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Te Deum Laudamus:
A Brief History on the Formation and Use of the Liturgy in the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Lutherans have always had an interest in the liturgy. Hymnody and worship rites have been an integral part of Lutheran worship. To what extent, has varied throughout history. Luther greatly valued the liturgy. So much that he even set aside his unfinished translation of the Old Testament for two months in order to complete his *Formula Missae et Communionis* in December, 1523. Some have even argued that the greatest contribution of Luther's Reformation was his work with the liturgy. Yes, Lutherans have always had an interest in the liturgy because they recognize the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*.¹ The same varying interest toward and concern for the liturgy can be seen throughout the history of the Wisconsin Synod. It becomes somewhat of a challenge to trace the specific liturgical practices because of a lack of records. But from what little remains, we can paint a pretty clear picture of the liturgical flow in Wisconsin.

No historian of the Wisconsin Synod will argue that its confessional stance at its inception was lacking. The *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle was somewhat lacking in Wisconsin's early years thanks to the strong influence of pietism and rationalism carried over from Germany. Though we may not have synod-wide records of liturgics throughout Wisconsin's history, it can be evident, to some degree, according to what hymnal or agenda was used. Although many German Lutherans had emigrated to America centuries before, the most significant influx was seen shortly after 1817 in response to the King Frederick's edict forming the Prussian Union, in which he attempted to unite Lutherans and Reformed into a single church body called the *Unirte*. As these Lutheran began to establish congregations they made use of the hymnals they brought along from their respective areas in Germany. In Germany, however, each

¹ The clause comes from a fifth century collection of anti-Pelagian pronouncements by Roman pontiffs, compiled probably by Saint Prosper of Aquitaine, ca. 330. The original form was *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* – “that the obligatory manner of praying may determine the obligatory manner of believing.” The original meaning then is clear: the authoritative rule of prayer determines the rule of believing, not vice versa. The Lutheran interpretation of *lex orandi, lex credendi* is a plausible principle for we recognize the importance between worship and doctrine. However, one should be careful in stressing this phrase without knowing its history. See Dr. Kurt Marquart's article, *Liturgy and Dogmatics*, CTQ, Vol 67:2, 175-190.

area, whether province, city, or other governmental or church district, published its own hymnal. In view of the vast amount of hymnals, there grew a large amount of confusion amongst most churches bearing the name 'Lutheran.' This same confusion occurred in the early years of the Wisconsin Synod as well.

Probably the first well-known and widely-used hymnal of the Lutheran church in America, Wisconsin included, was produced by the Pennsylvania Synod in 1849 known as the 'Wollenweber hymnal.' Much of this hymnal came from work previously done by Henry Melchior Muhlenburg. Muhlenburg was sent to America by D. Francke of Halle to labor among and fix many of the problems in that were present in the Pennsylvania Synod. Among the many problems that Muhlenburg noticed, the large variety and in some parts even the lack of a liturgy was most notable. Though Muhlenburg's original order, known simply as the (Pennsylvania) *Agende*, was never printed, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania resolved to use it and no other in every congregation for nearly forty years.²

In the hopes of uniting Lutherans, Muhlenburg incorporated using a common liturgy. Though Muhlenburg's concept was good and indeed benefitted many American Lutherans, it did not take long before many Wisconsin Synod pastors, teachers, and lay people alike recognized that the Wollenweber hymnal, said to contain more than one hundred hymns of dubious Lutheran integrity, might not have been the best option. Many of its hymns were written by Rationalists, Pietists, and Reformed. Some in the Wisconsin Synod tried to join the Ohio Synod's efforts in producing a hymnal that contained only pure Biblical doctrines, but their effort came with no success.

² Fear was expressed by one delegate that "during the cold winter days the service might be somewhat too long." It's encouraging to know that this is not only a complaint of Wisconsin's members!

The earliest record of the Wollenweber hymnal's presence in the Wisconsin Synod was at Wisconsin's organizational convention on December 8, 1849 at the church in Milwaukee, today's Grace Ev. Lutheran Church. According to its proceedings, the hymn numbers and titles which opened the services for each morning session correspond with those in the Pennsylvania hymnal. If the Wollenweber hymnal was used at the Milwaukee church, it can safely be assumed that John Muehlhaeuser, serving as Milwaukee's pastor, also used this hymnal at the other preaching stations he held. The forerunners and early clergy of the Wisconsin Synod did not display much interest in or concern about hymns, liturgy or church music in general. This is evident as we see how long the rationalistic and pietistic Pennsylvania hymnal was used in the Wisconsin Synod.

Koehler, in his 'History of the Wisconsin Synod,' argues that the early Wisconsin Synod was somewhat unjustly accused of using the Pennsylvania *Agende*. He recognizes that this may have been true in the Milwaukee area in accordance with Muehlhaeuser's approval, however, Koehler continues, there is no reason to assume that the early Wisconsin Synod pastors made use of the rationalistic portions. To support this claim, Koehler cites letters written that indicate Muehlhaeuser provided hymnals, and more than likely a book of agenda, for the congregations who needed them.³ One wonders though, if Muehlhaeuser was using Pennsylvania's hymnal and its *Agende* in his own congregation, what would we assume he distributed to other Wisconsin congregations?

