

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH MUST BE CONSTANTLY VIGILANT AS IT
SINGS THE CHRISTIAN SONG

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Abstract

In recent decades, Christian churches, including Lutheran churches, have significantly increased their interest in and utilization of contemporary Christian music. WELS congregations have been limited in their ability to produce songs considered contemporary, and therefore have made use of popular Christian radio songs and even pulled songs from other Evangelical churches, which are often categorized as Christian Contemporary music. The purpose of this paper is to review, compare, and evaluate the traditional Lutheran understanding of music with concepts that flow out of mainline American Protestantism, especially from Arminianism, Revivalism, and Evangelicalism. From a study of the theological background of this kind of music this paper will examine concepts that will differ from the Lutheran approach. A fuller understanding of the study and background of Christian Contemporary music from a Lutheran theological background will help to establish a norm for evaluating Christian Contemporary music. Establishing such a comparison will help pastors evaluate resources as they establish biblical criteria for utilizing music from popular contemporary sources.

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Introduction

For as long as it's been around Christian music has been tied to emotion and intellect in a way that no other music can truly claim. Christian songs combine music with the word of God and intersect both intellect and emotion. Not only are Christian songs an intellectual and emotional response of faith, but also are emotional and intellectual proclamations to the Word of faith. Luther recognized this unique combination and praises the value of the Christian song because of the influence it has on believers. He writes in the *PREFACE TO GEORG RHAU'S SYMPHONIAE IUCUNDAE*,

“...next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions—to pass over the animals—which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them. No greater commendation than this can be found—at least not by us. For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate—and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely, the emotions, inclinations, and affections that impel men to evil or good?—what more effective means than music could you find?”¹

With the Christian song being such a useful tool for delivering the word of God, it comes as no surprise that Satan takes that song and uses it for the harm and destruction of Christians. He does so with the use of songs containing false doctrine. And he does so by leading Christians to take comfort in enthusiastic singing as a sign of saving faith rather than a response of faith.

The Church has always struggled in its effort to find hymns that proclaim the Word correctly with fitting musical accompaniments. One of two tendencies has often afflicted the Church. For the common Christian, the tendency is to put too much value on the emotional aspect of the song without recognizing the need for doctrinal precision. For the Christian theologian, the tendency is to value the theological content of the song so highly that he forgets the importance of the emotional impact. A resulting tension potentially arises then between congregation members and churchgoers and pastors concerning the selection of Christian songs in Christian worship.

That tension is evident today as many 21st century Americans are seek a different sort of hymnody than what currently exists in hymnals and supplements. There is no denying the

¹ Martin Luther. (1999), *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 323.

influence Christian Contemporary music, especially Evangelical and Christian radio music, has had on American Lutheran congregations, pastors and laypeople.

Outreach strategies have recognized that most Americans seeking a church have little experience with or appreciation for traditional Christian hymnody. Knowledge or awareness of the challenges that average church attendees face to express faith in musical styles that are unfamiliar to them is not necessarily something to which most pastors and church musicians are sensitive. As a result, the traditional Christian hymnody can serve as a barrier to the proclamation of the Gospel in music.

WELS has not engaged its own poets and composers to write in the newer styles of music to which it may be easier for the common man to relate. In an effort to retain the found and reach the lost, many Lutherans seek hymns and songs in new styles from Evangelical sources because Lutherans do have an available repository of such songs. In these Evangelical sources they find music with simple texts accompanied by a “Top Forty” musical style that seems to appeal to millions of people in today’s society.

This procedure leads to questions of validity considering that many current hymns come from non-WELS sources. Many of the hymns contained in Wisconsin Synod hymnals are from non-WELS sources. Historically, the Christian Church, and WELS synod have been willing to accept new musical styles and try new songs, but questions then arise with regard to the text of the Christian Contemporary music (CCM) songs, the musical theology of the Evangelicals from which many songs come, and the roles that their theology and texts play in the decision of the synod to use them. This thesis contends that: **The Evangelical Lutheran Church must be constantly vigilant as it sings the Christian song.**

The story of the song of Lutheranism

Before considering the Arminian/Revivalism/Evangelical theology of music it is important to first consider the Wisconsin Synod’s Lutheran roots in order to have a baseline with which to compare and contrast CCM. To consider the Lutheran approach to the Christian song one first must go to Scripture. The Lutheran principle *sola scriptura* applies to every aspect of theology including music. After discussing the Biblical principles involving the Christian song, this paper will also consider Luther’s own principles on music as he derived them from scripture.

Firstly, Scripture proclaims that the Church is present wherever people confess God’s Word and celebrate the sacraments as instituted by Christ. The authors of the *Augustana* wrote, “It

is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among who the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.”² The very profession of every believer and the Church in general is the administration of God’s Word. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20a)

The patriarchs understood this when they called on the name of the Lord. They built altars to the Lord and worshipped him, proclaiming his name to a sin-filled world. As they proclaimed the glory of their Lord they put into practice the concept, to borrow from the Seminary Worship notes, “All praise is proclamation and all proclamation is praise.” As they proclaimed the glory of the Lord they ascribed worth to him. One of the first things noted then about worship in the Bible is that it is by nature outreach oriented. To praise the Lord is to proclaim him. To proclaim the Lord is to share his wonders with the world.

Just as people praised the Lord in response to his grace, they also proclaimed his grace to those who heard them. The Bible contains a compellingly close connection between prophesy and music. The Hebrew verb “נָבֵא”, “to prophesy”, is used in connection with singing in 1 Samuel 10:5-6,

After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.

The Hebrew verb “נָבֵא” is also used in the context of singing in 1 Samuel 10:11, 19:20, and with music in 1 Chronicles 25:1-3.³ More instances of praise being proclamation can be found throughout the Psalms. Psalms 8, 19, and 33 are all Psalms that proclaim just one aspect of the

² The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. 1959 (T. G. Tappert, Ed. Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press), 32.

³ David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals. Here is the list of the men who performed this service:

From the sons of Asaph:

Zaccur, Joseph, Nathaniah and Asarelah. The sons of Asaph were under the supervision of Asaph, who prophesied under the king’s supervision.

As for Jeduthun, from his sons:

Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six in all, under the supervision of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising the LORD.

power of the Lord, the Lord as creator. Many of the other Psalms proclaim other aspects of the Lord as Creator, Redeemer, Protector, etc...

So we see that in its very nature worship is evangelical. It is outreach minded. One of the best ways to understand the harmony of outreach and worship is that they are one and the same. One of the best ways to use worship as evangelism then is to retain pure doctrine, and proclaim all the purity of God's truth in worship.

Beyond the close synonymous connection of praise and proclamation, another connection exists wherein proclamation also leads to praise. God's Word works responses in humans. The Law produces sorrow over sin. The Gospel produces a joyful response of thanks for God's grace, which is worship.

In some of these expositions of the rhythm of proclamation and acclamation in the liturgical songs of the congregation, use has been made of the Latin terms *anabasis* and *catabasis*: God speaks to us—in the liturgical assembly the word of God is heard in the *catabasis* of proclamation; we speak to God—from within the same liturgical assembly we respond to God in the *anabasis* of acclamation (though the two terms are not seen as mutually exclusive but as actions that share elements of both concepts).⁴

The Bible abounds with rich examples of this concept from beginning to end. As scripture records songs throughout its pages, the obvious pattern emerges of God's grace and the believer's response." After the Israelites safely made it through the Red Sea and the Egyptians perished at the working of the Lord's almighty power, the Israelites broke into song, "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea." (Exodus 15:1) A number of the Psalms are responses to the Lord for delivering the writer from his enemies. The songs of Mary, Zechariah, and the angels in Luke 1-2 are responses to the Lord's grace in keeping his promise to send the Redeemer to earth.

Even the early Christian church recognized the nature of the proclamation of God's Word eliciting a response, the *catabasis* and *anabasis* aspect of worship. In a homily on Psalm 28 Saint Basil discusses worship and notes the progression of God's word eliciting a vocal and emotional response. He writes, "You have a psalm, you have a prophecy, the evangelical precepts, the preachings of the apostles. Let the tongue sing, let the mind interpret the meaning of what has

⁴ Robin Leaver, "Music as Proclamation and Acclamation," Liturgical Ministry 80(Spring 2001), 73-82.

been said, that you may sing with your spirit, that you may sing likewise with your mind.”⁵ In his essay *Music as Proclamation and Acclamation*, Robin Leaver shows that this antiphonal style of worship was in practice attested by Hippolytus and Justin Martyr,

Following the synaxis, the Eucharistic liturgy was also characterized by an antiphonal alternation of acclamation and proclamation: in the *Sursum corda* dialogue, as witnessed in Hippolytus, that led to the corporate acclamation of the *Sanctus* (after the fourth century), and in the emphatic acclamation "Amen" following the thanksgiving prayer (with its proclamatory elements), to which Justin attests.⁶

The Christian hymn itself was born in the 1st century. The antiphonal singing of the Israelites up to the time of Christ revolved around the Psalms. But after the death and resurrection of Christ, leaders of the Christian church found themselves at a crossroad with regard to worship style, sacrifices and singing Psalms versus finding something new. The early Christians noted a certain limitation within the Psalms in that they were couched in the language of the old covenant, which contained no specific mention of Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer. Despite the challenge to use New Testament language to praise God in song, Scripture encouraged them to be a singing church. They considered how to incorporate Jesus into their music just as Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn after the institution of the Lord's Supper, and more so as Paul encouraged them to, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16)

The psalms had their limitations from the Christian point of view, since the language of the Old Testament was inadequate to describe the glories of a completed redemption. The divine nature of Christ, as well as the whole Christian concept of the Holy Trinity, demanded a new approach to worship. Only by giving expression to their faith in a crucified, risen and glorified Saviour could the first Christians find a form of worship that satisfied their souls.⁷

The need for new covenant language birthed a rapid expansion in hymnody. Although the Church utilized new songs in worship, the use of the Psalms never disappeared, and the antiphonal nature of worship remained as well. In fact, the rhythm of alternating remained in the worship rite for centuries. Unfortunately, priests and worship leaders limited liturgical antiphonies more

⁵ Sister Agnes Clare Way, trans., *The Fathers of the Church: Saint Basil Exegetical Homilies* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 210.

