

What Have Lutherans Learned From Lutheran Worship?

by

Paul Fanning

Prof. Brenner

Senior Church History

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After nearly half a century of constant use, the 1941 *Lutheran Hymnal* was officially replaced in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The 1982 hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*, was published after the LC-MS rejected the results of an earlier hymnal project, a project with other Lutheran church bodies which produced *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Eggert, *WLQ* 114). Conservatives in LC-MS felt that this first attempt to produce a new hymnal resulted in a theologically unsound hymnal, so LC-MS struck out on its own to produce a new hymnal.

The result of the Missouri Synod's efforts was *Lutheran Worship*, which was introduced into LC-MS congregations in 1982. At about the time the Missouri Synod introduced its new hymnal, the Wisconsin Synod began to plan its own hymnal revision. The WELS had hoped to adopt *Lutheran Worship*, but negative response in the congregations led the WELS to appoint its own hymnal committee to produce a separate hymnal (Eggert, *WLQ* 115). The result of a project that lasted nearly a decade was *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*.

The fact that these two Lutheran church bodies once shared a hymnal but ended up doing separate revisions leads us to wonder why two hymnals were necessary. How did the WELS learn from and improve on *Lutheran Worship*? In order to answer that question, we need to examine the differences between the two hymnals and their development. We will

begin by looking at the liturgical differences between *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship*. Then we will see how *Lutheran Worship* was received in the Missouri Synod. Finally, we will study the improvements made over *Lutheran Worship* in the WELS hymnal, *Christian Worship*.

In examining the differences between *Lutheran Worship* and *The Lutheran Hymnal*, we will focus on the liturgical sections of these hymnals. The changes in the hymn section included updating the language of some old hymns and publishing some new hymns. Although there has been controversy over the hymn section, there appear to have been more drastic changes in the liturgy. Focusing on the liturgy will narrow our study somewhat. Some of these changes are more significant than others, but we will try to be as thorough as possible.

Turning to the liturgical section of *Lutheran Worship*, we see that the church year calendar has been changed. The Trinity season is now the Season after Pentecost. Liturgical colors are listed for seasons and festivals, but there is no explanation for the meanings of the colors, which include the new blue and gold colors (8-9).

The next liturgical section is the propers, which may have been moved to the front to prevent the first pages of the book from wearing out as often happened to copies of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Engel 2). The introits have tones for chant which *TLH* did not have. Scripture references are included for the propers to match the new three-year

lectionary. Although a one-year lectionary appears, it is not the same as the traditional lectionary from *TLH* (*Lutheran Worship* 10-123).

The section of petitions, intercessions and thanksgivings has a wider variety of prayers than *TLH*. Although there are fewer prayers, *Lutheran Worship* prayers treat more specific situations relevant to modern life such as a prayer for those suffering from addiction (127) and for the estranged and the divorced (130-131).

The first of the actual orders of worship is Divine Service I, which approximates *The Lutheran Hymnal's* Order of Morning Service and Order of the Holy Communion (*Lutheran Worship* 136-157). The main difference is that the two services have been combined into one with the option of beginning communion on page 144. The liturgy may be a little easier to follow since all the orders of service are printed in two colors; red indicates titles and rubrics while black designates spoken or sung parts.

Divine Service II is the next order of service (158-196). It can be used in two forms (the first and second settings), but only the music changes from one form to the other. One significant addition to the communion portion of the service is the sharing of peace. Ministers and the congregation are invited to greet one another in the name of the Lord (172, 191). This may be a fine practice, but Lutherans might perceive Roman Catholic overtones here.

Divine Service III is yet another order of service in *Lutheran Worship*. It is designed to follow Luther's German Mass, in which parts of the liturgy for Holy Communion are replaced with hymns (197).

An order for Holy Baptism is included in *Lutheran Worship*, but it is not a complete order of worship (199-204). This form is meant to precede a worship service and continue with one of the other orders of worship, according to the rubric (204).

An order of confirmation appears in *Lutheran Worship*, which appears nowhere in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (*Lutheran Worship* 205-207).

The Orders of Matins and Vespers in *Lutheran Worship* are much the same as the orders in *TLH* with a few more variations for the seasons of the church year (208-223).

