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Celebrating Five Centuries
of Lutheran Hymnals

About the Cover Art

For the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, Concordia Seminary sponsored a concert on October 13, 1983, at Powell Hall with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and Chorus titled “A Musical Evening Celebrating 500 Years of Martin Luther.” For the promotional materials for this concert, the seminary commissioned local artist Siegfried Reinhardt (1925–1984) to depict Martin Luther as a hymn writer and musician. The artwork by Reinhardt was also used for the seminary’s hymn festival “The Ashes Go on Singing” on February 18, 2024.

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Of the Making of Many Hymnals

As I write these words, I am sitting at the biennial conference of the Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Hymnologie (German Hymn Society). The conference is in Prague this year because in 1501, a hymnal was published there by the spiritual descendants of the church reformer Jan Hus (ca. 1370–1415). That hymnal is widely recognized as the first hymnal printed in the vernacular (in this case, Czech), and its contents and context demonstrate, once again, that the Lutheran Reformation did not burst into flame out of thin air. Rather, it took on momentum within a much wider context of social, theological, and political tensions and reforms, which, in the case of the Hussites, had been smoldering for more than a century. The Hussite hymnals made possible the eventual refinement and printing of Lutheran hymnals. Most importantly, the pervasive use of Lutheran hymnals became essential to the spread of the Reformation Gospel throughout Germany and much of the rest of Europe.¹ And it has not stopped since.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the *Achtliederbuch* (Eight-hymn Book), the first Lutheran hymnal and the occasion for this issue of the *Concordia Journal*. In this issue we celebrate the making of many Lutheran hymnals—from the humble beginnings of Luther’s hymnal of 1524 to the present, into the future, and around the world.

Peter Reske’s article was first presented as a hymn festival at Concordia Seminary on February 18, 2024, focused on the hymns of Martin Luther from the *Achtliederbuch* of 1524. To his hymn festival text, Reske added a series of illuminating footnotes that take the reader more deeply into the history and theology of Luther’s hymns. “By their footnotes shall ye know them,” somebody once observed.

Samuel Eatherton began his service at Concordia Seminary this fall as Kantor and Director of Music Arts and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology. As such, his more than two decades of service as a parish musician, composer, and recitalist are brought to bear in the service of our seminary community. Sam also happens to be a wonderful musicologist and scholar, and his article traces how Martin Luther adapted and transformed existing sixteenth-century church melodies and Latin texts into some of the Luther hymns that we know and love today.

Sergio Fritzier writes from a Latin American perspective as pastor, seminary professor, and hymnal editor of *Himnario Luterano* (2021), the most recent Spanish-language hymnal for Lutherans. In his article, Fritzier brings to English speakers for the

first time a history of Spanish-language hymnals for Lutherans in Latin America—a history that, in many ways, is linked with and mirrors the development of English-language hymnals in North America.

Phillip Magness and Sandra Rhein write as missionary practitioners. Magness spends several weeks each year in Francophone Africa teaching Lutheran church musicians. Out of his work there came the development of a hymnal supplement, *Liturgies et Cantiques Luthériens: Édition Africaine* (Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2023), and this article describes the process for the development of this “mission hymnal.” Rhein travels the world for LCMS International Mission, assisting partner churches in developing hymnals in places as far-flung as Ethiopia, Kenya, Indonesia, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Latin America. She has been involved in this work for more than a decade, and here, for the first time, she tells the important story of these international hymnal projects.

The book reviews in this issue are a healthy sampling of recent volumes on Lutheran hymnody and church music. Of note is the review essay by Robert Kolb of *A New Song We Now Begin: Celebrating a Half Millennium of Lutheran Hymnals, 1524–2024*, edited by Robin A. Leaver. Kolb aptly summarizes: “In a series of snapshot portrayals of key points in the ongoing development of the publication of hymnals in Lutheran churches, there emerges a portrait of the essential place occupied by the hymnal as a tool for the singing of the faith in the piety of the Wittenberg Reformation.”

“From Wittenberg to the ends of the earth . . .” Wherever Lutherans have gone, so have their hymnals gone with them, enabling them to sing “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” with gratitude in their hearts to God (Colossians 3:16). And that is, after all, one of the few things in this life that we can be sure we will be doing for the rest of our lives in eternity—singing hymns “to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb” (Revelation 7:10).

Jon D. Vieker
Guest editor and
Dean of Chapel

Endnotes

- 1 Christopher Boyd Brown suggests that even by conservative estimates, there were “more than two million hymnals, song sheets, and other hymn-related materials circulating in sixteenth-century Germany,” the overwhelming preponderance of them Lutheran in origin. *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation*, Harvard Historical Studies (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 5–6.

Articles

The Ashes Go on Singing

Peter C. Reske



Peter Reske is senior editor of music/worship at Concordia Publishing House. He was the editor of *Lutheran Service Book* and *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, the editorial advisor for *One*

and *All Rejoice* and was co-editor of *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*.

Luther's First Hymn

There was excitement in the village that day. The balladeer was in town to sing the news.¹ His ballads were stories of noteworthy or scandalous events set to catchy tunes. After singing, the balladeer would eagerly sell the people one-page copies of his songs for a penny or two. What sensational tidings

from distant lands did he bring today? He made his way to the village inn, where he dragged a wooden bench to the middle of the room. He climbed up on the bench, cleared his throat, and started singing: "A new song now shall be begun." The first line was familiar enough,² something like "Here's one you haven't heard." But the song was indeed new. Its subject was the death of two Lutheran martyrs, and its theme was "praise for all that God has done."³ By the time the bench-singer⁴ left the village, all his copies of the martyr ballad had been sold, and his pockets were full.

On July 1, 1523, two Augustinian monks, accused of spreading Lutheran heresies, were brought before the inquisitors in Brussels. Their names were Henricus Vos and Johannes van den Esschen.⁵ Henry and John were interrogated by

Editor's note

The author originally wrote and delivered this essay as the narration for "The Ashes Go on Singing: A Hymn Festival on the Hymns of Martin Luther," held in the Chapel of St. Timothy and St. Titus at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on February 18, 2024, the commemoration of Martin Luther. The endnotes have been added for this publication.

theologians sent from Louvain, were defrocked (literally and figuratively), were given a written confession to sign, and finally were burned at the stake. When news of the event reached Martin Luther, he set his pen to paper and wrote this ballad, his first hymn.⁶

Not content with only a description of the events of the trial and execution, Luther tells how the ashes of the young men were “flung to the heedless winds”⁷ and how they “scatter to all places.”⁸ The ashes rise up and accuse the inquisitors; they rise up and accuse us. But these ashes also sing. They sing of how our God through his Son has rescued Henry and John and all of us from sin and death. The ashes go on singing!

This hymn marked a “bright dawning”⁹ for the recovery of the Word of God. It was a new day for hymnody as well. The hymn concludes with a paraphrase of Song of Solomon: “For behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come.”¹⁰

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 A new song now shall be begun, ¹¹
Lord, help us raise the banner
Of praise for all that God has done,
For which we give Him honor.
At Brussels in the Netherlands
God proved Himself most truthful
And poured His gifts from open hands
On two lads, martyrs youthful,
Through whom He showed His power. | 3 From where the Foe in ambush lay,
He sent to have them taken
To force them God’s Word to betray
And make their faith be shaken.
Louvain sent clever men, who came
In twisting nets to break them.
Hard played they at their crooked game,
But from faith could not shake them.
God made their tricks look foolish. |
| 2 One was named John, a name to show
He stood in God’s high favor.
His brother Henry, well we know,
Was salt of truest savor.
They now have left this world behind ¹²
And wear bright crowns of glory.
These sons of God had fixed the mind
Upon the Gospel story,
For which they died as martyrs. | 4 Oh, they sang sweet, and they sang sour,
They tried all their devices.
The youths stood firmly like a tow’r
And overcame each crisis.
It filled the Foe with raging hate
To know himself defeated
By these two lads, and he so great.
His rage flared high, and heated
His plan to see them burning. |

- 5 Their cloister garments off they tore,
Took off their consecrations;
All this the youths were ready for,
They said Amen with patience.
They gave to God the Father thanks
That He would them deliver
From Satan's scoffing and the pranks
That make men quake and shiver
When he comes masked and raging.
- 6 The God they worshiped granted them
A priesthood in Christ's order.
They offered up themselves to Him
And crossed His kingdom's border
By dying to the world outright,
With ev'ry falsehood breaking.
They came to heaven pure and white;
All monkery forsaking,
They turned away from evil.
- 7 A paper given them to sign—
And carefully they read it—
Spelled out their faith in ev'ry line
As they confessed and said it.
Their greatest fault was to be wise
And say, "We trust God solely,
For human wisdom is all lies,
We should distrust it wholly."
This brought them to the burning.
- 8 Then two great fires were set alight,
While men amazed did ponder
The sight of youths who showed no
fright;
Their calm filled men with wonder.
They stepped into the flames with song,
God's grace and glory praising.
The worldly sages puzzled long¹³
But found these new things dazing
Which God was here displaying.
- 9 They now regret their deed of shame,
Would like to slough it over;
They dare not glory in their blame,
But put it under cover.
They feel their gnawing infamy,
Their friends hear them deplore it.
God's Spirit cannot silent be,
But on Cain's guilty forehead
He marks the blood of Abel.
- 10 The ashes of the lads remain
And scatter to all places.
They rise from roadway, street, and lane
To mark the guilty faces.
The Foe had used a bloody hand
To keep these voices quiet,
But they resist in ev'ry land
The Foe's rage and defy it.
The ashes go on singing.
- 11 And yet men still keep up their lies
To justify the killing;
The Foe with falsehood ever tries
To give to guilt clean billing.
Since these young martyrs' holy death,
Men still continue trying
To say, the youths with their last breath
Renounced their faith when dying
And finally recanted.
- 12 Let men heap falsehoods all around,
Their sure defeat is spawning.
We thank our God the Word is found,
We stand in its bright dawning.
Our summer now is at the door,
The winter's frost has ended,
Soft bud the flowers more and more,
By our dear Gard'ner tended
Until He reaps His harvest.

Psalm Hymns

[Sing: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (*LSB* 656)]

All the hymns we are singing today were published 500 years ago in 1524—that is, all except “A Mighty Fortress,” which first appeared around 1529.¹⁴ “The Foe,” who showed up five times¹⁵ in “A New Song” is back in “A Mighty Fortress” and “now means deadly woe.”¹⁶ But this hymn, Luther’s paraphrase of Psalm 46, is meant to be one of comfort. Like the martyrs, we may lose everything, even our lives, but Jesus Christ fights for us, and Christ has won.

While “A Mighty Fortress” starts by paraphrasing its model Psalm 46 and then moves beyond the psalm, Luther’s treatment of Psalm 130, “From Depths of Woe,” follows the psalm closely.¹⁷ Here we have sorrow over our sins, acknowledging that our best deeds must fail and that we cannot hope in our own merit. But we have comfort again, singing of God’s love, God’s grace, and his abundant favor. Each year, as our foreheads are marked with ashes and we sing this hymn,¹⁸ the ashes also sing. The ashes sing of our mortality and death. “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”¹⁹ But the ashes also sing of the cross and how our “shepherd good and true” will free us from all “sin and sorrow.”²⁰ The ashes go on singing!

The cross is also at the center of Luther’s paraphrase of Psalm 12.²¹ He is concerned with “false teachers”²² who “own no lord and master,”²³ with “heresy”²⁴ and “error.”²⁵ If we look for a battle hymn of the Reformation, a better candidate than “A Mighty Fortress” might be “O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold.”²⁶ Here as in the psalm, our God arises to bring his saving Word to fight for us and to defend us. His “little flock”²⁷ finds its salvation only in Christ, whose “light beams brighter through the cross.”²⁸

[Sing: “From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee” (*LSB* 607)]

[Sing: “O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold” (*TLH* 260)]

Festival Hymns

The printers were in a hurry. They knew a book of Luther hymns would make a best-seller, and they knew other printers had the same idea. So what if the date on the title page was wrong? No matter. And why did this Nuremberg printer put the city Wittenberg on the title page? Perhaps they knew it would get more attention. Early in 1524, the first Lutheran hymnal came off the press.²⁹ This hymnal came to be known as the *Achtliederbuch*, German for “eight-hymn book.” Though with its eight hymns and only twenty-four pages, it was barely a book. Even so, one could argue, the Western Church was changed forever.

Three of the eight hymns were by Paul Speratus, including his “Salvation unto Us Has Come.”³⁰ One hymn was anonymous.³¹ And four were by Martin Luther, including three psalm-hymns: “O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold,” “From Depths of Woe,” and “The Mouth of Fools,” a setting of Psalm 14.³² But given pride

of place, the very first hymn in the very first Lutheran hymnal was “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice.”³³

Unlike the ballad “A New Song,” this hymn was intended for liturgical use. Already in 1524, a hallmark of this new hymnody (by Luther and others) was firmly established. In our hymns, we “proclaim the wonders God has done.”³⁴ We proclaim to one another and to the world our lost condition and the saving deeds of Jesus Christ.³⁵ In the hymn, which covers the entirety of salvation’s story, Luther describes the “torment” of sin in a life that has become “a living hell.”³⁶ So God first speaks to his Son: “It’s time to have compassion.”³⁷ The Son then speaks to us, his people, and tells us in the tenderest terms, “I am yours, and you are Mine.”³⁸ The Foe returns, but this time Jesus himself tells us “The foe shall not divide us.”³⁹ And divided we are not. Life wins the victory over death. Christ’s innocence bears our sin. And we are blest forever.

[Sing: “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” (*LSB* 556)]

Congregational hymns for the church year and its festivals were a necessity, and Luther set about providing them. A few examples include: “Savior of the Nations, Come” for Advent;⁴⁰ “From Heaven Above” for Christmas;⁴¹ and for Epiphany, “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord.”⁴² But Luther didn’t have to start from nothing. He relied on an existing type of medieval folk hymn that was sung by congregations in their common language and that typically ended with an acclamation of “Lord, have mercy.”⁴³ Many of these vernacular folk hymns were already in use, especially for feast days. For his Easter hymn “Christ, Our Lord, Who Died to Save Us,”⁴⁴ Luther used this existing model. No ten-stanza discourse here; three stanzas will do. Rather than complete images, the Easter themes come almost as fleeting glimpses: Christ died; he is arisen. Spotless victim; death is buried. But in stanza three the panorama becomes so full and complete, the poetry overflows. We view Christ holding everything in his hands: “death and hell and life and glory.”⁴⁵

For the hymn “To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray,” Luther started with a popular medieval hymn to the Holy Spirit. The first stanza with its “Lord, have mercy” had already been sung by congregations for several centuries.⁴⁶ Luther added three of his own stanzas that expand on the names and work of the Holy Spirit: “O sweetest Love,”⁴⁷ “Transcendent Comfort . . . when the foe shall taunt and assail us,”⁴⁸ and “precious light.”⁴⁹ The medieval first stanza ends with the exiled people wending their way home as the tune stretches out with movement and longing on the word “wending.” In Luther’s final stanza, we pray that the Holy Spirit keep us in Christ until we reach that true and longed-for home. Lord, have mercy!

[Sing: “Christ, Our Lord, Who Died to Save Us”]

[Sing: “To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray” (*LSB* 768)]

Hymns from the Liturgy

Luther was now writing hymns in earnest, encouraging his colleagues to join the hymnic effort.⁵⁰ At the same time, he was also refining the liturgical services of the church. The people should sing more than hymns in the service, so he provided congregational versions of liturgical music, such as the Gloria in Excelsis “All Glory Be to God Alone”⁵¹ and the Sanctus “Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old.”⁵² His creedal hymn, “We All Believe in One True God,”⁵³ already reflected his thoughts on the creed found in his Large and Small Catechisms, which wouldn’t be published for another five years. While the hymn certainly functioned in the service as a creed, it also became a Catechism hymn, a vehicle for teaching the faith. The three stanzas recount and amplify trinitarian creedal statements. The Father created earth and heaven, made us his children, and provides for all our needs. Jesus Christ, “our elder brother,”⁵⁴ was born of Mary, was crucified, and was raised. And the Holy Spirit comforts us and keeps the church, as we look for the resurrection of the dead.

For almost two hundred years, “We All Believe in One True God” was the hymn prescribed in Lutheran worship books more often than any other.⁵⁵ Coming in second place was “O Lord, We Praise Thee,”⁵⁶ which is still one of Luther’s most popular hymns. Here Luther adapted another medieval folk hymn and added two of his own stanzas. Christ’s body—the same body that was born of Mary—carried our sins and sorrows and “into death was given.”⁵⁷ Christ’s blood nourishes our souls, pleads for us, and sustains us. Christ paid our debt, and “peace with God once more is made.”⁵⁸ Frequently sung at the end of Communion, the hymn sends us out into the world with a prayer that the Spirit would grant us that same peace.

[Sing: “We All Believe in One True God” (*LSB* 954)]

[Sing: “O Lord, We Praise Thee” (*LSB* 617)]

We close our hymn festival today with the *Nunc Dimittis*,⁵⁹ a canticle sung at the close of a day, at the close of a service, at the close of a life.⁶⁰ Our evening rites and devotions often include this Song of Simeon. Each sleep is like a little death, and “death is but a slumber.”⁶¹ We leave the Lord’s Table “serene and confident,”⁶² knowing that our eyes have seen our “faithful Savior.”⁶³ And when our time on this earth comes to its close, we can sing, “Now I know He is my life, my friend when I am dying.”⁶⁴

At the graveside, after singing this canticle, perhaps even this very paraphrase by Martin Luther, a small sign of the cross may be made by pouring sand or earth on the casket.⁶⁵ Even at the close, the ashes go on singing. And we go on singing! We sing of how God “sent the people of the earth their great salvation.”⁶⁶ We sing of his “holy, precious Word, in every place resounding.”⁶⁷ And we sing of Christ, “the hope and saving light,”⁶⁸ and that we, “in Him, find joy and glory.”⁶⁹

[Sing: “In Peace and Joy I Now Depart” (*LSB* 938)]

Endnotes

- 1 For a discussion of ballad singing at this time, see Rebecca Wagner Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), and Una McLivenna, *Singing the News of Death: Execution Ballads in Europe 1500–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), especially 13–14.
- 2 Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda*, 62.
- 3 St. 1.3.
- 4 A German name for these singers was *Bänkelsänger* (bench-singers). See Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda*, 27. The term is related etymologically to “mountebank.” See McLivenna, *Singing the News of Death*, 25.
- 5 A thorough account of the events and an analysis of Luther’s ballad are given in T. H. M. Akerboom, “A New Song We Raise.’ On the First Martyrs of the Reformation and the Origin of Martin Luther’s First Hymn,” *Perichoresis* 4, no. 1 (2006): 53–77.
- 6 Luther’s hymn “Ein neues Lied wir heben an” was first printed as a broadside with the heading “Ein lied von den zween Merterern Christi, zu Brüssel, von den Sophisten von Löuen verbrandt. Geschehen im jar MDXXII [sic]. Dr. Martin Luther.” While no copy of the broadside can now be located, Franz Magnus Böhme presumably saw one as he reported this title and corrected the date to 1523 in his *Alteutsches Liederbuch: Volkslieder der Deutschen nach Wort und Weise aus dem 12. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1877), no. 386, p. 477.
The hymn’s first appearance in a book was in *Eyn Enchiridion oder Handbüchlein* (Erfurt: Johann Loersfelt, 1524), fols. C5^r–C6^r, and then in *Enchiridion Oder eyn Handbüchlein* (Erfurt: Mathes Maler, 1524), fols. F2^r–F3^v. In both these Erfurt *Enchiridion*, the hymn only had ten stanzas (stanzas 1–8, 11–12 of the version given here). Later in 1524, the hymn appeared with twelve stanzas in Johann Walter’s *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn* (Wittenberg: Joseph Klug, 1504 [i.e., 1524]), no. 6, tenor partbook fols. B1^v–B3^r. German editions of the hymn include *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1923), 35:411–15; Markus Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe der Werke Martin Luthers, vol. 4. (Cologne: Böhlau, 1985), no. 18, pp. 217–22; Jürgen Heidrich and Johannes Schilling, eds., *Martin Luther: Die Lieder* (Stuttgart: Reclam and Stuttgart: Carus-Verlag, 2017), no. 18, pp. 72–77. English editions include Helmut T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther’s Works*, vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leopold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 211–16; Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda*, no. 61, pp. 260–63; Peter C. Reske, ed., *The Hymns of Martin Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016), 10–12.
The hymn is not found in any of the congregational hymnals or supplements of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. However, it does appear in a book for school children: *Liederbüchlein für untere Classen und gemischte Schulen* (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten [Concordia Publishing House], 1875), no. 41, pp. 29–31. It sits between a birthday song (no. 40) and “Silent Night” (no. 42).
- 7 “Flung to the Heedless Winds” is a two-stanza English hymn based on stanza 10 of Luther’s “Ein neues Lied wir heben an.” See *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), no. 259. The paraphrase first appeared in J. H. Merle D’Aubigné, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in Germany, Switzerland, etc.* (London: D. Walther, 1841), 3:194–95. There the publisher, David Walther, states that the translation was “obligingly rendered by John Alex. Messenger; to whose friendly pen the publisher is indebted.”
- 8 St. 10.2.
- 9 St. 12.4.
- 10 Song of Solomon 2:11–12a.
- 11 The English translation is from *The Hymns of Martin Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 6:8–10. This six-volume collection of Luther’s hymns had text translations by F. Samuel Janzow and musical settings by Paul Bunjes, Richard Hillert, and Carl Schalk. Bertram Frederick Samuel Janzow (1913–2001) was a professor of English and theology at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest. See Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, Jon D. Vieker, eds., *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns* (St.

- Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), hereafter *LSBCH*, 2:430–31. Janzow’s translation as given here was altered in two places for publication in Reske, *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, 10–12. See below.
- Other English translations include Richard Massie’s “By Help of God I Fain Would Tell” in his *Martin Luther’s Spiritual Songs* (London: Hatchard, 1854), 40–44, and George MacDonald’s “A New Song Here Shall Be Begun” in his *Exotics: A Translation of the Spiritual Songs of Novalis, the Hymn-Book of Luther, and Other Poems from the German and Italian* (London: Strahan and Co., 1876), 71–76. MacDonald’s translation also appears in *Luther’s Works*, 53:211–16. For a prose English translation, see Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda*, 261–63.
- 12 Janzow had: “This world they now have left behind.” It was altered in Reske, *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, for smoother syntax.
- 13 Janzow had: “The logic choppers puzzled long.” It was altered in Reske, *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, for a more mellifluous translation of “der muet wart den Sophisten klein” (the sophists’ courage was small). (For German hymn quotations, the original orthography is used throughout this essay.)
- 14 “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” was likely written between 1527 and 1529. The earliest reported publication of this hymn is *Geistliche lieder auffß new gebessert und gemehrt zu Wittemberg* (Wittenberg: Joseph Klug, 1529), although no copy is known to exist. For background to the hymn, see *LSBCH* 1:836–43.
- 15 In Janzow’s English translation, “the Foe” appears five times (sts. 3.1, 4.5, 10.5, 10.8, 11.3); in Walter’s twelve-stanza version, “der alte feynd” occurs only three times (sts. 3.1, 4.5, 10.4).
- 16 “Der alt böse feind, mit ernst ers ytz meint” (The old evil foe now means deadly woe, st. 1.5–6).
- 17 For background to the hymn “Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir,” see *LSBCH* 1:703–707.
- 18 The rite for “Ash Wednesday with Optional Imposition of Ashes” in *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 486, suggests “Savior, When in Dust to Thee” (LSB 419), the penitential psalms, or other appropriate hymns be sung during the imposition of ashes. The prescribed hymn of the day for Ash Wednesday is “From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee.” See *Lutheran Service Book: Propers of the Day* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 449.
- 19 *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*, 486.
- 20 St. 5.5, 7.
- 21 For background to the hymn “Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein,” see Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, no. 8, pp. 175–79; Heidrich and Schilling, *Martin Luther: Die Lieder*, no. 8, pp. 37–40; *Luther’s Works*, 53:225–28; Reske, *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, 46–47.
- 22 St. 3.2.
- 23 St. 3.7.
- 24 St. 3.1.
- 25 St. 2.7: “error’s maze”; st. 6.3: “error.”
- 26 For a discussion of “A Mighty Fortress” as a Reformation battle hymn, see *LSBCH* 1:836.
- 27 St. 6.6.
- 28 St. 5.5.
- 29 The first Lutheran hymnal, *Eitlich Cristlich liden Lobgesang, vn[d] Psalm, dem rainen wort Gottes gemeß* (Wittenberg [i.e., Nuremberg]: Jobst Gutknecht, 1514 [i.e., 1524]), was likely published in January of 1524. See Konrad Ameln, “Das Achtliederbuch vom Jahre 1523/24,” *Jahrbuch für Liturgik und Hymnologie* 2 (1956): 89–91.
- In three exemplars of the book, the date on the title page reads “M.D.Xiiij” (1514), a misprint for 1524. The copies are at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel (VD16 L 4698), at the Landesbibliothek Coburg (VD16 L 4699), and at Emory University. See Stephen A. Crist, “Early Lutheran Hymnals and Other Musical Sources in the Kessler Reformation Collection at Emory University,” *Notes* 63, no. 3 (March 2007): 503–32, especially 510–11. The date on the title page was subsequently corrected to “M.D.XXiiij” (1524) (VD16 L 4700).
- While the title page identifies Wittenberg as the place of publication, or at least the city where the hymns originated, the book was printed in Nuremberg by Jobst Gutknecht. For more on the *Achtliederbuch*, see

Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, 19–20, and Robin A. Leaver, *A New Song We Now Begin: Celebrating the Half Millennium of Lutheran Hymnals 1524–2024* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024), 45–51.

- 30 The three Speratus hymns were “Es ist das Heil uns kommen her” (Salvation unto Us Has Come, see *LSBCH* 1:577–583); the creedal hymn “In Gott glaub ich, daß er hat” (In God I trust, for so I must); and the paraphrase of Psalm 2 “Hilf Gott, wie ist der Menschen Not” (Help, God, how great is the need of man). For biographical information on Paul Speratus (1484–1551), see *LSBCH* 2:680–81.
- 31 The anonymous hymn, sometimes ascribed to Justus Jonas, is “In Jesus Namen heben wir an” (In Jesus name we begin).
- 32 Luther’s hymn based on Psalm 14 is “Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl” (The Mouth of Fools Doth God Confess). See Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, no. 9, pp. 180–83; Heidrich and Schilling, *Martin Luther: Die Lieder*, no. 9, pp. 41–44; *Luther’s Works*, 53:229–31; Reske, *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, 60–61.
- 33 For background to the hymn “Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein,” see *LSBCH* 1:583–88.
- 34 St. 1.5.
- 35 Carl F. Schalk provides a superb treatment of the theology and function of Lutheran hymns in his essay “The Church’s Song: Proclamation, Pedagogy, and Praise” in *LSBCH* 2:123–29. For discussions of Luther’s theology of music and hymnody, see Walter E. Buszin, “Luther on Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (January 1946): 80–97; reprinted as Walter E. Buszin, *Luther on Music*, Lutheran Society for Worship, Music and the Arts, Pamphlet Series no. 3 (St. Paul: North Central Publishing Company, 1958); Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988); Robin A. Leaver, *Luther’s Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Daniel Zager, *The Gospel Preached through Music: The Purpose and Practice of Lutheran Church Music* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2013); Daniel Zager, *Lutheran Music and Meaning* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2023).
- 36 St. 2.3, 7.
- 37 St. 5.2.
- 38 St. 7.5. While Luther’s use of the German familiar form here (Dann ich bin dein vnd du bist mein) is not unusual, it is nonetheless striking.
- 39 “Vns sol der feindt nicht schayden,” st. 7.7.
- 40 See *LSBCH* 1:5–9.
- 41 See *LSBCH* 1:74–78.
- 42 See *LSBCH* 1:208–13.
- 43 The characteristic ending with the word “Kyrieleis” (a contraction of “Kyrie eleison”) lent this type of vernacular congregational song the name *Leise* (plural *Leisen*). See Anthony Ruff’s essay “The Early Church and the Middle Ages” in *LSBCH* 2:3–12, especially 9–12.
- 44 For background to the hymn “Jesus Christus, unser Heiland, der den Tod,” see Jenny, *Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge*, no. 13, pp. 198–201; Heidrich and Schilling, *Martin Luther: Die Lieder*, no. 13, pp. 55–57; *Luther’s Works*, 53:258–59. The English translation used at the hymn festival is by Carl Schalk and may be found in Reske, *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, 18. Schalk originally translated the text to be used with a four-choir motet by Michael Praetorius as published in Carl F. Schalk and William H. Brauns, eds., *Lutheran Choral Anthology: The 16th Century* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 187–90.
- 45 St. 3.1.
- 46 Berthold of Regensburg (ca. 1210–72) quoted this *Leise*, “Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist,” in a sermon. For background to the hymn, see *LSBCH* 1:1128–1131.
- 47 St. 2.1.
- 48 “Du hochster troster . . . wenn der feind wird das leben verklagen,” st. 3.1, 4.
- 49 St. 4.1.

- 50 Toward the end of 1523, Luther wrote to Georg Spalatin: “[Our] plan is to follow the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers of the church, and to compose psalms for the people [in the] vernacular, that is, spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may be among the people also in the form of music. Therefore we are searching everywhere for poets. Since you are endowed with a wealth [of knowledge] and elegance [in handling] the German language, and since you have polished [your German] through much use, I ask you to work with us on this project.” Helmut T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther’s Works*, vol. 49, *Letters II*, ed. Gottfried G. Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 68.
- 51 See *LSBCH* 1:1541–1547.
- 52 See *LSBCH* 1:1568–1572.
- 53 For background to the hymn “Wir glauben all an einen Gott,” see *LSBCH* 1:1557–1560.
- 54 St. 2.7.
- 55 “Wir glauben all an einen Gott” is mentioned 179 times in church orders; “Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet” is mentioned 124 times. Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 66.
- 56 For background to the hymn “Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet,” see *LSBCH* 1:731–34.
- 57 St. 2.1.
- 58 St. 2.9.
- 59 For background to the hymn “Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin,” see *LSBCH* 1:1512–1515.
- 60 The Nunc Dimittis is appointed at Compline, the last service of the Daily Office. *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*, 353–54. Four settings of the Divine Service in *LSB* include the Nunc Dimittis. *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*, 169–70, 208–9, 249–51, 271. The Nunc Dimittis appears in both the “Com-mendation of the Dying” rite and in the Funeral Service. *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 95, 122. Furthermore, the Nunc Dimittis is suggested as an optional canticle in the Good Friday Tenebrae Vespers. *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*, 526.
- 61 St. 1.6.
- 62 St. 1.3.
- 63 St. 2.1.
- 64 St. 2.5–6.
- 65 At this point in the rite, the pastor says: “We now commit [his/her] body to [the ground / its resting place]; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subdue all things to Himself.” *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, 138.
- 66 St. 3.1–2.
- 67 St. 3.5–6.
- 68 St. 4.1.
- 69 St. 4.6.

Luther's Latin Hymn Translations It's Not Monkey Business

Samuel J. Eatherton



Kantor and teacher.

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When someone asks what hymns Luther wrote, what comes to mind? “A Mighty Fortress” is probably the first, with perhaps “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice” and “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” as close seconds. But in addition to creating original texts and tunes, Luther also used existing Latin chants and modified them into

singable chorales in the German language. Luther recognized the importance of the historic chants and wanted to get these words—and in some way, their tunes—into the mouths of the worshipping congregation. However, he was not content to impose a German translation over the original Latin melodies. He wrote, “For to translate the Latin text and retain the Latin tone or notes has my sanction, though it doesn’t sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody, and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection, otherwise all of it becomes an imitation, in the manner of the apes.”¹ Luther was referring to the creation of German chants in place of the Latin mass, but his same aesthetic sense can be seen in his reworking of Latin office hymns and sequences to form new material that sounded natural in German. The efficacy of his method is seen in the staying power of the three examples described in this study, all in *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) and sung by LCMS congregations in the United States today: “Savior of the Nations, Come” (*Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*); “Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest” (*Komm, Gott Schöpfer*); and “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (*Christ lag in Todesbanden*).

Luther and Music

The chant *Veni Redemptor gentium* was the basis for several tunes, including Luther's hymn tune *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*. Luther's adaptation of the *Veni Creator Spiritus* chant became the chorale *Komm, Gott Schöpfer*. In both instances Luther translated these Latin office hymns into German and adapted or recomposed the plainsong to fit better the accents of the German. The third chant-chorale combination explored in this study is the Easter sequence *Victimae Paschali* and Luther's chorale *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. While Luther's chorale tune does not follow the chant as closely as the first two cases mentioned above, similarities in the texts and tunes—as well as the chorale's similarity to the late medieval anonymous German hymn *Christ ist erstanden* (itself based on the sequence hymn *Victimae Paschali*)—make the connection between the two a strong one.²

Luther was not only a doctor of theology, but he also had more than a passing knowledge of music. As a boy he attended the *Lateinschule* in Mansfeld, where his early education in music was largely in the form of liturgical music gained from singing in services. Later in the schools of Magdeburg and Eisenach, both attached to churches, he was required to sing for church services as a member of the choir, gaining experience in singing the liturgies of the Mass and daily offices. At the University of Erfurt, the study of music (philosophy) was included in the *Quadrivium*

required for the master's degree. At some point he learned to play the lute, and he had some skill in composing polyphony as evidenced in his one choral work based on his favorite psalm verse, Psalm 118:17, "I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord," (*Non moriar sed vivam*). The fact that some three dozen hymns (texts and tunes) emanated from the pen of Luther attest to his skill as both a poet and a composer.

Luther not only knew how to *make* music, but he also knew the *power* of music: it was a gift of God and a medium through which God's word could be broadcast. In his 1530 letter to the composer Ludwig Senfl, Luther wrote, "It is clear that the Devil, the author of all sad worries and restless confusion, flees from the voice of music



Figure 1: The title page of Spangenberg's chant anthology showing the dual language nature of the book. The first half of the book provided the texts in Latin, and the second half provided texts in German.



Figure 2: At the bottom of the left-hand page begins the Victimae Paschali chant in the Latin portion of Spangenberg's book.

in almost the same way as he flees from the Word of theology.”³ Although devotional and other religious songs in the vernacular were sung in Germany well before Luther's time, he recognized the influence of music, coupled with the common language of the people, to convey doctrinal information especially to the uneducated. The technology of the printing press that played such a key role in disseminating texts such as the Ninety-five Theses was quickly enlisted to print hymns (with music) that corrected the abuses of Rome and, in Luther's eyes, allowed people to learn the faith more deeply.

The new texts and tunes—the author and composer were normally the same person in the Meistersinger tradition—were published in hymnals first appearing in 1524: *Etlich Cristlich lider* (Nürnberg), the *Enchiridia*⁴ (Erfurt), and Johann Walter's *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyen* (Wittenberg). Prior to this time Luther had tried his own hand at composing, one of the first of his creations being his setting of Psalm 130,

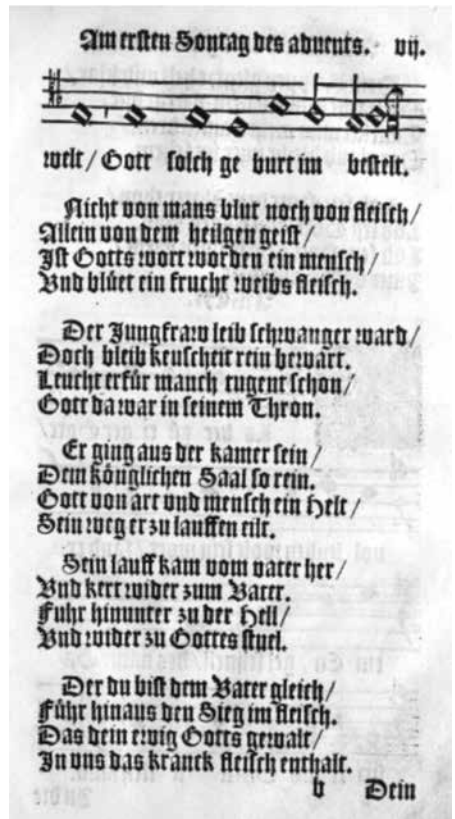


Figure 3: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland in the German portion of Spangenberg's book. Note the heading of the German hymn is the title of the Latin chant.

Aus tiefer Not in 1523. Luther was also encouraging other German composers to set texts in the vernacular, writing to them personally, as revealed in his 1523 letter to Georg Spalatin at the Saxon court.

Following this example of the prophets and fathers of the church, I intend to make vernacular psalms for the people, that is, spiritual songs so that the Word of God even by means of song may live among the people. Everywhere we are looking for good poets. Now since you are skillful and eloquent in German, I would ask you to work with us in this. . . .⁵

From Hymns to Hymnals

By the following year, the fruits of Luther's labor were shown in the hymnals

cited above, the first of which was the *Etlich Cristlich liden*, also known as the *Achtliederbuch*. Of the eight hymns therein, four were by Luther himself.⁶ The Erfurt *Enchiridia* contained eighteen hymns by Luther, and of the thirty-eight hymns in the *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn*, twenty-four are by Luther, including Luther's reworking of the tune *Veni Redemptor gentium* to his text *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*.⁷ The *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn*, edited by Johann Walter, has long been considered the first hymnal made under Luther's supervision; however, since it was essentially a compilation of previously printed broadsides, the extent to which the Reformer was involved in the editorial process is questioned.⁸

The image shows two pages from a book. The left page is titled "Von der Auferste. Christi. xxiij. Am Osertage/ Epistel/ i. Corinth. u." and contains a large decorated initial 'I' followed by the text: "eben Brüder/ feger den alten Saurteig aus/ auff das ihr ein neuer Teig seid/ Gleich wie ihr ungesewere seid. Denn wir haben auch ein Osterlamb/ das ist Christus/ für uns gropfert/ Darumb laßt uns Ostern halten/ nicht im alten Saurteig/ auch nicht im Saurteig der hohheit und schalekheit/ sondern im Süßteig der Lautekeit und der warheit." Below this is the title "Christ ist erstanden/ gebessert." and a musical staff with a decorated initial 'C' and the text "Christ lag in To des Der ist wie der er." followed by "banden/ für un ser sind ge- standen/ Vnd hat uns bracht das eben/ Des wir sel ler. frölich sein/ GOTT". The right page is titled "Von der Auferstehung Christi." and contains a musical staff with a decorated initial 'G' and the text "Gott loben und danckbar sein/ Vnd singen ha le lula/ hale lula." followed by "Den Tod niemand swingen kund/ Dey allen menschen Kinde/ Das macht alles unser Sünd/ Kein unschuldt war zu finden/ Davon kam der Tod so bald/ Vnd nam ober uns gewalt/ hielt uns in sein Reich gefangen." Below this is the title "Haltlula." and the text "Jhesus Christus Gottes Son/ An unser star ist komen/ Vnd hat die Sünd abgethan/ Damit dem Tod genomen/ All sein recht vnd sein gewalt/ Da bleibt nichts denn Tods gestalt/ Den starckel hat er verloren/ Haltetma." followed by "Es war ein wunderlich Krieg/ Da Tod und Leben rungen/ Das Leben behielt den Sieg/ Es hat".

Figure 4: Luther's Christ lag in Todesbanden appears in the Easter section of the German half of Spangenberg's book. It is titled "Christ ist erstanden gebessert," (Christ ist erstanden revised) as it was in its first appearance in the 1533 Klug hymnal. Several pages later in Spangenberg's book, Luther's hymn Komm, Heiliger Geist—another chant-turned-chorale—is titled similarly, as "Veni Sancte Spiritus gebessert." The similar title lends credence to the fact that Luther modeled his hymn Christ lag in Todesbanden after the German hymn Christ ist erstanden which, in turn, was closely related to the Victimae Paschali.