⁶ Robin Leaver, "Music as Proclamation and Acclamation," *Liturgical Ministry* 80(Spring 2001): 73-82.

⁷ E.E. Ryden, *The Story of Christian Hymnody* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 4.

frequently until only the clergy and choir sang the responses while the congregation remained effectively silent.

Luther's Principles

It was at this point that the Lord used Martin Luther as a reformer of both doctrine and worship. Luther's principles for worship, based on standards taken straight from the Holy Scriptures, led to the transformation of Christian worship. In his work entitled *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*, Carl Schalk compiled a list of five biblical principles Luther understood and practiced when it came to music and worship.

Luther's contribution was to focus on a cluster of paradigms and raise them to a position of decisive importance. In so doing he began a movement that was to reshape the way the church understood and practiced the art of music in its life and worship. For Luther there were five pivotal understandings, five 'paradigms of praise': (1) music as God's creation and gift; (2) music as proclamation and praise; (3) music as liturgical song; (4) music as the song of royal priests; and (5) music as a sign of continuity with the whole church.⁸

The quote by Luther in the introduction to this paper shows just how highly he admired music. Luther further demonstrated his high regard for music in this excerpt from the revised notes in the *Preface for All Good Hymnals* section of Luther's 53rd Volume on Liturgy and Hymns:

The Reformer provided the rimed introduction, entitled *A Preface for All Good Hymnals*. Artists of the sixteenth century liked to personify the arts, sciences, virtues, etc. It was a common device of painters, sculptors, and poets to represent music as a lady. Luther followed this trend when he put his preface on the lips of "Dame Music" and had her extol her own gifts...

Dame Music [speaks:]

Of all the joys upon this earth
None has for men a greater worth
Than what I give with my ringing
And with voices sweetly singing.
There cannot be an evil mood
Where there are singing fellows good,
There is no envy, hate, nor ire,
Gone are through me all sorrows dire;
Greed, care, and lonely heaviness
No more do they the heart oppress.

⁸ Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 34.

Each man can in his mirth be free
 Since such a joy no sin can be.
 But God in me more pleasure finds
 Than in all joys of earthly minds.
 Through my bright power the devil shirks
 His sinful, murderous, evil works.
 Of this King David's deeds do tell
 Who pacified King Saul so Well
 By sweetly playing on the lyre
 And thus escaped his murderous ire.
 For truth divine and God's own rede
 The heart of humble faith shall lead;
 Such did Elisha once propound
 When harping he the Spirit found.
 The best time of the year is mine
 When all the birds are singing fine.
 Heaven and earth their voices fill
 With right good song and tuneful trill.
 And, queen of all, the nightingale
 Men's hearts will merrily regale
 With music so charmingly gay;
 For which be thanks to her for aye.
 But thanks be first to God, our Lord,
 Who created her by his Word
 To be his own beloved songstress
 And of *musica* a mistress.
 For our dear Lord she sings her song
 In praise of him the whole day long;
 To him I give my melody
 And thanks in all eternity.⁹

Luther iterated his love and admiration for music in many ways and eloquently communicated his confession of music as God's creation and gift to mankind. Schalk summarized Luther's view well when he said, "Stated as simply as possible, Luther's primary view of the relation between music and Christian life and worship is the understanding that it is the good and gracious gift of God the Creator, given to humanity that we might in turn use it in God's praise and in the proclamation of the Gospel."¹⁰

This last quote also reflects the second principle of Luther concerning music. He saw music as a gift from God, which served a high purpose. Music as a gift from God is meant to praise him

⁹ Martin Luther. *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, 319-320.

¹⁰ Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 33-34.

and proclaim his glories. This principle flows from Scripture in countless songs of praise as the saints proclaimed his grace for eternity.

In his third and fourth principles, Luther reminded the people of the universal priesthood of all believers. With these principles in mind he stressed the importance of lay participation in worship. Singing God's word was no longer just for the clergy and choir.

Luther also saw a weakness in the Latin service because it was not the language of the people and so it left the laity doomed to passive silence in worship. This was one of the reasons Luther wrote the *Deutsche Messe*. He was also concerned with putting not just the liturgy in the language of the people, but also the hymns. "I also wish that we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing during mass, immediately after the gradual and also after the Sanctus and Agnus Dei. For who doubts that originally all the people sang these which now only the choir sings or responds to while the bishop is consecrating?"¹¹ Luther later showed his pastoral care, stating that people ought to be able to understand the hymns, and explained that the hymns should be of educational benefit for them. He demonstrated this by encouraging the German poets to write good hymns for worship. "But poets are wanting among us, or not yet known, who could compose evangelical and spiritual songs, as Paul calls them [Col. 3:16], worthy to be used in the church of God... For few are found that are written in a proper devotional style. I mention this to encourage any German poets to compose evangelical hymns for us."¹²

With many of his principles Luther made it his goal not to try to replace every custom and practice of the Roman Catholic Church especially in his final principle. Luther saw to it to retain everything in worship that was "useful, proper, and good." Other than putting it in the language of the people, Luther retained much of the liturgy. He saw this retention of the useful, good, and proper parts of worship as a way for the each individual church to express the shared faith with the members of the Church. "To accept those gifts of tradition was, for Luther, to be linked with Christians of other times and places and to be reminded in a unique way that the church of his day was indeed part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic company of saints."¹³

Digressions from Lutheran Principles

¹¹ Martin Luther. *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, 36.

¹² Martin Luther. *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, 37.

¹³ Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*, 47.

With the Reformation spreading, and with Luther's encouragement, hymn writing exploded. Despite the adherence to Luther's request, which one would expect to please him, Luther saw the work of Satan even in the midst of the reformation and the great potential for the spread of false doctrine. In response to the 1545 hymnal, *Geistliche Lieder*, published by Valentin Babst, and out of concern for the potential spread of false doctrine, Luther wrote this warning:

Many false masters now hymns indite
Be on your guard and judge them aright.
Where God is building his church and word,
There comes the devil with lie and sword.¹⁴

During the time of the Reformation, the church continued to struggle with issues concerning worship and hymnody. French theologian and contemporary of Martin Luther, John Calvin, who was also influenced by his Swiss counterpart, Ulrich Zwingli, proposed that the only proper form of singing in worship was what he considered to be the true form of apostolic worship, that is, the singing of only the Psalms. Calvin, fully enveloped in the idea of reformation, wished to do away with every worship form and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin adhered to the principle *sola scriptura* to the extreme in the case of music. Professor of history at Rice University, Charles Garside, shows the conclusions of Calvin as influenced by Saint Augustine:

If one accepts the proposition of Saint Augustine, as Calvin does, that 'no one is able to sing things worthy of God unless he has received them from Him,' then the most exhaustive search will yield 'no better songs nor more appropriate to the purpose than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and spoke through him.' ... The solution reached in theory, Calvin proceeds to urge the universal adoption of the Psalms to the exclusion of other songs. 'Only let the world be so well advised that in place of songs in part empty and frivolous, in part stupid and dull, in part obscene and vile, and in consequence evil and harmful, which it has used up to now, it may accustom itself hereafter to singing these divine and celestial hymns with the good King David.'¹⁵

Luther, on the other hand, felt differently, which he stated in his principles for worship citing that music is a creation and gift of God. Formulators of Article X, while not directly addressing the hymnody, shared the sentiments of Luther when they stated:

We believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has the power, according to its circumstances, to change such ceremonies in such manner as may be most useful and edifying to the congregation

¹⁴ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, 332.

¹⁵ Garside, Charles. *The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music, 1536-1543*. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1979), 23.

of God... We believe, teach, and confess that in time of persecution, when a plain [and steadfast] confession is required of us, we should not yield to the enemies in regard to such adiaphora, as the apostle has written Gal. 5, 1: *Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.*¹⁶

The Lutheran formulators made a clear confession of Christian freedom with the continued use of hymns in worship. In doing so they demonstrated that hymns can be used for the very purpose of upholding true doctrine and making clear confessions of faith.

Another digression from Luther's scriptural principles on hymnody came roughly a century later at the hand of the German Pietists. German Pietism was a movement, "reacting against a congregation life which is characterized as cold and formal, emphasized a practical and deeply personal piety. It sought to restore a more vigorous spiritual life by emphasizing personal Bible study, prayer, and works of Christian charity."¹⁷ The spirit of subjectivism characterized the Pietistic movement. People began to look to their own personal piety for assurance of salvation rather than the objective truth of God's grace in Christ's atonement.

Pietism had its lasting effect on Lutheranism as it developed in America. A number of hymnals were in circulation when Henry Muhlenberg, considered to be the patriarch of American Lutheranism, arrived in America. After founding the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the first Lutheran church body in North America, Muhlenberg was commissioned by the Ministerium to form a new hymnal in order to bring together Lutheran hymnic unity.

By the end of 1786, the new hymnal, *Erbauliche Liedersammlung zum Gottesdienstlichen Gebrauch in den Vereinigten Evangelisch Lutherischen Gemeinen in Nord-America*, had been printed and put into circulation. This was the first German Lutheran hymnbook made and published in America and it contained 706 hymns. In the preface to the *Erbauliche Liedersammlung* Muhlenberg wrote, "What matters is not the number of hymns, but rather the choice of the best and most powerful, and for that we still have –thank God- freedom and opportunity, as sensible and experienced Christians can themselves perceive from this book."

¹⁶ Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. (1996). *Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (electronic ed.), Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 329.

¹⁷ Carl F. Schalk, *God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 40.

