GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

LEADERSHIP, COMMON WORSHIP AND UNITY IN THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN EXPERIENCE

A SENIOR THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE RELIGION FACULTY

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ALC	American Lutheran Church (1960)
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELC	Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegian)
ELW	Evangelical Lutheran Worship
ILCW	Inter Lutheran Commission on Worship
LBW	Lutheran Book of Worship
LCA	Lutheran Church in America
LCMS	Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
SBH	Service Book and Hymnal
ULCA	United Lutheran Church in America

Introduction

When Martin Luther posted the 95 theses, he did not wish to create a new church, but rather to reform the existing church. Even when it became apparent that a new church would be created, Luther advocated uniformity on the most important theological ideas but not in the day-to-day expression of the faith. After Luther's death Lutheranism spread to different places, and practices and traditions emerged related to the location of the church. Eventually people from many different Lutheran backgrounds found their way to the North American continent and had to determine what it meant to be Lutheran in a different place.

When these people emigrated from their homes to North America, they brought with them their languages and their own styles of worship. American Lutherans today can call on all of these traditions as antecedents to their own styles of worship. Once in the new land, the immigrants formed their own churches. From congregation to congregation, doctrine, hymnody and language in early American Lutheranism generally depended on the part of the country in which the church was located, where the founders of the church originated, what language was spoken, and the length of time in America. As such, there were many different congregations and groups of congregations.

Eventually emigration from traditionally Lutheran lands slowed. As members of congregations became assimilated to the new culture, smaller groups of churches began to join together, not necessarily along ethnic lines. Those who advocated these mergers found common worship materials useful tools for minimizing differences; thus, this movement included the creation of these new tools for worship.

Several main themes will be dealt with in this examination of the development of the structure of the Lutheran Church in the American experience. This paper will discuss factors

other than theology, such as identification with a certain ethnic group and society which, in the context of history play large roles in both the creating and mending of divisions. In addition, special focus will be given to leaders, either pastoral or structural, to show their tremendous influence on the movement toward or away from unity. Finally since many of the mergers were precede by the creation of common worship materials, common worship will be addressed to determine if it brought about unity or is caused by unity. Throughout this thesis I will argue that a desire for structural unity has always existed at some level and once an American identity was established only small things stood in the way of achieving it. In addition, I will argue that two main factors aided in the realization of unity, the influence of society and common worship and the extent to which they did was a result of decisions made by leaders of the church.

Chapter One

Luther on Worship, Orthodoxy and Pietism

To be able to understand the Lutherans who came to America, it is important to go back to the beginning of Lutheranism. This chapter discusses Luther's understanding of worship in the context of the Reformation and the historical ancestry of the multiple movements in Lutheranism. This is important in order to understand how each influence what is meant when unity is discussed today.

Certain misunderstandings about Luther's reforming intentions exist, particularly in the United States where Lutheranism is either categorized with Protestants who trace their theology back to other Reformers, or seen as something very similar to Catholicism. The second view is probably closer to the truth than many would think. Luther set out to reform the Catholic Church, not create a movement of his own. As such, his views on worship show a desire to improve and clarify the existing structure and not to start anew, as did Zwingli, and to a lesser degree, Calvin.

In his pamphlet *Concerning the Order of Public Worship,* Luther outlined three abuses of worship. First, the Word had disappeared from church services; second, instead of preaching the Word, priests read legends, fables and hymns that were essentially un-Christian in character. Finally, the service was made into a work in order to win God's grace and salvation.[1] This list of abuses highlights two of Luther's main reforming points: the Word must be central to a true Christian service, and salvation is through God's grace, not earned by works and sacrifices of individuals.

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[1] Martin Luther, "Concerning the Order of Public Worship 1523." Trans., Paul Zeller Strodach. In *Luther's Works* American Edition 53, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, (Philidelphia: Fortress Press, 1965.), 11. Hereafter cited as LW 53.

*The full bibliography, starting page 59, has been annotated to account for the different perspectives of the authors utilized in this paper.

These concerns of Luther's arose not only from his deep personal struggle but also out of pastoral concern for the common believer. Karlstadt's independent and traumatic reforms were an impetus for outlining exactly how Luther thought liturgical reform should be made. Clearly, Luther understood that changing the liturgy was going to take time. He explained his approach so that other pastoral leaders could emulate his actions.

> Therefore, I have used neither authority nor pressure. Nor did I make any innovations. For I have been hesitant and fearful, partly because of the weak in faith, who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one, and more so because of the fickle and fastidious spirits who rush in like unclean swine without faith or reason, and who delight only in novelty and tire of it as quickly, when it has worn off.[2]

Again, the Word was central to Luther's reforms. As long as the service emphasized the Word and worship and communion were not seen as a sacrifice, people were free to worship as they chose. The rest was important but not essential. Luther's take was that:

> Other matters will adjust themselves as the need arises. And this is the sum of the matter: Let everything be done so that the Word may have free course instead of the prattling and rattling that has been the rule up to now. We can spare everything except the Word. Again, we profit by nothing as much as by the Word. For the whole Scripture show that the Word should have free course among Christians.[3]

This view holds implications for later groups of Lutherans considering worship. Since only the word is required, these later groups have had to struggle to determine what other parts of worship are important to create a particularly *Lutheran* form of worship. Of course these groups have had historical models to inform their decisions. Eugene L. Brand, a liturgist who chaired the Inter Lutheran Commission on Worship that created *the Lutheran Book of Worship*, finds that throughout history Lutherans have tended to follow closely the tradition of the Latin church. The

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[2] LW 53, 19.

[3] Ibid., 14

instances where the liturgy has departed from this tradition are concurrent with a departure from the Lutheran Confessions at that time.[4]

Luther did advocate the discontinuation of the daily mass because it was a sacrifice but declined to stop daily services. Instead, the daily services were to focus on biblical texts and homilies so that people could learn about their faith. The only thing that Luther did not wish to change was the Words of Institution because they had been handed down from Christ and were a crucial part of the sacrament. Beyond that, Luther saw that other things were bound to change. There was no reason they should not as long as they met the two criteria.

In his concern for the education and participation of the laity, Luther found music a valuable tool. Throughout the Bible and accounts of early Christians, people used music to praise God. For Luther's purpose, hymns aid in the praise of God in a manner that connected the worshipers to the early Christians and provide a way for the common people to participate in the service. Thus, Luther used music as a tool to connect contemporary worshipers with the whole historic church.

Luther also advocated churches in close proximity to have similar services so that the common people would not be confused by the variety. When discord arose among the churches in Livonia, Luther wrote:

> We should consider the edification of the lay folk more important than our own ideas and opinions. Therefore, I pray all of you, my dear sirs, let each one surrender his own opinions and get together in a friendly way and come to a common decision about these external matters, so that there will be one uniform practice throughout your district instead of disorder—one thing being done here and another there—lest the common people get confused and discouraged.[5]

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[4] Eugene L. Brand, "The *Lutheran Book of Worship:* A Shaper of Lutheran Piety in North America," *Word & World* 9 no. 1 (Winter 1989): 39.

[5] LW 53, 47.

Though different practices among the church catholic are acceptable, attention and argument over the minute details draws the focus of worship away from the things that really matter. Indeed, earlier Luther had exhorted his fellow ministers on the use of different rites. Differences were fine as long as no one condemned the others. "And let us approve each other's rites lest schisms and sects should result from this diversity in rites—as has happened in the Roman church."[6] This quote appears to be in conflict with the previous one about uniform practice, and indeed Luther frequently contradicts himself.

However contradictory these two statements may seem, Luther affirms in both the power of common worship. In each instance, dispute over worship practices threatened the unity of congregations. Theology was not the issue: it was differences in worship that had the power to break congregations apart.

It should also be remembered that what Luther tended to emphasize was based on what he felt the laity needed. If law was needed, then in Luther's thinking it was law that needed to be preached. If it was grace that was needed, then gospel should be preached, but the person that needs to hear law does not at that moment need to hear gospel, and the person that needs to hear gospel does not at that moment need to hear law.

The same can be said for worship in the context of these two positions. If the parishioners are becoming confused by different worship practices in a region, then common worship practices should be used. If the parishioners are not confused by a variety of practices, it is up to the pastors to support the others as long as the main doctrinal points are present in the worship. This attitude places a great responsibility on the worship leaders, because it requires them to assess accurately the needs of the laity they work with and respond in an appropriate manner. In

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[6] Brand, 31.

addition, if those in leadership in the pulpit only emphasize one aspect over the other, it can seriously distort the views of the laity since Lutherans tend to put great amounts of trust in their leaders. Due to this potential, differences arose almost immediately, though not necessarily because of worship. What it meant to be Lutheran depended on whom you asked, and separate groups formed around these ideas. Two of these groups, the Orthodox and the pietists, have had the most influence on American Lutheranism.

The movement generally termed *Lutheran Orthodoxy* arose as the historical distance from Luther grew. The beginning of the movement served a valuable role in the development of Lutheranism. After Luther's death his absence made it possible for lesser theologians to misinterpret the intent of his teachings when new situations that Luther had not encountered arose. Guidelines were needed to define some of the particulars of the faith, as the Reformer understood it, before too many variations made it stray away from the original movement. Out of this need came the *Formula of Concord* (1577) and later the *Book of Concord* (1580), a collection of the documents most important to defining the Lutheran faith. Also pastoral leaders needed to be trained for the church. Schools developed, and with them theological stances.

These theologians were intent on preserving correct doctrine; therefore the movement took on a conservative and polemical tone. They were university teachers; thus, their work was done in light of current academics. This development occurred partly in response to continuing pressure from the Roman Catholic Church and later from the political pressures of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). In order to make adequate arguments against Roman Catholics, it became necessary to incorporate formal logic and philosophy into the scope of the work. The emerging primacy of the sciences over theology also placed the movement on the defensive, and

it began to seek to prove that everything that one needed to understand the world could be found in theology.

Part of the focus in the response to these theological challenges became a stressing of *sola scriptura,* a doctrine important to Luther. Thus, it soon turned into the claim that the Bible is literally inspired and therefore the inerrant word of God. This directly contradicted Luther's view that some books of the Bible are better than others. In Luther's understanding, God worked through the writers of the Bible to convey a message, but human influences could end up influencing the Scriptures. In daily life, the concentration of "Lutheran Orthodox theologians focused pastoral education on pure doctrine and polemics against other theological views, so many pastors delivered learned sermons unconnected with ordinary life."[7] The point when Orthodoxy gets caught up in the little details and loses sight of the faith and the faithful marks when society had changed enough that the movement no longer met the current needs of the greater church.

