

THE TREND TOWARD GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND ITS EFFECT ON WORD  
CHOICES IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A LUTHERAN HYMNAL

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## ABSTRACT

Language is never static, but it is constantly changing. Phrases that had one meaning in a previous generation can mean something completely different in the next. “Man” used to be a word that could be understood in a broad sense meaning “human being.” As the English language changed, that broad use slowly became phased out of common usage. In modern English, “man” simply means “male”. It does not refer to females. It is this change in the English language that the members of the Joint Hymnal Committee had to consider as they updated the language of the liturgy and hymnody for *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the need for using gender-inclusive language in *Christian Worship*, to list concerns about using gender-inclusive language, and then to show examples of how the Joint Hymnal Committee used gender-inclusive language to ensure that God’s Word be proclaimed as clearly as possible for the next generation that would be making use of the hymnal.

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## INTRODUCTION

“And do what they will-- hate, steal hurt, or kill-- Though all may be gone, Our victory is won; The kingdom’s our forever.” A lifelong WELS member in his or her 20’s wouldn’t think twice about the origin of these words from stanza four of the Lutheran classic, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*. This is the way they learned it as children in catechism or hymnology classes. In fact, I would be willing to bet that the majority in this group would not even know that these words were once different. When someone of the WELS generation born from 1986 to the present refers to ‘the hymnal,’ they mean the ‘red’ hymnal, *Christian Worship*, because that has been the standard worship book in our churches ever since they can remember.

In 2013, *Christian Worship* will be celebrating its 20th birthday. This finely crafted book, where linguistic and musical art are joined together with God’s Word, has been around long enough to become deeply cherished in the hearts and minds of those who regularly make use of it. Even older generations might now immediately think of *Christian Worship* when someone speaks of ‘the hymnal.’ For the older generation, however, *Christian Worship* was not always the standard, just as the New International Version of the Bible was not always the standard Bible translation in our synod.

If someone from the younger generation of WELS members would ask one of their parents or grandparents to recite from memory the last stanza of *A Mighty Fortress*, they might be in for a surprise. “...And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth.” On close comparison, the thoughts of these lines are very close, but there are some major differences in word choices. How did “goods, fame, child, and wife” become “hate, steal, hurt, or kill?” Is there real significance in this change, or is it simply poetic license that the makers of *Christian Worship* chose to exercise?

Through the examining of meeting minutes and personal correspondences of the Joint Hymnal Committee, this paper will provide an in-depth look at the arguments for and against the use of gender inclusive language in *Christian Worship*, the guidelines that were established for making these language changes in *Christian Worship*, and demonstrate how the Joint Hymnal

Committee followed those established guidelines. This paper will also foster a sense of respect for the hard work and evangelical approach that the Joint Hymnal Committee undertook in producing this treasure for the Christian Church, and will conclude with personal assessments from the author of this paper, along with recommendations and insight for the producers of a future hymnal.

“The WELS in its 1983 convention resolved: “That the Synod now begin work on a new/revised hymnal of its own, one that under the blessings of God will be scripturally sound and edifying, welcomed and judged to be highly satisfactory by a majority of our members, in harmony with the character and heritage of our church body, and reflecting the larger perspective and mainstream of the worship of the Christian Church.””<sup>1</sup>

For over fifty years, *The Lutheran Hymnal* served as a blessing to churches throughout the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Its liturgies on pages 5 and 15 provided a standard for how services were to be conducted, providing members with a sense of unity and comfortability as they confessed their sins to the Lord and received his forgiveness, as they grew in their faith through the gospel proclamation in Word and Sacraments and encouraged one another through response and song. Through fine poetry and excellent tunes in its hymns portrayed the truths of God’s Word in memorable ways that fixed them in the parishioners’ hearts, so that they could be easily recalled in a necessary moment.

If *The Lutheran Hymnal* would do such a fine job serving its purpose in WELS for over fifty years, why then in 1983 did the Synod Convention approve creating a new hymnal? One factor was the feeling that worship life in the WELS had become stagnant. While on the one hand the constant repetition of the same-old orders of service and hymns allowed for easy memorization, on the other, it also allowed for laziness in worship. The familiarity of *The Lutheran Hymnal* made it easy to simply go through the motions of worship, instead of meditating on the words that were spoken and sung by pastor and worshiper. And so it was felt that more variety in liturgy and hymnody would break up this monotony.

Just prior to the 1983 WELS Synod Convention, two new Lutheran hymnals were produced: *Lutheran Worship* and *Lutheran Book of Worship*. After various committees studied

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<sup>1</sup> *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House. 1993, 8.

the possibility of replacing *The Lutheran Hymnal* with one of these options, it was concluded that the WELS should produce its own instead of using either of these new ones.

A third factor, and the one which this paper will address, is the issue of the changing American language. In his article, “The Shaping of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*,” Reverend Victor Prange quotes Reverend Kurt Eggert on this issue.

“It is necessary to view the hymnal against the backdrop of a changing worship language, from the KJV Bible to the NIV Bible, from the Elizabethan language of the Book of Common Prayer to the language spoken today in America. This is a widespread change in Christian churches, not a product of the Hymnal Committees. It is a change that has already taken place in most WELS churches. We are not *initiating* change, we are merely *recognizing* it...”<sup>2</sup>

Although many of the adults in WELS congregations had grown up using ‘thees’ and ‘thous’ in church, the next generations would not. The NIV Bible brought the English of the Bible up to speed with the English that was spoken and written in everyday use, and the Hymnal Committee felt that it was only fitting to do the same in the new hymnal as well. Among this discussion of language changes also fits the use of gender-inclusive language.

#### ARGUMENT FOR USING GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Throughout the 20th century, sensitivity toward discrimination was growing in America. Certainly the end to slavery brought about by the Civil War and the push for equality among African-Americans and white Americans raised a level of sensitivity and helped change the English language in America. But racial differences were not the only issues on the table. The issue of how men and women relate to one another was also a growing issue.

When God created male in female in the Garden of Eden, he created them both in his image. Adam and Eve were equals in the sense that they were both God’s holy precious creation. Neither was loved any more or less by their heavenly Father. God loved and provided for them both with a perfect love. As a God of order, God created specific roles to be carried out by Adam and Eve. As a male, Adam was to be the leader of his family. As a female, Eve was to be a

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<sup>2</sup> Kurt Eggert quoted by Victor Prange. *Not unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 2001, 181.

helper for her husband. Yes, they each had a different role to play in God's creation, but neither role was better than another. Neither role showed any more or less love for God than the other.

Unfortunately, Genesis 3 describes how sin ruined God's perfect creation, including this perfect relationship between males and females. On the one hand, sin causes men to either abuse their God-given role as leaders by treating women as second-class citizens or as slaves without showing Christ-like love for them, or to simply ignore their responsibility as leaders and replace it with laziness.

This sinful idea that women are inferior to men was a problem in America that needed to be fixed. As a new nation looking to establish itself with laws and regulations, the American founders did what would only seem natural, keep the things that worked well and improve upon the things that didn't work. When it came to social rules and regulations, English common law had appeared to work well for centuries, and so why not incorporate it into American law? English common law viewed men as the leaders in society, and especially in the home. Because of this, women did not have fair representation in the legal system; they had very limited rights and limited educations and were treated as second-class citizens to men. This law certainly saw a distinction between roles of men and women, but unfortunately, when abused, it allowed for chauvinism to run rampant.

Early American laws allowed a husband to commit his wife to an asylum--without proof of insanity. And where states allowed divorce, the husband got everything. Worse, the law reinforced the view that the husband owned the wife's body. That meant a man could legally beat a wife who displeased him sexually or divorce her. And it meant the law interpreted rape as a crime against the husband or the father, since the law said the man owned his wife's and daughter's bodies.<sup>3</sup>

Without any means to voice their feelings and frustrations publicly, many women were left feeling helpless and alone.