Carl Schalk, noted Lutheran composer and church historian of the 20th and 21st centuries, gave this appraisal of the hymnal and Muhlenberg's work: "Muhlenberg's *Erbauliche Liedersammlung* was a hymnal born in the period of pietism which, nevertheless, still retained a healthy concern for orthodoxy. It made significant provision for the church year, and breathed a warm and churchly spirit."¹⁸

With the turn of the century, the influence of rationalism forced its way into Lutheran circles. In 1807, Fredrick Henry Quitman, who was a student of the "Father of German rationalism" Johan Salamo, was elected as president of the New York Ministerium. By 1812, the Ministerium appointed a committee for producing an English hymnbook. In 1814, *A Collection of Hymns, and a Liturgy, for the Use of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches* was published and put into circulation. The new hymnbook rejected a majority of the heritage of Lutheran chorales. It also took serious liberty in altering hymns to conform to the rationalism of the day. Quitman himself admitted to the liberties taken in the production of this hymnal, "Some of these, as well as several parts of the Liturgy, have been translated from German; others have been taken from English authors and collections; and a considerable degree of freedom has been used in selecting and framing them."¹⁹

The hymn collection is noticeably devoid of Lutheran theological doctrines of the Trinity, Christ's divinity, and a distinct statement on original sin. Examination of this hymnody and the doctrine contained therein reveals a heavy Unitarian and Socinian²⁰ influence. Take, for example, Isaac Watts' *Alas and did my Savior Bleed* and notice the distinct absence of the second stanza which gave a clear confession of the atoning sacrifice of Christ:

Was it from crimes that I had done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!

Three years later, on the 300th anniversary of the Reformation, the Lutheran church published a new hymnal. The spirit of Unionism led to the publication of *Das Gemeinschaftliche Gesangbuch, zum gottesdienstlichen Gebrauch der Lutherischen und Reformierten Gemeinden in*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 48.

¹⁹ From the "Preface" to *A Collection of Hymns, and a Liturgy, for the use of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches*. Pg. xiii-xv.

²⁰ Socinianism can be characterized by a rejection of original sin, the doctrine of the trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the propitiatory act of atonement.

Nord-America (The Common Hymn Book for the Use in the Worship of Lutheran and Reformed Congregations in North America). This new book contained a liturgical style that departed from tradition and placed the emphasis in worship on the sermon. The hymnal also included significantly fewer Lutheran hymns and considerably more Reformed hymns. “As a result of the debilitating effects of unionism and rationalism, Lutheran hymnody in America—particularly in Quitman’s *A Collection of Hymns, and a Liturgy* and *Das Gemeinschaftliche Gesangbuch* reached its lowest point. In the broad sweep of American Lutheran hymnody, it was a retrogression from which it would take almost a century to fully recover.”²¹

The noticeable correlation between Evangelical Revivalistic hymnody and Lutheran hymnody continued. In 1828, under leadership of Samuel Simon Schmucker, the General Synod published *Hymns, Selected and Original, for Public and Private Worship*. This hymn selection contained a clear influence of Revivalism. The church organized the hymns more dogmatically and all but ignored the church year. The hymns themselves contained gross amounts of Calvinistic and Arminian material. Besides that, the hymnal also incorporated millennialism, which was a trademark of Frontier Revivalism.

During this period, the Lutheran church digressed greatly from the scriptural principles established by Luther. Schalk summarized this time period of Lutheran theological and hymnic development, “In the 300 years since the Reformation, the significant theological, liturgical, and hymnological heritage of the Lutheran Reformation had been vitiated by the inroads of Pietism, rationalism, and an amiable ecumenism that often resulted in the absorption of elements from neighboring denominations in America that were inconsistent with its heritage.”²²

The Revival of Confessional Hymnody

When Lutheranism was at its lowest point of hymnody, the influx of Lutheran immigrants had a significant impact on a return to confessional Lutheran hymnody on a number of different fronts. When German Lutheran Pastor, J. A. A. Grabau saw the desire for there to be union among Lutherans and Reformed churches in Prussia, he left and immigrated to New York. He found that the situation among American Lutherans was no better than in Prussia. Following the formation of the Buffalo Synod in 1845, the congregations were introduced to the *Evangelisch Lutherisches*

²¹ Carl F. Schalk, *God’s Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America*, 80.

²² *Ibid.* Pg. 91-92.

Kirchengesangbuch. Over half of the 491 hymns in the book came from the Babst hymnal of 1545.

On the Saxon front, C. F. W. Walther took the position of leadership. In 1847 the *Kirchengesangbuch fuer Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinde ungeaenderter Augsburgischer Confession* was published with the intent to serve all confessional Lutheran groups. The compilers of this hymnal concerned themselves, not unlike Luther, primarily with ensuring the hymns contained pure doctrine that expressed the language of the whole church and not just individuals.

Meanwhile, other Lutheran synods in America also saw the need to return to a more confessional type of hymnody. German-Lutheran Pastor, Wilhelm Loehe, was highly influential in the founding and leading the Iowa Synod into a far more confession form of worship, albeit it from afar. The Ohio Synod had a gradual change in hymnody throughout the middle of the 19th century. Their first attempt at an English hymnbook in 1828 was quite significantly drawn from the resources of the General Synod and it reflected the poor theology, but as years passed they continued to return to more confessional works and finally by 1880 they published the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal*.

The General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America from its inception had a concern with confessional hymnody. In 1868 the General Council published the *Church Book for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations*. Up to this point, hymns written in English had a negative stigma because the poor quality of the English hymnody produced, so congregations were skeptical of the quality of the *Church Book for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations*. Despite the skepticism, this hymnal better represented confessional theology. Just nine years later the General Council also published the *Kirchenbuch fuer Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* out of concern for German speaking Americans.

While the General Council saw the need for the German hymnal, leadership within the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) saw a need to publish their own German hymnal after it left the General Council in 1869. In 1869, WELS congregations adopted a proposal to enter into a contract with Mr. G. Brumder, a German-American newspaper publisher in Milwaukee, to publish the Brumder Hymnal as the *Evang.-Lutherisches Gesangbuch fuer Kirche, Schule und Haus*. Upon its first publication many pastors voiced their complaints concerning the doctrine contained in some of the hymns. Complaints arose because people noted that a number of

the hymns incorporated “chiliastic and unionistic” tendencies, with some containing remnants of “pietistic phrases”. Leadership came to a decision to remove and replace those hymns containing heterodox influences. “The 1870 final edition, copyrighted by George Brumder in 1872, has remained virtually unchanged in regards to the hymns contained therein. Different editions may have different appendices, but the hymn verses remained with very little changes.”²³ The Brumder hymnal continued to be printed into the 1930’s.

It was not until the *Christian Worship*, published in 1993, that the WELS produced their first major English hymnal. WELS leadership hoped that the production of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) hymnbook, *The Lutheran Book of Worship*, published in 1978, would be suitable for use within the WELS. The original intent of *The Lutheran Book of Worship* was motivated by more of an openness toward other Lutherans. Thus the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) began to create a hymnal that for use by all Lutherans in America. WELS waited patiently for the production of this hymnal in order to evaluate it. However, during its production the members of the LCMS began to show some caution to the corporate approach. LCMS eventually recognized that a confessional Lutheran church body could not use the *Lutheran Book of Worship* as the ILCW produced it.

Despite the standstill, LCMS still wanted a new hymnal. Four years later, in 1982, the LCMS published *Lutheran Worship*, a revision of *The Lutheran Book of Worship*. After patiently waiting for the publication of this hymnal, WELS leadership evaluated and tested the hymnal in congregations.

The unpredictable series of events listed above led to some frustration on the part of the WELS Commission on Worship. With hope that the LBW and later the LW might be suitable for use in the synod, it waited and spent the time in working on a new non-Communion service (Service of the Word) and in revising some of the Propers for trial use. When it became apparent that the LBW would not serve our congregations, the synod resolved to publish its own supplement to the hymnal, *The Worship Companion*.²⁴

After evaluating *Lutheran Worship*, WELS representatives decided that it was not suitable for use in WELS congregations, so they made the decision in 1983 to publish a WELS specific hymnal.

²³ Arnold O. Lehmann, “Wisconsin Synod Hymnals and Agendas 1850-1950,” *WELS Historical Institute Journal* (Volume 16, Number 2, October 1998), 18.

²⁴ Kurt Eggert, “The Shaping of the New Hymnal” (An essay prepared for the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum), 1.

Principles of CW

After nearly a decade of planning, WELS committee members produced *Christian Worship*. The principles used in editing and vetting hymns are laid out in detail in the *CW Manual*, and are clearly a reflection of principles based on Luther.

What follows is a summary of the source of the principles laid out in the *CW Manual*.

“Several sources suggest the qualities of excellence in hymnody, The first of these is the poetry of the Old Testament, the psalms, Isaiah, Job, and other sources called canticles, which the church down through the ages has selected for use in its liturgies. The second source is the New Testament: the poetic prologue of St. Luke’s Gospel; selected portions of St. Paul’s epistles, particularly his Epistle to the Ephesians; and Revelation to St. John. The third source is the hymnody of the New Testament church: from St. John Chrysostom to St. Ambrose, to Martin Luther and Paul Gerhardt and Martin Franzmann.”²⁵

The editors fully admitted that not all of these qualities would be evident in every hymn, nor are they all of equal importance. Nevertheless having examined hymns from all ages of church history. Excellent hymns 1) are liturgical, 2) contain doctrinal content, 3) make use of the Word of God, 4) apply the Word of God, 5) are poetic, 6) have emotional content, 7) are influenced by the “year of our Lord”, and 8) have melodies that support the scriptural message and touch the heart of the worshiper.

Throughout the process, representatives from the WELS displayed attitudes that demonstrated they considered hymn selection a serious issue by desiring to establish and follow through on their chosen principles. The Lord has led his Church to see the effect that hymns have on people both emotionally and spiritually, and the importance of establishing principles in selecting the best possible hymns with which to praise and proclaim the name of the Lord.

The story of the song of Revivalism/Evangelicalism

Early Development

With the Lutheran approach to worship and hymnody principles discussed, as well as the influence Satan has on worship and hymnody within the Lutheran realm, the next aspect for discussion is the Revivalism/Evangelical approach to worship. Ironically, to tell the story of

²⁵ Gary Baumler & Kermit Moldenhauer, Ed., *Christian Worship Manual* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House. 1993), 230-231.

Evangelical Revivalism in America the discussion begins with a couple of Calvinists who really were the catalysts for the First Great Awakening,²⁶ the first of which was Jonathan Edwards. In 1730 the New England colonies' religious culture consisted primarily of Calvinism. Jonathan Edwards, who fell into the role of the sole pastor of one of the largest congregations in America after his grandfather died, was famous for his fiery law preaching. Edwards' heavy emphasis on law and total depravity evoked a load of guilt on the laity which in turn resulted in masses returning to church seeking to appease the wrath of God.

