

ETHNOMUSICOLOGY FROM THE 1500s: APPLYING LUTHER'S REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC PRACTICES TO TODAY'S MISSION FIELD¹

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No one considering the development of worship and church music in the Lutheran church in the 16th century can avoid facing squarely the pivotal role played by Martin Luther. He was important, however, not only because he was the focal point of a new theological movement. He stood, as well, at the center of a new musical movement that was to affect profoundly the church that would come to bear his name.³

We can mention only one point (which experience confirms), namely, that next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions—to pass over the animals—which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them.⁴

Ask a Lutheran to name Luther's contributions to church music, and many make reference to congregational singing. However, a closer look at Reformation history will reveal an extraordinarily large array of historic changes in church music brought about by Luther. Of course, Luther was not the only one nor always the first one in his day to advocate for certain significant changes in the church's music practices. Composers, musicians, hymnal editors, pastors, and lay leaders throughout Europe had independently taken up the cause of reforming various practices. However, as the theological leader of the Reformation, Luther's advocating for change was critical. Taken as a whole, the Reformation era changes in the musical life of the church, under the leadership of Luther, may be considered nothing less than revolutionary.⁵

¹This article is the concluding section of Dr. Schultz's piece, "Whose Heart Music is in Your Mission's Hymnal?" *Ethnomusicology Principles for Cross Cultural Missions*. The remainder will be published in a future *WLQ*.—ed.

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³Carl F. Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 9.

⁴Martin Luther, "Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae Iucundae*," LW 53:322.

⁵The Reformation changes in worship practices maintained, of course, the centrality of the Word in worship. "The greatest and principle purpose of every church ser-

It is indeed striking that Luther's beliefs and practices regarding church music align with so many principles advocated by Christian ethnomusicologists today. Where, one may ask, does one find a "cross-cultural" component in Luther's music work? Up to the time of the Reformation, the use of music in church was of course dictated by the Catholic Church in Rome. The centuries-old Latin Mass was the centerpiece of the church's worship. Imbedded in the spoken and sung words of the Latin liturgy were numerous false doctrines that needed to be rooted out. But Luther's musical changes went far beyond removing false doctrine in texts. Luther led the charge in reexamining the role of the churchgoer in the worship service. He opened the door to the use of a greater variety of music styles for worship. And unlike Protestant leaders Calvin and Zwingli, Luther worked out a truly biblical understanding of the proper use of the extraordinary emotional power of music.

Today, Luther and the Reformation's understanding of the proper use of music for the church is of great assistance for anyone responsible for facilitating cross-cultural worship. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve deeply into the historical context of Reformation music practices, or provide a detailed analysis of the sources of Luther and the Reformation's music. I am not a Luther scholar, and at any rate my purpose in this article is more modest.

A mainstay of Lutheran pastors' libraries for decades has been *Luther's Works, volume 53: Liturgy and Hymns*. For this essay, I have chosen to simply rely on Luther's own words on music, along with the respected commentary of Ulrich S. Leupold, editor of volume 53. I have collected and organized quotes from Luther and from Leupold's commentary under various ethnomusicology categories and principles. (The categories are interconnected and often overlap.) The simplicity of my approach matches the simplicity of my endeavor: to demonstrate how ethnomusicological principles undergirded the worship music practices of Luther and the Reformation church, and to investigate how these principles have a critical place in our own cross-cultural mission work today.

There is, of course, the great danger of manipulating Luther quotes to bolster one's preconceived positions on worship music. However, through Luther's words and Leupold's commentary, we do discover Luther's amazingly clear awareness of principles advocated by today's Christian ethnomusicologists. I will offer ten principles that guided Luther's approach to church music which we

vice is to preach and teach God's Word" (Martin Luther). Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis, MO: 1986), 1:301.

would do well to apply to our cross cultural mission work today. In Luther's music practices, we find a wonderful guiding light. We thank our Lord for the gift of Luther's and the Reformation's insights and practices as their movement ushered in revolutionary changes in church music.

1. Luther understood music to be God's gift to mankind.

After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words.⁶

Among the three major figures of Reformation history, Luther stands alone in possessing a truly scriptural understanding of God's gift of music and how to utilize it in the church.

For those churches under Ulrich Zwingli's leadership, no choirs, instruments, or congregational singing were permitted. As Pietsch explains,

Zwingli's departure from Luther and Calvin lay in his separation of the spiritual from matters of the "flesh," which included music. He could not find a biblical precedent nor God's express institution for singing or instruments in worship. Zwingli's attitude to Colossians 3:16 sealed the issue; for while Paul called for "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and spiritual songs," Zwingli concluded that the true spiritual song is with the heart, and is private and not audible.⁷

John Calvin restricted music in worship to "simple and pure" singing,⁸ resulting in a complete lack of harmony and very little rhythmic variety. As for lyrics, "the Calvinists absolutely forbade any texts to be sung in church except the book of Psalms and one or two canticles."⁹ Calvin's faulty biblical understanding of music led him to prohibit the use of any instruments in church. He wrote: "Instrumental music was only tolerated in the time of the Law [the Old Testament] because of the people's infancy."¹⁰ As Hustad clearly summarizes, Calvin "was extremely fearful that [music's] seductive and distracting charms would be harmful to pure, public worship."¹¹

⁶LW 53:324.

⁷Helen Pietsch, "On Luther's Understanding of Music," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 26:3 (1992): 162.

⁸Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* (London: Schirmer Books, 1984), 107-109, quoted in Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 65.

⁹Wilson-Dickson, *Story*, 65.

¹⁰P. Weiss and R. Taruskin, *Music*, quoted in Wilson-Dickson, *Story*, 65.

¹¹Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol

Both Zwingli and Calvin evinced an extreme fear of the emotional power of music.

Luther understood music from a fundamentally different perspective, one in utter contrast to Zwingli and Calvin. Schalk writes: ". . . that glowing center of awareness and comprehension that was for [Luther] the basis of understanding music in the life and worship of God's people, was *music as creation and gift of God* (emphasis original).¹² Luther's understanding of music is found in the preface he wrote for Georg Rhau's 1538 *Symphonia iucundae* ("Delightful Symphonies"), a collection of fifty-two motets for the Sundays of the church year.¹³ In his opening paragraph to the preface Luther writes:

Greetings in Christ! I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the excellent gift of God which it is and to commend it to everyone. But I am so overwhelmed by the diversity and magnitude of its virtue and benefits that I can find neither beginning nor end or method for my discourse. As much as I want to commend it, my praise is bound to be wanting and inadequate.¹⁴

Later in the preface, Luther writes that it is possible . . .

. . . to taste with wonder (yet not to fully comprehend) God's absolute and perfect wisdom in his wondrous work of music. Here it is more remarkable that one single voice continues to sing the tenor, while at the same time many other voices play around it, exalting and adorning it in exuberant strains and, as it were, leading it forth in a divine roundelay, so that those who are the least bit moved know nothing more amazing in this world. But any who remain unaffected are unmusical indeed and deserve to hear a certain filth poet or the music of pigs.

But the subject is much too great for me briefly to describe all its benefits. And you, my young friend, let this noble, wholesome, cheerful creation of God be commended to you. By it you may escape shameful desires and bad company. At the same time you may by this creation accustom yourself to recognize and praise the Creator.¹⁵

That God's wondrous gift of music is often desecrated and utilized in depraved ways by Satan (as are all the arts), Luther addresses in his very next words. He concludes his preface with choice words for those who abuse God's gift of music and use it for sinful purposes:

Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company, 1993) 193.

¹²Schalk, *Luther on Music*, 33.

¹³"Though succinct, the preface is perhaps Luther's most extensive discourse on his philosophy of music." Pietsch, *Luther's Understanding*, 161.

¹⁴LW 53:321-2.

¹⁵LW 53:324.