This abuse of the male leadership role led to a movement known as Feminism, and a positive of the movement was for women to garner respect from men as well as attain legal equality. Although the movement to end slavery in the late 1800s had been successful, women

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<sup>3</sup> Nathan Pope. *Feminism: Understanding and Balancing Its Impact on Marriage, Family, and Church*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003, 98.

still bore the image of a lesser status in society. The 14th Amendment gave national voting rights to the black Americans who had recently been liberated from slavery, but women on the other hand still remained inferior in the social and political realm compared to men. However women's involvement in the abolition movement awakened a spirit of activism and a growing sense of self-confidence and self-worth among them. This spirit led women to continue to strive for their own voting rights, which they would finally win on June 4, 1919 with the signing of the 19th Amendment.

As the years progressed into the early 20th century, other changes began to take place in America. Free public schools allowed young girls to finally receive an education on par with the boys. With more children attending school, this brought about more openings for teachers, and women became the attractive hire, because laws requiring equal pay had not been established yet. Women could do the same job as men, while making less money. As technology improved and production of goods moved from the homes to the factories, other new opportunities for employment also became available for women besides teaching. Women could now take their skills of working in the home and put them to use in the factory. Once again, women made for an attractive hire, because they could do the job for less pay than their male counterparts. As men went to serve in the world wars, the working woman became the backbone keeping America's economy thriving.

World War II had profound effects on the U.S. economy, and particularly on women workers. As millions of men went into uniform, women went into industry as never before, accounting for 36 per cent of the nation's labor force in 1945, up from 25 per cent in 1940. Wages rose, the number of wives holding jobs doubled and unionization of women quadrupled. Employers' attitudes toward women remained skeptical, but since women were the only available labor, they were hired.<sup>4</sup>

It was this new awareness in America to view men and women as equal human beings that also seems to have led a change in English word choices as well. For centuries the words "man" and "men" were used in both a broad and narrow sense. In the broad sense these words referred to human beings in general, both males and females. In the narrow sense they

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<sup>4</sup> Sandra Stencel. *Editorial Research Reports on The Women's Movement: Achievements and Effects*. Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1997, 34.

specifically referred to males. As the 20th century progressed, the broad sense of the words slowly became phased out of popular every day usage in American English.

The Joint Hymnal Committee also recognized this change in language. As Professor James P. Tiefel of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary noted, “They looked up “man” in as many dictionaries as they could and discovered that half defined “man” as a male creature and half defined man as a generic term for a human being. In other words, they discovered that language was changing.”

An article in the *Northwestern Lutheran* similarly stated,

The words “man” and “men” have also undergone a change in how they are used. There was a time when these two words were used quite regularly in a general or generic sense, especially in writing. One of the dictionary definitions for “man” is: “any human being, regardless of sex or age; a member of the human race; a person.” *The Lutheran Hymnal* has many examples of the words “man” and “men” used in this generic sense.

But this generic usage is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Language is changing. When someone says “man” today, he is likely using the word to mean “an adult male being, as distinguished from female.” This dictionary definition of the word is gender specific.

Why is the generic sense of “man” becoming obsolete? No doubt it is happening because the words “woman” and “women” are coming to be used more and more in conjunction with “man and “men.” Here are some examples (and one could multiply these examples): women’s Olympic events are watched with the same interest as are men’s; there is increasing emphasis in society on equal rights for men and women; women are sometimes asked to sing certain hymn stanzas alternately with men; and we’ve all seen the signs which distinguish between restrooms for “men” and “women.” The more the word “men” is used in this gender specific sense, the less will its generic sense be recognized.<sup>5</sup>

In a new generation that was less likely to understand the broad general sense of words like “man,” “men,” “sons,” and “brothers,” certain phrases needed to be changed in the new hymnal to bring clarity and certainty to the truths of Scripture being portrayed in the hymns and liturgy. The intended message or *forma* of Scripture is not edifying if it is buried or misunderstood because the *materia* or the words that are used to portray the intended message cause it to be lost in translation.

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<sup>5</sup> Victor Prange, ““Man” and “Men”.” *The Northwestern Lutheran*, September 1991, 301.

Excerpts from few letters stressed to the Joint Hymnal Committee stressed this need and excitement for change.

The second stanza of “Stand Up! Stand Up, for Jesus” says: “Ye that are men now serve him...” And it grows more and more difficult to say, inwardly, “People is what’s meant here.” Just as “Blest is the man, forever blest” and “The man is ever blest.” While we understand it is meant universally for humanity, when males sing it, both meanings can apply- specific male-ness and humanity. Women must immediately say (and while most women don’t realize they’re doing it may deny they’re “translating,” believe me, after years of training so that the translating act, like breathing, is unconscious, women are unconsciously, subconsciously, making mental changes in words and text so that they can identify from the heart.) “This applies to me, although I am not nor ever will be male, because it means people.”<sup>6</sup>

I am almost afraid to express my opinion for fear that people will misunderstand and label me a “women’s libber” or another “nut from California.” If that happens, so be it. The important thing is that I know in my heart the reason I’m expressing my opinion is that I love the church and I want it with its Gospel message to reach out to all. My hope is that the new hymnbook will use inclusive language and not exclusive.

Inclusive language is clearer language. Inclusive language uses words that include all human beings – men, women, and children. This is in contrast to exclusive language, which is unclear language. Exclusive language is confusing because it uses masculine nouns and pronouns to stand for all people.

The textbooks used in our Christian day school, the newspapers we read in our homes, the commentators on the news, the science programs on educational T.V. – all use inclusive language. Even the Oxford English Dictionary says the use of “man” as a generic form is obsolete.

If it is really true that it is inevitable that the language of worship will be the language of today’s people, then the generic use of man will have to end. Our liturgy will then read “children of God” not “sons of God”; our hymns will read “peace on earth to all” not “Peace on earth to men.”

Our synod is shrewd enough to use non-sexist language when asking for money, or when asking for volunteers. It is my prayer that the new hymnbook will use a clear language—a language that will include all people, men, women and children.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from Karen Hasley to Kurt Eggert, Personal Correspondence Regarding the Project. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 3.2, Files 57. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Mrs. Jane Franzmann to Rev. Kurt Eggert Personal Correspondence Regarding the Project. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 3.2, Files 51. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

This task of incorporating gender inclusive language would by no means be an easy task for the Joint Hymnal Committee, but it was not an area they could overlook. Arlyn Boll, a principal at St. John's Lutheran School in Watertown, WI, compared the task of the Joint Hymnal Committee to that of their forefathers, who dealt with the change from German to English as well as a missionary, whose goal it is to proclaim the gospel in a non-English speaking country. He writes,

This matter has similarities to the German-English situation our church faced years ago. We didn't do much reaching out to an English-speaking nation when people first had to learn German before they could understand God's word. If we are to continue our gospel outreach today, it must be done in words clearly understood...

I think here of a missionary going into a country with the gospel and telling everyone to learn English first; then he can preach to them. Let's not tell America we have the pure gospel, but that people must first learn this old English, and then they can know Jesus Christ. There are enough problems, it seems to me in having today's world receive the word of God without putting a language problem in the way too.<sup>8</sup>

#### CONCERNS ABOUT USING GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

This issue of using gender inclusive language in time-treasured liturgy and hymnody was a two-sided coin, however. On the one side of the coin was the fact that the broad general use of masculine sounding terms was rapidly going out of style and if used, could cause a stumbling block between the truths of God's word and the hearers. On the other side of the coin, though, were very legitimate concerns about making such changes. From lay members to parish pastors, these concerns were brought before the Joint Hymnal Committee.

The first concern was that changes to the wording would become a stumbling block to the worship of the older generation in WELS churches. This is a counter argument to the one made by Principal Boll. To change the wording of hymns and liturgies may be helpful to the younger people in the church, but it could become a distraction to the older, as they stumble over words that are different than the way they learned them as children.

