

“Fostering Unity Without Imposing Uniformity”: A Review of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Pew Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006. 1248 pages. Cloth. \$20.00.

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In 2006 two new hymnals appeared among Lutherans in North America: the *Lutheran Service Book* (LSB) for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod¹ and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW), “commended for use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” and “approved for use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and...commended...as its primary worship resource.”² ELW is the successor to a hymnal that was a joint project of North American church bodies cooperating in the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) which produced the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW, 1978).³ From this LBW project came an “LCMS version,” *Lutheran Worship* (LW, 1982),⁴ incorporating much of the material that was jointly owned. Though the LBW did not turn out to be a single book for all Lutherans as some had hoped, the work of the ILCW did identify and prepare a shared tradition of liturgies and hymns.⁵ A distant link for this shared liturgy was the “Common

¹ *Lutheran Service Book.*, prepared by the Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).

² *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 4. While the authors of this review participated in committees that prepared LSB, they wrote this review-essay with a desire to know what the ELW contained even though they had no expectations that they would be using it. In particular they were curious what directions the brothers and sisters in the ELCA took in their worship theology and practice as it might be revealed in the pew edition of their new hymnal. After all, the LBW was more a product of predecessor church bodies to the ELCA and the ELCIC, namely, the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada. The ELCA came into existence some ten years after LBW.

³ *Lutheran Book of Worship*, prepared by the churches participating in the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship: Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978).

⁴ *Lutheran Worship*, prepared by the Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982).

⁵One can view the ultimate result of ILCW’s work less as a “common book” and more as a “common core” of liturgies and hymns shared by several church bodies—not unlike the post-World War II German hymnals that

Service” of 1888, a Lutheran service of Holy Communion in English which included those basic elements “common” in Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While many liturgical texts may have been in common, the hymnals of the individual church bodies published the liturgies with various musical settings.⁶ Not surprisingly these worship books carried varied hymn traditions, depending on immigration patterns.

After LBW/LW, the LCMS continued on its “old Lutheran” path (a *quia* subscription to *The Book of Concord* is important to its history and practice)⁷ in preparing LSB; the newly formed ELCA chose a path of expanding ecumenical relationships and an attendant growing comfort with diversity in doctrine. When examining the pew edition of ELW several questions are of particular interest. Does ELW reveal anything new in theology and practice when compared to LBW? How well does it serve a “Christian assembly” that bears a Lutheran label? How do the contents of ELW reflect its introduction’s stated desire for “fostering unity without imposing uniformity”?⁸

In the sections that follow we will examine the layout of the book, its theological orientation, liturgical year, services, psalms, hymns and songs. In the process it should become clear how diversity and uniformity and a Lutheran orientation fare in this new resource.

The Book

shared a basic set of liturgies and hymns. Materials which were particular to a region could be provided in an appendix for a regional edition. In this case, there were two editions of “jointly owned materials”: *LBW* and *LW*.

⁶ For a report on the argument in the late 1880s about the Lutheran roots of the Common Service and on probable sources for the music that it carried into the first English language hymnal for the LCMS (1912) see: James L. Brauer, “Trusty Steed or Trojan Horse? The Common Service in the Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, XIV/3 (Holy Trinity, 2005), 21-30.

⁷ In the LCMS the Lutheran Confessions are accepted “because” (*quia*) they agree with Scripture, as distinguished from a subscription “insofar as” (*quatenus*) they agree with Scripture.

⁸ ELW, 8.

That the cover of ELW is red, the opposite of LBW's green, is perhaps no more significant than that in today's worship spaces a warmer tone for book covers is preferred. It does, however, recall the hue of the *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958), predecessor to ELW.⁹ The cover is embossed a cross with four leaf shapes, the graphic is repeated in gold on the spine above the single word *Worship* and it occurs on the fly leaf and the title page. Are the four leaves perhaps tied to the "diversity" theme? The cover symbol does remind the user that a Christian faith and life grows from Christ's saving work. Over all, the look and feel of the books is slightly more attractive than LBW.

ELW is organized into these sections: introduction (pages 6-9), the church year (13-87), Holy Communion (91-222), Holy Baptism (225-250), Lent and the Three Days (251-270), life passages (273-297), daily prayer (295-331), psalms (all 150), assembly song (#151-#893) and additional resources (pages 1121-1211).

The Purpose and Theological Orientation of ELW

The Introduction to ELW, while not a definitive liturgical theology, does provide clues as to the theology which informed the preparation of ELW and in light of which the hymnal's content can be interpreted. The introduction begins with the first and second principles of the ELCA's ecclesiological and sacramental theology as expressed in its statement on Word and

⁹ *Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America*, authorized by the Churches cooperating in The Commission on the Liturgy and The Commission on the Hymnal, Music edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958). The cooperating churches were: the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, The American Lutheran Church, The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Lutheran Free Church, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church in America. The introduction points to the *Common Service* as something that was shared but also points to "the enduring value of some elements which were lost temporarily in the sixteenth century reconstruction of the liturgy, as, for instance, the proper use of the Prayer of Thanksgiving and the essential meaning of the term 'catholic' in the creeds" (vii). It likewise cautions that "the most ornate structure [liturgy] should not incorporate extraneous or unauthorized texts" and "the simplest service should not omit essential or important parts, or change their order"(viii) lest these would erode the "one faith, one mind and understanding" and promote sects or schisms.

Sacrament, *The Use of the Means of Grace* (UMG),¹⁰ focusing on the Trinitarian foundations of Christian worship and the power of the Spirit in the Word and the sacraments. Then, turning aside from God and His activity, it continues, “The Lutheran Confessions describe the church in terms of the worshipping assembly.”¹¹ While it is true that the church is fundamentally a worshipping assembly, does this orientation to a “worshipping” assembly presume a sociological starting point for Christian worship? The introduction quotes from UMG and from Augsburg Confession VII pointing to the church’s divine creation and sustenance through worship and expounds this in terms of the Spirit’s work of gathering the church through the means of grace. Unfortunately, the introduction provides no definition of worship or the assembly and it makes no further affirmation of or reference to dependence on the Holy Spirit in the first two principles of UMG. ELW willingly focuses on Word and sacraments as the center of the church’s worship, but fails to indicate specifically what God does spiritually for faith in and through those means of grace.

The introduction then turns its attention to the basis for unity in the midst of increasing diversity in worship, reflective of its goal of “fostering unity without imposing uniformity.” The ground of unity is worship as an activity of the assembly and that activity’s connection to the Christian tradition of patterns, words, actions, and songs in worship.¹² Without an explanation of what role these patterns, words, actions and songs play, it is not very clear what gives them spiritual power. ELW focuses on using the Christian tradition of worship, yet apart from a well-informed orthodox teaching framework, substantively informed by

¹⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1997).

¹¹ This assertion informs the reason that the frontispieces and artwork focus upon people issues rather than the mysteries of God. The worshipping assembly and its people are the primary essence of Christian worship. Gordon Lathrop reflects this principle when he writes, “Assembly, a gathering together of participating persons, constitutes the most basic symbol of Christian worship.” Gordon Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 48.

