

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

A Reformation Perspective on Worship

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INTRODUCTION

We are not the first to observe a centenary of the Lutheran Reformation, and should the world continue yet another century, we certainly pray God that we should not be the last.

The centenary in 1617 was marked as a significant milestone. At the Saxon court in Dresden, the centenary was celebrated in an elaborate fashion between 31 October and 2 November. Details of the service held over the three days, morning and evening, were included with the published sermons that had been given by the senior court chaplain, Matthias Hoë von Hoënegg. Much celebratory music was composed by Heinrich Schütz for these services in the Dresden court chapel, involving many musicians and singers.¹ Even though there was much elaborate music, the primary thread of the music-making was supplied by congregational hymns, often with the congregation alternating with the choir and instruments. Sometimes the latter involved trumpets and timpani, as in the final section of Luther's German *Te Deum, Herr Gott, dich loben wir*, or in between the verses of the six-chorus Magnificat, when the congregation sang the individual stanzas of Luther's *Erhalt Uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort*. Other hymns were sung throughout the three days, notably *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, after the morning sermon on 1 November.²

Sounds a bit like a worship conference I've heard of.

Even during Luther's own lifetime, it seems this anniversary was now and then observed: "There is some evidence that Luther and his colleagues marked the anniversary, at least in some years. For example, on the tenth anniversary in 1527 he wrote a letter to Nicholas Amsdorf and signed it: 'Written at Wittenberg on the Day of All Saints, in the tenth year after the indulgences had been trampled underfoot, in memory of which we are drinking at this hour.'"³

Sounds a bit like a... let's keep moving.

It is a distinct pleasure to be gathered here with all of you once again. It is my prayer that the topic, A Reformation Perspective on Worship, will serve as a refreshing and edifying kickoff for our conference.

¹ The quote [Moser] at this point also includes the following: This music was performed by the musicians of the Elector of Saxony, our most gracious Lord: eleven instrumentalists, eleven singers, three organists, four lutenists, one theorbist, three organ choir boys, five discantists with interchange of all kinds of magnificent instruments, with two organs, two regals, three clavicymbals, and, in addition, eighteen trumpeters and two kettledrums, all presented with due solemnity under the leadership of Heinrich Schütz of Weissenfels.

² Leaver, Robin. *The Whole Church Sings*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

STATUS QUO

It would be an overstatement and a fallacy to say that the message of the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus had vanished from the earth or from Germany as the 15th Century turned into the 16th. As in the rather dark spiritual days when Jesus was born, there were in the early 1500s the Simeons and Annas and Marys and Josephs who, by God's grace and despite the mountains of theological error that may have surrounded them, clung to God's promise of pardon in Christ. It would be hard to say precisely how much of the gospel could have been derived from a service of corporate worship in or around Wittenberg in those days, but from what we do know, the gospel light had grown mighty dim in the sanctuaries of Saxony. It was nine years after the posting of the 95 Theses that Luther's German order of service was launched. His commentary on that order included the following:

...this is the damnable thing about the popish services: that men made laws, works, and merits out of them—to the detriment of faith—and did not use them to train the youth and common people in the Scriptures and in the Word of God, but became so engrossed in them as to regard them as inherently useful and necessary for salvation. That is the [work of the] very devil. The ancients did not institute or order them to that intent.⁴

It is with sincere sensitivity toward any who have been raised in Roman Catholicism that I would give a snapshot of what “pre-Lutheran” worship was like. In the cover letter for the 95 Theses, writing to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, Luther pleads: “O great God! The souls committed to your care, excellent Father, are [being] directed to death.”⁵ Two years after the theses were posted on the door of the Castle Church, that church was still the site of 6000 private masses per year, an average of about 16 “communion services” per day, masses that were spoken to decrease the time that dead electors or others would have to be in purgatory.⁶ A year later, George Spalatin, secretary for Elector Frederick the Wise and thus a man with access to the records, put that number at 11,000, or 30 per day.⁷ Try to fathom growing up in a setting where you are taught that at church they are staying busy re-sacrificing Jesus 30 times a day to lessen someone's stay in purgatory.⁸ Think how desirable it would be, in such a setting, to buy indulgences⁹ rather than doing penance. Indulgences were the great equalizer. They were sort of like caulk when you're installing crown molding or door trim but you're not a very good finish carpenter. Indulgences could fix a lot of things. They could fix up whatever messes might possibly be leftover, and there are plenty to fix up, so buy a lot of caulk [indulgences]. Try to think about attendance at church where what the worship leader was saying was false, typically inaudible, and in a language you quite possibly didn't understand (but God will be pleased as long as you attend, so you better attend). By the assessment of Nikolaus Herman, cantor of Joachimstal, author/composer of “Praise God the Lord, Ye Sons of Men,” the popular favorites that people knew how to sing were songs about Mary and the dead saints, who served as your “end

⁴ LW 53:62 (Logos edition here and throughout)

⁵ LW 53:45-48

⁶ Wengert, Timothy J. “Luther's Liturgical Reforms and the Origins of Evangelical Lutheran Worship.” CrossAccent Fall Winter 2015, pp. 32-33.

⁷ Valleskey, Stephen. “Dr. Luther Celebrates Holy Communion,” p. 6.

⁸ It is a common belief among Catholics that we go to Mass to participate in a communal meal, in which we commemorate the Last Supper, give public witness to our Christian community, and finally, receive Jesus in the Eucharist as an act of unity with each other and with Christ.

While there is nothing wrong, per se, with any of these understandings, they distract from the ultimate purpose of the Mass – the perpetual offering of the perfect victim sacrifice on the Cross to the Heavenly Father in atonement for our sins.

<https://www.onepeterfive.com/why-do-we-go-to-mass-four-essential-reasons/>

⁹ Or as Roland Bainton referred to the system of indulgences, “the bingo of the 16th Century.”

missed the point. The content of the Gospel reading and the content of the Sacrament of the Altar are the same – Jesus takes your sin away. The Lord’s Supper—this is no priestly hocus pocus, this is no place for inaudible or unintelligible muttering, this is no recurring sacrifice, this is no purgatory reducer, this is Jesus Christ’s true body and blood for you, for the forgiveness of sins. What must it be like to have Jesus in the service, giving himself to you for forgiveness? That must be an amazing thing!

I cannot cite all the references which indicate that every liturgical or public worship step Luther took was away from legislating about worship and toward one thing: doing what would benefit people. I can’t cite them all but I’ll mention a few. In that cover letter to Albrecht, Luther wrote: “I do not so much complain about the quacking of the preachers, which I haven’t heard; but I bewail the gross misunderstanding among the people which comes from these preachers and which they spread everywhere among common men.”¹² When congregations in Livonia on the eastern Baltic were using their freedom wrongly and apparently requiring people to follow along with their innovations, Luther wrote: “Hold mass, sing, and read uniformly, according to a common order, the same in one place as in another, because you see that the people want and need it and you wish to edify rather than confuse them.”¹³ An understandable, repeated order of service had an interesting target audience: “It is best to plan the services in the interests of the young and for such of the unlearned as may happen to come.”¹⁴ Editor Ulrich Leupold sees it clearly as he introduces LW 53: “[Luther] shrank from innovations and avoided liturgical sensationalism because he had a pastor’s concern for the faith and piety of the common people.”¹⁵

“What do people need?” Not, “What should people do?” What do people need, because in worship, God is there to give what people need. It’s the whole reason God ordained public worship—to bless people. Mark 2:27 - “The Sabbath was made for man,”¹⁶ not man for the Sabbath.”