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<sup>8</sup> Boll, Arlyn. "Language in Study and Worship." *The Northwestern Lutheran*. March 1987, 108-109.

Here is one example out of many that could have been included in this paper that states this very argument.

Many of our middle-aged and older members have supported the church physically, spiritually and financially for many years. Now they cannot even worship anymore because the liturgy has disrupted the whole service. They cannot be reminded of their sins, God's love or God's forgiveness. Please don't turn your backs on these ordinary people.<sup>9</sup>

A second concern about using gender inclusive language in the new hymnal was the feeling that the WELS would be conforming to the radical feminist agenda that was sweeping the nation. As previously mentioned, centuries of abuse of the male headship role as God had intended it from creation led many women to feel like lesser human beings than their male counterparts, and in the twentieth century, changes were underway in America to correct this in society. However, not all aspects of the feminist movement were in line with what Scripture teaches. It was the goal of radical feminists to take gender inclusive language to the extreme.

Whereas 19th-century feminists wanted equality with men, many present-day feminists want superiority over men or, especially, to be free from men. That difference, with its inherent views on gender, spells trouble and tension but, ironically, not just between men and women today. Feminists to this day are fiercely split between these two definitions of feminism and their respective assumptions on inherent gender characteristics.<sup>10</sup>

It is this branch off of radical feminism that no longer was satisfied with simply being treated fairly and being able to openly express their feelings of being mistreated. Instead they wanted to change the social structure by doing away with the traditional male authority, and this brought about the struggles the Church faces to this day.

Radical feminism saw as one of its main threats, the biblical doctrine of the roles of men and women. Mary Daly, an assistant professor of theology at Boston College clearly displays this new attitude among feminists in an excerpt from her book, *The Church and the Second Sex*.

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<sup>9</sup> Don Baer. *The Northwestern Lutheran*. Letters to the Editor. August 1987.

<sup>10</sup> Nathan Pope. *Feminism: Understanding and Balancing Its Impact on Marriage, Family, and Church*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003, 7.

Our problem now is to understand the basic nature of our task of exorcising, on the level of practical activity and within the context of evolving structures, the “demon” of sexual prejudice in the Church...The disease can be understood in terms of self-fulfilling prophecy, a process by which the dominant class projects its unwanted characteristics, its lower self, upon the members of the oppressed class, who in turn interject the despised qualities. Thus the creation story speaks the truth in declaring that Eve came from Adam. Moreover, the workings of the process--the whole vicious circle of role psychology--are understood neither by the oppressor nor by his victim, both of whom are inclined to accept the myths, such as the myth of fixed natures, which serve as its justification. <sup>11</sup>

In an attempt to eradicate this disease of what she perceives to be a male coup to oppress women through the use of Scripture, Daly suggests that,

efforts should be directed to seeking out and using the talents of gifted and highly trained women specialists in influential and decision-making roles within the Church...In liturgical affairs, as participation of the laity becomes more active, equally active participation of both sexes must be insisted upon. If laymen serve as lectors and acolytes, if they preach and distribute Holy Communion, then women should do the same. <sup>12</sup>

But her reasoning doesn't stop here. She brings her argument to its next logical step by suggesting that churches need to allow for women priests. She writes,

Men have the option of becoming priests or remaining laymen. Women have no choice. As long as the Church maintains a significant distinction between hierarchy and laity, the exclusion of women from the hierarchy is a radical affirmation of their inferior position among the people of God. By this exclusion the Church is, in a very real and effective way, teaching that women are not fully human and conditioning people to accept this as an irremediable fact. It is saying that the sexual differentiation is--for one sex--a handicap so crippling that no personal qualities of intelligence or virtue, or leadership can overcome it. <sup>13</sup>

Where the radical feminist agenda goes wrong is in its attempt to blame the Bible itself for the abuses that women have suffered. Radical feminists look upon the roles of man and women as a teaching introduced by a culture of male chauvinists and women to afraid to stand up for themselves, rather than a structure ordained by God himself from the beginning of time for the good of his creation. Those parts of the Bible, therefore, need to be either changed or removed. Radical feminists often see male pronouns in Scripture as anti-female. Questions are asked like, “Why does God have to be male? Can't God be a she?” “Women can be as good of a

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<sup>11</sup> Mary Lou Thompson. *Voices of the New Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, 138.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid* 140

<sup>13</sup> *ibid* 141

public speaker or church leader as a man---maybe even better. Why do church leadership positions have to be limited to men?" These questions lead to an improper use of gender inclusive language. Instead of being used to clarify passages of Scripture where both men and women are being talked about, it is used to change the very meaning of Scripture to fit a sinful agenda.

Some of these extreme ideas had already begun to influence hymnal committees of other Christian denominations.

A lyric referring to God as "strong Mother" as well as Father, drew such backlash among Methodists that the hymn was dropped, but the issue still smolders in some current hymn-selection processes.

Jacqui James of Boston, staff liaison for the Unitarian Universalist project, says of referring to God as Mother, "We'll probably do it somewhere."

Other denominations tend to be more cautiously tentative about it, or not likely to consider it.

Melva Costen, a worship-music professor in Atlanta, who chairs the Presbyterian hymnbook committee, said the committee wants to "broaden the images of God as not limited to either sex."<sup>14</sup>

While the intention of using gender inclusive language in the new WELS hymnal was to bring clarity to phrases that could be misunderstood by the next generation in liturgy and hymnody and not to change doctrine to appease some sinful agenda, one man worried that making such changes might give the impression that the WELS is fine with the radical feminist agenda, or even open the door for false doctrine to slowly creep in to the synod in the future. He shared his thoughts with the Joint Hymnal Committee.

A thoroughgoing revision of our hymn texts on a gender-neutral basis would require so many changes that the man (i.e., man or woman) in the pew might begin to suspect that the Synod had in fact shifted ground. Change calls attention to itself, and a multitude of

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<sup>14</sup> "Revised Church Hymns Tune in to the Times." *The Daily Herald*, Feb. 6, 1988. Hymn Committee. 1985-1991. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 2.4, File 38. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

changes would merely focus attention all the more sharply on questions that do not, at present, disturb the peace of the Wisconsin Synod.<sup>15</sup>

In an article from the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Dr. John Brug sums up these issues surrounding the use of gender inclusive language, the difficult choices that the Joint Hymnal Committee would have to make, and the reminder that Christian education and explanation of Scripture still need to happen, whether such changes to words are made or not. He writes,

We can respond more effectively both to the misguided feminist campaign for totally inclusive language and to the concerns that some have about terms like “man” and “mankind” by teaching our people to draw a clear distinction between bad, falsely motivated inclusive language and inclusive language which is neutral or even scriptural. We may try to avoid needless offense by using naturally inclusive terms where they are scripturally appropriate, but we should also avoid a slavish adherence to totally “inclusive language” and the use of artificial neologisms like “humankind” and “personkind,” which would give the impression that we are acquiescing to feminist demands.

