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## The Hymn and the Liturgy

By HAROLD W. SCHEIBERT

### I

#### THE LITURGICAL HYMN

THE Lutheran Church is a liturgical church. It is in the mainstream of Western Christianity and uses a clearly defined form of the Western Liturgy. The Lutheran Church is also a singing church. Born with it in the 16th century were hymns that are still favorites of Christians everywhere. Lutherans have always used their hymns in their public liturgical worship. They still do so today. There must therefore be a relationship between the hymn and the liturgy. The hymns ought to have the same goal as the liturgy and the liturgy as the hymns. Specifically the hymns used with the liturgy ought to be "liturgical hymns." Before we discuss in detail "The Hymn and the Liturgy," we want to be sure that we understand our terms. Therefore we begin by defining the *Liturgy*, the *hymn*, and finally the *liturgical hymn*.

First, we define *liturgy*. The word *liturgy* is sometimes used very broadly to cover almost everything that has anything to do with worship. However, the most distinct and particular meaning of the liturgy is the Christian service of the Eucharist, sometimes known as the Divine Liturgy or the Mass. "Liturgy" is a "term which covers generally all that worship which is officially organized by the church. . . . It distinguishes this from the personal prayers of the individual Christians who make up the church. . . . In the course of time 'the Liturgy' has come to be particularly applied to the performance of that rite which was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself to be the peculiar and distinctive



worship of those who should be 'His own' . . . the Eucharist, or Breaking of Bread." (Dix, p. 1) <sup>1</sup>

The Western form of the liturgy used by most English-speaking American Lutherans is the "Common Service." This liturgy was first prepared by Lutherans in the eastern part of the United States and published in 1888. It is based on 16th-century Lutheran precedent. Because it is the most commonly used American Lutheran liturgy, it will be the liturgy to which we refer in this article.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, we define *hymn*. For an interesting general definition of *hymn* we might turn to St. Augustine. Commenting on the 148th Psalm, St. Augustine described "what a hymn is" by saying: "It is a song with praise of God. If thou praisest God and singest not, thou utterest no hymn. If thou singest and praisest not God, thou utterest no hymn. A hymn, then, containeth these three things: song (*canticum*), and praise (*laudem*), and that of God. Praise, then, of God in song is called a hymn." (Julian, p. 640)

Julian adds this comment to Augustine's definition: "This definition, then, excludes prose anthems, meditative, didactic, historical, merely religious poetry, and private devotional pieces unsuited for public worship. According to this definition, to constitute a hymn three conditions are requisite: it must be praise of God or of His saints, be capable of being sung, and be metrical."

To be useful a hymn must meet some carefully circumscribed standards. The thoughts and imagery cannot be too complex; the hymn must be understood, at least in part, by even the most simple worshiper. It must have an easily sung tune with a limited range, preferably no more than one octave, so that the average congre-

<sup>1</sup> In this and the following references see the appended Bibliography for details.

<sup>2</sup> The specific form and rubrication of the Common Service under discussion in this paper is that of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Concordia, 1941) and *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Concordia, revised 1955). These are the forms currently in use by Lutherans of the Synodical Conference, and it may be some time before the needed general revision will be made. Improvements have been made in a revised form of the Common Service prepared by the Joint Commission on the Liturgy and adopted by the co-operating churches for *The Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church*. However, since the Synodical Conference did not participate in this effort, the advantages of this revision are not discussed here.



gation can sing it. Furthermore, it must be reasonably short so that it can be sung without fatigue.

For Lutherans a good hymn must meet all these standards in addition to its most important qualification — that of being "liturgical." So, thirdly, we define the "liturgical hymn." Among all the various definitions for the hymn, such as "congregational song," "church song," and "praise of God in sung meter," one of the simplest and best is "liturgical verse." Louis Benson, the great American hymnologist, says of the hymn: "Its special sphere is worship, and its fundamental relations are not literary but liturgical. Of all the definitions of the hymn, that which claims least for it best defines it — it is liturgical verse" (*Engl. Hymn*, p. viii). Of course, as a Presbyterian Protestant, Benson has a rather broad definition of the word *liturgical*. It seems that for him "liturgy" is simply public worship (*Engl. Hymn*, p. 73; *Hymnody*, pp. 20 ff.).

The Lutheran Church, which wants her hymns to fit into, and become part of, her liturgy, must have and use liturgical hymns. The word *liturgical* should not frighten us. This word is not a synonym for "difficult," "obscure," "obsolete," "enervating," or "formal." A "liturgical hymn" can be simple and plain, newly created this morning, full of the dynamic power of the Christian faith.

Now that we have defined our terms, we shall concentrate our discussion on the "liturgical hymn," that is, the hymn used in the liturgy and properly understood in its relationship to the liturgy. We shall list here six standards for liturgical hymns. Not all six are equally important, nor must all six be met to make a hymn liturgical. However, to be genuinely liturgical, a hymn must meet at least some of these standards.

1. The liturgical hymn should be Trinitarian. The liturgy itself recognizes the Holy Trinity from beginning to end. A hymn that clings only to a "sweet Jesus, only Jesus" type of theology is not liturgical. All three persons of the blessed Godhead ought to be acknowledged. One of the best and most common devices used in liturgical hymns to meet this standard is the use of the Trinitarian doxology as the final stanza of the hymn.