Edwards recognized that he had an amazing opportunity before him to inspire a great change. He took time to organize his congregation into smaller groups and encourage them on to more holy living. The First Great Awakening began primarily with Edwards because "It began with dynamic preaching that led to a personal experience inside worship, and was followed up with an encouragement to personal piety."²⁷

For a Puritan Calvinist, Edwards had a radical view on singing praises to the Lord in worship. When reflecting upon the Awakening, Jonathan Edwards fully admitted in his 1742 book *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion*,

And it is really needful that we should have some other songs besides the *Psalms* of David. It is unreasonable to suppose that the Christian church should forever and even in times of her greatest light, in her praises of God and the Lamb, be confined only to the words of the Old Testament, wherein all the greatest and most glorious things of the gospel, that are infinitely the greatest subjects of her praise, are spoken under a veil, and not so much as the name of our glorious Redeemer ever mentioned, but in some dark figure, or as hid under the name of some type. Because of his influence on the revival and his prominence in religious circles in New England, Edwards' words greatly impacted traditional worship practice, and hymn singing grew rapidly in favor among the people.

George Whitefield was the other Calvinist who had a great influence on the Evangelical emergence in America. Like Edwards, Whitefield was known for his captivating preaching style. Born in England, his ministry began in his early twenties when, being too young to be assigned to

²⁶ A religious movement in the early 18th Century whose lasting effects lead to a more theatrical style of worship as an opposition to cold dead orthodoxy, a downplay of doctrine with more emphasis on emotionalism, experiential response from listeners, and pietism.

²⁷ Adam R. Mueller, "Worship and Outreach: The Evangelical Strategy" (A paper presented at A Symposium on Worship & Outreach Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI, September 20-21, 2010).

a congregation, he sought an audience wherever he could be heard. His appealing preaching attracted crowds of nearly 20,000 people at times.

It seems, however, as though the real attraction to his preaching had little to do with clear representation of doctrine and masterful dividing of law and gospel, but more to do with the theatrics of his presentation. Londoners never had before experienced sermons like his which often consisted of impersonations of biblical characters, profuse weeping, and theatrics more suitable for plays than for pulpit. When he left for America in 1737 he was only twenty-three years old. Mark Noll notes in *The Rise of Evangelicalism* that at such a young age he had become London's most renowned celebrity for his dramatic preaching.

When Whitefield arrived in America he was already famous. He took his preaching on two tours from 1739-1741. His dramatic performances coupled with his and Edwards' success lead many other mainline clergymen to mimic the same enthusiastic style as they began to take liberty with historic church practices. Because of this, revivalist and mainline clergy decided to assemble a meeting to discuss matters of doctrine and practice. In the end, the work of Edwards and Whitefield, two Calvinists, became a catalyst for Arminian Evangelical development in America as it advanced the spirit of the emotional aspect of worship and subjectivism.

Although Whitefield and Edwards directly influenced the development of Evangelical theology, their influence on Evangelical hymnody was more oblique. More tangible influence on Evangelical hymnody during the First Great Awakening came under the influence of the Wesley brothers.

John, the older of the two Wesley brothers, attended Oxford University and was raised in a "high church" fashion, a more formal training characterized by resistance to modernization. He and his brother, along with George Whitefield, were members of the "holy club" which was started by a group of students unhappy with the state of the doctrine at Oxford. Labeled the "Methodists", this group met weekly to methodically and systematically study the scriptures.

In 1735 John and his brother Charles made voyage to America to do some mission work. Upset with constantly being at odds with the church and generally filled with confusion, John wrote that his chief motive in leaving Britain was for the sake of saving his own soul. Unfortunately, the trip and the mission work did not serve the purpose of clearing up any confusion that burdened his heart.

After about one year in Georgia, Wesley decided to return to England. He had faced a number of difficulties in his ministry, particularly with regard to a young woman named Sophia Hopkey. John and Sophia had become close, but under the advisement of a trusted friend, John made a decision to disentangle himself romantically from her, causing a great deal of upset and gossip among the people in the area. Sophia filed a lawsuit against John, and he returned to England more discouraged than when he had arrived.

John hoped that his mission to America would give him a spiritual transformation, however, he did not experience the desired transformation until his trip home. During his journey back to England he was accompanied by a group of Moravians²⁸ who had a great influence on him. When storms arose on the sea, John was amazed at the faith of the Moravians who imitated Paul and Silas' examples by singing psalms to the Lord while they waited out the storm. The conversations he had with the Moravians impacted him more, specifically when the Moravians encouraged John to seek to "know that he (Jesus) has saved you".

The Wesleys were heavily influenced by Moravian hymnody, which impacted their own hymnody so significantly that the impact still exists even in WELS hymnody.

The special feature of Moravian hymns is the concern to create a subjective experience of the Savior's suffering. These hymns are emotional, imaginative, sensuous, with a minimum of intellectual structure. The concern of the worshiper was to feel the pain of the Savior and to cause, therefore, a turning to him in love and adoration.²⁹

"Jesus Your Blood and Righteousness" exemplifies this style of hymnody when in its original 33 stanza form uses phrases that encourage the singers to experience the suffering of Christ. One of the stanzas that does not make it into *CW* reflects the graphic attempt to appeal to emotions.

The deadly writing now I see
Nail'd with Thy body to the tree:
Torn with the nails that pierced Thy hands,
The old covenant no longer stands.

This vivid language and poetry along with the clear doctrinal expression of the passing of the old covenant begs the question as to whether or not this hymn really contains merely a "minimum intellectual structure." Critiques aside, Moravian hymnody does display early stages

²⁸ A religious sect started by Jan Hus in the early 1600's in an effort to reform the mandates of Roman Catholic worship practices. These Moravians were especially influenced by German Pietism and emphasized a special conversion moment. During the 1700's the Moravians sent out more missionaries than any other Protestant Religion.

²⁹ Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 82.

of an enthusiastic influence. An interesting historical fact about this hymn is that John Wesley was the one who translated it into English and included it in a number of the hymnals he and his brother produced and published.

After Wesley returned to England he still had doubts about his own faith and even admitted that he was not sure that he had true justifying faith. Because of his doubts, he was eager to maintain contact with the Moravians. He continued discussions with one of their leaders, Peter Böhler, who had come to England to ask for permission to start mission work among the African Americans in the Georgia colony. After continued contact with Böhler both of the Wesley's were finally ready to admit that they had "experienced special reassurance of divine grace."³⁰ Because of the variety of spiritual influences, John Wesley's spiritual development can be considered syncretistic. Spiritual influences such as his education at Oxford, participation in the Methodist club, and the Moravians all contributed to his development. In the end he broke not only from Whitefield but also the Moravians, and is himself considered the father of Arminian Methodism. Some of Wesley's doctrinal errors prevail today in worship practice, such as prevenient grace, which leads to ideas of synergism (the human will cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration), and perfectionism.

The Wesley brothers' influenced vast doctrinal advances and hymnic developments. Their particular Arminian Methodism spread quickly throughout England and reached even to America during their lifetime. The Wesleys produced an extraordinary amount of poetry, hymns, and commentary works. Along with Edwards and Whitefield, they promoted the writing and use of new hymns in worship at a time when hymnic innovation was outside of the norm of Anglican practice. Despite the positive work they produced developing hymnody, the faulty doctrine posed and produced in their hymns undermined the positive steps. As stated before, the Wesleys defended the doctrine of prevenient grace. One of their short hymns displays the idea of prevenient grace and synergism all in one.

Assisted by prevenient grace,
I bow me toward the holy place,
Faintly begin my God to fear,
His weak, external worshipper:
But if my Lord His blood apply,

³⁰ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 95.

Entering into the holiest I
Boldly approach my Father's throne,
And claim Him all in Christ my own.³¹

Many more samples exist of Wesleyan doctrine in the hymnody, as well as the lasting impact the faulty doctrine has had throughout the years, but that study is left for a different time.

The First Great Awakening began with stimulation in outreach enthusiasm. “Within only a few years of John Wesley’s death in 1791...Not Wesley himself or even just the Methodists, of course, but evangelicalism as a whole had begun to move around the globe, even as it was mobbing deeper into British, American, Canadian, and West Indian societies.”³²

Revivalism

With the turn of the century came the period of Revivalism. With the sudden zeal for outreach, a rapid expansion began in America. A great need for trained pastors arose, but the demand could not meet the need. Trained theologians were no longer the leaders of congregations, but rather it was often the untrained circuit rider (or traveling clergyman). As the expansion moved westward developing new missions, few houses of worship existed in which the new believers could gather for worship. Unable to meet in a house of worship, “the unique feature of the Revival was camp meeting.”³³

During this time, the use of hymns degenerated from the traditional hymns with rich doctrinal content. The Camp Meeting hymn is one type of hymn displaying that kind of hymnic degeneration that arose out of this period. Louis Benson, Presbyterian minister and a leading authority on hymnody in the early 20th Century, described the characteristics of the Camp Meeting hymns as “spontaneous song”, “rough and irregular”, including “liberal interspersing of Hallelujahs and refrains”, and often “started by an auditor during the preaching”. While common attributes of the early form of Camp Meeting Hymns, and due to the spontaneity within the worship setting, they were rarely written down and recorded for later use. The later development

³¹ John, and Charles Wesley: *Poetical work vol IX*. London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868.

³² Mark A. Noll. *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*. p. 232.

³³ Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1915), 291.

of Camp Meeting Hymns was no better, though. “It is individualistic...sometimes a narrative of personal experience for warning or encouragement... The Camp Meeting Hymn is not churchly.”³⁴

Camp Meeting Hymns only lasted for a short period before they gave way to the modern type of Spiritual Songs associated with the names of Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey. Although they had a short life span, the spirit of Camp Meeting Hymns is evident in the worship of Modern Charismatics. The Camp Meeting Hymn structure is still apparent in Gospel hymns with respect to the repetition of phrases accompanied by a simple tune.