Forms for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline are included in *Lutheran Worship* for family or small-group devotions (236-269). Nothing like these are in *TLH*.

Responsive Prayer 1 and 2 correspond to the Suffrages sections of *TLH* (*Lutheran Worship* 270-275). The first suffrage in *TLH* (113-114) has been dropped in *Lutheran Worship*, however.

The Bidding Prayer has been changed from a responsive prayer between the pastor and congregation to a prayer whose petitions are introduced by an assistant then spoken by the pastor and acknowledged by the assembly (276-278).

Other miscellaneous propers and devotional guides appear in *Lutheran Worship* (288-299) which correspond to the similar sections in *TLH* (95-101, 118-119, 161-164) but include more opportunities for singing.

The format of corporate confession (*TLH* 48) has been changed from question-and-answer to responsive (308-309). In addition, a form for individual confession has been added in *Lutheran Worship* (310-311).

The Psalms section in *Lutheran Worship* include tones for chanting, but only 60 psalms are included (313-365) compared with the 93 psalms of *TLH* (123-157).

Besides the changes mentioned above, the language of the *Lutheran Worship* liturgy has been updated to contemporary English and NIV translations.

These are the more significant differences between *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Lutheran Worship*. We have not been able to list every single difference, but these examples are the more noteworthy ones. These changes were surely made in the interest of improving liturgical worship within the Missouri Synod. To determine how successfully the new hymnal fulfilled its task, we must now look at how *Lutheran Worship* was received in the LC-MS.

As may be expected with any new endeavor, reaction to the new hymnal was mixed within the Missouri Synod. But as we will see, much of the response (at least that which found its way into print) was slanted toward a negative view of the hymnal.

An example of a fairly positive reception comes from Salem Lutheran Church in Gretna, Louisiana, which adopted *Lutheran Worship* in 1983, the year after it was published. Pastor Curtis Peterson (now a WELS pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Milwaukee) was serving Salem congregation at the time *Lutheran Worship* came out. Pastor Peterson was kind enough to relate how his congregation accepted the new hymnal. Before introducing *Lutheran Worship*, Salem practiced the new liturgies with a liturgical sampler that Missouri's hymnal committee had published. One of Salem's grade school teachers led the congregation in practicing the new forms of worship before each service, in particular the Divine Service II, which the Missouri Synod suggested all its congregations introduce first.

Pastor Peterson found no part of the liturgy too difficult to handle personally and he thought his congregation felt the same way, although there were some complaints about the translations of hymns into contemporary language. On the other hand, the congregation was excited to see some of the new hymns included in *Lutheran Worship*, such as "How Great Thou Art" and other famous hymns not found in *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

Pastor Peterson attributes the overall acceptance of the hymnal to the amount of educating done beforehand and the congregation's preference for "high church" worship. But Pastor Peterson also suspects that *Lutheran Worship* was not critically evaluated in the adoption process because

Salem had been caught in a controversy over Charismatic gifts, which may have occupied everyone's attention while the new hymnal was introduced. The congregation voted, however, to alternate using *Lutheran Worship* and *The Lutheran Hymnal*, and by the time Pastor Peterson left Salem congregation in January 1985 the congregation was still alternating between the two hymnals (Peterson).

Other congregations did not accept the hymnal so peacefully. Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Church of Decatur, Indiana said in a resolution:

The LCMS has now discarded the orthodox book titled *The Lutheran Hymnal* and has adopted a book called *Lutheran Worship* as its new official hymnbook. *LW* is a confusing, space-wasting, and error-ridden piece of work...Difficult liturgies are introduced which contain Romanistic tendencies such as a Eucharistic prayer and high church chants...An inconsistent and irreverent removal of the Divine addresses (Thees & Thous) was attempted. It is full of redundancies, troublesome tunes, humanistic hymns, a surrendering to the Women's Lib insistence on non-sexist language and poor printing. It closely resembles the heterodox *Lutheran Book of Worship* used by the LCA-ALC-AELC pan-Lutheran group from which much of its contents were lifted. ("Protests Mounting vs. 'Lutheran Worship'" 7)

Beautiful Saviour was not more specific in its resolution, but St. John's of Luxemburg, Wisconsin was. The resolution of St. John's acknowledged positive elements of *Lutheran Worship* such as elimination of the false doctrine in *Lutheran Book of Worship* and inclusion of rich liturgical

tradition. On the negative side, however, St. John's claimed:

Lutheran Worship was produced by certain "experts" without real grass roots consultation. Except for limited "trial use" & "Write-ins", the congregations of synod and their pastors were not asked for their input. Hence, the book reflects the judgments, musical tastes, likes and dislikes of a few "experts" and not necessarily the feelings of the congregations (Resolution of St. John's Lutheran Church 1, 7).