C Hymnus. Veni redemptor gentium.



Kom der Meyden heyland-der jungfrauen
kyn erkannt. Das sich wunnder alle welt / Gott
solch gepurt yhm bestelt.
Nicht von Adams blut noch von fleisch / allein vō
dem heyligen geist / Ist Gottes wort worden eyn
mensch- vnd bluet eyn frucht weibs fleisch.
Der jungfrau seib schwanger ward / doch bleib
keuscheyt reyn bewaid / Lucht er für mäch tugēd
schon / Gott da war yn seynem thron.
Er gieng aus der kamer seyn- dem kōnglichen saal
so reyn. Gott vō art vñ mensch eyn helli / seyn weg
er zu lauffen eyllt.
Seyn laufft kam vom vater her- vnd keret wider
zum vater. für hyn vndertē zu der hell- vnd wider
zu Gottes stuel.

C ij

Figure 5: Luther's version of *Veni Redemptor gentium*. Note that the heading retains the Latin title of the chant, while the text below it is Luther's German translation used with his reworking of the chant.

Der hymnus Veni creator.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is a vocal line with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The bottom staff is a lute or keyboard accompaniment line with a C-clef (soprano clef) and a key signature of one flat. The music is written in a style characteristic of the early 16th century.

Kom Gott schepfer heiliger geist / besuch das
hertz der menschen deyn. Mit gnaden sye full wy
du weyst- das deyn geschepff vorhyn seyn.

Figure 6: Luther's *Komm, Gott Schöpfer* as it first appeared in the 1524 Erfurt Enchiridia.

That Latin chants continued to be sung by the choir alongside newly composed German chorales is widely attested.⁹ Luther encouraged the singing of the Latin chants, as did others, including Luther's student Erasmus Alber.¹⁰ Luther's friend and collaborator Johann Walter, Cantor at the Lutheran church and school in Torgau, began compiling Latin chants for the use of his schoolboys but left the work unfinished at his death. Johann Spangenberg (1485–1550), also a staunch supporter of Luther, finished his own anthology of Latin chant for his choir boys in Nordhausen. Published in Magdeburg in 1545 as the *Cantiones ecclesiasticae/ Kirchengesenge Deusche*, this collection was printed in large folio format so that it could be placed on a central stand for all the choir to see. Leaver describes the significance of this book:

The primary importance of Spangenberg's *Cantiones ecclesiasticae/ Kirchengesenge Deusche*, is that it is the most extensive collection of Lutheran liturgical music to be issued during Luther's lifetime, the first in a significant sequence of chant anthologies issued for use in Lutheran worship. . . . Its secondary importance is that it witnesses to the way in which Luther's liturgical provisions were put into practice.¹¹

The volume's first part includes all the Latin chants necessary for the church year; the second gives liturgical chants and hymns in German, also arranged according to the church year. In so doing, the

volume provides resources to put into practice Luther's recommendations in both his *Formula missae* of 1523 and his *Deutsche Messe* of 1526. Leaver continues, "Thus the Latin forms were intended for churches in cities and towns where there were universities and/or Latin schools, and the German for churches in smaller towns and villages where only German was spoken."¹²

From Latin to German in Text and Melody

While Latin chants continued to be sung by the choir in some places throughout the Reformation era, the body of new German hymnody grew apace. Luther himself, encouraging others he deemed more capable, wrote both original tunes and others based on tunes already in existence. He was the first to take Latin plainsong and adapt it to fit better the German language texts he wrote. The relationship between different chants and their derivative sixteenth-century chorales has been documented.¹³ One of the most well-known examples is the advent chant *Veni Redemptor gentium*. This chant spawned three melodies by Luther (*Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland; Erhalt uns, Herr; and Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich*); and one by Michael Weisse of the Bohemian Brethren (*Von Adam her so lange Zeit*).¹⁴ Thomas Müntzer, the Anabaptist reformer who had contact with Luther while in Wittenberg between 1518 and 1519, also translated Ambrose's *Veni Redemptor gentium* and adapted the chant melody to the German but with arguably less skill than Luther.¹⁵ Konrad Ameln comments, "But most remarkable is the fact that in spite of their common origin each



Figure 7: Komm, Gott Schöpfer as it appears in the 1531 edition of Klug's hymnal. This is the first extant version of the tune in its current form. (Compare to Figure 6.)



Figure 8: This is the tenor part for Luther's Christ lag in Todesbanden as published in Walter's 1524 Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn. Note the slight change in the tune in the second system, as compared with the later version from the 1533 Klug hymnal, Figure 10 below.



Figure 9: Christ ist erstanden from Klug's 1533 hymnal.

of Luther's three melodies has acquired its own characteristic features.¹⁶ By cleverly altering the tunes to reflect the natural rise and fall of the German poetry, Luther gave each one distinction and singability that has allowed all of them to abide even into the current century.¹⁷ Figure 5 shows Luther's hymn *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* as it appeared in the 1524 Erfurt *Enchiridia*.

Komm, Gott Schöpfer, Luther's translation of the Latin hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*, together with his adaptation of the chant tune, was included in the Erfurt *Enchiridia* (1524). The first page where it appears is shown in Figure 6.

It should be noted that in Figure 6 the tune is similar but not identical to the tune sung today. Perhaps Luther revised the tune between this first printing and the 1529 *Geistliche Lieder auff's new gebessert* (Wittenberg) edited by Joseph Klug (Fig. 7), which is the first appearance of the tune in its modern form.¹⁸

The third chant/chorale combination explored in this paper is the *Victimae Paschali* chant and Luther's hymn *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. This warrants some explanation since Luther's hymn is not derived as directly from the chant as the other two discussed in this paper. However, it is closely related to both the chant and the chorale *Christ ist erstanden*, which was interpolated into the Easter sequence as a



Figure 10: Christ lag in Todesbanden from Klug's 1533 Hymnal.

German hymn and sung by the people.¹⁹ Luther was known to have loved *Christ ist erstanden*, and scholars have pointed out that the melody of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* “can be traced to that of the folk song [*Christ ist erstanden*].”²⁰

The 1533 Klug hymnal (*Geistliche Lieder auff's new gebessert*, Wittenberg) is the first hymnal to include the pre-Reformation German hymn, *Christ is erstanden*. It is preceded by a woodcut of Christ rising from the tomb and headed by “*Folget der lobe gesang/von der aufferstehung Christi*,” or “Here follows the song of praise for the resurrection of Christ.” (See Figure 9.)

The relation of *Christ ist erstanden* to Luther's hymn can be demonstrated by the way *Christ lag in Todesbanden* is included in the same book. First, it is titled “*Christ ist erstanden gebessert*,” or “Christ is arisen, revised.” Second, it is preceded by the same woodcut that accompanies the hymn *Christ ist erstanden* later in the hymnal. It seems probable that Luther had in mind both the *Victimae Paschali* chant and its interpolation, *Christ ist erstanden*, when authoring and composing the music for his own hymn, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*.

Conclusion

Martin Luther's desire to stay within the fold of the Catholic Church became impossible with his excommunication by Pope Leo X in 1521. However, his immersion in the church's tradition—his training as an Augustinian monk, his doctoral degree in theology, and his love of the church's musical heritage—remained essential to how he viewed music in worship. Unlike more radical Reformers, he held the more sophisticated compositions of the church to be of great value while at the same time seeking to give the common people music to express the faith in their own language. Since the people were not used to singing in worship (that duty had largely been relegated to the priests and choirs), he adapted familiar chants into metered hymnody. With familiar sounding melodies and rhythmic, rhyming texts in the German language, Luther hoped that the worshipping people would be able to learn these hymns with relative ease and thus be given a voice to proclaim God's word in worship. Although Luther also wrote new melodies, the fact that several of his adapted chants are still sung as chorales today attests to their skillful composition and usefulness in the church.

Endnotes

- 1 Martin Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 40, ed. Conrad Bergendoff and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 141.
- 2 Discussion of Luther's use of Latin chant can be found in Robin A. Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 209–241.
- 3 Rebecca Wagner Oettinger, *Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 43. Oettinger explores more fully the forces at work during the Reformation that enabled song to become such a powerful influence.
- 4 The plural "Enchiridia" refers to two hymnbooks, printed around the same time in Erfurt, both of which are similar in content. Robin A. Leaver, *The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther's Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 93–96.
- 5 Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 144.
- 6 Robin Leaver states that the *Achliederbuch* is often misrepresented as being published in Wittenberg because that name is given on the title page. It was, however printed and published by Gutknecht in Nürnberg, as typographic evidence shows. Leaver, *The Whole Church*, 90–91.
- 7 George MacDonald and Ulrich S. Leupold, "The Hymns," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 53, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 192–193.
- 8 Luther's direct involvement has been related to the fact that he wrote the preface to the hymnal. Pertinent to the discussion in this paper, it should be noted that in addition to the thirty-eight chorale motets in German, five Latin motets were included. The book was not a hymnal for congregational use but rather intended for the choir. Leaver, *The Whole Church*, 97–99.
- 9 See, for example Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The retention of medieval practices, including Latin hymns, is noted in Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Faith and Act: The Survival of Medieval Ceremonies in the Lutheran Reformation*, tr. Kevin G. Walker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012). Daniel Zager and Steven Wentz provide insight into the use of Latin chant during the Reformation era in their book, *The Choir and the Organ in Early Lutheranism* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2017), 11–21. Robin Leaver's research specific to the religious services in Wittenberg notes the use of both Latin and German hymns there. Leaver, *The Whole Church*, 121–139. Matthew Carver has translated several Latin office hymns used in the Lutheran Church in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Matthew Carver, *Liber Hymnorum: The Latin Hymns of the Lutheran Church* (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Emmanuel Press, 2016).
- 10 Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 212.
- 11 Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 216.
- 12 Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music*, 216. See Jonathan Wessler, "An Examination of the Relationship Between Johann Spangenberg's *Cantiones ecclesiasticae/Kirchengesenge deutsch* and Martin Luther's *Formulae missae et communionis and Deutsche Messe*" (DMA diss., Eastman School of Music, 2011), <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/15947>. See also Daniel Zager, "Music for the Lutheran Liturgy: Johann Spangenberg's *Cantiones ecclesiasticae/Kirchengesenge Deutsches* (1545)," in *This Is the Feast: A Festschrift for Richard Hillert at 80*, ed. James Freese (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 45–60.
- 13 While a body of literature on this subject had appeared in German, it was not until Konrad Ameln's work in 1964 that this research was brought to English-speaking scholars. Konrad Ameln, *The Roots of German Hymnody of the Reformation Era*, Church Music Pamphlet Series, Hymnology: Number One (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964).
- 14 Ameln, *The Roots of German Hymnody*, 18–19.
- 15 Leaver, *The Whole Church*, 84–88. Leaver compares the tunes that Luther and Müntzer adapted for both *Veni Redemptor gentium* and *Veni Creator Spiritus*. While Luther paid careful attention to the accents created by the German language, Müntzer largely copied the chant tune itself and superimposed his German translation.

- 16 Ameln, *The Roots of German Hymnody*, 20.
- 17 *Lutheran Service Book* (2006), the official hymnal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, includes all three hymns under the following titles: “Savior of the Nations, Come” (332, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*); “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word” (655, *Erhalt, uns Herr*); and “Grant Peace, We Pray, in Mercy, Lord” (778, *Verleih uns Frieden*). The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).
- 18 Joseph Herl comments: “The tune ‘Komm, Gott Schöpfer,’ in its current form, first appeared in the 1529 edition of *Geistliche lieder auffß new gebessert und gemehrt zu Wittemberg*, issued from the press of Joseph Klug in Wittenberg. No copy is known, but a report on the 1529 edition appeared in the *Journal von und für Teutschland*, vol. 5 (2. Semester, 1788), 328–329. Wilhelm Lucke, the editor of volume 35 of *Luthers Werke* (the “Weimar Edition”), used this report to reconstruct the contents of the edition (see Lucke, 31–32). His reconstruction has met with approval from more recent scholars, and today everyone just assumes it is correct. The tune next appeared in *Geistliche lieder auffß new gebessert zu Wittemberg* (Erfurt, 1531). This is the earliest extant source. The 1533 edition from Klug’s press is the third known source.” Joseph Herl, e-mail message to author, February 15, 2019. The author extends his gratitude to Joseph Herl for the picture shown in Figure 7. How the version of the tune in the 1524 book was eventually superseded by the one in the 1529 and 1531 books is not clear.
- 19 *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) retains the old practice by printing the hymn “Christ is Arisen” (*Christ ist erstanden*) on the page facing “Christians to the Paschal Victim” (*Victimae Paschali*), giving directions for singing the two hymns, with *Christ ist erstanden* sung by the congregation in response to the chanted *Victimae Paschali* sung by the choir.
- 20 *Luther’s Works* 53, 255. Joseph Herl notes that the picture given in Figure 8 is the fourth source of *Christ lag in Todesbanden*. E-mail message to author, February 15, 2019. A detailed summary of the hymn and its sources can be found in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, ed. Joseph Herl, Peter C. Reske, and Jon D. Vieker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), 331–340.

Himnario Luterano Within the Framework of a Hispanic Lutheran Century

Sergio Fritzler



musician. He also served as an editor of *Himnario Luterano*.

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As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the first Lutheran hymnal, it is important to highlight the Hispanic Lutheran contribution, and especially the latest contribution, *Himnario Luterano* (2021).¹ Although in this digitized world it seems that hymnals are a thing of the past and no longer have a place, we Lutherans believe that

they are still very important because we sing the faith (the doctrine) about Christ and his gifts, both in the church, in schools and in homes. As one hymnal preface described it: “We are heirs of an astonishingly rich tradition. Each generation receives from those who went before and, in making that tradition of the Divine Service its own, adds what best may serve in its own day—the living heritage and something new.”² This article will briefly outline almost a century of history of Lutheran hymnals in Spanish and the importance of *Himnario Luterano* as the most recent contribution.

Early Hispanic Lutheran Hymnals

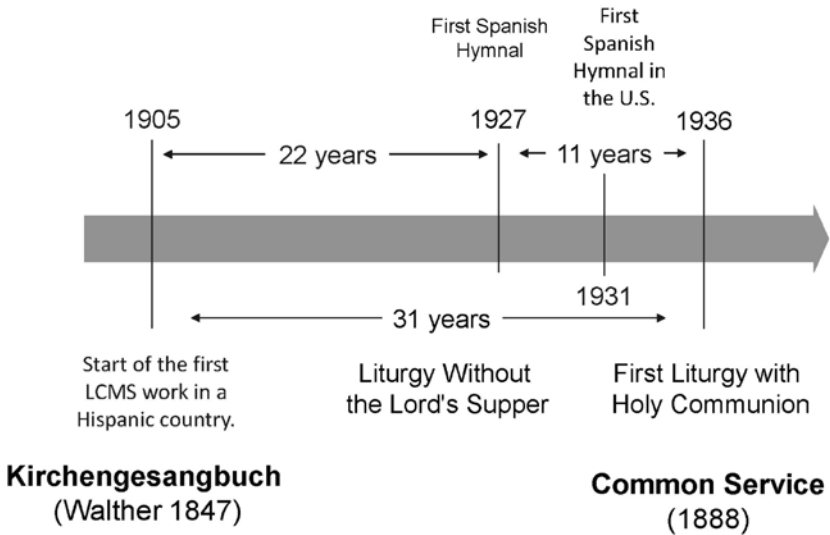
The first LCMS work in Hispanic countries was in Argentina in 1905,³ but the language of the church was in German, using the *Kirchengesangbuch* (Church Hymnal) of C. F. W. Walther.⁴ According to historical records, the first mission work by the German Lutherans in Spanish began in 1922.⁵ Given the need and the doors that the gospel opened, it became obvious that a Spanish hymnal was necessary, but as a logical step, before the hymnal, the Small Catechism was first translated in 1925.

It is within this context that the first Lutheran hymnal appeared in Spanish, titled

Himnario Evangélico Luterano (Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal).⁶ It was published in 1927 by the Lutheran Church of Argentina and was edited by Alfred T. Kramer.⁷ It included an order for the Divine Service (a translation of the service from Walther’s *Kirchengesangbuch*, but without the Lord’s Supper) and twenty-six hymns translated by Carl F. Truenow,⁸ Bertoldo H. Ergang,⁹ and Alfredo T. Kramer. With the Bible, Luther’s Small Catechism, and a new Spanish-language hymnal, missionary work now had the support it needed.

In paging through this first hymnal, one observes that its main objectives were missionary, catechetical, and pastoral: the hymnal was simple and had what was necessary for new converts to the Gospel. In the introductory note it describes the hymnal as being “for the mission among the Spanish-speaking people.”¹⁰ Some of the main characteristics of this first hymnal in Spanish include: (1) The Divine Service in translation from the German *Kirchengesangbuch* of C. W. F. Walther of 1847; (2) The service had no provisions for the Lord’s Supper; it centered only on the Word and its preaching. This was considered to be an appropriate liturgical order to start a mission congregation, and such simplicity is evidenced also in the use of liturgical songs in the form of hymns (as was also done in Luther’s *Deutsche Messe* of 1526); the hymns were also rather short. (3) There was considerable influence from Fliedner’s Spanish hymnals. (See endnote 6.)

The second hymnal, *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* (Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal), was published in 1931 in San Antonio, Texas by Pastor Sergio Cobián.¹¹ It contained 182 hymns, a selection of psalms, an “Order of Liturgical Worship” (a



translation of the Common Service of 1888, with Holy Communion), and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther.

Rev. Sergio Cobián arrived in Texas from Puerto Rico in 1926 as an evangelist. (He was not yet a pastor but became one in 1931, the same year this hymnal was published.) The first Hispanic pastor in Texas was the well-known Andrés Meléndez, “where he played a decisive role in the formation of the first Hispanic congregation of the district, Trinity Lutheran Church.”¹² This hymnal was for all Hispanic missions in the Texas district and was likely used by many other Hispanic congregations at that time because of its quality and breadth.

The third hymnal was also titled *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* (Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal) and was first published in 1936. This is the famous “negrito”¹³ of Bahía Blanca (Buenos Aires) produced by the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina). Basically, this hymnal is described as the “first,” more formal hymnal for Argentina, and it contained the Order of Divine Service and seventy hymns. This hymnal had corrections and enlargements as new editions were printed: in 1939 (second edition), from seventy hymns it became 168; in 1945 (third edition), called an “emergency edition,”¹⁴ printed in a rustic and simple way in the face of a great missionary need; in 1950 (fourth edition)¹⁵ with 272 hymns; in 1961 (fifth edition);¹⁶ in 1975, a reprint of the 1961 edition.¹⁷ and finally in 1982, another reprint of the 1961 edition.¹⁸

Culto Cristiano (1964) and Cantad al Señor (1991)

The eighth hymnal was *Culto Cristiano* (Christian Worship), first published in 1964. *Culto Cristiano* was published by Hispanic Lutherans in the northern hemisphere—the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). It was the first Spanish-language hymnal to be published with music for worship and hymns on a large scale. This hymnal was a great Lutheran masterpiece in Spanish of hymns, liturgy, prayers, and so on, in the twentieth century.

Culto Cristiano contains hundreds of the classic hymns sung not only by Lutherans of European origin but by Christians of many races, cultures, and denominations from all over the world. You can test this by checking the hymn indexes of *Culto Cristiano*. It is a treasure trove of hymns, and to single it out for not being Latin American or Hispanic enough is to dismiss its intimate ties to the universal church.¹⁹

Culto Cristiano began as a project in 1955 with a committee under the chairmanship of Rev. Dr. William Georg Arbaugh (1902–1974).²⁰ The other committee members were: Arnfeld C. Morck, (1913–1992), a Canadian Lutheran

missionary who represented the Lutheran Synod of Colombia (part of the LCA); David Orea Luna (1918–1972), a Mexican pastor who represented the ALC; and Andrés A. Meléndez, who represented the LCMS. It took nine years of work until its publication.

