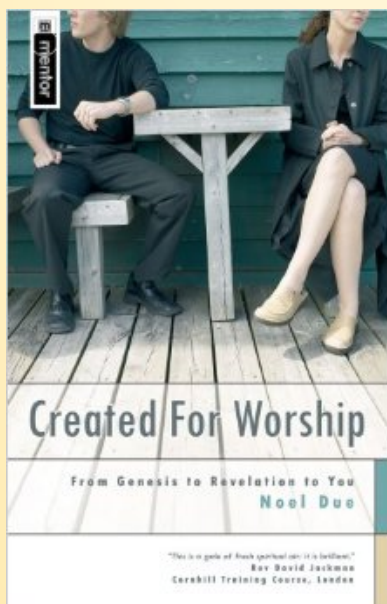


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## IDOLS as barriers to transformation



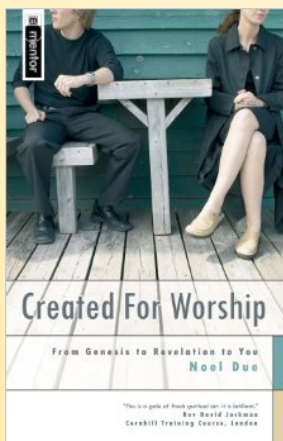
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- *Created for worship* by Noel Due
- *Worship makes the world go around*
- [http://due.sermon.tv/Worship\\_Makes\\_the\\_World\\_Go\\_Around](http://due.sermon.tv/Worship_Makes_the_World_Go_Around)

6

## Worship is crucial



- **Worship is not just on the periphery. It touches the core of human identity and human relationships.**
- **The cross as pointer to the One whom Christians worship and who breaches the gap.**

7

## Worship as challenge to idols



8

## What is it about worship?

- **Worship arises from God and matches the movements within the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**
- **Humans have been created not to be self-defining creatures but to worship**
- **'The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.'**



9

- **Psalm 115.8**
- **People become what they worship, they become like the idol in its inability to hear, speak and obey the Word of God.**



10

## Transformation in Rome

From this

To this

Romans 1.18-32

Romans 12.1-8



11

## A tension

- between the claims of Christ and the conviction that God is at work in the world and in the lives of people whether they worship God or not.



12

## **How Christian worship challenges idols**

- **Worship demands trust which implies a giving up of trust in the idols.**
- **Worship in Lutheran schools acts as a challenge to idols in the society and lives of the students and others just as first century Christian worship was a challenge to the idols worshipped in the pagan temples.**
- **Unlike Christian Studies, worship is vocative.**

13

## **To consider and discuss:**

- **What does worship do to challenge the idols which other elements of Christian education do not?**
- **What forms of worship best challenge the idols, and for particular age groups? How important are visual images in the school for issuing the challenge to idols?**
- **Should Lutheran schools provide for worship for those from other religious traditions? Should Christians in schools also be open to conversion to those traditions?**
- **What does the role of worship in transformation of young people have to say about the worship of school staff in terms of both their fundamental orientation and also their worship life and practice?**

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## Worship as an idol

- Avoiding false trust in the temple while ignoring God's call to holy living
- Jeremiah 7.4-14



15

## Worship as an idol in schools

Directing worship to God rather than setting up an idol in school worship practice



16

**When worship is like your grandmother :**  
*it's good to just have her around.*



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**What does 'grandmother worship' in a  
Lutheran school look, sound and feel like?**



18

*Wise fools: wisdom, worship and the purpose of Lutheran education:*

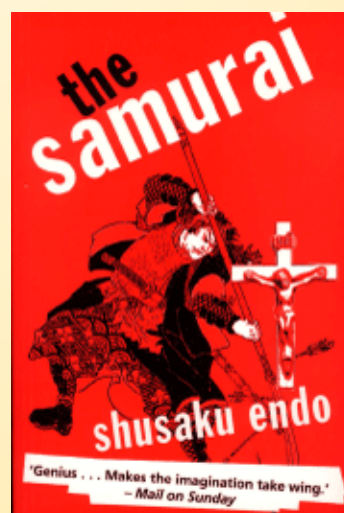


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**For some reason he did not feel the same contempt for him he had felt before.**