Take special care to shun perverted minds who prostitute this lovely gift of nature and of art with their erotic rantings; and be quite assured that none but the devil goads them on to defy their very nature which would and should praise God its Maker with this gift, so that these bastards purloin the gift of God and use it to worship the foe of God, the enemy of nature and of this lovely art. Farewell in the Lord.¹⁶

Rather than abandon the use of music in the church (Zwingli), or place severe restrictions on the elements of music (Calvin) due to its emotional power, Luther fully embraced God's "wondrous work of music." In the Rhau preface, Luther discourses exuberantly on "the infinite variety of [music's] forms and benefits" and upon music's power upon the emotions of men.

Here it must suffice to discuss the benefit of this great art. But even that transcends the greatest eloquence of the most eloquent, because of the infinite variety of its forms and benefits. We can mention only one point (which experience confirms), namely, that next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions . . . which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them. No greater commendation than this can be found—at least not by us. For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate—and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely the emotions, inclinations, and affections that impel men to evil or good?—what more effective means than music could you find? The Holy Ghost himself honors her as an instrument for his proper work when in his Holy Scriptures he asserts that through her his gifts were instilled in the prophets, namely, the inclination to all virtues, as can be seen in Elisha [II Kings 3:15]. On the other hand, she serves to cast out Satan, the instigator of all sins, as is shown in Saul, the king of Israel [I Sam 16:23].¹⁷

In the 1542 "Preface to the Burial Hymns," which was a fourteen-song hymnal devoted exclusively to burial songs, Luther offers a succinct summary of the proper use of music:

We have put this music on the living and holy Word of God in order to sing, praise, and honor it. We want the beautiful art of music to be properly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians. He is thereby praised and honored and we are made better and stronger in faith when his holy Word is impressed on our hearts by sweet music. God the Father with Son and Holy Spirit grant us this. Amen.¹⁸

¹⁶LW 53:324.

¹⁷LW 53:323.

¹⁸LW 53:328.

The historical importance of Luther's understanding of music as God's gift to mankind can hardly be overstated. As Schalk puts it:

In emphasizing music as God's creation, not people's, and as God's gift to people to use in His praise and adoration, Luther set the stage for the freedom of composers, congregations, choirs, and instrumentalists to develop their talents and abilities to the highest degree possible. The music that developed in the Lutheran tradition is eloquent testimony that the church, together with its musicians, found Luther's paradigm of music as creation and gift of God to be a preeminent constructive element in the development of a rich musical culture in which to live, work, play, and praise their God.¹⁹

Luther's clear, biblical understanding of the proper use of music serves as an important foundation for today's missionary. Our Creator and our fellow Christians are indeed served when we "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts" (Col 3:16). The missionary needs to guard against impeding the emotional element of music as God intended it to be used, especially in cultures accustomed to intense, outward expressions of emotion. It is incumbent on the cross cultural worker to responsibly facilitate opportunities for the people he or she serves to put all of their Spirit-renovated heart and energy into praising the Lord. So God's own word leads and encourages us:

I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name forever (Psa 86:12).

2. Luther did not allow a foreign culture to dictate the worship practices of another culture.

It is not in these matters [liturgical rites] that anyone should either seek or establish as law some indispensable form by which he might ensnare or harass consciences. Nor do we find any evidence for such an established rite, either in the early fathers or in the primitive church, but only in the Roman church. But even if they had decreed anything in the matter as law, we would not have to observe it, because these things neither can nor should be bound by laws.²⁰

Luther's repudiation of the soul-threatening theology of the Roman Catholic Church naturally led to revisions in the Reformation church's worship. Luther and his fellow theologians and composers rooted out of the Mass the many abuses involving the Lord's Supper. They purged lyrics of their false doctrine, for example, the improper praise

¹⁹Schalk, *Luther on Music*, 36-37.

²⁰LW 53:46.

directed to Mary, the saints, and the angels. However, Luther went far beyond reforming the sacrament and revising song lyrics. Luther ushered in sweeping changes in how church music was understood and used.

In order to revise the church's music practices, Luther needed to work entirely unfettered by the demands and dictates of a "mother church." In light of the deep theological rot that Luther encountered in the Catholic Church, throwing off Rome's control of the church's music might not appear too difficult a step. However, recall that from childhood Luther was raised on the music and the worship practices of the Catholic Church. At times during his elementary school years Luther practiced church music for an hour each school day and sang in several church services every week. Recall also that Luther's original intent was to reform the Catholic Church, not break away from it. Luther loved much of the music (minus the false doctrine in the lyrics) from Rome and continued to utilize it throughout his life in situations where it made sense to do so.

The Catholic Church, consistent with its unbiblical theology of authority, the priesthood, and the churchgoer's role in worship, had severely limited the effectiveness of music in worship. Luther's musical reforms confronted centuries-old church music practices that were considered beyond challenge or question. Many of Luther's and the Protestant Movement's worship reforms, including the use of heartfelt music whose lyrics and accompaniment resonated with the man and woman in the pew, were indeed revolutionary.

Luther of course understood the Bible as the unassailable, single authority and guide in worship matters. Luther recognized the priesthood of all believers. He knew the German churches were not subservient to Rome in matters of worship music. He knew that they were more than equal partners. Every national church had the right to make biblically informed decisions on worship matters.

And while that point seems patently obvious to us, the question may be asked: What actually occurs in practice in the foreign mission field today? Throughout mission history the impression has at times been given that the worship music of the missionaries, or at least of the West, was the proper music style for Christian worship.²¹

Indeed, "consciences have been snared": at times, new converts, citing their great appreciation and respect for their "spiritual fathers" who brought the saving gospel message to them and their families,

²¹See James R. Krabill, "Encounters: What Happens to Music when People Meet," in Roberta King, ed., *Music in the Life of the African Church* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 57-78.

have not dared challenge their fathers' obvious musical preferences.²² Moreover, in the pioneer years of many mission fields, the new national church was often presented with only one worship music option, the music style of the spiritual fathers' home culture. Luther's words on the topic are a clear caution to today's cross-cultural workers:

For those who devise and ordain universal customs and orders get so wrapped up in them that they make them dictatorial laws opposed to the freedom of faith.²³

A national church body ceding choices and decisions in worship music to a foreign church body—to the missionary sending church body—is not biblical. Historically, it is not Lutheran. The Reformer writes, "Even if different people make use of different rites let no one judge or despise the other, but every man be fully persuaded in his own mind [Rom. 14:5]."²⁴ It is the missionary's responsibility not simply to pay lip service to this biblical teaching, but to instill in new converts an awareness that biblically-informed choices about worship "customs and orders" are theirs to make.

Sharing the Luther quotes in this section and other quotes from Luther's "Concerning The Order Of Public Worship"²⁵ may be an excellent place to start. May we enthusiastically and vigorously present to the nationals the confessional truth which we uphold:

It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. [Augsburg Confession, Article VII, Concerning the Church.]²⁶

Rather than endorsing his own worship music, either explicitly or implicitly, as "the way Lutheran Christians do it," the missionary will guide the national church to find their own joyous, confident, heartfelt indigenous voice for biblical worship.

3. Luther championed the use of heart language and heart music²⁷ in worship.

Luther was the most inclusive and consistent of the Reformed leaders in his espousal of all sorts of music for worship—the most

²²The author has personally witnessed this phenomenon throughout 20 years of foreign mission experience.

²³LW 53:46

²⁴LW 53:31

²⁵LW 53:11-14

²⁶Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 43.

²⁷"Heart music" is defined earlier in the article as the musical style that an individual or culture associates with, and prefers for expressing, certain emotions. Research is cited suggesting that humans acquire their "heart music," like their mother tongue, at a very young age.—ed.

sophisticated art forms of his time and also the simple congregational hymn, often based on tunes that long had been associated with secular texts.²⁸

Luther's worship music practices reveal the immense importance he placed upon having musical accompaniment appropriate to a culture. Again, all of the worship music reforms of the Reformation era did not originate with Luther. However, Luther provided leadership in the historic utilization of the German people's heart language and heart music in worship.