The Camp Meeting Hymns were written mostly during the peak of the Second Great Awakening. Other notable and influential characteristics of this period evident in present day Evangelical/Revival hymnody include the fact that worship was no longer regarded as something needed to be done in a corporate and orderly fashion. The movement of the frontier westward in the spirit of outreach meant that worship could not always be conducted in large planned groups and the resulting small groups gathered in an unstructured and unplanned form of worship.

Other notable characteristics of this period include unionism, more emphasis on personal conversion experiences, and an outbreak of denominations. The fact that the church leaders were not trained theologians, but rather laymen and circuit riders, attributed greatly to the countless new denominations that arose during this period. “It is impossible to draw any hard and fast line between the indigenous phase and the imported phase of the religious ideas cherished and acted upon by frontier people.”³⁵ With the pushing of the frontier and the spread of Evangelicalism Calvinism virtually disappeared.

Frontier hardship acted as a leveling agent and tended toward a depreciation of education and culture and a democratizing of all social institutions. Individualistic tendencies and the western sense of freedom made short work of the stricter tenets of Calvinism and modified other doctrinal statements in such a way as to give the individual greater religious prerogatives.³⁶

Although he did not directly contribute to hymnody at this time, Charles Finney, a significant leader in the Second Great Awakening, possibly had the biggest effect on worship at this time of revivalism. Despite the fact that he had no college education, he became one of the

³⁴ *Ibid.* pg. 293.

³⁵ Merrill Elmer Gaddis, “Religious Ideas and Attitudes in the Early Frontier,” *Church History* 2 no 3 S.161 (1933), 153-170.

³⁶ *Ibid.* pg. 170.

most influential of preachers and worship innovators of his time. Under his influence, pragmatism trumped orthodoxy. He concerned himself primarily with the conversion of souls. His utilization of the anxious seat /bench³⁷ did more in emphasizing the conversion experience than anyone before him.

Finney discarded traditions when they did not prove as effective as his newer methods. The essential test, then, is a pragmatic one: Does it work? If so, keep it; If not, discard it. Finney and his associates represent a liturgical revolution based on pure pragmatism... In essence, what Finney called 'new measure' were simply practices that had proven effective on the frontier; protracted meetings lasting several days replaced camp meetings and an anxious seat took the place of those the mourners' bench.³⁸

James White describes his lasting effects writing,

The test for worship is its effectiveness in producing converts in a largely unchurched nation... Revivalism developed an order of worship that came to dominate American Protestant worship. Characteristically, its normal Sunday service has three parts: a song service or praise service sometimes caricatured as 'preliminaries,' a sermon, and a harvest of new converts.³⁹

Finney truly redefined worship. The emphasis no longer focused on people gathering around the means of grace for proclamation and praise. Rather, worship became even more of an opportunity for emotional arousal and a chance to make a choice for Christ. "Early evangelical hymnody, however, concentrated specifically on the moment of 'invitation' when the soul, sufficiently prepared by God's prevenient grace, was enabled to accept or acknowledge Christ's offer of salvation through faith."⁴⁰ The invitation for a sinner to make that decision is seen in the hymn "Come, humble sinner, in whose breast".

Come, humble sinner, in whose breast,
A thousand thoughts revolve,
Come, with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve.

³⁷ The bench or row of seats in the front of worship in which people seeking conversion would sit. The pastor and people would put on a show of prayer and, in a sense, would pressure people to "give into Jesus". The bench experience was basically a plot to play on the emotions of those seeking a conversion, and it turned conversion into more of a personal experience of emotion.

³⁸ James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 176.

³⁹ *Ibid.* pg. 177.

⁴⁰ Stephen Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion" *Church History* 71 no 2 Je (2002), 290.

Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But, if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.

I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
But if I stay away, I know
I must forever die

(Only three of the seven verses are listed here.) The first and last verses clearly emphasize the invitation to resolve to come to Christ. The second verse included notably expresses the speaker's doubt of acceptance. Hearing and believing this invitation was considered a hopeful sign of grace, but until conversion was complete the only response could be the doubt expressed in the middle verse.

Wellesley College professor Stephen Marini carried out a study of the most widely circulated evangelical revival hymns of the colonial, federal, and antebellum periods in an attempt to explore early American popular religion. Of particular interest, he noted that one of the features of these groups of hymns is the noticeable absence of the topic of worship, and more specifically the topics of the Lord's Supper and Baptism.

While evangelicalism is usually depicted as an anti-liturgical movement, its doctrines of the new birth and the gathered church had profound impact on the theology and practice of Communion and Baptism. Yet virtually no hymns express this important and defining dimension of evangelicalism...The very denominations that perfected and benefited from the revivalistic rituals seemed paradoxically not to embrace hymns about them.⁴¹

The misunderstanding of the means of grace often characterizes Evangelical thought. Charles Hodge, 19th Century principal of Princeton Theological Seminary, wrote of the means of grace, "Regeneration itself, the infusion of new life into the soul, is the immediate work of the Spirit. There is here no place for the use of means."⁴² Finally, Marini provided a summary of early American evangelicalism and its doctrine reflected in hymnody;

The heart of early American evangelicalism was spiritual regeneration, the hierophantic transformation of the soul by the sovereign power of God. Popular hymnody selected only a bare minimum of cosmological beliefs and concentrated on the morphology of conversion not because evangelicals were anti-intellectual or

⁴¹ *Ibid.* pg. 282-283.

⁴² *ST*, Vol II, pg. 685.

lacked theological sophistication, but because the doctrines of atonement, invitation, salvation, sanctification, witness, perseverance, death, and heaven articulated their direct, transforming experience of Christianity.⁴³

Another development in Evangelical hymnody worth considering is the progress of the Gospel Hymn. The Gospel Hymn characteristically contains a simple tune and text, and is often cast in the form of a solo song (which can provide an immediate congregational response in the refrain). These hymns are designed to produce an immediate effect on listeners, and in a sense they are a form of preaching with minimal cognitive content and maximum emotional content. The effects of Revivalism clearly show in the content of Gospel Hymns. Retrospect provides a well-rounded view of Gospel Hymns, but even when the music was new, people took notice. John Spencer Curwen wrote of Gospel Hymnody,

American Gospel Hymnody is nothing if it is not emotional. It takes a simple phrase and repeats it over and over again. There is no reasoning, nor are the lines made heavy with introspection. ‘Tell me the story simply, as to a little child.’ The feelings are touched; the stiffest of us become children again. Now, as these hymns are slight and simple, so they naturally suggest slight and simple music... Yet, after the musician has vented his spleen upon this degenerate psalmody, an important fact remains. Music in worship is a means, not an end, and we are bound to consider how far these tunes serve their end in mission work, which, after all, has not musical training for its object, so much as the kindling of the divine spark in the heart of the worshippers.⁴⁴

John Spencer Curwen, son of a Congregationalist minister, a Congregationalist minister himself and a musician, described Gospel Hymns heavily influenced by his own background. Notably, his last sentence addresses the problem he saw with the development of pragmatism, particularly that the music was becoming more important than the words it proclaimed. Philip P. Bliss’ hymn, *Words of Life*, written in 1874 exemplifies the above description:

Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life;
Let me more of their beauty see, Wonderful works of life;
Words of life and beauty, Teach me faith and duty:
Refrain
Beautiful Words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life;
Beautiful Words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life.

⁴³ Stephen Marini, “Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion”, 302.

⁴⁴ John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship-Music (Second Series)* (London: J. Curwen and Sons, 1880), 39-40.

As Gospel Hymns developed and grew in popularity, certain people influential in the development cannot be overlooked, such as Fanny Crosby, Ira Sankey, and Dwight Moody. Inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, Fanny was one of the most dominant figures in Gospel Hymnody. She wrote over 8000 Gospel Hymns, and has been nicknamed the “Mother of modern congregational singing in America”. Two of her hymns are in *Christian Worship; Take the World, but Give me Jesus*, and *To God be the Glory*. The influence of the Gospel hymn is evident in these as each hymn consists of a simplistic text with a refrain containing repeating phrases.

Ira Sankey and Dwight Moody were an Evangelical traveling duo. Having met at a YMCA convention in 1870, they joined forces in their outreach efforts. Moody would preach and Sankey would be the singer/song leader. Fanny Crosby directly attributed her fame to the work of Sankey and Moody in popularizing the Gospel Hymn. Their style of worship became the template for many 20th Century evangelists including Billy Graham.

The pattern of worship that developed out of Revivalism directly influenced the pattern widely used in Evangelical worship today. The service is generally divided into three main sections. A large portion of the service consists of singing songs, which are chosen primarily as a means for arousing emotion leaving theological content in the back seat. The main event of the service is the sermon. And the final part is the altar call, the section in which people who have been stirred up emotionally by the service have the opportunity to commit their lives to Jesus. “The [revival] pattern has proved remarkably durable. It still forms the outline of most Protestant worship in North America and has spread rapidly in mission areas overseas... There is obviously a conjunction of this form of worship and profound human needs.”⁴⁵

Church Growth Movement

The pragmatism that resulted from Revivalism eventually led to the Church Growth Movement⁴⁶ in the middle of the 20th Century. The use of scientific studies and research in preparation for mission work is not problematic in and of itself. The theological problem that can develop from the Church Growth Movement is that it turns methods into means. In a paper on

⁴⁵ James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 161.

⁴⁶ Movement really kicked off by Donald McGavran. The Church Growth Movement was rather pragmatic in that it made use of quantitative research of social sciences to determine how and where to conduct their ministry. Growth in numbers is the basis for success.

church growth theology Ernst H. Wendland summarizes some of the chief theories of church growth using the terms and expressions used in church growth theology.