¹² ELW, 6.

justification by grace through faith for Christ' sake, as the proper context for their use. Placing the traditions and texts of worship at the center of the church's worship and unity leads one to wonder whether or not the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are the central and unalterable centers of the church's unity, as they are in UMG. Without locating worship as an activity of the assembly within an orthodox center of teaching, can there be any real unity in the church's worship?¹³

On the other hand, it is very clear that ELW takes seriously that worship which constitutes the church serves as the fundamental expression of the church's mission, of God's mission. For the sake of this living mission of the church, ELW calls for worship to be "responsible and responsive to the world that the church is called to serve."¹⁴ Thus, ELW understands inculturation of the church's worship in the forms of the surrounding cultures to be at the very heart of the church's mission. ELW properly recognizes that Christian worship is according to the gospel. But are the gospel and theological criteria inherent in the Word of God driving the choices made for the sake of inculturation and cultural diversity? Or is cultural diversity pursued for its own sake apart from any theological and cultural criteria to validate the choices within a broadened cultural palette? Indeed, the ELW's argument for cultural diversity may be circular: The church's mission as expressed in worship is to *serve the world* by renewing the church's worship through inculturation and diversification by means of the *world's cultural forms*.

¹³ The Augsburg Confession points toward the centrality of orthodox teaching as necessary for ecclesial unity: "The church is the assembly of the saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments." AC VII, 1-2; Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 43.

¹⁴ ELW, 7.

In addition to the fundamental purpose of shaping worship unity in the midst of diversity, the introduction states seven goals¹⁵ for the hymnal, several of which provide a snapshot of the hymnal's fundamental orientation. They are stated more in the language of principles than of goals. The first seeks to provide an expansive, comprehensive resource for Lutheran worship assemblies within increasingly diverse contexts on the basis of: "what the churches consider worthy to hold in common."¹⁶ While there are clear connections to the primary criteria used for developing The Common Service—"the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century," the sixteenth century sources clearly assumed a theological basis for what was included within the word "pure." Purity assumes a more objective, theological standard while worthiness assumes a much more aesthetic and subjective criterion. A second principle asserts that the key to what is held in common is the centrality of the means of grace. But what exactly is meant by means of grace? The language of UMG principles 5, 14, and 31, which define Word, Baptism and Holy Communion, does not appear to directly inform the introduction to ELW. It is not clear that the Spirit's activity in forgiving sins, granting new life, and creating faith, as affirmed in UMG, drives ELW's understanding of worship. The fourth principle affirms what LBW's introduction claimed, namely, freedom and variety in ceremony, music, and liturgical form; it also commits to fostering unity without imposing uniformity in worship. Fostering such unity guides the hymnal's understanding of the means of grace. Yet what exactly constitutes the basis for or recognition of a common understanding or practice is not clear. Phenomenologically, it would seem, as long as congregations proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments that is

¹⁵ Not under discussion here are these goals/principles: the third affirms that worship leadership is a shared task of the entire assembly exercised also in vocations in the world; the sixth affirms that the hymnal is only the beginning for unfolding all the resources for use by a church in mission.

¹⁶ ELW, 7.

sufficient for a common practice (“commitment to gathering regularly around both God’s Word and the holy Supper”),¹⁷ no matter what theology is reflected in the way that they gather around the Word and the Supper. Is there any boundary for diversity under this approach? Apart from any clear theological criteria does not the affirmation that ELW seeks to avoid uniformity actually undermine the very search for some sense of unity? The seventh principle is the ultimate goal for ELW: to support the mission of the church, the mission of God in Christ for the world. One of the few times this mission of God, and thus the worship of the church, is identified with any clear theological content is in this thesis: “through liturgy and song the people of God participate in that mission, *for here God comes with good news to save.*”¹⁸ This is the closest ELW’s introduction comes to viewing worship from the perspective of God’s activity. Although ELW affirms that worship is the mission of God, it fails to identify what God does and how God saves in worship. According to Augsburg Confession article 5, as affirmed by UMG, is not God’s activity in worship through the means of grace to give “the Holy Spirit who produces faith, when and where he wills, in those who hear the gospel?”¹⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, answers to those questions, addressed in *The Use of the Means of Grace*, are not adequately expressed as formative factors in the shaping of ELW.

The Church Year

Worshippers seldom think of the Scripture readings as ritual but it is the lectionary that gives rhythm to days, weeks and the year. Instead of a series of local, one-time events it offers an overarching template centered on Jesus—his life in the festival half and his teachings in the

¹⁷ ELW, 8.

¹⁸ Ibid. This is a central theme in the helpful book, *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission*, edited by Thomas H. Schattauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). Foundational is the article by Thomas Schattauer, “Liturgical Assembly as Locus of Mission,” 1-22.

¹⁹ AC V: 2-3; Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 40.

other half of the year. It is repeatable, shared with other Christians and, as the introduction to ELW says, the lectionary “tells the story of God, who is beyond time, acting in history.”²⁰ In ELW the list of Scripture readings is labeled “Propers” and is divided into two sections: “Sundays and Principal Festivals” and “Lesser Festivals, Commemorations and Occasions.” “Lesser Festivals” recall Christological events (annunciation), individual disciples, apostles, angels and martyrs (Mary Magdalene, Stephen) or other events and topics (Reformation). “Commemorations” include saints, martyrs, missionaries and others from church history and provide a way to reflect on people of faith and lives of service. “Occasions” (New Year’s Eve, Anniversary of a Church) celebrate local and national events.

ELW’s calendar has this uniformity with LBW: the Sundays and principal festivals are the same. There is a Christmas cycle (Advent, Christmas, Time after Epiphany), an Easter Cycle (Lent, the Three Days, Easter) and a Time after Pentecost (from Holy Trinity to Christ the King/Last Sunday after Pentecost). A small change in ELW’s principal calendar is the designation “Three Days,” namely, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Resurrection of Our Lord, where in LBW these were part of “Holy Week.”²¹ For the Sundays in the “Time after Epiphany” and “Time after Pentecost” ELW has found a substitute terminology for what the Roman lectionary, the Common Lectionary²² and the Revised Common Lectionary²³ called “Proper #.” The ELW’s nomenclature has “Lectionary 16” where RCL has “Proper 11.” The new label has this benefit: “Lectionary” requires little explanation.

In ELW the Lesser Festivals are listed month by month with the Commemorations; small capital letters designate which are the lesser festivals (Name of Jesus, Philip and James,

²⁰ ELW, 13.

²¹ See ELW, 14; LBW, 9.

²² *Common Lectionary: The Lectionary Proposed by the Consultation on Common Texts* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1983).

²³ *The Revised Common Lectionary: Consultation on Common Texts* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

Apostles), a method used in LBW. LBW's list of commemorations was trimmed. Gone from ELW in January and February, for example, are four names: Kaj Munk (January 5, martyr, 1944), George Fox (January 13, renewer of society, 1691), Eivind Josef Berggrav, (January 14, Bishop of Oslo, 1959), and Rasmus Jensen (February 20, the first Lutheran pastor in North America, 1620). In January two new names appear: Anthony of Egypt (January 17, renewer of the church, c. 356) and Thomas Aquinas, (January 28, teacher, 1274). St. Matthias, Apostle,²⁴ is moved from February 24 to May 14 in agreement with the Roman Catholic post-Vatican II calendar. One can argue over which non-biblical names are worthy of inclusion and every lectionary project will tinker the list, hoping to create an attractive balance of ancient and recent figures for use in daily worship. In general, should not each individual in the list be helpful in pointing worshipers to God's grace in making us new in Christ? If so, some names in ELW's list seem not so worthy. Though the details vary, both LBW and ELW lists are designed to reflect a much broader spectrum of Christian figures than their predecessor books did.