In the lands of the Reformation of Luther's day, significant differences often existed between Lutheran congregations due to such factors as 1) urban or rural setting, 2) formally educated or non-formally educated members, and 3) availability or non-availability of music resources, including trained music leaders. Due to such diversity, a "one-size-fits-all" worship service experience would not function. Rome's insistence on the use of the Latin mass left the average churchgoer with little participation in the music and little comprehension of what was sung or chanted. Many a worshipper was reduced to being a passive observer of a service he or she did not understand. Luther knew that a variety of styles of music, along with lyrics in the vernacular, were needed to serve the different subcultures within Germany. The revolutionary declaration in the Augsburg Confession on "human traditions, rites, or ceremonies"²⁹—that each congregation had the freedom to make certain choices with respect to the worship service—is one of the significant contributions of the Reformation.

Luther found it necessary to get personally involved in the matter of orders of service. He purged the Latin mass of many theological heresies. He found it unacceptable that in so many parishes, the churchgoers did not understand the spoken and sung Latin. Through the efforts of Luther and his coworkers, Luther's reformed 1523 *Formula Missae*, a mixture of Latin and German, became the norm for cathedrals and collegiate churches where Latin was more commonly understood. Luther's vernacular language 1526 German Mass (*Deutsche Messe*) became common in smaller towns and rural churches.³⁰ A detailed account of Luther's involvement and contributions in the two masses is beyond the scope of this paper. However, several relevant points may be noted.

In the 1523 *Formula Missae* "much of the historic mass outline remains. Only the hymns, scripture readings, and sermon are in

²⁸Hustad, *Jubilate*, 186.

²⁹Kolb, *The Book of Concord*, 43.

³⁰Hustad, *Jubilate*, 188.

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the vernacular; the rest continued to be sung or spoken in Latin."³¹ Regarding Luther's hymns which were becoming available, Leupold writes: "For the older German hymns which Luther enlarged and for Latin hymns which he translated, well-known tunes that had been sung for centuries were used, though often with significant alterations."³² The alterations were made in order to make the songs more "sing-able" by the congregation.

In striking contrast, the German Mass was an "all-vernacular form" where "the historic Latin hymns were replaced by German metric versions set to melodies in the secular Meistersinger and Minnesinger traditions."³³

Luther's endorsement of two different worship services (actually three; see below) reveals his understanding and commitment to providing music resources that were culturally appropriate. Luther availed himself of a wide variety of music styles, his foremost concerns being the comprehension of the words and participation of the congregation in singing. Leupold writes:

Both in his hymns and in his chants he [Luther] neither disdained the use of older traditional materials nor shrank from revolutionary changes in the interest of German speech rhythm and popular appeal. For he wanted hymns and chants to be sung by the congregation as well as the choir. Actually, the difference in musical style between these two forms was much smaller than it is today; for the chorales with their modal tonality and floating rhythm were much closer to plain chant than are modern hymns, while the chants with their extended intonations and meditations were more syllabic and melodious than proper Gregorian psalmody. *But it was this basic simplicity and folklike character of Luther's chants that made it possible for the congregation to participate in the liturgy* (emphasis added).³⁴

Luther's use of a variety of sacred and secular music styles for worship—his opening wide the gates to the use of heart music—profoundly influenced the course of Western church music. What styles of music did Luther use? Foley, noting the work of Amelin,³⁵ lists four categories of music utilized by Luther and provides an example of each.³⁶

³¹Hustad, *Jubilate*, 187.

³²LW 53:202.

³³Hustad, *Jubilate*, 187.

³⁴LW 53:149.

³⁵Konrad Amelin, "The Roots of German Hymnody of the Reformation Era," *Church Music Pamphlet Series*, Hymnology: Number one (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 3-18.

³⁶Edward Foley, "Martin Luther: A Modal Pastoral Musician," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, vol. 14 (1987): 405-418.

1. "Gregorian chorale" or those Latin chants from the ordinary and proper of the Latin mass which punctuate the liturgical year. (Example: Luther's hymn, "Come, Holy Spirit.")
2. Unison hymns of the Middle Ages called *cantios*. (Example: Luther's "In the Midst of Life We Are.")
3. Religious folk songs. (Example: Luther's "All Praise to Thee, O Jesus Christ.")
4. Secular folk songs. (Example: Luther's "To Me She's Dear, the Worthy Maid.")

Discussing Luther's incorporation of well-known sacred (and especially) secular folk song tunes into worship involves a wade into the waters of church music history that can become treacherous. As noted earlier, the great danger, of course, is that of using Luther's words and actions to bolster one's favored position regarding music styles for today's church. However, the influence of the German folk song in Luther's musical work can hardly be overstated. Leupold writes:

The German folk song was the good earth from which all of Luther's hymns sprang. Its style textually and musically is evident everywhere and its patterns are often clearly recognizable. . . . Characteristic stock phrases and melodic turns of the folk song are found in all of Luther's hymns.³⁷

What are we to make of Luther's use of well-known secular folk song tunes along with sacred folk song tunes as musical settings for worship service music? And what of the never-ending controversy over whether Luther used songs from the tavern or "drinking songs" as sources of his worship songs? Again, an entire paper could be devoted to the topic. A clear and simple description of the topical range, flexibility, and varied performance contexts of the strikingly similar sacred and secular folk music styles of Luther's day is found in St- Orange who writes:

The religious folk tunes were melodies associated with pilgrimage songs and the tales of saints. The secular tunes were more closely related to the sharing of political news and of satire. . . . The line in Medieval Germany between the sacred and the secular is, musically speaking, difficult to draw. A tune used to accompany a story about St. Anne may, the next night, be used to tell the news of the Emperor's death, and then to describe the value of a good mistress.³⁸

Some readers may perhaps become flummoxed at the thought of sacred and secular music styles being interchangeable. However, consider a simple example from the music history of the US in which

³⁷LW 53:196.

³⁸Charles P. St-Orange, Music, Worship and Martin Luther, Fourth Year Master of Divinity Paper, Concordia Theological Seminary, (March 30, 2003): 2.

a sacred folksong style and a secular folksong style were amazingly similar. Early African American spirituals and early traditional American blues share common musical roots in the work songs and field hollers of the African slaves. The basic chord progressions of the sacred spirituals and of the secular blues are often interchangeable. The basic structure of the songs and the musical phrasing are often the same. Based solely on the *musical accompaniment*, many spirituals and blues songs could be placed in either the spiritual or blues category. Only the *content of the lyrics* would determine if it were a spiritual or blues song. (Some early recording artists became masters of both genres.)³⁹ I believe the situation was similar in Luther's day, where folk tunes passed between the secular and the sacred.

Folk songs—"the good earth from which all of Luther's hymns sprang"—are just that, the song of the people. As such they are the very definition of heart music. Luther's revolutionary expansion of the use of heart language and heart music remains one of his greatest contributions to the church. No doubt there are places among our mission fields today where people would benefit from the incorporation of indigenous folk music into their worship music.

4. Luther advocated the use of different liturgical forms for different subcultures

As previewed in the previous section, Luther advocated for the availability of several liturgies. That it was never Luther's intention to abolish the use of liturgy is clear in the words of his preface to "An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church of Wittenberg, 1523":

We therefore first assert: It is not now nor ever has been our intention to abolish the liturgical service of God completely, but rather to purify the one that is now in use from the wretched accretions which corrupt it and to point out an evangelical use.⁴⁰

Luther specifies the "wretched accretions" of the mass a few paragraphs later when he writes "What I am speaking of is the canon, that abominable concoction drawn from everyone's sewer and cesspool. The mass became a sacrifice. Offertories and mercenary collects were added."⁴¹

As we have seen elsewhere in his writings, Luther makes it clear in the Wittenberg preface that "it is not in these matters [liturgical

³⁹Several of the earliest Blues recording artists (Charley Patton, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Son House) created masterpieces in both Blues and Gospel idioms.