The movement that arose in reaction to fill the deficiencies in Orthodoxy was the *pietist* movement. Though a deep spirituality had been present at times in Orthodoxy, by the end it was generally seen as void of spiritual relevance for the common person. The pietists saw themselves as another reforming presence in the church with the goal of returning Bible study to the laity without the oversight of commentators or doctrine. The recognition of the laity's role in service and witness and an emphasis on Christian morality and good works were also a major factor in

[7] Bradley Hanson. *Grace That Frees: The Lutheran Tradition* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 27.

the movement. These goals were specifically outlined by the founder of the movement, P.J. Spener in his *Pia Desideria* (1675).[8]

In its reaction against Orthodoxy, Pietism tended to avoid speculative theology, preferring to stay out of the strong and often heated theological debates that had characterized prior movements. Though this approach made the pietists appear to be anti-intellectual, they did have a complex set of theological points to which they adhered.[9] In their practical application they stressed that the Christian should be walking with Christ at all times and, though they should not necessarily be categorized as "born again" Christians, there was more of an emphasis on conversion experiences and the idea that a Christian should be made new in Christ. As a result the movement tended to be on the more mystical end of the spiritual spectrum with more of an emphasis on heart than head.[10]

Given these emphases, the potential existed for pietism to be a very passive form of faith. However, good works were stressed as part of concentration on love for the neighbor; in the eyes of the pietist the neighbor was anyone of God's children regardless of their circumstances. Pietist ideas stimulated wholehearted philanthropy and social welfare organizations. Indeed, critics of pietism objected to their emphasis on good works as proof of a saving faith as well as what they saw as excessive tolerance, indifference to central authority and as mentioned above, anti-intellectualism.[11]

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[8] Albert C. Outler, "Pietism and Enlightenment: Alternatives to Tradition." In *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, edited by Louis Dupre and Don E. Saliers, 240-256. (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 243.

[9] Outler, 246.

[10] Hanson, 30.

[11] Outler, 246.

Pietists did have centers for academic learning; the main location was the University of Halle, influenced largely by August Hermann Francke. There pastors were prepared along pietist lines of thinking and sent out to serve parishes, teach in schools, run orphanages and support other projects started by laity.[12] Some even undertook missionary work with a few of these making their way across the Atlantic Ocean to minister to Lutherans in the Colonies and help shape the face of Lutheranism in the New World.

Through the examination of Luther's understanding of worship it becomes clear that Luther did not think that worship had to be one particular way. Instead as long as the Word was preached, and the service not seen as a sacrifice the structure of the service did not really matter. With Luther also originates the recognition of the power of common worship and the intentional use of it to influence structure. In same way, Luther emphasizes the responsibility of the pastor and worship leaders to make sure worship is organized and conducted in a way that is meaningful for those worshipping in recognition of the powerful influence of leaders on the structure of the church. Understanding the origins of the Orthodox, and pietist movements gives insight into why the emphases of each movement is important and provides background for understanding each movements' influence on American Lutheranism.

[12] Outler, 243.

Chapter Two

Lutherans in America: the development of structure in the church

This chapter will discuss the structural history of Lutheranism in America from the Colonial period up to the 1960s in order to understand how society influences the organization and identification of a group. In addition to society, the powerful influence of both leaders and group thinking on the direction of the Church, which began with Luther is examined in the context of the American experience.

Lutherans with roots both in Orthodoxy and pietism came to the New World, but they account for only a small portion of the explanation as to why so many different groups developed. Country of origin, traditions of the home church, language, and geographical distance, as well as influence by other local denominations, all contributed to the forming of divisions within Lutheranism at the beginning of its history in America. Though there are still divisions today that can be traced to the differences in these two movements, the type of unity with which this paper is concerned is primarily structural. It is confessional only to the degree that it serves structural unity.

Some inextricably tie Lutheran identity with adherence to all of the traditional Confessions found in the *Book of Concord.* Those who understand identity in this way logically understand unity in the same way. If one must adhere to the Confessions to be Lutheran, then Lutherans seeking unity must adhere to the Confessions. This is not this paper's understanding. Certainly, doctrine and worship practices can be compromised only so much before they can no longer be called Lutheran, but *how much* has been a debate among Lutherans for as long as they have been in the New World. The difference between the meaning of unity (either structural or confessional) and those points necessary to identity must be addressed by each group of people

in their particular time and place in history before they can make a decision about how their group can relate to other Lutherans.

A variety of Lutherans have been present in America from the time of the earliest settlements. The Dutch West India Company settled the Colony of New Amsterdam in 1625, and while Reformed Church membership was required, the settlers included some German and Scandinavian Lutherans. These initial settlers formed the oldest Lutheran Church in the New World in 1649.[13]

As the number of people in the Colonies grew, so did the percentage of Lutherans, though they were still in the minority compared to the Dutch Reformed Church and other protestant denominations. When Lutherans gathered together to form congregations, the only resources they had for worship were whatever books they happened to have brought to the new world. Pastors, books and money had to be requested from the church in the homeland, all of which might, according to those in charge, be a long time coming or not be sent at all:

> Continued dependence on the church of the homeland was particularly marked among the Lutherans of Dutch New York and the Swedish Lutherans along the Delaware. Brought on the wave of commercial colonial enterprise that swept business and political leaders of seventeenth-century Europe, these settlers continued to be Europeans as far as possible in language, clothing, and food, in buildings and implements and industry, and in church. [14]

The shortage of pastors left many congregations without sound leadership and advice. Some congregations followed wandering preachers, of suspect credentials at best. Others formed relationships with the Reformed Church, which, being originally sponsored by the companies settling the colonies, had greater resources and members. It was difficult to maintain a

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[13] Abdel Ross Wentz. *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955) 6-7.

[14] Wentz, 24.

congregation with no one to lead worship and administer the sacraments. Even when pastors were supplied, they were not useful if they did not meet the needs of the congregation they were serving. In the case of the Lutherans of New Sweden pastors from Sweden had no desire to learn or use English at the same time the congregations were shifting to worship in English. To meet their needs the Lutherans of New Sweden moved closer to the British Episcopal Church, with whom they had good relations, adopting the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer as early as 1742. By 1846, all of the originally Swedish congregations had joined the Episcopal Church.[15] This is an example of common worship overcoming differences in theology to create unity.

As home churches sent pastors to minister to those in the Colonies, those with strong personalities had the unique opportunity of molding the young church. Perhaps one of the greatest leaders was Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, sent to Pennsylvania in 1741 from the University of Halle. Upon arrival, he found the congregations in disarray and had to work to bring organized leadership back into the church.[16] It was he who organized the first synod in 1748, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, doing so apart from any supervision of the European churches. This started to broaden the perspective of the colonial American Lutherans and lay the foundation for independence from Europe.

The fact that it took over one hundred years for any formal organization to occur, and at the impetus of a European, highlights one of the main obstacles faced by groups of Lutheran immigrants. The establishment of the church in America was an experiment from the very beginning. The immigrants did not know how to create church organizations larger than a congregation. This was due to the reality that the Lutheran Churches from which the immigrants

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[15] L. DeAne. Lagerquist, *The Lutherans,* Student ed, (Westport: Praeger, 1999), 29-30.

[16] Wentz, 38.

came were run by the state. Since the state organized any larger structure beyond the congregation, immigrants had no administrative experience. In addition immigrants were generally young, poor and in search of a better life. These were people who, even if a structure existed in their homeland to lead, would not have had the opportunity or even the education to do so. Following the advice of Luther, Lutherans were disposed to work with civil authorities. Pastoral authority, which held great importance in European congregations, and was now mostly absent. There existed little experience upon which immigrants could build. Each new wave of immigrants would have to learn to navigate these uncharted waters. If the experiment worked, and to what degree it created a functioning church would influence how various church bodies would deal with structure in the future.

According to the historian Abdel Ross Wentz, it is important to recognize the influence of the surrounding society on the actions on the church. After the creation of synods, the development of the Lutheran Church in America is tied closely to the development of the United States as a nation. As the United States struggled to find its identity American Lutherans had to reconcile this identity with their Lutheran identity.

From the beginning Lutherans were politically active. They fought on both sides in the Revolutionary War, showing a willingness to participate in the secular life of the society in which they lived. The distinct nature of the American church was inaugurated with "An American hymnbook [that] was ordered in 1782 and prepared under Muhlenberg's guidance."[17] It was Muhlenberg's ultimate dream that all Lutherans in America could be one and he saw a common hymnal as a step toward accomplishing that dream. Despite a good start toward this goal, a lack of strong educated leadership hindered progress. The church depended on foreign

[17] Wentz, 43.

trained pastors because no facilities existed to train pastors in America. Consequently, there was always a shortage of clergy.

In 1786, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania published a combined service book and hymnal. The order of service included was a composite of those available to the editors, but they managed to create one which best served the needs of the local congregations by making allowances for multiple languages and different orders of service used by the immigrants. In this way another step toward an independent American church was taken. It should be noted that Muhlenberg and the group of pastors he gathered into the Ministerium were trained in Halle and thus brought a distinctly pietist flavor to their style of worship and theology. These pastors were not the only Lutheran clergy present at that time, and debates along the traditional Orthodox/ pietist lines were already occurring among pastors and groups of churches.

As the nation settled into its independence and distinct identity immigrants began to assimilate to the prevailing culture. This was no more apparent than in language as English was fast becoming the common tongue. The more generations removed from the homeland, the less likely the people were to know the German or Danish being preached from the pulpit. Already by the late 1700s and early 1800s, some churches insisted on the use of English. Some congregations split over the issue, and as mentioned above, some congregations joined other denominations. This is another example of the power of worship to combine or divide Again it was not theological differences that caused congregations to split or join another denomination, but the style of worship, in particular the language of worship.

The churches worshipping in English often made use of translations or hymns from other English-speaking traditions; since Luther's hymns were a way to teach doctrine, the use of other traditions' hymns meant that they potentially departed from Lutheran doctrine. Granted, this was

probably more of a concern to those with Orthodox roots, but many pietist traditions also were concerned about confessional orthodoxy.

New Lutheran translations were often clumsy:

> Regardless of any lack of grace in the translations from German to English, the subsequent history of English Lutheran hymnody in America strongly suggests that the rationalism of early 19th century Lutheranism together with a developing concern for 'literary excellence'. . . were to play significant roles in the development of Lutheran hymnody in America.[18]

In other words, English-speaking worshipers displayed a taste for hymns that worked poetically rather than theologically. Translations of some of Luther's hymns did exist, but they were not the best and sounded clumsy in comparison to the Anglican hymns of neighboring denominations. This departure from doctrine contributes to a change in the understanding of what it meant to be Lutheran.

