

METROPOLITAN NORTH PASTORAL CONFERENCE
September 20, 1982
"Review of Lutheran Worship -- Liturgical Section"
Michael Engel

"Gregorian chant thrown together incongruously with the dullest modern street ditties"? "Ugly, uninspiring and -- let's face it -- ridiculous music masquerading as worship"? Has the LC-MS wasted hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of dollars on their recent hymnal project as Mr. Richard Band claims in the July 19, 1982 edition of Christian News? Is he correct in predicting that thousands of laymen will be alienated from the church they love -- "all because of this jarring, unsingable scrapbook of second-rate noise"?

Before we cast our ballots it would be "truly good, right, and salutary" that we take an objective (not object-ive) look at Lutheran Worship (hence referred to as LW) to determine our reactions, good or bad. You had your first taste of the liturgical section in the communion service this morning. You no doubt noticed that Divine Service I, billed as p.5 and p.15 of The Lutheran Hymnal (hence referred to as TLH) combined is not exactly the same as the liturgies to which you have grown accustomed. Enough notes and words are changed that it comes across more as a "new" liturgy than a revision of the old. More on that later.

At any rate, what follows is by no means an exhaustive critique. You may have noticed something I have missed. What I have done is listed each section in turn and included what I feel are plusses (+), negatives (-), or just general remarks (*) neither pro nor con. I hope my remarks will stimulate some good discussion.

Before proceeding any further, let's take a look at the filmstrip produced by the LC-MS Commission on Worship as part of the promotional package for LW. Part of the soundtrack is included in the Introduction on p.6-7. You may like to read this again for yourself....

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...Now, let's take a cursory look at the 362 pages of liturgical helps:

1. THE CHURCH YEAR pp.8-9 (TLH p.3)

- + Liturgical colors are listed for each season and festival
- No explanation is given for the meaning of the colors, especially the newer blue and gold additions.
- * The "Trinity" season has been replaced by the "Pentecost" season.

2. PROPERS OF THE DAY pp.10-123 (TLH pp.54-94)

- Having this section "up front" makes it harder to turn right to the liturgy being used. (Explanation: to prevent the first "30 pages" from wearing out as in TLH).
- + The Introits have been expanded and given a little more context.
- + The Introits have been set to music (see pp.366-368 for instructions on chanting)
- ++ Scripture references are provided for Introits, Graduals, and Verses.
- + The newer 3-year series lectionary is included.
- The 1-year series is not the traditional one from TLH.
- ++ The NIV is used here and elsewhere in LW.

3. PETITIONS, INTERCESSIONS, AND THANKSGIVINGS pp.124-133 (TLH pp.102-109)

- + The archaic language has been updated.
- + Prayers relevant to today's needs and problems have been included: for ex. for the unemployed, for addicts, for the estranged and divorced, for adoptive parents.
- Prayers used most often could have been listed first: for ex., before and after worship, and communion, at the birth of a child,
- * Objections to "At the Birth of a Child" on p.127 are unfounded. The prayer makes it adequately clear that Jesus is regarded as the Son of God and the foster son of Joseph.
- * WELS members may not be used to the idea of calling deaconesses (p.131 bottom)

4. ATHANASIAN CREED pp.134-135 (TLH p.53)

- + Some of the language is updated.
- No explanation is given for the word "catholic". It should have rated at least an asterisk and a footnote to avoid confusion with "Roman Catholic".
- Words such as "person" and "man" in reference to God are better capitalized.