⁴⁰LW 53:20.

⁴¹Luther calls the prayers (for the departed, for special favors, etc.) in the canon "mercenary" because they were based on the assumption that the sacrifice of the mass would evoke a readier response from God." Leupold in LW 53:21.

forms] that anyone should seek or establish as law some indispensable form."⁴² So important is this point to Luther that we find him repeating it several times in the Wittenberg preface:

This is enough for now about the mass and communion. What is left can be decided by actual practice, as long as the Word of God is diligently and faithfully preached in the church. And if any should ask that all these [forms] be proved by Scriptures and the example of the fathers, they do not disturb us; for as we have said above, liberty must prevail in the matters and Christian consciences must not be bound by laws and ordinances. That is why the Scriptures prescribe nothing in these matters, but allow freedom for the Spirit to act according to his own understanding as the respective place, time, and persons may require it. And as for the example of the fathers, [their liturgical orders] are partly unknown, partly so much at variance with each other that nothing definite can be established about them, evidently because they themselves used their liberty. And even if they would be perfectly definite and clear, yet they could not impose on us a law or the obligation to follow them.⁴³

Luther suggested the creation of three kinds of worship service. Luther's two orders of service, the evangelically revised Latin-based "Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg" of 1523 and his "German Mass and Order of Service" of 1526, are well known for their immense historical significance. What is less known is that Luther advocated for the availability of a "third kind of divine service or mass."⁴⁴ Luther writes:

The third kind of service should be a truly evangelical order and should not be held in a public place for all sorts of people. But those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. According to this order, those who do not lead Christian lives could be known, reproved, corrected, cast out, or excommunicated, according to the rule of Christ, Matthew 18 [15-17].⁴⁵

Although neither Luther nor his contemporaries ever composed such a service, the relevance of Luther's advocating for a simple service for groups of "those who want to be Christians," meeting in a home, is highly relevant to our mission work today. In many countries, establishing house churches is an important option. Sometimes it is the only option. Luther's words amount to a veritable blueprint for creating a house church service:

⁴²LW 53:31.

⁴³LW 53:37.

⁴⁴LW 53:62.

⁴⁵LW 53:63-4.

Here would be no need of much and elaborate singing. Here one could set up a brief and neat order for baptism and the sacrament and center everything on the Word, prayer, and love. Here one would need a good short catechism [i.e., catechization] on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Our Father.⁴⁶

Today, the movement of people and the resultant fragmenting and refiguring of societies creates subcultures at an accelerating rate. Having available a variety of orders of service for a variety of groups and settings within a culture made sense to Luther in his time. It makes sense for our home and foreign mission fields today.

5. Luther created artistic yet accessible worship music for the expanding participation of the congregation.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet 2:9)

Communion in Christ's blood was not to be reserved for a special priestly class; even less was the praise of the people to be restricted to a special musical class.⁴⁷

Consider the abysmal worship service situation of the fifteenth century, as described by Hustad:

Looking back at 15th-century worship . . . it is apparent that the medieval performance of the mass needed drastic reform. From the simple services of the first century, worship had developed into an elaborate ritual that fell far short of New Testament standards in both theology and in practice. . . . The Liturgy of the Word had little significance. . . . Typical worshipers understood little that was being said and sung, since the service was in Latin. Their own vocal participation was almost nil.⁴⁸

In correcting the church's theology of man and worship, the Reformation welcomed the churchgoer to greater participation in the music of the service. Luther wrote, "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests."⁴⁹ Luther's understanding and application of the doctrine of the universal priesthood was a leading factor in the transformation of the service. As Schalk observes:

Luther understood active congregational participation in worship as a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the royal priesthood

⁴⁶LW 53:64.

⁴⁷St-Orange, *Music, Worship and Martin Luther*, 2.

⁴⁸Hustad, *Jubilate*, 185.

⁴⁹LW 36:116, quoted in Schalk, *Luther on Music*, 43. Luther wrote, "Therefore, all Christian men are priests, all women are priestesses be they young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, learned or unlearned. Here there is no difference, unless

of all believers . . . Since all were royal priests, each participant in worship had a crucial role to play in this sacrifice of praise and prayer. No longer was the assembled congregation to be passive in worship but active participants in worship. The introduction of the vernacular opened both Scripture and the liturgy to the people in a way they had not experienced before. . . . Worship could no longer be viewed as something done by others on behalf of the people.⁵⁰

As Hustad points out, Luther's hymnic purposes were three-fold: "theological (to demonstrate believer-priesthood), liturgical (to retain what he considered orthodox in the Roman mass) and pedagogical (to teach Lutheran doctrine)."⁵¹

Furthermore, let us not overlook the significance of Luther's contribution in the congregational singing of the liturgy. Schalk notes:

As for hymnody, it is commonplace to observe that a great contribution of the Lutheran Reformation was the restoration of congregational singing. But what is usually less noted is that Luther's desire for the active participation of the congregation through hymnody was a result of his concern that the people participate actively in the singing of the liturgy.

It was no accident that among the most popular hymns of the early Reformation was a body of hymns associated with the Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei).⁵²

Researchers attribute thirty-seven music texts and at least fifty-five tunes to Luther.⁵³ Musical and lyrical analyses reveal the extraordinary care taken by Luther to make available to the congregation texts that were easily understood and music that was easily sung. Following Foley's outline in his superb article, "Martin Luther; A Model Pastoral Musician,"⁵⁴ we discover the following techniques Luther employed to carefully craft songs for congregational singing.

Regarding the texts:

1. Familiarity: "Out of Luther's thirty-seven chorales only five have texts which could be considered original."⁵⁵ Apparently, in Luther's day, congregants could set aside in their minds the original, well-known, no-doubt-often-memorized, false-doctrine

faith is unequal." LW 35:101, quoted in Schalk, *Luther*, 43.

⁵⁰Schalk, *Luther on Music*, 42,44.

⁵¹Hustad, *Jubilate*, 188-9.

⁵²Schalk, *Luther*, 41.

⁵³Edward Foley, "Martin Luther: A Model Pastoral Musician," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 14 (1987): 407.

⁵⁴Foley, *Martin*, 408-415.

⁵⁵Foley, *Martin*, 412.

lyrics of a song, substitute Luther's modification of the original lyrics, and sing away! The congregation's familiarity and enjoyment of the tune (despite the rather engrained, original lyrics) remained an asset, according to Luther, as he chose to use such melodies. (More on this topic below.)

2. Short sentences: "Luther used few adjectives and formed brief, pungent lines consisting almost exclusively of verbs and nouns."⁵⁶ This would of course lend clarity and ease of understanding to the teachings contained in Luther's lyrics.
3. Sentences containing a single thought: Regarding textual meter, "Luther continuously employed seven or eight syllable lines which, in a configuration of nouns and verbs, allow for the development of a single thought but little else."⁵⁷ Foley adds that there is "little textual carryover between one line and the next."⁵⁸ Instead, as Pietsch observes, each hymn line consists of 'a compact thought unit in itself.'⁵⁹
4. Familiar vocabulary: In a letter to George Spalatin, whom he hoped would assist in providing texts for congregational songs, Luther wrote, "I would like you to avoid any new words or the language used in the court. In order to be understood by the people, only the simplest and common words should be used for singing."⁶⁰

Summarizing Luther's literary style, Foley writes: "Aside from the obvious employment of the vernacular, it is also clear that in literary style, Luther generally shaped his texts for broad comprehension, liturgical durability, and easy access."⁶¹

Regarding the music:

The following are among the compositional elements Luther took advantage of in his quest for optimum congregational accessibility of his songs:

1. Form: Luther often used the song structure form AAB or "bar-form," (the first line of music, "A," is repeated, followed by a different line of music, "B"). This was "one of the most employed forms of the Minnesingers and Meistersingers who dominated the popular music scene in medieval Germany."⁶² The form

⁵⁶LW 53:198.