Whatever interest or concern the Wisconsin Synod had, positive and negative, toward the liturgy can be credited to the Missouri Synod.⁴ Wisconsin's lack of an interest in the liturgy, as compared to Missouri, can be explained for a number of reasons. There were many advantages

³ John P. Koehler. *The History of the Wisconsin Synod (Second Edition)*. Sauk Rapids: Sentinel. 1981, 70.

⁴ To some degree, one can also suppose Missouri is to blame for Wisconsin's overreaction toward the negative.

that Missouri held over Wisconsin from the start. Most of the founders and members of the Wisconsin Synod came over to America as individuals either to flee the Prussian Union or simply to seek opportunity in the New World. The early Missourians, on the other hand, came over in one large group of roughly 700 persons. This large group consisted of several congregations including seven pastors, four school teachers, eight theological students, and even three physicians. Very shortly after the Missouri Lutherans' arrival they established a theological educational institution and included music as part of its curriculum. Probably the greatest advantage that Missouri held over Wisconsin, however, can be found in one man, Dr. C.F.W. Walther.

Walther, described as the 'undisputed American champion of confessional rite and hymnody,'⁵ was originally a music major at the University of Leipzig before he changed his course of study to theology. Less than ten years after arriving in America, Walther compiled a hymnal of Lutheran hymns (1847) that were pure in doctrine entitled the *Kirchengesangbuch*.⁶ Simply a text edition, it included 437 hymns, prayers, antiphons, Luther's Small Catechism (*Enchiridion*), and the Augsburg Confession. The committee that worked with Walther expressed their concern for quality hymns as described in *Der Lutheraner*, announcing the hymnal's appearance:

In the selection of the adopted hymns the chief consideration was that they be pure in doctrine; that they have found almost universal acceptance within the Orthodox German Lutheran church and have thus received the almost unanimous testimony; that they had come forth from the true spirit [of Lutheranism]; that they express not so much the changing circumstances of individual persons but rather contain the language of the whole church, because the book is to be used primarily in public worship; and finally that

⁵ James P. Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes in the WELS," *LOGIA* 14 (Holy Trinity 2005): 32.

⁶ Complete citation: *Kirchengesangbuch für Evangelisch- Lutherische Gemeinden ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession darin des seligen D. Martin Luthers und andere geistreichen Lehrer gebräuchlichste Kirchen-Lieder enthalten sind.*

they, though bearing the imprint of Christian simplicity, be not merely rhymed prose but the creations of a truly poetry.⁷

Emerging as the leading theologian of Missouri, in light of the Martin Stephan controversy, Walther saw a need for uniting the Missourians in a time of turmoil. Similar to Muhlenberg, Walther sought to do this by means of a hymnal and a common liturgy. Nine years after the release of his *Kirchengesangbuch*, Walther produced the *Kirchen-Agenda*⁸ which contained the main Sunday order. Visitors to the St. Louis congregations, where Walther served as senior pastor, would have experienced not only an elaborate liturgical rite based on Luther's Reformation revisions, but chasubles, chanting, candles, and crucifixes as well. They might also have experienced the thrill of hearing Walther on the organ; it is said that regular churchgoers did not have to glance to the balcony to know when Walther was taking his turn on the bench. Walther also stood behind the efforts of his former students to establish his worship perspective and rites in every Missouri Synod congregation.⁹ So powerful was Walther's liturgical influence that even congregations in the synod that possessed their own confessional rites were led to abandon them for Walther's.¹⁰

As for the Wisconsin Synod, there is no report that any of its original or founding pastors showed any signs of musical ability or had any formal musical training. For the most part, they were satisfied with the hymnals and Agendas they brought from Germany. Although Muhlhaeuser did admit that the good Lutheran Agendas from Germany did not contain the services and rites needed in this country, i.e. cornerstone laying, dedication, ordination, etc. Also,

⁷ Precht, Fred L. *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*. St. Louis: CPH, 1993, 89. This hymnal remained in use until the Synod's gradual transition from German worship services to English with these changes in three editions: the addition of the Epistle and the Gospel pericopes and the history of the Destruction of Jerusalem in 1848; six hymns in 1857; and 41 additional hymns in 1917.

⁸ Precht outlines Walther's entire *Agenda*, 92-96.

⁹ Tiefel, 32.

¹⁰ In his history of Frankenmuth, Michigan, *Teach My People the Truth*, Herman Zehnder laments the fact that St. Lorenz congregation was "forced" by Walther's contemporary Fuerbringer to give up its Willhelm Loehe liturgy, thought by Zehnder to be far richer even than Walther's.

unlike Missouri, none of the early Wisconsin Synod churches on record had an instrument to lead the singing,¹¹ with the result that often the pastor had to assume the post of cantor to introduce the hymn by singing its tune. This was usually done by the pastor singing a line and the congregation repeating it immediately after in a practice that came to be known as “lining out.” One can only imagine what this would have sounded like. Talk about the ‘blind leading the blind.’ Or maybe better, ‘the tone deaf leading the tone deaf.’ Wisconsin also differed from Missouri in their church building and architecture. Koehler notes, “Most of our early congregations did not have a crucifix and candlesticks on the altar... Wisconsin did not attach any importance to them.”¹²

