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Translations, Traditions, and Transformations: Catherine Winkworth and the Lutheran Chorale in English

Benjamin Kolodziej

How incongruous is it that a writer and poet steeped in the English Victorian tradition, herself having trifled with Unitarianism, should become one of the earliest providers of hymn translations for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod? In fact, her translations (or some variation thereon) are used some seventy-three times in *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941. Thus, eleven percent of the hymnody in *TLH* originates from Winkworth in some way. Even astute and experienced musicians and theologians could be forgiven for thinking Catherine Winkworth held the Lutheran faith, for her representation in Lutheran hymnals belies her actual involvement in that church, which was next to none. Anyone for whom that wistfully tranquil stanza of Luther's evokes Christmas Eve—"Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled, Within my heart that it may be A quiet chamber kept for Thee"—has unwittingly encountered Luther's hymn through the lens of Winkworth's own incarnational theology, for whom it was of utmost importance that Christ be presented both as God and man. What First Sunday in Advent is complete without singing "Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying"? These, too, are her words as much as Nicolai's, her particular sense of the sacrament at the conclusion of stanza 2 having presented problems for Lutheran hymnal editors for generations. Her inclination for some pietist hymnists resulted in a rich panoply of those texts entering common usage. Winkworth expressed God's omnipotence as well as his loving kindness when she declared through Joachim Neander, "Ponder anew What the Almighty can do As with His love He befriends Thee," the response to which she adapted Martin Rinckart's text to proclaim, "Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices." So imbued have her words been on the hearts and tongues of countless Christians for a century and a half, one could argue that she should be considered for inclusion in that noble pantheon of other poetic luminaries such as Olearius, Gerhardt, Crüger, Rambach, or even Luther, for their poetic theologies have found expression in English through her over four hundred chorale translations.

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Life and Vocation

Knowledge of Catherine Winkworth's life comes from her sister Susanna's 1883 biography of her, *Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth*,¹ while a niece, Margaret Shaen, contributed her *Memorials of Two Sisters: Susanna and Catherine Winkworth* in 1908.² Both provide invaluable, and sometimes overlapping, accounts of her life referencing copious primary sources, the first suffering from the romantic nostalgia one would expect from a Victorian writing about her sister. Susanna herself admits that she omitted many events from Catherine's life, including much correspondence, particularly that of the theological kind. Shaen's book, published thirty years after Catherine's death, beneficially collects letters which had been omitted from Susanna's volume. Beyond these semi-primary sources, and other than a smattering of obsequious articles condensing information from Susanna's biography, Robin Leaver's short 1978 monograph, *Catherine Winkworth: The Influence of Her Translations on English Hymnody*, published by CPH, remains the only in-depth scholarly work on her life and work.³

Born in London in 1827, Winkworth would move with her family to Manchester two years later. Her childhood was marked by a deep appreciation both for reading and travel, and the family frequently availed themselves of visits to new destinations, certainly fostering in the daughters (Susanna had been born in 1820) an appreciation for other cultures.⁴ Winkworth's grandfather was an evangelical minister at Southwark, her father was in the civil service, and her "childhood was passed in the warmest atmosphere of evangelical devotion."⁵ Although they were Anglican, her sister Susanna recalled that Catherine learned Isaac Watts's catechism "from the time we could speak." Susanna remembered of their childhood, saying,

I know I earned my first Prayer-Book by repeating the church catechism without a fault, when I was about seven and a half. Both our parents used often to take us aside to talk to us, pray with us, and explain the Bible to us . . . the doctrines we were taught were those of the Calvinistic Evangelical School of Newton, Romaine, Toplady, etc., but in my mother's teachings, the love of God

¹ Susanna Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials of Catherine Winkworth, Edited by Her Sister* (Clifton, UK: E. Austin and Son, 1883).

² Margaret J. Shaen, ed., *Memorials of Two Sisters: Susanna and Catherine Winkworth* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908).

³ Robin Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth: The Influence of Her Translations on English Hymnody* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978).

⁴ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 1ff.

⁵ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 6.

was so brought out as almost to conceal with its brightness the sterner aspects of the creed to which she too subscribed.⁶

Susanna continued, “Owing to her remaining at home with Mamma, Kate had the advantage over us elder ones of having the bright and loving aspects of religion instilled into her in early childhood, while we learnt much more about the terrors of the law.”⁷ Catherine Winkworth commenced study of Italian at age twelve, and Greek a year later. The German language, though, enthralled her after a sojourn to Dresden in 1845, and she soon immersed herself in the Teutonic culture, of which music was of prime importance. She recalled that “there is much still that I wish to learn independently of the fact that I do not yet speak either French or German by any means perfectly. With regard to music, if I were to take a year’s more lessons here I might make something of it. As it is, I do not know what will become of my music. I do not choose to give it up.”⁸ She wrote later of her experience with church music, “In my days in Dresden, there were a famous organ and organist in the Hofkirche, where you had chorales and Bach’s fugues in perfection.”⁹

Upon return to England, Winkworth’s studies continued with James Martineau, a Unitarian who espoused a Christianity free of miracles and traditional scriptural authority, but who also would turn his interest to hymnody and encouraged Winkworth’s translation work. Her sister observed of Winkworth’s exposure to a less evangelical milieu, both in Germany and through Martineau, as having

. . . thrown her out of the old traditional grooves of thought and feeling in which her childhood had moved, and her whole intellectual being was now in a state of ferment; she had entered on what the Germans call the Sturm and Drang period of her life. Her early beliefs had been rudely shattered, and she was at this epoch much inclined to replace them by the worship of art and culture. [Martineau’s] teaching laid down for her, once for all, the landmarks of mental and moral philosophy, which proved her guide . . . Nevertheless, I do not think that she at any time adopted Mr. Martineau’s views with regard to Christian doctrine or the teachings of scripture.¹⁰

In 1850, the family moved to a suburb of Manchester and Winkworth began what would be her second vocation after translation—helping the poor. Through her efforts to alleviate poverty, she worked alongside or corresponded with many

⁶ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 8.

⁷ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 13.

⁸ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 103.

⁹ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 110.

¹⁰ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 120.

luminaries of the time, including Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Brontë, Adelaide Procter, John Ruskin, and even Ralph Waldo Emerson. As her work as a translator blossomed during the 1850s and 1860s, she was able to realize her dream of sustaining herself financially, continuing to work for social change. In 1860, the family moved to Clifton, outside of Bristol, where her father, to whom Catherine was particularly close, died in 1861. Winkworth herself died at age 50 in 1878 in Switzerland.¹¹

Winkworth and Hymnody

Winkworth's story owes its origins to the Prussian diplomat and amateur theologian Christian Carl Bunsen. During those heady years around the three-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation, it was Bunsen who envisioned a common Reformed and Lutheran liturgy for universal use based on that of the English Church, and he worked tirelessly to promote the cause of the Prussian Union. Bunsen likewise assembled a hymnal, the purpose of which had been to "seek out the finest hymns because most of the modern ones (since the time of Gellert), although pious and devout, are commonplace in sentiment and expression and unworthy of general use."¹² Examining some 2,500 hymns from the various hymnals in circulation, his efforts resulted in the publication in 1833 of the *Versuch eines allgemeinen evangelisches Gesang- und Gebetbuchs*, a "union" hymnal of 934 hymns and 350 prayers.¹³ Bunsen may have been a pawn of a rationalist monarch desirous to eliminate anything uniquely Lutheran, but Bunsen's own words suggest that his purpose was instead to reclaim the original texts. Bunsen observed, "Each government, sect, or school of opinion, thought themselves justified in remodeling the older National Hymnody according to their own ideas, till at length little remained of their pristine rugged glory."¹⁴ Bunsen's goal was not to modernize German hymnody, but to preserve it as a living relic of the German national consciousness.