⁵⁷Foley, *Martin*, 414.

⁵⁸Foley, *Martin*, 414

⁵⁹Pietsch, *On Luther's Understanding*, 166.

⁶⁰LW 49:69.

⁶¹Foley, *Martin*, 412-13.

⁶²Foley, *Martin*, 409.

was simple and easy to sing. The musical repetition of the form aided the memorization of the notes and the text.

2. Range: Luther most often employed a musical range of a ninth—an octave plus one note. This is a very comfortable range for congregational singing.⁶³
3. Mode: Regarding the arrangement of tones in an octave (what we today commonly refer to as the scale), there were several well-known modes in the time of Luther, such as the Dorian, Lydian, Mixolydian, and Phrygian. Significantly, we find Luther using the two modes (Dorian and Ionian) which, to Europeans, “were already becoming the most popular modes in the sixteenth century.”⁶⁴ As Foley observes, “Here again we see that ease and accessibility, now in tonal language, were important guiding principles for the composing Luther.”⁶⁵

To sum up Luther's musical style: it is obvious that Luther's overarching concern was to produce music that was artistic, yet easily accessible to the man and woman in the pew.

Returning to the mission field: would the nationals characterize the missionary's musical texts as shaped for “broad comprehension, liturgical durability, and easy access?” And what would be said of the missionary's musical settings? How many nationals would characterize the music settings found in their hymnal as “easy and accessible,” features that Luther labored hard and meticulously to attain? The element of scale or mode is particularly concerning. The modes of the heart music of the people we serve (perhaps played on indigenous instruments tuned differently than Western instruments) may be strikingly different than the modes of the music found in a Western hymnal. Conversely, the modes of the host country's music may be utterly unfamiliar to the missionary.

Such textual and musical concerns are all the more reasons to have nationals producing their own worship music in heart music styles. As biblical worship principles are taught, the national church takes the lead in making available lyricists and composers to produce “broadly comprehensive, easily accessible” worship music. Such partnerships, in which both missionaries and nationals acknowledge their strengths and deficiencies and learn from each other, is but a reflection of the universal priesthood under which all labor as equals for the advancement of the kingdom.

⁶³Foley, *Martin*, 410.

⁶⁴Foley, *Martin*, 412.

⁶⁵Foley, *Martin*, 412.

6. Luther reworded popular church songs that contained false doctrine and wrote lyrics to well-known secular folksong tunes for use in worship.

The first published Lutheran hymnal, the *Achtliederbuch*, contained only eight hymns.⁶⁶ As the Reformation movement grew, so did the need for worship music resources. As noted above, Luther engaged in the practice of revising the lyrics of well-known church songs containing false doctrine and then used the songs in Reformation worship. Since Luther's use of familiar music with flawed original lyrics may suggest an option for our mission churches today, let us consider Luther's words on the subject. In the preface to a 1542 hymnal dedicated exclusively to burial hymns, Luther writes:

... we have collected the fine music and songs which under the papacy were used as vigils, masses for the dead, and burials. Some fine examples of these we have printed in this booklet and we, or whoever is more gifted than we, will select more of them in the future. But we have adopted other texts to the music so that it may adorn our article of the resurrection instead of purgatory with its torment and satisfaction which lets their dead neither sleep nor rest. The melodies and notes are precious. It would be a pity to let them perish. But the texts and words are non-Christian and absurd. They deserve to perish.

Therefore, we have unclothed these idolatrous, lifeless, and foolish texts, and divested them of their beautiful music. We have put this music on the living and holy Word of God in order to sing, praise, and honor it. We want the beautiful art of music to be properly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians.⁶⁷

The following three examples reveal Luther taking well-known liturgical songs containing false doctrine, revising them, and using them in worship. We begin with a Lutheran post-communion chorale. Leupold notes:

In two of his writings Luther referred to a German hymn [“Let God Be Blest”] that enjoyed great popularity before the Reformation. [Luther] suggested that the fifth and sixth lines (a prayer for the grace of receiving the sacrament from the hands of an ordained priest before death) were spurious and should be omitted . . . in 1524 Luther discontinued the observance of Corpus Christi in Wittenberg, so it is not unlikely that he transformed the medieval Corpus Christi hymn into a Lutheran post-communion chorale to save a liturgical song that was popular with the people and that he himself treasured.⁶⁸

⁶⁶See <http://www.lutheranchoralebook.com/sources/achtliederbuch/>.

⁶⁷*LW* 53:327–8.

⁶⁸*LW* 53:252.

In the second example, churchgoers were actually informed on the page of their hymnal that the song in front of them had been revised. Regarding the 1524 hymn, "Jesus Christ, Our God and Savior," Leupold writes:

This hymn first appeared in the Wittenberg hymnal in 1524, in the Erfurt enchiridia, and on the broadsheet of the same year. In all these sources it bears the caption: "The hymn of St. John Huss, revised." A Latin hymn of nine stanzas, "Jesus Christus nostra salus" had been known since the fifteenth century and sometimes ascribed to John Huss (1366–1415), the Bohemian forerunner of the Reformation. Reminiscences of this hymn are found in the first, second, fourth, and sixth stanzas of Luther's chorale. But on the whole, the latter has little in common with its Latin counterpart. The word "revised" evidently refers to a complete theological revision.⁶⁹

In another fascinating example, a pilgrim song originally containing false doctrine was revised by Luther and put into use, only to be taken back by the Catholic church, which revised Luther's revised version. Commenting on the 1524 hymn, "God the Father with Us Be," Leupold writes:

This hymn of invocation of the Holy Trinity seems to be patterned after medieval pilgrims' songs invoking the aid of the saints. Hymns that started, "St. Peter, with us be," "Dear Nicholas, with us be," or "St. Mary with us be" were well known in the fifteenth century . . . the melody was evidently well known, for the enchiridia of 1525 did not even bother to print the notes. A comparison of Kleber's tablature and Walter's version suggests that Luther adopted the melody without change. He retained the first five lines of the text with minor changes, replacing the appeal to the saints with an invocation of the three Persons of the Trinity, and he formed the concluding part differently, at least from those medieval versions that have been preserved. Later Catholic hymnals, such as *Vehe* 1527 and *Leisentrit* 1567, combined the hymns with its medieval prototypes so as to include invocations both of the triune God and of the angels.⁷⁰

Regarding the use of melodies from secular folk songs, recall our earlier point that there could be little stylistic difference between a sacred and a secular folk melody. And, as we noted earlier in a quote from Leupold, "characteristic stock phrases and melodic turns of the folksong are found in all of Luther's hymns."⁷¹

Leupold describes Luther's song, "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun," which tells the story of the first two martyrs of the Reforma-

⁶⁹LW 53:249.

⁷⁰LW 53:268.

⁷¹LW 53:196.

tion as "the first hymn of the Reformation."⁷² It is in the style of a folk ballad, and Luther's authorship of the melody "can be taken for granted."⁷³ As a popular music style of the day, secular folk ballads were sung by wandering minstrels "in the market place, the roadside, and the tavern," and "printed on broadsheets and widely sold."⁷⁴ Folk ballads "told the stories of kings and villains, of treason and heroism, of battles and banditry."⁷⁵ Luther and others felt that this musical style could be used in the church.⁷⁶ Significantly, the most famous song of Luther, "Our God He Is a Castle Strong" ("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"), is, according to Leupold, similar "both in structure and melodic progression" to Luther's folk song ballad, "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun."⁷⁷ (Due to the historic importance of the lyrical content of "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun," we will explore the lyrics under the next principle.)