These differences in worship and liturgics did not go unnoticed between the two Synods and would be a source of animosity throughout their history. Neither Walther nor Muehlhaeuser was discreet in expressing his thoughts toward the others liturgical practices. The constitution of Muehlhaeuser’s Grace congregation in Milwaukee, for example, included this paragraph:

Be it resolved that our congregation, founded on the ground of the apostles and prophets, whereon Jesus is the cornerstone, makes confession of the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism. However, never may or shall a preacher of the said congregation use the rite of the *old* Lutheran church, whether in Baptism or the Lord’s Supper.¹³

Though it cannot be proven, one wonders if Walther wrote the following words in direct reply to Muehlhaeuser:

We refuse to be guided by those who are offended by our church customs. We adhere to them all the more firmly when someone wants to cause us to have a guilty conscience on

¹¹ The first instrument on record in a Wisconsin Synod church is the organ at Milwaukee’s Grace Lutheran Church, mentioned in the 1858 synodical financial report of Grace congregation. The cost was \$700.00. The present St. Mark’s congregation in Watertown installed an organ in its church in late 1857, but that was before it was a member of the Wisconsin Synod. Organs did become more common in the Wisconsin Synod in the later 1860’s but were only found in the city congregations of Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha, and possibly in the large country churches near Milwaukee. At Manitowoc the organ belonged to the pastor and had to be carried into the church on Sunday morning by the deacons.

¹² Koehler, 70.

¹³ Tiefel, 32. (emphasis mine)

account of them...It is truly distressing that many of our fellow Christians find the differences between Lutheranism and papism in outward things. It is a pity and dreadful cowardice when one sacrifices the good and ancient customs to please the deluded American sects, lest they accuse us of being papistic.

Indeed! Am I to be afraid of a Methodist, who perverts the saving Word, or be ashamed in the matter of my good cause, and not rather rejoice that the sects can tell by our ceremonies that I do not belong to them?

We are not insisting that there be unity of perception or feelings or of taste among all believing Christians, neither dare anyone demand that all be minded as he. Nevertheless it remains true that the Lutheran liturgy distinguishes Lutheran worship from the worship of other churches to such an extent that the latter look like lecture halls in which the hearers are merely addressed or instructed, while our churches are in truth houses of prayer in which the Christians serve God publicly before the world.¹⁴

Though the Wisconsin Synod's hopes, intentions, and even views concerning themselves were to be and remain confessional, in the early years, it seems this was achieved simply with words rather than with actions in their liturgical practices. Missouri's brand of liturgical worship and its tastes in hymnody simply ran counter to what Wisconsin's founders and early leaders had experienced from their youth. Wisconsin was in great need and in some respects ready for a confessional adjustment, but the assimilation of liturgy, ceremony, and the objective hymns of Missouri didn't feel right to many Wisconsin pastors and members born and bred in Pietism.¹⁵

As a viewer of history and not one who experienced it, one might suppose that Walther's liturgical leadership would have been powerful enough to change the prevailing worship attitude in the Wisconsin Synod, however, this was not the case. Though Walther's hymnal and service order were available for use, Wisconsin never formally adopted or even considered adopting them.¹⁶ In the Wisconsin Synod, an 1874 resolution calling for the adoption of Walther's *Agende* specifically rejected Walther's order of service. As Tiefel notes, it is difficult to document but one senses that early Wisconsin Synod pastors saw in Walther, and to an extent Missouri in general, a certain "pushiness" that they resented. It is likely, that Wisconsin – smaller, poorer,

¹⁴ C.F.W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*. St. Louis: CPH, 1992, 1:194.

¹⁵ Tiefel, 33.

¹⁶ Though there are records of some individual congregations in Wisconsin that made use of it.

and generally less sophisticated than Missouri – compensated for a subtle inferiority complex by dismissing Missouri’s ways as somewhat extravagant and ostentatious. “The less lovely sister often deals with the lovelier sister’s beauty by considering her vain.”¹⁷ Or as August Pieper was fond of saying, “*Wir sind in der Wisconsin Synode; wir machen kein ‘show.*”¹⁸ Anecdotal history leads one to sense that such a compensation occurred in Wisconsin more often than the official histories admit.

Whatever chances Wisconsin and Missouri had at joining their efforts in fellowship were set back by Wisconsin’s decision to join the General Council in November, 1867.¹⁹ It confirmed for Walther and the rest of Missouri what they feared to be true concerning the Wisconsin Synod. Work was being done in the Wisconsin Synod to improve the Pennsylvania hymnal and *Agende* but work was slow. The standing hymnal committee of the Wisconsin Synod, consisting of Pastors W. Streissguth, W. Dammann and C. Guasewitz, published a pamphlet, dated April 25, 1866 entitled: “Index of Hymns which should be removed from the old Hymnal [Pennsylvania] and a List of Hymns which should take their Places.”²⁰

In his President’s Report at this convention, Streissguth stated that he had, according to the mandates of the 1865 convention, contacted other synods about their hymnal plans and that he received the following responses: The Pennsylvania Synod committee would make no commitments, but would present the Wisconsin Synod proposals sent earlier by Streissguth to the Pennsylvania Synod at their convention which would be held on the same dates as the Wisconsin Synod convention. The Ohio Synod indicated that its work had progressed so far that

¹⁷ Tiefel, 33.