2. The liturgical hymn ought to be objective. That is, its thoughts must not comprise an excessively subjective analysis of personal experience. Instead of speaking in personal terms of



feelings and experiences which not every Christian could duplicate, the liturgical hymn should speak for the church catholic. Compare the Ordinary of the liturgy.<sup>3</sup> The liturgical hymn is objective in its praise of God. It uses words that should be on the lips of all Christians. It does not trace the maze of individual experience and indulge in the personal pronoun of the first person singular.

3. The liturgical hymn should have a due regard for the church year. Its value should not lie only in immediate homiletical considerations. Some of the finest liturgical hymns in the church's tradition are festival and holy-day hymns. In a later section of this article we shall see that the best liturgical hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal* are in the section on the church year. When the liturgy guides Christians in worship with a set of constantly changing Propers, it is respecting the miracle of God's coming into time through the incarnation. It leads us through a yearly repetition of important Christian commemorations. Hymns used with the liturgy should perform a similar function and hence should follow the pattern of the church year.

4. The liturgical hymn ought to be Eucharistic. This is not to say that all liturgical hymns have to be "Communion hymns." However, because the Holy Communion is the hub about which the entire liturgy revolves, all hymns used with the liturgy ought to have an ultimate relation to the blessed Sacrament.

5. Liturgical hymns should be clearly dominated by their texts, not by their tunes. In this respect liturgical hymns are similar to liturgical chant, although they are a completely different method of expression. In the genuine form of both expressions the words are more important than the music. The music simply has the task of conveying the message of the words with beauty and in a meaningful manner. But the music should never obscure the message. If the hymn is such that the tune is the primary concern and is used as an end in itself merely to produce an effect, the hymn is not liturgical. Because of this principle the ancient Gregorian melodies and the German chorale are two of the finest

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<sup>3</sup> The "Ordinary of the Liturgy" is the invariable part of the Service, as distinct from the variable "Propers." For example, the Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei are part of the Ordinary, whereas Introit, Collect, Gradual, and Lessons, which change with the church year, are Propers.



forms of music for liturgical hymns. It was no accident that Luther and Bach both knew and loved the liturgy and that John Mason Neale, the greatest translator of ancient Latin and Greek liturgical hymns into English, also concerned himself with restoring the ancient Gregorian melodies for his translations.

6. The liturgical hymn ought to be like the ancient Latin Office hymns. Thus our repository of Latin Office hymns could be established as a standard in judging whether modern English hymns are liturgical or not. This is not an arbitrary standard, nor is it a prejudiced love of the ancient for its own sake. The old Latin hymns are undoubtedly liturgical in the highest sense. They are so because they were an integral part of the Office itself, the Mass as well as the minor breviary offices. Especially the Latin hymns from the early centuries, such as those of St. Ambrose, are thoroughly objective.<sup>4</sup> And they have proved their worth over the centuries. Today many of them are indisputably entrenched as favorite hymns of the church.<sup>5</sup>

Louis Benson sums up most of these six standards which we have set forth for the liturgical hymn when he discusses the liturgical hymn established by the 19th-century English Oxford Movement in comparison with the evangelical hymn. He says:

The Evangelical Hymn is inevitably the voice of the believer; the Liturgical Hymn is the voice of the worshipping church. The Evangelical Hymn deals primarily with inward experience; the Liturgical Hymn, even though expressive of common experience, relates it objectively to the hour of worship, the church season or occasion, the ordinance and sacrament. The Evangelical Hymn is

<sup>4</sup> In the later Middle Ages Latin hymnody tended to become increasingly more subjective. Examples are the *Stabat Mater*, "At the Cross Her Station Keeping" (13th century), the familiar *Iesu, dulcis memoria*, "Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee" (12th century), and *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, "Come, Holy Ghost, in Love" (11th century). The gradual change from objective to subjective in Latin hymnody is discussed by Ruth Ellis Messinger. (See Bibliography)

<sup>5</sup> E.g.: *Veni, Redemptor gentium* ("Savior of the Nations, Come"), *In dulci iubilo* ("Now Sing We, Now Rejoice"), *Victimae Paschali* ("Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"), *Surrexit Christus hodie* ("Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"), *Hymnum canamus gloriae* ("A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing"), *Veni, Creator Spiritus, mentes* ("Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest"), *Sancti, venite, corpus Christi sumite* ("Draw Nigh and Take the Body of the Lord"), *Iesu, Rex admirabilis* ("O Jesus, King Most Wonderful"), and *Splendor paternae gloriae* ("O Splendor of God's Glory Bright").



free; the Liturgical Hymn, in theory at least, is the metrical element of a closely articulated liturgical order, having its fixed place which determines its contents. (*Engl. Hymn*, p. 498)

Bishop Thomas Ken of England (1637—1711) is just one among many hymn writers who wrote liturgical hymns. Bishop Ken loved the liturgy, and a breviary, missal, and several books on the liturgy were among his most prized possessions (*ibid.*, p. 70). He seems to have caught the liturgical and devotional tone of the breviary in his hymns. Ken is represented by three hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. These are his famous morning hymn, "Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun" (536), the equally familiar evening hymn, "All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night" (558), and the well-known doxology "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" (644). Both morning and evening hymns use the doxology as last stanzas. This famous four-line poem is a perfect expression of liturgical hymnody:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