5. DIVINE SERVICE I pp.136-157 (TLH pp.5-14 & 15-31)

- + Combining both forms into one service with or without communion seems to make sense and saves pages.
- + Use of two colors (red print for titles and rubrics, black for words of P /Pastor/ and C /Congregation/ is better than tiny italics in TLH.
- Who is "A" on p.140, 144, etc? /Assistant/, I suppose, but clergy? Layperson? Why is he given those particular parts?
- + Each page indicates what particular liturgy is being followed with a title at the top. It could be even more confusing otherwise.
- + The change from Holy *Ghost* to Holy *Spirit*. I don't think the word ghost conveys what we want to say about the Spirit.
- The wording in the Gloria on p.138 is incorrect; "who takes" and "who sits" should be singular when modifying "you" (i.e. Jesus Christ). If that sounds awkward, then the whole phrase should be changed to something grammatically correct.
- * The Gloria Patri now appears as part of the Introit instead of preceding the Kyrie.
- Instead of singing the Offertory directly after the sermon in response to the Word, it is sung after the offering is received. This puts a different slant on it; it now becomes a sacrifice the worshiper makes to God instead of a request for cleansing.
- * The alto, tenor, and bass parts of the liturgy have been dropped in favor of a single line.
- + The Creeds (p.141-142) have been revised slightly in wording.
- A change in punctuation in the Apostles' Creed raises an important question. Isn't "the holy, Christian church" synonymous with "the communion of saints"? By dropping the semi-colons and inserting commas between each phrase, it makes it sound like two separate groups. The traditional punctuation was followed in the Catechism section (p.301).
- * The Lord's Prayer appears in dual form 16 times in the liturgical section. I'm undecided about this way of approaching modernization of the prayer.
- I would prefer capitalization of pronouns and words referring to Christ and the Trinity (You, Him, His, Giver of life, etc.). I realize that most of the Bible translations we use do not capitalize such words, but perhaps it would be better to stay with the pattern of the TLH, especially in this day where many deny the deity of Christ.
- The subtle changes in melodies and words in this service are just enough to throw a person off. Perhaps that's not all bad, to avoid getting into a rut with p.5 and p.15. But since it's usually harder to unlearn something than to learn, I feel it would have been better to keep this service much the same as the old and do the innovating with the other alternate liturgies. D.S.I will probably please neither the advocate of real change nor the defender of cherished tradition.

- * The prayer before the Lord's Prayer (p.149) is seen by some as an attempt to reinstate the Eucharistic Prayer which Luther dropped from the mass for doctrinal reasons. Prayer is from man to God, whereas Sacrament is from God to man. This prayer, however, is merely a request for worthy reception of the Lord's Supper. This was not the case with the prayer which appeared in the Worship Supplement several years ago.
- * Divine Service I was prepared by Paul Bunjes as a revision of the familiar service of Holy Communion on p.15 ff. in TLH.
- + The Words of Institution have been changed (p.150). "After He had supped" becomes "he took the cup after supper." "Take drink ye all of it" becomes "Drink of it, all of you." Both changes are for the better.
- * Nunc Dimittis p.152-153.

6. DIVINE SERVICE II, FIRST & SECOND SETTINGS pp.158-196

- * The text of D.S.II is identical in both settings. The music for Setting One was prepared by Richard Hillert; the music for Setting Two was composed by Ronald A. Nelson.
- Some good forms did not make it into LW (for ex. the Gloria in the WS). Perhaps one setting of D.S.II would have been sufficient.
- * A place is provided for the congregation to offer petitions and thanksgivings of their own (p.168). Is that practical? The rubric right below this I also find a bit strange. Give thanks for the departed, in every service?
- Both Offertories on p.168-169 include idea of sacrifice. Perhaps this is not a good place to introduce this idea, just before celebrating Christ's sacrifice of His body and blood. The two could easily be confused. Also on p.168 with rubric 19: There should be a more clearcut division between the offering from us to God, and His offering of Himself to us.
- * P.171 calls for the PEACE to be given and shared. I've always felt this to be rather artificial. Perhaps in the right setting it could contribute to a feeling of oneness among the communicants.
- * p. 172 The minister and his assistants are to commune first. Would this contribute to giving the impression that they are more important? Perhaps not.
- * Recordings.

7. DIVINE SERVICE III pp.197-198

- + Use of this service could be a refreshing change.
- The use of the word "externally" on the top of p.198 makes it sound like transsubstantiation. What is meant?

8. BAPTISM p.199-204

- + The congregation can follow along with this part of the service.
- It seems a little lengthy for inclusion in the regular service. Perhaps it is more suited for a private baptism.

+ Included are directions for infants and young children, and older children and adults both.

* Some customs mentioned are unfamiliar in our congregations (pp.203-204).

9. CONFIRMATION pp.205-207

++ The questionable wording in our present Agenda -- "Do you this day...confirm the solemn covenant which at your Baptism *you made with the Triune God?*" has been eliminated, and the emphasis put back on God's action through baptism.

10. MATINS pp.208-223 (TLH pp.32-40)

* p.211 - What's the OFFICE HYMN?

* The Te Deum (pp.214-217) is not the familiar one from TLH. That version appears as Canticla No. 8 in the hymn section. The last part of the Te Deum, which many feel was a later addition anyway, is omitted. Some will miss it!

+ Printing of the Venite and the Te Deum as one continuous line makes it easier to follow.