The next pastor with associations to Halle to have an influence on American Lutheranism was Frederick Henry Quitman. Quitman was of the generation influenced by both rationalism and the Enlightenment. Therefore his theology de-emphasized the heartfelt experience of pietism and turned to include modern reason in theology. His theology used modern knowledge to which had the effect of moving the church away from classically Lutheran ideas including the removal of references to the Lutheran Confessions and altering the worship service, limiting congregational participation in the liturgy. "The collection of hymns Quitman published in 1814 lacked the doctrinal grounding of older Lutheran texts. The hymns included drew heavily on Anglo-American sources and were reflective of popular evangelical themes rather than

[18] Carl F. Schalk *God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 56.

rationalistic ones."[19] To be fair, it was not Quitman alone who imposed this shift on the theology of the church; the greater governing church body approved his materials. This is an example of worship being influenced by trends in society and then by existing in that form furthering movement in the direction of the trend by validating its ideas.

In addition, the spirit of rationalism had weakened denominational loyalty throughout the United States. "The attraction of Lutheran and Reformed churches in America to each other in the early years of the 19th century can be readily understood. Rationalism had tended to obliterate confessional difference, or at least made them seem unimportant."[20] The Reformed Church being the stronger body, Lutherans tended to absorb more of their traditions and style of worship than the other way around. Indeed a similar, more formal experiment occurred in Prussia in 1817 with the uniting of the Reformed and Lutheran Churches under the Prussian Union. This Union though, had less to do with religious trends among the people than it did with politics, and many reacted strongly against it.

By 1820, six other synods (New York, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio and Tennessee) were in existence and were ready to create the next level of organization in the church. Meetings were held to propose the establishment of a General Synod, and in 1821 the three synods that decided to join met for the first time. The role of the General Synod was normally advisory, mediating between synods and offering direction and resources for worship and teaching but not meddling in the day-to-day affairs of the smaller bodies. In the eyes of one Lutheran historian, "The organization of the General Synod assured the independence of the Lutheran church in this country. It was fundamentally opposed to the schemes of union with the

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[19] Lagerquist, 56.

[20] Wentz, 75.

Reformed in Pennsylvania and with the Episcopalians in North Carolina and elsewhere."[21] Not only could the General Synod mediate between synods, but it could also broadly represent the distinct Lutheran position in dialogue with other denominations.

In the decades preceding and following the Civil War, great numbers of Lutheran immigrants came from Germany, Scandinavia and other European countries. While some joined existing synods, many chose to create their own churches to continue to worship in their native tongue. They followed the similar pattern of the earlier churches and eventually transitioned to English for worship.

Another reason for these immigrants to create churches of their own was doctrine. Intellectual movements and other denominations had so influenced the established Lutheran Church over the years that mention of the Lutheran Confessions had been removed from the constitutional documents. The later immigrants generally held a more confessionally grounded faith (some more so than others) and their presence created a movement to return to a more historic form of Lutheranism. Worship practices began to adopt to a liturgy and style that reflected the practices of early Lutherans and reaffirmed the importance of recognizing the Confessions for maintaining Lutheran identity.

The outbreak of the Civil War divided the General Synod along regional lines with the churches in the South forming their own General Synod. The Northern General Synod made gestures of reconciliation at the close of the conflict, but the Southern group claimed that they

[21] Wentz, 80.

now had their own particular problems with which to deal and declined reuniting. This is a direct example of non-theological societal changes influencing the development of the Church.*

In another respect though, the war fostered a common American identity for the recent immigrants. It was hard to maintain the identity of one's European homeland when your sons had fought with sons from other nations to preserve the United States. Indeed for a period of ten years until 1870 Swedes and Norwegians worked together in the Augustana Synod. "But the laymen and the congregations, both Swedish and Norwegian, did not share the co-operative spirit of their pastor and church leaders."[22] When new congregations formed, they did so along nationalistic lines, the synod supported both Norwegian schools and Swedish schools that were separate, and Norwegians even brought over a scholar from Norway to teach at the Synod seminary. In addition the Norwegian faction had to balance, their role in the synod with their role in the Norwegian community, which included relationships with congregations in strictly Norwegian synods. When this became too much to balance nationality won over co-operation and the Norwegians withdrew to create their own organization in conjunction with the Danes forming the Conference for the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their withdrawal left the Augustana Synod a purely Swedish Synod.

As history moved beyond the Civil War, the Churches on the East Coast began to reclaim their common heritage and move closer together. The formation of the United Lutheran Church in America in 1918 finally combined the East Coast synods. As will be discussed later, the three

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* While those who argued both for and against slavery could and did use theology the split in the General Synod was geographical and followed the split of the nation. It is fair to argue that had the nation not divided the General Synod would not have divided.

[22] Wentz, 132.

groups that merged to form this body had been working together since 1885 to form common worship materials. Their hope had been that such work would precede an eventual merger.

In the broader picture of Lutheranism at this time the influx of German and Scandinavian Lutheran immigrants continued. Though not all the immigrants that came were Lutheran or maintained their church affiliation, enough did so to provide a boost in the membership and to maintain strong ties with the theology and culture of the church at home. As discussed above, their presence created many different synods and church bodies. However, occasions arose for these groups to work together and interact. The Association of Lutheran College Faculties, missionary work, and the 400th anniversary of the ninety-five theses in 1917 all provided opportunities for Lutherans to work together without synodical differences interfering.[23] Occasions such as these laid the groundwork for future work together by providing neutral ground to initiate relationships.

United States' political policy also influenced the Church. In 1921, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, which restricted immigration, thus stemming the flow of Lutheran immigrants. Without the constant influx of newcomers, the established synods were left to acculturate to life in America without being influenced by ideas from Europe. Possibly most influential of all was the involvement of the United States in both World War I and World War II. Historian E. Clifford Nelson makes the observation that "it was only in the face of dire necessity, external pressures, and threatening crises that Lutherans began to close ranks."[24]

World War I was one such external pressure. Lutherans speaking German and other similar sounding languages faced scrutiny and discrimination from other Americans and thus

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[23] Lagerquist, 105-107.

[24] Nelson, E. Clifford. *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 18.

speeded up the process of switching to English. In addition, Lutherans needed to find a way to provide aid to both Lutheran soldiers and others in Europe. As it was much more efficient to provide aid through a larger umbrella organization, most of the synods supported one or two different organizations through which they could minister to their European sisters and brothers. In addition, the U.S. government was unwilling to work with separate denominations making a joint effort almost inevitable. These organizations included the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare, begun in October of 1917 and the National Lutheran Council, which began in 1918.[25] Work continued through these groups even after the conclusion of the war.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), which required complete confessional agreement with any church before they could work with them, initially became involved in the National Lutheran Commission but soon withdrew. The Synod outright declined to participate in the National Lutheran Council and thus maintained their policy of isolation, even from other Lutherans. They did, however, have to maintain minimal cooperation with the umbrella groups due to the government's refusal to work with small denominations.[26]

In the interim between the wars, synods continued the process of discovering what it meant to them to be Lutheran in the United States. As generations of the newer immigrants began to be further removed from the old country, more dialogue and a few mergers occurred,

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[25] Nelson, 6.

[26] Ibid., 19.

such as the creation of the American Lutheran Church in 1930 out of the Iowa, Buffalo and Ohio Synods.[27]

During this decade, a theological controversy arose that would hold implications for merger negotiations in the decades to come. This was the debate over scriptural inerrancy. The most conservative churches, including the Buffalo, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin Synods, agreed in the Intersynodical Theses, written between 1925-1928, that Scripture is "*verbally* inspired and without errors or contradictions." The middle of the spectrum, the American Lutheran Conference,* used phrasing such as "inerrant Word of God" or "inspired Word" and "infallible authority." The most liberal stance, represented in particular by the United Lutheran Church of America (ULCA), recognized the Bible as the Word of God and the history of revelation. They also affirmed the contents of the Bible as inspired. [28]

World War II provided an even greater opportunity for inter-Lutheran cooperation. Since the mechanisms for aid were already in place, the work started as soon as the conflict. Many more of the laity became involved in these organizations and through these groups met people from the other synods. When faced with personal relationships with those whom they had only heard about as people from 'that other synod,' they found that they really were not so different.

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[27] Lagerquist, 118.

*The American Lutheran Conference was mostly made up of Midwestern German and Scandinavian Lutherans, excluding the Missouri Synod.

[28] Ralph W. Quere, *In the Context of Unity: A History of the Development of the Lutheran Book of Worship.* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2003), 17. All material in the paragraph falls under this citation.

Other synods were not something to be afraid of.[29] These relationships made it possible for the laity to accept and endorse eventual mergers.

War was also a time of great population mobility. As Lutherans moved around the United States, the trend emerged that, when searching for a new church, synodical allegiance did not play as great a role as many expected. People generally joined a church in which they felt comfortable, regardless of the synod to which it belonged. As always, there were exceptions. Members of the Missouri Synod by and large found another Missouri Synod congregation to join when relocating to a different part of the country.[30] As above, the more contact the laity had with each other the more willing they would be to consider mergers when suggested by the leadership.

After WWII, the mobility shifted to the academic sphere. Pastors and scholars did more advanced study both at home and overseas. During this study they encountered contemporary biblical research and theologians that changed their approach to the Bible and the view of the church in the world. This new outlook came to be known as "neo-Lutheranism," and it spread through the seminaries where the scholars were now teaching. Needless to say, neo-Lutheranism came into conflict with the established form of Lutheranism or "old Lutheranism."[31]

Old Lutheranism held on to the tenets of the Orthodox movement, particularly that of scriptural inerrancy. Neo-Lutheranism found that the historical-critical method of studying the Bible was not only helpful but necessary. Based on this, divine revelation had to be encountered as historical in nature. "Revelation was not the communication of sacred information about God;

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[29] Nelson, 159.

[30] Ibid., 160.

[31] Ibid., 164-165.

rather, it was the judging and redemptive action of God, his self-disclosure in history."[32] If revelation was not a divine command but a reaction to history, theology and doctrine could not be static: they must always be changing, meaning that the Lutheran Confessions were not to be ascribed to word for word but understood and lived out. Neo-Lutheranism also re-evaluated the doctrine of two realms and concluded that Christians live in both the secular and the sacred realms under Christ. This understanding revised the "orthodox-pietist" view that the two realms were separate with an absolute law in each. The revision of these concepts resulted, among other things, in a new emphasis on ecumenism and social action.[33]

Thus, the perspective of neo-Lutheranism removed barriers to both intra-Lutheran unity and ecumenical work. Living the Confessions meant that it was not enough to either affirm or deny their contents. "Confessional subscription meant acceptance of the understanding of the gospel as witnessed to in the confessions. He who received the gospel as taught in the confessions was a Lutheran."[34] This view considerably broadened the previous definition of what it meant to be Lutheran because it allowed for more viewpoints than insistence on doctrinal purity allowed. In addition it expanded the concept of the greater Church into a Christ/gospel centric definition and therefore increased the groups that, given this view, Lutherans *should* be working with.