Culto Cristiano brought to the Lutheran Church a book that contained everything: hymns in abundance, prayers for all subjects, various rites, the Small Catechism for catechesis, indexes for research, and so on—a very complete hymnal that was also “ecumenical,” in that it was shared by the three largest Lutheran churches in North America.

The fact that *Culto Cristiano* had been developed by the mother churches in the United States began to “make noise” in the 1980s, as an air of independence, a perceived need for the “Latin American sense,” and a yearning to be part of the larger Latin American church began to generate the publication of new hymnals. In 1983, *Liturgia Luterana: provisional*, influenced by the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) was published.²¹ In 1984, the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida (United Evangelical Lutheran Church) in Argentina published the hymnal, *Celebremos*.²² In 1989, *El Pueblo de Dios Canta: adviento, navidad, epifanía y otros*, under the direction of Dimas Planas-Belfort, was published.²³ In 1991, the LCMS published its own Spanish hymnal, *Cantad al Señor*.²⁴ In 1998, the ELCA published *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico*.²⁵ And in 1999, the Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Colombia (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia) published the *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* in a second edition.²⁶

In 1976, the second edition of *Culto Cristiano* was published in Argentina with the inclusion of an appendix with fifty-eight new hymns—some translations of new hymns as well as other important chorales from the German and Lutheran tradition.²⁷ “The third edition of *Culto Cristiano* was published in Buenos Aires in 1976 as a ‘Pocket Edition.’ That edition included a new selection of hymns that was added as an appendix to the original edition.”²⁸ The fourth edition was published in New York in 1978.²⁹ At the end of the Preface was added: “The fourth edition has been published in response to the urgent need for worship material, primarily among the growing number of established Lutheran congregations in the Hispanic communities of North America. This edition also included the selection of additional hymns (the appendix).”³⁰ The fourth edition included the same contents as the 1976 edition (with Appendix), but in the format of the 1964 edition. It was published by “El Escudo” (The Shield) in New York. A fifth edition was also published in New York in 1983,³¹ and a final sixth edition, which was the same as the fourth edition, was published in 1995 by Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis.

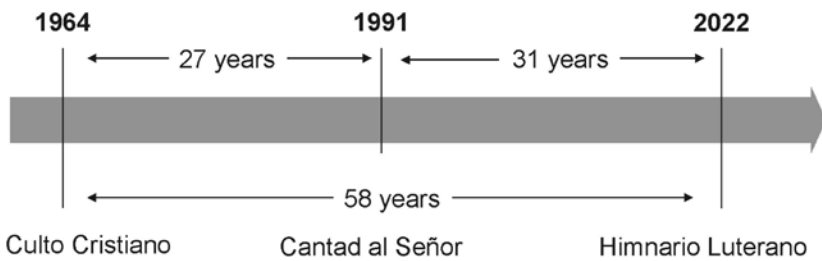
A final hymnal from this period to consider is *Cantad al Señor*, published in 1991 by Concordia Publishing House with funds from “Forward in Remembrance” and the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League of the LCMS. It took five years to

develop it, and the commission doing the work was made up of four Americans: Lorraine Floríndez, Gerardo Kempff, Otto Hintze, and Carlos Puig (the last two serving as coordinators); three Argentines: Leopoldo Gros, Héctor Hoppe, and Erico Sexauer; one Venezuelan, Rudy Blank; one Mexican, Miguel Ángel Fernández; one Panamanian, Gregorio Klotz; and one Guatemalan, David Rodríguez.³²

The main purpose of this hymnal was, as one of its editors, Lorraine Floríndez, writes: “It had as its aim to try to plant something of the tunes . . . the poetry . . . the Latin flavor in Lutheran singing. And it has done so in a very noble way, especially in the Hispanic part of the United States and Central America.”³³ The major contribution of *Cantad al Señor*, unlike its predecessor hymnals, was: (1) inclusion of all three Scripture readings; (2) inclusion of the Psalm of the Day; (3) inclusion of the Verse of the Day; (4) two settings of the Divine Service; and (5) a selection of new hymns with an emphasis on Latin American music.³⁴

Himnario Luterano (2021)

In the decades prior to *Himnario Luterano*, we were at the dawn of a new millennium. Influenced by the rise of technology, many Lutheran churches began to use printed booklets for new and old hymns and, in the face of considerable influence from evangelicalism, many *coritos* (short songs) and *canciones* (songs) were incorporated into congregational use. Each church began to publish informally its own “songbooks” or “hymnbooks.” This also happened with the Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile, publishing in 2005 the “Christian Hymnal,” which contained a selection of hymns with liturgical options. With this began the dream of publishing a complete hymnal that had the best hymns from the past and the best of today, under Lutheran confessional and liturgical parameters. In 2007 it was agreed between the churches of Chile, Argentina, and Paraguay to produce and create a new hymnal—*Himnario Luterano*—which was published in 2022 by the Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile (Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile) with assistance from several entities.³⁵



Himnario Luterano took fourteen years to bring to publication. It had been 31 years since *Cantad al Señor* (1991); 58 years since *Culto Cristiano* (1964); 86 years since *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* (1936); and 95 years since the first Lutheran hymnal in Spanish (1927). Of the 670 hymns in *Himnario Luterano*, 276 came from *Culto Cristiano* (41.2 percent) and 55 from *Cantad al Señor* (8.2 percent). *Himnario Luterano* holds 31.2 percent of its hymns in common with *Lutheran Service Book* (2006), 34 percent of its hymns are written in this generation, and 24 percent are newly published in Spanish.

The objectives proposed for *Himnario Luterano* were to:

1. integrate the liturgical materials and hymns that were commonly in use in the Hispanic churches.
2. bring new hymns from contemporary composers, and at the same time translate into Spanish highly esteemed hymns from the past.
3. simplify the music for piano and guitar.
4. restore the singing of the psalms, as well as the role of the pastor as cantor.
5. extend the use of the hymnal to the home.
6. include a variety of resources for the life of the church and of the people.
7. add catechetical and pastoral materials.

Himnario Luterano is currently being used in a number of Spanish-speaking sister churches around the world. It has also been doctrinally reviewed by the LCMS and commended for use in LCMS congregations. In this regard, *Himnario Luterano* is unique in that it is the first Hispanic Lutheran hymnal to originate and be developed not in the United States but in Latin America. Thus, *Himnario Luterano*:

1. was produced at initiative of the Latin American churches of the Southern Cone of South America.
2. incorporates the best of the heritage received.
3. is being used in more than twenty-two countries, providing Latin American Lutherans unity and concord in doctrine and practice.
4. restores the sung liturgy, the singing and use of the psalms, the verba, and so on.
5. restores the regular Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper.
6. identifies those who use it as churches that sing the faith.
7. confesses Christ as the Divine Savior who comes to serve us.
8. gives us the assurance of the delivery of Christ's gifts through the Means of Grace.

Himnario Luterano compiles the best of previous hymnals and includes a wide

variety of newly composed hymns as well as translations from the treasure trove of the past. As we survey the history of our Hispanic Lutheran hymnals, one can only respond with faith and joy. For Christ has intended that his gospel should go into all the world—to all races, cultures, nations, and languages—and therefore, it is an inexpressible and overflowing joy, with immense thanksgiving to our God, to hear and receive his gospel, to sing his word and praise him at all times, to pray for the needs of others, to receive comfort in our sufferings, and to celebrate together with the church triumphant, the feast of victory for the Lamb of God.

We are living in historic times with the many blessings of this hymnal. The next generation will add their own to these hymns, and so it will continue until the Lord returns. Hymnals fulfill what is expressed in Hebrews 11—that is, the faith of those who precede us, which is not a faith different from the faith of the past or the present, but the same faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Ever since the Reformation, Lutheran hymnals have covered three key areas, which in turn represent the three well-defined vocations: the sanctuary (congregations), the school (children and youth), and the home (family and individual). This has been the case throughout the history of teaching and proclamation of Christ because faith always needs hymns to express itself, a liturgy to celebrate, prayers to cry out, and resources from God's word to nourish it.

Every hymnal is always “a work in progress,” for each generation and for those to come. A hymnal is never “complete” because the ultimate liturgy and songs will be enjoyed in heaven with all the heavenly court. Yet, that heavenly joy can already be “tasted” here on earth. God is so merciful that He has sent Christ in the flesh to save us so that we can enjoy his redemption today by the nourishment of Christ's own body and blood, within the framework of the heavenly songs of praise and adoration to the Triune God, and as he opens wide the doors to heaven, our eternal home.

The church's missionary work continues because it is not ours; it is the Lord's. And it will be our children and grandchildren who will produce another hymnal for their generation. We will always have a firm and immovable foundation, God's holy word, to be lived by faith, taught to our children, proclaimed to our neighbors, and discussed with all those we encounter. This is the work of Jesus! May the Lord guide this generation so that the gospel of Christ may be proclaimed to the ends of the earth!

Endnotes

- 1 *Himnario Luterano* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial de La Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile, 2021).
- 2 The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), vi.
- 3 The Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina) depended on the LCMS from 1905 until 1986 when they became “sister” churches. During its first period (1905–20), Argentina belonged ecclesiastically to Brazil under the “Department of Mission of the Brazilian District.” See Claudio L. Flor, ed., *IELA: 90 años de historia* (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1995), 16. In 1920 the *Missionskommission Argentina* (Mission Commission for Argentina) was formed, and this commission was under District of Brazil, a district of the LCMS.
- 4 *Kirchengesangbuch für evangelisch-lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession* (New York: G. Ludwig, 1847). For an English translation of the 1892 edition of this hymnal, see: Matthew Carver, trans. and ed., *Walther’s Hymnal: Church Hymnbook for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012).
- 5 The first missionary work was entirely in Spanish: “Important news: the Lutheran Church begins work in Spanish in the province of Cordoba! In January 1922, Pastor Gehrt was installed by Pastor Wolf in the following congregations: Achiras, Elena and Río Cuarto in the province of Córdoba, and La Punilla, in the province of San Luis.” Flor, *IELA: 90 años*, 110.
- 6 We consider the *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* [“Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal”] (Buenos Aires: IELA, 1927) to be the first Lutheran hymnal in Spanish. Although the first Hispanic missionary work was in Madrid, with the missionary Federico Fliedner (1845–1901), his work centered around forming a general “evangelical” church in Spain. He also founded the publishing house, printing house, and bookstore—the “Librería Nacional y Extranjera”—which produced a hymnal in 1874: *Himnos para uso de las iglesias evangélicas* [“Hymns for the Use of the Evangelical Churches”] (Madrid: Librería Nacional y Extranjera, 1874). This hymnal should be considered more “evangelical” than Lutheran, which is reflected also in the title of the hymnal published by Fliedner in 1877: *Himnos Evangélicos* [“Evangelical Hymns”] (Madrid: Librería Nacional y Extranjera, 1877).
- 7 Dr. Alfred Theodore Kramer (known as A. T. Kramer) was born in the United States on September 8, 1892, studied at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and was sent to Argentina in 1916 as a pastor-missionary. For his hard work, he was honored with a doctorate in 1955 by Concordia Seminary. He died on June 28, 1964. *El Luterano* 20, no. 9 (September 1964): 69–70.
- 8 Carl Fredrik Truenow was born in the United States on August 30, 1890. He finished his studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1914. In 1915, he began as a pastor-missionary in Argentina. He died on October 28, 1963. *El Luterano* 21, no. 12 (December 1963): 95–96.
- 9 Bertoldo Hugo Ergang was born on May 22, 1894, in Lithuania. He came to Argentina when he was a child. He entered Concordia Seminary in Brazil, being the first student for the pastorate from Argentina. He married Kramer’s daughter, Flora, in Missouri. He died on October 25, 1977.
- 10 *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* (1927), 1.
- 11 Sergio Cobián (1889–1962) was a Puerto Rican who came to the Lutheran Church in San Juan in 1914, not from the LCMS but from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America. Cobián was educated at Luther Seminary. <https://ulsemdigital.libraryhost.com/files/original/28f3338ad6451d3e15a107a1c6deb067760b9cf.pdf> (pp. 145, 147). Accessed March 1, 2024.
- 12 Ken Hennings, *Texas missions (Part 3): Hispanic ministry*. May 2012. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/8926720/may-2012-the-texas-district-of-the-lutheran-church-missouri-synod>. Accessed March 1, 2024.
- 13 Each hymnal in its day was known by the color of its cover: “the black one,” “the red one,” “the blue one,” etc.
- 14 Alberto Lehenbauer notes: “The previous edition was about to be sold out. And besides, our pastors had

asked for a better hymnal. The Committee, in response to these requests, can announce that instead of about 150 songs in the 1939 hymnal, we will have 241 songs in the new one to be used in our congregations and missions in their services. However, this increase in number tells but a part of the truth regarding the improvements made in the hymnal.” “En camino hacia el Himnario Nuevo,” *El Luterano* 2, no. 1 (January 1946): 3. The article further explains the improvements in clarifying specific themes; that the brevity of the hymns “not only confesses, but also expounds and explains” the truth of the Gospel; and the division of the stanzas into syllables so as not to disrupt the naturalness of the music. Lehenbauer continues: “The [economic] poverty of our mission makes it impossible to print the hymnal with music” (p. 4). He then goes on to describe with which melody each hymn is to be sung. For the use of tunes, he proposes the use of the classical hymn tune to “. . . record the truth that there are many advantages in a more or less uniform use among congregations and missions of the same faith” (p. 4). He adds: “We are on our way to the Lutheran hymnal in Spanish. This will not be the definitive, perfect hymnal. It will be, rather, a ‘new model’ that will incite us to sing more and also to translate and compose more hymns expressive of the saving doctrines of the Bible and of our gratitude to our incomparable God and Savior” (p. 4). His words, “we are on the way to the Lutheran hymnal in Spanish,” also underscore the “emergency” nature of this printing, borne of out of missionary necessity.

- 15 Augusto Kroeger notes: “In anticipation of this fact, work had continued on the production and collection of hymnals, and thus it was possible to publish in April 1950 the hymnal currently in use, with 272 hymns and a print run of 5300 copies.” Flor, *IELA: 90 años*, 39.
- 16 The 1961 Preface notes: “This fifth edition is a faithful copy of the previous one. Thanks be to the Lord for the good reception given to the fourth edition. In publishing this present edition, our fervent prayer is that it may also contribute to the spread of our beautiful Lutheran hymns in the widest circles, for the good and comfort of men, and for the glory of God.”
- 17 This edition was printed by Centro de Publicaciones (Simbrón 4667, Buenos Aires, Argentina) in 1975. It was a photomechanical reproduction of the fifth edition of 1961.
- 18 The Preface to this printing notes that it is “a faithful copy of the previous edition.”
- 19 Lorraine Floríndez, Gerardo F. Kempff, and Douglas R. Groll, *La Iglesia Canta* (Chicago: Instituto Hispano de Teología, 1994), 25.
- 20 Arbaugh represented the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the Caribbean of the United Lutheran Church, based in Puerto Rico. See *Revista Teológica* 3, no. 11 (1956): 39.
- 21 Lutheran Church in America, *Liturgia Luterana: provisional* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983).
- 22 Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida, *Celebremos* (Buenos Aires: Comisión, 1984).
- 23 *El Pueblo de Dios Canta: adviento, navidad, epifanía y otros* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).
- 24 *Cantad al Señor* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991).
- 25 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Libro de Liturgia y Cántico* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998).
- 26 *Himnario Evangélico Luterano* (Bogotá: Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Columbia, 1999).
- 27 *Culto Cristiano*, 2nd ed. (Argentina: El Escudo, 1976). See *La Iglesia Canta*, 26.
- 28 *Culto Cristiano*, 3rd ed. (Argentina: El Escudo, 1976). See *Culto Cristiano*, 6th ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), x.
- 29 *Culto Cristiano*, 4th ed. (New York: El Escudo, 1978).
- 30 *Culto Cristiano*, 4th ed., x.
- 31 *Culto Cristiano*, 5th ed. (New York: El Escudo/La Aurora, 1983).
- 32 *Cantad al Señor*, 7.
- 33 *La Iglesia Canta*, 25.
- 34 For many, *Cantad al Señor* came to be viewed more as a supplement than a hymnal: “Compared to *Culto Cristiano* it is simply not of the same category as a hymnal in the sense of containing a great treasury of historical information or indexes that can help the musician or the pastor. There are reasons for this. The

cost of producing or printing a hymnal in the *Culto Cristiano* category in 1991 would have cost ten times the cost of 1964. The committee had to publish something with the resources at hand . . . even if it was not of the same classic stature as the hymnal of 30 years earlier.” *La Iglesia Canta*, 28.

- 35 Those entities included: Concordia Lutheran Education Foundation; Lutheran Heritage Foundation; Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation; The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Office of International Mission, Latin America and Caribbean; Luther Academy; and David’s Harp Foundation. *Himnario Luterano*, 1044.

“We Need Hymns” Singing About Jesus in Francophone Africa

Phillip Magness



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Souls his music is represented in *Lutheran Service Book*, and *Christian Worship*.

Hymns and Hymnals

Lutheranism has been associated with congregational song since the earliest days of the Reformation. Even before the Augsburg Confession, Martin Luther recognized the pedagogical usefulness of music and the need for the saints to sing the faith.¹ Lutherans developed a rich and robust treasury of hymnody,

leading to their becoming popularly known as “the singing church.”² While the technology of recent decades has increased the use of printed bulletins and screens, most Lutherans today still sing hymns and liturgy out of hymnals. While the use of hymnals is not a true mark of the church, one can fairly argue that singing from hymnals is part of the idioms of Lutheranism.

The content of hymnals can be divided into two neat categories: songs the people are singing and wish to continue singing, and songs those who compile hymnals want them to sing. Early hymnals were necessarily composed entirely of the latter category, as they were promulgated for the introduction of new or revised songs the Reformers desired for their congregations. Contrary to popular notions of Luther opening the floodgates of song, this was a centuries-long project, as congregations needed to be taught both to sing and what to sing.³ In the years since the eighteenth century, however, after those initial two centuries of intentional provision of congregational song by the various Christian churches, familiarity and “tunefulness” began to also be criteria.⁴ Once a set of core hymns was established, the conditions were set for the people to have certain expectations regarding new hymnals. Yet, with the evolution

of language, music, and theology, and with the natural creativity of hymnwriters and musicians, new hymnals have continued to emerge, each providing a mix of songs expected by the people and songs hymnal editors hope the people will embrace.

A Lutheran Mission Hymnal for Francophone Africa

The development of the Lutheran Franco-African mission hymnal, *Édition Africaine (ÉA)*,⁵ posed a unique challenge in this regard. In some ways, Africa—being populated with newer church bodies—is like the congregations of the Reformation, lacking a substantive tradition of biblical song. At the same time, many leaders of the Lutheran African churches have had exposure to the broad hymnody of the church at their seminaries and via the internet. In addition, the Lutheran seminary in Dapaong, Togo (*Centre Luthérien pour les Études Théologiques [CLET]*), has hosted LCMS cantors at various times for church music seminars, and was blessed for years to have a resident teaching missionary with strong skills in music there as a pastor and professor.⁶ Using the francophone hymnal published in 2009, *Liturgies et Cantiques Luthériens (LCL)*, a good number of core Lutheran hymns had taken root in Togo, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Republic of Congo (ROC), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As a participant in this work, the author made trips to the ROC in addition to teaching at CLET. So, while the need to establish a repertoire of strong hymns was certainly a prime consideration, the editors of *ÉA* enjoyed a stronger starting position than Luther and Johann Walther had when they produced the first Lutheran hymnal.⁷

Despite the advantages of modern communications and some hymnic and liturgical knowledge among key leaders, the essential need to nurture a core set of hymns remains. Just as Luther and the Reformers wanted to use the art of music so that the gospel would dwell in people more richly, so has the author heard the plea of many a Lutheran African pastor: “We need hymns.” Yes, the Africans have their own music and sing it well and with great zeal. But their folk song is not rooted in Christianity, and its repetitive nature limits its text capacity.⁸ While a popular folk chorus can be baptized with Christian lyrics—a fair practice as long as the tune does not carry profane or idolatrous associations—these local songs generally lack capacity to carry rich theological texts or recount much more than highlights from the Scripture’s story of salvation. Also, just as Westerners enjoy the connection to the global church they experience when singing songs from other parts of the world, so do Africans embrace the catholicity of the church in song and wish to inherit with us the rich legacy of music and poetry we so often take for granted. In addition, while some folk music could be adapted for Christian use, the local cultures lack music for the canticles of the historic liturgy, so settings of the Divine Service and Matins are much in demand.