## II

### THE HYMN AND THE EUCHARIST

We have seen that one of the major climaxes of the liturgy is the Holy Communion. Our blessed Lord Himself connected the Holy Supper with hymn singing. After the institution of the Sacrament and before going out to the Mount of Olives He sang a hymn with His disciples.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to see that one of the most successful approaches through which good liturgical hymns have often been introduced or restored has been the Holy Eucharist. The celebration of Holy

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 26:30. Commentators are disagreed as to whether our Lord and the disciples at this time used some hymn unknown to us or whether this "hymn" was some part of the Psalmody. Some think that it may have been Psalm 136. Others think that the so-called Hallel Psalms constituted the hymn of Matt. 26:30. These psalms (115—118) had a liturgical origin and use in the Old Testament church. If the hymn was Psalm 136, our Lord used an example of magnificent liturgical hymnody in connection with His institution of the Eucharist. The opening verse of this psalm is the theme "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." The refrain "for His mercy endureth forever" is repeated in each verse.



Communion is, and always has been, a natural occasion for the singing of hymns of thanksgiving.

There have been periods in the history of the Christian Church during which the quality of hymns deteriorated and their use declined sharply, in the late Middle Ages, for example, when Latin hymns became more and more subjective, sentimental, and Mary-directed. Another example is what took place in England during a period of almost 200 years after the Reformation. The creation and use of hymns in this period declined to practically nothing. The psalm-singing tradition of Calvin and Knox reigned supreme. But as a new appreciation for the Holy Communion helped the church end the medieval era with a surge of spontaneous Eucharistic hymnody, so it was the singing of Eucharistic hymns that to a large extent beat down the defenses of a psalm-singing post-Reformation English Church and ended a long period of inactivity in English hymnody. Here, too, the Eucharist helped restore hymn singing to the parish church.

Illustrations to demonstrate the connection between the hymn and the Eucharist could probably be taken from the period of the German Reformation and other periods in the history of the church, but here we shall illustrate the connection with several examples from post-Reformation England.

Louis Benson calls a certain George Wither "the only pre-Reformation [English] poet who really had a hymnic motive in his poetry" (*Engl. Hymn*, pp. 31, 32). Wither wrote in *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (1623): "We haue a custome among us, that, during the time of administring the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is some Psalme or hymne sung, the better to keepe the thoughts of the communicants from wandering after vaine objects" (*ibid.*). However, Benson limits the importance of this isolated example of hymn singing in an era largely destitute of hymns. He points out that it was not really an admission of hymns into the Service, because this singing of hymns was really a semiprivate affair by the communicants in their pews while others were receiving Holy Communion.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> We might compare this to the common Lutheran practice of "singing hymns during Communion." *The Lutheran Liturgy* has no rubric allowing or regulating such hymn singing. Hymns sung during Communion are not part of the prescribed Service.



A Calvinistic Baptist by the name of Benjamin Keach eased his congregation into hymn singing via the Lord's Supper. In 1673 he introduced a hymn into the worship at the close of the Lord's Supper. Apparently at that time the Holy Communion was a rare affair in his Baptist parish. Six years later Keach began using hymns on "public Thanksgiving Days." Finally in 1690, 11 years later, 17 years after he had established the first beachhead for hymn singing through the Lord's Supper, his people "agreed to sing the praises of God every Lord's Day." (Benson, *Engl. Hymn*, p. 97)

Among the early Presbyterians ejected from the Church of England at the end of the 17th century a Reformed liturgy prepared by Richard Baxter was in use. This liturgy contained parts of the English Prayer Book and other worship forms. At the end of "The Order of Celebrating the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ" there is this rubric: "Next sing some part of the hymn in meeter, or some other fit Psalm of Praise (as the 23d, 116th, or 103d, or 100th, etc.)" (Ibid., p. 84). "The hymn" referred to is "The Lord Be Thanked for His Gifts," a hymn appended to the Psalter in current use by these Presbyterians. This rubric again shows that during this period, while hymn singing was beginning to work its way into English worship, the Holy Communion was a means of entrance.

By 1697 Joseph Stennett could publish *Hymns in Commemoration of the Sufferings of Our Blessed Savior Jesus Christ, Composed for the Celebration of His Holy Supper*. This book went into three editions and began to meet a growing demand for hymns. (Ibid., p. 100)

By 1745 Isaac Watts had brought a new epoch of hymn singing into English worship. In that year John Wesley published one of his many hymnbooks. This book was devoted entirely to hymns on the Holy Communion. Its title is *Hymns on the Lord's Supper, with a Preface Concerning the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*. Benson says of this book: "Its 166 hymns testify to the deep reverence for the sacramental side of religion that characterized both brothers [John and Charles Wesley], and the demand for ten editions shows how much those views influenced the earlier Methodist worship" (ibid., p. 234). It is interesting to note the genuine appreciation of the Sacrament shown by both John and Charles



Wesley. Frequent Communion was at the beginning a part of the Methodist movement. The early Methodists were urged to receive Communion in their parish churches. The Methodist meetings and the parish church with its sacramental worship were understood to exist side by side, and, in fact, Charles Wesley never wanted the Methodist Church organized. It was from within such a sacramental atmosphere that the great Wesleyan hymn movement was born, and there is a real connection between the hymn movement and the sacramental emphasis. It was only in later years, after the Methodists were separated from the established Church of England, that Wesley's followers seem to have forgotten their founders' vital sacramental accent. And we also ought to remember that the really dynamic hymn production among the Wesleys came from John and Charles Wesley, not later followers.