The formation of the ALC and the LCA

Ultimately, it was emphasis that prevented the forming of one body instead of two, though the doctrinal issues between old Lutheranism and neo-Lutheranism did initially play a

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[32] Ibid., 165.

[33] Nelson, 166.

[34] Ibid., 166.

role. The American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United [Danish] Evangelical Lutheran Church merged to form the American Lutheran Church (ALC) in 1960. The United Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the Finnish Suomi Synod, and the American Evangelical [Danish] Lutheran Church merged to form the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) in 1962.[35]

By the time all of the little synods got around to merging into the two bigger synods, the theological reasons for two separate synods no longer existed. Discussions of unity in the American Lutheran Conference, already underway in 1948, included all of the synods that were to become the new ALC plus Augustana. With the exception of Augustana, the churches held a more old Lutheran view of the Bible, though Augustana managed to add a neo-Lutheran touch to some of the documents. By 1952 it became apparent to Augustana, who wished to emphasize Lutheran unity, that true structural unity could not be created under the premises set up by the other churches, so they withdrew from merger negotiations and moved toward the other future LCA churches.[36] The old Lutheran position was then re-established and talks continued.

By 1955, some involved realized that there might have been a better way to go about things, but when the ULCA and Augustana invited all other American Lutheran Churches to consider a merger that would reflect their vision of true Lutheran unity, those already involved in merger negotiations declined because they were currently in the middle of the process. The leaders of the merger process recognized that it was a bad reason for denying the invitation, yet they continued with the existing talks. Some scholars openly expressed the concern that two

[35] Ibid., 174.

[36] Nelson, 180.

mergers would cause more discord than unity, but they had little influence, and two churches were created.[37]

While the ALC had started to move away from the old Lutheran position by the time it formed, it was conservative enough in doctrine that Missouri could consider working with it. Therefore, the ALC saw its role as a mediating body between the conservatism of the LCMS and the LCA at the opposite end of the spectrum. The LCA, as shown above, was conceived with a focus on unity and ecumenism. Therefore the LCA's motivations required it to work to create something new not just preserve the status quo until enough outside influences caused the Synods to move close enough together to merge.

From this examination of the structural history of Lutheranism in America several conclusions can be drawn. Ethnic identity and physical location had more of an impact on the creation of separate denominations than differences in theology. This can be concluded because groups merged as members assimilated and took on an American identity and found that they were not so different from each other in theology and practice. Also apparent from this discussion of history is the power of both individual leaders and group thought to influence the structure. Muhlenberg, as a strong leader was able to bring together many separate churches into a larger structure and the Norwegians withdrew from the Augustana Synod at the insistence of parishioners. Finally, events in society (particularly wars) provided occasions where people of different synods not only had the opportunity but were forced to work together. These occasions did more to advance structural unity than anything leaders had done intentionally.

[37] Ibid., 180-183.

Chapter Three

Common Worship as Preparation for Unity

When events surrounding the various mergers in American Lutheran history are compared an interesting pattern emerges. Each large merger (ULCA in 1918, ALC in 1960, and the LCA in 1962) was preceded by cooperation on and the publishing of a common hymnal. Could common worship be so powerful that its practice drew the involved synods together? Or was it being used deliberately as a tool by leaders attempting to foster structural unity? This chapter seeks to answer these questions by examining the events preceding and following the the creation of shared worship materials.

As discussed above, some attempts had been made to create specifically American worship materials, with varying degrees of success and on the small scale at the synod level. The first concentrated effort to produce common worship material began in late 1800s when the General Council, the General Synod, and the General Synod South began discussing the possibility of preparing a common service book. Luther D. Reed, a liturgist involved in both the creation of the *Common Service Book* and the *Service Book and Hymnal*, in his study of the common Lutheran liturgy of America, cites a resolution from a meeting of the General Synod South in 1876 as the beginning of this endeavor.

> *Resolved,* That, with the view to promote uniformity in worship and strengthening the bonds of unity throughout all our churches, the committee on the Revision of the Book of Worship, be instructed to confer with the Evangelical Lutheran General Synod in the United States, and the feasibility of adopting but one Book containing the same hymns and the same order of services and the Liturgic forms to be used in the public Worship of God in all the English-speaking Evang. Lutheran Churches of the United States.[38]

[38] Luther D. Reed. *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America*. Revised ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 183.

The leaders of this movement realized that people needed to have something in common besides a name before they would consider themselves of the same group. The other synods eventually agreed and in 1885 the Joint Committee on a Common Service Book was established.[39] This is a very deliberate use of the creation of shared worship materials to achieve a set outcome. Not all examples are this intentional.

Though in the end the Synods could not agree on one standard form of the liturgy contained in the common book, the points of disagreement were small enough that in 1888 each synod published essentially the same book with minor variations. In the estimation of Reed, "the Common Service immediately drew the constituencies of the three general bodies closer together. Appreciation of a common birthright quickened a common spirit and endeavor."[40] Reed does not provide tangible examples besides the hymnals of just how the general bodies came closer together. Sometimes such effects cannot be exactly identified but their influence reflected upon from later in history. In addition is it significant that other Lutheran bodies not involved in its creation were quick to appreciate the work for its literary and liturgical merits and gained permission to use the book in their own English worship services. These synods included the Iowa Synod, the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Missouri Synod, the Norwegian synods, the Augustana Synod and the Icelandic Synod, thus spreading the goal of common worship even farther than originally conceived.[41]

The work of the Joint Committee did not stop with the publication in 1888. It continued to meet and supervise other English publications useful to the church. By 1910 the Committee

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[39] Reed, 185.

[40] Ibid., 197.

[41] Ibid., 197-198.

decided that it was time to create a common service that was truly common, with no more variations among synods. In addition, the Committee wanted to include musical settings for the liturgy and add hymns to the book. The resulting work was the *Common Service Book and Hymnal,* published in 1918.[42]

In 1918 the three Synods that had worked together on the Joint Committee merged to create the United Lutheran Church in America. It should be noted that these three Synods had the most in common historically, being the oldest of the East Coast bodies. The merger was almost more of a reuniting than a new merger. Nevertheless, this merger did realize the hope of unity that motivated the leaders who created the Joint Committee on Worship and is a tangible example of the deliberate use of common worship by leaders to draw people together.

The *Service Book and Hymnal* of 1958

By the mid-1930s, the church bodies started to consider the need for new worship materials. In 1934 the American Lutheran Conference* elected a committee to revise the liturgy. The Augustana Synod began revisions on its own hymnal in 1936. In 1938 the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) resolved to study liturgy, and in 1942 the old American Lutheran Church also began to meditate on revisions. Included in almost all of the official resolutions to begin considering a new hymnal was the stated intention to reach out to other Lutheran bodies to consider the creation of a common hymnal. There is no evidence that any of the churches was in communication with any other on this issue; the desire for a common liturgy was independently

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[42] Reed, 203.

*The American Lutheran Conference, founded in 1930, was made up of the Ev. Lutheran Augustana Synod in North America, the Norwegian Lutheran church of America, the United Danish Ev. Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Free Church. The Conference dissolved in the late 1950s as differences arose among the Synods due to the merger negotiations.

shared.[43] This means that the interest in cooperation that could lead to unity existed before work on a common hymnal.

In 1944, both the ULCA and the American Lutheran Conference officially proposed to revise hymnals and seek the cooperation of other churches. Again, these were independent acts on the parts of the two bodies. Work together actually began in 1945 when the ULCA invited other churches to a conference on the topic. Four attended, the ULCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegians ELC), the American Lutheran Conference, and the Augustana Synod, and agreed to start work on a common hymnal and service. Initial analysis of the hymnals already in use in the churches showed that there was more in common than previously thought, with many of the hymns being present in all four books.[44]

In addition the majority of services were being conducted in English, and several churches were using English translations of liturgies from Europe. However, the majority of Lutherans in the United States were using the Common Service (1888), and it was included in all of the hymnals, of which each body had its own.[45] The committee decided that to do justice to the project a compilation of the liturgies could not be used. Instead, comprehensive surveys were done of the liturgies of many traditions, and the most important elements of all of them were considered in the creation of the liturgy found in the new hymnal. Luther D. Reed, chair of the entire project, summed up the new liturgy as follows. "In spirit and form the Common Liturgy is historic and not individual or sentimental; its tone is devotional and not dogmatic; its outlook is ecumenical rather than narrowly confessional or provincial; its total impact is that of a

[43]E. E. Ryden, "The Common Hymnal." *Lutheran Quarterly* 2, no 3 (August 1950): 269-271.

[44] Ryden, 272-273.

[45] Reed, 207.

contemporary form well adapted to the requirements of a continent-wide constituency."[46] Apparent in this view of the liturgy is the intent to avoid being influenced too much by one historical tradition, balancing the "head and heart" tension between the Orthodox and the pietists. Whether the liturgy would live up to Reed's summation had to be left to history. Given how soon after the publication of the *Service Book and* Hymnal (SBH) plans for more liturgical revisions were made, Reed was perhaps a touch optimistic about the influence the new liturgy would have.

As work continued, more churches became involved. The Finnish Suomi Synod joined the project in 1946, and the Lutheran Free Church joined in 1947. A hitch arose in the thus-far smooth project in 1948. The ELC moved to adopt the new hymnal but requested to be allowed to add a supplement of the things they felt were important but not included in the general hymnal. Despite the fact that the whole purpose of the creation of the hymnal was to remove such differences, the committee agreed that a supplement was allowable, but under strictly regulated provisions and at the expense of the church adding the supplement.[47] This request was officially withdrawn in 1956, removing the final obstacle to creating a common hymnal.[48]

Since structural unity, at least in liturgy, was a goal from the beginning of the joint effort, the creators and reviewers of the text held very optimistic outlooks for the book and its impact on the future of the Church. In 1947 Reed summarized his thoughts on the book and the potential it held for the future.

> The *Service Book and Hymnal* is a flexible and powerful instrument for the promotion of church consciousness, unity and loyalty. Intelligent and general use of it will harmonize and unify the church in a constructive development, which has the promise of permanence because it is doctrinally and historically grounded, comprehensive and

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[46] Reed, 212.

[47] Ryden, 277-278.

[48] Reed, 217.