It was Bunsen who encouraged Arthur Tozer Russell, an Anglican vicar, to translate a number of hymns into English—eventually publishing the *Dalton Hospital Book* of 1848. Bunsen encouraged others to translate German hymns into English, including Richard Massie, Frances Elizabeth Cox, and Catherine

¹¹ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 329.

¹² J. Vincent Higginson, "Catherine Winkworth and the Chorale Book for England," *The Hymn* 25, no. 1 (January 1974): 9–13.

¹³ *Versuch eines allgemeinen evangelisches Gesang und Gebetbuchs zum Kirchen- und Hausgebrauche* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1833).

¹⁴ *Versuch eines*, preface.

Winkworth. Susanna writes of the genesis of Catherine's first major translation effort, *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays and Chief Festivals of the Church Year*:

I have in vain sought to discover among our letters anything which would fix the exact date when Catherine first took up the idea of translating the German Hymns for publication . . . I think it must have been in the summer of 1854, that I suggested she should translate a . . . volume of sacred poetry, since she had always succeeded well with the translations from German poetry . . . She replied that that was quite beyond her powers; but when at Heidelberg, I imparted my idea to Bunsen, who strongly approved of it, and afterwards wrote me a letter on the subject, which will be found dated October the 8th. From the following letter, it appears that she was attempting to translate some hymns, but was so far from having any definite plan of publishing them, that she was still looking for some book to translate, in which case she would give them up. But I think that the letter of Bunsen's to which I have alluded brought her floating ideas to the crystallizing point, and that then, or soon after, she began to try and arrange a series of hymns for translation.¹⁵

It was through Susanna that Catherine was encouraged by Bunsen to translate hymns of the German nation into English. In October of 1854, Baron Bunsen wrote to both sisters setting forth the "idea of a *Lyra Germanica* as exhibiting the Spiritual Epos of the German mind in lyric form."¹⁶ Bunsen's plan was not a mere hymnal in English, but something which would capture the ethos of the "National German Church, constituting an uninterrupted link of Spirit and Sacred Poetry, from Luther's Great Hymn in 1521, down to our own days." Its scope far beyond a collection of hymns, the book would also contain a Table of Lessons "artistically arranged for private and public edification."¹⁷ Bunsen's letter must have inspired Catherine well enough, for by July 1855 she had completed this first major project. She recounted in the preface the origins of *Lyra Germanica*:

The following hymns are selected from the Chevalier Bunsen's "*Versuch eines allgemeinen Gesang- und Gebetbuchs*," published in 1833. From the large number there given, about nine hundred, little more than one hundred have been chosen. This selection contains many of those best known and loved in Germany, but in a work of this size it is impossible to include all that have become classical in that home of Christian poetry. In reading them it must be remembered that they are hymns, not sacred poems, though from their length

¹⁵ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 454.

¹⁶ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 461.

¹⁷ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 461.

and the intricacy of their metres, many of them may seem to English readers adapted rather to purposes of private than of public devotion. But the singing of hymns forms a much larger and more important part of public worship in the German Reformed Churches than in our own services. It is the mode by which the whole congregation is enabled to bear its part in the worship of God, answering in this respect to the chanting of our own Liturgy.¹⁸

Winkworth's volume contains hymns by Luther, whose poetry she claims is "wanting in harmony and correctness of metre to a degree which often makes them jarring to our modern ears, but they are always full of fire and strength, of clear Christian faith, and brave joyful trust in God."¹⁹ She lauded the works of Paul Eber, Nicholas Hermann, and the "rich" sacred poetry of the Thirty Years' War hymnists—Johann Rist, Johann Heermann, Simon Dach, and Paul Gerhardt. Winkworth looked fondly on the pietists, or the "elder school of German sacred poetry, a school distinguished by its depth and simplicity."²⁰ Yet, Winkworth acknowledged the defects of the school of pietists, observing that the hymns could "degenerate into sentimentality."²¹

She intended her work for devotional rather than historical use, hoping "that these utterances of Christian piety which have comforted and strengthened the hearts of many true Christians in their native country, may speak to the hearts of some among us, to help and cheer those who must strive and suffer, and to make us feel afresh what a deep and true Communion of Saints exists among all the children of God in different churches and lands."²² This volume is arranged according to the liturgical calendar, with each Sunday given its own hymn(s), as well as the minor feasts and each day of Holy Week. Although standard practice now, this arrangement anticipates the "hymn of the day" process now in common usage, but not a common organizational principle for many hymnals up to that point, particularly German ones. Consider the *Hannoversches Kirchen-Gesangbuch* of 1832, whose *Inhalt* (table of contents) is typical:

1. Praise Hymns and Weekly Songs
2. Hymns for the Liturgical Year
3. Of God's Works and Deeds

¹⁸ *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays and Chief Festivals of the Christian Year*, trans. Catherine Winkworth (New York: Stanford, 1856), preface.

¹⁹ *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, preface.

²⁰ *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, preface.

²¹ *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, preface.

²² *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, preface.

4. Of God's Mercy
5. On the Afflictions of Man
6. In Times of Trial
7. On the Last Things
8. Morning, Table-songs, Evening Hymns
9. Vocational Songs, Occasions, and Travel Songs.²³

One might be tempted to attribute Winkworth's liturgical arrangement to the influence of the Oxford Movement, but she was no proponent of the Tractarians as she remained loosely within the Evangelical fold. There had been hymnals in the evangelical tradition arranged according to the liturgical year, but according to Robin Leaver, "Catherine Winkworth surpasses them all in her choice of days and seasons. Indeed, in doing so she was many years ahead of her time . . . [she] was not only a careful translator of German hymns: she was also a thoughtful hymn book compiler."²⁴ *Lyra Germanica* sold out its first printing within a few months and a second edition was produced by Longmans. According to Leaver:

The book was very sympathetically received. Bunsen was extremely pleased with it and hoped that the demand would produce "a second or fourth or tenth edition!" Martineau wrote that these translations introduce "the English reader with the least possible drawback of passing out of their own language." The anonymous reviewer in *The British Quarterly Review* wrote, "Happy are we to receive from the authoress this fruit of her piety, intelligence, and good taste . . . it is a beautiful book in its stationery, and printing, and binding, but much more beautiful intrinsically."²⁵

Even the negative reviews speak more about the source material than Winkworth's actual translations. Martineau also wrote, "The extreme inwardness of the German Christian sentiment (appears) in the English a little sickly and unreal."²⁶ Erik Routley observed that to read the *Lyra Germanica* "at a sitting leaves one with the kind of indigestion that is naturally induced by an overdose of Pietism."²⁷ Leaver himself acknowledged that "Certainly some of the hymns have a devotional expression which sounds strange to modern ears, but hymns speak with individual voices and each one has to be heard for its own sake, and so judged on its merits,

²³ *Hannoversches Kirchen-Gesangbuch* (Hannover: Verlag des Moringschen Waisenhauses, 1832).

²⁴ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 31.

²⁵ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 32.

²⁶ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 131.