Hymns are inseparably linked to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Our Western Liturgy itself bears this out with its two great hymns, the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei, embedded as they are in the Ordinary of the Office of the Holy Communion.<sup>8</sup> Although they are part of the Ordinary itself, the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei are nothing more than superb liturgical hymns used when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

### III

#### THE HYMN AS PART OF THE LITURGY

Apparently hymns are here to stay. Christians everywhere sing them. They are an integral part of Christian worship. The use of hymns is not limited to Protestants and sectarians. Catholic Christians, who center their worship in the blessed Eucharist and use the great liturgy of the church, also sing hymns. Hymns are used with their liturgies. Therefore Lutherans require liturgical hymns. This is why we must discuss "The Hymn as Part of the Liturgy." We need hymns that fit without difficulty into the pattern and movement of the liturgy.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The Nunc Dimittis is a part of the Ordinary of the Common Service. However, the Nunc Dimittis is a canticle properly belonging to the Office of the Compline, and its use in the Service of Holy Communion is not based on unanimous historical precedent. (Reed, p. 356)

<sup>9</sup> Thus the position of the hymn is similar to that of the sermon. The sermon must also be understood as a part of the Liturgy and be planned to fit



The history of the liturgy shows us that the hymn has always been a constituent part of the liturgy and, in fact, sometimes has been developed directly from it. We find that the hymn is already a part of the liturgy in primitive New Testament worship. Saint Paul is talking about Christian worship when he says: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16, RSV). Pliny's famous letter to Trajan, dated about A. D. 112, is one of our earliest descriptions of a Christian liturgical assembly. Pliny wrote: "But they [the Christians examined] declared that the sum of their guilt or error had amounted only to this, that on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before day-break, and to recite a hymn (*carmen*) antiphonally to Christ, as to a god. . . . After the conclusion of this ceremony it was their custom to depart and meet again to take food; but it was ordinary and harmless food." (Bettenson, p. 6)

The Latin sequence hymn developed directly from the liturgy of the Mass. Its source was the Gradual. The Gradual developed as an interlude between the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel. It usually consisted of several psalm verses chanted while the lectionary was being carried from the Epistle side of the altar to the Gospel side. It ended with the singing of a protracted *Alleluia*. Eventually words were set to this extended melodic figure, and the sequence hymn was born. A German by the name of Notker Balbulus was the originator of an earlier German school of the sequence hymn, while Adam of St. Victor led a later French school. As might be expected, both of these men devoted their best efforts to the great seasonal festivals of the church year. They wrote liturgical hymns. Their motivation, and the very source of their hymns, was the liturgy. Thus, historically, hymns were a part of the liturgy. (Messenger, see Bibliography)

In the years after the Reformation, when psalm singing reigned supreme in England, the singing of new hymns, when and where

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in with the Propers and theme for the day. We must not look upon the sermon as something separate from the Liturgy or speak of "Liturgy and sermon" as though they were two completely different entities. There is simply one Liturgy, and as the rubrics prescribe, it includes sermon and hymns. (Lang, pp. 19—39)



introduced, became a badge of dissent, an offshoot from the mainstream of the church's worship. It was almost regarded as a freakish phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> But when the 19th-century Oxford Movement finally rediscovered the fact that the hymn had been a constituent part of the Daily Office and even the Mass, it put English hymn singing on a completely different basis. Hymn singing again became an integral part of the English Church's liturgical worship.<sup>11</sup>

## IV

## THE PLACE OF HYMNS IN THE LUTHERAN LITURGY

We have pointed out that hymns must be understood as part of the liturgy, not merely as adjuncts to the liturgy, extra devotions imported into the liturgy, or employed as support for the sermon. The General Rubrics of *The Lutheran Liturgy* would seem to follow this point of view. A rubric says: "The primary function of the choir is to lead the Congregation in the singing of the Liturgy and the Hymns and to sing the Propers of the Liturgy when they are beyond the capacity of the Congregation" (p. 419). This rubric defines the liturgical function of the choir. The prescribed hymns should fit into and become a part of the liturgy. One of the responsibilities of the liturgical choir is to help in their correct rendering.

But with the current set of rubrics in *The Lutheran Liturgy* this point of view does present us with some apparent contradictions and some practical problems. The first difficulty stems from the rubric for the opening hymn. This rubric reads: "A Hymn of Invocation of the Holy Ghost or another Hymn shall be sung."<sup>12</sup> If the movement and mood of the liturgy are understood and the hymns are appreciated as integral parts of the liturgy, we could have a clash of mood if this opening rubric would be blindly ob-

<sup>10</sup> In 1661, when the Presbyterians in the Church of England requested a purer Psalmody, the commission of bishops to whom they appealed brusquely denied them by simply stating that the singing of psalms and hymns in meter was not a part of the Liturgy. (Benson, *English Hymn*, p. 83)

<sup>11</sup> John Henry Newman's "Tract No. 75" clearly demonstrated that the hymn was a part of the ancient offices.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that the form of the Common Service as contained in the *Common Service Book* here has an optional rubric. That is, an opening hymn *may* rather than *shall* be sung.



served. The first part of the Common Service, up to the beginning of the Introit, is the Preparation. It is not part of the liturgy itself. It is a preparatory confession of sins, penitential in character. It should be spoken in its entirety — versicles, responses, and "Amen" — without organ or chanting.<sup>13</sup> The worshipers may kneel in humility to show their penitence. With such humility and confession they prepare themselves for the approaching mercies of God in Word and Sacrament. Some worshipers may feel, at least on occasion, a contradiction of mood if this preparation is prefaced by an exuberant hymn of praise or a loud organ prelude.