For effective work we must aim for *measurable growth*. A numerical approach is essential, since the church is made up of countable people. Such an approach requires a careful study of all the circumstances involved: membership statistics; results of other churches working in a given area; manner of growth over a period of years (whether by birth, transfer, or conversion); causes of growth (radio, literature, revival, political climate, use of national workers, etc.). *Study with graphs in hand!*

In the final analysis one must use every available resource in order to answer two questions: what factors and methods yield successful growth and which ones retard such growth? Missionary organizations will constantly review their priorities in the light of church growth principles in order to ascertain which programs are to be given maximum support.⁴⁷

At worst then, Church Growth Movement replaces the Means of Grace with scientific methods of outreach. The substitution of personal means for the means of grace is evident in their written works. “People today who respond to the Christian faith...are those who respond to the love and caring of Christ’s people, not to a set of ideas or theological statements. People are not talked into the kingdom. They are loved in. Reflecting God’s unconditional love is the essence of the Christian gospel. And love is experienced, not verbalized.”⁴⁸ Showing acts of love replaces the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” In Church Growth theology the ministerial means of the believer replaces the instrumental means of the gospel. “The non-Christian person who perceives your relationship as one of a ‘friend’ is far more likely to eventually respond to Christ’s love than the person who sees you as a ‘teacher’—instructing on doctrine, sin and morality.”⁴⁹

Because the Church Growth Movement is concerned primarily with the results without being too concerned with orthopraxy, many of the Revival methods are utilized. The same principles of the Gospel Song remain popular among Evangelicals i.e. simple tunes that have

⁴⁷ Ernst H. Wendland, “Church Growth Theology”. (Uncertain about date of composition. Found on WLS Essay File), 3-4.

⁴⁸ C. Peter Wagner, ed., *Church Growth: State of the Art* (1986), 66-67.

⁴⁹ Charles and Win Arn. *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples* (Pasadena, Church Growth Press, 1982), 98.

emotional appeal with little doctrinal content. Subjectivism and the efforts at emotional responses remain doctrinal issues among many evangelicals.

Some have traced the origins of CCM to the period when the Church Growth Movement was making great advances. Song-writer and author, Barry Alfonso traced it much farther back. “American Christianity believed in reaching out to the unsaved, and some believers found creative ways to do this early on. Setting new, biblically inspired lyrics to popular tunes –an early form of Contemporary Christian music- began as far back as the 1850s, when Horace Waters turned several Stephen Foster melodies into Sunday school hymns.”⁵⁰

Scholars recognize the mid 20th century as the origin of CCM as it exists today. As the rock and roll craze took off in the late 1940’s, an initial tension existed between mainline Christianity and rock and roll. “The emerging rock culture seemed to embrace just about every sinful thing imaginable: sexual freedom, drugs, political subversion, blasphemy. When John Lennon declared that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus, the line was clearly drawn. If hell had a soundtrack, it was psychedelic-era rock.”⁵¹

While the music community loved this new style, the religious community was also looking for something new. Professor James Tiefel summarized it well when he wrote, “Young Americans, searching for spiritual support after World War II and turned off by the liberal theology of mainline Protestant churches, were ready for change.”⁵² Although there was a tension between mainline Christianity and rock and roll, both recognized the potential for a market inside each other’s camps. Elvis Presley was one of the first rock and roll artists to tap into the Christian market with the first of his three gospel albums, *His Hand in Mine*, released in 1960. The Christian community also saw a market in the popular styles of music. Originally called “Jesus Music”, the utilization of popular styles of music in connection with doctrinal content is now labeled as Christian Contemporary Music.

⁵⁰ Barry Alfonso, *The Billboard Guide to Contemporary Christian Music* (New York: Billboard Books, 2002), 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pg. 15.

⁵² James Tiefel, *The Liturgy and Its Use in Our Church* [paper on-line] (The Institute for Worship and Outreach); available from <http://worshipandoutreach.org/paper/144/liturgy-and-its-use-our-church>; Internet; accessed 23 March 2013, 16.

The evolution of hymnody theology during the Revival period reveals itself in popular CCM in the 21st Century. In 2006, Paul Jacobs conducted an examination of the top 20 CCM songs of 2006. From his analysis, he concluded three things; first that they lack Christian flavor in their few references to Christ, second, that they are generic in doctrinal content, and third, they are “decidedly anthropocentric and not theocentric.” Jacobs made valid observations about the popular songs of 2006 as he charted which theological content each song covered, and noted the type of “generic, anthropocentric” music produced and popularized. However, noticeably absent from his observations and chart is the theological topic of the means of grace. Nowhere did he note that the songs contained no explanation of the importance of the Word of God and how it is the “power of God for salvation”, or the grace of God in his sacraments. This may reveal his personal theology and views of the means of grace. Regardless of Jacobs’ personal views, the evidence points to CCM’s deficient reflection of the means of grace.

In his paper, *Law and Gospel in the Church Growth Movement*, Robert Koester noticed the same low view of the means of grace.

One of the most striking things about Church Growth literature is the absence of the Gospel message. In spite of all the talk about fulfilling the great commission, there is little attempt to describe what it is we are to share. Now granted, you might not expect every book on Church Growth to go into a detailed presentation of the Gospel, or explain how the Gospel is the center of Church Growth methodology. But when you read book after book and find an almost complete absence of reference to the importance of the Gospel, you begin to wonder.⁵³

If there is no need to share the gospel message as the only cure to the otherwise incurable disease of sin, then there has not been a proper explanation of the gravity of sin and its consequences. When that is lost Christianity becomes nothing more than an opportunity for people to morally improve self and at best attempt to offer solutions to the aches and pains of the temporary life on earth. It furthermore changes the true nature of faith. Faith is no longer viewed as a miraculous gift of the Spirit, but it becomes a cognitive and emotion assent of the human will.

The method for making disciples becomes preaching and teaching and singing solely to appeal to a person’s emotions rather than crushing them with the law and healing with gospel. Preaching to a person’s emotions is not in and of itself a doctrinal issue. In fact in the Wisconsin

⁵³ Robert Koester, “Law and Gospel in the Church Growth Movement” (A paper presented at the Dakota-Montana Pastoral Conference, September 18-19, 1984), 10.

Lutheran Seminary Dogmatics notes it states that the Word of God works in a psychological manner and appeals to human emotions. However, making an appeal to human emotions can become a doctrinal issue when 1) there is an overemphasis on emotions, 2) there is a manipulation of emotions, 3) people are taught or led to believe that their emotional response gives them their certainty of their salvation.

This is the basis upon which Evangelical doctrine is currently working; for many, the ends justify the means. The sacrifice of doctrine is justifiable if it generates results. So it is no surprise that their present day hymnody currently reveals heavy influences from the past.⁵⁴ Other influences include subjectivism, the popularity of the progeny of Gospel Hymns, and a misunderstanding of the tools needed for making disciples. *People in the Presence of God: Models and Directions for Worship* evidences this theology wherein Barry Liesch, professor of music at Biola University, posits the fact that true worship is accomplished in coming into the presence of God. Therefore, the goal of every worship service is to come to a feeling of transcendence, a feeling of coming into God's very presence with our worship. He makes the point that words alone do not necessarily accomplish that goal, but that music is necessary to appeal to the emotions so that people can experience that transcendence. He wrote, "In congregational singing, we need to explore boundaries of loudness and softness. Singing that lacks dramatic affect, that remains stuck in the middle-ground dynamics, is deadly...Try exploiting the sudden shift from loudness to softness...Let the sudden softness open a window to transcendence."⁵⁵

Robin Leaver summarized the issues involved with the Church Growth Movement when he wrote,

One of the problems of our age is that we have confused the different functions of worship and evangelism, especially with regard to hymnody. Worship has a concern for the vertical: it is God who calls and speaks to us, and we respond to God's ingathering and God's imperatives. Evangelism has a concern for the horizontal "One beggar telling another where to find bread," as the Asian Christian D. T. Niles used to put it. Worship hymnody should be Theocentric- a term that also embraces Christocentric and Pneumacentric- if it is to be effective. Evangelistic hymnody...should be anthropocentric if it is to be effective. But the two need to be distinguished. One is a vertical offering to God, persons to Person:

⁵⁴ See [Appendix 1](#) for a chart of development of Evangelicalism

⁵⁵ Barry Liesch, *People in the Presence of God: Models and Directions for Worship*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988), 32-33.

the other is an horizontal act of sharing, from one person to persons. Thus overtly evangelistic hymns used in worship subtly change the nature of that worship, and instead of focusing on God we focus on ourselves. By contrast, genuine worship hymns, hymns that center on what God has done and continues to do, will always have-perhaps paradoxically- an evangelistic dimension.⁵⁶

Luther directly opposes church growth theology in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles Creed.

“I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”

Moving Forward

The hymnal utilized by the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod is now 20 years old. Because of the heavy influence of CCM in the past two decades, all the recent changes in the late 20th and early 21st Century worship music, and the changing perspectives of many church-goers, some have begun to question the content of *CW*. The invention of the internet has allowed for a flood of new resources in hymnody. Nevertheless, Satan continues to work today as he did 20 years ago, trying to undermine the theological benefits of quality hymnody. The English language is constantly changing as is secular music. Any theology not based on *sola scriptura* is one based on changing principles. For those reasons, among many others, hymns today often have a short life span, and as a result many hymns are mass produced and widely publicized. Due to the rapidly evolving nature of hymnody within many different denominations, leaders and members of WELS congregations must be constantly vigilant and aware of the potential dangers to the theological quality and orthodoxy of the hymnody utilized within their congregations.

The foremost importance of the *CW* was to proclaim purity of doctrine in our hymnody. The concern for doctrinal purity in hymnody is of vital importance. Borrowing from Evangelical circles has the potential to threaten the orthodoxy of our hymnody, especially considering their roots and the potential heresy contained in their hymns. Decision theology has been a characteristic of Evangelicalism as is still seen in the practice of altar calls, but another concern regarding their hymnody, aside from its inherent heresy, is the doctrinal content it excludes.

⁵⁶ Robin Leaver, “Renewal in hymnody,” *Lutheran Quarterly* ns 6 no 4 379-380 (Winter 1992), 359-383.

As noted in the study by Stephen Marini, there are significant gaps in the corpus of doctrine included in their hymnody. The insignificance with which the means of grace is treated results in a significant absence of discussions regarding Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, however, a heavy emphasis is placed on the Holy Spirit apart from the means of grace.