This intersection between “what people know” and “what leaders desire for them”

is the critical creative juncture. Err on one side, and one only codifies a set of popular songs that will not much endure; err on the other, and one publishes books that gather dust as they go unused. “Splitting the baby” fails also as a solution: one winds up with a book that lacks cohesiveness and, as a result, invites use of one half over the other. Thus, creative synthesis is required to produce a hymnal that is desirable from the perspectives of both the worshipers and the pastors who care for them. Teaching is still required to bring the people to the hymnal, but that begins with having a hymnal that can be brought to the people.

Personnel, Vision, and Content

And so, driven by the awareness that good hymns and liturgical music are needed to fulfill the Pauline mandates to sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col 3:16; Eph 5:19), a small team worked together to create *ÉA* as a mission hymnal for francophone Africa. That team was comprised of the author, the Canadian team of David Somers and David Saar, who had produced *LCL*, and leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Congo (*Église Évangélique Luthérienne du Congo*). Their work was guided by two underlying principles: the expressed desire of our African partners to enjoy the beauty of the texts and tunes of our hymnody, and the understanding that adaptations were needed to fit the realities of ministry in Africa.

The vision for this hymnal was drawn from the realization that African mission worship in the twenty-first century is not substantially different from Lutheran mission worship in the late nineteenth century. Just as missionaries expect and accept that the Africans sing a number of their own songs in the service, so did Lutheran missionaries among English speakers anticipate a good amount of popular English hymnody would be sung in their day. Thus, the first English-language hymnal published by Concordia Publishing House (CPH) had only thirty-three hymns.⁹ These hymns were selected from the core hymns of Lutheranism, the *Kernlieder*, which sing clearly of Christ as they confess the chief article. They richly teach Christian doctrine, encompass the life of Christ, and extol the Means of Grace. Our LCMS fathers knew that, with a sturdy set of songs like this, gracious accommodation for popular songs of praise could readily be made as they catechized new communities into the faith. Similarly, LCMS missions in francophone Africa have done the same thing. A typical Divine Service in Togo or Congo features local, vernacular songs for the gathering, offering, and sending, while using core hymns from *LCL* before the sermon and during communion. Over the years, some congregations have taken to singing hymns from *LCL* (and now *ÉA*) at other times as well.

Given the amount of familiarity with *LCL* among several of the synod’s mission partners, the committee developing *ÉA* decided on a larger number of hymns than the thirty-three core hymns first promoted in English by CPH, and even the forty or fifty hymns that had been taught in various places by the author and

other missionaries over the previous decade. However, the principle was the same: sing fewer hymns so that the same hymns are sung more often. *Repetitio est mater studiorum*. This conveniently aligned with the desire to have a smaller book for the sake of production and shipping costs. *LCL* was published in St. Louis, and each book is about the size and weight of a copy of *LSB*. So, it is expensive and difficult to get many *LCLs* into the hands of Africans. For this reason, the committee wanted to produce a smaller book and have it published in or near Africa. This would make the book affordable and practical—essential elements for the acceptance of such a hymnal. In the end, *ÉA* included seventy tunes for 113 hymns covering the Church Year, the Sacraments, justification, sanctification, marriage, vocation, and death, thus providing a solid foundation for Lutheran worship in any franco-African context.

Finally, *ÉA* also had a liturgical goal. Whereas *LCL* contains three settings of the Divine Service along with Matins, a noon Office, Vespers, and Compline, the smaller *ÉA* would not allow for such variety. In addition, many of the African leaders expressed a desire for all eleven members of the “francophone union” (a network of confessional Lutheran francophone African churches) to use the same liturgy. For this reason, the author—having taught all three settings of the Divine Service contained in *LCL* several times in various places in Africa—selected the most well-received canticles out of the three settings to create an order of Divine Service now known as *Suite Africaine*. It has a Kyrie from one setting, a Gloria and Sanctus from another, an Agnus Dei and Nunc Dimittis, and an Alleluia familiar to many francophone churches.

Some Practical Considerations and Adaptations

This unified liturgy and core of Lutheran hymns provided a strong foundation upon which to build a francophone African mission hymnal. With these “first things” in place, the committee then proceeded to incorporate secondary, practical considerations that would help the hymnal be more useful and desirable. More content of African origin was sought, standard ecumenical hymns by francophone Christians were included, and the layout of the music was optimized to meet the realities of the mission context.

Given that the worship in Lutheran congregations in Africa already allows for a sizable number of local songs and given the intended size and scope of the book, the committee did not wish to add hymns of African origin simply for the sake of inclusion. Yet we also wanted to be sure to include African hymns that have become part of the global Lutheran repertoire. For example, while the Tanzanian Easter hymn “Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia” was in *LCL* and so was readily included in plans for *ÉA*, hymns like “When I Behold Jesus Christ” and “Listen! God Is Calling” had not been included in *LCL*. So, some work had to be done to prepare these hymns for inclusion in *ÉA*.

With “When I Behold Jesus Christ,” a satisfactory French translation was not found, but two texts from the Lutheran tradition were found where the French fit the tune perfectly when a key stanza of the original was assigned to the refrain. These were both sacramental texts, one fitting communion distribution and the other suitable for a song of praise. Given the need for more sacramental hymnody in Africa, this was a serendipitous development.

“Listen! God Is Calling” kept the source text but required translation work. While there were existing French translations currently in use, these translations were by non-native French speakers, and the committee wanted a text that would be in more respectable and in a more eloquent French. Due to the contrast between the rhythm of the Kenyan tune, NENO LAKE MUNGU, and the syllabic stresses in French, this took a sustained effort on behalf of the committee working with several French and Canadian pastors and musicians. The result was much appreciated by the Africans when the final translation was revealed during field testing.

The efforts to include African content extended more deeply into the selection of tunes, the addition of more psalm antiphons, and the adaptation of some hymns according to local customs. For example, some of the melodies from the German *Kernlieder*, which were highly desired, were too challenging to sing, given the melodic vocabulary of African cultures and the lack of skilled musicians or appropriate instruments to guide congregational song in more difficult tunes. In some cases, this meant settling on a different hymn for an occasion, but in other cases, a delightful solution was provided using an African tune. Thus, Gerhardt’s “Awake, My Heart with Gladness” is sung to the Kenyan air TUMSHUKURU (ÉA 70, “Debout, mon cœur et chante”). This pairing of text and tune was immediately embraced during field testing, even as the East African tune was unknown to the West Africans. Other felicitous examples included the use of the Haya tune from Tanzania, KWA NEEMA NA PENDO, for “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing” (ÉA 110, “Au festin du saint Agneau”) and the Kikongo melody LUTOMA ZAYA KWENO for “Let Me Be Thine Forever (ÉA 120 “Que ton amour m’entoure”).

In other cases, changes were made to the North American versions of tunes so that the notation would match local interpretations. While sometimes jarring at first to Western visitors, such is the natural evolution of hymn tunes, where one finds variation on tunes in hymnals between nations and generations and denominations,¹⁰ a phenomenon that continues into the modern era.¹¹ These adjustments were made both to reflect the teaching experience of the missionaries, but also to represent received practice. For instance, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and German hymn tunes tonicize the dominant (e.g., modulate into a related key) at a midpoint in the tune. This strengthening of the dominant tone is achieved by raising the fourth degree of the scale (fa) a half-step (to fi), matching the half-step relationship of the seventh degree to the tonic (ti to do). Because African folk

singing uses few, if any semitones (half steps), this practice is not readily heard and matched by untrained African ears and voices. The solution is an easy one: *don't introduce the half step*. Ironically, this results in some of the melodies in *ÉA* returning closer to their original, sixteenth-century forms. A couple of examples include: the “Amen” on the Agnus Dei from the Common Service (no F-sharp on the second-last note; cf. *LSB* 198); or the third phrase of “All Glory Be to God on High” (also no F-sharp; cf. *LSB* 947). Both of these Reformation-era melodies had become modified over the centuries as tonicization became a common practice in Western music with development of equal temperament.¹² The teaching experience revealed similar challenges, such as with the tune PUER NOBIS (cf. *LSB* 344), where the singers avoid fa at the beginning of the last phrase and sing mi instead, even as fa is sung successfully earlier in the melody. This will sound like a wrong note to Missouri Synod Lutherans and many others, but PUER NOBIS was sung this way in previous eras and even today in some communities.¹³

A crucial change was also made in the layout of the music. Whereas *LCL* (like *LSB*) has four-part harmonizations for most of the hymns, the notation in *ÉA* consists of the melody only for each hymn, with chord symbols for guitarists and keyboardists above the staff. Having solely the melody on the staff helps the congregants see the tune better. The chord progressions for the melodies were then crafted to support the natural harmonizations that many African cultures can be expected to improvise around the melody, and, like the *LSB: Guitar Chord Edition*, have slower harmonic rhythms to allow for a simpler accompaniment. As a result, the chords in *ÉA* do not correspond with the common practice harmonizations of Western hymnals. The author provided the chords for the tunes; the design work and layout for this was by David Saar.

Conclusion

The Reformation quest to bring forth a singing church—a people faithfully observing the Pauline exhortations to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles for and with one another—was a centuries-long project that began with a simple hymnbook of eight hymns. Developing a Lutheran singing culture in the United States began with a mission hymnal of thirty-three songs and remains an ongoing project. Like the Scriptures and the catechism, the songs of the church must be taught; baptism bestows many gifts, but it does not give knowledge of the psalter. Thus, the church must care for her children, providing spiritual care through nourishing song. Albert Pougui (1942–2020), founder of *Église Évangélique Luthérienne du Congo*, understood this very well. Imprisoned with other Christian leaders in the 1990s by the Republic of Congo’s then-Marxist regime, he knew well what it was to suffer for the Christian faith. Like Paul and Silas, he and his fellow imprisoned Christian pastors sang in jail. He knew the value of hymns to teach and sustain faith. When

asked over dinner why he so valued Lutheran hymns so much that he was willing to urge church members to take weeks off from work to attend the author's workshops, he responded forcefully, yet simply: "La doctrine!"

Édition Africaine follows in the Lutheran tradition of providing hymnody and liturgy for the people, that they may gladly hear and learn about the love of God for us in Christ Jesus, that his truth, goodness, and beauty would dwell richly in them. May these songs flourish like the earlier efforts after which this hymnal was patterned, "till all Thy creatures own Thy sway."¹⁴

Endnotes

- 1 Carl Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 24–27.
- 2 *The Musical Heritage of the Lutheran Church*, vol. I (Valparaiso, IN: Valparaiso University, 1945).
- 3 Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation and Three Centuries of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 175–179.
- 4 Erik Routley, *The Church and Music: An Enquiry into the History, the Nature, and the Scope of Christian Judgment on Music* (London: Duckworth, 1967), 159–161.
- 5 *Liturgies et Cantiques Luthériens: Édition Africaine* (Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2023).
- 6 Micah Wildauer, LCMS missionary now in Belize, served faithfully at CLET from 2015–2020, and greatly enriched liturgical life there.
- 7 The *Achtleiderbuch* (Eight-Song Book), the first Lutheran hymn book, was published in 1524, six years before the Augustana. This small hymnal was immediately well-received: it was reprinted at least three times that year. See Philipp Wackernagel, *Bibliographie zur Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes im XVI Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961), 49ff.
- 8 Howard S. Olson, *Tumshangilie Mungu*, 6th ed. (Nairobi, Kenya: Printfast Kenya Limited, 1987). The most prominent collection of African hymnody, with 152 indigenous hymns, reveals both the strength and limitations of repetition.
- 9 *Hymns of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: for the use of English Lutheran Missions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1886).
- 10 Nicholas Temperley, *The Hymn Tune Index: A Census of English-Language Hymn Tunes in Printed Sources from 1535–1820*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1998). This monumental work references tunes by their incipit, revealing notable variations even in those first musical lines.
- 11 Katherine Smith Diehl, *Hymns and Tunes: An Index* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1966). This resource indexes songs from seventy-eight hymnals of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- 12 Norton, Richard. *Tonality in Western Culture: A Critical and Historical Perspective* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984), 220–223.
- 13 *The New English Hymnal* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 1986), hymn #86. This example demonstrates an example of rhythmic variation as well.
- 14 *LSB* 886:5, "The Day Thou Gavest," a hymn whose astonishing imagery captures the global span of the church's song.

From Wittenberg to the World

Sandra Rhein



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deaconess training in Asia.

Hymns have been central in the life of the Lutheran Church throughout its history. The centrality of hymnody, in fact, is a hallmark of the Lutheran Church, and Martin Luther's hymns form the core of Lutheran hymnals. The legacy of Luther's hymns flows from the Reformation to the present and into the future through the

church's hymnals. By the grace of God, this rich heritage of hymnody continues as established and emerging Lutheran church bodies around the world seek to develop hymnals in their local languages, just as Luther once did in Germany.

Learning from Luther

Martin Luther regarded music as one of the most precious gifts of creation. It has all the ingredients of beauty, harmony, and scientific order that are present in his good creation. Luther perceived that music itself, even apart from words, is able to convey the gospel, to chase away the devil, and to lift spirits.

When coupled with the word of God, though, music is a handmaid to that word, serving and supporting it. It makes a powerful emotional and spiritual connection with us. Through metered verse and poetic phrasing, it carries the word deep into our minds and hearts, helping form and shape faith. The specific characteristics of hymnody make it uniquely suited to bringing God's word to his people. Hymns proclaim Christ with words set to music, making them a sung confession of the faith. Hymns preach and proclaim Christ. They interpret Scripture so that we see Christ and his cross always at the center.

The regular and recurrent use of hymns in worship has unquestionably shaped so much of the basic vocabulary of words, phrases, and images that have become part of both our individual and collective memory as church. Hymns implanted deep in our memory and recalled to mind in the varied situations of the Christian life are more powerful and influential in our spiritual nurture than we might imagine.

Hymns teach and catechize. Luther wrote the Small Catechism to teach Scripture and doctrine. His experience as a musician had shown him that music was a powerful aid to memorization, so along with writing the Catechism, he wrote a hymn for each of its six chief parts.

Luther's hymns and those of his colleagues in the Reformation era are among the strongest confessional hymns we have to this day. "Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice," by Luther, and "Salvation unto Us has Come," by his colleague Paul Speratus, are small catechisms in themselves, teaching the faith in song. Hymnody and liturgical singing are among the most significant influences of Luther upon the worship life of the Lutheran Church.

Luther once said to his friend Georg Spalatin, "Following this example of the prophets and fathers of the church, I intend to make German Psalms [hymns in the vernacular] for the people, i.e., spiritual songs so that the word of God even by means of song may live among the people" (*Luther's Works*, 53:221). Hymns set the word of God before us. God gives us music to carry his sweet words of forgiveness into our hearts, souls, and minds.

This rich heritage of hymnody has continued over the past five hundred years, faithfully setting before people the word of God. Hymns help sustain the church in times of struggle or persecution. They carry the confession of the faithful and help form and confess their unity as the body of Christ. All this is pertinent and valid on the mission field, where there is an ongoing need for hymnals in local languages. As Luther understood, it is important to make spiritual songs available in the vernacular. Assisting Lutheran church bodies around the world who desire to develop a hymnal in their local language is a welcome and salutary part of our mission work.

As a sacred music educator on the mission field, I have been privileged to coordinate several hymnal projects, including those in Kenya, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Sri Lanka. These projects are part of the continuing story of Lutheran hymnals. In this article, I will briefly outline a brief history of those projects, along with several anecdotes about their work.

A Hymnal for the Kenyan Lutheran Church

Kenya is a rural country in East Africa, and most of the people do not own cars. Congregations are numerous, to be within walking distance, and one pastor often serves several congregations. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Walter Obare served as Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) from 2002–2019. In the

early years of his service, he visited many congregations around the country. Since the ELCK had no official hymnal, Bishop Obare observed that congregations frequently had to conduct services without the benefit of a pastor and without the benefit of a common hymnal. What could they do? They would often use whatever hymnal a congregant was able to obtain—whether it be Pentecostal, Anglican, or another. The result was that the people were being catechized out of the Lutheran Church by their hymnals. Hymns teach and help form the faith. Clearly, a Lutheran hymnal was needed.

The hymnal project for the Kenyan Church was begun in 2008 and the hymnal, *Ibada Takatifu* (“Divine Service”), was completed and dedicated in 2012. It is completely in Swahili and includes 175 hymns, twenty-seven of which were translated into Swahili for the first time.

The most challenging task with almost any hymnal project is finding individuals with the skills to translate the hymns. The translators for the Kenyan Hymnal Project were Peter Mremi and Amsuri Masuki from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, who joined with the Kenyan team comprising of Tom Omolo and the Isaiah Obare, among others. Tanzanians were chosen because the Swahili spoken in Tanzania is considered a purer form of the language. Pastors Mremi and Masuki were also both musicians, serving on the faculty of a Bible college in Mwika, on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

On the mission field, nearly all the work on a hymnal project is volunteered, but hymn translating is an exception, where providing payment is a way of showing the significance and gravity of the task. After the translating was finished and these two pastors had been paid, Pastor Masuki insisted that Isaiah and I come to his home because he had something we needed to see. In the small village where the Masukis lived, there was no running water yet, but recently the government had installed a water tower. Villagers needed to walk only a short distance to get drinkable water from this water tower. With some of the money Masuki earned translating hymns, he bought a small water tank and enough flexible tubing to reach from his front porch to the large water tower. In this way he had clean, drinkable water available on his front porch for his family and all the neighbors. He said to us, “As long as this water flows, that is how long I will remember the Kenyan hymnal project.”

To our delight another unexpected benefit of an official hymnal for the ELKC was that the Kenyan government considered the existence of a hymnal as one of the criteria for officially recognizing a church body. It was a sweet reminder of God’s loving guidance in all of life.

Let this food your faith so nourish
That its fruit of love may flourish
And your neighbor learn from you
How much God’s wondrous love can do. (*LSB* 627, st. 10)

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), located in the horn of Africa, is both the largest Lutheran church body in the world, with upwards of ten million members, and the fastest growing. After ending their partnership with the ELCA in 2013, the EECMY established a relationship with the LCMS, though that relationship has not yet progressed to full fellowship.

Of the over two dozen countries I've visited, Ethiopia has felt the most foreign. It was isolated from the rest of the world for much of the twentieth century, due both to political circumstances and choice. Reasons for the foreign feel are mostly related to time. The Ethiopian calendar has twelve months, each 30 days long, and a thirteenth month with five or six days. They are seven to eight years behind our Gregorian calendar, so while it is 2024 in America, it is 2016 in Ethiopia. Ethiopian time is also figured differently from western countries. They use a twelve-hour clock that starts at sunrise, which is 1:00. There is something uniquely disconcerting about scheduling a meeting for 10:00 in the afternoon, which goes beyond the normal and expected brain fog of jet lag!

Another "foreign" implication is that traditional Ethiopian music uses only pentatonic scales. A traditional diatonic scale, as is prominent in Western music, has seven tones in a pattern of half and whole steps. Because a pentatonic scale has only five notes, it has no half-steps and includes some larger intervals of one-and-a-half steps, making for a distinctive, recognizable sound. Some hymnals have rewritten Western tunes to fit those pentatonic modes, specifically avoiding all half-steps under the assumption that they would be hard to distinguish since they don't exist in traditional music. We chose not to do that for the EECMY hymnal because in recent decades the country has become less isolated and other musical styles are now common. Many examples of tunes built on diatonic scales can be found in current hymnbooks.