These might be some of the possible solutions to this problem:

1. Eliminate the opening hymn, and begin immediately with the Confession of Sins. Actually the rubrics give us ample opportunity to do plenty of hymn singing at more appropriate places. The least we could do would be to make the opening rubric optional by using a "may" instead of a "shall," as the *Common Service Book* of the United Lutheran Church does. This would allow the omission of the opening hymn.<sup>14</sup>

2. We might remove the Confession from its place before the Introit. In such a case, the preparatory Confession could be moved to this later position in the liturgy, or confession could be made in a separate confessional service or by means of the fine Lutheran practice of private confession. Even the current General Rubrics recognize that the service may sometimes begin with the Introit and not with the Confession.<sup>15</sup> If the Confession were thus removed from the place before the Introit, an opening hymn could be used or not used. If used, it would fit much better immediately preceding the Introit than it would preceding a Confession of Sins.

<sup>13</sup> "Since the Preparation is not a part of the Service proper, it is preferable that the Officiant and the Congregation speak the entire Preparatory Service." This is from the General Rubrics of *The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 419. In view of this rubric and the sound principle behind it, it is most unfortunate that music is provided for the Confession of Sins in both *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *The Music for the Liturgy* (Concordia Publishing House). Interestingly, the Introductory Remarks in *The Music for the Liturgy* recommend disregarding the music for the Confession and speaking that part!

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps one of the practical but decidedly unliturgical reasons for invariably including the opening hymn is conveniently to drown out disturbances and noise caused by latecomers to the worship!

<sup>15</sup> "When the Service begins with the Introit [my italics], the Officiant shall proceed to the altar at once." (General Rubrics, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, loc. cit.)



3. The third possible and the least radical solution would be simply to choose the opening hymn and, for that matter the organ prelude, with great care. The clash between hymn and confession could be considerably lessened by a judicious choice of the hymn. This does not mean to say that a penitential hymn of confession need always be chosen. If a hymn must be sung before the Confession, a carefully selected hymn of invocation to the Holy Ghost, as the rubric itself suggests, or a reverent hymn of awe at God's presence would be better than a crashing hymn of praise.

The other occasions for hymn singing prescribed by the rubrics of the Common Service do not present such problems. If the church year, the Propers, and the unified theme of the service are kept in mind when the hymns are chosen, there should be no difficulty. The hymns that are chosen, of course, should be liturgical hymns. In fact, if the liturgy is taken into consideration at all, the hymns chosen must of necessity be liturgical hymns.

A "sequence hymn" may follow the psalmody between the Epistle and Gospel. This should, of course, reinforce the preceding Alleluia Verse or Tract.

The Common Service directs that a hymn follow the lessons and the Creed and immediately precedes the sermon. Not only the sermon but also the lessons for the day should govern its choice. Of course, the lessons should also govern the preparation of the sermon! Thus a unified whole is achieved. The idea of choosing this hymn entirely with reference to the sermon dates from the liturgically bankrupt 18th century. At that time appreciation for the liturgy was rapidly deteriorating, and the sermon was beginning to dominate the service more and more. (Reed, pp. 287 and 288)

The fourth opportunity for a hymn in *The Lutheran Liturgy* is governed by an optional rubric, "Then *may* a Hymn be sung." This hymn would come after the Offertory and General Prayer and immediately before the Preface of the Office of the Holy Communion. This point in the liturgy is an excellent setting for the singing of a hymn, and ordinarily, unless there is a need to save time, there is no reason to follow the option allowing omission. This "pre-Communion hymn" can serve as a bridge between the Offertory section of the liturgy and the Holy Communion itself;



it can prepare the worshipers for the blessed Sacrament; and it can serve the practical purpose of giving the officiant time to prepare the sacred vessels at the altar.

The fifth and last rubric on hymns in the service is also optional. It comes after the Thanksgiving Collect and immediately before the Benedicamus and Benediction. A hymn could serve there as a suitable expression of thanksgiving by the worshipers, but it does extend the thanksgiving when the mood of the liturgy seems to suggest a sincere but brief expression of thanks after the climax of receiving the holy elements at the altar. If used, a brief hymn of thanksgiving would serve best.

If we understand the hymn as an integral part of the liturgy and choose the hymns in direct relationship to the Propers, many of our problems are solved. To appreciate the liturgical hymn and its place in our rite, we must begin with an understanding of the unity of the liturgy. Ordinary, Propers, hymns, sermon — we must bind them all together and offer them to Almighty God in one grand expression of Eucharistic worship.