The guiding principle in talking about worship would not be how do they do worship at churches that are growing, or how did they do worship in 16th century Wittenberg, or can we come up with our own 21st century version of the *Deutsche Messe* (German order of service), or who has the better hymnal, or what kind of music is most appealing to Millennials as compared to Boomers, or should we continue with the Christian Worship Common Service. I wouldn’t rule out talking about any of those things, but all of those things are trumped by the following: What brings the peace of Jesus to the heart of the worshiper? What will happen as that principle shapes our views of the essentials of public worship, our views of the sermon and the celebration of the sacrament, of liturgy and hymns, of hymnals and accompaniment editions, of cantors and choirs. The foundational philosophy of worship conference is not, “Here’s what we should all be doing.” Rather, it is, “Look what God is here giving.”

MEAT AND POTATOES

I thought I should put this to the test at least a tiny little bit. I thought I should do at least one reality check, so I picked one of the more happening community churches in the town where I live, the one with the huge parking lot and people everywhere. It was Lent 5 and this local church was having a thirty-day emphasis on something or other (30 is the new 40?). The “sermon” text was Jesus feeding the 5000. The message was on how blessed you are when you give, like when that little boy gave his lunch. Not a word about Jesus’ miraculous providence. Not a word about my sin or Jesus taking it

¹² LW 48:46

¹³ LW 53:47,48, as quoted in Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career*, p. 471.

¹⁴ LW 53:89

¹⁵ LW 53:xiv

¹⁶ Generic use of the term “man”; Greek ανθρωπος; the Sabbath came into being for the sake of the human being, not the human being [came into existence] for the sake of the Sabbath.

away. Not a word. No meat and potatoes in that place for Lent 5. Not even a sip of milk; sadly, it was more like they were serving tapeworms.¹⁷

Toward the end of his comments in the German order of service, Luther wrote: Among Christians the whole service should center in the Word and the Sacrament.¹⁸

Friends, law and gospel preaching and the proper reception of the sacrament are where public worship will always need to be at. If we have anything to celebrate,¹⁹ anything to which to commit ourselves in 2017, let it be these two pillars of public worship.

That church I visited... The message amounted to: “When you put Christ first in this way, you are going to be blessed.” That always and of course sounds very Christian but it’s always First Commandment law. On the topic of preaching alone, I don’t know that you would very easily if ever convince me that the homiletical grass is greener on the other side of town over there at the happening, highly-attended church. Prof. Deutschlander reminds us²⁰ that the recurring law term in 16th Century confessional preaching/writing was *terror*. He reminds us that “my problem is not that I have done this or that wrong but that all I have done is wrong,” that none of it is untainted by sin. In souls that take God seriously, this breeds terror. Along comes the gospel and says that none of what I have done and none of what I am is tainted by sin; all sin went to Christ. Taking God seriously means that in Christ, terror departs and I am certainly at peace with God.

I don’t hold a position from which I can analyze the preaching in our church body. I am in a position to say that we will want to thank the Lord for the preaching principles which are instilled in the men who graduate from our seminary. In this year of Reformation 500, I would want to look back with thanks that from the pulpits of our church body, the unconditional Gospel sounds forth. I would want to call to your minds the very old principle that we do not call pastors to run churches smoothly and efficiently but to spend time in our behalf in the Word of God, that they might keep bringing its treasures to us.

For the past four years, seven pastors have spent countless hours to bring forward an updated version of the Lutheran lectionary. That three year series of readings will be a blessing for decades to come, as has been a one year lectionary for centuries in the past. We hear from Luther about preaching on the appointed lectionary texts, on the Gospel on Sunday morning and on the appointed Epistle at Vespers on Sunday afternoon. During any number of years Luther preached more than a hundred sermons in a calendar year.²¹ Apparently, he found one or two other things to do as

¹⁷ To be fair, the speaker was a guest speaker from out of state, brought in to talk about financial stewardship. Yet, what I heard (or didn’t hear) was what I heard (or didn’t hear). I will hope that the local pastors do better on a weekly basis.

¹⁸ LW 53:90

¹⁹ Wengert, p. 28: What Luther was most clearly calling for in the 95 Theses is shown both in the theses themselves and in the letter, dated 31 October 1517, that he sent to the highest church authority in Germany, Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz. Luther’s concern focused on a bishop not doing his job in overseeing what was being preached from the pulpits of his congregations. Indeed, so strong and consistent was Luther’s concern that were we to celebrate anything in 2017, it should be with a goal to improve the preaching in our American Lutheran churches. Woe to those Lutheran preachers today who starve their people of Christ’s mercy with incessant hawking of the law.

²⁰ Jahn, Curtis A. (compiling editor). Reformation 500: The Enduring Relevance of the Lutheran Reformation, p. 246ff.

²¹ The frequency of his preaching is indicated by the fact that in the years from 1522 to his death in 1546 he preached an average of seventy sermons a year, though even this figure presents an inadequate picture, for, except when he was ill, he preached more often than this, and besides, for many periods we do not have transcripts of his sermons (e.g., Röer’s transcripts of the sermons of 1527 as well as the weekday sermons on Matthew 11–15 of 1528–29 are missing). The following samplings of the number of sermons preached in a year give a truer picture: 1522, 138; 1524, 100; 1528, 190; 1531, 180; 1534, 80; 1538, 100. After 1540 the number decreases but rises sharply again in 1544 and 1545. He preached on the average of two or three times, occasionally four times, a week. In his Table Talk on April 19, 1538, speaking of his preaching in the year 1517, Luther said, “Often I preached four sermons on one day. During a whole Lenten season I preached two sermons and lectured once each day in the early days when I was preaching on the Ten Commandments.” In 1529 he preached eighteen times in the eleven days from Palm Sunday to the Wednesday after Easter. LW 51:xii

well. At a conference such as this, and even more importantly, at your home church from week to week, it remains true that to hear God's Word and believe it is the essence of worship.²² The Sabbath is for man. The terror-instilling and terror-eliminating sermon featuring Jesus Christ our Savior from sin is the Holy Spirit feeding the people of God. To this day, hearing a good sermon still constitutes the best worship that might ever take place.