- On pp.220-221 there are 5 "or's". Do we need that many alternatives?

- On p.223 is an example of space waste and/or poor planning.

11. VESPERS pp.224-235 (TLH pp.41-45)

- On p.232-234 are 7 "or's". It tends to be confusing.

- On p.235 the only difference between the two is "us" vs. "you".

12. MORNING PRAYER, EVENING PRAYER, COMPLINE pp.236-269

* A simplified form, suitable for family or small group devotion, is indicated by the small circle o.

* These forms apparently are intended for occasions where no pastor is present. L /Leader/ takes the place of P.

- I question how often these forms would be used. Is the space taken justified?

13. RESPONSIVE PRAYER 1 & 2 pp.270-275 (TLH pp.113-116 Suffrages)

+ The first form in TLH with its confusing directions and chopped off Lord's Prayer is omitted.

* Included is a section to be used before travel.

14. THE BIDDING PRAYER pp.276-278 (TLH pp.116-117)

* Why A & P? Must it be done that way?

* "Schismatics, Jews, and heretics" have become "all who are outside the Church."

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15. THE LITANY pp.279-287 (TLH pp. 110-112)

+ It is set to music right away instead of including it twice as in TLH.

+ Air travelers are included now too in "all who travel". The prayer used to be restricted to land and sea travelers.

12a. PROPERS FOR MORNING PRAYER AND EVENING PRAYER pp.288-291 (TLH 95-101)

- I'm not sure when these ever get used. They could be omitted as far as I'm concerned.

16. DEVOTIONAL GUIDES pp.292-299 (TLH pp.118-119, 161-164)

+ This section may help families who don't know what to do for devotions.

The daily lectionary set-up is preferable to the one in TLH, easier to follow.

17. SMALL CATECHISM pp.300-307

+ Sections of the catechism could be incorporated into worship. Now everyone has access to this devotional aid.

- The text is not the same as the newly revised WELS catechism.

18. CORPORATE CONFESSION pp.308-309 (TLH pp.46-49)

* I miss the Q & A form of confession on p.48 in TLH.

19. INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION pp.310-311

- It seems a bit formal for pastor/parishoner use.

8a. HOLY BAPTISM (Emergency) p.312 (TLH p.858)

* Perhaps this should be in a more prominent place.

20. THE PSALMS pp.313-365 (TLH pp.123-157)

- There are only 60 psalms on 53 pages compared with 93 on 35 pages in TLH. It's too bad more couldn't have been included.

+ The psalms are set to simple music; they are not hard to learn. Ten chants are provided.

++ NIV! The old KJV psalms in TLH just didn't do much for me.

21. CHANTING pp.366-368

* Despite the criticism that LW has gone completely over to chanting unlike TLH, it really hasn't. 21 times in TLH p.15 the instruction is given to say or chant including the Collect, Nicene Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Benediction. LW merely makes it more possible by giving melody lines and instructions. I think a caution would be in place though not to suddenly start chanting the whole liturgy when the average congregation is not accustomed to that type of worship. Some chanting, with choir participation, might be a refreshing change of pace.

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GENERAL COMMENTS:

- No glossary as on p.168 of TLH.
- The glut of variations and alternates may confuse many worshipers, especially the elderly. As it is, anything out of the ordinary is hard for them to follow.
- * A farmer is quoted as saying, half-seriously: "People will be weary by the time they get to the sermon --for which they came!"
- * The hymnal is perhaps the next most important book after the Bible in our worship life. Whatever decision WELS makes on a new hymnal should be well thought out, not rushed into. As the Russian proverb goes: "Measure your cloth ten times! You can cut it but once!"
- * I would suggest that our WELS Commission on Worship and/or a special committee begin work very soon on the subject of a hymnal for our Synod. Instead of wasting time debating endlessly about the pro's and con's or WS vs. TLH vs. a WELS WS, we need some definite proposals from those who have made a thorough study.
- * There will be some who will not be happy no matter what decision is made. If you need convincing of that, reread the 7 letters printed so far in the Northwestern Lutheran -- all negative. But if possible we want to avoid reactions such as the one expressed by Anna Freudenberg about LW: "A pack of caterwauling tom cats would be more musical and soothing to hear than a congregation of Missouri canaries wallowing through the Liturgies in the new hymnal thrust upon a defenseless assembly in church."
- * Let us learn what we can from LC-MS's mistakes and its successes in promoting Lutheran Worship.