Another element lacking in Evangelicals' theological corpus is the topic of the law and sin. "Since the heavy emphasis on sin and guilt of traditional theology does not resonate with the basic self-interest of secular society, they must be avoided and replaced by less demanding themes."⁵⁷ Revivalism and the Church Growth Movement changed the way many view scripture. In their theology God's word is a tool that can be altered and manipulated, added to and subtracted from, in order to accomplish the goals to which the church aspires. Christ gives the command to the Church to proclaim the entire body of God's word. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey *everything*⁵⁸ I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20)

This command aids in understanding the theological implications and influences of a hymnal on a body of believers, because when believers sing hymns they proclaim the truths of scripture and thus, hymns in their essence are theological documents. Hymnals are a compilation of theological documents covering a number of different topics which qualifies them as synthetic theological manuals.

'Synthetic' should not be understood to imply that a perspective or a point of view is missing. A hymnal inevitably takes on a theological flavor. The way individual hymns are edited demonstrates this, but so do the sectional divisions, their relationships, and a hymnal's general organization. The themes in each section and the hymns that are in proximity to one another express an orientation—one reason hymns are located in different places in different hymnals—and hold together many themes.⁵⁹

Because the Church has seen the need to teach just as God has commanded us in the Great Commission, it has seen the prudence in organizing hymnals into thematic outlines covering the entire story of God's grace. Because hymnals are compilations of theological documents they take on theological flavor depending on how the editors chose to arrange and vet the hymnal. The

⁵⁷ Robin Leaver, "Renewal in hymnody," 364.

⁵⁸ Emphasis mine.

⁵⁹ Paul Westermeyer, "A Hymnal's Theological Significance." *Dialog* 48 no 4 pg. 314 (Winter 2009), 313-319.

hymnody of *CW* take on a specific Lutheran flavor, for example, because the hymns are arranged according to church year, and then thematically according to sin, justification, sanctification.

Giving up on a hymnal has some serious theological implications. It means giving up on a summary of Christian doctrine with the theological flavor intended by the authors. It means giving up on a cue card of theology that took years to compile and organize, and therefore the onus now has been taken by the individual worship leader to organize a corpus of theological songs that express the entire story of God's grace, that express *everything* God has commanded us. Luther expressed concern for changing his hymns. In his preface to the *Weiss Hymnal* he wrote,

Now there are some who have given a good account of themselves and augmented the hymns so that they by far surpass me and are my masters indeed. But others have added little of worth. And since I realize that there is going to be no end to this haphazard and arbitrary revision which goes on from day to day, and that even our first hymns are more and more mutilated with each reprinting, I fear that this booklet will ultimately fare no better than good books everywhere, namely, to be corrupted and adulterated by blunder heads until the good in it will be lost and only the bad remain. Similarly, we see in St. Luke 1 [:1–4] that in the beginning everyone wanted to write a gospel, until the true gospel was all but lost among so many gospels.⁶⁰

And yet, praise the Lord because he has given us freedom to worship him without any mandate on externals. The Solid Declaration puts it well.

We further believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church. Paul instructs us how we can with a good conscience give in and yield to the weak in faith in such external matters of indifference (Rom. 14) and demonstrates it by his own example (Acts 16:3; 21:26; 1 Cor. 9:10).⁶¹

As believers, the principles discussed in this paper still apply. An additional principle that bears consideration is the rule *lex orandi lex credenda* (the canon of prayer establishes the canon of faith). What believers confess and pray and sing forms and confirms their beliefs. WELS has produced a hymnal that is an accurate summary of Scripture and proclamation of the synod's beliefs, however, with the increasing prevalence of CCM and continued requests for it, *CW* has

⁶⁰ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, 317–318.

⁶¹ *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (T. G. Tappert, Ed.), 612.

begun to fall short, which has left a number of churches with the desire to seek resources from other denominations, resources not vetted by a called and established worship committee.

As congregations move forward in this manner, it is important for them to keep scriptural hymnody principles in mind. If congregations choose to borrow hymns from denominations that exclude important doctrines expressed in scripture, then it follows that they need to make a conscious effort to sing hymns that make clear confessions concerning those very doctrines. However, Evangelical hymnody does not always do that. Paul Jacobs writes,

A discerning examination of the Top 20 songs reveals some interesting things. Some of the songs are deeply enriched with solid theological lyrics that most, if not all, evangelicals would embrace. Others proclaim theological concepts that when properly understood, make sense, but also could just as easily be enjoyed by a Muslim with his own understanding of "God."⁶²

Yale Hymnologist, Robin Leaver writes pertaining to this topic,

The fact that there is so much shoddy hymnody in the churches shows that we think superficially about the words and music of our hymns, and we rarely give their theology a second thought. Yet for the people of our churches, theology is largely formed by the hymns they sing. We cannot be good pastors if we ignore the theology of the hymns our people sing. We have to be concerned with the theology of hymns. We need to remember Ambrose, who countered the heresies of Arius by a renewal of the hymns of orthodoxy.⁶³

The Unionist movement has led to a straying away from firm confessional statements displayed in hymns. Although they are not systematic documents, the hymns the WELS utilizes still do need to make firm confessions and need to address the heretical forces at work in our current times, just as Ambrose countered the heresies of Arius. Consider how Augustus Toplady did this very thing when he wrote the hymn "A Living and Dying Prayer for the Holiest Believer in the World", a hymn Christians now know as "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me." He intended this hymn to be a frontal attack against the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection and wanted to make a clear confession that no matter how sanctified or holy a person's life may be, they still remain sinners in need of an atoning sacrifice. Or consider also how Wesley himself wrote the hymn "Father Whose Everlasting Love" to combat the heresy of particular grace. Notice the pierce at Calvinism in nearly every line.

⁶² Paul Jacobs, "Sing unto the Lord a new song: an examination of the theological orthodoxy and biblical content of the top 20 contemporary songs of 2006." *Criswell Theological Review*, ns 5 no 1 pg. 101 (Fall 2007), 97-106.

⁶³ Robin Leaver, "Renewal in hymnody," 367.

Father, whose everlasting love
Thy only Son for sinners gave,
Whose grace to all did freely move,
And sent Him down the world to save;

Help us Thy mercy to extol,
Immense, unfathomed, unconfined;
To praise the Lamb who died for all,
The general Savior of mankind.

Thy undistinguishing regard
Was cast on Adam's fallen race;
For all Thou hast in Christ prepared
Sufficient, sovereign, saving grace.

The world He suffered to redeem;
For all He hath the atonement made;
For those that will not come to Him
The ransom of His life was paid.

Why then, Thou universal Love,
Should any of Thy grace despair?
To all, to all, Thy bowels move,
But straitened in our own we are.

Arise, O God, maintain Thy cause!
The fullness of the Gentiles call;
Lift up the standard of Thy cross,
And all shall own Thou diedst for all.

Furthermore, our hymnody shouldn't have gaps in the doctrinal content it proclaims. Robin Leaver writes an excellent paper entitled *Renewal in Hymnody* on this topic in which he posits 9.5 theses concerning the form orthodox hymnody needs to take. His conclusions demonstrate his understanding that hymnals are synthetic documents of scriptural truths. On account of this, he wrote that a hymnal should contain the major doctrines of the Bible, including topics of law and gospel and the sacraments. This consideration keeps in mind the command from the Lord when he gave the Great Commission to the Church. Leaver further stated that hymnody should also contain quality hymns from all generations of the church, be contextually intelligent, and express a prayer for the Lord to bless our evangelism efforts. (Although it does not exhaust the topic of hymnody, a full list of these 9.5 theses is in [Appendix 2](#).)

One of the reasons for the advocacy of utilizing a hymnal is because they have been edited by a committee who has made sure to include all of these crucial topics. Worship still can be done well and include these topics apart from utilizing the hymnal, but it increases the workload for the person planning worship. If a shepherd of a flock determines it is best to stray from the corpus of hymns compiled in the hymnal, then it is the responsibility of that shepherd to compile a corpus of his own that is not only orthodox in content, but also includes these crucial topics that strictly adhere to Christ's call of "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." That procedure would include dedicating a large amount of time not only in searching for those resources, but also in keeping a detailed record of the hymns used throughout the years.

Worship leaders are then challenged to keep in mind several things with regard to Gospel songs, which comprise much of Evangelical hymnody. A gospel song generally lacks doctrinal content and often repeats the same phrases and utilizes the refrain ad nauseum. Despite this challenge, some Gospel songs can still be utilized and actually serve good purpose in Christian worship. Wisconsin Synod hymn writer, Kurt Eggert discussed the use of Gospel hymns and their use in *CW*.

We must be concerned if we are to pursue our synod's outreach. We have to be concerned about worship materials for outreach among the black community, who have adopted the gospel songs, usually via the Baptist Church. Also, what about the mission prospects, the catechumens, the new Christians, and those who enter our church from other church backgrounds where the gospel song is the norm? ... Can the gospel songs be a kind of temporary worship music, a stepping stone to the chorale and standard hymnody?

Perhaps the gospel hymn can be looked at also, however, as a kind of *Gebrauchsmusik* for certain times or occasions or for certain groups within our church.⁶⁴

This reflects one of the primary purposes of music in Christian worship; hymns are not only proclamations of the Gospel but also serve the purpose of education. The Lutheran Confessions see education as a critically important purpose in worship as well.

Meanwhile no conspicuous changes have been made in the public ceremonies of the Mass, except that in certain places German hymns are sung in addition to the Latin

⁶⁴ Kurt J. Eggert, "Gospel Hymns and Lutheran Worship," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* Vol 90, No. 4, pg. 262-267 (Fall 1993), 266-267.

responses for the instruction and exercise of the people. After all, the chief purpose of all ceremonies is to teach the people what they need to know about Christ.⁶⁵

Conclusion

Throughout the history of the Bible God's people sang his praise and believers will continue to praise the Lord in song. The Israelites sang the praise of the Lord together after the Lord delivered them safely across the Red Sea. "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea." (Exodus 15:1) King David wrote over 70 inspired songs. Mary, the mother of Jesus, glorified her Lord in song shortly after the announcement of the coming Messiah. In fact, the first few chapters of the book of Luke are filled with believers lifting their voices in praise to their Lord. The early Christian Church joined together to use their voices to sing to the Lord using psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Believers continue to sing to the Lord still today. Although the Israelites probably frequently sang the words "הֲדָו לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לַעֲוִלִים חֶסֶד׃"⁶⁶, the average American Christian today would not think of singing those words nor would they he or she understand them. In fact, believers now would not even recite those words the way they did 40 years ago.⁶⁷ Language is constantly changing, and the need to keep hymns in tune with that change is necessary to keep the message both relevant and understandable. (The essay "Our Changing Worship Language"⁶⁸ goes into much more detail on the matter.)