²⁷ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 33.

and cannot be expected to shout out its message from the confused Babel created by our lack of time for leisured reading.”²⁸

The success of *Lyra Germanica* led in 1858 to the publication of *Lyra Germanica: The Christian Life*, an elaborately bound and profusely illustrated volume of new translations to supplement the first volume. (In fact, famed artist John Ruskin had been considered for the illustrations.) These two series contained 223 translations, among which are those enduring standards: “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,” “All My Heart This Night Rejoices,” “Blessed Jesus at Thy Word,” “Christ the Lord Is Risen Again,” and “Now Thank We All Our God.”²⁹ A clarification on nomenclature is necessary at this point. Winkworth’s first *Lyra Germanica* is sometimes referred to as *Lyra Germanica, First Series*, as opposed to *Lyra Germanica: The Christian Life*, which even in early publication runs (but not the first) is called *Lyra Germanica, Second Series*. To further confuse matters, the first *Lyra Germanica* is secondarily entitled *Songs for the Household* on the title page, and in some editions this is even embossed on the cover (one edition says “Household Songs”). This secondary title clarifies that Winkworth intended her translations to be sung and used at home. But only a few years later she would hone her ambitions toward producing a hymnal.

By 1862, she had published *The Chorale Book for England*, a tome whose ambitions are evident in its title. *Hymns Ancient and Modern* had been published only a year before, with its own aspirations to provide a single hymnal for the island empire. Winkworth specified the purpose of her new volume: “The *Lyra Germanica* was intended chiefly for use as a work of private devotion; the *Chorale Book for England* is intended primarily for use in united worship in the church and family, and in meetings for the practice of church music.”³⁰ Her translation principles remained the same, although she acknowledged that some of the hymns had been shortened to accommodate those accustomed to singing only four stanzas at a time. Nonetheless, this volume differs from the *Lyra Germanica* in that the music was considered and printed along with the texts. Winkworth wrote, “As a rule, the hymn and tune have been considered as one and indivisible and the original metres therefore strictly preserved for the sake of the tunes, which would not admit of any deviation without detriment to their characteristic beauty.”³¹ Winkworth, though, was only an amateur musician, so this effort was aided by both William Sterndale

²⁸ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 33.

²⁹ *Lyra Germanica Second Series: The Christian Life*, trans. Catherine Winkworth (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1858).

³⁰ Catherine Winkworth, William Sterndale Bennett, and Otto Goldschmidt, eds., *The Chorale Book for England* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865), preface.

³¹ *The Chorale Book for England*, preface.

Bennett, professor of music at Cambridge University, and Otto Goldschmidt, composer and professor at the Royal College of Music in London (as well as husband to Jenny Lind, the “Swedish Nightingale” singer). Musical notation attached to hymn texts, of course, was a fairly new development. *Hymns Ancient and Modern* included music, but most hymnals, in English or German, provided only texts. *The Chorale Book* was even more forward-thinking, however, as it employed the original rhythmic versions of the chorales, not always to the pleasure of Winkworth herself, who observed in September 1861:

Mr. Goldschmidt came today . . . the truth is, there is a fundamental difference in our conceptions of the work which cannot entirely be get over. I am always thinking of the poetical and devotional use of the work among English people, who know nothing of its contents beforehand; he, of its scientific value among a learned musical class. We both agree in wishing to combine the two; but where they clash, I should always prefer the first, and he the second. On some points they have yielded to me, but on a good many I must follow them; and what I am a little anxious about, and can do nothing to prevent, is the general tone of the music, which I fear will be too severe.³²

Representative authors included Luther, Zinzendorf, Neumann, Franck, Scheffler, Gerhardt, Tersteegen, Heermann, Rist, Nicolai, “Anon. Thirty Years’ War,” and many other German Reformed and Lutheran writers. Although its success as a hymnal was largely mitigated due to the burgeoning usage of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, this hymnal not only introduced the original tunes to reticent ears, but also provided English texts that Lutheran hymnals in the United States would begin to quarry as they transitioned from German.

Winkworth’s Theology

As an evangelical Anglican tutored by a Unitarian and mentored by a unionistic amateur politician/diplomat, her theology was less systematic as it was infused with an intense piety oriented toward simplicity. Winkworth addressed her changing theological views when she said, “Sometimes I love Jesus and have confidence in him, but these nice feelings go away very soon and naughty doubts come again.”³³ Perhaps it was her Baptist governess who influenced her to write in 1840, “Last Sunday evening I had a good deal of thought about serious things. I re-gave myself to God. It was an event to be remembered.”³⁴ Although her tutor James Martineau

³² Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 224.

³³ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 27.

³⁴ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 33.

was a Unitarian, Winkworth “told Susanna to beware of Unitarianism and of worshipping the pride of intellect,”³⁵ adding, “It won’t do now . . . What blank there would be were I to give up Christ to turn atheist or even Socinian; it would be like looking at a transparency without a light. Thoughts of Him come in everywhere.”³⁶ She was not without her time of doubts. She recalled befriending a minister who questioned her on her beliefs:

He asked me whether I went regularly to the Communion, and so thereupon I told him how much I cared to go, and yet how I doubted whether I had a right, because I didn’t believe all that the services said, etc., and we discussed the sacramental services and the Athanasian Creed. He was very good and friendly and not shocked at anything I said; to my surprise, for he is a great deal too Calvinistic for me; but I don’t think we convinced each other a bit. We could have got the same amount of conversation in half the time, if he wouldn’t have followed that clerical practice of illustrating what you know as well as possible beforehand.³⁷

Winkworth perhaps should be credited for even knowing of the Athanasian Creed. That it provided a starting point for some of her theologizing suggests how well-versed in theology she actually was.

Sacraments

Despite her disparaging comment about her Calvinist minister friend, her views on the Lord’s Supper were decidedly Calvinist. She noted that she agreed with her father’s view of the Lord’s Supper, that “he considers it as a remembrance of Christ’s death, and as a sign of a pledge on God’s part, of the covenant between him and his people for their redemption.”³⁸ Winkworth’s sacramental theology is manifest in stanza 2 of Philipp Nicolai’s king of chorales, “Wachet Auf”:

Zion hört die Wächter singen,
das Herz tut ihr vor Freuden springen,
sie wachet und steht eilend auf.
Ihr Freund kommt vom Himmel prächtig,
von Gnaden stark, von Wahrheit mächtig,
ihr Licht wird hell, ihr Stern geht auf.
Nun komm, du werthe Kron’,

³⁵ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 46.

³⁶ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 34.

³⁷ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 388.

³⁸ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 48.

Herr Jesu Gottes Sohn!
 Hosianna!
 Wir folgen all' zum Freudensaal,
 und halten mit das Abendmahl.

Zion hears the watchmen singing,
 And all her heart with joy is springing,
 She wakes, she rises from her gloom;
 For her Lord comes down all-glorious
 The strong in grace, in truth victorious,
 Her Star is risen, her Light is come!
 Ah come, Thou blessed One,
 God's own Beloved Son,
 Hallelujah!
 We follow till the halls we see
 Where Thou hast bid us sup with Thee.³⁹

The text at issue here is *Abendmahl*, which of course literally means “evening meal” or “supper,” but it has always been used metonymically for the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper. The original text conveys a connotation of present action—we “follow all to the hall of joy, and keep the Lord’s Supper.” She colors the phrase with eschatological content—the implication being that one may “sup” at some point in the future in heaven rather than on earth. At a minimum, the translation offers theologically interpretive space.

Relative to Baptism, she wrote to new parents:

I hope you are going to have the little creature baptized? . . . But it seems to me such a right and beautiful and appropriate thing, whether the apostles did it or not, to consecrate the little creature to God as soon as he has given it, and mark it with the sign of the faith in which it is to be brought up. Though I think it would be very un-Christian to believe that the absence of a ceremony would prevent its being a Christian hereafter.⁴⁰

Winkworth omits mention of the Holy Spirit’s action in Baptism, preferring to think of it as a consecration to God, again betraying a Calvinist understanding.