## V

### LITURGICAL HYMNS IN THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL

We shall now briefly evaluate some of the hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal* from the liturgical point of view. Any kind of survey of Christian hymnody is a large task. Even the examination of a particular body of hymns in a certain hymnbook from only one point of view is a big order. The following paragraphs therefore claim to be only a briefly stated personal evaluation of the liturgical qualities of some of the hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. The ancient Latin Office hymns will be especially emphasized because of their undisputed liturgical value through the centuries.

The best liturgical hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal* are the psalms, the canticles, and some of the songs in the Ordinary of the liturgy itself. The Gloria in Excelsis and the Sanctus, for example, are splendid ancient liturgical hymns, which fit perfectly into the Office of the Word and the Office of the Holy Communion respectively. The Venite and the Te Deum are two grand liturgical hymns in the Matins. They express our morning praise with inspired words. Much could be said also for the Nunc Dimittis, the



Magnificat, the Benedictus, and other canticles, and psalms. There is good reason why they have endured through the centuries and become part of the liturgy itself.

The best liturgical hymns in the actual hymn section of *The Lutheran Hymnal* are in the church-year sections of the hymnbook. This could be illustrated even from a purely statistical point of view by a count of Latin Office hymns. We find that among the 180 hymns assigned to the church year there are thirty Latin hymns, most of which are from the earlier centuries of Latin hymnody. However, among the 259 hymns following the church-year section there are only five Latin hymns, and three of these are from the 12th century.

We shall now briefly analyze the hymns in the church-year section and a few other sections of the hymnal.

*The Lutheran Hymnal* includes 21 hymns for Advent. Among these there are four Latin hymns translated by Neale, Caswall, and Chandler, who are recognized as the best among the translators of Latin hymns. The four Latin hymns are "Hark, a Thrilling Voice Is Sounding" (60), "Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel" (62), "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" (63), and "The Advent of Our King" (68). Some of the German and English hymns in this section also have a fine liturgical character. Examples of these are "Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come" (55), "Jesus Came, the Heavens Adoring" (56), "Hark the Glad Sound" (66), "Hosanna to the Living Lord" (70), and "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates" (73). The Advent hymns adequately cover the Advent themes of the liturgy.

The 34 hymns in the Christmas section include seven Latin hymns and two from Greek sources. This section has some good modern liturgical hymns in addition to the ancient hymns. There is, for example, Isaac Watts' "Joy to the World." We cannot but admire in this hymn the objective element of praise and joy that fits so well with the Christmas mood of the liturgy.

The 16 hymns assigned to New Year's Eve and New Year's Day include three Latin hymns (115, 116, 117). All three of these hymns are really intended for the Circumcision and Naming of our Lord and are the only genuine liturgical hymns in this section.



Neither New Year's Eve nor New Year's Day are festivals of the church year. However, a hymn such as Watts' "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past" (123) is a good hymn with a solid churchly character.

The nine Epiphany hymns include only one Latin hymn, Neale's glorious translation of the *Hostis Herodes impie* ("The Star Proclaims the King Is Here," 131), but the hymns in this section objectively cover the Epiphany emphases of the liturgy. There is, for example, John Julian's fine but seldom-used hymn, "O God of God, O Light of Light" (132). The *Hostis Herodes impie* and Wordsworth's "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise" (134) are the only two among the nine Epiphany hymns that cover all of the liturgy's Epiphany themes—the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, the coming of the Magi, Christ's Baptism in the Jordan, and the first miracle at Cana.

It is interesting to notice that only one hymn is assigned by *The Lutheran Hymnal* to the Feast of the Transfiguration (135), but four are listed for the seldom-celebrated Feast of the Presentation of our Lord and the Purification of Mary (136—139). None of these are Latin hymns.

From a liturgical point of view the sections appointed for Lent, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday are disappointing. The magnificent *Vexilla Regis* as translated by Neale (168) is the only Latin Office hymn among the 44 hymns in these sections. Some of the hymns appointed for Lent lean quite heavily toward an excessively subjective Lenten piety. Perhaps the subjective medieval Lenten emphasis has influenced our modern Lenten worship too much.

Among the three Palm Sunday hymns Neale's translation of the traditional Palm Sunday processional hymn, *Gloria, laus, et honor*, is included (160). However, all three hymns fit well with the Palm Sunday liturgy.

The Easter section again provides us with a fine set of liturgical hymns. Seven of the 25 hymns included here are derived from Latin and Greek sources. Some of the Easter favorites are Latin hymns. Examples are "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" (191), "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today" (199), "Ye Sons and Daughters of



the King" (208), and "The Strife Is O'er" (210). The thrust of the victory theme itself at Easter tends toward the production of good, objective, liturgical hymns.

Twelve hymns are offered for the Ascension. The Venerable Bede's *Hymnum canamus glorie* ("A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing," 212) is one of the best.

Most of the 13 hymns assigned to Pentecost in *The Lutheran Hymnal* are liturgically quite good. Three are from the Latin (227, 233, and 236). The *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* (227) comes from the 13th century; the translation by Palmer that we have is needlessly sentimental.