AS FOR THE SACRAMENT

On Cantate Sunday in May 1507, we hear it reported that being in contact with the body of Christ (holding the host) caused Luther to hesitate the first time he conducted the mass and chanted the words which the priests had been chanting since long before he was born. Later, he would publish those same words so that people could actually know how corrupt the canon of the mass (the words spoken during the communion part of the service) had become. When you read them, as you may in LW 36 (accompanied by Luther's running commentary), you can get a sense of what the reformer was up against. You can understand why he would say: "This is such an abomination that I don't believe it could be sufficiently punished on earth if it rained pure fire from heaven" [Luke 9:54],²³ why he would equate the mass of his day with toilet content: "that abominable concoction drawn from everyone's sewer and cesspool."²⁴ The fact that in our Lutheran worship services today we are coming together to receive Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of sins can be traced back to what are generally referred to as Luther's liturgical reforms, chief of which purged the celebration of the sacrament of its sacrificial language and practice.²⁵ It's possible that we sometimes lose sight of the blessing we have, as far as comparison to the broader Christian church, in which (outside conservative Lutheranism) you would be hard pressed to find any hint of practice or teaching about the real presence and the forgiveness of sins granted by the sacrament. In the Sacrament of the Altar, the worship principle is being sounded in the clearest of terms, the Sabbath is for man.

KEEPING IT FOR THE PEOPLE

In the language of the people

The pace at which and the process by which Luther "changed the service" was slow and deliberate. He clearly and repeatedly emphasized, with both the revised Latin service (1523) and later the revised German service (1526), that he was not advocating for a "one size fits all" order of service that everyone must use identically. It will always be good for us to note that worship forms were not the sum and substance of the move away from Roman Catholic worship practice. They were always and in every way formulated so that the Gospel might be delivered to the people. Thus, under pressure from a number of fronts to bring forward a German order of service, Luther took his time, lest, as one writer has put it, he give the impression that this whole "movement" was about nothing other than a new worship form.²⁶ All of this was for the people, so that the content of the service could hit home in the hearts of the worshipers in their native tongue.²⁷ A few timeline items are in the footnotes below.²⁸

²² Hughes Oliphant Old as quoted by Ngien, "Worship as Radical Reversal in MLs Theologia Crucis," p. 15.

²³ LW 36:320

²⁴ LW 53:21

²⁵ LW 36:162 In addition I have consoled those whose consciences are weak and have instructed them so that they may know and recognize that there is no sacrifice in the New Testament other than the sacrifice of the cross [Heb. 10:10] and the sacrifice of praise [Heb. 13:15] which are mentioned in the Scriptures; so that no one any longer has cause to doubt that the mass is not a sacrifice.

²⁶ Bornkamm, p. 474.

²⁷ Ibid. "An advance training period was necessary lest the newly understood faith be thought to consist in new ways of worship only. An initial period of freedom was thus necessary, so that the old and the new could be used side by side. It is a well-established consensus that Luther was the first in proclamation of the Word and the last in the introduction of a new service of worship."

Why an emphasis on people participating in worship, then and now? Why all the effort to move from Latin chant to German hymn? Why a sung liturgy (see below)?²⁹ In the 16th century, the truths of the gospel had been, to a large degree, AWOL from the worship service. Singing them was putting them back into service. If public worship were viewed as a group outing, the hymn was the school bus; it was the vehicle that enabled group singing of key truths.³⁰ Singing the creed would not have been “to add a little variety,” but to “recite” the creed. What could easily have been for many (because it was in Latin) a meaningless gradual became a meaningful “We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost,” sung between epistle and gospel. During Advent, trade that out for the seasonal, “Savior of the Nations, Come,” and during Easter, for the seasonal, “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands.”^{31 32} As you can teach the letters of the alphabet without singing the ABC song, so you can tell people about Jesus without singing the liturgy songs. It’s just one of those things, though, that make you think: Hard to see why you wouldn’t make use of the ABC song, when it’s as plain as rain that parents and preschools around the country universally find it to be a good way to do it. Add to that the thought: “Sing with the congregation and you will sing well. Even if your singing is not melodious, it will be swallowed up by the crowd. But if you sing alone you will have your critics.”³³ While congregational hymn singing may well have been for all our days a part of the lives of many of us, this was a revolutionary phenomenon in Luther’s day, a change that was viewed as being just as drastic as the marriage of the clergy or the giving of the cup to the laity.³⁴

And what shall we say of the metrical psalms?

²⁸ It was nine years after the 1517 theses (Christmas 1525, published NY 1526) that the German language service came about. The current had certainly been flowing in that direction. Sample events from successive years show how deliberately Luther moved: 1522 – NT translated September (5000 copies in the first two months) 1523 – Thomas Müntzer holds a German service in Alstedt (German language but still too Roman) 1524 – Theobald Schwarz reads a German mass in Strassburg, no music, members caught flack for worshipping differently; wrote Luther a long letter 1525 – early in the year Nicholas Hausman sends Luther a bundle of German masses, but Luther is not in favor of German words dumped into Latin music; later in the year he writes to the Livonians in connection with this same matter, telling them not to be changing everything up if it is going to leave people in confusion.

Thus in the fall of 1525 Luther tackles the German order of service. But it was all done in such a way as to emphasize that global uniformity wasn’t the goal, that worship forms were not the sum and substance of the move away from Roman Catholic practice.

²⁹ The German hymn versions of the canticles:

Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above (Kyrie)

All Glory Be to God on High (Gloria)

We All Believe in One True God (Credo)

Isaiah Mighty Seer in Days of Old (Sanctus)

Lamb of God, Pure and Holy (Agnus Dei)

³⁰ Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*, p. 41. “Luther’s desire for the active participation of the congregation through hymnody was a result of his concern that the people participate actively in the singing of the liturgy. For Luther, the congregational hymn was a vehicle for involving the faithful in the singing of the liturgy.”

³¹ In this 1520’s “Springtime of Lutheran Hymnody” we also first hear, “Dear Christians One and All Rejoice,” “Salvation unto Us Has Come,” “All Mankind Fell in Adam’s Fall,” and “The Only Son from Heaven,” by Elisabeth Cruciger.

³² Marzolf, Dennis. “That the Unlearned May Be Taught: The Legacy of the Lutheran Chorale,” p. 4. 1523 and 1524 were the years in which the fledgling Lutheran song developed into the mature Lutheran chorale. 1 “*Nun freut euch*” was first sung in 1523. At the same time “*Es ist das Heil*” of Speratus was being sung by evangelically-minded Christians from the Vienna woods to the Wittenberg plains. Mrs. Cruciger’s profound hymn on the doctrine of the incarnation, “*Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn*,” was sung by the university students of Wittenberg in the lecture hall and in the liturgy. Alongside Spengler’s monumental chorale, “*Durch Adams Fall*,” they appeared in Walter’s Little Book of Choral Song from 1524. Since this was a book prepared for choirs, it may be assumed that the tunes and texts were already being disseminated throughout the Lutheran regions. By 1526 Luther and his musical advisors prepared a liturgical order that allowed for the singing of at least seven congregational hymns. Three of these hymns corresponded to parts of the ordinary of the Latin mass. Four corresponded to portions of the proper of the Latin mass. The ordinary hymns of Decius were in use by 1525 (Gloria; “*Allein Gott*”) and 1531 (Agnus Dei; “*Lamm Gottes*”).

³³ Schalk, *Paradigms*, p. 44, quoting LW 42:60.

³⁴ Brown, p. 9.