³⁹ *Lyra Germanica Second Series*, 243.

⁴⁰ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 91.

The Trinity

Her ideas of the Godhead were consistent with orthodox Christianity, as she explicated:

I have just finished Stuart's Letters to Channing. To me they seem satisfactorily to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is contained in the Bible. . . . Yet again when I find it stated that he was born, that he prayed, sorrowed, died, rose again, must I not conclude him to be man. I believe therefore that there is but one God, yet that in the Godhead there is a threefold distinction, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do in some respects really and truly differ from each other, yet that this difference is not subversive of the unity of the Godhead; also that Jesus has two natures human and divine. How this can be I know not.⁴¹

She theologizes elsewhere, asserting a relatively orthodox view of Christianity:

I have been reading a German novel called Spinoza . . . many parts are too metaphysical for me, and what I can understand is too unbelieving to suit me. None of the characters are what I call Christians. Spinoza of course is a Jew, but not even a "Gläubiger Jude," and the rest do not appear to have any firm faith in Christ; they think him a good man, that is all. Such books make me uncomfortable. I cannot live in the mists of metaphysics; I must have faith in something real and personal.⁴²

In 1844, at age 17, she offered herself up for confirmation in the Church of England, a seminal venture of importance in her theological formation. Amidst the doctrinal concerns, she hoped to maintain the simplicity of her childlike faith:

My only objection has been the fear lest by this step I committed myself to an entire acquiescence in the Church Services, Articles, etc.—but after reading the prayer Book, it appears to me that the test of membership laid down by the Church for the laity, simply consists in a profession of belief in the Apostle's Creed, and an intention to lead a holy life; and since I can sincerely accede to both of these, and also it (the Church of England) appears to me a more liberal communion than any other (unless it be the Unitarian, which I cannot conscientiously join), and as I decidedly prefer the daily Liturgy of the Church to the ordinary service in a Dissenting Chapel, I have determined to be confirmed.⁴³

⁴¹ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 51.

⁴² S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 73.

⁴³ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 74.

Certainly the beauty of the English liturgy enticed her; yet, she did acknowledge fealty to the doctrines as laid forth in the Apostles' Creed, if not exactly that as explicated in the prayerbook and services of the English Church. Yet, throughout her life, as well-read and educated as she was, Winkworth avoided controversy, eschewing what she perceived as rigid dogmatism, whether from the Lutheran Church or the Tractarians.

Epistemology

In some ways, Winkworth's epistemology bore imprints of Luther's own theology of *sola fide*, with an emphasis more on faith than on reason, in particular as regarded revelation:

I am in a manner ambitious, but my ambition is to have intellect, but to turn it all to the glory of God. In my mind deeper feelings than I have ever felt before are beginning to develop themselves; the intense, earnest aspirations of the soul after holiness and immortality—the ardent longing to glorify, to serve God—the desire for truth—the thirst for knowledge. These emotions have hitherto slept darkly within me, but now they are waking from their slumbers and rousing my whole soul. And to know that perfect holiness is attainable, for immortality is sure, that God is our Father and that we can serve him, that Jesus came down to earth to atone for sin, and has told us both what to do and what to believe. This is joy!⁴⁴

Her emotive language here recalls the manner of the pietists, but also reflects her worldview as a nineteenth-century Victorian. She continued expressing her skepticism for the attainments of the intellect, “I [am] too apt to forget religion and confidence in God and salvation through Jesus Christ, in desires after working out my intellectual progress.”⁴⁵ Winkworth thus tacitly acknowledged that her human nature—her “intellectual progress”—often distracted her from God, the source of faith. She elsewhere manifested disdain for the dry intellectualism of the Unitarians:

Certainly I should as not have a child christened at all as have done like the only Unitarian affair I ever saw . . . not in the chapel, with no solemnity about it, and the whole service expressing but one thing—“Please don't think us superstitious for doing this, I'm going to prove intellectually that we're not.” Not one bit of single direct faith that it was a right thing.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 52.

⁴⁵ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 69.

⁴⁶ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 367.

To Winkworth, then, Christianity embodied more than mere intellectual principles, but included the scriptural witness of miracles and of “direct faith.”

Ecclesiology

Winkworth’s ecclesiology drew from a patchwork of sources and influences, lacking any sophisticated methodology:

I asked what was meant by the “Communion of Saints” in the Apostles Creed. He said he thought that communion is a short word for common union and that it meant the bond of union among Christians, as we read in the Epistles, that Saints form one body, are all ‘members on of another.’ The ‘communion of saints’ differs from the ‘Holy Catholic Church’ in being the principle which unites Christians; their common belief in the great facts of Christianity, their common hopes and fears, the love which they all should bear to each other, unite their hearts and form a bond of union which is the ‘communion of saints.’ The ‘Holy Catholic Church’ is the visible bond of Christianity in the common profession of certain truths and their common obedience to certain laws.⁴⁷

A Lutheran might well wish for further explication of Christ’s nature as the head of the “Holy Catholic Church,” as one of the “certain truths” she mentions. A Lutheran will certainly also chafe at any description of the church which predicates membership on “obedience to certain laws.” Winkworth’s theology does not hold up well to such detailed scrutiny, and is exactly the sort of theologizing Winkworth sought to avoid. Although she could never embrace Unitarianism, she remained distrustful of the institutional church and, by extension, its doctrines:

I am jealous of seeing the authority of the Church in any way put above that of the Scriptures . . . because it seems to me that the life and words of our Lord and His apostles must be the highest authority . . . I suppose it comes to this; you speak as if there were but two means of arriving at truth—mere human reasoning, or the outward authority of the Church, giving us notions and views, or a complete body of doctrine. And I think this leaves out the grand method by which truth comes to us—namely, that the Spirit shows it to those who do the will of the Father . . . such truth is confirmed by the outward witness, but cannot be given by that alone . . . You seemed to me to hold that there is no salvation out of the Church; and it seems to me that the Bible teaches that there is no salvation out of Christ, which is not the same thing.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 57.

⁴⁸ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 171.

One can discern here Winkworth's hesitation towards establishment authority, and maybe even latent anti-Romanism. To interpret her words generously, though, Winkworth here extols a certain *sola scriptura* principle not unlike Luther's, in which Scripture, rather than an institutional tradition, guides the church. For Winkworth then, intellectual accession to certain doctrines was futile if not infused by the Holy Spirit, which is then confirmed by "outward witness." This, of course, aligns well with the theology of the German pietists.

Translation Style

The first task of a translator is to know what to translate. Winkworth's intimate knowledge of German and the chorale *corpus* resulted in her application of astute judgments as to what would sound best rendered in English. Whether or not her translations are still the favored ones in the twenty-first century, her translations represent "nearly all of the classic German hymns," according to Robin Leaver.⁴⁹ Leaver further observes that, even up until 1950 with the publication of *Das Evangelische Kirchengesangbuch* for the churches in Germany, which contains 394 "hymns which are deemed to be the finest examples of German hymnody taken from every major period of hymn writing . . . That Catherine Winkworth had [such] an eye, or an ear, for the best of German hymns is underlined by the fact that she translated 149 texts to be found in the *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch*, which is almost forty percent of the total."⁵⁰ Her translations *can be* divided into three main streams:

1. The Luther tradition: 79 total including 14 by Luther, 6 by Weisse, 3 by Eber and Selnecker.
2. The Gerhardt tradition: 142 total including 27 by Gerhardt, 10 by Rist, 9 by J. Franck and Heermann, 7 by Schmolck.
3. The Pietist tradition: 82 total including 11 by Tersteegen, 6 by Neander, 5 by Dessler and Arnold.