It is necessary to be careful to avoid unnecessary offense to those who are easily offended by terms like “man” and “mankind” until there has been opportunity to instruct them. But it is also necessary to avoid giving the impression that there is something sinister and oppressive about the use of terms like “man” and “mankind” in Christian literature. If we are concerned about offending some people by the use of “man” and “mankind,” we should also be concerned about offending others by purging all such terms from our religious literature. When we use such terms inclusively, we can make it clear in the context that the reference is inclusive. In this period of linguistic change and turmoil we can best do this by educating people on the issue and by making our own use of the terms clear.<sup>16</sup>

#### GUIDELINES FOR USE OF GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

It was the responsibility of the Joint Hymnal Committee to take all of this information, the differing concerns, wishes, worries, and desires of the members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and find a way to produce a hymnal that would be treasure and loved by all. “In consideration of the current furor over sexism and racism in language, the committee was led to consider carefully how far and to what extent these issues might play in the text revision process and in the writing of new hymns for the new hymnal.”<sup>17</sup> But ultimately it was the desire to

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Band. “Inclusive Language.” *Essays on Inclusive Language*. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 5.2, File 98. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. John Brug. “Inclusive Language,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 86.4 Fall 1989, 305-306.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Buss. “Master Hymn List: Choosing the Hymn Texts.” *The Northwestern Lutheran*, October 1988, 353.

proclaim law and gospel as clearly as possible to God's people that led them to prefer the use of gender inclusive language over the generic masculine terms more familiar to a previous generation. In no way were they conforming to the radical feminist agenda by doing so either. Sure, they risked being perceived this way, and not everyone would be pleased with the changes to words and phrases that they had memorized as children, but overall, the concern of the Joint Hymnal Committee was making sure that no stumbling blocks hindered a person from knowing Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

In a response to a letter addressed to *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Pastor Victor Prange reaffirmed the motivation of the Joint Hymnal Committee. He writes,

I want to assure you that no decision made by our synod's Joint Hymnal Committee concerning language revision was the result of seeking to please the radical feminists. The decisions which we made were the result of our desire to speak the language of the 1990s as best we could. Our goal was to express in the worship language which believers sing and speak the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Our Joint Hymnal Committee attempted to find substitutes for words like "men, sons, etc." when these words referred to people in general, both female and male.<sup>18</sup>

Records from the Joint Hymnal Committee provided guidelines that were established for using inclusive language, which would prevent unnecessary changes, changes that would destroy the poetry of a hymn, and changes that would alter doctrine as it is presented in Scripture. The guidelines are as follows:

#### Words Referring to Human Beings

Masculine nouns and pronouns have generally been understood as referring not only to males, but also in a generic sense, to all people. Terms most often used in this way are: Man, mankind, sons of men, brothers, sons of God, and he and his.

The language of worship is changing to reflect growing sensitivity to the use of masculine words to refer to women. It is likely that these generic but masculine terms will continue to diminish in favor of inclusive terms that are gender-neutral: People, all people, folk, we, us, our, humankind, humanity, friends, "Good Christians, all," or "People of God," etc.

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<sup>18</sup> Letter from Victor Prange to Mr. Marvin Krueger Dec. 6, 1992. Personal Correspondence Regarding the Project. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 3.2, File 56. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

Without endorsing all the various aspects (agenda) of the so-called feminist movement and mindful of the Scripture's words regarding the roles of men and women, we favor the careful use of "inclusive" or gender-neutral words where ever it can be done gracefully and without calling undue attention to the change.

### Words Designating God

There is also a growing movement in our society today to avoid, insofar as possible, the use of masculine pronouns and descriptive words that present God and the three persons of the Trinity as male.

Though we understand that God is a Spirit, and so without body, yet we decline to change the language in which God has revealed himself or to avoid the use of descriptive words such as Father, Son, King, and Lord. Because the language used in Scripture is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, therefore the descriptive names, titles, and metaphors designating God should not be expunged from our hymns or changed.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, the process of using inclusive language according to these guidelines was shared in a letter written by Kurt Eggert in 1993.

As far as our use of inclusive language for men and women, we have been frankly eclectic in our choice. We observed that the use of the words "man" or "men" as referring to both sees is changing today so that more and more these words are thought of as sex-specific instead of generic. Here we have normally gone along with a language update unless it was detrimental to the poetry, or called undue attention to itself, or where the original was emotionally imbedded in the memory banks of many or most people.

On the other hand, when pronouns or imagery referred to the deity, we retained the pictures and masculine pronouns of the scriptures. Changing the imagery or using female pronouns for God often involved us in theological questions an let to unwarranted conclusions. For example, the father-son relationship between God and his people and especially the mystery of the inner Father-Son relationship of the Holy Trinity needs to be kept within the bounds of words and phrases which God himself has used in the scriptures.<sup>20</sup>

With these guidelines established the next section of this paper will give examples of how gender exclusive language was removed and gender inclusive language was introduced in three areas of *Christian Worship*: the hymns, the Nicene Creed, and the Marriage Rite.

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<sup>19</sup> "Gender-Inclusive Guidelines for the Joint Hymnal Committee." Hymn Committee. 1985-1991. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project*. Series 2.4, File 39. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Kurt Eggert to Reverend Butler May 13, 1993. Personal Correspondence Regarding the Project. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project*. Series 3.2, File 56. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR HYMNS<sup>21</sup>

One area of doctrine that the Joint Hymnal Committee felt necessary to make clearer in hymnody was the use of the law as mirror, that because of sin, all people are unable in and of themselves to stand in a right relationship with God and therefore deserve eternal condemnation. Romans 3:23 states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” which includes males and females, adults and children. Hymn 495 of *The Lutheran Hymnal* originally stated, “What though the spicy breezes Blow soft o’er Ceylon’s isles, Though ev’ry prospect pleases, And only man is vile.”<sup>22</sup> In order to remove the possible misunderstanding that only males are sinful, *Christian Worship* changes the underlined phrase to “Yet sin the land defiles.”<sup>23</sup> A line in the original text of “Hark the Voice of Jesus Crying,” speaks of the “souls of men dying.”<sup>24</sup> This is changed in *CW* to read, “while the multitudes are dying.”<sup>25</sup>

To further avoid the notion that only males are opposed to the Word of God, a few changes were made to stanza one of hymn 260. “Thy saints by men forsaken”<sup>26</sup> was changed to “Your saints by all forsaken,”<sup>27</sup> and “Men suffer not Thy Word to stand”<sup>28</sup> was changed to “Your Word is not allowed to stand.”<sup>29</sup>

The largest number of changes to hymn texts is in the area of gospel proclamation. These changes were made to remove any stumbling block that would lead a person singing the hymn to think that Jesus only came to save males and not females. Hymn 132 of *TLH* speaks of the lamb being slain for sinful men.<sup>30</sup> Its counterpart in *CW* removes the phrase “for sinful men” and replaces it with a phrase emphasizing the resurrection of the lamb.<sup>31</sup> “God and man hath reconciled” was changed to “God and sinners reconciled” in stanza one of hymn 191 in *TLH*.

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<sup>21</sup> A chart that provides many more examples of changes made to the hymns found in both *The Lutheran Hymnal* and *Christian Worship* can be found in the appendix of this paper.

<sup>22</sup> Hymn 495 st. 2. *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

<sup>23</sup> Hymn 571 st. 2. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993.

<sup>24</sup> Hymn 496 st. 4. *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

<sup>25</sup> Hymn 573 st. 4. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993.

<sup>26</sup> Hymn 260 st. 1. *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

<sup>27</sup> Hymn 205 st. 1. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Hymn 260 st. 1. *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Hymn 205 st. 1. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993.

<sup>30</sup> Hymn 132 st. 1. *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

<sup>31</sup> Hymn 85 st. 1. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993.

Stanza four of the hymn, “Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid,” demonstrates yet another good example of a change made for the sake of gospel clarity. The original stated, “Who for lost man’s redemption died,”<sup>32</sup> whereas the altered text reads, “who for all human kind has died.”<sup>33</sup> And where *TLH* uses the word “sons” to express those who are blessed through the blood of Christ in hymn 391, *CW* uses the word “saints.”

In the stanzas that talk of sanctification or the ability of the Christian to live lives of praise and thanks to God clarifications also needed to be made. One example is found in the change from “men” to “brave” in stanza two of “Stand Up!--Stand Up for Jesus.”