- Ps 12 O God, Look Down from Heaven, Behold (CW 205)^{35 36}
- Ps 67 May God Bestow on Us His Grace (CW 567)³⁷
- Ps 130 From Depths of Woe (CW 305)³⁸
- Ps 128 Blessed Is He that Feels the Lord
- Ps 124 If God Had Not Been on Our Side (CW 202)
- Ps 14 The Fool Says in His Heart
- Ps 46 A Mighty Fortress (CW 200/201)

Into the hearts of the people

Friends, I am not devoting a decade of my life (and working with 70 others) just because I like working with music or hymns. If you would be so kind, focus on these thoughts:

Leaver may be right when he asserts that we have not only gone beyond, but also abandoned Luther's primary purpose in singing hymns—for proclamation of the gospel, not for expression of the singer's spiritual experience. Luther's hymns are primarily catechetical, even didactic, in presenting the teaching of the church, and most especially the doctrine of justification. Human response (including emotional response) is not absent from these hymns, but it is a minor part of them—they embody, reflect, and nurture a theocentric understanding of worship. Worship, for Luther, is not primarily a human response to God's work, but is itself first and foremost God's work. These hymns let the Word of God come out of peoples' mouths, and by constant use insert it under their skins. Leaver sees this aspect of hymnody as one that is almost completely ignored in the contemporary church.³⁹

Or reaching a little farther back, we might also echo the thoughts of Johann Walter, the first Lutheran cantor: the purpose of Christian song was that God's promise of free and unmerited grace "might be kept fresh in human memory" and to "move the heart to high delight in praising God both day and night."⁴⁰

Example: We the people in order to form a more perfect union...

On a much more serious plane, when Luther lay dying in Eisleben, the city of his birth, his colleague and pastor Johannes Bugenhagen noted how the dying doctor three times uttered, "Into your hands I commend my spirit." It seems to have been no accident that these words would have been familiar to Luther not only from the 31st psalm but

³⁵ Herl, Joe. *Worship Wars*, p. 90: "In 1527 a visiting preacher from Magdeburg, in his first and only sermon in Braunschweig, extolled the saving virtue of good works; whereupon: 'a citizen by the name of Hennig Rischau began and said in a loud voice: "Father, you're lying!" He then just as loudly began to sing the twelfth psalm, which Dr. Luther had just recently set in thought-provoking German verse as "*Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein*"... In 1529 in Lübeck and 1530 in Lüneburg congregations disrupted the sermons by singing, seemingly spontaneously, Luther's '*Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein*'. This hymn seems to have been so ubiquitous as a protest song that it, rather than the better-known '*Ein feste Burg*,' deserves the epithet 'battle hymn of the reformation'."

³⁶ Marzolf, p. 4. On December 5, 1529, two young men stood up and intoned the well-known chorale "*Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein*" in the Church of St. Mary in Lübeck just before the beginning of the liturgy for Holy Communion. The entire congregation joined them in their singing, the first time a vernacular hymn was sung in this great church. Years of theological and political Controversy came to a head with the singing of this chorale. On December 10th the powerful city council gave their assent to the installation of Lutheran pastors and practices throughout the city. By January 7, 1530, the Lutheran clergy were installed in the city churches. In six years the chorale had become one of the chief teaching forces and confessional symbols of the Lutheran Church. It had a place of honor in the liturgical music of the mass and office. It was inseparably linked to the Lutheran way of preaching, praying, and teaching.

³⁷ Sung at the close of the *Formula Missae* (Luther's Latin Communion Service); first great Lutheran missionary hymn

³⁸ Leaver. As his body was being transported back to Wittenberg, the people of Halle sang *Aus tiefer Not*.

³⁹ Oldenburg, in a review of Leaver's "Luther's Liturgical Music."

⁴⁰ Schalk, Carl. *Singing the Church's Song: Essays and Occasional Writings on Church Music*, p. 47.

from singing Compline in his monastic days (and afterward).⁴¹ Coincidentally (?), we repeat the phrase three times in the Compline rite.

What is happening when we are singing the hymns of the Christian faith, and one might say, especially these and other warhorses of the Reformation era? Could there be anything better for us to get under our skin, for us to have as part of the fabric of our being, anything better for us than that that these words would literally dwell inside us and that we sing them in our heads when alone and with others when in church?^{42,43}

FURTHER EXAMPLES

- Catechism hymns⁴⁴
- Hymn sing⁴⁵

⁴¹ Leaver, Robin. *Luther's Liturgical Music*, p. 64. These are the words that Jesus uttered from the cross but they were also words that Luther had sung almost every day for much of his life: the words of the short Respond following the scripture reading at Compline. It is significant that Bugenhagen informs us that Luther repeated them three times in the Compline Respond, which suggests that this was the last thing he sang this side of eternity.

⁴² Brown, pp. 67,68, quoting Eber. Among the manifold ways of applying and using God's Word, this is not the least: that God's Word is put into rhyme and songs and set before the young laity with the results that the youth not only are excited and stirred to devotion in the public assembly in the church, but also retain the Word along with the songs and take it home with them, and when they are alone, occupied with other work, they sing them, and thus think more deeply about God's Word and every day meditate better upon the Word. And without doubt God is active through his Holy Spirit in the hearts of many who make diligent use of such Christian songs, so that good thoughts are awakened in their hearts whereby they are led to thanksgiving to prayer, to patience, obedience, steadfastness in faith, and to confession, and are comforted amid temptation and discouragement.

⁴³ Brown, p. 65. Consider this little selection:

For music has the special grace
That whatso in her power is placed
Is sooner learned than what is read
Or what in church or school is said
Like a schoolmistress sweet and kind
She calls her lessons back to mind
And what she teaches without pain
Is e'er remembered and retained.

Written by Nikolaus Herman at the close of his *Sonntags Evangelium*, a tremendously popular book of metrical paraphrases of each Sunday's gospel lesson, set to music, Joachimstal congregation, published broadly.

⁴⁴ Brown, p. 11. In the rubric for his hymns on the parts of the catechism in Joseph Klug's hymnal of 1543, Luther wrote, "For we would have the catechism doctrine diligently set forth by all means, by preaching, reading, singing, etc., and always taught to the young and simple folk so that it may ever be preserved in its purity, and handed down to our descendants." It could easily be a study unto itself, or a sermon series, or a Lenten series, but the so-called "catechism hymns," one for each of the six chief parts, were at one time alive and well as broadly-observed practice. Reformation scholar Robin Leaver has looked at many a Lutheran hymnal and has yet to find one that presents these six hymns in a category of catechism hymns. Should our next hymnal not do so, I wouldn't count it as a failure but from music's innate ability to bring text into head and heart, it would certainly be fitting to layout such a publication somewhere.

In our current hymnal, this would be...

Ten Commandments – CW 285
Creed – CW 271
Baptism – CW 88
Lord's Supper – CW 313
Keys – CW 305
Lord's Prayer – CW 410

⁴⁵ That same Joachimstal congregation (previous footnote) seems to have had a regular practice of a hymn sing for an hour before the worship service. If you haven't thought of how that might happen at your congregation, you are invited to think about how that might happen at your congregation, or amongst your area congregations. The Christmas season is not long, but in seeking to resist the temptation to let the Christmas repertory spill backwards into the Advent Season, think about getting at some of those other Christmas hymns during a hymn sing after Advent 4 or before Christmas Eve/Day/Christmas 1 or 2 etc.