She clearly favored Gerhardt. In 1869, she published a biographical handbook of German hymn writers entitled *Christian Singers of Germany*, in which Paul Gerhardt figures prominently on the frontispiece. From the preface, she wrote admiringly:

Yet it was just at this time that the religious song of Germany found the purest and sweetest expression in the hymns of Paul Gerhardt, who may be said to be

⁴⁹ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 47.

⁵⁰ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 48.

the typical poet of the Lutheran Church, as Herbert is in English . . . as a poet he undoubtedly holds the highest place among the hymnwriters of Germany. His hymns seem to be the spontaneous out-pouring of a heart that overflows with love, trust, and praise; his language is simple and pure; it has no vulgarism, and at times it rises to a beauty and grace . . . his tenderness and fervor never degenerate into the sentimentality and petty conceits which were already becoming fashionable in his days; nor of his penitence and sorrow into that morbid despondency we find in Gryphius . . . If he is not altogether free from the long-windedness and repetition which are the besetting sins of so many German writers, and especially of hymn-writers, he at least more rarely succumbs to them.⁵¹

Winkworth's hymns aim foremost to enhance devotion, and are only secondarily didactic, as she claimed in the preface to *Lyra Germanica: The Christian Life*: "As the object of this work is chiefly devotional, the hymns are arranged according to their subjects, not in chronological order, and have been selected for their warmth of feeling and depth of Christian experience, rather than as specimens of a particular master or school." Thus can be described her affinity for Paul Gerhardt's hymns, whose devotional aims she saw as congruent with her own, noting that: "[Gerhardt] is without doubt the greatest of the German hymn-writers, possessing loftier poetical genius, and a richer variety of thought and feeling than any other."⁵² Gerhardt, of course, represents a softer and gentler form of hymnody in which first-person singular is acceptable as a means to a devotional end. Theodore Hewitt evaluates Gerhardt's approach as follows: "Approximately one-eighth of Gerhardt's hymns begin with 'ich,' while not one of Luther's begin this way. Gerhardt's hymns, then, proclaim his own personal experiences . . . one may find one's own thoughts and feelings expressed in these poems."⁵³ Gerhardt was less interested in reestablishing a doctrinal framework for the believer as he was in expounding devotionally on Christian experience, as Hewitt's evaluation continues: "Gerhardt was essentially a 'Gelegenheitsdichter,' a poet of occasions, choosing for his themes the various vicissitudes of life and such events as would present themselves to an earnest pastor devoted to the flock in his care."⁵⁴ And this concern for pastoral devotion is exactly where Winkworth begins her life's work—her texts are not hymnological specimens for doctrinal study, but should aid in devotion and

⁵¹ Catherine Winkworth, *Christian Singers of Germany* (London: MacMillan, 1869), 201.

⁵² *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, xiii.

⁵³ Theodore Hewitt, *Paul Gerhardt as a Hymn Writer and His Influence on English Hymnody* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), 17.

⁵⁴ Hewitt, *Paul Gerhardt as a Hymn Writer*, 17.

edification. Her ends were remarkably consonant with Gerhardt's and allowed her to achieve great success with his texts, as she observed:

I admire and love Gerhardt's hymns so much that I am half unwilling to admit their defects; yet while many have marvelous dignity, force and tender sweetness, others, it must be confessed, are curiously prolix and unpoetical . . . But a hymn that sounds popular and homelike in its own language must sound so in ours if it is to be really available for devotional purposes.⁵⁵

Hewitt cites Winkworth's translation of Gerhardt's "Wie Soll ich Dich Empfangen" as an example of a translation borne of an innate understanding of the original, noting that "As Winkworth was so thoroughly at home in the German she was able to reproduce a surprising number of details. Even the alliteration and repetition for emphasis of which Gerhardt is so fond find in her poem at least a partially corresponding place."⁵⁶

Ich lag in schweren Banden
 Du kommst und machst mich los;
 Ich stand in Spott und Schanden,
 Du kommst und machst mich gross
 Und hebst mich hoch zu Ehren
 Und schenkst mir grosses Gut,
 Das sich nicht lässt verzehren,
 Wie irdlich Richtig tut.

In heavy bonds I languish'd long,
 Thou com'st to set me free;
 The scorn of every mocking tongue—
 Thou com'st to honour me.
 A heavenly crown Thou dost bestow,
 And gifts of priceless worth,
 That vanish not as here below
 The riches of the earth.

Nichts, nichts hat dich getrieben
 Zu mir vom Himmelszelt
 Als das geliebte Lieben,
 Damit du alle Welt

⁵⁵ Shaen, *Memorials of Two Sisters*, 180.

⁵⁶ Hewitt, *Paul Gerhardt as a Hymn Writer*, 17.

In ihren tausend Plagen
 Und grossen Jammerlast,
 Die kein Mund kann asufagen,
 So fest umfangen hast.

Nought, nought, dear Lord, could move Thee
 To leave Thy rightful place
 Save love, for which I love Thee;
 A love that could embrace
 A world where sorrow dwelleth,
 Which sin and suffering fill,
 More than the tongue e'er telleth—
 Yet Thou couldst love it still!⁵⁷

In Gerhard's hymnody, she recognized her own proclivities. She preferred hymnody of a simple, devotional style which avoided dogmatically controversial theological nuances. She masterfully crafted her phrases allowing for some degree of interpretation. She gladly employed this interpretive space in a way her mentor Richard Massie never would, for whom doctrinal content had to take precedence over poetic style. Massie wrote: "My first aim has been to give the meaning of the original with accuracy and fidelity . . . since the slightest mistake, or, in some cases, even the change in a word, might involve the change of a doctrine, and thus destroy the interest which they possess, as a plain and short Epitome of the great Reformer's views"⁵⁸ Consider Johann Franck's phrase in "Schmücke Dich, O Liebe Seele," in which he prays: "oder mir vielleicht zum Schaden, sei zu deinem Tisch geladen!" which Winkworth translated as "Never to my hurt invited, Be Thy love with love requited." Franck's original meaning, that it would be literally to "my detriment not to be invited to Thy table," with its sacramental and eschatological implications, turns into a general address noting the singer's response in love to God's initial act of love. Winkworth here accentuates the human response rather than the invitation ("geladen"). She employs similar poetic flexibility in Paul Eber's "Wenn wir in Höchsten Nöten sein":

Und heben unser Aug und Herz
 Zu dir in wahrer Reu und Schmerz
 Und flehen um Begnadigung

⁵⁷ *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, 7.

⁵⁸ Alan C. Hoyer, "A Victorian Legacy: Translating the German Hymns," *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* (April 1994): 18–25.

Und aller Strafen Linderung,
 To Thee may raise our hearts and eyes,
 Repenting sore with bitter sighs,
 And seek Thy pardon for our sin,
 And respite from our griefs within.⁵⁹

The first line is translated exactly, while the second replaces “Reu and Schmerz” with “bitter sighs,” a line which could have been inelegantly but literally rendered “To Thee in true remorse and pain,” a solution which even preserves the meter. Yet, she chose the more poetic “bitter sighs,” which is preceded by “repenting,” a word not found in the stanza, but one which is certainly congruent with Eber’s thought. If her work here is judged strictly on literally faithfulness to the poetry, she might be found wanting. Yet, she has managed to create a poetic hymn which preserves the overall sense of this confessional text.