Among Ethiopian protestant churches, Pentecostal music is hugely popular, and Christian music studios are abundant. These songs can be heard blasting through speakers from churches, outdoor gatherings, and city buses as regularly as the calls to prayer from the Muslim mosques and Ethiopian Orthodox churches. Interestingly, it was the young people of the EECMY who let their leaders know they were weary of being bombarded by the shallow lyrics and insipid tunes and wanted more substance in their own churches. This is especially significant in a nation like Ethiopia where the median age is a young twenty years.

As noted earlier, the most difficult task in a hymnal project is translating hymns. The translators need to be fluent in both English and their local language, and they need to understand theology, music, and poetry. Emnet Araya, a gifted Ethiopian from a prominent musical family in the EECMY and who currently lives in England, had all the necessary skills and gifts as well as the time and interest to do the

translating. Emnet expertly translated twenty-six hymns from English into Amharic, thus offering her home church body a monumental gift.

The EECMY had already been using a previously developed hymnal, but as is the case with most hymnals on the mission field, it consisted only of song lyrics. A goal of the LCMS mission hymnal projects is to introduce and include other resources and services that will strengthen the church's song in each church body. The EECMY hymnal committee studied *Lutheran Service Book*, considered the gold standard of hymnals by Lutheran church bodies around the world, as they considered the contents of their new hymnal. Knowing that books are scarce in homes, their new hymnal also includes the Small Catechism and prayers. In this way, with only a Bible and a hymnal, families are fully equipped for prayer and catechesis. The committee chose to continue their tradition of naming their hymnal *Sebhat LeAmlak* ("Sing to the Lord").

Hymnal projects provide opportunity for teaching and training, especially for the pastors. During the five or so years of a hymnal project, we offer pastors' conferences to teach liturgical history and practice. These conferences are crucial for equipping the pastors of the church body since they will primarily be the ones to teach and lead their people. Congregations generally respect their pastor and follow his lead, so his understanding of and love for the new hymnal is a huge influence on theirs.

Choosing Hymns for Translation

Translating hymns is costly. Resources of time, money, and people are limited. Finding and identifying the right people for translating hymns is a major step forward for a hymnal project, but the actual translating also takes much time and energy. All this means that we must choose hymns wisely.

Some criteria are obvious and easy. Typically, many hymns have been brought into the church from Protestant missionaries or church bodies, so there is an abundance of hymns that fit under topics related to Christian Life, but there is often a sad lack of hymns with a right understanding and confession of the sacraments. Therefore, hymns for Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are a high priority.

Luther's catechism hymns seem like an obvious choice for teaching and confessing our beliefs, but very quickly the decision becomes complicated. "To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord," for instance, is a strong, confessional hymn, but has a complex tune and seven theologically packed stanzas. Not even all LCMS hymnals have always included it, and LSB offers a rare second tune. Will a hymn like this get taught and used in a church body with a more limited repertoire of hymns and fewer trained musicians for teaching? These are important considerations.

A balance of hymns from different time periods and different countries is desirable. As well-loved as some of the newer hymns in *LSB* are, they are chosen sparingly, for two reasons: first, they have not yet stood the test of time; and second, the copyright protections in place makes them more expensive to include.

The choice of essential hymns still needing to be translated varies from project to project, but are often drawn from this list:

1. Savior of the Nations, Come (*LSB 332*)
2. To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord (*LSB 406*)
3. A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (*LSB 438*)
4. Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle (*LSB 454*)
5. Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands (*LSB 458*)
6. Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest (*LSB 498*)
7. Triune God, Be Thou Our Stay (*LSB 505*)
8. O Love, How Deep (*LSB 544*)
9. Salvation Unto Us Has Come (*LSB 555*)
10. These are the Holy Ten Commands (*LSB 581*)
11. God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It (*LSB 594*)
12. All Christians Who Have Been Baptized (*LSB 596*)
13. All Who Believe and Are Baptized (*LSB 601*)
14. Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (*LSB 621*)
15. Wide Open Stand the Gates (*LSB 639*)
16. From Depths of Woe (*LSB 607*)
17. O Lord, We Praise Thee (*LSB 616*)
18. Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice (*LSB 556*)
19. A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (*LSB 438*)
20. Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying (*LSB 516*)
21. O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright (*LSB 395*)
22. "As Surely a I Live," God Said (*LSB 613*)
23. All Who Believe and are Baptized (*LSB 601*)
24. Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me (*LSB 683*)
25. Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (*LSB 621*)
26. At the Lamb's High Feast (*LSB 633*)
27. Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word (*LSB 655*)
28. I Walk in Danger All the Way (*LSB 716*)
29. Jesus, Priceless Treasure (*LSB 743*)
30. Our Father, Who from Heaven Above (*LSB 766*)
31. We All Believe in One True God (*LSB 954*)
32. I Walk in Danger All the Way (*LSB 716*)

33. Lord, Thee I Love With all my Heart (*LSB* 708)
34. Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me? (*LSB* 756)

In Christ there is no east or west,
In Him no south or north,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth. (*LSB* 653, st. 1)

Indonesia

Indonesia, a country of more than 17,000 islands located between the Indian and Pacific oceans, is home to the world's largest number of Muslims—an estimated 231 million, constituting nearly 90 percent of the Indonesian population. Here, more than ever, Christian worship must be explicitly and unequivocally about Jesus Christ. Hymns need to be clear that the God referred to is the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and that forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, come from Jesus Christ through God's word and sacraments. "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Indonesian pastors recall that as far back as 2006, their Bishop had been instructing them of the need for a faithful hymnal. My first trip there was in 2009, years before the beginning of an official hymnal project for the Indonesian Lutheran Church (GKLI). A missionary, working with a local musician, Jubel, had a setting of the Divine Service translated into Indonesian. The next step was to enter it into the computer, and for that they needed my assistance. My time with Jubel was fascinating and productive, and we made quick progress until one day he offhandedly asked me when we were going to put everything into *their* music notation. I had no idea what Jubel was talking about. As it turns out, traditional music notation in Indonesia (as well as Mainland China, Taiwan, and a few other Asian countries) is a numbered notation. In this system, number 1 to 7 represent scale degrees and are sung with solfège syllables, while dots and dashes are used to represent rhythm and octave.

Figuring out a way to enter this numerical notation above the standard Western notation was one of the biggest challenges I've faced in this hymnal work and to my great satisfaction, Finale music notation software eventually created a plug-in specifically for these Lutheran hymnal projects. I am ever so grateful to a specific Finale engineer who worked with me personally and developed a solution for my need. This skillful and generous young man, while no longer an employee of Finale, continues to answer my questions and update the software when needed.

The fact that I had no idea initially what Jubel was talking about, is one of the most common experiences in overseas work. With a foreign culture and language come many challenges of incomprehension.

An interesting tradition in the GKLI is the singing of a song called “Evangelium” before the sermon. Jethro Sinaga, a Batak man from North Sumatra Indonesia, studied at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota in the 1950s. During his time there, he began to realize that he had not heard much gospel in the sermons he heard back home. Once he completed his program and returned to Indonesia, he urged his fellow pastors to proclaim the gospel in their preaching. He wrote a song titled “Evangelium” to exhort preachers to remember the gospel in their preaching. In the GKLI tradition, “Evangelium” is sung before the sermon in every single service. It is interesting to note that for the GKLI, “Evangelium” is the word used for both “sermon” and “gospel.” The implication of this is that when the congregation sings “Evangelium” they are simultaneously declaring: “Preach!” and “Gospel!”

Buku Ibadah Lutheran (“Divine Service Book”) is currently in the proofreading stage, and Lord willing, will be completed and dedicated by the end of 2024. Thirty hymns were translated into Indonesian for the first time, and several others were edited and improved.

Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ, our head and cornerstone,
Chosen of the Lord and precious,
Binding all the Church in one;
Holy Zion’s help forever
And our confidence alone. (*LSB* 909, st. 1)

Taiwan/China

The LCMS began work on the island of Taiwan in the South China Sea in 1951 and has been a sister church with the China Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC) since 1966. One reason the LCMS Office of International Mission (OIM) agreed to assist with a Chinese hymnal was the existence of a large corpus of hymns already available in Chinese. It was surmised that with those current translations, this hymnal could be produced relatively quickly. However, as the CELC hymnal committee began its work, it became apparent that most of those translations needed major editing. They were difficult to sing because the lyrics didn’t flow naturally with the tunes. Even a congregation that made a concerted effort to learn a modest number of hymns well found the task unrewarding. Because the words and the music did not fit together, singing them was difficult and awkward.

The committee explored options. Could new tunes be written? This idea was rejected for cultural reasons. In the Asian culture, conformity is more highly valued than individualism. Using existing traditional Chinese tunes was rejected because in their pagan culture; every tune that was considered sounded pagan and thus unfit for Christian worship. Finally, the church in Taiwan and mainland China is small and

isolated. They desire to be united with the church around the world and across the ages by singing the same hymns with the same tunes. Indeed, the tunes themselves have significance. The church's culture is a function of her musical language as well as her written language. Much has been written about the marriage of tune and text in Lutheran hymns. Those tunes support the words and serve as handmaids of the gospel. They are good gifts of God, upholding and adorning and magnifying the word of God and prayer.

A test booklet was published in 2019 containing the setting of Divine Service 1 from *LSB*, Luther's Small Catechism, selected psalms and tones, prayers, services for Holy Baptism and Confirmation, and fifty-six hymns. All but two of the hymns included are translations of hymns from *LSB*, with settings of Luther's Morning Prayer and table prayer as the two additions. This booklet is being used by six of the nine CELC congregations as their primary hymnal. It has been distributed literally worldwide and is also being used regularly by at least a few LCMS Chinese congregations in the United States.

Settings for Matins and Vespers have been completed and distributed in pamphlet form, and a supplement containing thirty additional hymns was printed in March 2024. The plan is to continue distributing hymns and other resources as they become ready, compiling everything into a full hymnal at the completion of the work.

To God in heaven
All praise be given!
Come, let us offer
And gladly proffer,
To the Creator the gifts He doth prize.
He well receiveth
A heart that believeth;
Hymns that adore Him
Are precious before Him
And to His throne like sweet incense arise. (*LSB* 726, st. 4)

Sri Lanka

In contrast to African Lutheran church bodies, where membership numbers are in the tens of thousands, or even millions, Asian Lutheran church bodies are generally small, and the Lutheran Church in Sri Lanka is among the smallest.

Sri Lanka is an island nation at the southern tip of India. Buddhism is the official religion and is practiced by over 70 percent of the people. Another 12 percent identify as Hindu, and nearly 10 percent as Muslim. Amidst this spiritual darkness stands the Ceylon Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC) with sixteen congregations served by four pastors, five evangelists, and one missionary family.

It is a testament to God's boundless love for his dear children that church bodies such as the CELC even exist. But exist it does, and the gifts of the gospel are received in all their abundance and fullness, regardless of the number of people gathered.

The unifying character of historic hymnody has especially great significance for a small church body. Hymns that have been sung for centuries, and presently are sung in many countries across the globe, connect the church. Hymns help form and confess unity as the body of Christ. They unify us with the church at large and give us a clearer identity as a Lutheran church.

The Sri Lankan church worships in Tamil and currently uses a Tamil Lutheran hymnal produced in India by the Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Tamil is a classical language with a long and fascinating history. It first appeared 5,000 years ago, making it one of the world's oldest languages and one of the few ancient languages still spoken today. This historical significance affects the translation of hymns and liturgy. Whereas in some cultures and languages it is advisable to update the vocabulary as words become obscure or obsolete, in this case, preservation is prized and desired. There is a loyalty and pride in their ancient language, and a keen sense of maintaining and defending its stability and constancy.

The orders for Holy Communion and Matins in the Tamil Lutheran Hymnal are translations from *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The Sri Lankans know these settings, so they are obvious for inclusion in the hymnal. The music notation of these liturgical settings, however, is full of inaccuracies, so correcting those errors is necessary, and itself a reason for a new hymnal.

A shortage of copies of the Tamil Lutheran Hymnal is another compelling reason for the CELC to produce its own hymnal. In one congregation I visited, I witnessed upwards of thirty people sharing two well-worn copies. Finally, the hymns in the older hymnal are text only. Adding music and making audio recordings will be helpful steps for Sri Lankans to increase their hymn repertoire.

Who trusts in God a strong abode
In heav'n and earth possesses.
Who looks in love to Christ above
No fear that heart oppresses.
In you alone, dear Lord, we own
Sweet hope and consolation,
Our shield from foes, our balm for woes,
Our great and sure salvation. (*LSB* 714, st. 1)

Latin and South America

The story of hymnal development around the world wouldn't be complete without a few words about *Himnario Luterano*, the Spanish-language hymnal published in

2021. Two notable aspects of this hymnal project are its far-reaching potential and its keen-sighted use of the internet for teaching.

Before this project, I had only worked in countries with multiple languages: countries where even the choice of language for the hymnal is difficult, where the most common language or the official language will only serve a minority of congregations, and where further translations must be an ongoing aspect of the project. By contrast, Spanish is widely spoken, especially in Latin America, and the Lutheran churches of seventeen countries had committed to using *Himnario Luterano* even before it was published (thanks be to God!).

The Spanish hymnal committee included skilled theologians and musicians from across Latin America and beyond, and it was a joy to work with such a capable team. I was privileged to join them near the end of their work. One of my tasks was to provide recordings for all the music to be used for teaching as well as for accompaniment when needed. My lasting memory of some enforced quarantine time a few years back is primarily that of recording hymns by the hundred from *Himnario Luterano*.

To the Ends of the Earth

The legacy of Luther's hymns flows from the Reformation to the present and into the future through the church's hymnals. By the grace of God, this rich heritage continues as hymnals are requested and developed by Lutheran church bodies around the world.

Hymnals set before us the word of God and, through the pairing of music, help write God's word on our hearts. They are a vital part of the story of God's people—the story of God's ongoing grace and mercy and his never-ending faithfulness. Martin Luther gave a lasting gift to the church when he used hymns to teach and spread the gospel. He encouraged his colleagues to follow the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers of the church, and to compose psalms for the people in the vernacular, so that the word of God may be among the people also in the form of music.

The church's singing and her song accompany the coming of the Lord. We sing in celebration of his coming in word and sacrament. When the name of the Lord is sung, his Spirit is actively present and at work in that word and in that singing to sanctify and bless both the singer and the hearer. Hymns and hymnals help sustain the church precisely because they carry the word of God. The production and use of hymnals continues strongly in the present and future of the mission field.

May God bestow on us His grace,
With blessings rich provide us;
And may the brightness of His face
To life eternal guide us,
That we His saving health may know,

His gracious will and pleasure,
And also to the nations show
Christ's riches without measure
And unto God convert them. (*LSB* 823, st. 1)

*Homiletical
Helps*

Lectionary Kick-start for the First Sunday after Christmas

The following are portions of *Lectionary Kick-start*. This podcast is one of the series produced by Concordia Seminary's Department of Theological Research and Publication (the same department that brings you the *Concordia Journal*). *Lectionary Kick-start* gives weekly support to church workers as they write sermons and lesson plans. Jessica Bordeleau, MAR, hosts 25-minute discussions with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger, professors of homiletics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Their conversations about the week's lectionary texts are designed to be a first step in planning for Sunday. You can find more episodes of *Lectionary Kick-start* at concordiatheology.org, CSL Scholar, and most major podcast apps.

In this episode the group discusses the first Sunday after Christmas. Dr. Schmitt shares sermon structures based on the Gospel of Luke and Dr. Peter Nafzger explores the epistle reading from Colossians 3.

Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kick-start. We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger. They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are pretty good preachers. Alright, let's get started! David, where are we in the church year?

David: We are discussing what the lectionary calls the Second Sunday in Easter, the Sunday right after Easter.

Jessica: And Peter, what are the texts this week?

Peter: The texts are taken from Exodus 13, Colossians 3, Luke 2, and Psalm 111.

Jessica: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you would preach about. Peter, this week you get to go first!

Peter: I am going to suggest a sermon on Colossians 3, but I've just got to say that the Sunday after Christmas is a hard Sunday.

David: It's rough! You're exhausted.

Peter: Not only have you had your own personal Christmas celebration, but church has been busy with all sorts of things going on. I want to have that in mind as I think about a sermon on this text. It's the 29th of December, this is the time when you're looking toward the new year. Instead of having New Year's resolutions this year, I'm going to encourage people, on the basis of this text, to have a "Christmas reset." Resolutions tend to be all about us and what we're doing, and of course, what we're not doing. But a reset is going back to something that's already been done. It invites you to think about what God has done for us in Christ. Let's take a reset and see how Paul and his letter to the Colossians can help. Jessica, will you read verses 12 to 14?

Jessica: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Peter: I'm going to suggest we have a threefold reset in this sermon. And the first one is to reset your wardrobe. I remember as a kid, I would get a new set of clothes for Christmas. It was just so fun to wear those new clothes to church or wherever we were going.

David: I always used to wear them to the midnight service.

Peter: The idea of putting on new clothes for Christmas, that's nothing new. But I'd like to help people think about a reset in terms of attitude and lifestyle. What do you put on each day? Compassionate hearts and the love of God.

The second part of this reset would be to speak new words. I would look at this in terms of resetting a relationship. The words that I would pick up on would be from verse 13. We speak words that we've heard, and here's where the gospel would be crystal clear—God has spoken these words of forgiveness. That's the whole point of Jesus. Not just his birth of course, but in his life, his death, his resurrection. All for our forgiveness, for our life, for our salvation.

And then I would invite people to have a reset with a relationship in their life. Instead of being general, I would give the hearers a moment or two to think about a person who has sinned against you, who has hurt you. I would encourage them as they're wearing their new, compassionate, loving clothes, that they reset their words with a relationship that needs forgiveness. At this time of year, after family gatherings, this a good time to think about forgiveness.

Jessica: I was just thinking that.

David: Oh man, there will be people fresh in mind. Oh yeah.

Peter: So that would be an emphasis on the forgiveness that we've received and the forgiveness that we speak to one another.

And then the third reset would be the song that we sing. be thankful, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. In verse 17, the last phrase, "giving thanks to God the Father through him" so the new song would be a song of thankfulness and gratitude. Let's reset after Christmas. We're looking toward the new year and let Paul's encouragement in Colossians 3 help us with this reset. The reset would be what carries the sermon thematically.

Jessica: David, what about you? What would you preach on?

David: Well, I'm going to go with the text from Luke. I just want to lean into the figure of Simeon and what he's doing on the scene. The one thing I want to point out, and I don't know Jessica, if this happens to you at Christmas, but for me at Christmas, there's a lot of activity. There's activity that has been planned. There's activity that's tradition. We gather around, we open gifts, we gather for a meal. So we've got all these things we do. but it doesn't have the deep resonance we wished for. It doesn't seem to sparkle or capture our attention. But then, every once in a while, there's one moment that

sticks out. It's December 29th, Christmas Day is over. As we look back, I'm wondering, is there a moment that happened that sticks out for you?

In this text, Luke opens with a description of all the activity that's going on. You've got Mary and Joseph bringing the baby Jesus to the temple. They're fulfilling the law of Moses. Then, out of the blue comes this one small moment that's going to stick out for us, in the midst of all of the activity in the temple. Jessica, if you could read verse 26 through 28a.

Jessica: And it had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him, according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms.

David: So the contrast is between Mary and Joseph and all the other people in the temple. I imagine this to be a really busy place, the people in the temple fulfilling the law of the Lord. They're doing what they should be doing.

Peter: And all the animals.

David: And all the animals, right? Yeah.

Jessica: Sounds noisy.

David: I know! (laughing) So they're fulfilling the law of the Lord. And into the midst of that, suddenly Simeon comes, and instead of seeing people fulfilling the law of the Lord, we see God fulfilling his promises. When you have a landscape filled with people fulfilling the law of the Lord, there are moments when we kind of pull back and we see that it's God fulfilling his promises. That's what sticks with us.