> consistent. Individualism and provincialism must give way before an informed church consciousness of significant dimensions.[49]

He continues, postulating that the SBH is ahead of the church and that it was created in the spirit of "progressive conservatism" to try to attain the richness of worship that the Reformers achieved and the Orthodox and pietist movements erased (an opinion which could be contested by those who recognized the merits of Orthodox and pietist worship material). Implied in this entire view is the expectancy that the Church will adjust to the new hymnal and subsequently progress to greater heights of unity and worship.[50] *The Service Book and Hymnal* was finally published in 1958.

Perhaps Reed, as chair of the commission, was too imbedded in the process to distinguish hopes from reality. In his 1961 article "An Appraisal of the Hymn Texts in the Service Book and Hymnal," author Benjamin Lotz calls for a total analysis of the new hymnal in order to make revisions as soon as possible. Though at the time of his writing the SBH had only been in print a couple of years, Lotz claims to have found more criticisms than praises and to have identified some serious deficiencies in the process of creating the hymnal.[51] The most serious of the criticisms is that the needs of congregations were not taken into account. When the commission interacted with congregations, it was more to present information than to gather feedback on materials. In addition Lotz finds that "the predilections of certain members of the commission" heavily influenced the selection of hymns and approach to the hymnal, enough to be discernable.[52] Indeed Carl Schalk notes "that one of the chief architects of both the CSB

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[49] Reed, 222.

[50] Ibid., 224.

[51] Benjamin Lotz, "An Appraisal of the Hymn Texts in the Service Book and Hymnal," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, no 2. (May 1961): 113.

[*Common Service Book*] and the SBH was prominent Lutheran liturgical scholar Luther D. Reed concerned some who wished to see a greater emphasis on Reformation hymnody."[53] This indicates that perhaps there is some foundation to Lotz's criticism of personal preference apparent in the hymns selected for the SBH.

In order to focus his article, Lotz applies his criticisms to the hymn texts of the SBH. In addition to the apparent influence of personal preference, Lotz argues that the approach used to include hymns will confuse the common person in the pew. This is because hymns were not edited for the sake of consistency, rather just included in the form the commission found them. This lends to inconsistencies such as inconsistent spellings, i.e. Sion vs. Zion, and archaic syntax which Lotz claims will appear to be a misprint to the person in the pew.[54] In addition he finds fault with the use of obscure terminology, less literary hymns where meaning is difficult to discern, and the inclusion of too many mystical hymns.

Perhaps the most serious of Lotz's criticisms deals with the doctrine of the hymns. "The criterion of a correct understanding of the Gospel seems not to have been the dominant one in the preparation of the hymnal."[55] Especially troublesome to Lotz are the eucharistic hymns. For example the hymn "Thee we Adore, O Hidden Saviour," by Thomas Aquinas is included in the SBH. "Like many eucharistic hymns from similar sources, the stress seems to be on a localized presence of Christ in the elements. This tendency was common among hymn writers of the last

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[52] Lotz, 116.

[53] Carl Schalk, "Some Thoughts on the Hymnody of *Lutheran Book of Worship*: Context, Issues, and Legacy," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 5 (Oct 2003): 368.

[54] Lotz, 116-117.

[55] Ibid., 122.

century, but the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper stresses a *personal* presence."[56] He also notes that the hymns lack an evangelical note traditionally important to Lutheran worship. His view seems to contradict Reed's assessment of "progressive conservatism" mentioned above.

Lotz's criticisms seem to have a conservative edge to them, especially his insistence on "correct doctrine" in hymn texts. He does recognize that the commission might have had a greater intention for worship in the book than he can see, but his point is that if he, a scholar, cannot understand this, then the laity surely will not. In addition his thoughts mirror the struggle of the Lutheran Church to define itself in the American experience. The tension between Lutheran doctrine in worship and the availability of good translations, the influence of other stronger denominations, and the influx of confessionally grounded immigrants into an established American Lutheran presence can all be found mirrored in the hymns of the *Service Book and Hymnal*.

Despite the struggle over Confessions and identity, pastors and leaders of the various Lutheran bodies were willing to work together. Without this willingness and initiative it is arguable that relationships between groups of Lutherans could not have been formed. Again, the leadership was aided by history, as the encountering of the "other" during times of war made the laity realize that they were very similar. Common worship served a similar function, but one that leaders could introduce on their own terms and intentions. As such, the common hymnal logically arose, advocated by those who saw unity as a goal within reach.

Therefore, the common hymnal can neither be the cause or the result of unity, but a mix of both. It cannot be the cause of unity because the historical factors that preceded the common hymnal's creation laid the groundwork for the different churches to seek each other out. Nor can

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[56] Lotz, 123.

it be the result of unity because the project was completed before the mergers that created more unity happened. Instead, the common hymnal must be seen as both a mediating factor and a tool in the quest for unity. Each community involved worshipped in some way before the creation of the hymnal, therefore it was a logical place (for those wishing to foster unity) to begin searching for commonalities. Once commonalities were established and unity was seen as feasible, the role of the common hymnal switched to that of tool which could be used to show that a merger was practical and logical since the community was worshipping in the same way.

The Lutheran Book of Worship

The creation of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW) had implications not only for structural unity among Lutherans but also their relationship with the ecumenical movement, as will be seen in the discussion of the reform of the liturgy. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had been invited to take part in the process that created the SBH but at the time had just published their own book, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), and so declined the offer. The 1953 LCMS convention decided to revise *The Lutheran Hymnal*.[57] It was a slow process and work had not been completed by the early 1960s when it was even more evident (due to the cultural shift of the time period that included questioning authority and greater sensitivity to inclusive language) that liturgical reforms were necessary. In addition, some members of LCMS felt that it would be inappropriate to proceed without the cooperation of all Lutherans. [58]

At the same time, despite the fact that the SBH had only been published in 1958, so many serious criticisms of the book had been made* that the joint ALC/LCA Commission on Liturgy

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[57] Quere, 19.

[58] Phillip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship: Lutheran Liturgy in Its Ecumenical Context*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 4-5.

* Refer back to the criticisms of Lotz pages 32-34.

and the Hymnal began to contemplate once again the need for a new book. Again the LCMS was approached in 1963 and this time agreed to work with the others. Because of its strictly confessional stance, the only way LCMS could work with the other churches was if it initiated the process. With that aim in mind the LCMS convention in 1965 extended an invitation to the LCA and the ALC to begin considering liturgical reforms. Schalk notes that "the 1965 resolution of the LCMS convention clearly envisioned liturgical and hymnic materials 'under a single cover.'"[59] It is important for later discussion to note that the initial intention of the LCMS *was* to create a hymnal that would be used in conjunction with other denominations. The churches accepted and the Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship (ILCW) was formed and met for the first time in 1966.

As mentioned above, the SBH was still a relatively new hymnal, and it seems odd that the churches that created it would be so willing to start on another hymnal. However, Phillip H. Pfatteicher in his commentary on the LBW cites several reasons this was an attractive offer. First, there was a new wave of interest in ecumenical relations and wider Christian unity brought about by the Second Vatican Council. Out of the Second Vatican Council came significant liturgical reforms for the Roman Catholic Church. Other traditions, including the Episcopal Church and the United Methodists were engaged in some form of liturgical reform. [60] Second, Pfatteicher points toward the widespread social change occurring at the time. The rapid pace at which society was changing, especially the questioning of existing structures, made liturgical reform necessary because the existing liturgy (though new) was no longer relevant to the

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[59] Schalk, "Some Thoughts on the Hymnody of *Lutheran Book of Worship*," 366.

[60] Pfatteicher, 1-2.

worshippers.[61] If the Lutheran Church wished to retain members, it needed to provide something that could be meaningful to people.

As the ILCW began revisions, they published and distributed (ultimately) ten worship supplements to interested congregations. With the later supplements, an evaluation form was included. In this way, the reform of the liturgy became the work of the church and not just the committee.

> The work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission of Worship was not an effort by an elitist few but was the result of a clear consensus of the cooperating churches and their representatives, tested and refined by theological discussion and by trial use in representative parishes. Moreover, the passage of a decade gave the churches a longer view of the work and enabled more informed discussions about what would endure and what was temporary and passing.[62]

The long passage of time allowed for liturgical experiments to be made and lived with for a while. Those that were judged to be successful were kept and put into the LBW and those that did not work out were abandoned. In addition, the liturgy in the LBW is truly ecumenical. The liturgical reforms and decisions of other denominations were taken into consideration when putting it together, and the commission took advantage of the work done by the International Consultation on English Texts, which was created out of the desire by many different denominations for common versions of texts as a sign of unity.

The LBW made great strides towards providing a visible manifestation of the commitment to intra-Lutheran unity and ecumenism by the Churches involved in its creation because it was such a joint effort. Even the listing of the Churches involved on the title page serves as a reminder that others are using the book as well. However, before it can be lauded as a

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[61] Pfatteicher, 5-6.

[62] Ibid., 8.

true shining symbol of intra-Lutheran unity, it must be mentioned that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who issued the invitation to work on the project, pulled out just before the hymnal went to print. Their reasons for doing so will be discussed in the next chapter, but this action on their part reversed their gradual movement toward other Lutheran Churches that had been occurring since the late 1800s and was a visible counter example to the great push toward unity occurring at the time.

This discussion of common worship materials is somewhat inconclusive. While it is obvious that work on a hymnal provides opportunities for different synods to create common ground and some have done so intentionally, the mergers happened so soon after the publication of the hymnals that common worship cannot be solely responsible. In addition a desire to work together had to exist before the invitation to work together could be extended or accepted. On the other hand such a visible sign of unity cannot be ignored and therefore the common hymnals must have had some influence, though just what is hard to say.

Chapter Four

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Since the definitions of unity and identity are so different for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod its one involvement in the preparation of common worship materials can act as a counter example to the other synods examined. Yet despite the different actions of the LCMS can the meaning of them ultimately be the same and affirm the actions of the other synods? This chapter seeks to answer this question in the context of the history of the Missouri Synod.

The involvement of the Missouri Synod in the creation of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* is also an example of leadership heavily influencing the direction of a church; in this case, in opposition to the prevailing sentiment and expectation of laity, pastors, and theologians. The decisions made by the president, J. A. O. Preus, were historically understandable due to the preservation mentality of LCMS doctrine. However, under the leadership that preceded Preus, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had been more willing to explore working with others.