Isaac Watts understood this concept and was himself a pioneer in the field of modernizing the way Christians sing hymns and songs. In a time when it was radical to change or update the Psalter, Watts saw that

the beauty of scriptural songs was that they met the needs or expressed the feelings of people in individual situations – they had concreteness, particularity, and specificity. On that basis, Watts took it upon himself not only to gospel-ize but to modernize, nationalize, and concretize the Psalter for his world of Great Britain and his target audience, the Dissenting churches.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. (T. G. Tappert, Ed.), 56.

⁶⁶ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: With Westminster Hebrew Morphology*. 1996 (electronic ed.) (Ps 107:1). Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary.

⁶⁷ KJV: "O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: For his mercy *endureth* for ever."

⁶⁸ Published in *Northwestern Lutheran*, October 15, 1987 (Vol. 74, No. 18, pp. 346-348)

⁶⁹ Richard J. Mouw & Mark A. Noll, Ed., *Wonderful Words of Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2004), 19-20.

The WELS currently faces this very issue with the debate about updating the Bible translation utilized by the synod, and the parallels between the two issues are quite similar in nature.

Just as language changes, so also music changes. At the time of the Reformation people debated the style of music and utilization of instruments in worship. Calvin, on one side of the debate, posed that the only correct form of worship was the singing of only the inspired word of God in the Psalms. Luther, on the other side, who was considered radical by some in his musical changes, called on the German poets of the land to come together in order to produce more relevant music. He saw the value in hymns and worship as an educational tool for the growth and development of faith, and he recommended using every possible instrument to accomplish that goal.

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. And if it would help matters along, I would have all the bells pealing, and all the organs playing, and have everything ring that can make a sound.⁷⁰

Luther's pastoral concern extends to churches in the 21st Century. The use of Praise Teams and choirs has become more common in WELS congregations to not only lead, but also to introduce new styles of music and to utilize different kinds of instruments to accompany the Gospel message. Carl Halter, author of *The Practice of Sacred Music*, struck on the heart of the issue of musical development throughout the ages when he wrote, "We may become blinded to the fact that music, even when it serves the Gospel, does not have the timelessness of the Gospel... and so we cannot insist that our people must accept the music of the Reformation era as they accept the Gospel."⁷¹

Music serves as a tool to deliver the Gospel message. With that in mind, the use of archaic styles of music and instruments could potentially hinder the message of the Gospel. As music changes, so hymns must change as well in order to use the most fitting and relevant tools for delivering the Gospel.

⁷⁰ Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 53: Luther's works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, 62.

⁷¹ Carl Halter, "Toward the Future," *The Musical Heritage of the Church Volume IV* 125 (1954), 123-129.

Evangelical circles have recognized this reality and encourage putting it into practice possibly more than anyone else.

Praise and Worship music, emerging during the 1970s, represents a culture that increasingly relies on audio and visual media. In the United States specifically, music is a ubiquitous background noise in public spaces, as the genre of ‘elevator music’ demonstrates. Popular music is a continuous presence in society, and its consumption is not restricted to any particular social class. Thus, 20th and 21st century P&W’s reliance on that omnipresent soundscape means that its dissemination is just as dependent upon state of the art media as hymnbooks were in the previous era.⁷²

As the WELS moves forward in its goal to preach the Gospel congregations will always struggle with the need to remain relevant. There will always be a need to “keep in tune with the times.” There will always be a correlation between the change in secular music and the change in church music. However, it is important to remember that the church will never be on the cutting edge of music. The church’s goal is not to be pioneers on the forefronts of music. The primary goal of the church always has been and always will be to share the Gospel.

The labor of love in searching out ‘good’ music is the first vital step in making music meaningful in our worship... Let us reach out and hold fast to the good. Let this search and adventure be our ongoing worship as church musicians! With a sense of balance, we will remain true to the ideals of Lutheran worship and, under God’s blessing, edify the church of God with music both old and new.⁷³

The church will always face the need for good and appropriate music with which to communicate the Gospel. In the wake of the Reformation, the leaders were faced with many decisions concerning the form their worship was going to take. The Catholic churches’ worship practice of allowing the congregation to remain essentially mute was neither scriptural nor pastoral. The Lutheran confessions and history showed a desire to base their worship form and content on Scripture alone. With Christian freedom in mind, an explosion of hymnic writings based on scripture developed in the worship rites in Protestant circles. The worship rites and the writings of the Lutheran Confessions establish the form of antiphonal proclamation and praise with an interest in education. .

⁷² Geza F. Hartje, “Keeping in Tune with the times –Praise & Worship Music as Today’s Evangelical Hymnody in North America,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* Volume 48 Number 4 367 (2009), 364-373.

⁷³ Kurt J. Eggert, “Meeting Contemporary Needs in Christian Worship,” *Not Unto Us* 48 (2001), 35-49.

Understanding the purpose of hymns slowly dissolved among Reformed circles, and was in danger of being forgotten in Lutheran circles on account of pietistic influences. As it stands today, the understanding of the purpose of hymns has been highly influenced by Revivalism and the Church Growth Movement. Generally, they use hymns primarily to add to their numbers, which reflects their theologically low view of the means of grace.

Many WELS congregations and synod leaders have seen the need to use CCM in worship and many see a need for constant output and utilization of new hymns to stay in tune with the changing language and the changing music of each culture. Totally abandoning the hymnal is not inherently sinful; Christian freedom permits liberty in this respect. Nevertheless, congregations must be cautious as they utilize Evangelical resources not vetted by a hymnal committee. Firstly, it is important to keep the heresies of the Evangelicals out of Lutheran circles. A good understanding of their theology would prove highly beneficial then in order to recognize and weed out inappropriate resources when borrowing from them. Secondly, believers must always be mindful that the hymnal truly is a theological document that attempts to summarize the major doctrines of Scripture in a succinct and meaningful manner. To subtract from or to eliminate entirely from use will have a direct impact on the education of the body of believers. On account of this, if a congregation is going to set aside the hymnal in the interest of using only CCM, leadership and members must do long range planning, carefully including hymns that contain doctrines often overlooked by Evangelicals. Finally, just as in church services and in sermons as pastors strive to crush the sinner with Law and heal them with the Gospel, so also in their hymnody they must also seek to do the same.

To retain orthodox hymnody has proven and continues to be an ongoing process. As congregations continue to utilize newer resources believers and church leadership should make it their goal to follow the narrow Lutheran middle. An approach of using old and new resources helps not only to retain that orthodoxy in hymnody, but also provides the opportunity to continue to use quality hymns from all generations. Continuing to use examples from the church fathers provides examples of good hymnody from the past. Continuing to seek out and use contemporary music helps the synod and congregations remain timely and relevant. A continued study and use of the Psalms provides examples of the *catabasis* and *anabasis* form that naturally takes place in the worship life of a Christian. Whatever resources congregations and the synod utilize it is important to keep in mind that the ultimate purpose of singing hymns is to proclaim the Gospel

message. With that in mind pastors and synod leaders must remember that worship works best as outreach when it preaches the entirety of God's word in clear and pure doctrine.

Psalm 150

Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,
praise him with tambourine and dancing,
praise him with the strings and flute,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD.

Appendix 1

| Theological Movement | Key individuals | Theological Development |
|--|--|---|
| First Great Awakening (1730-1760) | Jonathan Edwards George Whitefield John/Charles Wesley | Influence of German Pietism. Emphasis on emotions. Emphasis on personal piety with heavy preaching of law. |
| Second Great Awakening (1790-1830) | Charles Finney | Development of Unionism. Pragmatism began to be emphasized. |
| Third Great Awakening (1850-1900) | Sankey/Moody | Post-millennialism emphasized. Gospel Song popularized. |
| Church Growth Movement (1950-Present) | Donald McGavran | Pragmatism full blown as social studies replace means of grace. |

Appendix 2

THESIS I

When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent," he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance; therefore Christians cannot but sing of repentance in their hymnody.

THESIS II

Repentance, the New Testament *metanoia*, is the response of contrition at being condemned by God's Word of law; therefore Christian hymnody cannot omit the sound of the demands of the law of God.

THESIS III

But God also speaks His Word of gospel, and contrition needs to be followed by faith; therefore Christian hymnody should thankfully glory in the joy of forgiveness, in God's Word of gospel that is centered in Christ crucified and resurrected.

THESIS IV

God also "speaks" his visible Words, whereby the life of repentance and faith, of forgiveness and grace, are applied to individual believers; therefore Christian hymnody must be sacramental.

THESIS V

Although the sacraments are individually received, this reception takes place within the body of believers, the church; therefore Christian hymnody must allow the whole body to sing and articulate in song the ecclesiastical and liturgical elements of the faith.

THESIS VI

The church is not a human institution but the creation of the Spirit of God, who calls and gathers the community of faith; therefore Christian hymnody must be truly "inspired"/"In-breathed" by the Spirit of God.

THESIS VII

The "communion of saints" is not bounded by limitations of time; therefore the hymnody of the contemporary Christian church should include the hymns of earlier generations alongside the hymns of today.

THESIS VIII

The "communion of saints" is also unconfined by geographical or cultural limitations; therefore contemporary Christian hymnody must explore the richness and variety of different ethnic, cultural, and national expressions of the world-wide faith.

THESIS IX

In the same way that the church is in danger when the distinction between law and gospel becomes blurred, the church also suffers when the activities of worship and evangelism become confused; therefore context should condition the choice of hymns.

THESIS IX.V

Although the church is called upon to plow, sow and reap in the work of evangelism, it is "only God who gives the growth" [1 Cor. 3:7 NRSV]; therefore Christians should prayerfully sing, with Fred Pratt Green, for God's "silent growth while we are sleeping ... Thanks be to God."

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