ELW employs not the lectionary in LBW but a newer ecumenical one, namely, the "Revised Common Lectionary." As the name implies, it is a revision of the "Common Lectionary," a project of the "North American Consultation on Common Texts" (CCT) involving primarily Protestant scholars (often volunteers more than designees) "representing" church bodies of North America. This group is "unsupervised" in that it requires no approval from any church body. CCT aims to provide something that all could use; individual church bodies may choose to use CCT's work, even overrule some details, just as the CCT was free to adapt the Roman Catholic lectionary.

²⁴ Other calendars have put it on February 24, see, for example, *The Book of Common Prayer* (n.p.: Seabury Press, [1979]), 20.

As some may recall, in 1973 the ILCW had published its own trial version²⁵ of the 1969 Roman Catholic three-year lectionary. It received wide, favorable acceptance and was used in LBW (1978). The Common Lectionary appeared in 1983, calling for a trial period. The “Revised Common Lectionary” then made adjustments, tweaking the lists and creating an entirely new Old Testament track to assist church bodies that found typological OT readings too limiting. RCL made “helpful” adjustments like lengthening readings and starting or ending at a different verse. Some changes, however, were based on “theological” or “cultural” preferences, e.g., dropping passages that were “offensive” to a subgroup or incorporating passages that were “desired” (more stories regarding women of faith). The “semi-continuous”²⁶ reading of a Pauline letter like Ephesians in year B can illustrate some of these preferences:

List of Readings for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
to the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (LBW terminology)

Roman ²⁷	ILCW ²⁸	LBW ²⁹	CL ³⁰	RCL ³¹	ELW ³²
1970	1973	1978	1983	1992	2006

²⁵ *Contemporary Worship 6: The Church Year: Calendar and Lectionary*, prepared by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House; Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973).

²⁶ A semi-continuous reading is a sequential reading with omissions as opposed to a continuous one that has no omissions.

²⁷ See <http://www.catholic-resources.org/Lectionary/1970USL-Sundays.htm>.

²⁸ *Contemporary Worship 6*, 99-106.

²⁹ LBW, 25-27.

³⁰ *Common Lectionary*, 87-89.

³¹ *The Revised Common Lectionary*, 51-52. Unlike the *Common Lectionary* this work has no commentary regarding consensus for individual readings.

³² ELW, 42-45.

8 a P	Eph 1:3-14	Eph 1:3-14	Eph 1:3-14	Eph 1:1-10	Eph 1:3-14	Eph 1:3-14 or 1:3-10
9 a P	Eph 2:13-18	Eph 2:13-22	Eph 2:13-22	Eph 2:11-22	Eph 2:11-22	Eph 2:11-22
10 a P	Eph 4:1-6	Eph 4:1-7, 11-16	Eph 4:1-7, 11-16	Eph 3:14-21	Eph 3:14-21	Eph 3:14-21
11 a P	Eph 4:17, 20-24	Eph 4:17-24	Eph 4:17-24	Eph 4:1-6	Eph 4:1-16	Eph 4:1-16
12 a P	Eph 4:30-5:2	Eph 4:30-5:2	Eph 4:30-5:2	Eph 5:25-5:2	Eph 4:25-5:2	Eph 4:25-5:2
13 a P	Eph 5:15-20	Eph 5:15-20	Eph 5:15-20	Eph 5:15-20	Eph 5:15-20	Eph 5:15-20
14 a P	Eph 5:21-32	Eph 5:21-31	Eph 5:21-31	Eph 5:21-33 ³³	Eph 6:10-20	Eph 6:10-20
15 a P	James 1:17- 18, 21-22, 27	James 1:17- 22, 23-25	Eph 6:10-20	Eph 6:10-20	James 1:17-27	James 1:17-27

One notices (a) that ILCW differs very little from the Roman, (b) that the LBW follows the ILCW except for the inclusion of Ephesians 6:10-20,³⁴ and (c) that CL makes adjustments to the Roman list. Primarily CL exchanges Eph 3:14-21 (being rooted and grounded in love) for Eph 4:17, 20-24 (putting off the old and putting on the new self) and including Eph 6:10-20 (the whole armor of God). RCL, however, introduces a number of new features, combining two readings from Ephesians 4 into a longer one and making room for another portion of Ephesians 4, thus eliminating Ephesians 5:21-33 (Paul’s instructions to wives and husbands), though it was in every previous lectionary in the chart, and replacing it with Ephesians 6:10-20, which was introduced first in LBW, as well as restoring James 1. Readers may recall that Ephesians 5:21ff has had a traditional place in marriage rites and now, in a project that seeks,

³³ The commentary reports: “Second reading—virtual consensus,” suggesting that there was a slight objection, distinguishing it from a simple “consensus” and no objection. See *Common Lectionary*, 89. This volume’s introductory material gives a helpful report on the issues and cooperative processes in creating an ecumenical lectionary based on the Roman Catholic model.

³⁴ Could Luther’s attitude about James (a “straw epistle”) have contributed to this decision?

above all, to be ecumenical, it is removed. It seems that a new criterion is at work in this “adjustment” and it is one that works against a principle like *sola scriptura* (“the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated” is Holy Scripture).³⁵ In a society that has so many troublesome issues regarding marriage does it not seem wise at least on one Sunday every three years to read this apostolic instruction?

Questions can also be raised about RCL’s newly invented Old Testament series, which ELW gives as an optional “semicontinuous reading and psalm.” Recall that the lectionary which existed at the time of the Reformation had two readings from the New Testament, an Epistle and a Gospel, even though early versions included selections from the Old Testament. In restoring an Old Testament reading to the lectionary in 1969 Roman Catholic scholars offered a system that connected the Old Testament reading to the Gospel selections from Matthew, Mark and Luke by choosing a “typological” selection, that is, a parallel event in the Old Testament. This fits well with a basic principle of biblical interpretation, “Scripture interprets itself.” For example, in the Roman lectionary Matthew 13:1-9 (the parable of the sower) was paired with Isaiah 55:10-11 (as the rain and snow come down, so the Lord’s word goes forth) or Matthew 14:13-21 (when no food was available, the five loaves and two fish became enough for all) was put alongside Isaiah 55:1-3 (Come, buy wine and milk without money). RCL’s new, alternative series for the Old Testament provides great stories of the Old Testament and of faithful servants of Yahweh. It thus offers completely new pairings of Gospel and Old Testament. For example, “Lectionary 15” puts Matthew 13:1-9, 18-34 with Genesis 25:19-34 (Esau sells Jacob his birthright for bread and stew) and “Lectionary 18” puts Matthew 14:13-21 with Genesis 32:22-31 (Jacob wrestled with an angel for a blessing). These OT readings are labeled “semi-continuous,” even though frequently there are many

³⁵ Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, 3.

omitted chapters between selections.³⁶ While there is no command from Jesus to use a particular lectionary or any humanly-devised list of readings at all, he does say that the Scriptures “bear witness about me” (John 5:39). It raises this question: can readings about individual faith adventures be considered of equal importance to the Gospel (God’s act of redemption through Jesus), which is “the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16)? At least, one can say that replacing the Old Testament typological pattern, which puts Jesus as the center of God’s story (a focus on the Gospel reading), does suggest a different theology of Scripture. What great benefit comes from this kind of “diversity” when the typological choices are so Christocentric?

The Services

While ultimate evaluation of a worship resource must be determined by actual use, nonetheless one can observe trends and emphases. In the case of ELW two significant emphases surface: a dependency of ELW upon LBW while embracing an ecumenical worship palette and a move toward so-called gender inclusive language especially with reference to the Godhead. Clearly, LBW served as the point of origin for ELW. The services included in the pew edition follow the same pattern and basic nomenclature as LBW, even those for the Holy Triduum. Many liturgical texts and some of the tunes from LBW are retained. Yet, it also is clear that ELW is its own unique resource which represents the “beginning of an unfolding family of resources . . . intended to respond to the developing needs of the church in mission.”³⁷ Included in that mission are the growing interrelationships between the ELCA and other Christian church bodies. For this reason the introduction can claim that ELW

³⁶ For example, in Year A, RCL’s sequence is: Proper 21, Exodus 17:1-7; Proper 22, Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Proper 23, Exodus 32:1-14.