In another example, Luther used a "pre-Reformation secular folk song, a singing game popular with the young people in Luther's time," for the original melody of his 1534/1535 hymn, "From Heaven on High I Come to You" ("From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"). Leupold conjectures that "with the increasing popularity of 'From Heaven on High I Come to You,' [Luther] must have felt that the hymn deserved its own melody."⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the original melody from the children's singing game had found its way into "the Klug hymnal of 1535 and many subsequent hymnals."⁷⁹

Could a song from a children's game be used as the basis for a church song today? Several years ago I discovered the folksong "Sea Lion Woman," from a Library of Congress field recording made in Byhalia, Mississippi in 1939.⁸⁰ Two African American sisters, Katherine and Christine Shipp, recorded the rhythmic song that they used as a rope-skipping rhyme. The melody crossed cultures and became the basis for my Spanish worship song, "*Llámame*" ("Call on Me"), which became very popular among several congregations in Peru.

⁷²LW 53:212

⁷³LW 53:213.

⁷⁴LW 53:212.

⁷⁵LW 53:212.

⁷⁶Although Luther wrote no other hymns in the form of a ballad, his martyr's hymn served as the pattern for countless Anabaptist hymns that appeared in the following years, describing the fate of their martyrs in as many as one hundred stanzas. LW 53:212.

⁷⁷LW 53:213.

⁷⁸LW 53:289.

⁷⁹LW 53:289.

⁸⁰See <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/katherine-shipp-mn0002301855>.

The practice of using preexisting tunes for worship songs can, of course, be found as far back as the Old Testament book of Psalms. In the superscriptions we find the phrase "To the tune of" included with Psalm 9, "To the tune of the 'Death of the Son'"; Psalm 22, "To the tune of the 'Doe of the Morning'" ("To the tune of" is NIV's interpretive addition⁸¹); Psalm 45, 60, 69, 80, "To the tune of 'Lilies'"; Psalm 56, "To the tune of 'A Dove on Distant Oaks'"; and Psalms 57–59, 75, "To the tune of 'Do Not Destroy.'" Though it cannot be established with certainty, it would appear that these melodic sources for Israel's inspired songbook include both sacred and secular tunes.

Missionaries and national churches face the challenge of providing a large quantity of quality, culturally appropriate worship music resources. The host culture may already have a substantial storehouse of public-domain sacred and secular songs with attractive melodies in the heart music of the people. Are there preexisting tunes in your cross-cultural field that can be used for worship songs? As always, only the host culture can make an informed decision on the appropriateness of a tune. Both sacred and secular tunes were used by Luther during his time. In our foreign fields today we may find an amazingly similar situation.

7. Luther encouraged the use of hymns with lyrics on current issues.

Oh! they sang sweet, and they sang sour;
Oh! they tried every double;
The boys they stood firm as a tower,
And mocked the sophists' trouble.
The ancient foe it filled with hate
That he was thus defeated
By two such youngsters—he, so great!
His wrath grew sevenfold heated,
He laid his plans to burn them.

"A New Song Here Shall Be Begun," v. 4.⁸²

Recounting in song a fairly recent event of significance to the Reformation church and then placing that song in a hymnal is yet another Reformation era innovation ascribed to Luther. Luther's intentions in creating such songs are obvious in the following four examples.

1. "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun" 1523

As Leupold reminds us, in 1521 the Edict of Worms declared Luther a "devil in human form" and his teachings heretical. He could

⁸¹Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary—Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 63.

⁸²LW 53:215.

now be imprisoned or executed for his teachings, and so could those who followed them. Leupold outlines the historic event in the Netherlands where "the Edict of Worms was carried out to the letter. . . [Two friars] Heinrich Voes and Johan Esch died martyrs' deaths at the market place [burned at the stake] in Brussels on July 1, 1523, the first blood witnesses of the Reformation."⁸³

Leupold goes on to describe that Luther "was incensed by the rumors quickly spread by his enemies who quickly claimed that Heinrich and Johann had with their dying breath disavowed their own teaching."⁸⁴ And so Luther "availed himself of the mass media most commonly used in his day for broadcasting important news . . . the folk song."⁸⁵ As noted in the previous section, these songs were "printed on broadsheets and widely sold. Wandering minstrels sang them in the marketplace, the roadside, the tavern. The ballads quickly made their way from town to town, and soon they were known by heart."⁸⁶ Luther preserved the true story of the two martyrs in a dramatic ballad that would be used in church services. Leupold notes that Luther's ballad "begins with the characteristic folk-song phrase, 'A new song here shall be begun.'"⁸⁷ Luther not only used this well-known phrase from secular folksongs for the opening phrase of his sacred song, but also used the phrase for his title.

And while we have already noted the significance of Luther's "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun" in regard to its musical style, here we find significance for the content of the lyrics. The ballad is a dramatic, poetic retelling of a true story of great significance to the Reformation. It includes rather graphic detail.⁸⁸ Luther's lyrics describe not only the earthly scene but also the cosmic reality behind the scene, with repeated references of the role of the devil in the event. The song was subsequently placed in several Lutheran hymnals.

Luther's ballad of the two Dutch martyrs had significant historical influence, serving as "the pattern for countless Anabaptist hymns that appeared in the following years, describing the fate of their martyrs."⁸⁹

⁸³LW 53:211.

⁸⁴LW 43:211–12.

⁸⁵LW 53:212.

⁸⁶LW 53:212.

⁸⁷LW 53:212.

⁸⁸Among the dramatic and graphic lyrics contained in "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun:" V. 4: "The boys they stood as firm as a tower;" "The ancient foe is filled with hate. . . He laid his plans to burn them." V. 7: "So they must burn to ashes." V. 8: "Two huge great fires they kindled then, The boys they carried to them . . ." LW 53:215.

⁸⁹LW 53:212.

2. "Although the Fools Say with Their Mouths" 1523

Luther's bold, vivid, church song describing the martyrs' deaths is not the only song he wrote on the current situations facing the church. On Luther's lyrics for the hymn "Although the Fools Say with Their Mouth," based on Psalm 14, Leupold writes, "Luther may have been thinking of the enthusiasts."⁹⁰ Luther's words in v. 1 include:

Their heart cares nothing for the truth,
In actions they deny him.
Their being is corrupted quite;
To God it is a horrid sight;
Not one of them works goodness.

In the fourth verse Luther adds:

How long by lies will they be led,
Who vain attempts redouble,
And eat my people up as bread,
And live upon their trouble?⁹¹

Obviously Luther did not shy away from using harsh words to describe his non-Lutheran contemporaries whose teachings threatened the eternal souls of the people. Luther felt it was appropriate to place such blunt lyrics in a hymnal.

3. "Happy Who in God's Fear Doth Stay" 1524

Luther's lyrics for "Happy Who in God's Fear Doth Stay," based on Psalm 128, describe a God-blessed home life that includes wife and children. In 128:3 the psalmist writes: "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Luther's lyrics (although translated here in English) demonstrate a strikingly close poetic paraphrase:

So shall thy wife be in thy house
Like vine with clusters plenteous
Thy children sit thy table round
Like olive plants so fresh and sound.⁹²

On "Happy who in God's Fear Doth Stay," Leupold comments:

In opposition to the medieval glorification of celibacy, Luther never tired of praising the married estate as a divine institution. No wonder he loved and frequently quoted the 128th Psalm! He made not only a German but also a Latin paraphrase of it.⁹³

⁹⁰LW 53:229.

⁹¹LW 53:230.

⁹²LW 53:243.

⁹³LW 53:242.

4. "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word" 1541/42?