That's what Simeon does for us in this event. I'm thinking of doing a narrative sermon. Paul Scott Wilson, in his book *The Four Pages of the Sermon* talks about filming the text. If you're going to tell a story, sometimes it's helpful to visualize it on a screen and narrate how you would present this on the screen. It'll help you as you retell the story, to think about very concrete, visual things. You're thinking about the order and the sounds. If you're going to put that on the big screen, how would you do it?

Peter: I was just thinking about how this sounds. The sound of commotion, I'm hearing sheep...

David: And turtle doves...

Peter: All kinds of stuff. As Simeon starts to talk, all of that just slowly fades and the only thing we can hear is Simeon's voice.

Jessica: Your description of the setting totally changes how I see the story. When I've read this in the past, I've fit it into the experiences that I've had. When I'm in a church and there's a ceremony with a baby, I'm thinking of a baptism. Everybody's sitting quietly in the pews, watching, right? I didn't think about the temple being a place where they're buying and selling, and people everywhere. There's a ton of things going on! Maybe there were sacrifices going on at the same time, and Anna at the same time, all at once. It's like this little thing is happening and maybe nobody even knows about it.

David: Right? So how would you picture that on the screen?

Jessica: I would start with a wide shot of the whole temple and the people buying and selling animals and the kids complaining and the people going to the court of the women and people reading from the scrolls and all the noise. Then I'd slowly zoom in closer and closer and closer to Simeon holding this baby and the look on his face.

Peter: What if you did that same zoom, but you didn't zoom in on Simeon, but on Anna's perspective of Simeon. Clearly just in that very hour, she was saying something! Let the visual be from her perspective.

Jessica: Yes! Simeon's doing something that no one's paying attention to, but Anna sees it. Yes, that's great!

David: Oh, that would be good. At the close, you could suggest that we have been like Anna. Like Anna, we have seen, and like Anna, we have heard a voice. We can share this news of what God has done. I would have the camera at ground level, capturing all the activity going on. I'd want you to see Mary and Joseph and Jesus, but just their faces in the crowd. They're just people, doing their business.

Jessica: Just one more couple bringing a baby in.

David: Right! One more couple being jostled in the crowd. Then I would move to Simeon's eyes as he's scanning the crowd. Then show Simeon's hand pushing through people until finally he comes to them, and he grabs the

baby, and he lifts the baby up. When the baby is lifted up, the shot is from above. You'd see the baby Jesus, and you'd see Simeon's face, and Mary and Joseph's faces; all looking up. That would be the moment when you'd begin to hear the words of the song, and everything would be silent. You'd have this recognition of who they are and the moment where God is working, bringing salvation.

Peter: The visual piece here is really helpful.

David: But I really liked this idea of Anna, I'd probably change it now with your idea of seeing it through Anna's eyes, having her see Simeon!

In the sermon, I'd open with the question: Is there a single moment that stands out from your Christmas? That would be the phrase that would help move from the story of the text to the story of our lives today. Through moments like this, when we still see God's salvation in our life in Christ. When we are coming forward for the Lord's Supper, there's the moment that we see and realize that this isn't us about us fulfilling our duty. It's about God fulfilling his promises for us.

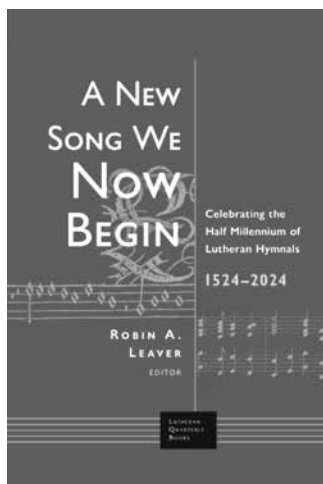
Jessica: That's beautiful! Thanks guys.
That's all for today. We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at concordiatheology.org. Check it out! You can find more episodes of *Lectionary Kick-start* and our other podcast *Tangible: theology learned and lived* on any of the major podcast apps. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau. Join us next week here at *Lectionary Kick-start* Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Reviews

**A NEW SONG WE NOW BEGIN:
Celebrating the Half Millennium
of Lutheran Hymnals, 1524–2024.**

*Edited by Robin A. Leaver. Fortress Press,
2024. Paperback. 301 pages. \$39.00.*

When the full fury and force of the Counter-Reformation descended upon the towns and villages of the Habsburg empire in the mid-seventeenth century and their pastors were arrested and sold as galley slaves to the Venetians, Lutherans and Reformed believers took to the woods on Sundays with their Bibles, catechisms, and hymnbooks or psalm-books in their hands. In every age the hymns of the church have sustained believers in good times and bad. Manuscript liturgies provided medieval song a material foundation. With the advent of the printing press, the hymnal slowly became a material vehicle for cultivating and sustaining the piety of the people, a *vade mecum* through life and into death. Not only in the days of terror and oppression but in the eras of relative peace, these books of poetic, melodic meditation, proclamation, and praise gave substance and expression to the faith of God's people. Even in an electronic age, we find comfort and pleasure holding the hymnal in our hands.



Martin Luther's call for reform arose out of his fundamental redefinition of what it means to be Christian. He rejected the medieval understanding that the core of the daily Christian life lay in proper performance of good works, especially sacred or religious rituals, mediated and conducted by priests, and that such performance was possible through sacramentally infused habitual grace. Instead of this mechanistic model, Luther found that being Christian involved conversation inaugurated by the Lord who created humankind and

who restored sinners to his kingdom through the death and resurrection of Christ. God addresses sinners from Scripture's pages, and believer trust in Christ's promise of new life elicits responses of praise and thanksgiving as well as service to other creatures, Luther taught. These responses included the confession of faith cultivated in the reformer's Small Catechism and the singing of hymns of praise and confession with the

family or the congregation. Liturgy and hymns became an essential tool of the Holy Spirit for Luther's followers.

Luther recognized what twenty-first-century psychologists and musicologists have noted in analyzing our humanity from the standpoint of their own disciplines. As James L. Brauer has shown in his recently published

Music—God’s Mysterious Gift: Its Power to Influence Humans and Its Role in God’s Kingdom, we are “wired for music,” and its effects on our bodies, minds, emotions, and wills are not completely graspable and explainable.¹ Lutherans in every age have experienced this power from singing and hearing sung, from playing a variety of instruments and hearing them played. That experience goes back five hundred years for Luther’s followers. That this aspect of our history remains essential for understanding what it means to be Lutheran is clear from the number of recent studies of Lutherans and music.²

Soon after his appearance in Worms in 1521, Luther began fashioning tools for implementing reform, such as his postil sermons, which provided a continuing education in homiletics for pastors, and his translation of the New Testament, designed to bring the speaking God into homes as well as churches. In 1523, he recognized the power of the sung message for spreading his understanding of the biblical message. His “new song” was intended to arouse opposition to those who executed his friends, the Augustinian brothers Johann van Esch and Heinrich Voes,³ but he followed quickly with hymns that brought the chant of the medieval worship into the mouths of the congregation.

The next year the first collection of hymns supporting his call for reform of the teaching of the church and its practice appeared in print. Enterprising printers had already caught on to the

power and profit at hand in combining Luther’s name and their product.⁴ Gradually, the hymnbook transformed congregational worship and the devotional life of families.⁵ From that time on, those who followed Luther and claimed his name have been singing from hymnals. In this five-hundredth anniversary year of the first hymnbook of the Lutheran Reformation, the celebration of this jubilee goes on in hymn festivals, preaching, and in scholarly research. In this volume the doyen of research on Lutheran hymnody in our day, Robin A. Leaver, has collected a team of scholars who provide readers with in-depth examination and re-examination of several aspects of the vital role of hymns and hymnals within Lutheran history. In a series of snapshot portrayals of key points in the ongoing development of the publication of hymnals in Lutheran churches, there emerges a portrait of the essential place occupied by the hymnal as a tool for the singing of the faith in the piety of the Wittenberg Reformation.

Leaver introduces the volume with an imaginative overview of these developments, focusing first on early modern auction catalogs of several theologians who collected hymnbooks and late in life offered their collections for sale to an eager market. The first essay in the volume, also by Leaver, explores the roots of Luther’s hymnody in his hymn, “A New Song,” composed in 1523 in the ballad genre to rehearse the story of the martyrdom of Voes and van Esch. Luther had quickly recognized

the potential of the printing press with the success of his *On Indulgence and Grace* in 1518, in the wake of the wider reproduction of his Ninety-five Theses on indulgences. Similarly, in 1523 and 1524 the popularity of his “A New Song” immediately led the reformer to grasp the possibilities that hymns offered his efforts to spread the gospel. He turned to psalm texts first before moving into other forms of hymns. Leaver reviews the development and impact of the *Achtliederbuch*, the first gathering of hymns by a printer devoted to Luther’s cause, Jobst Gutknecht in Nuremberg, and the competing volumes published in Erfurt and Wittenberg the same year, just as Luther was launching his first attempt at liturgical reform, the *Formula Missae*.

Paul J. Grime (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne) places Luther’s activity as editor of the 1529 hymnal, *Geistliche Lieder*, in the context of his larger use of print to reform the church and bring his message to the people. Grime links the reformer’s catechetical efforts and his composition and revision of his prayerbook with his production of hymns and hymnals. Although Luther did not aid in the composition of the influential “Bapst Hymnal,” published by the Leipzig printer Valentin Bapst in 1545, his preface to Bapst’s hymnal explicated the theological foundations for a Lutheran use of music in subsequent generations.⁶

Leaver’s volume moves into the period following the Reformation with an essay on the introduction of the *cantional* genre—homophonic, four-part

settings, by Lucas Osiander. Markus Rathey (Yale University) traces the further development of the *cantional* form by Michael Praetorius, Johann Hermann Schein, and Melchior Franck in the early seventeenth century. Joseph Herl (Concordia University Nebraska) analyzes the most frequently published hymnal in the Lutheran tradition, Johann Crüger’s *Praxis pietatis melica* of 1640. Crüger, cantor of the church of Saint Nicholas in Berlin, not only produced tunes and texts that have endured into the twenty-first century, but he also helped popularize the texts being composed by one of the pastors with whom he served, Paul Gerhardt, as well as by another contemporary in Silesia, Johann Heermann. Crüger’s hymnal borrowed richly from its sixteenth-century heritage, but it also introduced contemporary pieces, such as Gerhardt’s, which followed the literary refinement prescribed by his contemporary Martin Opitz, whose literary theory shaped German poetry for generations to come. These new hymns embraced a more emotional expression of personal piety. Since organs had not come into general use in Lutheran churches by the first half of the seventeenth century, the hymnals of the period generally presented homophonic settings, designed for use in both congregational worship and family devotion. Herl notes that initially Gerhardt’s hymns were regarded with suspicion by many orthodox Lutheran theologians. Pietists took to them immediately, reflecting the influence of

the Crüger hymnal on a wide spectrum within German Lutheran churches.

Diane McMullen (Union College, Schenectady, NY) notes the influence of Crüger's hymnal on a hymnal assembled by Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen, a member of the inner circle of Pietists around August Hermann Francke. Freylinghausen's *Geist-reiches Gesangbuch* contained many hymns from Crüger's hymnal, including those by Johann Rist and Paul Gerhardt, but it also used hymns by radical Pietists such as Gottfried Arnold and Johann Wilhelm Peterson and the Roman Catholic convert from Lutheranism, Johann Scheffler. Freylinghausen's hymnal aroused fierce criticism from orthodox Lutheran circles that made this second-most popular hymnal in Lutheran history also the most controversial (although the field of competition is formidable). Critics attacked its use of "a certain springing and dancing type of melody" as well as its emphasis on sanctification and eschatology. McMullen provides readers with a glimpse into current musicological methods with a brief overview of her own work in conjunction with that of Wolfgang Miersemann and Gudrun Busch.

An essay by Jon D. Vieker (Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis) opens the section of this volume on American Lutheran hymnals. His analysis of "Walther's Hymnal" demonstrates that the Perry County/Saint Louis emigrants, discontented with the Rationalist hymnal they

brought with them from Saxony, placed high priority on the development of their own hymnal that returned to the earlier tradition of Lutheran hymnody. C. F. W. Walther took the lead in editing the hymnal but employed the help of his brother-in-law Friedrich Lochner, pastor in Maryville, Illinois, nearby to Saint Louis. Lochner had devoted himself to studying hymnody and liturgics. Trinity congregation launched the project in November 1845; by 1847 its manuscript was sent to a printer in New York City. Within weeks of the arrival of the first edition in Saint Louis in August 1847, it sold out, and within two years its fourth edition had appeared, expanded to include, in addition to its hymns, texts for the Epistle and Gospel pericopes, a passion harmony, and Josephus's description of the destruction of Jerusalem. Walther stressed the need for hymns that taught doctrine purely within the orthodox Lutheran tradition. Vieker traces the influence of "Walther's Hymnal" as it became used by congregations throughout the newly founded Missouri Synod. With English translations of the German Lutheran hymnic tradition by Catherine Winkworth, Richard Massie, the Missouri Synod's own August Crull, and others appearing by the late nineteenth century, a store of texts became available that could be incorporated into the Missouri Synod's *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* of 1912, shaped significantly by an earlier hymnal of the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

By 1912, Missouri Synod worship was using English hymns from Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Horatio Bonar, and others in the Methodist and Evangelical Anglican traditions.

Hymnals have played a variety of roles in the development of Lutheran worship, personal piety, and ecclesiastical life. Paul Westermeyer (Luther Seminary, Saint Paul) traces the role of the *Common Service Book with Hymnal* of 1917/18 in bringing Lutherans divided by country of origin and theological orientation together into the United Lutheran Church in America, the merger in 1918 of the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South. This hymnal rested on the Common Service of 1888; its form set the standard that has governed North American Lutheran hymnals for a century. Westermeyer carefully follows the often tension-filled development of Lutheran hymnody out of the context of the desire of both Lutheran and Reformed German immigrants to express their common national heritage in the North American context. Reactions by those in eastern Lutheran churches included the embrace of the Confessional Revival in European ancestral lands, leading to a renewed appreciation of the German hymns of the past. Westermeyer's recitation of the stages in the efforts to produce a common hymnal for "East Coast" Lutherans demonstrates how hymnals both reflect and shape the larger life of the church.

Westermeyer's Luther Seminary

colleague, Gracia Grindal, provides a catalog of the Scandinavian hymnal traditions, from Iceland to Finland, from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first. She condenses the complex production and use of the rich strains of hymnody in each of the Nordic lands and tongues. The Baltic Sea interweaves these lands with northern Germany, also in the early influences flowing north from Wittenberg and other German Lutheran centers. But already in the 1520s and 1530s, both theological and ecclesiastical leaders of the kingdoms of Denmark-Norway-Iceland and Sweden-Finland were cultivating native hymnic traditions that blossomed in the next two centuries. Grindal assesses succinctly and clearly how Orthodox, Pietist, and Enlightened ways of thinking shaped hymn-writing and used hymnals to propagate their emphases in the church's teaching. In the nineteenth century, as in Germany, nationalist and Romantic tendencies expressed themselves in hymns and hymnals as well. Grindal concludes her survey by bringing the ongoing saga of the church shaping hymnals and hymnals shaping the church in Nordic lands into the twenty-first century.

The newest North American hymnals flow from the common efforts that resulted in the *Service Book and Hymnal* of 1958. Mark Granquist, also a Luther Seminary professor, analyzes a variety of factors that shaped the negotiations toward and production of the *SBH*. These include the several traditions of hymnody that have

graced Lutheran churches over a half millennium, ecclesiastical politics, and theological developments amid the ongoing process of finding an appropriate place to sit at the ever-changing banquet table of North American cultures and societies. Granquist crisply reviews how patriarch Heinrich Melchior Mühlberg's dream of a common hymnal for North American Lutherans, elusive already at his time because of the remnants of Swedish and Dutch Lutherans in the English colonies, neared fulfillment without being able to grasp it. Granquist's command of archival and printed sources enables him to offer a critical assessment of the *SBH* of 1958 and a detailed tracking of the story that led to the publication of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* in 1978. He elucidates the role of the Missouri Synod, whence came the initial call that led to work on the *LBW*, in the deliberations that created this volume and the circumstances that led to the Synod's abandonment of the project in 1977.

Daniel Zager (Eastman School of Music) explores the explosion of North American Lutheran hymnody through a review of the Missouri Synod's *Worship Supplement* of 1969, an example of a late twentieth-century phenomenon shared with other Lutheran churches. Zager focuses particularly on the works of Jaroslav Vajda and Martin Franzmann and the fresh translations by Martin L. Seltz and F. Samuel Janzow. Zager explores the *Supplement's* appropriation of older hymns from the Lutheran traditions and its use of different settings for familiar hymns. The volume closes

with a survey by Zager and Leaver of other recent endeavors to expand the hymns available for North American Lutherans in supplements and hymnals in English, French, and Spanish.

Christians have sung since living in the shadow of Judaeen synagogues and the dankness of the catacombs. Martin Luther captured song as a means of teaching the faith and praising his Lord early on. With his musical and poetic gifts, Luther set a pattern for using music in the service of the Gospel of Christ. His followers have pursued his practice for five hundred years. Leaver presents us with twelve snapshots of central elements (events!) in the history of the material expression of this practice in hymnal form. Each author brings the skills of his or her discipline and the perspectives of the place in the Lutheran hymnic and hymnal traditions that each occupies.

The complete study of the history of the Lutheran production of hymnals and their role in cultivating the public witness and personal devotion of the saints will include studies of Baltic, Slovak, and Siebenbürgen hymnals, as well as those produced in Australia and a variety of Majority World churches that have carried what began in 1524 in Nuremberg into the 2020s in countless lands and tongues around the world. This volume's contributions supply critical, focused detail on specific elements of the unfolding of the heritage of singing God's teaching and his praise that enlighten current readers and provide a model for scholars to come.

Robert Kolb

Endnotes

- 1 James L. Brauer, *Music—God’s Mysterious Gift: Its Power to Influence Humans and Its Role in God’s Kingdom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 40–63.
- 2 Among many examples, see Leaver’s own *Luther’s Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007; now available from Fortress Press, Minneapolis) and *The Whole Church Sings: Congregational Singing in Luther’s Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017); Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Joyce L. Irwin, *Neither Voice nor Heart Alone: German Lutheran Theology of Music in the Age of the Baroque* (New York: Lang, 1993; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017); and Mattias Lundberg, Maria Schildt, and Jonas Lundblad, eds., *Lutheran Music Culture: Ideals and Practices* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2022). The wealth of such studies in German includes Ernst Koch, *Musik der Menschen und Musik der Engel: Frömmigkeitsgeschichtliche Beiträge zur lutherischen Musikkultur*, Stefan Michel and Johannes Schilling, eds. (Leipzig: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 2021); Konrad Küster, *Musik im Namen Luthers: Kulturtraditionen seit der Reformation* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2016); and Johannes Schilling and Brinja Bauer, *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied: 500 Jahre Evangelisches Gesangbuch*. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2023).
- 3 On their story in its wider context, see Robert J. Christman, *The Dynamics of the Early Reformation in Their Reformed Augustinian Context* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).
- 4 Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2015).
- 5 Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars*.
- 6 On a similar preface, that for the Rhau hymnal of 1538, see Dietrich Korsch, “The Word of God and Music in Luther: Re-Reading Luther’s 1538 Rhau Preface,” in *Lutheran Music Culture: Ideals and Practices*, 21–33.

SINGING CHURCH HISTORY: Introducing the Christian Story Through Hymn Texts. By Paul Rorem. *Fortress Press, 2024. Paperback. 205 pages. \$34.00.*

There is a common assumption that church history is boring, difficult to make sense of, and not relevant to the life of the church today. However, Paul Rorem shows in *Singing Church History* that this assumption is wrong on all three counts; indeed, the history of the church, as told by Rorem through the history of the hymns of the church, is exciting, easy to understand (though never simplistic), and has much to bear on the life of the church today.