Endo Shusaku, 2011, *The Samurai*, Peter Owen Modern Classic, 221

<http://www.bookdepository.co.uk/Samurai-Endo-Shusaku/9780720613537>



20

### Acknowledgment of image sources

Slide	Image	URL
1,4,19	Washing	<a href="http://www.ourladyofmercy.org.uk/spirituality/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=312">http://www.ourladyofmercy.org.uk/spirituality/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=312</a>
2	Darth	<a href="http://www.missfidget.com/?cat=4&amp;paged=2">http://www.missfidget.com/?cat=4&amp;paged=2</a>
5,10	Idols	<a href="http://eyesofreason.com/tag/idols/">http://eyesofreason.com/tag/idols/</a>
5	Idols sign	<a href="http://teeveetee.blogspot.com.au/2011/02/danny-k-first-guest-judge-when-idols.html">http://teeveetee.blogspot.com.au/2011/02/danny-k-first-guest-judge-when-idols.html</a>
5	Actress	<a href="http://www.forbes.com/fdc/welcome_mjx.shtml">http://www.forbes.com/fdc/welcome_mjx.shtml</a>
5	Money tree	<a href="http://www.nativespellhealer.co.za/wealth-spells.html">http://www.nativespellhealer.co.za/wealth-spells.html</a>
12	Transformed	<a href="http://www.myniceprofile.com/religious-14033.html">http://www.myniceprofile.com/religious-14033.html</a>
15	Cathedral	<a href="http://planbox.wordpress.com/2011/12/22/ulm-cathedral-ulm-germany/">http://planbox.wordpress.com/2011/12/22/ulm-cathedral-ulm-germany/</a>
15	Jeremiah	<a href="http://thepropheticbooksofbible.org/major-prophetic-books-of-the-bible/jeremiahs-prophet-calling/">http://thepropheticbooksofbible.org/major-prophetic-books-of-the-bible/jeremiahs-prophet-calling/</a>
17,18	Grandmother	<a href="http://www.juliadesantis.com/family-children-2/">http://www.juliadesantis.com/family-children-2/</a>
20	Samurai	<a href="http://www.peterowen.com/pages/modclas/samurai.htm">http://www.peterowen.com/pages/modclas/samurai.htm</a>

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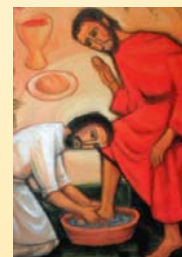
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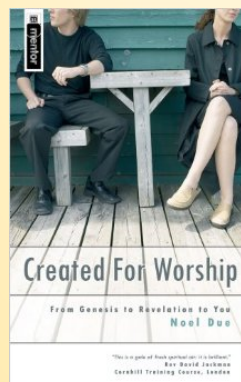


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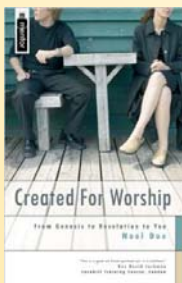
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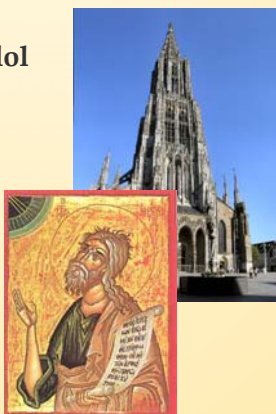
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## ***Wise fools: wisdom, worship and the purpose of Lutheran education:***

### **Text of session for ACLE 4 by Andrew Jaensch**

#### **Focus:**

(Slide 1) The purpose of Lutheran education is transformation in mind, body and heart. Because a call from God is integral to worship, worship itself is crucial in that transformation purpose in two ways: by challenging of the idols which shape the hearts of people, and by calling for a response through which the person may be transformed through Christ in whom and through whom worship takes place. Worship, therefore, is crucial to people becoming 'wise fools', people whose wisdom is reflected their following of the one whose death is God's power which appears as foolishness. In being faithful to this transformative purpose, worship in schools must remain focused on Christ so that it does not become an idol itself.

#### **Introduction:**

(Slide 2) The image of a Darth Vader lookalike suggests a poking fun at the religious 'fools in dresses', as if wherever human maturity is to be found, it is not in religion. While I see the Darth Vader joke as both funny and clever, I will be proposing here that the development in mind, body and heart of people including those in Lutheran schools ultimately finds its fulfilment in Christ and that participation in worship plays a key role in this.

With this in mind this workshop, please respond yourself now in the TodaysMeet site (Slide 3) to this question:

How does worship in a Lutheran school contribute to the transformation of people? (Slide 4)

The workshop will consider this question in connection with a particular challenge: idolatry, in its various forms.

I want to acknowledge the work of a colleague in stimulating and development of my thought on this. Rev. Dr Noel Due is the Regional Resourcing Pastor for the Lutheran Church of Australia here in Queensland. His book 'Created for worship' and series of talks 'Worship makes the world go around' have been very helpful for me, as have a number of extended conversations with him about this question. I have made use of a lot of Noel's writing and thinking about worship, developing it in my own way, and especially applying it to the context of Lutheran schools.

(Slides 6 and 7) Take a look at the cover of 'Created for worship' and reflect on its meaning through its very 'non-worshipy' design. What do you think it's suggesting about worship?

- Worship is not just on the periphery of life but something far bigger and integral to who we are and what life is about. Worship touches the core of human identity and human relationships.
- The cross in the form of the table is pointer to the One in whom Christians worship and who brings all things together.

### **Part 1: Worship as challenge to idols (Slide 8)**

1. Foundational points about worship (Slide 9):
  - a. Worship arises from God and matches the movements within the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
  - b. Humans have been created not to be self-defining creatures but to worship, though this worship is often directed to something other than God.

Calvin for example wrote that ‘The human heart is a factory of idols ... Every one of us is, from his mother’s womb, expert in inventing idols’ and ‘The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much.’