In the time of Luther, the Reformation churches were under constant political and spiritual threat from Rome. The Catholic Church maintained the right in many countries to imprison and even execute those who followed Luther's teachings. Meanwhile, Europe faced a geopolitical and spiritual threat from the Ottoman Empire as Sultan Suliman hoped to conquer the world for Islam. In response to these ongoing threats, Luther wrote the following lyrics to his song, "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word." It is a short hymn which, "has been and perhaps still is the most widely used of all of Luther's hymns."⁹⁴

1. Lord, keep us steadfast in thy Word
And curb the Turks' and papists' sword
Who Jesus Christ thine only Son
Fain would tumble from off thy throne.
2. Proof of thy might, Lord Christ, afford;
For thou of all the lords art Lord
Thine own poor Christendom defend,
Than it may praise you without end.
3. God, Holy Ghost, who comfort art,
Give to the folk on earth one heart;
Stand by us breathing our last breath,
Lead us to life straight out of death.⁹⁵

Luther's lyrics describing the relentless, deadly threat from Turk and Papacy no doubt had churchgoers sitting up in their benches, glancing at children, spouses and friends, and singing earnestly to God for courage and protection. This dramatic naming of the enemies—Luther placing the Turks and the Papacy side by side—met with some controversy, as Leupold notes.

But many people took bitter offense at the juxtaposition of "Turk" and "papist" in the second line of the stanza. In predominantly Catholic principalities the hymn was forbidden, and after the interim of 1548, even Lutherans attempted to revise this line. Under the influence of pietism it was commonly changed to a petition for protection from enemies of the Word, and today the original version has almost completely disappeared from use. But it must be remembered that at the time of the writing not only the Turks but also many of the European princes loyal to Rome were ready to liquidate Lutheranism by force. Francis I of France, e.g., who posed as a defender of the church, made common cause with the Sultan against the Empire. These were the conditions that inspired Luther's prayer for protection against both pope and Turk.⁹⁶

⁹⁴LW 53:304.

⁹⁵LW 53:305.

⁹⁶LW 53:304.

Sadly enough, the profoundly important spiritual issues found in these four hymns of Luther are each a source of blazing controversy within Christendom today. Consider: Protestant megachurches teach the same false doctrines as the enthusiasts, threatening eternal souls. The sanctity of marriage between a man and woman has diminished or been lost among many in society, while diabolically twisted versions of marriage (not between a man and a woman) are substituted and even sanctioned by some churches. In a horrific, tragic historic parallel to Luther's time, Christians today are being martyred in several countries—shot, beheaded, or burned alive—at times in village-wide, even region-wide genocidal campaigns. Today, various armies and militias are engaged in military campaigns to conquer the world for Islam. As for the Papacy, it still considers the foundational doctrine of Christianity, justification by grace alone, to be anathema.

Is there a place in today's hymnals and songbooks for lyrics on these and other issues facing our increasingly embattled church? What would a missionary's host culture advise? Luther's example of writing bold, blunt, unequivocal lyrics on current spiritual topics, for placement in the church's hymnal, calls for our consideration.

8. Luther used worship music for pedagogical purposes.

Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Psalm 34:11

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children . . .

Psalm 78:5

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit . . .

Colossians 3:16

Those should be regarded as the pick and as the best and most useful teachers who are able to drill the catechism well, that is, to teach aright the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed . . . for this is the most necessary instruction, because it comprises, in brief form, the entire Scriptures. One must necessarily forever hammer home those brief lessons to the common people. . . Unfortunately, even then they learn little enough of them.⁹⁷

That Luther would use music for pedagogical purposes comes as no surprise. Luther held that "we might be bettered and strengthened in the faith through his holy Word, *driven into the heart with sweet*

song (emphasis added).⁹⁸ Luther's ability to provide effective musical settings for lessons based on his catechetical writings is illustrated in his hymn for the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father in the Heaven Who Art." Leupold notes:

The writing of this hymn may have been prompted by Luther's desire to furnish a hymn for every part of the catechism. Many other people had tried to versify the Lord's Prayer in the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. But Luther's version is outstanding for every stanza begins with an almost literal rendering of the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase, followed by the catechetical interpretation of its meaning in the remaining lines.⁹⁹

Luther's hymn on the Creed, "In One True God We All Believe," is based on an earlier medieval hymn on the Creed which contained only one verse.¹⁰⁰ Luther's version, which contains one verse for each person of the Trinity, obviously conveys much more information. As Leupold notes, "Both in the *Strassburg Kirchenamt* of 1524/25 and in Luther's German Mass of 1526 [this hymn] was used as a substitute for the Latin Credo of the mass, a function which soon was universally accepted in the Lutheran Liturgy."¹⁰¹ Again we see Luther striving through song to inculcate the fundamental truths of Christianity.

Luther was, of course, passionate about teaching the Ten Commandments to the people. He wrote two hymns on the Ten Commandments in 1524, "These Are the Holy Ten Commands" and "Man, Wouldst Thou Live All Blissfully," and applied the dictum *Repetitio mater studiorum est* (Repetition is the mother of all learning) to the church service. For as Leupold reports:

As early as 1525 these hymns [on the Ten Commandments] were sung in the weekday services during Lent when the sermons were on the Catechism. According to a Wittenberg church order of 1533, the choir boys were supposed to sing this hymn ["These Are the Holy Ten Commands"] before catechism sermons and the other hymn of the Ten Commandments ["Man, Wouldst Thou Live All Blissfully"] afterward.¹⁰²

Luther took another step to make the learning of the Ten Commandments in song as easy and attractive as possible. Regarding "These Are the Holy Ten Commandments," Leupold writes:

Luther assured its immediate reception by assigning to it the melody of the pre-Reformation pilgrims' hymn "In Gottes Namen

⁹⁸Plass, *What Luther Says*, vol. 2, 981.

⁹⁹LW 53:295.

¹⁰⁰LW 53:271.

¹⁰¹LW 53:271.

¹⁰²LW 53:277.

⁹⁷Plass, *What Luther Says*, vol. 1, 124-5.

fahren wir" ("We Journey in the Name of God"), sung since the thirteenth century.¹⁰³

Lutheran congregations can easily insert pedagogical songs in a variety of church settings. Following Luther's example, are there opportunities today in our mission fields for setting Luther's catechetical writings to music? Since the Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed are already a part of the liturgy, why not sing them? In Latin America, our Spanish hymnal's musical settings of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed have been well received.¹⁰⁴

Many cultures today are still primarily composed of oral learners, with wisdom passed down in story, song, dance, drama, and other arts. Globally, the rate of literacy remains stunningly low. Increasing the use of church music for pedagogical purposes merits serious consideration in virtually every ministry setting.¹⁰⁵

9. Luther maintained exceptionally high standards in matching translated lyrics to music.

I would gladly have a German mass today. I am also occupied with it. But I would very much like it to have a true German character. For to translate the Latin text and retain the Latin tone or notes has my sanction, though it doesn't sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody, and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection, otherwise, all of it becomes an imitation in the manner of the apes.¹⁰⁶

Luther's concern that the natural character of the "mother tongue" not be lost when used for lyrics to preexisting music is so evident in

¹⁰³LW 53:278.

¹⁰⁴To hear a musical setting of a Spanish version of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles Creed see the music files under *Música y liturgia* at: iglesialuteranacristo.com.

¹⁰⁵Leupold's comments on the reaction of the "modern mind" to writing hymns for pedagogical purposes is, unfortunately, accurate: ". . . to the modern mind the whole idea of writing a hymn on the Ten Commandments seems preposterous. We have become so accustomed to think of poetry as an expression of the personal feelings and emotions of the writer that we cannot conceive of a merely 'utilitarian' use of poetry. Hymnody in our own age has been defined as 'lyrical religion.' We find it difficult to think of a merely didactic hymn without sentimental overtones. But Luther proceeded from different premises. Very soberly he thought of hymns as a means of instilling the Word of God in the people. While some of his hymns were born out of his most personal experience and reflected the struggles and victories of his own faith, others were mere versifications of the Catechism. And it is hardly surprising that the demands of the law in the Ten Commandments did not inspire him to such lofty joy as the message of the gospel and justification by faith. Nevertheless, he wanted both law and gospel to be expressed in verse to instruct the common people and firmly ground them in the whole plan of salvation." LW 53:277.