In his history of *Christian Worship*, published in the book, *Not Unto Us*, Pastor Victor Prange gives insight into the most controversial text revision among the hymns. In arguably the most recognized, memorized, and beloved hymn among Lutherans, “A Mighty Fortress,” a line in stanza four read “And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife.” This was a literal translation of Luther’s German, “Nehmen sie den Leib, Gut, Ehr’, Kind und Weib.” The problem of this phrase comes with the words “child and wife.” It would be silly for a child to sing about losing a child or wife, when he or she has neither. The same goes for a woman who has a husband, but not a wife.

One of the original recommend changes was to use the translation found in both *Lutheran Worship* and *The Lutheran Book of Worship*, new hymnals published by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “And take they our house, Goods, fame, child, and spouse.” Prange reports that the Joint Hymnal Committee was split on making any changes to this classic Lutheran hymn. It was first recommend that since *Christian Worship* would feature two different tunes for “A Mighty Fortress”, two different texts be used as well, the original and a modified version.

In January of 1991, that recommendation was dropped in favor of one version with a few alterations. Finally, after much debate and reaction from outside reviewers, the Joint Hymnal

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<sup>32</sup> Hymn 236 st. 4. *The Lutheran Hymnal*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941.

<sup>33</sup> Hymn 188 st. 4. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House. 1993.

Committee settled on this translation, “And do what they will, hate, steal, hurt, or kill.” And concerning this translation Prange had this to say,

It should be pointed out that many English translations of foreign language hymns in *Christian Worship* are less than literal. Even though the wording found in stanza 4 of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” does not literally say what Luther wrote, it does express the truth he wanted to express: even though the enemies of Jesus Christ “hate, steal, hurt, or kill” and we lose everything still “our victory is won” and “the kingdom’s ours forever.” These are words that every Christian can sing with conviction.<sup>34</sup>

In the midst of all these changes it is also important to note a couple of instances where the Joint Hymnal Committee decided to leave the text alone, either because of its popularity, or because a change would not have been possible without ruining the poetry. One example would be in hymn 85 of *Christian Worship* where the quote of the angels singing that first Christmas night rings out “Good will to men!”<sup>35</sup> If the word “men” would have been changed to “all” or “people” the rhyme scheme of the stanza would have been ruined. It also would have deviated from use of the word “men” found in both the KJV and NIV translations of the Luke 2 account of the angels’ announcement, which was memorized by adults and children alike. Another place where change would have been difficult was the opening line of hymn 85 in *Christian Worship*, “The man is ever blessed,” and therefore it was left alone.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NICENE CREED

The unique factor that separates the creeds from the hymnody is that the creeds are not used by just members of the Wisconsin Synod, nor are they used only among Lutherans. The creeds are used universally throughout Christendom. They are also arguably the second most memorized part of the liturgy, closely following the Lord’s Prayer. Changes to the creeds would therefore be minimal, and if any were made, the members of the Joint Hymnal Committee would have to dedicate much time and ink to explaining the reasons why they made them.

An article in the *Northwestern Lutheran* stated, “While alterations in the Apostle’s Creed were kept to a minimum, more changes are proposed for the text of the Nicene Creed. These aim

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<sup>34</sup> Victor Prange. *Not unto us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 2001, 204.

<sup>35</sup> Hymn 85. st. 1. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House. 1993.

to achieve not only better English but also a more faithful translation from the original Greek text.” When it came to the issue of gender inclusive language in the Nicene Creed, two key changes took the spotlight.

The first change was the removal of the word “men” from the phrase, “for us men and for our salvation.” Although there was a desire to be faithful to the original Greek text, the Joint Hymnal Committee also had to grapple with the dying use of the generic form of “man” in the English language. To the ancient speaker of Greek, *τοὺς ἀνθρώπους*, would have been properly understood as meaning all people, males and females. To the modern English speaker, however, this addition of “men” could be misunderstood and become a stumbling block to that person’s faith. The Creed expert of the Joint Hymnal Committee, Professor Theodore Hartwig, in explanation of the decision to leave out the word “men” wrote,

The omission of “men” at line 13 results in the loss of a noun for which no satisfactory substitute came to light. To replace “men” with “people” or “humans” or “human beings” or “all of us” or “us all” does not come off well. To insist that “men” has a generic sense and should be so recognized in an age when people commonly associate “men” with gender is to close the eyes to reality. The loss of the noun seems a small price to pay in exchange for clarity and unambiguity.<sup>36</sup>

He also assures that, “to omit the word “men” in line 13 does not change the content of the sentence, unless someone attaches a restricted meaning to “us.” “Men” is not omitted by compulsion, but in consideration for the growing number of Christians sensitive to words, which have taken on other meanings.

The second change to the Nicene Creed that was highlighted due to the issue of gender inclusive language was the change from “and was made man” to “and became fully human.” This change drew many comments and criticism from WELS pastors, lay members, and even a professor from the Missouri Synod Seminary in Fort Wayne<sup>37</sup>, directed toward the Joint Hymnal Committee. The major concern of these comments was that removing the word “man” from the

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<sup>36</sup> Theodore Hartwig. “The Creeds in Contemporary English.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (1989): 212.

<sup>37</sup> Steven Spencer. *Weinrich and the New WELS Creed*. Personal Correspondence Regarding the Project. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 3.2, File 56. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

creed was a concession to the radical feminist movement, which intended to de-masculinize God by either referring to him in the neuter or the feminine.

Professor Hartwig explains that this was not the intent at all for this change in the creed. Rather the change was made to more carefully and accurately express the message the original Greek intended to get across. He writes

The change in line 16 from “was made man” to “became fully human” may be counted as one of the finest improvements in the new translation; it catches quite satisfactorily what the original participle (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα) intends to communicate. The Greek text here asserts that Gods Son took on all that makes a human being a human being; that he became a genuine human being with soul, body, mind, senses, emotions and everything else that constitutes the human person in God’s original creation.<sup>38</sup>

Professor James Tiefel further elaborated on the issue,

What did the Nicene fathers write in the Creed? The Greek word is ἐνανθρωπήσαντα. The Greek verb from which this word is derived means “to take on human form.” Literally, the word means, “he was humanized.” The Latin translation says the same thing, *homo factus est*, “was made human.”

The logical progression of the Nicene fathers makes perfect sense. After spending several sentences asserting that Jesus is true God, they added that Jesus is also a true human being.

By its use of the masculine pronouns and the phrase “Son of God” our translation asserts itself that the fully human Jesus is a male person...When we confess that Jesus became fully human, we do not deny or allow someone to deny that Jesus is also true God, for the Creed speaks clearly about Jesus’ deity. In the same way, when we confess that Jesus is fully human, we do not deny or allow someone to deny that Jesus is also a male human being, for the Creed speaks clearly about his maleness.<sup>39</sup>

A second concern over the use of the phrase “and became fully human” was that it might lead to the misunderstanding that Jesus was born a sinner. Victor Prange responded to that concern in a letter by stating,

Bear in mind that to be “fully human” does not mean that a person is a sinner. To understand “fully human” to imply sinfulness would mean that before Adam and Eve fell into sin they were not “fully human.” They were “fully human” even before they were sinners. So Jesus is also “fully human” without being a sinner.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Theodore Hartwig. “The Creeds in Contemporary English.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (1989): 212.