¹⁸ Dr. Mark Braun. *The Black Geneva Piety of the Wisconsin Synod: An Analysis of the Changing View of the Relationship of Doctrine and Liturgy with the WELS*, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly. Vol 79:3, 2006, 184.

¹⁹ The first organizational meeting of the General Council was held on December 12, 1866 in Reading, PA. The 1867 date notes the General Council’s first convention.

²⁰ Arnold O. Lehmann. *Wisconsin Synod Hymnals and Agendas 1850-1950*, WELS Historical Institute Journal Vol 16:2, 1998, 9. The index contained 270 suggested hymnal replacements. The committee erred in the case of two hymns, so that the actual number was 268.

the participation of the Wisconsin Synod would not be practical. And the New York Synod had resolved in the previous year that a revision was not necessary.²¹ And yet, according to the 1866 Proceedings, the hymnal committee (floor committee No. 6) suggested: “that it would be better to publish a new hymnal with the proposed General Council (*Generalsynode*), but also to proceed under the present arrangement for the revision of the old Pennsylvania hymnal.”²²

At the first convention of the General Council, held in Fort Wayne, Indiana, November 20-26, 1867, the wheels of producing a new hymnal were set in motion. A large amount of time was spent discussing the hymnal which produced eight adopted resolutions that expressed the General Council’s desire to have only good Lutheran hymns published, and these in their original forms as much as possible.²³ The General Council resolved to produce both an English and German hymnal and that a delegate or representative from each synod in the General Council be present on each hymnal committee. The English *Church Book* took up most of the time and attention since this was going to be the first English hymnal for most of the synods present.²⁴ The publishing of the *Church Book* was given to the Pennsylvania Ministerium. The task of compiling the German Hymnal was given to a sub-committee of three members. President James Bading was one of the three.

It seemed as though the Wisconsin Synod was finally going to achieve its dream of possessing a solid Lutheran hymnal with help from the General Council. However, the dream never came to fruition. In view of the weak theology that permeated throughout the General Council, it was probably a good thing. At its 1869 synod convention, the Wisconsin Synod voted to withdraw its membership from the General Council, citing disagreements concerning pulpit

²¹ Lehmann, 9.

²² Lehmann, 10.

²³ Lehmann, 13.

²⁴ From the Wisconsin Synod, Pastor R. Adelberg (St. Mark’s, Watertown) was appointed to the English *Church Book* committee.

and altar fellowship, Chiliasm, and lodges. Leading up to the break was also a growing desire from Watertown and Milwaukee to join forces with the Missouri Synod.

1870 would prove to be an important year for the Wisconsin Synod. It finally released the long awaited German hymnal it had desired for so many years entitled the *Gesangbuch*.

However, the synod's first official hymnal was a prime example that Wisconsin was not ready to produce its own hymnal evident that it had to endure an immediate revision to cleanse it of nine hymns that should not have been included.²⁵ Revisions were made and the September 1, 1870 edition of the *Gemeindeblatt* contained the following announcement:

The hymnal (*Gesangbuch*), produced and approved by the Wisconsin Synod, is now ready and available. . . In this edition the hymns designated (9) as offensive by the committee have been removed and others put in their places.

With the hymnal problem apparently solved, there was still concern in the synod concerning a related book, the Agenda. Soon after, in 1873, the Northwestern Conference presented a memorial to the Wisconsin Synod asking that it issue an Agenda so the services in synod congregations would be uniform. The synod was concerned about using a book that contained orders for ministerial acts ever since the 1850's. After a lengthy floor discussion at the 1873 synod convention it was resolved that the individual conferences each draw up a proposed Agenda and send it to the synod president, who in turn was to give the proposed material to an appointed committee, which in turn was to select the best material and present a suggested Agenda to the 1874 convention. However, the individual conferences failed to achieve this in time for the 1874 convention. Because of this, a floor committee was given the undesirable task of finding a solution. What it offered was somewhat ironical:

a) to accept the Missouri Agenda (Walther's);

²⁵ Lehmann gives a detailed list of these nine hymns and the reasons for their rejection. See Lehmann, 17-18. Hoenecke noted that an additional 100 hymns should have been replaced as well.

b) to set up a committee for developing a revised worship service order such as most of the Wisconsin Synod congregations were using; and for providing necessary formulas for ministerial acts which were not in the Missouri Synod Agenda.²⁶

Naturally, the convention voted to go with option 'b' and a committee was appointed.

However, in 1875, the committee reported to the convention that they also failed to carry out their assignment, with the result that the synod referred the matter back to the committee which then appointed Professor A.F. Ernst as chairman.²⁷ This committee fulfilled its task for the 1876 convention and presented its suggested order of worship for the main (German) service discussion. The order of service read as follows:

- 1) Congregation hymn in place of *Introit*.
- 2) "Our help is in the name of the Lord" or "Our beginning²⁸ is in the name of the God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" as an introduction to:
- 3) The lesser doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and evermore from eternity to eternity."
- 4) Confession and Absolution.²⁹

Some disagreements and discussion arose concerning the section on Absolution and the matter was not resolved, referring it back to the committee for a reworking, which was to be presented to the 1877 convention.³⁰ But no mention concerning an Agenda of any kind was recorded in the subsequent synod Proceedings until 1886 where it was recorded that the new Agenda was magically ready for publication. Again synodical Proceedings are silent concerning this Agenda until 1900 where it seems that the Northwestern Publishing House took over its production reporting it had gathered 250 small Agendas.