The St. John's resolution points to several examples of parts of the new liturgy that are not "'pure' regarding Lutheran principles" (1). The line "We have not loved you with our whole heart" in the confession of sins (*Lutheran Worship* 158) allegedly contradicts hymn 413 "Lord, You I Love with All My Heart." The absolution is given to everybody in the liturgy, but the St. John's resolution claims that omitting "upon this your confession" (*TLH* 16) grants absolution to believers and unbelievers. The resolution also takes issue with the shortened *Te Deum*, chanting, and the revised lectionary.

FOR THESE REASONS, the pastor, elders, and church council recommend to our Voters' Assembly that St. John's Congregation continue to use the present "Lutheran Hymnal", using only select material from the new book, properly revised, when the occasion is fitting. ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE VOTERS ASSEMBLY, Conversion of St. Paul (Jan. 25), 1982 (Resolution of St. John's Lutheran Church 7).

Besides congregational objections to *Lutheran Worship*, the new hymnal received heated criticism from certain

prominent figures in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. One such notable figure was John M. Drickamer, a doctor of theology and former instructor at Concordia, Ann Arbor. In a lengthy article in *Christian News* entitled "I'll Stay With TLH" Dr. Drickamer summarizes his objections to *Lutheran Worship*.

Dr. Drickamer lays out his concerns as follows: The use of the New International Version Bible translation in the psalms may influence the psalms with Reformed ideas. The one-year pericope is not the traditional lectionary. The liturgy sometimes calls for assistants (e.g. *Lutheran Worship* 140) but does not identify them as clergy or laity nor does the hymnal caution against female leadership in worship. The options in the liturgy are confusing because they are placed side-by-side. The prayer for peace (129) contains the words "Peace in our time, oh, send us!", which is reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain's declaration after signing an appeasement treaty with Hitler in 1938. The prayers before the Lord's Prayer (149, 171) seem to be a move to restore the Eucharistic prayer that Luther dropped for doctrinal reasons. The words of institution have been changed (150, 171). It is disorderly to have the people offer prayers during the service (such as on page 168). The peace (171-172) is disorderly and because it is so close to communion emphasized communion as fellowship with one another rather than as receiving something from God. The middle prayer in section 13 of Morning Prayer is unclear

(243). The service of Prayer at the Close of the Day has the leader confess to the whole congregation (264), but this is unnecessary unless there has been public offense. The prayer "At the Birth of a Child" calls Jesus the child of Mary and Joseph, thus denying the virgin birth (127). These are Dr. Drickamer's specific objections to the liturgical sections of *Lutheran Worship* (Drickamer 1).

These objections of Dr. Drickamer's were also made by others, but their inclusion here would be redundant. Some of his objections and questions are legitimate: Why not use the traditional lectionary? Why have assistants to the minister and how does this harmonize with the LC-MS doctrine of Church and Ministry? Too many options can be confusing, especially to visitors. The phrase "peace in our time" is a fine prayer but will shatter the worshipful mood for anyone even vaguely versed in the history of World War Two (or for the church members who lived through it).

But other objections of Dr. Drickamer can be answered satisfactorily. The NIV has never by itself caused a Lutheran congregation to fall into reformed theology. The words of institution are in contemporary language to mesh with the rest of the liturgy. The pre-communion prayers give thanks to God and ask Him to help us remember the work of His Son in receiving the Lord's Supper; these concepts are supported in Scripture. [Note: Charles Evanson of the hymnal committee admits that there was heated debate over including such a prayer (Brauer and Precht 437)]. And

finally, the prayer that calls Jesus the child of Mary and Joseph does not teach false doctrine but rather shows Jesus' legal status as the son of Joseph; no conservative hymnal committee would have condoned a blatant denial of a doctrine so fundamental as the virgin birth.