<sup>39</sup> James Tiefel. “In Defense of the Nicene Creed” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (1993): 56-57.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Victor Prange to Marvin Krueger. Personal Correspondence Regarding the Project. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 3.2, File 56. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

While both of these changes to the Nicene Creed would be rather noticeable to the congregants who had memorized them differently, and would take some getting used to, the Joint Hymnal Committee ultimately came to the conclusion that this translation best stated the meanings the original Greek writers were trying to convey when they wrote the Creed. Once again, it would be difficult to please everyone, not everyone would agree that “became fully human” states better what “was made man” once said, but after taking into consideration all of the concerns and wrestling over the issues, decisions had to be made. And these changes were felt to be necessary changes for clarity’s sake and for the benefit of those who would use *Christian Worship*.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MARRIAGE RITE

In the early stages of planning for *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*, it was recognized that there was no universal rite for Christian Marriage for use across WELS. Many pastors chose to use the marriage rite found in *The Lutheran Agenda*, a supplemental source of worship materials for *The Lutheran Hymnal*, but many others chose to create their own wedding rites. The members of the Joint Hymnal Committee decided that it would be a nice benefit for pastors to include a marriage rite within *Christian Worship* itself. Now certainly the Joint Hymnal Committee would have no interest in leaving out words like “husband” and “wife” replace them with “person” for the sake of clarifying doctrine in the marriage rite. The use of gender-inclusive language was not in the plans for the marriage rite of *Christian Worship* as it was in the hymnody and Nicene Creed. And yet with the sensitivity towards women that brought about the use of gender inclusive language on the minds of the Joint Hymnal Committee, a different type of word change was considered for the marriage rite.

In *The Lutheran Agenda*, the starting reference point for the new marriage rite of *Christian Worship*, the woman’s vow contained the phrase, “Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honor him, obey him, and keep him in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?” As the discussion progressed over the formation of the new marriage rite, a concern arose over the use of the word “obey.”

As a result of sin, this word had become abused by many men. Instead of understanding the word to mean that the woman would undertake the helper role of wife and submit to the headship of her husband in love, as God had instituted for her in the garden of Eden and as was clearly stated in Ephesians 5, they understood the word to mean that she must obey every single command he gave her, that he now had the permission to talk down to her, and that she should not grumble and complain about this situation. And if a wife disobeyed her husband, then he had the right to abuse his wife emotionally and physically.<sup>41</sup>

Because this teaching of male headship in marriage was easily being misunderstood by society, some members of the Liturgy Committee originally felt that its teaching should be left out of the marriage rite and that the word “obey” be kept out of the woman’s vows. In a letter to the committee, Professor Tiefel gives insight into the questions that they needed to fully consider before they began putting words on paper. He first gives four points as to why this doctrine should not be left out of the marriage rite.

1. That the teaching is often abused and misapplied is not a reason to exclude the principle. Many teachings of Scripture have been so treated and we do not hesitate to proclaim still. Nicholas Amsdorf misused the doctrine of grace in a well-meaning way, but that does not keep us from teaching the doctrine of grace.
2. That the teaching is misunderstood by some is not a reason to exclude the principle. Many of our own people misunderstand the doctrine of fellowship and yet we do not hesitate, in the communion rite, to stress close communion.
3. That the teaching is not stressed or applied by all WELS pastors is not a reason to exclude the principle. It has been my observation that many of our pastors do not discipline delinquents and yet this is not a reason to downplay the necessity for church discipline.
4. That one or another agenda in the church’s history has not included the word obey is not a reason to exclude the principle. This fact may have something to do with a decision to drop the word “obey” but it has very little to do with the second issue.
5. That Jesus’ primary command and his overriding command is “love one another” is not a reason to exclude the principle. The same Jesus who asked Peter, “Do you love me?” told his eleven disciples on Maundy Thursday, “If you love me you will obey teaching.” The idea that the ministry is service does not keep the writer to the Hebrews from telling his readers to obey their leaders. In other words, the command to love may overshadow the command to obey, but it does not disallow the command to obey.<sup>42</sup>

He then listed five questions that needed to be thought through and answered.

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<sup>41</sup> Victor Prange. “Domestic Violence.” *The Northwestern Lutheran*, May 1988.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from James Tiefel to the Liturgy Committee. Liturgy Committee, 1985-1992. Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project. Series 2.3, Files 25. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

1. Is the teaching of the headship of the husband a Scriptural teaching?
2. Is this teaching necessary for a proper understanding of marriage?
3. Is this teaching under attack in society and in the church today?
4. Do we do a disservice to our people by failing to proclaim this teaching as they begin or as they review the marriage situation?
5. Will we be perceived as denying this teaching if we fail to make specific reference to it in some way?<sup>43</sup>

By examining the progression of the marriage rite from beginning to finish, it appears that the Liturgy Committee took these questions to heart and decided to leave the word “obey” out because of its negative connotation. In the same light, they also decided not to go the route of the Evangelical Church in America hymnal, *The Lutheran Book of Worship*, by removing the doctrine of the roles of man and women completely from the rite.<sup>44</sup>

After the marriage rite went through multiple revisions among the Liturgy Committee, it was then sent out for testing and evaluation before a final form was approved by the Joint Hymnal Committee. The following are reactions to the omission of the word “obey” from those who tested the marriage rite:

Why is word “obey” omitted?? (Lindner)

Bride’s: *appreciate* that you left out “obey”—would prefer instead of “support”: “respect” (Eph 5:33) (Martin)

You will be “accused” of wrongdoing by omitting the woman’s “obey” word, but the proposed wording is balanced and evangelical-*assuming* prior emphasis on what the roles are and involve. If the use of “obey” is seen as a “point of confession” in our society now, of course, it should be retained. (Bivens)

Since the Lord gives directive in Eph 5:33, it might be good to include the words “respect him” in the bride’s promise. I’m assuming you didn’t want to touch “submit”. (Uhlhorn)

On the one hand I think placing clear statements about “roles” into the ceremony may not be a good idea at a time when significant discussion continues in our Synod about roles. More neutral language might be better, not in the sense of compromise or avoiding the issue but rather recognizing that the hymnal will be published long before the roles questions are “settled” or comfortable for us.

On the other hand, I would hate to see you include a service with “obey” in the vows. My sense is that many congregations are not using that word, not because they are giving in to feminist pressure but because the word is more likely to communicate the wrong idea

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<sup>43</sup> *ibid*

<sup>44</sup> See appendix for the full progression of the marriage rite.

than the right idea. Scripture does not require the brides promise to obey. Eph 5 does talk about submitting, but that is another matter.

If “obey” were included, I suggest that the marriage liturgy would be useless to many congregations. Since we have a variety of practices now, I don’t believe the hymnal committee should give in to any pressure (if you receive it) to include “obey.” It would seem as if the hymnal were to enforce or encourage a uniform practice where it is not necessary (B. Gerlach)

Some will say omission of the “obey” in the bride’s portion is a concession to the feminists. I personally don’t feel uncomfortable with the wording as you have it. It says what we want it to say without eliciting a lot of raised eyebrows, since the term “obey” can be misunderstood to mean childish obedience, rather than the submissive, loving obedience described in Eph 5. (D. Bitter)

The final question bothers me. It seems you are trying to sidestep the traditional\* “obey” without actually denying it. Why not simply ask “Will you love her as Christ loves the Church?”—“Will you submit to him as to the Lord?” [But I do agree with scrapping “obey.” It is not Biblical] (Blummer)<sup>45</sup>

Overall, the reactions were positive, reinforcing the stance taken by the Liturgy Committee to remove the word “obey” because of its negative connotations. Some of the evaluators, however, still felt that instead of removing the word “obey” completely, that it be replaced with a different word, similar in meaning, but without the negative baggage. It was felt that the WELS should not shy away from proclaiming the truth about the roles of man and woman as Scripture presents them in the marriage vows. Words like “respect” and “submit” were suggested as replacements.

After many hours spent on evaluating and discussing all sides of the issue, and altering and revising the wording, the Joint Hymnal Committee finally approved the version of the marriage rite to be published in *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. The Joint Hymnal Committee chose to include the word “submit” in the final draft of the woman’s marriage vow, but they did so in a way so as not to leave confusion about the meaning of the word. As the pastor explains the purpose of marriage to the congregation and the couple, the Joint Hymnal Committee included a paragraph explaining Ephesians 5 and the roles of men and women in marriage. This explanation clearly expresses that women are to live in submission to the headship authority of their husbands, but at the same time, men are to love their wives as Christ

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<sup>45</sup> *Critical Reviews of the Marriage Rite*. Liturgy Committee, 1985-1992. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal Project*. Series 2.3, File 28. The Historical Archives of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI.

loved the church. This leaves no room for the abusive relationship that men had interpreted from and found support for in the word “obey.”