²⁶ Lehmann, 19-20.

²⁷ The members of the committee: Prof. A.F. Ernst and Theo. Brohm, and Pastors C. Mayerhoff, Ad. Hoenecke and Bernhard Ungrodt. Hoenecke would resign from the committee and Pastors J. Brockmann and Reinsch were added.

²⁸ An unfortunate choice of words since the congregation would have already sang a hymn.

²⁹ Lehmann, 20.

³⁰ One group held to their committee's proposed forms in which the pastor assures the repentant sinners of their forgiveness. A second group insisted that the pastor, as an ordained servant, personally forgives the sins, saying that these words offer "forgiveness more strongly, more surely, and more comfortingly," The first group agreed that the latter absolution was appropriate for a confessional service, but that the other absolution was adequate for a non-communion service.

Many had hoped that with the emergence of John P. Koehler, a student of Walther's at St. Louis, the Wisconsin Synod would start to show signs of a greater desire in confessional liturgics. Given his vast knowledge of history and love of music, one would have thought that the liturgy would have been a natural fit for Koehler. This never proved true. Instead of being motivated by his seminary professor to embrace confessional liturgical practices, he was led to the conclusion that too often liturgy and ceremony were imposed on the church in a legalistic manner. Like many of the early Wisconsin Synod pastors, Koehler viewed Missouri's practices as those which led, not to a faith-wrought liturgical life, but rather to one that was formalistic. Some suggest that Koehler's concern was so deep that he refused to bring himself to become a champion for liturgical enrichment, though he possessed the gifts, in his own synod.³¹ Others have expressed even deeper reservations concerning Koehler's liturgical views. In an article penned for the first issue of the *WELS Historical Institute*, Victor Prange (who married Koehler's granddaughter) observed:

Koehler shows an appreciation for protestantism; one misses an equal appreciation for that which is catholic. Koehler speaks of how the life of the church so easily "becomes materialistic." One suspects that he might have been just a bit uncomfortable with some of Luther's writings on the Sacrament of the Altar. At times one gets the feeling that Koehler would have felt right at home in a Zwinglian church building cleansed of all distractions so that in that plain and bare setting the Word alone could impact the soul. Koehler appreciated hymnody; I find little evidence that he cared much for the liturgy. The liturgy is catholic; hymnody is protestant.³²

Though his emphasis may have been protestant over catholic, Koehler's priceless contributions to the Wisconsin Synod's hymnody should not be overlooked. Indirectly, he significantly advanced the Wisconsin Synod's liturgical thinking by offering the seminary's first course on liturgics; founded the seminary chorus, teaching pastors how to sing and lead in

³¹ Tiefel, 33.

³² Victor Prange, "Review of J.P. Koehler's 'The History of the Wisconsin Synod'," *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, 1:1, 1983, 40.

worship; and he encouraged the use of great hymns of Lutheranism's golden age, which, until then were primarily unknown by most Wisconsin Synod members.³³

Though they were in fellowship as members of the Synodical Conference, when it came to liturgics, the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods seemed ages apart. More than thirty years after the founding of the Synodical Conference, Missouri published their first major English hymnal in 1912, the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book with Tunes*. It contained the 1888 Common Service based on the best and most widely used liturgical orders of the Reformation Era. The Common Service was more than an order of service; it included translations of the introits, graduals, and collects for all the Sundays and festivals of the Christian church year. The musical settings were prepared by the well-known liturgical historian Luther Reed along with Frederick Archer in 1901.³⁴

What one can only assume was out of spite, Wisconsin once again chose to display their lack of liturgical leadership by producing their own hymnal five years later in 1917, the *Book of Hymns*,³⁵ instead of choosing to make use of Missouri's new hymnal. The *Book of Hymns* borrowed a few of Reed's and Archer's settings from Missouri, but little else. One portion that the *Book of Hymns* did not borrow was Missouri's order of Common Service (1888). This would become significant upon the arrival of *The Lutheran Hymnal* which did include this rite. Upon its completion, Pastor John Brenner somewhat ignorantly concluded that the *Book of Hymns* contained "everything that is necessary and no more." Brenner considered it an advantage that it did not include psalms, collects, and other elements "rarely, if ever, used in our services."

³³ Tiefel, 35.

³⁴ Tiefel, 34.

³⁵ It is interesting to note that nothing is recorded anywhere – in the synod's archives, in the official periodicals nor in the archives of NPH – about the progress of the proposed hymnal until 1917 when the Proceedings of the 1917 synodical convention held in July record the report of the Publishing house committee, which reported a list of works published during the previous year (which in Proceedings and reports always meant from one convention to the next), among them "the long awaited *Hymn Book* by Peter O. Hagedorn."