¹⁰⁶LW 40:141.

the above quotation that little explanation is needed. A "multiplicity of German masses"¹⁰⁷ were appearing in Luther's day. Composers and editors involved in creating hymnals were seeking Luther's assistance. Leupold notes, "When Hausmann in March of 1525 sent a few samples of German liturgies (probably from Nordlingen, Allstedt, Strassburg, or Nurnberg), Luther wrote in response: 'I am returning the masses and have no objection against having them sung in this manner. But I hate to see the Latin notes set over the German words.'"¹⁰⁸ Here again, Luther evinces a great concern that the insertion of lyrics in a heart language into preexisting music result in a truly artistic music piece.

The quantity of changes to the music that Luther would make to historic Latin Mass arrangements, in order to accommodate the German language, is obvious from Leupold's list of revisions by Luther for an introit based on Psalm 34:

Luther developed this chant by recasting the first psalm tone. But whereas the original plain-chant psalm tone had two accented notes both in the mediation and termination, Luther provided for three in either place. Contrary to Gregorian usage, he also observed the word accent in the intonation. . . . Luther takes many liberties with his cadences in the interest of better adapting the music to the text. His music is more flexible and follows the rhythm of speech more closely than Gregorian psalmody.¹⁰⁹

Ameln similarly notes the care Luther took in applying German lyrics to preexisting hymns, writing of how Luther transformed an old hymn "in such a way that it very closely resembled the rise and fall of the spoken voice-melody of the text concerned. He thus fitted the music perfectly to the poetry."¹¹⁰ Leupold's words on Luther's work on the 1526 German Mass summarize well Luther's approach to lyric writing. Leupold writes, "Luther's pointing shows a meticulous and extremely sensitive concern for the natural speech rhythm of the German language."¹¹¹

Over the centuries, countless missionaries have requested that their Western liturgies and hymns be translated into the indigenous language. Within Lutheran missionary fields, how many translations of the 1941 Missouri Synod hymnal and other Lutheran hymnals have been utilized for decades by national churches as the only liturgical option? Were the musical accompaniments to the liturgies and hymns revised in order to accommodate the mother tongue?

¹⁰⁷LW 53:53.

¹⁰⁸LW 53:54.

¹⁰⁹LW 53:58.

¹¹⁰Ameln offers two examples, "Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort," and "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland." Ameln, *The Roots*, 20.

¹¹¹LW 53:57.

Were any heart music styles inserted as a more appropriate, artistic, language-accommodating musical option? Luther's deep concern that musical accompaniment be artistically matched to the heart language is a sobering reminder for us all.

10. In both his lyrics and his music Luther often wrote in a dramatic and bold style.

Luther's literary style in his liturgical orders is as direct, earthy, and realistic as it is in his other writings. He did not need to affect an unctuous dignity to make a religious impact; for in his life-long occupation with the Bible he had made the Hebraic mode of expressing divine truths in vivid, dynamic terms his own.¹¹²

The psalmist is brutally honest about the explosive joy that he's feeling and the deep sorrow or confusion. And I often think, "Gosh, well, why isn't church music more like that?"¹¹³

Today, at a Lutheran festival church service, we may literally tremble with emotion while singing the incomparably majestic "A Mighty Fortress." In a dark, candlelit Christmas Eve service, there is an almost unbearable tenderness to the simple "Ah, Dearest Jesus, Holy Child." To many who were raised in the Lutheran church, the hymns of Martin Luther represent the unsurpassable ideal of what congregational music should sound like.

To the churchgoers of Luther's day, however, the Reformer's often bold songs—the result of manipulating both textual and musical elements—sounded surprising, striking, even radical. In "An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg, 1523," in which Luther details the changes he wished to make for the Latin services, Luther pointedly wrote, "In church we do not want to quench the spirit of the faithful with tedium."¹¹⁴

Among his many musical gifts, Luther had the ability to match an earthy, robust, lyrical style to an equally earthy, robust musical style, that of the German folk music. As Leupold points out, Luther's bold, direct church music was a reflection of his personality and temperament. He writes:

The forthright simplicity and vivid concreteness of the words [lyrics] accord with the folklike style of the hymns. The syllabic structure of the melody and the bold intervals are quite in keeping with his musical principles and temperament.¹¹⁵

¹¹²LW 53:xviii.

¹¹³U2 lead singer Bono. From the documentary film, "The Psalms," by Fuller Studios. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/bono-wants-christian-music-to-get-more-honest_us_5720f787e4b0f309baef690d,

¹¹⁴LW 53:24.

¹¹⁵LW 53:185.

We have already seen throughout this essay the many ways in which Luther manipulated lyrical and musical elements to achieve his purposes in church music. Lyrically speaking, we especially noted the vivid words on current events that found their way into hymnals approved by Luther. Knowing that eternal lives were at stake, we found Luther taking on false prophets, Turks, and papists in direct, blunt lyrics. "Unfortunately," Leupold observes, "little of the original ruggedness of Luther's poetic style survived in the translations of his hymns that have found their way into modern English and American hymnals."¹¹⁶

Leupold finds much evidence of Luther's manipulation of musical elements in pursuit of bold compositions. On Luther's "In One True God We All Believe," he writes, "[Luther] avoided any suggestion of monotony by starting his verses alternately with an upbeat and downbeat and ending them with masculine and feminine rimes in turn."¹¹⁷

The meaning attached to rhythm and tempo varies, of course, from culture to culture. Leupold finds evidence of a sophisticated use of the element of rhythm by Luther. He notes,

Some of the melodies, e.g., those for "Our God He Is a Castle Strong" or "To Me She's Dear, the Worthy Maid" are amazingly complicated in their rhythmic structure. They abound in syncopation and rhythmical anticipation.¹¹⁸

The surprising range and sophistication of the rhythmic element found in original Reformation hymnody would merit an entire essay.

Regarding the element of tempo, churchgoers today may often feel that a slower, "stately" pace is called for in church music. However, the historic evidence indicates that church music in the Reformation churches of Luther's time included a "fairly rapid" tempo. Leupold writes:

... but regardless of whether the congregations in Luther's time sang the chorales with or without all the syncopations and rhythmic intricacies found in the printed sources, one fact is clear—the beat of the music was fairly rapid.¹¹⁹

On the musical element of melody, Leupold offers a sampling of Luther's innovations, observing yet again how Luther's manipulation of compositional techniques reflected his personality.

The tendency towards syllabic style—in marked contrast from the hymnals of Munzer or the Bohemian brethren—points to his

¹¹⁶LW 53:199.

¹¹⁷LW 53:271.

¹¹⁸LW 53:203–4.

¹¹⁹LW 53:205.

conviction that the melismatic style of plain chant is unsuitable for German verse. The preference for disjunct rather than conjunct movement, with bold fourths and fifths setting the tone, and the frequent defiant beginnings on the highest note of the scale are quite in keeping with what we know of his daring and dauntless temperament.¹²⁰

How would nationals describe the lyrics and/or the music brought to them for worship by Western missionaries? According to the nationals' music sensibilities, would they characterize the songs as *bold* or *daring*? Then again, what are the chances of that happening when the music is not the heart music of the people he or she serves? Missionaries need to facilitate the nationals' creation of heart music which, like Luther's hymns, may include dramatic and bold presentations of law and gospel messages.

Speaking apparently of church music in the United States, renowned modern Lutheran hymnist Carl F. Schalk observes, "Much of the music heard in churches today can be characterized by the banal melody, the trite rhythm, the treacly harmony, and the striving for the easy effect."¹²¹ It would be a travesty to insert such music into our mission fields today. We are at war with the old evil foe for the eternal souls of every man, woman, and child in our mission fields. Luther labored mightily to produce dynamic and compelling lyrics and music to drive the life-saving message of the Savior into the heart. May we settle for nothing less in our churches today!

¹²⁰LW 53:203.

¹²¹Schalk, *Luther on Music*, 52.