³⁷ ELW, 8.

“represents the gifts of the breadth of the church of Christ.”³⁸ Use of the primary liturgical texts from the ecumenical English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) bears this out; as does the structure of the baptismal rite which follows the American Episcopal Book of Common Prayer in placing the renunciations and the profession of faith, not immediately prior to the baptism, but prior to the prayer of thanksgiving over the water. This underlines the degree to which ELW is more than just a book seeking to unite North American Lutherans, as was LBW. Evidence for this is found in the departures from LBW. Most significant among these are the omissions of the LBW musical settings of the canticles, not only from the services but from the entire hymnal. These include the musical settings of the Magnificat of Evening Prayer and the Venite, the Benedictus, and the Te Deum of Morning Prayer. Likewise, changes in chant tones (such as in the versicles of light for Evening Prayer) and texts in the various services, often to parallel the ecumenically-prepared texts, demonstrate that ELW has its own character and orientation. Is there enough familiar to those who have used LBW for 30 years that they will feel at home immediately and yet ready to branch out into the brave, new, ecumenical-liturgical world?

The second emphasis in ELW is the move toward gender-inclusive language with reference to the Triune God and the person of Christ Jesus. It is apparent from the liturgical texts that this was carried out as systematically as possible. Any place in which God or the Father was referred to with the masculine pronoun in LBW has been eliminated. While such a move might adequately attend to qualms about gender-specific language in reference to the first person of the Trinity who is without gender, the new language often undermines the particular nature of the Trinitarian relationships and thereby weakens the Trinitarian economy

³⁸ Ibid.

of salvation.³⁹ For example, the change in the Nicene Creed from “his only Son” to the ELLC’s “God’s only Son” eliminates some of the specificity attached to the relationship between the Father and the Son. The “God” referred to here is the Father, not the entire Trinity of persons, nor some generic concept of God. It is a specific person who has a particular and unique relationship with the only Son of God. “His” was able to bear the weight of that particular relationship in ways that “God” cannot. The Son brings the believer into His unique relationship with the Father, not with some God in general. Furthermore, ELW removes many references to both the Father and (especially) Christ as “Lord”: “Let us pray to the Lord” becomes “Let us pray”; “Lord, have mercy” becomes “Have mercy, O God”; “Into your hands, O Lord . . . through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” becomes “Into your hands, gracious God . . . through Jesus Christ, Our Savior”; “The peace of the Lord be with you always” becomes “The peace of Christ be with you always.” Frequently “Savior” replaces “Lord” in reference to Christ. Since the reference to Christ as Lord is foundational to the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah, as fully divine, and as equally possessing the same authority and deserving of the same worship as the Father Pantocrator (Almighty One), this change is an extremely curious one. It is not clear what is considered inadequate in the attribution that Jesus is Lord or what is gained by omitting it or changing it. Does not the significant number of times Lord is omitted suggest a subtle Christological shift? Is Jesus

³⁹ The identity of God and of Christ and the nature of salvation are inextricably connected to one another. In the words of Bruce Ware, “The very identity of Christ as the one and only Savior and the full efficacy of the atoning work of Christ, then, are inexplicable apart from his relationship both with the Father and the Spirit. The Father is the Father of the Son, and as such he commissions and sends his Son into the world to be and do what he calls him to do. The design of salvation is the Father’s, and the justice brought to bear against our sin was executed by the Father. The Son, however, could not accomplish the obedience and perform the works that he did apart from the anointing of the Spirit who abides with him as the necessary presence and power of the messianic identity and ability. *Cur Deus Trinus?* Must God be Triune for Christ to be a Savior? Indeed, the Trinity is necessary for the identity of Christ as the atoning Savior, and the Trinity is necessary also to the efficacy of his atoning death.” Bruce A. Ware, “Christ’s Atonement: A Work of the Trinity” in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 156-88 (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 186-7.

Christ fully God, of one substance with the Father, divine and human natures eternally united in one person without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation?⁴⁰ Do the texts lead one to think that Jesus the Savior is a being of lower divine stature than the God to whom one is praying?

Diversification is reflected in the variety of services, especially for Holy Communion. ELW groups the services into five sections: Holy Communion; Holy Baptism; Lent and the Three Days; Daily Prayer; Life Passages. The services follow the LBW pattern and they are reflective of other denominational worship books.

There are ten distinct settings of Holy Communion and one stand-alone Service of the Word. The pattern for the Sunday gathering was first enunciated in *With One Voice*⁴¹ (WOV) as the fundamental shape of the Christian rite of Word and Sacrament: Gathering-Word-Meal-Sending (hereafter referred to as “ordo”).⁴² This ordo shapes all of the services within the book except the Daily Prayer services, which have their own historic pattern, and is valued because of its flexibility for local shaping, “while focusing on what the church holds in common.”⁴³ While not theologically explicit, what the church holds in common is the mission and activity of God: the joining of the whole people of God “by the same gifts of grace, for the sake of the same mission of the Gospel, into the life of the one triune God.”⁴⁴ The ritual

⁴⁰ These are the words of the church fathers gathered at Chalcedon in 451 from their Definition of Faith which confessed the one Jesus Christ to be in two natures, divine and human. See Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Church Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, volume 14, “The Seven Ecumenical Councils” (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1991), 264.

⁴¹ *With One Voice: A Lutheran Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1885), 8-9. This resource was intended to be used alongside a principal worship book like LBW.

⁴² Gordon Lathrop, the liturgical theologian and worship professor for many years at the ELCA’s seminary in Philadelphia (now retired), argued for this pattern as the constitutive biblical pattern for worship in his work, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology*. For Lathrop, what is particularly Christian about the pattern is not the content of Word and meal *per se* but the juxtaposition of the two which necessitates death and resurrection or the encounter with God in the crucified Jesus. See Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 50.

⁴³ ELW, 91.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

phenomena of Gathering-Word-Meal-Sending expresses this mission of God enacted through the gathered people of God. While these ritual factors encapsulate the central human activities embodied in Christian worship, are they sufficient to define truly Christian, and especially Lutheran, worship?

This “ordo” is followed for all ten settings of the Holy Communion. Three musical settings from LBW are carried into ELW as Settings Three, Four and Five: the Hillert setting, the Nelson setting, and the Plainsong setting. The placement of these settings after two other settings was apparently intentional so as to encourage the use of new settings, rather than defaulting to the familiar. Use of the first two new settings is further encouraged by the omission of various texts from the subsequent eight, which can be used directly from the hymnal only with difficulty. The new liturgical music comes from various composers: Setting One is a recent compilation from various sources; Setting Two is by the contemporary composer Marty Haugen; Setting Six is a combination of the two settings from the African American Lutheran hymnal *This Far by Faith*;⁴⁵ Setting Seven is a Spanish language setting with the canticles take from the ELCA’s *Libro de Liturgia*;⁴⁶ Setting Eight is a recent compilation from various sources; Setting Nine is by Joel Martinson; and Setting Ten is a hymn tune setting. None of the settings are from WOV, although some of the canticles from the divine services in WOV were included in the ELW Service of the Word. Since every setting follows the ordo and utilizes the same texts, they maintain “unity” in worship life across congregations, while providing a high degree of flexibility. But does this multiplicity of settings give too much encouragement to a growing smorgasbord of services among Lutherans?