The above examples of *Lutheran Worship's* reception in various congregations and by noted scholars show us that at the time the hymnal was released it was probably less successful than the planners had hoped. Even several years after the hymnal was introduced there was not overwhelming approval. According to a survey of 157 churches in the LC-MS Southern Wisconsin District, only 52% were using the new hymnal in 1985 and a few used it alternately with *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Rohde 4).

Thus far we have seen the changes made from *The Lutheran Hymnal* when *Lutheran Worship* was designed and how those changes were received. At about the same time *Lutheran Worship* came out, the Wisconsin Synod saw the need for its own new hymnal and began work on its own product. The timing of the WELS project allowed the hymnal committee to learn from the mistakes made in the LC-MS and avoid repeating those mistakes in the new WELS hymnal. Here we will examine the improvements that were made in the liturgy of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*.

Perhaps one of the most notable improvements that *Christian Worship* has made over *Lutheran Worship* is in organization. Above we examined Pastor Curtis Peterson's

experience with *Lutheran Worship*. One of the most common criticisms he heard was that it is difficult to find one's way around in the liturgical section (Peterson). *Christian Worship* has avoided this problem by restricting the number of options in the orders of service. Instead of weighing down the liturgy with options, *Christian Worship* typically presents one suggested option and includes a brief note allowing for others as in the Common Service. Here the song of praise after the absolution is the traditional *Gloria in Excelsis*, but the note above the song reads "GLORY BE TO GOD or another song of praise is sung" (16).

Christian Worship also may have made an improvement by introducing chant more judiciously than *Lutheran Worship*. Rather than including chanted introits, *Christian Worship* dropped introits altogether and primarily restricted new chant to the psalms. Although *The Lutheran Hymnal* did allow for chant, the format did not encourage it. *Lutheran Worship* may have seemed overwhelming to Lutherans who derided chant as "Catholic." *Christian Worship* appears to have found a way to encourage chant while not offending the weak.

As for the psalms, *Christian Worship* has 59 psalms printed with refrains and chant tones, almost as many as *Lutheran Worship's* 60. But these psalms are shorter than those in Missouri's hymnal and so are less likely to intimidate the learning congregation (64-122).

Christian Worship also includes fewer prayers in its personal prayer section (134-139). It has 35 prayers compared to *Lutheran Worship's* 58 (124-133). At first glance it may seem that more prayers would be preferred, but realistically many of *Lutheran Worship's* prayers are for such specific occasions that they would never be used in corporate worship nor would many individuals in such situations be likely to turn to an obscure section of the hymnal in time of prayer.

Lutheran Worship includes the exchange of the sign of peace among the congregation (172, 191), but *Christian Worship* included no such gesture, probably out of pastoral concern for sensitive consciences.

Christian Worship has a form for Holy Baptism which is designed to precede one of the other forms of worship as in *Lutheran Worship*, but the form in *Christian Worship* includes a bit more congregational participation, especially in the confession of sins (*Christian Worship* 12-14).

Christian Worship was also probably more practical in its choice of orders of service. There are fewer orders for Sunday worship and morning and evening services, but there are also two orders not in *Lutheran Worship*: Christian Marriage and Christian Funeral (140-147). These will probably receive more use than *Lutheran Worship's* obscure Service of Compline or Service of Corporate Confession and Absolution, but how popular they will be remains to be seen.

These are liturgical improvements that *Christian Worship* has made over its LC-MS predecessor. We are not suggesting that every change *Lutheran Worship* made from *The Lutheran Hymnal* was for the worse, nor are we implying that its liturgical changes are in every case inferior to the liturgy of *Christian Worship*. We admit that what is positive or negative in liturgy is largely a matter of personal opinion and only time will tell how helpful *Christian Worship's* changes have been.

Overall, we can say that the WELS learned from *Lutheran Worship* that a church body must be willing to take time and invest faithful effort in producing a new hymnal. Finally, one must also remember that liturgy is a matter of adiaphoron as long as it carries God's word clearly and does not hinder its teaching. While one form of worship may enjoy more popularity than another, what finally matters is that God's people are strengthened in faith and that God is glorified in corporate worship.

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