Wisconsin church members “often do not take part in the liturgical service, as they know neither the words nor the melody of the responses.”³⁶ The *Book of Hymns* did contain full musical accompaniment for two forms of Morning Service, one Evening Service, and one Communion Service. “Those of us whose congregations frequently meet in services with congregations of the Missouri Synod,” Brenner wrote, “will be glad to find that the compiler has adopted the forms given in the Missouri hymnal.” Although, one wonders to what forms Brenner is referring.³⁷

Almost from its initial publication date, the *Book of Hymns* met with great disappointment. Subsequent issues had to include numerous corrections. And there were pastors who were displeased by the book’s liturgical and hymnological poverty.

In the spring following the release of the *Book of Hymns* (May, 1918), its compiler Otto Hagedorn revealed even more about Wisconsin’s attitude toward worship. The Invocation and *Introit* had been omitted from the order of service, the latter because “there is no good reason for it in a service which is opened with a hymn by the congregation, serving the same purpose of expressing the character of the respective Sunday.” The *Gloria Patri* was also omitted, because the *Gloria in Excelsis* “conveys the same sentiment.” Hagedorn also disappointedly predicted that “the average churchgoer will thank us for not putting in more than one Scripture lesson.”³⁸ Hagedorn also defended the rejection of portions of Missouri’s Common Service. Another change was moving the *Agnus Dei*: “There is very good reason for singing...“O Christ, Thou Lamb of God” immediately after the Confession of Sin; hence we put it there, but omitted it later where it is often found.” Hagedorn makes this claim despite the historical evidence that the *Agnus Dei* had been attached to the Holy Communion service since at least the second century

³⁶ Braun, 185.

³⁷ Brenner went on to say in an article in the September 21, 1917 *Northwestern Lutheran*, “Book of Hymns for the Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and other States – is the title of a book in which all members of our synod will be, or ought to be, interested.”

³⁸ Braun, 185.

and was positioned in the Communion liturgy by Luther in both of his orders.³⁹ Already by 1925, the Wisconsin Synod convention resolutions were looking for something better: an appendix to the *Book of Hymns* containing more and better hymns, or perhaps a completely new book, maybe even (*gasp!*) a joint effort with Missouri and the other synods of the Synodical Conference.⁴⁰

Perhaps it was this liturgically weak demonstration of the Wisconsin Synod that caused the first article commending liturgical worship to appear in the *Quartalschrift* in 1938.⁴¹ It took more than twenty years after the unleashing of the *Book of Hymns* and thirty-four years after *Quartalschrift's* inaugural issue, before the importance of liturgics was finally expressed on a synod-wide level. It is also interesting to note that the article, "What Benefits May Be Derived from More Emphasis on the Study of Liturgics," was not written by a seminary professor or a synodical stud but by a parish pastor, Gervasius Fischer.⁴² In the Wisconsin Synod there always seemed to be a concern for better Lutheran hymnody but it was not until the 1930's, thanks in part to the liturgical movement, that the synod's concern shifted to the liturgy. Along with

³⁹ Hagedorn's complete article: "It may not be amiss to anticipate a few criticisms that may come in again, though they have, we believe, been sufficiently disproved. The words "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen," as an introduction to the altar service have been intentionally omitted, because the thought conveyed therein is sufficiently expressed in the words "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth," and in the subsequent confession of the Creed. The words "Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart, etc." introducing the Confession of Sins, have been omitted, because we prefer the more liturgical way of saying and singing, "I said, I will confess... And Thou forgavest..." and there certainly is no necessity for a double introduction.

The *Introit* has been omitted, because there is no good reason for it is a service which is opened with a hymn by the congregation, serving the same purpose of expressing the character of the respective Sunday.

The *Gloria Patri* is omitted in the morning service because the subsequent *Gloria in Excelsis*, which conveys the same sentiment in amplified form. We have put the *Gloria Patri* into the Evening Service, in which the *Gloria in Excelsis* is not used. There is a very good reason for singing the *Kyrie* or "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God" immediately after the Confession of sins; hence we put it there but omitted it later, where it is often found.

We believe the average church-goer will thank us for not putting in more than one Scripture Lesson.

Other deviations from the forms found in other books were from the same considerations: to avoid unnecessary duplications and reiterations. Let the pastor and choir director put all the variety into the service that their liturgical conscience will demand or permit; but for the standard forms let us confine ourselves to that which is truly essential and liturgical." O. Hagedorn

⁴⁰ Tiefel, 34.

⁴¹ *Theologische Quartalschrift* 35 (April, 1938): 109-130; and 36 (April, 1939): 97-118.

⁴² Gervasius Fischer also served on the liturgics sub-committee for *The Lutheran Hymnal* (TLH).