As far as Lutheran denominations in the U.S. go, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has probably changed the least. The founding members arrived in the United States in 1839 and were a group of Saxon Lutherans who could be characterized by their piety and religious practice as well as their attachment to the whole of the Lutheran Confessions. They exemplify the Orthodox movement in its later forms, particularly as they foundationally subscribe to the Confessions as uncorrupted and the Bible as inerrant.[63] To be in fellowship with other Lutheran groups, the LCMS considered full doctrinal agreement to be necessary. The founders of the Synod, who formed the group in opposition to the Prussian Union, implemented much of this

[63] Pfatteicher, 119.

neo-confessional position. This has been much of the reason for the unchanging nature of the LCMS.

National heritage is also important to understanding the LCMS, since it has traditionally been an exclusively German group. Germans formed a great majority of the Lutheran immigrants to the United States. Some of the earliest Lutherans were of German origins. As different groups of Germans arrived, they formed their own churches and moved through the assimilation process in the same way as other nationalities. This particular group, however, worked to maintain their exclusive German identity. In fact much of what motivates the doctrines and actions of the LCMS is a desire to maintain the identity with which the group began. Thus, the meaning of identity and unity in the eyes of the Missouri Synod are essentially the same, as both require complete doctrinal agreement. This and other factors have prevented the types of mergers that occurred among the other synods.

Several times the LCMS had taken a part in larger groups of Lutherans, even if only from the margins. If, however, they are present at inter-Lutheran gatherings that discuss theology, it is only in the role of observer. Therefore it was rather surprising when the LCMS agreed to work on a common hymnal with the LCA and the ALC. At the time the LCMS and the ALC did have a fellowship agreement, signaling perhaps that the denomination was, for a time, opening up a little. This openness may have something to do with the leadership, since the withdrawal from cooperation occurred shortly after J.A.O. Preus was elected president of the church. If the change in leadership from one person to another could change policy that drastically then this is another example of the importance of structural leadership on the direction of a Synod.

Throughout the process of creating the LBW, the Missourians were willing but difficult partners. Every part of the worship service and hymn texts needed to be doctrinally correct, so

many compromises had to be made on the part of the ALC and LCA. As the project neared completion in 1977, surveys of LCMS congregations, which had tried out test materials found that congregations viewed the LBW favorably and in a poll taken indicated sixty percent of LCMS clergy viewed the LBW in a positive light.[64] However, the president and some seminary professors pushed for more delays. Though the LBW was supposed to go to print in 1978, the Missouri timeline delayed the possibility of their approval until at least 1979. At this point the other churches involved in the project decided to move ahead with the previously scheduled printing in spite of whatever Missouri decided to do. This decision and the LCMS's subsequent creation of a new hymnal, made from much of the LBW material, essentially ended the possibility for fellowship between the LCMS and other churches. Though the LCMS had moderated post WWII, the other churches' decision to ordain women added another almost insurmountable obstacle to fellowship.

Within the LCMS there was disagreement over the LBW as well. In 1977 after it became apparent that the chances the LBW would be used in the LCMS were slim the whole LCMS commission on worship resigned. They were upset because the higher ups would never accept it, no matter how many revisions they instituted. Ultimately it came down to the problem of fellowship with the other churches. The use of a common hymnal could imply that not only was the hymnal common but the doctrine was as well.[65]

This reaction by J.A.O. Preus and the other LCMS leaders is a, perhaps unintentional, acknowledgement of the powerful influence of common worship on unity in the church. Their actions indicate that it was purity of doctrine that they were most concerned about, but why is

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[64] Quere, 211.

[65] Ibid., 217.

purity of doctrine so important in the Missouri Synod? The founders of the Synod, as mentioned above, placed heavy importance on doctrinal purity to *prevent* mergers with other churches. If common worship is powerful enough to influence the doctrine of such a doctrinally protective group, then its status as a powerful tool for unity is affirmed by the actions of the LCMS leaders.

Therefore it was not a surprise when Preus finally authorized the new committee to begin gathering materials for a new service book and hymnal. Many involved in the LBW process were upset at what they felt was a manipulation of the process on the part of high leadership.[66] Ultimately a new book was created that looked markedly similar to the LBW, though there were some Missouri congregations that ordered the LBW regardless of the new book. Though the leadership, especially Preus, acted in the interests of the traditional confessional unity of the Missouri Synod, their method did little to win supporters within the denomination and between others.

The example of the LCMS at this time runs counter to the previous examples of leadership influenced structural unity. First, the actions taken on the part of the leadership, especially Preus, were intended to *preserve* unity as understood by the LCMS instead of create unity as understood by the other Lutherans involved in the process. This distinction makes the actions of the LCMS defensive instead of cooperative. Second, one figure, Preus, held more authority than the leadership in the other churches, and when there was disagreement among the leadership his decision overruled dissent. In previous processes, when there had been disagreement among leaders, there was generally an opportunity for conversation to express concerns and potentially work out a compromise. The authoritarian status of the LCMS president prevented such discussion as could be useful and made some seem unappreciated.

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[66] Quere, 219.

Thus, the actions of the Missouri Synod in their own way affirm the power of common worship and the influence of a single person. Preus, in the capacity of leader drastically changed the course his synod was taking, returning from a period of openness to a very conservative stance. Withdrawing from the LBW project was part of this move but at the same time affirmed the power of common worship to create doctrinal and structural unity.

Chapter Five

The ELCA and the Future of Church Unity

The intent of this chapter is to examine what has happened since the publication of the LBW with the forming of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the publication of a new hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and answer the following questions: How is the process that formed the ELCA different or similar to other mergers? Does the quest for unity change with the creation of the ELCA, if at all? No merger has followed the publication of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, has the role of worship changed since the ELCA? The influence of leaders will be noted along with the discussion of these questions.

Though the creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was a long process and one very open to observation, it is significant that Edgar R. Trexler, editor of *The Lutheran* magazine and member of the Committee on Lutheran Unity, cites the friendship between the presidents of the ALC and LCA in the early 1970s as a reason that merger was even discussed early on. "The friendship between the two presidents—both newly elected, Marshall in 1968 and Knutson in 1970—made it easy for them to discuss how their respective churches might reorganize along similar lines."[67] Perhaps even more important to the merger discussion was the death of Knutson in 1973. His replacement, David W. Preus, was not a proponent of structural unity so much as confessional unity. It is significant that in the process that brought together roughly two-thirds of the Lutherans in the United States the opinion of the laity was at least asked if not taken into consideration.

The first official call to begin merger talks came in 1978 from the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). This was a new group in the world of Lutheran bodies

[67] Edgar R. Trexler, *Anatomy of A Merger: People, Dynamics, and Decisions that Shaped the ELCA*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991), 1.

that had formed in 1976 after breaking away from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in reaction to a long dispute over biblical interpretation. The LCA and ALC accepted the call, and the Committee on Lutheran Unity was formed to include members of all three churches and began meeting in January of 1979. Each group came with a slightly different motive.

These differences relate back to the goals with which the two Synods began. The LCA, with the constitutional responsibility to seek structural unity felt that if theological differences were taken care of first the structural part would logically fall into place. The ALC, acting as a mediator between the theological ends of the spectrum, found structure to be a stumbling block to Lutheran unity. Achieving Lutheran Unity, according to Article VII of the Augusburg Confession, which just required acceptance of the proper interpretation of the gospel and the sacraments for unity, was much easier to achieve than trying to combine the existing structures of the churches. The AELC, set up as an interim church, simply wanted to merge before they dissolved due to their tenuous status.[68] Ultimately the three bodies did not hold theological stances that were that different from one another; the motives behind each group were different.

The early stages of the process proceeded slowly, as the committee tried to come up with a theological justification for unity, and David Preus delayed. Finally, the committee suggested that congregations in each of the three bodies be presented with some options. They could voice their opinion and, if there was a consensus, the national conventions of each church could vote on the proposed union in 1982. Significantly Preus agreed to abide by the decision of his congregations.[69] Ultimately, the support of the laity for unity in the ALC moved the process

[68] Trexler, 5.

[69] Ibid., 18-19.

forward faster than urging by the leadership of other churches. In this way, the process departed from the previous trend of unity originating with leaders.

Four options were ultimately presented to the conventions. Type 1: the three churches maintain their current structure and find more ways to work together. Type 2: a church be formed to deal with international and some national functions but maintain existing structures. Type 3: form a large church with international responsibilities and several large geographical structures within the church. Type 4: form one church with lesser structures established along geographic lines to aid the day-to-day functioning of the church.[70] All three conventions chose to proceed with the study, and even the ALC voted overwhelmingly to move forward. At the same ALC convention David Preus was almost not reelected president. It took until the third ballot and even then the vote was 560 in favor and 408 against. Trexler attributes this close vote to Preus's anti-merger stance and regards it to be a sign that the opinion of the laity differed from his. [71] Whether that was *the* reason for the close vote is impossible to say, but it may have had a part in it.

Materials were circulated and various groups weighed in through the various church periodicals. An opinion poll was taken. The results showed that the majority polled favored union and the type 4 (one church) structure.* David Preus, facing public opinion, stopped his stalling and began to work wholeheartedly to form the new church. It was not so much that he had been opposed to merger. He saw that as inevitable. Rather he and the ALC favored a slower timeline than advocated by the LCA and AELC which might allow time to include the Missouri

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[70] Trexler, 23.

[71] Ibid., 25.

* For the numerical results of the opinion poll see Appendix A.

Synod or other more conservative Lutheran groups. A time table was constructed for the formation of the new church, beginning with the conventions voting to commit to the process in 1982 and ending with the constituting convention for the new church projected for 1987-88.[72] The time table provided for a very quick process considering the amount of work to be done.

With this decided, the Committee on Lutheran Unity began to discuss the make-up of the merger commission. Numbers aside, it became clear that all constituents of the churches needed to be represented on the committee. Therefore quotas were established. Though, in the end, the quotas were suggested rather than required, all of the bodies met or exceeded the quotas. They provided places on the commission for the representation of women, minorities, and a balance of lay and clergy, meaning that the latest step toward unity was not supposed to be taken by the high leadership alone but with the support and input of the laity.

After years of work to build the new church, the constituting convention met in Columbus, Ohio, on April 30, 1987 and in a voice vote, the delegates unanimously approved the new constitution. The first operating day of the ELCA was January 1, 1988.[73] The church worked to adjust for two years before presiding Bishop H. Chilstrom ordered a restructuring of the church, which was adopted in 1991. The growing pains of the new body, while interesting, are not relevant to this paper, what is relevant is that despite difficulties, the church adjusted and has functioned now for twenty years.

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[72] Trexler, 33.

[73] Ibid., 232.

As the ELCA seems to be stable and looks to be intact for a while, the discussion about unity has to take a different angle.* Up to this point the unity we have been concerned about is structural intra-Lutheran unity. The creation of the ELCA seems to have achieved all feasible mergers, as the only Lutherans left outside of the ELCA are those who will not consider mergers due to doctrinal considerations.