For Luther, theological truth was arguably binary—black or white, right or wrong, of God or of Satan. Gerhardt lived in the same tradition, but such theological concerns as had beset Luther had been worked through by Gerhardt’s time, whose era was marked by political strife masquerading often in the guise of theological difference. Gerhardt manifested more of an experiential approach, a position which Winkworth likewise favored. One of her favorite words was “prolix”—something that is too verbose or discursive, or tending toward doctrinal contention. In positioning herself in the *via media* of a broad church tradition, her more experiential and devotional texts then are more easily able to find favor and utility among multiple denominations, which certainly lent her popularity most primarily throughout the Lutheran denominations in the nineteenth-century United States. Her texts were remarkably consonant with the ethos of the era, but yet usually conveyed remarkably faithfully the thoughts of the original chorale.

Winkworth approached the other pietists cautiously, realizing the saccharine and cloying spirituality the texts could sometimes imbue. She was drawn to Phillip Friedrich Hiller because of his similarities to Gerhardt. Although Hiller’s hymns could be more “purely didactic,” they are “never in bad taste, never irreverent or extravagant.”⁶⁰ She thought of Tersteegen as “the greatest poet” of the tradition, but slightly less so of Joachim Neander, whose style she thought “unequal; [with] occasional harshnesses contrast[ing] with very musical lines.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ *The Chorale Book for England*, #141.

⁶⁰ *The Chorale Book for England*, 57.

⁶¹ *The Chorale Book for England*, 58.

Toward Luther's hymns, which she characterized as having "a certain manliness, breadth and fervor about them," she was more ambivalent and less enthusiastic, as they tended to affront her Victorian sensibilities. Consider "Ein Feste Burg" as a point of comparison, with Luther's original followed by Winkworth's translation:

Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,
 ein gute Wehr und Waffen.
 Er hilft uns frei aus aller Not,
 die uns jetzt hat betroffen.
 Der alt böse Feind
 mit Ernst er's jetzt meint,
 groß Macht und viel List
 sein grausam Rüstung ist,
 auf Erd ist nicht seins gleichen.

God is our stronghold firm and sure,
 Our trusty shield and weapon,
 He shall deliver us, whate'er
 Of ill to us may happen.
 Our ancient Enemy
 In earnest now is he,
 Much craft and great might
 Arm him for the fight,
 On earth is not his fellow.⁶²

Winkworth was not happy with her setting of this hymn, which appeared first in *Lyra Germanica*. In fact, in *The Chorale Book for England* she used William Gaskell's translation, which borrows heavily from Winkworth's:

A sure stronghold our God is He,
 A trusty shield and weapon;
 Our help He'll be and set us free
 From every ill can happen.
 That old malicious foe
 Intends us deadly woe;
 Arm'd with the strength of hell
 And deepest craft as well,

⁶² *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, 173.

On earth is not his fellow.⁶³

Both of these translations, which are close to the versions appropriated by American Lutheran hymns over the past 150 years, are yet poetically distant from Luther's original; if one has any doubt, consider George MacDonald's translation. This Scottish Christian minister (and mentor to C. S. Lewis) captures the spirit of Luther's original, although in so doing demonstrates exactly Winkworth's reticence in appropriating Luther's style too closely:

Our God he is a castle strong,
 A good mail-coat and weapon;
 He sets us free from ev'ry wrong
 That wickedness would heap on.
 The old knavish foe
 He means earnest now;
 force and cunning sly
 His horrid policy,
 On earth there's nothing like him.⁶⁴

Ulrich Leupold in his edition of Luther's Works laments the efforts of some Victorian translators as they sought to tone down the uneven language:

Unfortunately 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. With the mighty resurgence of English hymnody during the nineteenth century, many poets tried their hand at rendering Luther's verse into English. But most of them took considerable liberties with the originals. Frequently they changed irregular verse forms into more accepted meters. Usually they aimed at a more polished and elegant style than was really justified in view of Luther's angularity. They tried to make him speak in the mellifluous accents of a Victorian churchman, with the result that both the literal sense and the original style often were lost.⁶⁵

⁶³ *The Chorale Book for England*, #124.

⁶⁴ George MacDonald, *Exotics: A Translation of the Spiritual Songs of Novalis, the Hymn Book of Luther, and Other Poems from the German and Italian* (London: Strahan and Co., 1876), 66.

⁶⁵ Ulrich Leupold, ed., *Liturgy and Hymns*: vol. 53, p. 199, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

George MacDonald's translation, although perhaps rendering the thoughts of Luther better, loses singability in the English language, always an utmost concern for Winkworth who intended her translations to be sung. They were no mere academic renderings. Thus, the "mellifluent accents" of Victorian verbiage sometimes actually provides for good singability.

That is not to say Winkworth could not exercise great fidelity in translating even Luther's hymns. Here one can see Winkworth's attention to faithful detail, conveying his words in a modern, poetic manner:

Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin
in Gott's Wille;
getrost ist mir mein Herz und Sinn,
sanft und stille,
wie Gott mir verheißen hat:
der Tod ist mein Schlaf worden.

In peace and joy I now depart,
according to God's will,
For full of comfort is my heart,
So calm and sweet and still;
So doth God his promise keep,
And death to me is but a sleep.⁶⁶

Luther employs simple language in this extrapolation of the *Nunc Dimittis*, the meditative character of which Winkworth preserves. The only poetic liberty she has arguably assumed is in the phrase "mein Herz und Sinn," which literally would be rendered "my heart and senses" (or "reason") but which she translates as "For full of comfort is my heart." She has turned the 85 84 77 meter into a less-jagged 86 86 77, with an ending line artfully and precisely translated as "And death to me is but a sleep." Consider, too, her translation of the eighteenth-century hymn "Alles ist an Gottes Segen":

Alles ist an Gottes Segen
Und an seiner Gnad gelegen,
Über alles Geld und Gut.
Wer auf Gott sein Hoffnung setzet,
Der behält ganz unverletzet
Einen freien Heldenmut.

⁶⁶ *The Chorale Book for England*, #81.

All things hang on our possessing
 God's free love and grace and blessing,
 Though all earthly wealth depart;
 He who God for his hath taken,
 'Mid the changing world unshaken
 Keeps a free heroic heart.⁶⁷

Her translation has experienced alteration through the years, but her words, “all things hang,” is a faithful rendition of “Alles ist an,” albeit a bit unwieldy to the modern tongue. She moves “Segen” to the second line to accord with the original second line which speaks of “Gnad” or “mercy,” to which she adds “love.” “Geld und Gut” becomes “earthly wealth,” a remarkably close translation, considering she was limited to three English syllables. The last line, “Einen freien Heldenmut,” becomes “Keeps a free heroic heart,” an exact, literal translation of “Heldenmut,” which has no direct English equivalent. Modern translations have replaced this with “dauntless heart,” although this arguably lacks the specific coloring and implicit elation of the original and Winkworth’s translation.

Winkworth’s personal iteration of pietism eschewed any theology she deemed as excessively “dogmatic.” This, of course, sets her on a collision with Luther, who bore no such compunctions. Winkworth had to confront Luther’s systematic theology, much too doctrinaire for her own liking, as she translated some of his hymns. Robin Leaver posits, “The hymns of Luther were a particular problem for her. Again, it was not because she did not appreciate his theology or could not respect the important part his hymns played in the cause of the Reformation: it was rather that their rough-hewn directness was an embarrassment to her feelings about smoothness of style.”⁶⁸ It may be, however, that theology and style, at least as Luther evidences them, are so intertwined that her discomfort with his “rough-hewn” directness really does speak to a clash between the Renaissance Teutonic and the English Victorian worldviews. Leaver further notes that “She thought that Speratus’ hymn ‘Es ist das Heil’ sounds ‘like a bit out of the Augsburg Confession done into rhyme.’”⁶⁹ Her aspersions against dogmatic theology likely reflected her own personality and her desire to remain in the *via media* even between the warring factions in the Church of England. She acknowledged that “I never comprehend the Scripture proofs; perhaps because I have not studied the Scriptures controversially.”⁷⁰ This is not to imply that she did not believe Scripture, as

⁶⁷ *The Chorale Book for England*, #130.