Fisher's article in the *Quartalschrift*, there were also growing concerns at the smaller district and congregational levels.⁴³

It was this growing concern, along with the liturgical movement, that preceded the course leading up to the Synodical Conference's producing *The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)*⁴⁴ in 1941. Still, Wisconsin's animosity toward the liturgical views in Missouri was present. This was evident in a number of ways. Perhaps one of the most notable signs was seen in how long it took Wisconsin to join Missouri's efforts in producing a joint hymnal. Whereas Wisconsin showed its speedy willingness to work with the General Council's joint hymnal committee, its eagerness toward Missouri was not quite as evident. It would take 70 years and two failed hymnals on their own before Wisconsin would take part in the Synodical Conference's efforts. It was apparent that the disagreements exchanged between the two synods in their early years would not soon be forgotten. John Brenner, who was Wisconsin's synod president at the time *TLH* was being produced, shared his concerns toward the current joint hymnal efforts warning a Wisconsin representative on the Synodical Conference hymnal committee that he wanted someone there "who had both feet in the congregation so that we don't get a monument to the musicians of the Missouri Synod."⁴⁵

⁴³ In 1936, in an essay delivered to the Minnesota District convention, Herbert Sitz warned that wherever churches discarded "our good Lutheran chorales for the vastly inferior subjective Gospel hymns that originate under sectarian patronage," there came "an ever increasing amount of the sectarian spirit encroaching upon congregational life." Sitz observed that in the Synod's "emphasis upon the importance of the spoken Word, upon the sermon," the importance of the liturgy may have been underemphasized. "Most of our churches are listless and apathetic" in their responses, and many regard the liturgy "simply as a form to be gone through" and "a rather long time to be kept standing upon their feet." If worshippers would only realize "what great privilege [was] theirs, then our liturgy would take on a new life and every participant would be greatly benefited." Taken from: Herbert Sitz, "The Use and Abuse of Music in the Lutheran Service," *The Northwestern Lutheran* 23 (August 30, 1936): 275.

⁴⁴ Though *TLH* was the hymnal of the Synodical Conference and not of one single state synod, the original idea of producing this "ultimate publication of a new hymnal" originated with Missouri at its Synod Convention in 1929 gathered in River Forest, IL. Perhaps it was this 'original ownership' that hindered Wisconsin's eagerness to join the efforts.

⁴⁵ Tiefel, 34. Spoken to Pastor William Schaefer. The other Wisconsin Synod representatives who served on the Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics: seminary professors John Meyer and August Zich and Pastors Otto Hagedorn, Gervasius Fischer, and Arthur Voss.

While the Wisconsin Synod brought many great contributions to *TLH*⁴⁶, it was for the most part considered Missouri's book and was only published by Concordia Publishing House. For example, The Order of Holy Communion ("Page 15") was essentially the order from its predecessor, the 1912 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*. However, *TLH* was far superior to its predecessor in a number of ways as well. *The Lutheran Hymnal* expanded the liturgical section over fifty-five pages as well as adding nearly one hundred hymns compared to the 1912 version. Though there was this apparent Missouri ownership attached to *TLH*, it didn't stop Wisconsin Synod congregations from purchasing the hymnal by the thousands.⁴⁷ *The Lutheran Hymnal* was met by Wisconsin with some hesitancy but it was said that by World War II nearly every Wisconsin Synod congregation was using it.⁴⁸

Whatever progress the Wisconsin Synod had made on account of Missouri would soon be reverted. During the years of the Lutheran liturgical movement (1930-50), the Missouri Synod grew liturgically but also ecumenically. With more innate interest, more financial resources, and more opportunities for scholarship, the Missourians stood at the forefront of efforts to reclaim the rich worship heritage left by the Lutheran reformers. With music giants like Paul Bunjes and

⁴⁶ Fischer was especially active on the liturgics subcommittee. Several hymn tunes by Fritz Reuter, the renowned DMLC musician, were included: Reuter (*TLH* 283) and New Ulm (*TLH* 50). The book contained an original hymn text by WELS poet Anna Hoppe: "O'er Jerusalem Thou Weepst" (*TLH* 419). Tiefel, 34.

⁴⁷ During a fifteen-month window, NPH encouraged the purchasing of *TLH* by offering the price of eighty cents per copy, if they were used to replace older books.

⁴⁸ Tiefel, 35. Among those who showed animosity toward *TLH* were recorded these stories: Martin Albrecht recounted an incident that took place in the fall of 1941 in the sacristy at Calvary, Thiensville, where he was serving as pastor. He was preparing for the opening service of the Milwaukee pastoral conference and had posted "page 15" (The Order of Holy Communion in *TLH*) on the hymn board. Just before the service, his district president and the chairman of the synod's Board of Trustees arrived at the sacristy door and suggested that Albrecht not use "that high-church liturgy." Albrecht was not deterred, but the Trustees chairman never did inaugurate the service in his congregation, First German in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. First German used the old Mecklenburger rite (translated) until the pastor retired in 1966.

Grace Lutheran Church in Yakima, Washington, never did adopt the Holy Communion rite in *TLH*; but rather transitioned straight from the liturgy in the Book of Hymns to that of Christian Worship – almost an 85 year span! Fifteen years after the publication of *TLH*, another district president, Pastor Arnold E. Sitz, was still criticizing the Holy Communion rite in a lengthy essay presented to his AZ-CA District brothers in the mid 1950's. Commenting on the conclusion of the Vesper service in *TLH*, he wrote: "This long post-sermon drag merits a short German epithet 'Sopff' (pigtail)! Not only good liturgical principle, but plain common sense dictates the shears for it." Tiefel, 35.