⁴⁵ *This Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999).

⁴⁶ *Libro de liturgia y cántico* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998).

Although LBW was a core source for the ordo and many of the texts, ELW made changes in order to provide a more ecumenically and culturally diverse resource. The Gathering Rite may be brief or extended to allow the gathering of the church into God's presence. This reflects the historical development of the entrance rite and its subservience to Word and Sacrament⁴⁷ and it reflects principle four in UMG⁴⁸ which encourages good order in worship but recognizes richly diverse ways of receiving and administering the means of grace. Thus, the order of the gathering rite itself is not predetermined. For instance, the greeting may precede or follow the singing of a Gathering Song. The entrance could employ one or more of the following: hymns, psalms, a Kyrie and a canticle of praise. Unfortunately, even the Leaders Desk Edition does not provide any theological guidelines for what the purpose and intent of the entrance rite is and what it most profitably might include.

One instance of flexibility in the gathering rite is the provision of two ways for the Spirit to gather the church: a rite of confession and forgiveness or a rite of thanksgiving for baptism. Given the historical development of the preparatory rite within the Lutheran church,⁴⁹ theoretically there is no reason a rite of thanksgiving for baptism could not substitute for confession and absolution, although it is a *novum* and the language of sin and forgiveness as a primary means of the Gospel should not be abandoned.⁵⁰ One caveat, however. Participating in a rite of baptismal thanksgiving is impossible for those not baptized. Does this mean such a rite ought to follow the sermon and a dismissal of the unbaptized? The

⁴⁷ For information on the development of the entrance/gathering rite, see Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, volume 1 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1986), 261-271.

⁴⁸ UMG, 9.

⁴⁹ For information on the development of the preparatory rite of confession and absolution in the Lutheran church see Fred L. Precht, "Confession and Absolution: Sin and Forgiveness," in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, edited by Fred L. Precht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 322-86.

⁵⁰ In the *Use of the Means of Grace* the twelfth principle asserts that congregations are called to make faithful use of corporate . . . confession of sins and holy absolution; see UMG, 17. Would the regular use of the Thanksgiving of Baptism vacate such a regular practice of corporate absolution?

remainder of the gathering rite suggests the traditional pattern of a gathering/entrance hymn or song, “prayer for God’s mercy to fill the church and world (Kyrie),” a “canticle of praise to God’s glory revealed in Christ (Hymn of Praise),” and the Prayer of the Day.

The Service of the Word follows the LBW structure with minimal changes beyond additional options.⁵¹ The Offertory Rite is clearly treated not as its own entity but primarily as a point of transition between Word and Meal. The most unique elements of this transitional rite are the changes in the Creeds, including the possibility for the omission of the Filioque in the Nicene Creed, and the lack of an appointed offertory canticle, although the LBW settings of “Let the Vineyards” appear in the service music section. The LBW settings of “What shall I render to the Lord” from Psalm 116 are not in ELW. The changes in the Creeds according to the English Language Liturgical Consultation texts include the elimination of masculine pronouns and the change of “was made man” to “became truly human.” Although these alterations reflect consistency across many mainline Christian denominations, they push the ELCA further from Rome, the Orthodox communions, the LCMS, and many expressions of Southern Hemisphere Christianity.

The Meal rite⁵² demonstrates the concern for gender-inclusive language and the provision of ecumenically and culturally diverse resources. For example, the address of LBW’s proper preface, “It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord,” becomes “It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.” The language, especially “duty,” seems quotidian and the Trinitarian economy of salvation

⁵¹ These options include responses to the Word and options in service music for the gospel acclamation.

⁵² LBW did not provide a heading for this section. One wonders what is emphasized when the Holy Communion is referred to primarily as a Meal?

appears de-emphasized by the failure to address prayer to the Lord Father and to the Lord Christ.

The divine services embrace ELW's intention of fostering unity through a very inclusive practice of welcoming all to communion. This is particularly clear in the funeral rite when the eucharist is celebrated. The rubric regarding communion in the funeral rite observes that "when communion is part of the service the sacrament is celebrated with the whole assembly."⁵³ Absent any qualifiers, the whole assembly would presumably include the unbaptized and those of other religious convictions. Is such inclusivity truly reflective of a church body which in UMG confesses this principle: "Admission to the Sacrament is by invitation of the Lord, presented through the Church to those who are baptized"⁵⁴.

Service of the Word. ELW provides a Service of the Word, but one that leaves behind the unique structure of the LBW Service of the Word. While borrowing resources from WOV, the service follows the divine service pattern until after the Peace. It then concludes with the Offering, Cantic of Thanksgiving (a version of the *Dignus est Agnus* or Worthy is the Lamb), thanksgiving for the Word, Lord's Prayer, and Sending Rite. While the pattern of Gathering-Word-Meal-Sending is maintained in this ante-communion rite, might not something have been lost in jettisoning an LBW service that didn't necessarily look like ante-communion?

Services of Lent and the Three Days. Unlike LBW the services of Lent and the Three Days are included in the ELW pew edition, yet the shape and content of the LBW paschal services remain intact reflecting the ecumenical convergence on these services since

⁵³ ELW: Leaders Edition, 44.

⁵⁴ UMG, 41.

Vatican II.⁵⁵ This may be the point at which ELW and LBW come into closest proximity. Some of the new elements include: the patterning of all the services after the ELW communion service ordo; the blessing of palms on Palm Sunday; stronger stress on the rite of footwashing on Maundy Thursday; greater emphasis on the disciplines of Lent in the Ash Wednesday service; some changes in the list of readings for the Easter Vigil.⁵⁶ There appears to be no provision for Good Friday Tre Ore or Tenebrae services which are quite popular in many churches. A welcome emphasis is the stress on baptism and baptismal imagery throughout all the services. The inclusivity of ELW perhaps reaches its apex with this change in the Bidding Prayer for Good Friday: “Let us pray for those who do not believe in Christ, that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way of salvation” becomes “Let us pray for those who do not share our faith in Christ Jesus.” The wording of the collect changed from “enable those who do not acknowledge Christ to receive the truth of the Gospel” to “gather into your embrace all those who call out to you under different names.” The former wording confessed Christ as the one way to salvation and prayed that those who did not believe in him might come to faith. Has inclusivity and plurality gone too far? Does this amount to a denial of the all-sufficiency of Christ for salvation?

Daily Offices. As with LBW, ELW includes three services of daily prayer, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline. All follow this ELW pattern—opening, psalmody, Word, prayer—bringing all of the prayer offices into structural uniformity. The Leaders Edition provides an instructive theological introduction to the prayer services stressing that worship continues from Sunday in lives of service as expressed in a Christian life of prayer. There are significant alterations from LBW. The chant tones of both leader and assembly in

⁵⁵ See Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship: Lutheran Liturgy in its Ecumenical Contexts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 239-88.

⁵⁶ Curiously, they do not follow the readings in the ELCA’s catechumenal materials, *Welcome to Christ*.