## CONCLUSION

After a long, nine-year process, *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* finally appeared in the pews of churches across WELS in 1993. Twenty years later, *Christian Worship* still holds true as a musical, liturgical, and poetical masterpiece for God’s people. Throughout its development, the Joint Hymnal Committee faced many challenges, listened to many concerns and criticisms, made revision after revision, and prayed that God would bless their work and the people through their work.

The issue of using gender-inclusive language was one such challenge that those faithful men had to struggle over. The decisions were not always easy to make. It was impossible for them to please everyone, including themselves. The highlight of this the research done for this paper, however, was that none of the decisions were made by the Joint Hymnal Committee for their own personal preference or simply for the sake of change. Every word change was made in the hymnal for the sake of others, so that Law and Gospel might be proclaimed as clearly as possible. If change in modern English meant that some words could become a stumbling block for the Gospel, then those words needed to be changed. For as Paul says in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

In order to make sure that no changes were made, simply for the sake of change, the Joint Hymnal Committee established guidelines, and as evidenced by this paper, they followed strictly to those guidelines. It was the use of these standards that also safeguarded from making word changes that would also affect doctrine as it is presented in Scripture.

When the Joint Hymnal Committee felt comfortable with the decisions they had made, their work was then field tested, before it could be published. This was also a smart move,

because it not only kept their work and decision making public, but also allowed for critical feedback, in case any changes needed to be made before final publishing.

And when concerns and criticisms did meet the eyes and ears of the committee members, what a joy it was to also see such evangelical responses from pastoral hearts. Concerns were not invalidated, shoved aside, or responded to in a harsh, resentful manner, but rather were acknowledged, given faithful attention, and replied to with full explanations for the final decisions that were made.

It did not take long for *Christian Worship* to become cherished by both pastor and parishioner alike after its publication. The changes may have felt uncomfortable or awkward at first, but over time people became accustomed to them, so much so that the word changes are rarely discussed anymore, if at all.

But now, the lifespan of *Christian Worship* is coming to a close. Will the same issues over gender inclusive language be an issue for a new hymnal committee? First there are the facts that as communication technology continues to advance, the English language changes faster than ever. With the development of the NIV 2011, gender inclusive language is still on the forefront of church news. Radical feminist agendas are also constantly hitting the newspapers. So, yes, this topic will have to remain on the minds of a new hymnal committee, however, the extent of such word changes might not be as great for a new hymnal. Much of the work involving gender inclusive language was already accomplished in *Christian Worship*, and will be able to be carried over in the new hymnal, such as in the creeds and the marriage rite. The biggest area where gender inclusive language will need to be considered will be in the area of hymnody. Older hymns that they wish to include may still make use of the generic “man.” Newer hymns may take the use of gender inclusive language too far and promote false doctrine.

It would be wise for the new hymnal committee to follow in the steps of their predecessors, by setting up their own guidelines for use of gender-inclusive language. First and foremost, the clear proclamation of Law and Gospel should be their top priority. Before final decisions are made, it would also be beneficial for them to test their work, and listen to any

concerns and comments to ensure that they are doing what is best for God's people. If they succeed in doing these things, then without a doubt, the WELS will be blessed with a new hymnal masterpiece, to be cherished by the next generation of believers for years to come.

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<b>The Lutheran Hymnal</b>	<b>Christian Worship</b>	<b>Changes to Remove Gender Exclusive Language/Input Gender Inclusive Language</b>
10	225	Change “Blest be the Lord, who comes to men” to “Blessed is Jesus Christ, who came” (st. 4)
14	233	Change “men” to “us” (st. 5)
20	249	Change “man” to “us”... “man” to “we” (st. 3)
26	235	Change “man” to “one” (st. 2 TLH / st. 3 CW)
58	18	Change “men” to “you”... “God’s sons” to “His children” (st. 4 TLH / st. 7 CW)
61	11	Change “her” to “their”... “and her” to “that their” (st. 1); “Yea, her sins” to “All their sins”... “She” to “They”... “her” to “their” (st. 2); “Bidding all men” to “calling people” (st. 3)
64	9	Change “Man’s” to “Our” (st. 3)
68	1	Change “old man” to “sinful self”... “new man” to “new self” (st. 5)
75	14	Change “Ye sons of men, oh harken” to “Arise, O Christian people” (st. 1)
77	37	Change “Brethren” to “Children” (st. 7 TLH / st. 5 CW)
87	62	Change “men” to “all” (st. 2)
94	61	Change “man” to “us” (st. 2); “man” to “we”... “the sons of earth” to “us from the earth” (st. 3)
105	41	Change “Praise God the Lord, ye sons of men” to “Let all together praise our God” (st. 1)
114	76	Change “sons of” to “on the” (st. 3)
123	441	Change “its sons” to “us all” (st. 6 TLH / st. 5 CW)
128	92	Change “sons” to “stars” (st. 1, 5)

<b>The Lutheran Hymnal</b>	<b>Christian Worship</b>	<b>Changes to Remove Gender Exclusive Language/Input Gender Inclusive Language</b>
132	85	Change “for sinful men” to “and raised again” (st. 1); “unheard by men” to “so sang the angel hosts again” (st. 3); “From angels praise and thanks from men” to “Forever let the song ascend” (st. 4)
136	80	Change “man” to “us” (st. 2)
140	98	Change “man” to “them” (st. 2)
142	100	Change “men” to “our” (st. 1); “men” to “my children”...”men” to “they” (st. 2)
150	126	Change “Thou Hope of men” to “My dearest friend” (st. 1); “man’s” to “your” (st. 2)
154	129	Change “man” to “his own” (st. 3)
156	128	Change “My faith would lay her hand” to “In faith I lay my hand” (st. 3); “her guilt” to “my guilt” (st. 4)
160	131	Change “And mortal men” to “And we with all” (st. 2)
161	130	Change “men” to “saints” (st. 2)
163	135	Change “he” to “they” (st. 9)
191	150	Change “man” to “sinners” (st. 3)
193	149	Change “Sons of men” to “Saints on earth” (st. 1)
195	161	Change “His” to “Its” (st. 1)
224	176	Change “dost men” to “your church” (st. 1)
226	181	Change “sons” to “saints” (st. 4 TLH / st. 3 CW)
236	188	Change “Who for lost man’s redemption died” to “who for all human kind has died” (st. 4)
260	205	Change “men” to “all”... “Men suffer not Thy Word to stand” to “Your Word is not allowed to stand” (st. 1)

<b>The Lutheran Hymnal</b>	<b>Christian Worship</b>	<b>Changes to Remove Gender Exclusive Language/Input Gender Inclusive Language</b>
262	200	Change “And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife” to “And do what they will, hate, steal, hurt, or kill” (st. 4)
267	202	Change “The threat of men” to “the devil’s wolves” (st. 1); “men” to “Satan” (st. 2)
275	274	Change “all men” to “people” (st. 2); “men” to “those” (st. 4)
278	337	Change “Her” to “Its” (st. 2)
285	284	Change “man his” to “us our”... “her” to “me”...”to heaven her fatherland” to “and bid me welcome home” (st. 3)
286	509	Change “her” to “its” (st. 3)
289	286	Change “man” to “one” (st. 3,4)
290	291	Change “he” to “all”...”His” to “Their” (st. 4)
301	299	Change “He” to “All”... “he” to “they” (st. 1)
313	317	Change “as brethren” to “together” (st. 3)
319	437	Change “strength of man” to “human strength” (st. 1)
358	354	Change “Son thy sins” to “all your sins” (st. 3)
360	340	Change “For every soul of man” to “That you might live again” (st. 6 TLH / st. 5 CW)
364	358	Change “his” to “our” (st. 1)
369	378	Change “from sire to son” to “From one to all” (st.1); “man’s” to “our”...”him” to “us”...”him” to we” (st. 2)
387	377	Change “to man” to “mankind”... “him” to “them”... “him” to they” (st. 5)
391	394	Change “sons” to “saints” (st. 1)
392	383	Change “man” to “they” (st. 1-4)