⁶⁸ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 59.

⁶⁹ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 59.

⁷⁰ S. Winkworth, *Letters and Memorials*, 226.

elsewhere she is clear as to the primacy of Scripture, but she tended to avoid polemic disputations. Although theologically astute, she knew she was no trained theologian and never claimed to be one.

Historical Evaluation

Winkworth stands with other translators of the era. Frances Elizabeth Cox, Richard Massie, the Borthwick sisters, and Frederic Hedge were predecessors or contemporaries who contributed fine and useful translations in their own right. Nonetheless, Winkworth's translations have probably received the most usage in the Lutheran Church. Why? How does one even frame the question? Does one judge a translation based on its faithfulness to the original text? What about its singability? What about considering other less poetic elements? All these may be competing interests which may not achieve ultimate reconciliation and must be taken on their own terms. Yet, consider Winkworth's own evaluation of herself. In the preface to her *Christian Singers of Germany*, she acknowledges her own deficits as a translator:

In reading the poems scattered through the following pages, it must be remembered that they suffer under the disadvantage of being all translations and from one hand, which inevitably robs them of somewhat of that variety of diction which marks, in the original, the date of the composition or the individuality of the author. Still, as far as possible, their characteristic differences have been carefully imitated, and the general style and metre of the poem retained.⁷¹

Leaver evaluates her, saying,

If texts which speak well in English are the primary concern then looseness of translation is quite permissible and it could be argued that the versions of Robert Bridges and Philip Pusey are superior . . . But if fidelity to the thought and expression of the original is a prime concern then one will judge differently: if these other translations are compared with those of Miss Winkworth it soon becomes clear which are more faithful to the original.⁷²

Consider Matthäus Apelles von Löwenstern's (1594–1648) hymn, with translations from Winkworth and Pusey:

Christe, du Beistand deiner Kreuzgemeine,
Eile, mit Hilf und Rettung uns erscheine.

⁷¹ C. Winkworth, *Christian Singers of Germany*, 3.

⁷² Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 67.

Steure den Feinden, ihre Blutgedichte
Mache zunichte.

Frieden bei Kirch und Schule uns beschere,
Frieden zugleich der Obrigkeit gewähre.
Frieden dem Herzen, Frieden dem Gewissen
Gib zu genießen.

Catherine Winkworth:

Christ, Thou champion of that war-torn host
Who bear Thy cross, haste, help, or we are lost;
The schemes of those who long our blood have sought,
Bring Thou to naught.

And give us peace; peace in the church and school,
Peace to the powers who o'er our country rule,
Peace to the conscience, peace within the heart
Do Thou impart.⁷³

Philip Pusey: (cf. *LSB* 659)

Lord of our life, and God of our salvation,
Star of our night, and Hope of ev'ry nation:
Hear and receive Thy Church's supplication,
Lord God Almighty.

Peace in our hearts, our evil thoughts assuaging;
Peace in Thy Church, where brothers are engaging;
Peace when the world its busy war is waging,
Calm Thy foes' raging.⁷⁴

LSB prefers the Pusey translation for its poetic value, but it strays far from the literal meaning which Winkworth preserves. Pusey completely changes the first line, while Winkworth captures “Kreuzgemeine,” (“those gathered under the cross”), for which there is no plausible English equivalent, with “war-torn host.” She preserves “peace in the church and school,” which Pusey must have considered too parochial a phrase. She keeps the martial feel of the original text, although Pusey keeps the original feminine endings of each line (in which the last syllable is unstressed), while

⁷³ *Lyra Germanica: Hymns for the Sundays*, #105.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #659.

Winkworth accents each ending syllable; in so doing, however, she is able to preserve more of the literal meaning of the original. Leaver evaluates her thusly:

This care for as precise a rendering as possible was for Catherine a duty she owed to the original authors. She was not a versifier who drew her inspiration from German hymns but a translator who sought to lose as little as possible in the process of transposition from the one language to the other. She wrote to Massie: "I feel that the more I have read and translated, the more I see the inward adaptation of thought and metre in good poems, and the less license I am inclined to take." To many this has been a mark of her success, to others a measure of her failure. In an otherwise favourable review the anonymous reviewer in *The Christian Observer*, August, 1856, had to make the following observations about the translations of the first series of *Lyra Germanica*. "It concerns us not to be able to give all the commendation we could desire to the translation before us. It bears no marks of either ignorance to the German language, or of the hearty desire to preserve the precise meaning of the original composition in the best idioms admit. But we must think that, in the anxiety to be literal, the author has suffered himself [*sic*] to become bald. There is little attempt to translate the figurative expressions in the original into the corresponding figure in our native tongue." Although she knew of this particular criticism we do not know how she answered it. It is likely that she would have said that she was a translator not a hymn writer and her first concern must be to let the original authors speak for themselves.⁷⁵

Her loose translation of *Abendmahl* in Nicolai's aforementioned hymn demonstrates one liberty she was willing to take, in this case with sacramental implications. The third stanza of "Wachet Auf," which concludes "Dies sind wir froh, io, io, Ewig in dulci jubilo," employs a macaronic turn which she chose to translate, "But we rejoice, and sing to Thee our hymn of joy eternally." Yet, in her translation of "In dulci jubilo" later in *The Christian Singers of Germany*, she preserves the macaronic, "Matris in gremio, Alpha es et O." Likely, though, this was simply because this volume was neither practical nor devotional, but historical and hymnological, and she assumed a highly educated audience who would be able to maneuver the Latin. She was averse to anything Roman Catholic, even looking askance at the Tractarian movement in the Anglican Church. Thus when she came to translate the second stanza of Laufenburg's "Ach liebe Herre Jesu Christ," she was careful to omit the Marian reference "Maria, müter Jesu Christ Sit du dins Kinds gewaltig bist," which becomes "Since in Thy heavenly kingdom, Lord, all things obey

⁷⁵ Leaver, *Catherine Winkworth*, 64.

Thy lightest word.” Winkworth would modify a text if it offended her sensibilities. She was not the first to do this, of course. John Wesley’s translations of the pietist chorales would frequently reduce the number of affectations such as “dear, precious, sweet Lord,” or the number of divine kisses involved. Winkworth avoided reveling in the gory aspect of hymnody in which the pietists held a fond compunction. She modified Eber’s hymn “In Jesu Wunden schlaf ich ein, die machen mich von Sünden rein” to “I fall asleep in Jesu’s arms sin washed away, hushed all alarms,” avoiding “sleeping in Jesus’ wounds.” Heermann’s “Jesu, deine tiefen Wunden deine Qual und bitter Todt” becomes “Lord! Thy death and passion give strength and comfort at my need,” here avoiding mention of “deep wounds.” And the thought of kissing in Zinzendorf’s “Solche Leute will der König küssen” (“Such People the King Would Kiss”) is softened to “Such the King will stoop to embrace.” The pietist hymn writers could tend toward a writing style which anachronistically limited their hymns to their particular time and place; in this instance at least, Winkworth improved this German text for English utility.