Morning and Evening Prayer are altered; the settings of all the canticles (Benedictus, Te Deum, and Magnificat) and the Venite are new. Only the LBW Phos Hilaron setting is retained. Admittedly, some of the settings in LBW were a challenge, especially the Magnificat. Will those familiar settings prove unforgettable or will the new settings enable renewed appreciation of the daily prayer services? In addition to the Paschal Blessing, a new element prepared for LBW retained in ELW, there is a rite of Thanksgiving for Baptism for Morning Prayer. Allowing for the rite of aspersion (sprinkling with water) as a remembrance of baptism, this rite encourages assemblies to live in the promises of baptism. In the daily prayer services the striving for uniformity amidst diversity comes to the most deliberate balance. The new and the old appear to blend well together. The daily lectionary in ELW offers a unique approach. Grounded in the Sunday, weekly cycle and related to the Sunday readings, the readings for Thursday through Saturday prepare for the following Sunday while the readings for Monday through Wednesday reflect upon the previous Sunday. This is a pattern attuned to modern, weekly schedules of reflection and preparation. Since the lectionary is church year-based it forces the reader to determine exactly where they are in the church year,-a serious difficulty for any first time user. Nevertheless, the orientation to the Sunday readings is helpful for modern people unacquainted with the cycle of the church year.

Psalms, Hymns and Songs

ELW groups psalms, service music, hymns and national songs in a category “assembly song”⁵⁷ and uses one numbering system, beginning with 150 psalms. This makes it somewhat easier than in LBW to locate an item since a user does not have to distinguish between a page number and a psalm number.

⁵⁷ ELW, 5.

Psalms. The introduction to the psalm section reminds the reader that “Luther considered the psalms the summary of all scripture, speaking to many situations and allowing the expression of a wide range of human response, such as adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and teaching.”⁵⁸

The introduction also says, “The psalms are intended for singing” and ELW provides sixteen “Psalm Tones,” though users are not limited to these melodies. Of the sixteen, only four come from LBW. The asterisk that showed the division of the verse in LBW is eliminated; instead there are indents that give the layout a less cluttered look. Where LBW had accent-like marks in the text to show where the reciting note ends, ELW has a “point” (small red mark) between the syllables.

The translation used for the psalms is not the New Revised Standard Version (1989), which is used for Scripture quotations elsewhere in ELW. Instead the introduction states that the psalms should have “a version intended for common sung prayer and proclamation.” Note the word “common;” it will be referenced later. Unfortunately, no other criteria are revealed, perhaps because such criteria were common to all of the “assembly song” materials and widely explained during the decade of the “renewal of worship” that preceded publication. A brief comparison of LBW and ELW psalms texts might suggest some guiding principles.

In texts that are to be sung one might want to feature vowel sounds that are open (as in doh, ray, me, fa) and limit both short vowels (as in words like bet, in, gun) or consonant sounds that lack beauty (as in words like stretch, shuffle, grin, ridge, error). Keep in mind these are purely musical, not linguistic, considerations and based mostly on comparing favorable sounds in different languages. In Psalm 44:9, for example, *The New English Bible* improved slightly on the King James version (less-musical words are underlined):

⁵⁸ LSB, 335.

KJV

9 I will sing a new song unto thee,
O God; upon a psaltery and an
instrument of ten strings will I sing
praises unto thee.

NEB

9 I will sing a new song to thee,
O God, psalms to the music of a
ten-stringed lute.

ELW's version of Psalm 99:1-4, a somewhat random choice, alongside the NRSV will provide some comparative details (less musical sounds are underlined):

NRSV

1 The LORD is king; let the peoples
tremble! He sits enthroned upon the
cherubim; let the earth quake!

2 The LORD is great in Zion; he is
exalted over all the peoples.

3 Let them praise your great and
awesome name. Holy is he!

4 Mighty King, lover of justice, you
have established equity; you have
executed justice and righteousness in
Jacob.

ELW

1 The LORD is king; let the people
tremble. The LORD is enthroned upon
the cherubim; let the earth shake.

2 The LORD, great in Zion, is high
above all peoples.

3 Let them confess God's name,
which is great and awesome; God is
the Holy One.

4 O mighty king, lover of justice, you
have established equity; you have
executed justice and righteousness in
Jacob.

In verse 1 ELW removes one “t” but introduces an “sh” for a “q” sound. In verse 2 ELW’s “high above” has an advantage over NRSV’s “exalted over.” In verse 3 ELW’s “confess” is not really better than “praise” and ELW introduces the word “which.” ELW’s verse 4 introduces an “O” but is otherwise the same as NRSV. The two versions are thus very equal in singing quality with a slight edge perhaps going to the NRSV. Since the introduction in ELW is silent on this matter, we cannot be sure that this “sound of the text” was a criterion for ELW’s alternate version of the psalms.⁵⁹ This small sample suggests that beauty of sound might have been a factor.

The psalm version in ELW⁶⁰ seems to be based on the one used in LBW, which was borrowed from the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and said to be “better for singing.”⁶¹ A primary feature of this BCP version was its “inclusive” adjustments. ELW takes these adjustments a step further, exhibiting a distinct avoidance of masculine nouns and pronouns. In the RSV Psalm 1:1-2 reads:

Blessed is the *man* who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
 but *his* delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on *his* law *he* meditates day and night (italics added).

⁵⁹ For one psalm version that does “improve” somewhat on the sounds of NRSV’s Psalm 99 consider this:

The Lord reigns from the cherubim throne, nations tremble, earth shakes!
 The Lord of Zion is great, high above all peoples.
 Praise the great and fearful name, “Holy is the Lord!”

Almighty ruler, you love justice, you strengthen the upright and secure equity for Jacob.

While it does not offer a preponderance of long vowels, this version does reduce multi-syllable words and provide a more flexible word rhythm. See *The Psalter: a Faithful and Inclusive Rendering from the Hebrew into Contemporary English Poetry, Intended Primarily for Communal Song and Recitation*. International Commission on English in the Liturgy. (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), Psalm 99:1-4.

⁶⁰ ELW’s pew edition, 1169, does not clearly indicate the source of the psalms translation.

⁶¹ The source for LBW’s version of the psalms is the *Standard Book of Common Prayer* “copyright © 1977 by Charles Mortimer Guilbert as custodian.” See acknowledgments in *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978), 922.

ELW eliminates some masculine language features by substituting a “neutral” plural for a masculine singular element and substituting “God’s” for “his”:

Happy are *they* who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
Their delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and *they* meditate on *God’s* teaching day and night (italics added).

This is only a slight change from what LBW had:

Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
 Their delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and they meditate on his law day and night.

While LBW had permitted “his” law, it did change much masculine singular language to a “neutral” plural. Here are some additional samples of ELW’s increased masculine avoidance:

<i>Psalm</i>	<i>LBW</i>	<i>ELW</i>
1:2	on his law	on God’s teaching
23:2	He makes me	the LORD makes me
23:3	He revives	You restore my
	For his name’s sake	for your name sake
46:9	what awesome things he has done on earth	(8) ⁶² what desolations God has brought upon the earth
46:10	It is he who makes war	(9) behold the one who makes war

⁶² For some reason verse 4 of LBW’s Psalm 46 is omitted in ELW’s version of Psalm 46, thus renumbering the subsequent verses. On the other hand, when this text occurs at verse 12 in LBW, it is included in ELW.

121:3 He will not let your foot The LORD will not let your foot
 121:4 he who watches over you the one who watches over you

It is a mild revision to go from “he” to “the one who” yet it is hard to imagine daily conversations that would prefer the three-word substitute. The most striking adjustment, however, is that ELW substitutes a second person pronoun (“You”) for a third person pronoun (“He”). It is indeed difficult to call such manipulation a “translation” so the ELW introduction calls it a “version,” which makes it sound more like it is part of a major translation project, e.g., King James Version, Revised Standard Version.