<b>The Lutheran Hymnal</b>	<b>Christian Worship</b>	<b>Changes to Remove Gender Exclusive Language/Input Gender Inclusive Language</b>
393	418	Change “When man’s help and affection” to “When human thought and action” (st. 2)
425	421	Change “He” to “They, “his” to “their” (st. 1)
446	472	Change “Watch lest with her pomp unfurl” to “Lest with bold deceptions hurled” (st. 3 TLH / st. 2 CW)
451	474	Change “men” to “brave” (st. 2)
458	410	Change “brethren” to “members” (st. 1)
462	533	Change “Her” to “They” (st. 4)
466	531	Change “her” to “our” (st. 1)
467	529	Change “men” to “us” (st. 2); “where ere men roam” to “your will be done” (st. 7 TLH / st. 5 CW)
473	538	Change “Men” to “The World” (st. 4)
482	542	Change “men” to “all” (st. 1)
491	545	Change “him” to “them” (St. 2,3)
495	571	Change “And only man is vile” to “Yet sin the land defiles” (st. 2); “men” to “those” (st. 3)
496	573	Change “souls of men” to “multitudes” (st. 4)
507	576	Change “Man” to “All” (st. 2)
511	84	Change “And all the sons of” to “And all who suffer” (st. 4)
566	617	Change “Men that love and honor thee” to “Known for love and honesty” (st. 3)
607	209	Change “frail man” to “in awe” (st. 7 TLH / st. 4 CW)
609	206	Change “men” to “saints” (st. 3)
619	212	Change “bears her unto me” to “comes to carry me” (st. 2)

<b>The Lutheran Hymnal</b>	<b>Christian Worship</b>	<b>Changes to Remove Gender Exclusive Language/Input Gender Inclusive Language</b>
647	65	Change “men” to “all” (st. 2)
658	537	Change “Men” to “Saints” (st. 4)

## COMPARISON OF MARRIAGE RITE IN *TLA*, *LBW*, and *CW*

*THA*-DEARLY BELOVED: Whereas you desire to enter upon the holy estate of matrimony, ordained of God, and to be held in honor by all, it becometh you, with reverent minds, to hear what the Word of God teacheth concerning this estate:

The Lord God saith, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ saith: Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The Apostle Paul, speaking by the Holy Ghost, saith: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the Church subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

And although by reason of sin, many a cross hath been laid upon this estate, nevertheless our gracious Father in heaven doth not forsake His children in an estate so holy and acceptable to Him, but is ever present with His bountiful blessings.

For thus saith the Lord in the Psalm: Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands. Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel.

Thus hath our heavenly Father sanctified the estate of matrimony. He will ever bless therein all who love Him, trust in Him, and live in His fear, for Jesus' sake.

Dearly beloved, you have come here to be united into this holy estate, which consisteth in your mutual consent, sincerely and freely given; it behooveth you, then, to declare, in the presence of God and these witnesses, the sincere intent you both have.

N., wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live with her after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor her, and keep her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

N., wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live with him after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honor him, obey him, and keep him in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

*LBW*-The Lord God in his goodness created us male and female, and by the gift of marriage founded human community in a joy that begins now and is brought to perfection in the life to come.

Because of sin, our age-old rebellion, the gladness of marriage can be overcast and the gift of the family can become a burden.

But because God, who established marriage, continues still to bless it with his abundant and ever-present support, we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored.

\_\_\_ and \_\_\_, if it is your intention to share with each other your joys and sorrows and all that the years will bring, with your promises bind yourselves to each other as husband and wife.

I take you, \_\_\_ to be my wife/husband from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.

*CW*: Dear Friends: When God in love created the world, he made man and women in his own image and bonded them together in marriage. Through this blessed union of husband and wife, God established the family, provided for the physical and spiritual welfare of children, and fostered the peace and stability of society.

God intended marriage to bring loving companionship to the people of his world. But because of sin, the joy of marriage was soon overcast with sorrow, and the harmony of family life was shattered by strife. Out of love God sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross to take away the sins of all people. Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness and is enabled by the Holy Spirit to live in peace and joy.

God's love for you is boundless. He commands you, in response to his love, to love each other. Love is forgiving and enduring. Love shows itself in truth and faithfulness, in thoughtfulness and understanding, in patience and kindness. Marriage furnishes a unique opportunity to put this love into practice.

The pattern for Christian marriage is the intimate union of Christ and his church, which the apostle Paul depicts in Ephesians 5. After urging believers to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," he makes this application for Christian spouses: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her." It is reverence for Christ on the part of husband and wife that lays the foundation for Christian marriage.

You have come here to be united in marriage, which consists in your mutual consent, sincerely and freely given. You are now invited to declare this intent in the presence of God and these witnesses.

\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_ to be your wife? Will you be guided by the counsel and direction God has given you in his Word and love your wife as Christ loved the Church? Will you be faithful to her, cherish her, support her, and help her in sickness and in health as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I will."

\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_ to be your husband? Will you be guided by the counsel and direction God has given in his Word and submit to your husband as the Church submits to Christ? Will you be faithful to him, cherish him, support him, and help him in sickness and in health as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I will."

PROGRESSION OF THE MARRIAGE VOWS IN *CHRISTIAN WORSHIP* FROM EARLY  
STAGES TO FINAL PRODUCT

M: (husband), I now ask you before God: Are you willing to take (wife) as your wife, to bind yourself to her with your promise of love and faithfulness and to accept the role of leader which God has established for husbands in his Word?

M: (wife), I ask you before God: Are you willing to take (husband) as your husband, to bind yourself to him with your promise of love and faithfulness and to accept the role of helper which God has established for wives in his Word? (Folder 26)

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M: (to the groom): \_\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_\_ to be your wife and promise faithfulness to her as long as you both shall live? Will you love her, comfort her, support her, and keep her in sickness and in health? And will you be guided In your role as husband by the counsel and direction God has given in his word concerning marriage? If so, answer, "I will."

M: (to the bride): \_\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_\_ to be your husband and promise faithfulness to him as long as you both shall live? Will you love him, comfort him, support him, and keep him in sickness and in health? And will you be guided in your role as wife by the counsel and direction God has given in his word concerning marriage? If so answer, "I will." (Folder 28)

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M: (to the groom): \_\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_\_ to be your wife and promise faithfulness to her? Will you be guided in your role as husband by the counsel and direction God has given in his word and love her as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her? Will you cherish her, comfort her, support her, and help her in sickness and in health for as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I will."

M: (to the bride) \_\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_\_ to be your husband and promise faithfulness to him? Will you be guided in your role as wife by the counsel and direction God has given in his Word and submit to him as the church submits to Christ? Will you love him, comfort him, support him, and keep him in sickness and in health for as long as you both shall life? If so, answer, "I will."---(6/26/1991) (Folder 29)

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M: \_\_\_\_, will you take\_\_ to be your wife? Will you be guided by the counsel and direction God has given you in his Word and love your wife as Christ loved the Church? Will you be faithful to her, cherish her, support her, and help her in sickness and in health as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I will."

M: \_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_ to be your husband? Will you be guided by the counsel and direction God has given in his Word and submit to your husband as the Church submits to Christ? Will you be faithful to him, cherish him, support him, and help him in sickness and in health as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I will." (*Christian Worship*)