

P. Kretzmann and Visual Aids

Paul E. Kretzmann was on the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He contributed the following book review for the Concordia Theological Monthly, which was published in the January, 1933 issue. He was reviewing *Screen and Projector in Christian Education* by Paul H. Janes. I include the review as a reflection upon how times have changed, yet good judgment does not.

The scope of this book is more exactly shown by its subtitle: How to use Motion Pictures and Projected Still Pictures in Worship, Study, and Recreation. The author rightly says: "With the addition of motion-pictures, projected still pictures, prints, photographs, models, maps, school journeys and reproduced sound, the educator has set out to stimulate a wealth of experiences to be used in the classroom to facilitate the understanding of the verbal symbols in books." (P. 14) We should like to emphasize the words "in the classroom" and add "in the church hall," because visual education has proved an invaluable aid in the work of our parish-school, Sunday-schools, young people's societies, and the various auxiliary organizations of the congregation. Every pastor who desires to have accurate information concerning the use of visual education helps will be glad to use the information contained in this book. We cannot endorse the larger part of Chapter V, on "The Use of Visual Aids in Worship," because the doctrinal and expository sermons of the Lutheran Church will rarely require, in most cases not even permit, the use of pictures. There are other dangers connected with the indiscriminate use of visual aids, especially if the emotional element is stressed. To such as will make use of the proper discrimination this book offers fine suggestions.

Full disclosure: two weeks ago (on July 8) I delivered a sermon explaining Lucas Cranach's altar piece in Weimar. The altar piece itself provides the Biblical basis for both painting and sermon. It was the first time I've tried such a thing, and I would consider it a success. You can find the sermon over at the [congregations' web site](#).

How is this different from other uses of motion or still pictures you have observed in a worship setting?

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in Technology at 16:40

Pictures in worship? I once toured an Orthodox church. These churches typically have painted iconography everywhere in the sanctuary, and while they aren't "used" during the service, they do serve a catechetical purpose. On the other end of the spectrum: the automated, drop-down screen, full of all sorts of problematic possibilities: one can have graphics displayed, or the words to praise songs for all to read and sing along to. Of course, there is seldom any music available, so if you want to sing in parts, you are on your own. But that is pretty old-fashioned anyway.

How are these different? While the use of still pictures in a sermon is not something I'd recommend ("How will they believe if they do not HEAR?"), I suppose a painting could be instructional and could aid worship if the painting is "taught". Done well, it wouldn't cheapen the divine service or detract from the liturgy. Drop-down screens are kitschy at the very least.

Anonymous on Jul 25 2007, 18:28