This issue of the next step on the path to unity was specifically addressed in the document "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" adopted at the church-wide assembly August 30, 1991. The document defines ecumenism as "the joyous experience of the unity of Christ's people and the serious task of expressing that unity visibly and structurally to advance the proclamation of the Gospel for the blessing of humankind."[74] The document maintains that the Church still retains its confessional character, referring to Article VII of the Augusburg Confession, which declares that it is enough to agree on the teaching of the gospel and the administering of the sacraments for Christian unity. At the same time retaining its confessional identity, the document acknowledges that commitment to the Confessions must be balanced with the commitments to the evangelical, catholic, and ecumenical nature of the ELCA.

Work with larger organizations, such as the Lutheran World Federation, and local ecumenical projects help fulfill the call to Christian unity for the ELCA. The one qualification is that "official membership will be established only with such ecumenical organizations as are

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*This statement is made with the full knowledge of those who project that the ELCA will not survive decisions over controversial issues, most recently the ordination of members of the GLBT community.

[74] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the ELCA," http://www.archive.elca.org/ecumenical/vision.html#II (accessed November 30, 2008): section A. paragraph 2.

composed exclusively of churches, which confess Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Savior."[75] This does not disqualify inter-faith dialogue, which is seen as extremely important but a different kind of relationship.

Up to this point the term "Christian unity" has been used but with little indication of what that actually looks like whether in structure as in inter-denominational mergers or in word only. Section D. of the document spells it out clearly.

> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is an active participant in the ecumenical movement, because of its desire for Christian unity. It seeks full communion as its goal, i.e., the fullest or most complete actualization of unity possible before the parousia with all those churches that confess the Triune God.[76]

Once again common worship is a factor in discussions of unity but this time it is *the* full expression of unity. Common worship is also seen in its old role as a tool to foster unity.

The document recognizes that full communion will not happen instantaneously and outlines a four stage progression. The first stage is to enter into ecumenical cooperation, which defines the initial relationship between the denominations, then moves into stage two: either bilateral or multilateral dialogues. Stage three, preliminary recognition, can take one of two forms. After stages one and two, the churches can enter into partial agreements in doctrine and recognition of church and sacraments. Or, a fuller agreement in doctrine can be reached, partial recognition of ordained ministers exchanged and commitments to work for full communion expressed in addition to the lifting of any mutual condemnations from the past. Stage four is full communion, which means that the churches mutually recognize Baptism and the sharing of the

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[75] "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment," section c paragraph 4.

[76] Ibid., section D. para 1.

Lord's Supper and are allowed to share in joint worship and exchange both members and ordained ministers.[77]

As of now, the ELCA has full communion agreements with five other denominations: the Reformed Church in America, The United Church of Christ and Presbyterian Church USA (all in 1997) and the Moravian Church and the Episcopal Church (in 1999). In addition the ELCA has an interim eucharistic sharing agreement with the United Methodist Church and is currently in bilateral discussions with seven other denominations.[78] While some of these full communion agreements have been very controversial, especially with the Episcopal Church, the leadership of the ELCA has seen fit to forge ahead despite the critics.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Again, worship can be used as a gauge to reflect how the church works. Thirty years have passed since the LBW was published. Its contents have stood the test of time, and what worked and what did not has been analyzed. In a 2003 article reviewing the successes and failures of the LBW, liturgical scholar Carlos R. Messerli picks fourteen innovations found in the LBW and assesses how they have withstood time. He finds that the emphasis on the sacraments in the LBW has strengthened the sacramental basis of worship, and implementation of the three-year lectionary and the addition of an Old Testament reading have increased biblical literacy. He also

[77] A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment," section D.

[78] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Full Communion." Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion.aspx,(accessed November 19, 2008).

lauds the role of the assisting minister as helping to greatly increase lay participation in worship.[79]

Not all fourteen points are relevant to this paper, but he is clear in his conclusion that, if an innovation succeeded, it did so because of congregational leadership, and if it failed, "the reason for their rejection or 'failure' may be due not to the item or innovation itself but to pastoral or musical leadership not having sufficient knowledge or interest to stimulate congregational growth in these areas."[80] Once again, the importance of leaders with vision in the life of the Lutheran Church, whether they be presidents, pastors or lay, is given a tangible example. In the estimation of Messerli, the way innovations were made were more influential than the innovations themselves; that duty fell to leaders at all levels of the Church.

Other scholars generally agree with Messerli. Mons Teig, a professor of worship at Luther Seminary, lauds the emphasis on baptism, and in particular the tying of confession and forgiveness to the baptismal rite. He also notes that the pattern of Word and Sacrament deepens the worshipers' encounter with God through the Holy Spirit.[81] His only criticism is the lack of guidance that has been given to lay leaders of worship, which he feels would add meaning not only for the leaders but for the rest of the congregation as well. This criticism is less with the LBW as a resource than with the pastors and worship leaders implementing it. As he so eloquently puts it, "Any worship resource is like notes on a music score. It is not music until it is

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[79] Carlos R. Messerli, "*Lutheran Book of Worship:* Successes and Failures—A Review for Pastors and Musicians," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 5 (Oct 2003): 342.

[80] Messerli, 348.

[81] Mons Teig, "*Lutheran Book of Worship*: A Gift of the Church," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 5 (Oct 2003): 382.

sung and danced. It is not liturgy until the Word is proclaimed and Sacraments rightly administered and the Spirit breathes life into the valley of dry bones."[82]

Stephen J. Cornils, a pastor at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, reviewing the LBW after ten years echoes the praises of Messerli and Teig as well as the criticism about the book not being used to its full potential. In addition he laments the omission of Bach choral settings, and excluding some of the traditional Northern European hymns. At the same time he criticizes the lack of worship materials for Lutherans not of Northern European origin (his solution is to have worship supplements directed to these groups). After ten years, his assessment is that the LBW has not impacted congregations due to a lack of willingness to change but deeper understanding of worship would come from a congregation that was better prepared for it.[83]

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW), published in 2006, was intended to replace the LBW after almost three decades of use. As it is still a new resource, not all Lutheran Churches have been able to, or desired to, purchase the new books. Worship remains in a state of transition. In addition, it is virtually impossible to draw any conclusions about how the new resource will stand the test of time or whether all congregations will eventually accept it, but the approach taken can indicate something about the current position of the ELCA.

In her review of ELW, Jennifer Lord observes that the language used in ELW shows the difference in the intended use between ELW and the LBW "which was in part borne out of a need to provide Lutherans of different church bodies a way to sing and pray together, and ELW

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[82] Teig, 384.

[83] Stephen J. Cornils, "The *Lutheran Book of Worship* at Ten," *Word & World* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1989).

which reflects the one church assembling around the means of grace in a variety of ways."[84] In his commentary on the shape of worship in ELW, Thomas H. Shattauer focuses on "Mission as an Orienting Concept in ELW."[85] This shift in emphasis ties in with Lord's observation to provide an interesting look at the status of the Church today.

A main focus in the LBW liturgy is baptism and remembering baptism on a daily basis. For a book trying to draw people together and highlight commonalities, baptism is a good choice. The debate over infant baptism aside, it is the one ritual that most Christian denominations agree on and recognize each other's baptism. As seen above, baptism is one thing denominations must agree on if they are to have a full communion agreement. The emphasis on mission in ELW indicates a stability in the ELCA. It is as if the church, now secure in its internal affairs (or at least its ability to handle internal differences) is now free to look outward and extend the good news to others. In fact its constitution requires it to do so, meaning ELW at least attempts to put into practice liturgically the evangelical mission of the church while remaining a Lutheran resource.

Schattauer's comments seem to indicate that churches making their way past the little differences that are big stumbling blocks, paves the way to an even richer deeper understanding of the purpose of the Church, which in this case is seen as *mission* and is portrayed in the act of worship.

> The visible *gathering* of a people in the midst of the world around Jesus Christ alive and present to us in *word* and *meal* enacts the purpose of God to establish persons in communion with God and with one another. The *sending* forth from this gathering points

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[84] Jennifer Lord, review of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, *Worship* 82, no. 2 (Mar 2008): 175.

[85] Thomas H. Schattauer, "The Missional Shape of Worship in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 181.

> to the incompleteness of our gathering and the larger purpose of God toward the world, into which we are sent.[86]

Schattauer asserts that the theology of mission in worship is not new. What is new is the emphasis. With emphasis on the sacraments firmly established by the LBW, the missional character of ELW takes the next step and models what it means to live a sacramental life in the world. Whether this emphasis will have any affect on the life and shape of the Church remains to be seen.

While the approach to ELW might seem different from the previous approach, it must be remembered that the context of the book is different as well. Set in the context of a church with an ecumenical vision to reach out to other Christians, ELW can be used as a tool to let congregations experience other forms of worship with which they may not be familiar, while at the same time being rooted in the confessional emphasis of the Lutheran tradition. As in the aid organizations in the World Wars when people experience "the other" whether it be people or worship styles they become less afraid of and resistant to it. As with the commentaries on the LBW the materials in the ELW will only be valuable if used thoughtfully by pastors and those planning worship.

As with the other examples of hymnals formed through a cooperative effort the publication of the LBW was followed by the merger that created the ELCA. The creation of the ELCA was still heavily influenced by leaders of the church but was also an open process that included as many groups as possible and consulted the laity, more so than any of the previous mergers. With the new church body the work for unity became an ecumenical process in search of greater Christian unity expressed by full communion agreements as opposed to an intra-

[86] Schattauer, 183.

Lutheran endeavor. Since ELW was not a cooperative effort it departs from the previous model of hymnals but if used to its full capacity can be used as a tool in ecumenical work.

Conclusion

In the Epilogue to his commentary on the *Lutheran Book of Worship* Philip H. Pfatteicher makes the bold assertion:

> Liturgical revision in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not only preceded the unification of church bodies but encouraged and facilitated the process. The Common Service of 1888 and the *Common Service Book* of 1917 led to the formation of the United Lutheran Church in America. The *Service Book and Hymnal* of 1958 led to the creation of the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church. The *Lutheran Book of Worship* of 1978 led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Churches cooperating in revising their liturgical heritage came to trust each other as they worked in concert toward a common goal.[87]

Everything Pfatteicher asserts is true, but liturgical revision cannot take all of the credit for the mergers that occurred after the hymnals. Liturgical revision *did* precede the unification of all the church bodies mentioned and it *did* facilitate the process. What Pfatteicher does not take into account is that the desire for unity, brought on by other historical events, initiated work on liturgical revision in the first place. Work together affirmed the feasibility of this desire and the product was a useful tool for leaders to achieve the goal, but ultimately the inclination toward unity existed before common worship was discussed.