When the practice of language through the ages and around the globe is considered, the super-sensitivity of gender dimensions in ELW psalms is striking and goes well beyond “translation.” Recall that in most languages the distribution of gender to nouns is pretty arbitrary (e.g., the German word for wife, *Weib*, is a neuter noun; the French word for harem, *harem*, is a masculine noun; the Latin word for beard, *barba*, is a feminine noun) and that a word’s gender is unconnected to sexuality. One scholar has summarized the language trend this way: “feminist theorists began to use the word gender in a newish way, to distinguish biology from society. In this scheme, your plumbing determines your biological sex; your social role determines your gender.”⁶³ To one who has never encountered biblical texts before it may not seem like much; to one who has memorized a Bible verse in an earlier translation the changes can be jarring, especially when a third person is changed to a second person. In any case, with the ELW psalms there is more going on than just finding a “singing” version. It would be more honest to label it a paraphrase. As much as it may seek to “clarify” the original, a paraphrase is always a “restatement” and the more it departs from the original, the more it is able to introduce the “translator’s” world of preferences. The restatement can thus

⁶³ See <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/g.html>.

easily misrepresent the original. Does the psalm version in ELW not clearly show what its paraphrasers prefer? Perhaps this was what the introduction's word "common" ("common sung prayer and proclamation") meant to say: it would be acceptable to all subgroups among the intended users.⁶⁴ But is this not then singing back to God, not what God inspired but "my version" of what the Word says?

Hymns and National Songs. ELW has 655 songs, 114 more than LBW. Like LBW, ELW provides both "hymns" and "national songs." There were four national songs in LBW but there are seven in ELW,⁶⁵ suggesting greater comfort in including such songs in a worship resource. It is curious that "O Canada" (with an English and French text) is included⁶⁶ but instead of Francis Scott Key's poem which is used as a national anthem in the United States there is just Key's "Before You, Lord, We Bow." In every hymn section it is obvious that ELW strives for a diversity in source and style and that it seeks new images and fresh ways of treating topics. This is a primary contribution. At the same time, the stretching for greater diversity results in moving away from a theological orientation grounded in the Lutheran Reformation. In order to discuss some detail we will examine texts and melodies of two seasonal sections, Advent and Lent, and one topical section, Holy Communion.

Nearly half of the Advent hymns (14 of 29) have twentieth-century texts. Six texts come from the eighteenth century and four from the seventeenth century; two are plainsong types. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (ELW #257), for example, was expanded to eight

⁶⁴ See ELW, p. 335.

⁶⁵ LBW includes "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," "God of Our Fathers," "God Save Our Gracious Queen!," and "God Bless Our Native Land." ELW drops all but "God Bless Our Native Land" and adds these: "This Is My Song," "O Beautiful for Spacious Skies," "The Right Hand of God," "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory" (332 in LBW), "O Canada" and "Before You, Lord, We Bow" (401 in LBW).

⁶⁶ "O Say Can You See," the national anthem of the United States, has a fourth stanza which states "this is our motto: 'In God is our trust'" and seems very parallel to "God keep our land glorious and free" in the Canadian anthem. But then the American anthem is longer and speaks of battle, of "just cause" and of many other patriotic thoughts which seem unsuited for worship situations.

stanzas with the last stanza repeating the first; LBW (#34) had only five stanzas because it omitted the Wisdom and King of Nations stanzas. Two other Latin hymns in ELW suggest a theological aversion to stanzas that mention the curse of sin being overcome by Christ's victory. In ELW (#245) the ninth century hymn "*Conditor Alme Siderum*" (Creator of the Stars of Night) has only five of its original six stanzas. ELW omits stanza 2 where its translation source had "In sorrow that the ancient curse / should doom to death a universe, / you came, O Savior, to set free / your own in glorious liberty."⁶⁷ Similarly, ELW (#263), Ambrose's "*Veni, Redemptor gentium*" (Savior of the Nations, Come), loses one stanza which in LBW (#28:6) mentioned Christ's victory over flesh and sin.⁶⁸ Since LBW's Advent hymn texts had referenced "sin" only three times,⁶⁹ a reduction of two references in ELW has some significance. The treatment of Latin hymn stanzas in ELW seems to suggest that adding poetic imagery, related to the season and the Savior, is more desirable than pointing to Christ's victory over the power of sin and flesh.

A further examination of the new twentieth-century texts in ELW, but not in LBW, seem to support this observation. Advent is the season of preparation and in Year A the Isaiah readings speak of the beauty of the coming of the Lord. The new Advent hymns in ELW fit well with the Isaiah readings. The readings from Matthew, however, speak of the coming

⁶⁷ See *The Hymnal 1982* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1985), stanza 2. Number 6, stanza 2 in *The Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 1940*. (New York: The Church Pension Fund), had this version: "To thee, the travail deep was known / That made the whole creation groan / Till thou, Redeemer, shouldst free / Thine own in glorious liberty." LBW (#323) had used a translation by Melvin Farrell, "O Lord, of Light, Who Made the Stars," where stanza 3 at least had these lines in reference to sin's debt: "To pay the debt we owed for sin / Your painful cross was made the price."

⁶⁸ *Lutheran Worship* (13:6), employing a more literal translation than LBW, gave this version: "Father's equal, you will win / Vict'ries for us over sin. / Might eternal, make us whole; / Heal our ills of flesh and soul." ELW seems to rely on the William M. Reynolds translation that was employed in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (95:5): "Thou, the Father's only Son, / Hast o'er sin the victory won. / Boundless shall Thy kingdom be; / When shall we its glories see?" Ambrose's Latin: *Aequalis aeterno Patri, / Carnis tropaeo accingere, / Infirma nostril corporis / Vitute firmans perpeti*; Luther's German translation: *Der, du bist dem Vater gleich, / Führ' hinaus den Sieg im Fleisch, / Dass dein' ew-ge Gott'sgewalt / In uns das krank' Fleisch erhalt*.

⁶⁹ LBW 22:5, 24:1, 36:12.

judgment, the need for repentance and the virgin's son, Jesus, who will save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21). The new poetry does not fit well with Matthew and perhaps no better with the Mark and Luke readings. Setting aside the paraphrases of the Benedictus (#250) and the Magnificat (#251), the new hymn topics are: light one candle to banish darkness (#240), Emanuel comes with loving kindness and warm, gentle, caring (#242), the Prince of Peace make us one body and reconciles all nations (#247), get ready for the Guest—Rose, Star and Lord—is on the way (#248), life can spring from death so renew our lives, Jesus (#252), He came down that we might have love, light, peace and joy (#253), the word of our Savior, faithful and strong, will “right the wrong” (#255), wait for the Christ who brings healing to the earth (#258), the Star scatters the night, enlightens every guest (#261) and our brother sets every body free and “he is present, in our neighbors we see our Jesus is with us” (#266). Is there a theme here that by Christ's coming this world can be a “nicer place”? Despite language that speaks of healing and saving these texts are hardly the Advent of the Matthew readings focused on repentance as preached by John or about an Immanuel who takes away punishment for sin. Does no twentieth century poet write about this? Or, is it that the stuff of old Advent “uniformity” (power of sin, repentance, need for forgiveness) which must be supplanted by texts with a different, “more diverse,” Advent message?