The 17 hymns for the Feast of the Holy Trinity are all liturgical hymns, though there is only one Latin hymn (240) in the group. These hymns are liturgical because they are by their very nature Trinitarian and because we are almost forced to be objective when we think of and try to set forth the nature of Almighty God. Their creedal and doxological character adds to their liturgical quality. We could take Reginald Heber's "Holy, Holy, Holy" (246), Horatius Bonar's "Glory Be to God the Father" (244), the anonymous "Come, Thou Almighty King" (239), or Martin Luther's "barbarically great" hymn "Isaiah, Mighty Seer, in Days of Old" (249), as examples of great hymns in the Trinity section that combine literary and liturgical qualities in some of the finest hymns of Christendom.

One of the four hymns included in *The Lutheran Hymnal* for the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels is an ancient Latin hymn translated by Edward Caswall (257), one is an ancient Greek hymn translated by John Neale (225), one is a 16th-century Latin hymn written by Melancthon (254), and one is an original by John Neale written in 1842 (256). All are fine liturgical hymns.

The Feast of the Reformation developed in the Lutheran Church since the Reformation, therefore all 12 hymns assigned to this feast (258—269) are, as we might expect, German Lutheran hymns usually used with German chorale tunes. There is an undeniably firm, churchly, and liturgical character to these hymns. They reach their climax, of course, in "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."



Although there are 23 fixed minor feast days in the calendar of *The Lutheran Liturgy*, *The Lutheran Hymnal* includes only six hymns (270—275) for these feasts in addition to the four listed for St. Michael and All Angels' Day and mentioned above. Six of the feasts have one hymn each, but there are 17 feasts to which no hymns are assigned. The paucity of hymns for the minor festivals seems to reflect the general and unfortunate neglect of these days in most American Lutheran churches. The fact is that more hymns would help give these days their due recognition. However, with a little ingenuity there is a tentative way of solving the problem without producing a new hymnal. That is by the simple expedient of using appropriate hymns from other sections of the hymnal for the minor festivals. For example, "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones" (475), found in the section called Communion of Saints, would fit splendidly on the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. Appropriate hymns for All Saints' Day could also be found in the Communion of Saints section. For the Feast of the Circumcision and Naming of Jesus (January 1) the hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" (339), taken from the section titled "Redeemer," could be used. For the Nativity of St. John the Baptist we might look through the Advent section of the hymnal, and there we would immediately find "Hark, a Thrilling Voice Is Sounding" (60) and "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry" (63), both ideally suited for the day of St. John's birth. For any of the Evangelists' or Apostles' days we might look through the Ministry or Missions sections of the hymnal (482—512). There are other possibilities for supplying hymns for the minor festivals from within the present limitations of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. However, additional hymns are needed.

As might be expected, when we move away from the church-year section of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, we find far fewer liturgical hymns. We noted earlier that the 259 hymns from No. 276 to No. 535 include only five Latin hymns. Furthermore, three of these five come from the inferior later-Latin period.

The six hymns in the section called "Invitation" (276—281) are dignified revival hymns. The 16 Law and Gospel hymns (282 to 297) cover a wide range in origin and quality. The first hymn in this section, "Christians, Come in Sweetest Measures," is a 12th-



century Latin hymn by Adam of St. Victor and is one of the best of the 16. The six hymns for Baptism are good (298—303). They can adequately serve a specific liturgical function in connection with the Sacrament of entrance into the church.

The hymns under the title "The Lord's Supper" are from a liturgical point of view disappointing. Perhaps this stems from a general neglect and misunderstanding of the blessed Eucharist. Many of these 13 hymns (304—316) are too subjective to be really good liturgical hymns. Some of them only stress subjective aspects of personal Eucharistic piety — worthiness or unworthiness, assurance of personal forgiveness, personal belief in the Real Presence, etc. They put too much stress on the personal benefits and the strengthening of one's faith through the Holy Communion. These, of course, are valid emphases, but their exclusive use creates unbalanced and unliturgical Communion hymns. These emphases must not dominate to the exclusion of other objective and liturgical aspects of the holy Sacrament. Some of the objective facets of the Communion that are neglected are the recognition of the church as the body of Christ in the Sacrament, the unique participation of the believer in that church as he communes at the altar, the horizontal fellowship among Christians expressed at the altar, the one great sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the church, made real in Communion, wonder at the sacramental mysteries, joy and thanksgiving for the life-giving atonement offered to us in the Eucharist, and others. These emphases, of course, are not totally lacking, but they do seem to take a secondary position. Too many of our Communion hymns are one-sided in their subjective piety.

Let us look, for example, at Johann Franck's hymn "Soul, Adorn Thyself with Gladness" (305), a very popular Communion hymn. Throughout this hymn we find lines such as these: "Suffer, Lord, that I receive Thee" (stanza 2); "Ah, how hungers all my spirit" (stanza 4); "In my heart I find ascending" (stanza 5); "Jesus, Thou, my Friend most tender" (stanza 7); "Let me gladly here obey Thee. By Thy love I am invited" (stanza 9). Now, these undoubtedly are all valid and genuine Christian sentiments, but their subjectivity makes the hymn more of a personal devotional poem for private use in the pew than a genuine liturgical expression of



the church. Other extremely personal Communion hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal* are 309, 310, 312, and 315.<sup>16</sup>

One of the best and most liturgical of our Communion hymns is the great "Gott sei gelobet" ("O Lord, We Praise Thee," 313). Although this hymn also has its subjective aspects — and, of course, this is something which we never will nor wish to completely avoid in hymns — it also objectively expresses our common joy and thanks for the blessings of the Eucharist and the fellowship of Christians kneeling together in this feast of love. It is a prayer that the church, rather than the individual, receive the benefits of this Sacrament. It is understandable why this hymn has become a prescribed hymn, almost a part of the Ordinary, in some of the German Lutheran liturgies.