- CW Psalmody (and, God-willing, a full psalter in the future for our church body); Psalm 24 is doing well among us, isn't it, if...
- *A capella*⁴⁶



1 Or - der my life, Lord, as you will; you are the one I cher-ish.
 2 In - still in me in - teg - ri - ty, faith - ful - ness, love and hon - or.
 3 When from this world I must de - part, show me your gra - cious fa - vor.



As you have prom - ised, now ful - fill— Lord, do not let me per - ish.
 Lead me in paths of pur - i - ty— Lord, do not let me wan - der.
 Let there be joy with - in my heart— Lord, do not let me wa - ver.



Kept by your grace, O let me be pa - tient in all
 Help me to clear - ly rec - og - nize false - hood with all
 In Je - sus' name, my prayer at - tend: Keep me un - til



ad - ver - si - ty, for you know how best to bless me.
 its sub - tle lies; send your Word of truth to bless me.
 my jour - ney's end; then, in death, my Sav - ior, bless me.

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Luther at the close of his comments on the German order of service:

In short, we prepare such orders not for those who already are Christians; for they need none of them. ...such orders are needed for those who are still becoming Christians or need to be strengthened, since a Christian does not need baptism, the Word, and the sacrament as a Christian—for all things are his—but as a sinner. They are essential especially for the immature and the young who must be trained and educated in the Scripture and God's Word daily so that they may become familiar with the Bible, grounded, well versed, and skilled in it, ready to defend their faith and in due time to teach others and to increase the kingdom of Christ. For such, one must read, sing, preach, write, and compose.⁴⁷

It is fascinating to read these words in our day and age, where so much is made of my personal worship preferences and so little is made of worship content meeting the needs of the others in the sanctuary around me. If hymns and psalms and rites are already under your skin (in a good way), then maybe one of the best things to remember is that they didn't get there by the waving of a magic wand. You were given the opportunity and the Lord's blessing to be where you could hear them and learn them and sing them and believe what they say about your Savior. In your case, maybe the majority of the cases here, we would want to recognize that the best liturgy and hymn participation we can offer will not only be a blessing for us but may be even more of a blessing for the young and the newcomers who have yet to learn and

⁴⁶ This is in no way at all a leaning toward that Zwinglian distortion of rejecting all instrumental music or that Calvinistic distortion of only unison psalmody. I am a big fan and a solid supporter of the pipe organ, piano, guitar, brass, and other instruments for worship. At the same time, a reformation perspective on worship does bring the reminder that, when sung in public worship, so many of these amazing reformation era hymns started without instrumental accompaniment. New hymns would often be introduced by a school or college choir, with the tenor voice carrying the melody, and other voices dancing harmonically about. But when there came along the congregation's turn for the alternating stanzas, it was *a capella*.

⁴⁷ LW 53:89

incorporate these gospel words and songs and truths for themselves. How about that for one of the most worthwhile Reformation perspectives on worship that I will be able to share with you during these fleeting plenary address minutes.

CURATION

Regarding the new German hymns, it is not that the German people were not singing any hymns in their native language; it's that they weren't singing anything good. By reaching out to Spalatin in 1523, Luther demonstrated the dire need that existed for solid hymn texts, and, more than anyone else, Luther himself was at work to fill that need.

There were eight hymns in the first booklet (Achtliederbuch ⁴⁸, published early 1524 by Jobst Gutknecht in Nuremberg), followed by 32 in Johann Walter's partbook (1524), 42 in the 1526 enchiridion published by Hans Lufft (same printer/publisher as Luther's first complete Bible in 1534; possibly with earlier editions in 1524 and 1525 which amounted to the pew edition for the laity as far as Walter's part book), 50 in the 1529 Enchiridion by Joseph Klug, which 50 ultimately served as the core group of hymns amongst the 120 hymns in the Bapst hymnal of 1545, the last hymnal on which Luther himself worked. All these editions (and many more produced by printer/publishers in cities throughout Germany) demonstrated a principle: In identifying what will be the song of the church, there will be certain items which rise to the top. Those who have oversight responsibilities in this process of continually identifying the best music and texts for worship are involved in what we will call curation.

For example, the various volumes in Christian Worship and Christian Worship: Supplement constitute a curated set of materials. Going forward, the next hymnal will be another example of a curated set of materials. We'll process lectionary and liturgy and hymns and psalms, and as we identify the best that can be compiled, we'll also seek to facilitate its use with supporting materials. By a process of curation, some items *appear* in hymnals and supplements. Because we are curating them, some items also *disappear* from hymnals and supplements. And because we are curators who keep our eyes open to the bigger picture, it might be that some items would *reappear* (the previous *a capella* example, "Order My Life, Lord, as You Will," sung to the tune HERR, WIE DU WILLST, available for further review at <http://www.forthedirectorofmusic.com/retranslations/>).

Liturgical songs and psalms and hymns which we wish to make use of are not some endless, online resource. They are not everything in the cloud. That would not be curation. That would be saying that anything that has ever been printed or made available on the internet, textually or musically, is of equal quality and that it's all fair game as far as selecting it and using it in the worship assembly. Such was not the practice in 16th century Saxony because, simply put, not everything made the cut.

WHAT ABOUT TODAY

Not everything makes the cut today, either. Curation is a practice we need to continue today. Is it our practice, or is Christian freedom being turned into something which, scripturally, it never was, i.e., "We shall, because we can"? The

⁴⁸ Achtliederbuch

Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein / Tune: *Nun freut euch*
Es ist das Heil uns kommen her / Tune: *Es ist das Heil*
In Gott glaub ich, daß er hat aus nicht / Tune: *In Gott glaub ich* (1524a)
Hilf Gott, wie ist der Menschen Not
Ach Gott vom Himmel, sieh darein / Tune: *Es ist das Heil*
Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl / Tune: *Es ist das Heil*
Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir / Tune: *Es ist das Heil*
In Jesus Namen heben wir an / Tune: *In Jesus Namen heben wir an*

“for the people” principle we’ve been exploring bears in mind what people need, and what people need does have a center mass—lectionary, liturgy, hymnody, psalmody. It can hardly be contested that these are the genres which have risen to the top as being most beneficial for use in corporate worship. Since, however, there is a lot of lectionary, liturgy, hymnody, and psalmody out there, we curate it. One contemporary hymn writer⁴⁹ talked about it this way:

I would dare to say less than 5 percent of our Reformed churches are taking congregational singing as seriously as any of these guys did. I’ve heard Ligon Duncan say, “There is no part of the worship life more in need of reformation than congregational singing.” Luther taught why we sing. He also curated songs that gave people a deep, rich understanding of the God of the Bible and the gospel he offers. We arguably live in the first generation in Judeo-Christian history where most people have no curation of the songs they sing (psalms, liturgy, hymn books, or localized sources), so people are finding their songs from corporate commercial music companies. Luther also worked with musicians to create and lead passionate singing. Luther prioritized curating the hymns his churches would sing, explaining why they should sing, and then setting to work on teaching and encouraging his people. That’s the single thing that needs to change most.⁵⁰