Of the melodies for the 29 Advent hymns (#239-#267) there is a preference for tunes composed in the twentieth century (nine melodies) and for folk-like melodies (seven). This preference is balanced with three tunes each from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and four tunes from earlier periods. The ethnic diversity is further expanded by including a Yiddish, a Cameroon, a Taizé Community, a Basque, and an Hispanic melody. It

is hard to explain why “Joy to the World” is a part of the Advent hymn section since it is generally used at Christmas time. Is there a misplaced topic at the head of the page?⁷⁰

In the Lent section (#319-#343) there are twenty-five hymns. Eight are carried over from the seventeen hymns in LBW’s Lent group. A few of LBW’s Lent hymns found their way into other sections: “Confession, Forgiveness” (#601, 602), “Commitment, Discipleship” (#811) and “Holy Week, Three Days” (#353). Three hymns from LBW’s “Justification” (LBW #292), “Community in Christ” (LBW #355) and “Commitment” (LBW #497) sections are brought into ELW’s Lent group (ELW #323, #332, #327). Five LBW hymns that were not retained deal with the Savior’s wounds, pain, blood and dying, which fit Lenten services that extended the passion story through the Easter preparation period. Perhaps their tunes were out of favor or they were dropped to make room for a new textual accents. Indeed, more than half of the hymns in the Lent section are new and treat the “pilgrim journey” of one who dies to self by baptism into Jesus death. For example, this new accent is clear in Carl Daw’s third stanza of “Restore in Us, O God,” which reads: “Bring us, O Christ, to share / the fullness of your joy; / baptize us in the risen life / that death cannot destroy.” A couple of the new texts focus on the imagery of the Lamb of God. Users of ELW will thus find two central themes in this section: preparation for Easter by fasting and prayer (journey of the faithful and the catechumens of the early church) or Christian meditation on the Passion of Christ (a medieval practice of extending this over the whole of Lent). Both themes have historic precedence and spiritual benefits.

Eleven of the tunes for ELW’s Lenten hymns are from the twentieth century, six are from the nineteenth, four are from the sixteenth and one each from the seventh and from pre-

⁷⁰ Is it perhaps because of a line like “let ev’ry heart prepare him room” in stanza 1? One notes, however, that most of the text discusses the “king”(“the Lord who is come”) who “reigns” and “rules with grace and truth.”

Reformation times—giving a variety of styles and sources, from Paul Gerhardt’s majestic “A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth” to Twila Paris’s prosaic “Lamb of God.”

Similar concerns surface with ELW’s Holy Communion hymns (#460-#502). True, ELW is richer (forty-three hymns where LBW had thirty-one) and these are augmented by a group of eleven hymns for Gathering and eighteen hymns for Sending. ELW does retain nineteen of thirty-one hymns in ELW; five of those eliminated had come from *Service Book and Hymnal*, a predecessor book to LBW. Language changes to the hymns from LBW are mostly minor adjustments (upper case to lower case or removing the last of the thees and thous) or the typical masculine-avoidance adjustments. ELW shows a strong preference for twentieth-century tunes (twenty); there are an equal numbers of tunes from the nineteenth and the seventeenth centuries (seven from each). Four melodies are from the sixteenth century and one from the fifteenth. This distribution provides a diversity of musical style but a preference for modern tunes simply because of the modern texts.

More significant is what the poetry chooses to discuss. Most focus on Holy Communion as food and drink (fourteen texts) or as feast (seven texts). Five texts focus on unity. Four give thanks or praise. Three deal with remembrance and three with service.⁷¹ As in other hymn sections one must ask: Where are the songs that speak of forgiveness (like ELW #460 or #464:3) or that recall the words of institution, “This cup is...for the forgiveness of sin”?⁷² Some poetry speaks of cleansing (#475:3, #476:3, #478:2), of salvation (#481, #488:3, 495:3, #500), reconciliation (#462:3) or healing (#483, refrain), all of which are images that deal with the benefits received. Plain language about sin and about forgiveness is

⁷¹ ELW does have a few hymns that speak directly about “This is my body” (468:2, 484:3, 485:2, 490:2, 491:1, 499:1, 2) and “This is my blood” (468:2, 485:3, 490:2, 491:2, 494:1), which, if used, would allow singers to encourage each other in believing that Christ is received bodily in the sacramental eating and drinking.

⁷² ELW, p. 110.

difficult to find. Does such a corpus of hymnody suggest too much that my sense of wholeness, connectedness and gladness are the central benefits of the Lord's Supper? Recall that Luther's Small Catechism anchored it all in the words of Jesus: "The words 'given for you' and 'shed for you for the forgiveness of sin' show us that forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation."⁷³

Judging by these four hymn sections it appears that though ELW provides fresh musical diversity, it is a project that reorients hymnody away from the theological accents of the Lutheran Reformation⁷⁴ toward theological expressions that do little to challenge Reformed objections to Lutheran doctrine. Though these appear to be small steps toward not "imposing uniformity," they raise questions about commitment to a Lutheran theological heritage. How beneficial can this kind of diversity be?

Conclusion

ELW builds on the LBW tradition and takes it in a new direction. The title *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* suggests a resource for worship that is both evangelical (oriented to the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus) and Lutheran (rooted in Lutheran understandings). At the same time the short title, *Worship*, on the cover may imply that it is about resourcing worship in an age that must be more inclusive and ecumenical. Here is a summary of major pluses and minuses:

- + In binding, layout and feel it is an attractive book.
- Internal graphics frequently draw more attention to human dimensions than to the actions of God through Word and Sacrament.

⁷³ ELW, p. 1166.

⁷⁴ Consider that, though the goal was not fully achieved, the LBW project had brought North American Lutherans together toward a theological uniformity in a great number of worship resources. Instead ELW demonstrates a tendency to move away from historical Lutheran understandings.

- + To link the worshipping assembly to God's mission and the Spirit's work through the means of grace is a clear goal, at least according to the introduction.
- Though ELW seeks to serve the world by renewing the church's worship by means of the Christian tradition of patterns, words, actions, and songs, it is not clear what guides the selection process for cultural forms other than a commitment to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments.
- + ELW provides a scheme of Scripture readings and a church year, one that is shared with Protestant North American church bodies, and lightly trims the commemoration list in LBW.
- By adopting the Revised Common Lectionary "as is" ELW tends to put the "modern reader" too much in charge of what is heard on Sundays and festivals under a banner of "unity" of tradition.
- + ELW offers a family of liturgical resources, representing the "breadth of the church," by means of a common "ordo" to give diversity a recognizable unity.
- Qualms about gender-specific language tend to undermine some ELW texts to realign the particular nature of the Trinitarian relationships and to initiate a subtle shift in Christological theology.
- ELW gives little theological guidance for using the flexibility of many options in the rites.
- The Holy Baptism rite tends to focus on the prayer and faith of the community more than on what God promises to the one who is baptized.
- + ELW provides the first example of a healing service in a recent Lutheran hymnal.
- The marriage rite does not reference procreation as a central purpose of marriage.
- + There is an increased selection of musical settings for services and a greater variety of musical styles in hymnody, making ELW more "global" than LBW.
- ELW's editorial preferences for fresh biblical themes and metaphorical images in the assembly's song diminishes the number of clear, direct statements of God's gracious forgiveness for sin by faith in Christ.

Thus, where ELW might have committed to the *uniformity* of the "shared tradition" in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* instead it reaches in new directions to accommodate those who do not wish to be bound by past Lutheran formulations but who seek *unity* in what might be

shared if fences between church bodies were removed. Users of ELW will find that under the guise of familiar Lutheran hymnic and liturgical “forms” there is increased emphasis on the “work of the people” instead of the actions of God in worship and that many texts were altered to be “politically correct” for service to inclusiveness and ecumenism. ELW seems primarily to offer resources that are more global in musical and liturgical expression. More importantly, it fosters the kind of unity that slips away from a Lutheran uniformity.