Luther asked the question: What does it mean to have a god? Or, what is God? He answered it this way: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe him from the [whole] heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god.

Luther also spoke of sin as being *incurvatus in se*. i.e. curved in on oneself, a state in which people set themselves up as their own gods, much as Adam and Eve did.

- c. So it follows that ‘The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom’ (Proverbs 1.7) and that ultimate transformation takes place only in and through Christ. Through this transformation people become wise fools, changed by the one whose death was –in Paul’s words- foolishness. (Romans 1.18)

### **2. Biblical study:**

- 1) Psalm 115.8 (Slide 10) People become what they worship, they become like the idol in its inability to hear, speak and obey the Word of God.

- 2) Romans 1.18-32 (Slide 11) The whole of humanity being spoken about here. Note the use of worship language here: 'did not honour God or give thanks to him'. There is no such thing as non-worship. That is the definition of human wickedness and foolishness. In the rest of Romans 1 we see this exchange of worship affecting every human relationship, leading to the breakdown of every relationship.
- 3) Romans 12.1-3 and through the rest of the Romans. Note the worship language here again ('living sacrifice', 'spiritual worship') and how transformation has taken place and is to continue to take place.

(Slide 12) At this point I want to acknowledge the tension between two associated truths:

- The challenge that where people worship other than the Triune God, they are out of alignment with who they were created to be.
- The conviction that God is at work in the world and in the lives of people whether they worship God or not. Biblical characters like Cyrus King of Persia who, though not recognising the God of Israel, was used by God to free the exiled Israelites from Babylon. Lutheran schools have so many people like Cyrus within them who serve schools wonderfully in spite of not trusting in the God who is at the heart of the school's identity.

### **3. How Christian worship challenges idols (Slide 13):**

- a. Worship demands trust which implies a giving up of trust in the idols. Coming to worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, involves a discontinuity in a person's life. This may take place abruptly or more slowly and incrementally.
- b. Worship in Lutheran schools acts as a challenge to idols in the society and lives of those in the school community just as first century Christian worship was a challenge to the idols worshipped in the pagan temples.
- c. Unlike Christian Studies, worship is 'vocative'. i.e. at its core worship is a call to place one's trust in God, instead of in other things. We see this reflected in Ps 115 where God speaks, unlike the dumb idols. In worship God makes a claim on people. In one of yesterday's elective sessions, the ABC's Scott Stevens spoke about the problem in much of contemporary western society where people believe they are nothing until they themselves choose to be something. People actually need to know that we are owned. To use biblical language, our lives are not our own, we were bought with a price. Participation in worship perhaps more than anything else brings people face-to-face with this truth.

It needs to be mentioned here that compulsory participation in school worship is not the fundamental issue in what I am advocating here. While I strongly favour an unapologetic but sensitive requirement that everyone in a Lutheran school experiences worship in some ways at some times, this is a separate issue. Perhaps the mere occurrence of worship on a school campus (whether people attend or not) can act as a challenge to idols and a call to faith in God, at least on one level, much as the occurrence of worship in the wider community can do the same.

Here are some related issues to consider (Slide 14):

- What does worship do to challenge the idols which other elements of Christian education do not?
- What forms of worship best challenge the idols, and for particular age groups? Which forms of worship foster engagement with the challenge to the idols even if they might harden people at the same time?
- How important are visual images in the school for issuing the challenge to idols?
- Should Lutheran schools provide for space and time for worship for those from other religious traditions?
- What does the role of worship in transformation of young people have to say about the worship of school *staff* in terms of both their fundamental orientation and also their worship life and practice?

## **Part 2: Worship as an idol (Slide 15)**

I have made a case here for the crucial role of worship in transforming people in Christian education. I have pointed to strong thrusts in the biblical message to support this. At the same time it must be recognised that that worship practice in the church and in schools can become an idol in itself.

For Israel there was fundamental need to avoid false trust in the temple while ignoring God's call to holy living. This caution was reflected in God's words to Solomon in relation to the temple (2 Chronicles 7.12-22) and then in Jeremiah's warning (Jeremiah 7.4-14) to an Israel which had fallen prey to that very thing: following all the religious ceremonies while living in ways inconsistent with God's call.

For Lutheran schools too there is a fundamental need to avoid setting up an idol in school worship practice (Slide 16). This is the kind of worship which, in the words of a friend of Noel Due's, is like your grandmother – it's good to have her around. (Slides 17 and 18)

It would be helpful to consider:

- What are the signs of misdirected worship in a Lutheran school?
- When has worship in a school become like your grandmother?

**Conclusion (Slide 19):**

When people are challenged through their experience of worship to recognise and place their trust in Christ, giving up trust in idols, an exchange has taken place which constitutes real transformation. People become 'wise fools', servants of him who became a foolish servant for them and all the world.

**Postscript (Slide 20):**

I recommend in this connection the wonderful novel 'The Samurai' by Japanese Catholic writer Shusaku Endo. In 'The Samurai', based on real events in seventeenth century Japan, a man is transformed in his view of Christ in ways that one might never predict.