Rorem tells the story of hymnody beginning with the hymns and canticles of Scripture, noting the ubiquity of song among the people of God even from the beginning. From there, he talks about the hymns of the early church (100–500) and of the early Eastern church (100–800), where he points out both the great treasures of the hymns of this period but also the sometimes-scattered records of them. He then discusses the hymns of Europe through the early, middle, and late Middle Ages (500–1100, 1100–1300, and 1300–1500), thoroughly debunking the notion that Luther “invented” hymn-singing and instead showing that many fine hymns were written during the period. After this, Rorem turns to the hymns of the Reformation (1500–1600), acknowledging that, while Luther didn’t

invent hymn-singing, he certainly had an enormous impact on it.

As he turns to the more modern period, Rorem's focus becomes more scattered as he tries to capture large, complicated developments over a relatively short number of chapters. Instead of focusing on whole periods of time, he turns to specific movements and traditions within those periods. Specific periods/movements he covers include Pietism (1600–1750) and the American Revivals/Social Gospel movement (1800–1950), where the importance of hymnody in these movements is emphasized. Specific traditions he covers include notably non-European ones: African American Hymnody (1800–present day) as well as the broad category of “World Christianity” (he focuses on this from the period of 1950–present day).

Rorem's survey of these periods is far from comprehensive. In each chapter he narrows his focus by choosing only a few figures from each period, and none of these figures are addressed in detail (e.g., the great Isaac Watts is covered in only three-and-a-half pages). However, the brevity of *Singing Church History* is not its weakness, but rather its strength: unlike most history textbooks that cover all these things in much greater detail, *Singing Church History* can

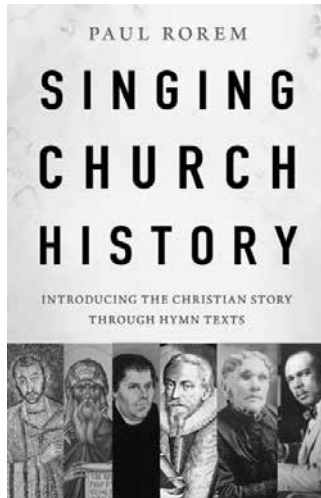
be read in an afternoon, and so it gives Rorem the freedom to paint his history with broad strokes.

These broad strokes allow Rorem to point to the ubiquity of singing in the life of the church—how it has always been an integral part of worship. In this, Rorem shows that hymns not only provide a window into the history of the church, but also that hymns have always been one of the driving forces in Christian history—from the heretical songs of Arius to the Reformation

anthems of Luther to the revival hymns of the Great Awakenings.

These broad strokes also allow Rorem to show that the hymns we sing today did not emerge from a vacuum; instead, each hymn has a context and history of its own. Through specific examples of hymns, Rorem shows the value that this context and history can provide. For example,

the next time readers sing a hymn like “Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying” after learning about the historical context of the hymn, they're bound to sing it with new enthusiasm and appreciation. What's more, when readers have a chance to discover new (or rather, old) meaning in these hymns, they will undoubtedly be inspired to do the same for all their favorite hymns. While this



may be the first book one might read on the history of hymnody, it certainly won't be the last. If you want to make this the "Book of the Month" for your congregational library (a great idea!), then be sure also to provide a copy of the *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns* (Concordia Publishing House, 2019) as well.

Finally, these broad strokes make this book exceptionally usable. At just over two hundred pages (and in an easy, readable style), *Singing Church History* is very appropriate for laypeople. Those in LCMS congregations will be especially inclined to appreciate this book, since more than half of the two hundred hymns mentioned in the book appear in the *Lutheran Service Book*; and of the roughly twenty hymns discussed in depth, three quarters of those appear in the *Lutheran Service Book*. What's more, at the end of the book are discussion questions for each chapter, making the book easily usable for any lay-led book study.

Over all, *Singing Church History* absolutely succeeds in its mission: to "introduce . . . church history by way of hymn texts, and . . . to enrich our hymn singing with glimpses into the lives and contexts of those who wrote them" (1).

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Naples, Florida

LUTHERAN MUSIC AND MEANING.

By Daniel Zager. Concordia Publishing House, 2023. 112 pages. \$16.99.

No one would deny the importance that Christians place on the music they hear and make themselves when they gather each week to receive the gifts of God. God's people sing! But what they sing and the reasons why they sing what they sing has through time has not always been obvious. The very fact that questions sometimes arise regarding the appropriateness of a particular melody or musical setting that is sounded in worship attests to the power of music to convey meaning.

To help us sort through the question of meaning in music we can now turn to a fine little monograph on the subject by Daniel Zager, a church musician and musicologist who taught for over two decades at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, and headed its world-renowned Sibley Music Library. This is not his first foray into the subject, having published another monograph a decade before titled *The Gospel Preached through Music* (Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2013). At various places in his most recent publication, Zager points in a similar direction as he notes the integral role of music in proclaiming the word of God (17, 108)

This time around Zager addresses head on the role that music plays in conveying meaning. He limits his subject matter to music specifically written for the Lutheran liturgical context, acknowledging that within that rather narrow focus there is a place for music that is borrowed and adapted (16–17). Of particular interest are hymn

tunes and music composed for voice and instruments.

If one were to point to the impetus for Zager's little study, it would likely be the opinion commonly voiced that music is a thoroughly neutral medium that conveys no meaning. Using a famous passage by Rick Warren, who three decades ago asserted that it was the words alone that made a song religious, Zager launches into a discussion of text and tune associations. Through numerous examples he demonstrates how the pairing of a tune with a text enables the melody to convey meaning. The familiar melody for "Silent Night," for example, loudly proclaims "Christmas" even when not a syllable of the text is heard (23). Also significant in this discussion is the occasional borrowing of tunes that carry non-religious connotations, a practice that has been carried out through the centuries. When the non-religious associations are too strong, Zager demonstrates, the religious text can be overshadowed.

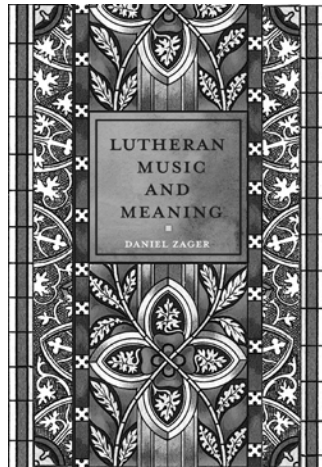
In chapter two Zager examines Martin Luther's own efforts at hymn writing. While there are good reasons for including this chapter, one suspects that the author wanted the opportunity to dispel two myths concerning Luther's

own hymns (33). Perhaps you've heard it said that Luther got his melodies from the bar songs of his day. It is true that Luther made use of a musical form that was popular in his day, the "bar" form. Many of the most familiar of those early Reformation hymns, "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice," "Salvation unto Us Has Come," and "A Mighty Fortress," follow that form. But it wasn't a form indicative of drinking songs. Or maybe you've heard the second myth, that Luther once said, "Why should the devil have all the good tunes?" with

the implication that he used melodies previously attached to bawdy lyrics. Luther did use a number of preexisting melodies, and he wrote a number of his own. But we have evidence that in at least one case he dropped a melody because of negative associations.

In addition to an examination of Luther's hymns, Zager also explores the sacred music of two prominent

Lutheran musicians: Michael Praetorius (56) and Johann Sebastian Bach (62). The former is particularly important in that he was not only one who wrote music—lots of it—but also one who wrote *about* music. In particular, he explores the relationship of *concio* (speech) and *cantio* (singing), his point being that one cannot divorce the song from the text but must instead



understand the proclamatory nature of the music itself.

In addition to addressing the topic of music, Zager invites the reader to consider its place in the liturgical context—the order, namely the rites or services, and the time, namely the church year and lectionary (79 and 89, respectively). Both offer significant parameters that help to prevent the church's music-making from becoming an end in itself.

Over all, *Lutheran Music and Meaning* is a wonderful exploration of a subject that continues to perplex the church. If there is one criticism I have of the book, it is the assumption that the reader is going to be able to follow the conversation. Zager indicates several times that he is writing for those “singers and listeners who make up Lutheran congregations” (18). Too often, however, terms and concepts are left undefined that many will not be able to grasp (e.g., motive, ornamental melody, chromaticism, half-step, falling intervals, fugal exposition). As a musician, I empathize; conveying these concepts in a monograph is exceedingly difficult, especially when the music literacy of those who read the book will likely be wide-ranging. A pleasant feature that Zager employs are the occasional guided listening instructions, urging the reader to locate a recording of specific examples on the internet. Yet, even here it seems that far more detailed guidance is required for fruitful listening. If a reader finds the musical terminology too foreign, one possible solution would be

to search out a church musician and go through the book together.

Such concerns aside, Zager should be commended for stepping into these churning waters and inviting us to ponder how music in the church, far from being neutral, plays an integral role in the proclamation of the gospel.

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**MUSIC—GOD'S MYSTERIOUS GIFT:
Its Power to Influence Humans
and Its Role in God's Kingdom.** By
*James L. Brauer. Wipf & Stock, 2023.
Paperback. 162 pages. \$24.00.*

Music is ubiquitous in twenty-first-century America. It plays in our ear buds during our morning jog, on our car radios on the drive to work, in the convenience store as we pick up our groceries, even on the phone as we wait for assistance. Yet for as much music as we are in the habit of consuming, our consumption is generally unthinking. Nearly everyone has their own musical preferences, but few have subjected music to the disciplined thinking that one would devote to a subject worthy of serious reflection.

As a response to this situation, Brauer offers a brief but weighty study on music, providing short expositions of music from the perspectives of various fields of inquiry to give readers a deeper grasp of both what music is and how it can and ought to fit into the lives of

God's people. Since the book's chapters examine music from perspectives as diverse as acoustics, neuroscience, and biblical theology, nearly every reader is likely to encounter chapters outside one's own field of expertise—and consequently opportunities to understand God's gift of music more clearly and in greater depth.

In the opening section of his book, the author presents music as God's creation, examining it scientifically as one might with any other created gift. He dedicates his first chapter to the question of how musical sounds are made, both individually and in groups, and how God has enabled the human body to perceive them. Next, he devotes a chapter to the psychological effects that music can have on its listeners and how the various elements of music work together to impact (and ideally benefit) the people who listen to it. From there he moves into the neuroscience of music, explaining in more detail how the human brain makes sense of the musical sounds laid out in the first chapter to bring about the benefits outlined in the second. These three chapters make up the bulk of the first section, and for the reader whose academic training focuses on theology and the humanities, they will likely prove to be the most challenging reading in the book.

The fourth chapter forms a hinge between the first section and the second. In it, Brauer attempts to diagnose many of the cultural changes that American society has experienced over the course of the last century, both generally and

especially regarding the ways they affect our view of music. Readers will likely differ in their opinions of how accurately he explains these broad and complex societal phenomena in a couple dozen pages, but the telos of his survey arrives when he asserts that postmodern Americans view music as something essentially individual, a matter of personal preference or experience that is not necessarily connected to God or a broader community. Brauer sees this approach to music as a profound error to which he endeavors to respond.

That response comes in the second section of his book, where he dedicates one chapter to the Old Testament's theology of music and another to the New Testament's continuation of it. Central to Brauer's view of music in the Scriptures is the idea of holiness: God is holy, and he makes for himself a holy people. In the Old Testament, holy music, both instrumental and vocal, helped the holy God to sustain his holy people who sang his mighty acts and called on him in musical prayer. In the New Testament, music is a carrier for the divine Word, which then makes people holy not because of their own efforts or worthiness but for the sake of Jesus when they trust in him. As the church carries out her mission, music serves as a delivery system for the Word that helps to carry God's salvific speech to all the nations of the world. Moreover, as opposed to the spoken word, music delivers that speech in a way that engages various parts of the brain to embed the message of Christ more

deeply in the hearer and make it easier to remember. Noteworthy is the fact that instrumental music, which plays a significant role in the chapter on the Old Testament, largely goes unmentioned in the logocentric chapter on music in the New Testament, where the focus falls heavily on songs and singing.

Following this multifaceted description of music, the closing chapter offers a proposed response to the question of how Christians will use God's gift of music. Brauer's threefold answer invites the reader to enjoy God's gift of music and to use it both for one's own temporal and spiritual benefit and for the benefit of one's neighbor. Here he offers a general platform for the Christian's relationship to God's gift of music on which others can and hopefully will later expand in greater detail.

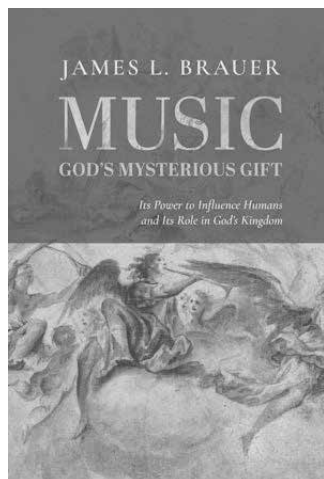
Given its brevity, this book does not attempt to answer every question a Christian might have about music. Yet when we consider the practice of the contemporary Lutheran church whom the author is especially addressing, there are a few questions that it might well have taken the time to consider. The first arises from its logocentric approach to music in the New Testament era: in a church where instrumental preludes,

postludes, offertories, and the like are nearly ubiquitous and frequently lacking a text, what role does instrumental music without singing play in the life of the Christian congregation? The second arises from a tension between the objective reality of music as it is outlined in the book's first section and Brauer's contention in the final chapter that two people's aesthetics can differ in such a way that they will likely be unable to enjoy a piece of music together successfully: if there is an objective

givenness with which God has endowed music, how does one account for these differences of taste? And especially looking back on the last century, a century in which the church has frequently argued over music in terms of personal taste, what does all this mean for the congregational practice of music? While it would be unfair to ask an author to answer every possible music-related question,

these are quite closely related to major topics in the book, and I would welcome Brauer speaking to them in the future.

For twenty-first-century clergy, music is as indispensable as it is ubiquitous. Along with other church workers, the preacher often selects music for the flock to sing, makes decisions about what kinds of music are useful for the gathered congregation, and proclaims the good news of Christ's



salvation in music to the sick and dying. Yet many clergy have spent little or no considerable time considering what music is, how it works, and how it can impact the lives of the family and congregation. To the pastor who is looking for a short primer on those questions, this book is worthy of consideration, and all Christians would do well to remember that point on which Brauer repeatedly insists: music is a great gift of God that his holy people can and should use in his service.

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CHURCH MUSIC: For the Care of Souls. By Phillip Magness. Lexham Press, 2023. Hardcover. 280 pages. \$19.99.

While the title of this book might appear to indicate that it focuses on one particular aspect or function of music in the church, it instead provides a more comprehensive overview of the nature, purpose, and function of music in Christian worship, outlining a holistic vision for its optimal use borne of a scripture-saturated philosophy.

The topic of music in the church has rarely strayed far from the center of controversy, and debate can often be marred by prejudice, stereotypes, and confusion. Instead of firing a partisan round into the ongoing salvo, Magness cuts through the fog with practical insight that offers a path forward for any congregation.

Planning and selecting music and

materials for worship is among the more nuanced and critical undertakings of any congregational ministry. Those responsible for it are literally placing words into other people's mouths, telling them what to believe, and orienting the collective focus of the assembly. How often can it be observed that the task has been undertaken with insufficient insight into the spiritual implications of the matter? What should inform the decisions that curate the culture of congregational singing and give aesthetic shape to our celebration of Christ's gospel?

A thoroughly biblical understanding of church music is vital to the expression and formation of a living faith.

However, effective musical leadership in the church is not a challenge with a one-size-fits-all solution. With many competing priorities held in tension, it is easy for a congregation to fall into one of the many ditches along this path—sentimentality, preference, or idealism. Why do we sing? What ought we to sing? How ought we to sing it? What ought the singing to *do*? Are style and instrumentation merely a matter of popular appeal, or is something deeper at stake?

With *Church Music: For the Care of Souls*, rather than providing easy, formulaic answers to all these challenges, Magness instead offers wisdom and perspective to guide such decisions. Recognizing that the musical and liturgical needs of all congregations are never entirely identical, Magness explores in a conversational and congenial manner the purpose and

meaning of the Lord's song in our assembly, along with how this affects the planning and execution of its musical leadership. Pulling relatable examples from a wealth of experience throughout the LCMS and neighboring traditions in numerous countries, Magness dives through deep reflections on the spiritual necessity of the Lord's song with gentle wit and illustrative storytelling. The principles advocated herein have been applied with meaningful success in sufficient diversity of contexts to argue their universality.

This is not a book that one needs a seminary or music conservatory degree to understand. Yet, the theological and musical insights provided are applicable for those just getting started to even the most studied of pastors and musicians.

Throughout, Magness connects the activities of music in Christian worship with *Seelsorge* ("care of souls"), demonstrating the many ways music is a powerful and indispensable aid to the work of the ministry.

This is no rehash of the tried-and-true things Lutherans have long said about music and worship, complete with the same Luther quotes we've read in countless places. Instead, Magness frames the issues in the language and

understandings of today with cultural references and dilemmas that will ring familiar to anyone laboring in the church's song. The allusions to various music cultures and Christian traditions are diverse and entertaining; it is not often that a book on sacred music includes consideration of Sinatra, Sting, and SonSeed (let the reader understand).

Baroque cantatas, Broadway musicals, New Wave, and Afropop are not beyond the scope of exploration, as the author draws on an intimate knowledge of sacred music contributions ranging from Bach and Mendelssohn to Marty Haugen and Sandra McCracken. Trends represented in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Mennonite, and other traditions are also considered with knowledge and

understanding.

Though coming from a Lutheran perspective and advocating distinctly Lutheran teaching and principles concerning music, it is written in a manner that can prove instructive to the Christian faithful of other confessions. For the rest of the Christian world, it holds forth the beauty of a theologically Lutheran approach to music and how all Christians can benefit from the scriptural wisdom that drove the



emergence and development of the Lutheran musical tradition.

This being a book for everybody doesn't make it a book with which everyone will completely agree. Rather than lobbing a politically one-sided grenade into the dying embers of the "worship wars," Magness sticks to examination and extrapolation of principle, from biblical precedent to engaging anecdotes, without regard to the "side" on which conclusions may fall.

Neither does he shy away from issues of potential controversy. He makes a compelling and original case for the supreme utility of the "king of instruments" in the facilitation of corporate song without dogmatizing the necessity of an instrument that has not been available to a significant majority of the faithful throughout history. As someone who has worked in worship development with African Lutherans who sing their chorales to hand drum accompaniment, his evaluation of the application of musical instruments is given considering the biblical ends to which they should serve. He argues persuasively for substance over style, insisting that no one musical sound is more intrinsically holy than another.

This is a book for anyone who considers the song of the Lord's people to be a critical constituent of our communal life—and a cure for those who mistakenly think otherwise. It has a delightful pace with a slightly devotional tone and strikes a pleasant balance between stimulating reflection and being easily finished. It ends with

practical guidance on finding the path forward for any congregation, along with helpful appendices for anybody seeking to increase their understanding of church music. If your congregation is experiencing controversy over musical style, this book could be incredibly helpful in reframing the discussion along the matters of true import while clarifying those areas in which Christian freedom unbinds human artistry. When it comes to the training and preparation of cantors for the church, this book can provide the encouragement, validation, inspiration, and renewed sense of purpose to musicians that the other volumes from Hal Senkbeil's "Lexham Ministry Guides" have given to many clergy, earning it a place on the shelf next to the works of Carl Schalk and Marva Dawn.

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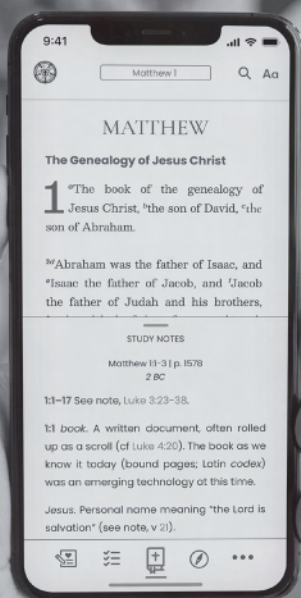
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