Forward-thinking leaders saw that the more Lutherans became *American* Lutherans the greater the possibility for unity among them. Particularly significant in this process were the wars that pepper the historical landscape. Each armed conflict brought more ways to share in common ideas, and despite divisions, there have always been a few leaders with a strong desire for greater corporate unity in the Church. At the same time there have always been leaders and groups with doctrines that either define unity differently or have no desire to seek it. Even strains

[87] Pfatteicher, 509.

of Lutheranism, which more often than not have expressed interest in greater unity, have split over theological and historical issues.

One thing that has remained constant throughout the American Lutheran experience is that those who desire unity or fellowship have the expressed the desire most often in the formation of common worship materials. By practicing unity before professing unity, the change comes as logical to those who might otherwise resist it.

Equally if not more important is the implementation of the common worship materials. As noted, especially in the case of the LBW, it is not enough to create the materials—they must also be used. The LCMS worked to produce the *Lutheran Book of Worship,* but at the very end of the process, when faced with implementing a powerful tool for unity, the leaders balked, and common worship was never given a chance. In congregations that did use the new book, the degree to which it was effective depended on how the worship leaders utilized the resource.

Finally, the creation of the ELCA seems to be the high point of intra-Lutheran unity in the American Lutheran experience. Given doctrinal differences, there are no other obvious mergers left to consolidate the synods either outside the ELCA and LCMS or between the two bodies, so the ELCA has set its sights on Christian unity. By Christian unity, the ELCA does not mean mergers with other denominations but a formal recognition of the shared faith in Jesus Christ and the sacraments. The most complete expression of this unity is the full communion agreement. This is the most intentional use of common worship to achieve unity yet. Not only is common worship a tool used during the process toward an ecumenical agreement but it is also the desired end result that shows the unity it worked to create.

Yet with each full communion agreement the question of what it means to be *Lutheran* in America changes and becomes more challenging. Any new worship materials produced must

balance the old and the new recognizing the tension between worship's recognition of history and its power to influence the future. Perhaps most important is that leaders introducing the new worship materials do it intentionally. What they emphasize will have long-reaching consequences for the American Lutheran experience.

Appendix A

Results of the Opinion Poll of the Committee on Lutheran Unity

From *Anatomy of A Merger* by Edgar R. Trexler page 31

Overall

14,308 delegates favored “uniting the churches in some form”

2,303 favored “retaining present structures”

623 were uncertain

1,270 expressed no opinion

Every district or synod of all three churches favored union.

Overall these results show a 6-1 preference for union.

LCA

86.6 % favored union, 70% voted for type 4

ALC

63.9% favored union, 52% voted for type 4

AELC

96% favored union, 58.8% voted for type 4

Annotated Bibliography

Brand, Eugene L. "The *Lutheran Book of Worship:* A Shaper of Lutheran Piety in North America." *Word & World* 9 no. 1 (Winter 1989): 37-45.

Brand was the project director of the LBW and was one of the most influential characters in mediating the different groups involved and directing the proceedings. He is also active in the Lutheran World Federation.

Cornils, Stephen J. "The *Lutheran Book of Worship* at Ten." *Word & World* 9 no. 1 (Winter 1989): 23-28.

Cornils is a pastor at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He writes from the perspective of a parish pastor. His criticisms of the LBW sometimes contradict themselves but reflect the views of one who has introduced the new book to a congregation.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "A Declaration of Ecumenical Commitment: A Policy Statement of the ELCA," http://www.archive.elca.org/ecumenical/vision.html#II (accessed November 30, 2008): section A. paragraph 2.

This is a primary source. The document was approved by the churchwide assembly August 31, 1991.

------. "Full Communion." Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Full-Communion.aspx (accessed November 19, 2008).

This is a primary source. Its intent is to provide information about the Full Communion agreements of the ELCA from the prospective of the ELCA. It also is a platform for the ELCA to state explicitly its views on ecumenism and Christian Unity.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.

Hanson, Bradley. *Grace That Frees: The Lutheran Tradition*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.

This book is a broad overview of the history, theology and practices of Lutherans. Though the later history is not specifically American, Hanson is American and writes from that perspective. Theology and history are addressed understandably and accurately with an emphasis on spirituality.

Lagerquist, L. DeAne. *The Lutherans*. Student ed. Westport: Praeger, 1999.

A "denominational history" of American Lutheranism. Lagerquist is an ELCA Lutheran and teaches at St. Olaf College. Thus the theology presented is informed by this tradition. The perspective of the book does not assume the reader knows anything about Lutheranism.

Lord, Jennifer. Review of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. *Worship* 82, no. 2 (Mar 2008): 175 - 177.

A book review of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Leaders Desk Edition* by a professor at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. It assesses the changes between the LBW and ELW from an outside perspective and in the context of ecumenical liturgical work.

Lotz, Benjamin. "An Appraisal of the Hymn Texts in the Service Book and Hymnal." *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, no 2. (May 1961): 113-131.

A rather conservative prespective appears in this article especially since the author tends to emphasize correct understanding of the gospel and confessional doctrine. As long as the bias is recognized, this article is useful as a representation of criticisms of the SBH.

Lutheran Book of Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978.

Luther, Martin. "Concerning the Order of Public Worship 1523." Translated by Paul Zeller Strodach. In *Luther's Works* American Edition Vol. 53. Edited by Ulrich S. Leupold, 9-14. Philidelphia: Fortress Press, 1965.

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------. "The Hymns." Translated by George MacDonald. In *Luther's Works* American Edition Vol. 53. Edited by Ulrich S. Leupold, 189-309. Philidelphia: Fortress Press, 1965.

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Messerli, Carlos R. "*Lutheran Book of Worship:* Successes and Failures—A Review for Pastors and Musicians." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 5 (Oct 2003): 342-348.

Messerli is the founding director of the Lutheran Music Program. His assessments are those of one who has lived through the history and his perceptions of the impact of the changes. While he does not cite numbers or studies to back his assertions, they are presented thoughtfully and supported with evidence when possible.

Nelson, E. Clifford. *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.

A detailed history of Lutheranism in the 20th century. It includes both theological and political controversies for a comprehensive picture. At the time of publication Nelson was a professor at St. Olaf College placing him in conjunction with the ALC. Despite this alignment Nelson was a critic of the ALC and favored the LCA policy of moving ahead quickly, even if it left the LCMS out. Other works focused on Norwegian Americans indicate that is a particular interest of his. His biography indicates that he also worked for the Lutheran World Federation. Since the book was published in 1972 and covers through 1970 Nelson most certainly participated in the history about which he was writing. He acknowledges that at relevant points but the information is used with its contemporary nature in mind.

Outler, Albert C. "Pietism and Enlightenment: Alternatives to Tradition." In *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, edited by Louis Dupre and Don E. Saliers, 240-256. New York: Crossroad, 1989.

An article in an encyclopedic book on Christian spirituality. As such it provides a broad perspective. Bias is kept to a minimum with multiple perspectives recognized.

Pfatteicher, Phillip H. *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship: Lutheran Liturgy in Its Ecumenical Context*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990.

Pfatteicher is a liturgical historian. It is important to note that he took part in the creation of the LBW.

Reed, Luther D. *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America*. Revised ed. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959.

While valuable, several circumstances must be taken into consideration when using this source. First, Reed actively participated in much of the history he describes, including the creation of both the *Common Service Book* and the *Service Book and Hymnal*. While valuable insight can be gained from this perspective, he is not as careful as some authors about recognizing the influence that perspective has on his conclusions. Second, the first edition of this book was published in 1947, in the midst of much of the history making, and the revised edition, used in this paper, was updated and published in 1959, less than a year after the SBH was published. That the content of both editions is not far removed from the actual events, must also be taken into consideration when using this source.

Ryden, E. E. "The Common Hymnal." *Lutheran Quarterly* 2, no 3 (August 1950): 269-285.

Since Ryden's other materials were published by the Augustana Book Concern, it seems logical that he would be connected with the Augustana Synod. However, no overt bias is noticeable in his assessment of the history leading up to the creation of the SBH.

Schalk, Carl F. *God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995.

------. "Some Thoughts on the Hymnody of *Lutheran Book of Worship*: Context, Issues, and Legacy." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 5 (Oct 2003): 366-371.

Schalk comes from a LCMS background and was a professor of Music at Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois. While the material in the book is valuable, a very strong sense of LCMS theology is present, especially with regard to confessional adherence. Any information used in this paper has either been general historic knowledge or has taken into account the perspective of the author. Schalk was also on the Hymn Music Committee that created the LBW.

Schattauer, Thomas H. "The Missional Shape of Worship in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 181-184.

Schattauer is a Professor of Liturgics at an Wartburg seminary and is therefore working within the structure. His article is valuable for its up-to-date perspective since ELW was published so recently. Taking part in the transition, he is able to provide insight into the subtle changes the LBW made and ELWs' response to the progress.

Service Book and Hymnal: of the Lutheran Church in America. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958.

Teig, Mons. "*Lutheran Book of Worship*: A Gift of the Church." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30 no. 5 (Oct 2003): 380-384.

Teig is a professor of worship at Luther Seminary and is disposed to take a very favorable view of the LBW despite the criticisms of others.

Trexler, Edgar R. *Anatomy of A Merger: People, Dynamics, and Decisions that Shaped the ELCA*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991.

This source is very valuable in that it brings together the story of the creation of the ELCA into one book. It contains much primary source information, quoting meeting minutes and what people said in various meetings. This source must be used with care though, because Trexler took part in the merger process. Part of the reason he is able to provide so many quotes is that he was present at all of the meetings. The upside to this is that Trexler can provide insight into the discussions at the meetings, but his analysis of the importance of certain events and the whole process is that of an insider making it difficult for him to incorporate a broader perspective. It is also published very close in time to the events discussed, so there is not much historical distance.

Quere, Ralph W. *In the Context of Unity: A History of the Development of the Lutheran Book of Worship.* Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2003.

Quere, like Trexler, took part in the creation of the LBW as the secretary of the Liturgical Text Committee. This book is primary source oriented but written with a focus on Lutheran unity and the LBW. While participant bias must be taken into consideration, Quere's book is much farther removed from the historical events. Therefore he is able to make assessments of not only the process but its affects, from the perspective of a participant in the creation of the ELCA. He is also careful to note when he moves into speculation away from historical claims.

Wentz, Abdel Ross. *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955.

Wentz's approach to the history of Lutherans in America is to address the development of the church within the context of the development of the country. In doing so he does more than present facts but makes connections between the social and political climate and the church and interprets along the way. His approach has merit but he makes more conclusions on less information than most historians.