Others might, and have, said the same more emphatically.⁵¹ Even in this setting of a plenary address for a worship conference, I feel the need to tread lightly, to not say certain things (things which lie in the realm of Christian freedom) too definitively, because NT worship is not to be legislated.⁵² We don’t want to legislate, we don’t want to come off as judgmental, and we certainly don’t want to come off as arrogant in our advocacy of what we find to be the best. But nor do we want to foolishly and wrongly transform being charitable toward others into an approach to worship that ultimately becomes “anything goes.” Someone in the UCC must have sensed how ridiculous this can become: “We choose not to make a statement either in favor of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey you have found that a light bulb works for you, that is fine. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb (or light source or non-dark resource), and present it next month at our annual light bulb Sunday service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, three-way, long life, and tinted—all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.”⁵³ That’s quite different from the occasion where Luther received a bundle of mass settings from Nicholas Hausman,⁵⁴ pastor in Zwickau, and essentially Shamgar’d⁵⁵ all of them, adding the comment, “I am absolutely not pleased to see Latin musical settings retained for German words.”⁵⁶ In the process of curation, some things didn’t make their way into the sanctuary but fell by the wayside.

Each generation, including our own, finds itself involved in that transitional point in the process where certain songs of the church are “shedding” their author and composer names and are simply recognized as the song of the Church.

⁴⁹ Keith Getty. It bears stating that we curate the so-called “Getty hymns” as well. While some could easily be labeled Lutheran, others, such as “Communion Hymn,” not so much.

⁵⁰ Getty interview: Hansen, Collin. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-reformation-changed-the-way-we-sing>

⁵¹ Moreover, this is a life-and-death matter to our Church. Whether our young people learn to sing our hymns or not will largely shape the future of our Church. There is more than sentiment in this. The hymnody of the Church contains the choicest specimens sifted out from among 100,000 hymns of Lutheran origin. This means that our hymns are the repositories of the finest spiritual thought of the ages and deserve far better from this generation than the immature and whimsical judgment or caprice of someone who does not understand or appreciate the situation. “Lutheran Tunes for Lutheran Congregational Singing.” CPH: Lutheran School Journal, October 1926.

⁵² Galatians 5:1.

⁵³ Schalk, p. 226, quoting from UCC’s Witness, First Things 99 (Aug Sept 1999): pp. 97-98.

⁵⁴ Though rejecting these mass settings, Luther would later dedicate his German order of service to Hausman.

⁵⁵ Judges 3:31; also a culturally elite term, used as a verb to refer to striking down something of inferior quality.

⁵⁶ Bornkamm, p. 470.

This is Luther's, "thus sings the Christian Church."⁵⁷ It's not always easy to select which of the more recently written hymns and songs will be sung 100+ years from now, the ones we want to adopt and publish. On the other hand, some of the tougher cases are those where it is recognized that the church has been singing certain songs for centuries, that they are of high quality, but they're no longer very accessible to 21st Century singers. Thus, curation is continuous, and multi-faceted, which is to say, we don't just go through lists. We also think about the work of teaching/reteaching.

Are the older hymns unable to be sung, or are we unwilling to teach/learn them? When new hymns started hitting the presses in 1523/1524, things moved slowly at first. The *Achtliederbuch* (1524) and the *Erfurt Enchiridia* (1524) together had a total of four new Luther texts set to the single (and already known) tune *ES IST DAS HEIL*, so that, for example, the learning of the drop of a fourth for *NUN FREUT EUCH*, or the drop of a 5th for *AUS TIEFER NOT*, could wait for a later time. Even the form of the music (barform), with its two musically identical *Stollen* and an *Abgesang*, such as in *NUN FREUT EUCH* (or in the hymn "In Christ Alone," or in the hymnal project field test hymn "I Run to Christ"), was meant to be an aid in learning. Curation, planned roll outs, plans to teach, time to learn, a musical form that favored group learning rather than soloistic singing – all helped to teach the people new material.

Related to the items above was the use of *contrafacta*, songs in which a new text was imported into an already known melody. In Luther's day it may have been a Marian hymn that people would have known, with lyrics updated (*Sancta Maria wohn uns bei* becomes *Gott der Vater wohn uns bei*.)⁵⁸ This is not to suggest that we put Christian hymn texts into Led Zeppelin or Bruno Mars tunes; sacred and secular lines were not as distinct then as they are now.⁵⁹ But we see it continuing in our day with tunes such as Londonderry Air, Thaxted, and Wild Mt. Thyme (examples, if time allows).

One of the clearest examples of curation involved Luther's work on the music for the German order of service. In the year 1525, with little else going on that year (peasant's war, marriage to Katherine, the death of Frederick the Wise, the Bondage of the Will), Luther brought in Johann Walter and Conrad Rupsch for three weeks, to work on the music of the German order of service so that it would be what it needed to be, musically.⁶⁰ Musical composition was what these men did for a living. Part of curation is that trained and experienced individuals have a role in producing and/or identifying what actually ought to rise to the top. Were we to add in the topic of the curation of hymn text translations, we could easily babble on for hours.⁶¹

Another example is Johann Walter's part book. The hymnals immediately following the *Achtliederbuch* contained 30-50 hymns. Walter's part book was polyphonic treatments of 32 of these tunes. They were complex choral pieces, with the melody in the tenor.⁶² But more than anything else, they were musical treatments of approved texts. The music was learned by the boys in the choir, and sung *alternatim* with the congregation (the choir sings a stanza in parts, the

⁵⁷ St. Ambrose composed many hymns of the church. They are called church hymns because the church accepted them and sings them just as though the church had written them and as though they were the church's songs. Therefore it is not customary to say, "Thus sings Ambrose, Gregory, Prudentius, Sedulius, " but "Thus sings the Christian church." For these are now the songs of the church, which Ambrose, Sedulius, etc., sing with the church and the church with them. When they die, the church survives them and keeps on singing their songs. LW 15:274

⁵⁸ A few more titles would be *IN DIR IST FREUDE*, *IN DULCI JUBILO*, *DURCH ADAMS FALL*, *INNSBRUCK*, *ICH MUSS DICH LASSEN*.

⁵⁹ Christie. Instead, in Luther's day, the church held the keys to the kingdom of heaven – and often the keys to the city as well. Riedel states, "The distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' did not exist then. Thus a melody sung with a 'secular' text could also be used for a 'sacred' text" (Riedel 26). This practice of replacing a "secular" text with a "sacred" text is called *contrafacta*. It is an important working concept in early Lutheran hymnody. <https://www.wls.wels.net/four-branches-january-2017/>