The number of hymns usable at the celebration of the Eucharist can also be considerably increased by a wise use of hymns from other sections of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. For example, many of the hymns in the Communion of Saints section could be used.<sup>17</sup> Many of the hymns in the Church Year section, especially those liturgical hymns which stress praise, the unity of Christians in the church, the mystery of God's love, Christ's sacrifice, and our response of thanksgiving could be very satisfactorily used. There is no need to limit a selection of hymns used at a celebration of the Sacrament to those specifically listed under The Lord's Supper.

*The Lutheran Hymnal* contains a large and varied collection of hymns, and many among those not discussed are in the best tradition of liturgical hymnody.<sup>18</sup> However, considering the six criteria for liturgical hymnody outlined previously in this paper and the discussion of the preceding pages, we conclude that some

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<sup>16</sup> A count of first person singular personal pronouns in several of the more subjective Communion hymns shows the following: In the hymn "Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Living Bread" (312), there are eight "me"s, six "I"s, five "my"s, and one "mine." In the hymn "I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table" (315), there are 16 "I"s, 8 "me"s, and 23 "my"s. Such a mathematical calculation may be a poor standard for judging, but it does seem to indicate a tendency in these hymns.

<sup>17</sup> Examples are "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (464), "The Church's One Foundation" (473), and "Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones" (475).

<sup>18</sup> The following hymns are among the most objective and liturgical in the sections not examined: 6, 536, 550, 555, 558, 559, 564, 605, 607, 612, 613, and 614.



of the best and certainly the largest number of liturgical hymns in *The Lutheran Hymnal* are among those arranged under the seasons of the church year.

## VI

## CONCLUSION

Hymnody in the Christian Church has had a long and interesting history. It has had its ups and downs, its eras of strength and eras of decline, its periods of neglect by the church and its periods of enthusiastic ascendancy. The New Testament church was born with a song on her lips. After the Day of Pentecost, Christians continued the praise of God in Old Testament psalmody with unbroken and ongoing continuity. New songs or "canticles" came into existence as the miracle of Jesus Christ was unfolded before the eyes of believers. The Latin and Greek fathers continued the tradition of hymnic praise with thousands of hymns in their languages. A name such as that of St. Ambrose will always be associated with Christian hymnody. After a period of deterioration and decline in the late medieval centuries Christian song was revived at the time of the Reformation under the leadership of Martin Luther. When hymn singing reached a new low point among the Protestants of England in the centuries after the Reformation, God revived it through Isaac Watts and like-minded Christian poets. The recognition of the church's hymns as part of her liturgy was re-established by the English Oxford Movement.

Our generation stands in this long succession of fellow Christians. Our task is to carry on the praise of God, which should never cease. God has given us the gifts of poetry, melody, music, and liturgy to express our adoration of Him, to do what the church must unceasingly do. We thus have many resources to carry out our task. We have the Latin and Greek hymnodies of the ancient church fathers. We have the development of the liturgy and the Daily Office. We have the 16th-century explosion of Christian song and praise in the German Reformation. In the English tradition we have Watts and Wesley and all the other great hymn writers of Britain. We have necessary correctives of the 19th-century Oxford Movement.

But now we must also use these traditions creatively in develop-



ing our own hymnody. In order to do so we must appreciate the liturgical hymns that we have and understand the function and definition of both the hymn and the liturgy. There is evidence and hope that we have both the ability and will to add to our reservoir of liturgical hymns. The following is one of the most recently written hymns of the church. It was written by Dr. Martin Franzmann of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for a special occasion on September 8, 1957. It is a fine liturgical hymn and makes a fitting conclusion for this paper.

### THOU WHOSE GLORY NONE CAN SEE

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| <p>1. Thou whose glory none can see,<br/>         Wisdom comes by fear of Thee;<br/>         Fear of Thee we cannot know<br/>         Till forgiveness Thou bestow.</p> <p>2. Send Thy Spirit from on high,<br/>         Who Thy Son shall glorify,<br/>         Who shall show us in Thy Son<br/>         All Thy grace and truth have done.</p> <p>3. He shall give us eyes to see<br/>         In the Cross Thy mastery,<br/>         In Thy Son's death Satan's doom,<br/>         Life eternal from His tomb.<br/>         Berkeley, Mo.</p> | <p>4. Thou Forgiver, fear of Thee<br/>         Shall from folly set us free,<br/>         Set us free from self-sought ways,<br/>         Set us free to sing Thy praise.</p> <p>5. All that man has sought and found,<br/>         All that man has caught and bound,<br/>         We shall take, and let it be<br/>         First fruits offered unto Thee.</p> <p>6. Then at world's end we shall raise<br/>         The full harvest home of praise<br/>         To Thee, Father, to Thy Son,<br/>         To Thy Spirit, Three in One!<br/>         (<i>Worship Service Helps</i>, p. 10)</p> |
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