Herman Schlicker building organs for many Missouri Synod schools and churches to William Heyne, professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who directed the St. Louis Bach Choir which was heard nationally on the Lutheran Hour, the Missouri Synod was making a name for itself on the grand stage of Lutheran and confessional liturgics. Couple that with the names of Walter Buszin, who had become widely known for his scholarly commentaries on Lutheran liturgy and hymnody; Carl Halter, professor at Concordia College, River Forest, IL, who exhaustively trained Missouri's church musicians for decades; and Arthur Carl Piepkorn, another St. Louis professor, probably best known for his controversial position in the United States military chaplaincy (1940-51), who produced a meticulously researched monograph on the history and use of the liturgical vestments, which was and remains the standard work on the subject,⁴⁹ and Missouri supplied the drivers who steered the ship that carried the Luther liturgical movement.

By anyone's standards, these men from the Missouri Synod were the champions of their day in Lutheran liturgical studies. Most of them carried on their activities within the context of the Lutheran liturgical movement, however, and this is where many of Wisconsin's suspicions were confirmed. The Lutheran liturgical movement attracted pastors, teachers, church musicians, and laypeople from various Lutheran synods who were interested in the liturgical, musical, and artistic legacy of orthodox Lutheranism.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, many of these same individuals were also interested in Lutheran ecumenicity and arrived at conferences and symposiums not only for the study of worship but also to discover how the confessional walls that existed between Lutherans might be broken down.⁵¹ Combine this with the influence of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation and you have the foundation laid for the Wisconsin/Missouri

⁴⁹ Tiefel, 36.

⁵⁰ Tiefel, 36.

⁵¹ Tiefel, 36.

split in 1961. In view of this, one can say with great validity that the liturgy was as strong a force for the break as anything else.

Naturally, the years after the split were the most difficult in Wisconsin's short history. Though congregations and even families were being torn apart, Wisconsin and Missouri still were united in the use of a common hymnal. One can only imagine the confusion and difficulties this must have caused among parishioners who were told they were no longer in fellowship with their former sister synod but whose Sunday services remained eerily similar.

Missouri proposed their next hymnal at the 1977 Synod Convention in Dallas, TX after a similar motion was turned down in 1965. *Lutheran Worship* was published in 1982 and like every hymnal met with mixed response.⁵² Though they had published a number of pamphlets and appendices, i.e. *Service of the Word* (1971), which contained a new rite for Holy Baptism and a set of responsive general prayers, the Wisconsin Synod did not move as quickly toward a new hymnal. The Wisconsin Synod did not even resolve to begin work on a new hymnal until a year after Missouri released *Lutheran Worship*. In the meantime however, Wisconsin did establish a standing committee for liturgy, hymnology, and worship in order to provide the resources and manpower the study of liturgics deserved. The 1963 Synod Convention resolved to establish a "Commission of Liturgy, Hymnody, and Worship," currently called the Commission on Worship.

Although the concern ran deep in many places that Wisconsin lacked the talent to produce its own hymnal and the necessary accompanying publications, the 1983 Synod Convention resolved, at the recommendation of the recently formed Commission on Worship,

⁵² Wisconsin pastoral conferences studied the new hymnal in earnest to see if adoption or at least adaption was possible. But the book's thick liturgical section simply highlighted the long-standing differences between worship concepts and practices in the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. Similar to the early years, Wisconsin might have been willing to accept Missouri's hymns but not its liturgies. Tiefel, 39.

“that the synod now begin work on a new/revised hymnal of its own, one that under the blessings of god will be...welcomed and judged to be highly satisfactory...by a majority of our members.” A hymnal project director (Rev. Kurt Eggert) was to be called, and a special hymnal committee was to be appointed. The entire project was placed under the supervision of the Commission on Worship as its first major project.⁵³ The target date for the new hymnal was set for 1990 and *Christian Worship* made its debut on August 7, 1993 at the Synod Convention in Saginaw, Michigan.

As was to be expected, being the first hymnal, outside of *TLH*, many Wisconsin Synod members saw in over fifty years, *Christian Worship* came under some criticism. But its track record established by the high congregational adoption rate and numbers of copies purchased over the last decade suggest a general acceptance and satisfaction within the synod. Arguably *Christian Worship*'s greatest contribution was a reintroduction to the chanting of *Psalms*. Before *Christian Worship*, Wisconsin Synod congregations rarely used the psalms in worship beyond the introits of *TLH* and a responsively read psalm at mid-week Lenten services. In previous decades chanting the psalms was virtually unheard of and rejected as being “too high church.” Yet, *Christian Worship* restored the psalms to regular usage in the synod's worship and paved the way for chanting in general and chanting by the pastor in particular.⁵⁴

The Wisconsin Synod has come a long way in its liturgical history. It has grown in recognizing that confessional liturgics is catholic in shape. It has grown to better appreciate the rich history of what was done for centuries with the liturgy in the Lutheran church from the time of Luther and beyond. It has grown to embrace the *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle ever attaching our synod's worship with its theology. Over the years the Lord has blessed our synod

⁵³ Lehmann, 28.

⁵⁴ Charles L. Cortright, “Christian Worship in Retrospect,” *LOGIA*, (Holy Trinity, 2005): 66.

with an abundance of gifted musicians and a love for the liturgy. May He continue to do so as we strive to worship Him with songs, hymns, and spiritual songs with great reverence and fear.

+ In Nomine Jesu +

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