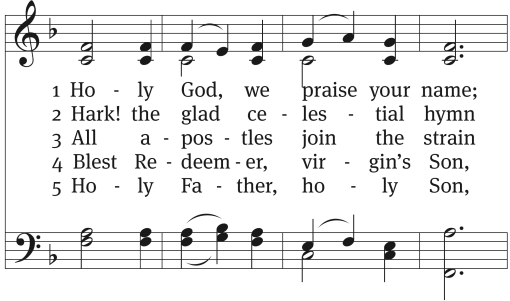
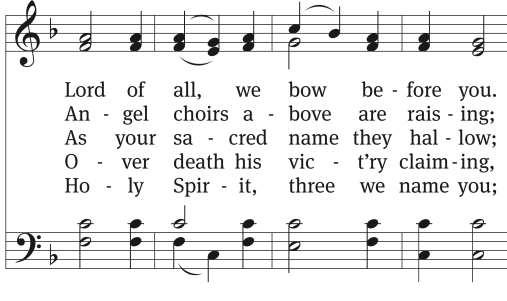
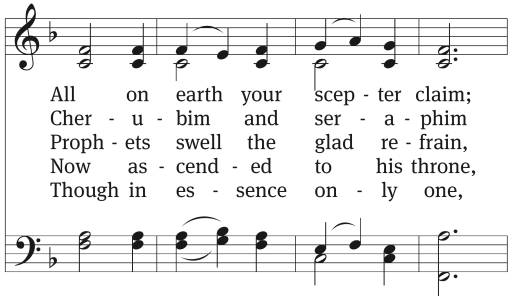
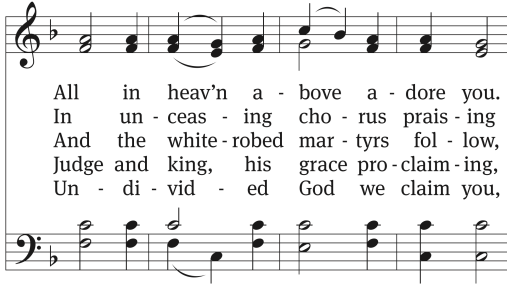
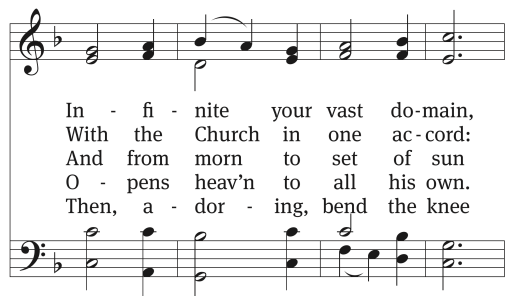
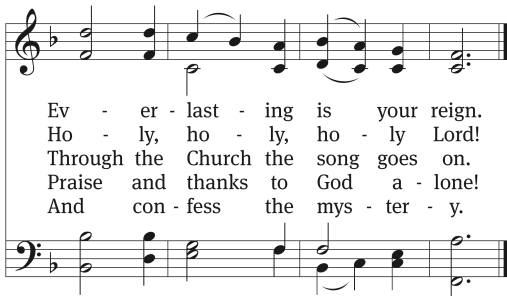
⁶⁰ Albrecht, Martin. "Luther's View of Worship," p. 50. Since Luther understood the art of music and had been trained in the monastery to chant psalms, scripture readings, and prayers, he realized that the Latin chant would have to be remolded for the German language. Together with two co-laborers who were musicians, Conrad Rupsch and Johann Walther, he labored for a long time, setting up a revised system of chanting. Finally in 1525 the *Deutsche Messe* was ready.

⁶¹ Schalk, Essays, p. 164. "In the course of this transition serious questions would be raised as to whether good translations of the German hymns were even possible, if possible whether they were desirable, and whether the literary quality of the result was worth the effort."

⁶² It wouldn't be until 1567 that Lucas Osiander brought forward the homophonic hymnal with the melody in the soprano.

congregations sings a stanza *a capella* in unison). A tremendous amount of expertise was required for and a tremendous amount of work went into this process to provide for the people what would be a blessing for them in worship.

The German *Te Deum* was constructed to be sung in *alternatim* between choir and people; it consisted of many short phrases, sung back and forth (cf. ELH #45).

<p>LEFT</p>  <p>1 Ho - ly God, we praise your name; 2 Hark! the glad ce - les - tial hymn 3 All a - pos - tles join the strain 4 Blest Re - deem - er, vir - gin's Son, 5 Ho - ly Fa - ther, ho - ly Son,</p>	<p>RIGHT</p>  <p>Lord of all, we bow be - fore you. An - gel choirs a - bove are rais - ing; As your sa - cred name they hal - low; O - ver death his vic - t'ry claim - ing, Ho - ly Spir - it, three we name you;</p>
<p>LEFT</p>  <p>All on earth your scep - ter claim; Cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim Proph - ets swell the glad re - frain, Now as - cend - ed to his throne, Though in es - sence on - ly one,</p>	<p>RIGHT</p>  <p>All in heav'n a - bove a - dore you. In un - ceas - ing cho - rus prais - ing And the white - robed mar - tyrs fol - low, Judge and king, his grace pro - claim - ing, Un - di - vid - ed God we claim you,</p>
<p>LEADER</p>  <p>In - fi - nite your vast do - main, With the Church in one ac - cord: And from morn to set of sun O - pens heav'n to all his own. Then, a - dor - ing, bend the knee</p>	<p>ASSEMBLY</p>  <p>Ev - er - last - ing is your reign. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord! Through the Church the song goes on. Praise and thanks to God a - lone! And con - fess the mys - ter - y.</p>

The twenty-three years that elapsed from Luther's first hymn and the revised Latin order of service (1523) to Luther's death (1546) saw a steady stream of refining and adding to and subtracting from the corpus of worship materials that was made available to the laity. This leads one to say of curation that we will never really have "arrived." I envision a completed hymnal, Bb trumpet scores for every melody, four part brass, parts for C, Bb, Eb, F instruments, piano/guitar edition, complete prelude series, psalter with all the best settings (plus instruments), choral stanzas or concertatoes for many hymns, best descants, handbell edition, perfect percussion parts (not too much, not too little), full orchestration for the liturgical canticles; piano settings in the pew edition have an organ score in the accompaniment edition; simplified settings (for keyboardists like me). And I say all this even after one of the first things I was told at NPH was to not promise things you might not be able to deliver. Oops. All of that and more would be a ton of work, but it would have one underlying purpose—getting vetted texts and music onto the lips of the people, so that gospel truths are in their hearts and in the air for everyone in the room. And when such curated resources are unpacked at your

congregation, it is time to adapt the curated set to local circumstances. I say that with the encouragement to add what your people find missing and to skip what they won't use, but to go with the curated set as the starting point.⁶³ Congregational core repertory in common with others, liturgical core repertory in common with others, lectionary and psalter in common with others, all with local variation and adaptation -- this is the Saxon/Lutheran model.

The goal of curation—this is the best we can give to our people. I would submit to you that those best materials are far better represented by the hymnal you hold in your hand than by the results of a Google search. Going forward, with all there is to be done and all there is in our little corner of Christendom to be processed in terms of curated resources, it's a good time to be alive and it's a good time to be working on publishing such materials. There are good things coming our way as we keep doing this work.

OF CANTORS AND CHOIRS

Nearly simultaneous with the first batch of new hymns and the revision of the Latin order of service was Luther's 1524 "Circular to the Princes of All German States, that Christian Schools Should Be Established and Maintained." Some would see this as going hand in hand with a desire to have students prepared to teach the hymns and new liturgical elements of the early/mid 1520s.⁶⁴ As coincidental or as intentional as that may have been, it cannot be denied that the boys in the Latin schools were to carry out a critical role in the musical aspects of the Sunday worship services. Schalk summarizes by saying, "By tradition, the students had to take part as singers in all church services."⁶⁵ So that they could carry out these important roles, there are reports that rehearsals were a bit tough once in a while.⁶⁶

We have not been completely severed from the above-mentioned tradition, but one might wonder, across our church body, if we are hanging by a thread as far as school children helping the congregation learn or sing hymns, psalms and liturgy. I would not want these words to be misconstrued as saying, "The preschoolers and primary grades children need to help us relearn 'I Will Sing My Maker's Praises.'" But when the new hymns or the tough hymns come along as

⁶³ A California church uses a hymnal with 500 hymns and a dvd has 960 extra arrangements that cover every hymn in the hymnal; a Florida church uses a hymnal of 250 hymns and every weekend publishes on its website (in advance of the Sunday) the hymns that will be sung that weekend, while the musicians continuously work on producing congregational arrangements of those 250 hymns (intentional repertory).

⁶⁴ Pankratz, Herbert R. "Luther's Utilization of Music in School and Town in the Early Reformation," p. 4. The school cantors would practice part arrangements of the new music in school for performance in church on Sundays. Such participation by the congregation was probably in unison and without organ accompaniment. [p. 7] Luther had been faced with a situation of considerable neglect with respect to the state of musical instruction in the schools. To counter this decline of interest and participation of the pupils in the singing of the worship services, Luther instituted his famous *Sendschreiben an die Ratsherren aller Städte deutschen Landes, dass die Christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen* ("Circular to the Princes of All German States, That Christian Schools Should Be Established and Maintained") of 1524. Thus, as a result of Luther's insistence that the schools once more assume the responsibility for taking over the musical obligations in the church services, the Protestant schools which were established during the ensuing decades placed a heavy emphasis on musical instruction.

⁶⁵ Schalk, *Paradigms*, p. 12, quoting Heinrich Boehmer in "The Road to Reformation."

⁶⁶ Pankratz, p. 11. The regulations of Beiger in the year 1595 which have small-town conditions in mind, give us some idea concerning the circumstances and vicissitudes of such musical fellowship: Any person who can sing but is uncertain, so that he cannot be entrusted with carrying a part by himself, should be required to sing along on the first three pieces. If he will not sing along, he shall be fined six pence. After these first three pieces he shall remain silent, withdraw, and participate in some other activity. However, no one who so withdraws shall disturb the others who are still singing; much less shall he take their copies from them or ridicule them for their singing. Whoever is guilty in these matters shall be fined one Groschen [a small silver coin]. He who sings the discant shall always have with him one or two boys who have agreeable voices, so that they may follow the copy with him and gain practice in singing and in time sing a discant part by themselves. However, they shall have nothing to do with the beer drinking; and as soon as the singing is concluded, they shall be sent home, so that their parents will not become unwilling [to send them again] and have reason to raise complaints against us. Those songs, which are to be sung in the churches, should be practiced more than the others, and should occasionally, when possible, be rehearsed in sol-fa with *Adjuvanten* [*Astanten*], so that they will learn them more readily and become accustomed to mutation [transition from one hexachord to another]. Care should be taken to avoid getting candle drippings or drops of beer on the copies or to ruin or desecrate the copies in any way; whoever does this, must pay the penalty.

they once in a while may, how differently might you feel and how differently might it go if you hear the school children or a junior choir belt out the first two stanzas and join you for the third and fourth? How differently do you feel if it is the song your kids learned at home and practiced at school? How differently do you feel about it if your grandchild learned it and sang it in church with the expressed intention that you could join him/her in singing it?

Let's add to the conversation an adult choir (from a quartet to a 40-voice choir)... How might things look if in your congregation you were seeking to follow a philosophy that stated, "We will not sing new or unknown hymns or songs in church without a choir first introducing them and without a choir also singing along with the assembly in some way"? There was a little bit of this already in the opening service with new musical settings of the canticles. But at this conference, you are not the typical congregation. We feel ok about dropping down upon your unsuspecting heads the unfamiliar new canticle, and saying, "Sing now, and sing out!"

"The significance of the different editions of the Wittenberg hymnal 'for the laity,' together with Johann Walter's *Chorgesangbuch* [termed "part book" above], means that the intent and practice of Luther and his colleagues in Wittenberg was to involve the congregation in partnership with the choir right from the very beginning. It was no one-sided approach of the choir singing the hymns in their special settings, with the hope that the congregation as a whole would eventually be inspired to sing as well. At every opportunity Luther and his colleagues were concerned to get the whole congregation—not just part of it—involved in the singing, teaching them of the need to sing the scriptural Word, giving them the texts and melodies to sing, and supplying the musical means by which an antiphony of unison and harmony graced their services of worship.⁶⁷

Were I to give you one thing to ponder and explore for the next century or so (until Reformation 600), it might be the role of cantor(s) in a congregational setting. (Admittedly, the concept is one that would easily deserve twenty pages unto itself if we were to have a hope of even beginning to adequately present it in a setting such as this.) The background reading for this presentation covered (among several others) two of the notables in the 16th century, Johann Walter in the Wittenberg area, and Nikolas Herman in Joachimstal. A handful of our churches may already have a similar position with ministers of music. But included in your pondering or exploration, beyond a cantor/music minister who can accompany on keyboard or other instrument, or who can assist with worship planning, give some thought to cantors who can sing with the assembly. I am thinking of an arrangement in my home congregation in which, when piano and other instruments lead the singing, mic'd cantors sing along with the assembly, not only for new music or unfamiliar propers (psalm or verse) but also for fresh arrangements of the hymns in the hymnal. (This certainly is not to imply that mic'd cantors need to sing every stanza of every hymn.) Congregations with many choir singers or no choir at all can still consider the many possibilities that exist, such as six volunteer singers, three in the left aisle and three in the right to aid with *alternatim* singing; four singers singing the distribution hymn (unison melody) with the assembly (when the number in the pews is decreased by the number communing, and to alleviate the chronic problem of returning to your seat and not being able to figure out which stanza is being sung). I'm sure you can come up with six more good examples. It seems to me that we are bringing together the best of both worlds if we can have singers (cantors) strengthening the singing of the assembly (where and whenever appropriate) while the assembly is still singing from the carefully curated set of materials in the hymnal and/or service folder.

CONCLUSION

With all our efforts to insure that the Sabbath remains for man and not man for the Sabbath, should it happen that a good result can be observed now and again, there would also be the good reminder from the cantor of Joachimstal (Nikolaus Herman):

⁶⁷ This is the closing paragraph in Leaver's recent book, "The Whole Church Sings," p. 162, op. cit.

On a few occasions Mathesius had to remind his congregation that neither the success of the mines nor the quality of the school choir but only faith in God's Word could assure them of God's favor; those who scorned Noah's preaching and were destroyed in the flood, according to Mathesius, were not saved by their ability to play their instruments and sing in four part harmony. God was pleased not by the noise of music, but by the faith of the heart that believed what it sang.⁶⁸

Respectfully,

Michael D. Schultz
Fifth Sunday of Easter, 2017

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⁶⁸ Brown, p. 49.

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