Winkworth in Lutheran Hymnals

Catherine Winkworth’s translations initially experienced a gradual, rather than burgeoning, acceptance. The first edition of the monumental *Hymns Ancient and Modern* appeared in 1861 with six translations from Winkworth therein, including “Now Thank We All Our God.” Orby Shipley’s *Lyra Eucharistica: Hymns and Verses on the Holy Communion, Ancient and Modern; with Other Poems* (1863) was likely the first hymnal not affiliated with the Church of England to use her texts, including four of her translations from *Lyra Germanica: The Christian Life. The Chorale Book for England*, which was really a joint publication among Winkworth, Goldschmidt, and Bennett, is the second major hymnal to carry her texts. Both of these were published by Longmans, who assiduously guarded her copyrights, sometimes to her detriment. In a letter in this author’s possession from Winkworth to hymnal editor Charles D. Bell, in which he had asked for permission to utilize some of her texts, she laments that she is not “quite at liberty there” to grant permission, because “they [Longmans] are in the habit of charging 5 shillings for permission to reprint each hymn. I occasionally give permission for the use of one or two from the Second Series gratuitously but it is not in my power to do so for any large hymnal.”⁷⁶ Longmans’ rather exorbitant licensing fee was obviously intended to dissuade

⁷⁶ Letter from Catherine Winkworth to “Rev. D. Bell,” dated January 16, 1878. In personal possession of this author.

reprinting, and only a smattering of her texts appeared in England throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

Her fortune fared better in America simply because the ecclesiastical landscape required her texts. Although by this time the Lutheran Church in America was well established and represented numerous European language groups, the German General Synod was the oldest, based in New York and Pennsylvania, and had generated the first attempts at adopting English hymnody. Frederick Quitman's *Hymns and a Liturgy* of 1814 was the first, and rather idiosyncratic, attempt at an English hymnal. It included few actual Lutheran hymns, a characteristic that afflicted many of the mid-nineteenth-century Lutheran hymnals of the General Synod which, in their haste to acculturate, often eschewed German chorales in favor of American camp songs of rationalist expressions.⁷⁷ Certainly there are profound theological concerns involved here, but the fact that the compilers of early English-language Lutheran hymnals had few preexisting translations to use naturally resulted in their usurping the offerings of their local Reformed/Methodist/Presbyterian brethren, at least until the *Hymns for the Use of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (1865), edited by Frederic Mayer Bird of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.⁷⁸ This hymnal contained forty-nine Winkworth texts. Three years later, in 1868, the *Church Book for Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* included fifty-six total Winkworth translations.⁷⁹ The *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States* in 1880 contained sixty-four of her texts,⁸⁰ while the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn Book* of the Evangelical Lutheran Conference of Missouri and Other States in 1889 contained fifty-four.⁸¹

No thoughtful analysis is required to understand the dynamics here. As Winkworth's efforts were aimed primarily at translating German chorales, naturally the English-speaking Lutheran Church would gravitate to them. After all, the second half of the nineteenth century saw something of a confessional revival—even Beale Schmucker in the General Synod was advancing a thoughtful and historical

⁷⁷ Frederick Henry Quitman, *A Collection of Hymns and a Liturgy for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Churches; to which are added Prayers* (Philadelphia: D. Billmeyer, 1814).

⁷⁸ Frederic Mayer Bird, ed., *Hymns for the Use of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: J. B. Rodgers, 1865).

⁷⁹ *Church Book for Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Book Store, 1868).

⁸⁰ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States* (Columbus: Ohio Synodical Printing House, 1880).

⁸¹ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn Book* (Baltimore: Harry Lang, 1889).

approach to liturgy and hymnody and was working toward the development of the Common Service.

The LCMS, of course, represents a different strand of American Lutheranism which only later began to engage the Winkworth translations because, August Crull’s efforts aside, the LCMS was less enthusiastic to acculturate. Catherine Winkworth’s texts benefitted from their historical location; her first publications in the latter half of the nineteenth century broadly corresponded with American Lutheranism’s nascent interest in acculturation. The LCMS’s involvement in such matters manifests later, but in mining the chorale translations they found Winkworth’s texts available, generally faithful, and hence useful. The flaws of her translations—such as frequently not translating all the stanzas of a chorale, omitting or altering sacramental stanzas, or even mitigating certain dogmatic tendencies in the original texts—could all be seen as advantageous (or at least less detrimental) in an era in which the Eucharist was commonly celebrated only four times a year and the lack of reliable, original source material for the chorales precluded any sort of detailed, doctrinal, or hymnological examination, even when there was a desire for it. (For example, consider C. F. W. Walther’s commitment to hymns and hymnals containing only “pure” Lutheran doctrine.) Additionally, her Victorian and occasionally sentimental language, seen now as antiquated in places, was certainly no hinderance at the time, and English-language hymnal editors were fond of including her work. Once her work became so ingrained in American Lutheranism through multiple hymnals, and after multiple generations knew certain chorales only through her hymns, it then became a pastoral concern to preserve these now-familiar texts. This propelled her translations into the twentieth century and beyond:

Hymnal	Number of Winkworth Texts
<i>Common Service Book</i> , 1917	53
<i>American Lutheran Hymnal</i> , 1930.....	45
<i>The Lutheran Hymnary</i> , 1935	67
<i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i> , 1941.....	73
<i>Service Book and Hymnal</i> , 1958	28
<i>Lutheran Book of Worship</i> , 1978.....	30
<i>Lutheran Worship</i> , 1982.....	41
<i>Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal</i> , 1994	57

<i>Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary</i> , 1996	75
<i>Lutheran Service Book</i> , 2006	68
<i>Evangelical Lutheran Worship</i> , 2006	19

Although Lutheran hymnals clearly held an affinity for Winkworth's translations, her work does appear elsewhere. *The Hymnal 1940* contains seven, while the *Moravian Book of Worship* contains twenty-two—not surprising for a denomination stemming from the German nation. The Episcopal Church's *The Hymnal 1982* contains only nine.

A Twenty-First-Century Evaluation

What exactly is Winkworth's hymnic legacy? Her texts are still quite popular in the more conservative corners of the Lutheran Church, particularly in the WELS, ELS, and LCMS. But how do modern hymnal editors evaluate her impact on modern hymnody? This writer posed some questions to Carl P. Daw, Curator of Hymnological Collections and Adjunct Professor of Hymnology at Boston University School of Theology, former Executive Director of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, and a member of the hymn committee for *The Hymnal 1982*. Drawing from his experience in compiling hymns for *The Hymnal 1982*, Daw evaluates Winkworth and addresses his own translational concerns:

At the outset it must be acknowledged that Winkworth is a formidable translator, as becomes readily apparent to anyone who attempts to render German texts in English. Of course, the convention in her day that hymns should appear in archaic English gave her the distinct advantage of being able to use “-eth” forms of third person singular verbs, a strategy that often helped her deal with the unstressed final syllables of many lines in German chorales. But her craft was sometimes blunted by her reticence to make her translations too angular or confrontational.

This latter consideration lay behind the decision of the Text Committee for H82 to seek a new translation of “Wachet Auf” that would convey the immediacy and urgency of the German text. In particular, the absence of any reference to the “uns” of the original first line was felt to be a fault to be corrected. On the other hand, I was under some pressure not to make the opening words too startling, so I adopted the phrasing familiar from many English choral versions of the chorale. If I were to undertake a new translation today, I would probably choose something bolder and more idiomatic (such as “Wake up now!”).

In all such choices the essential criteria were to communicate the original text (German or other language) as accurately and effectively as possible, with particular attention to familiarity, poetic excellence, and singability. The nine Winkworth texts in H82 testify to her enduring significance in making German hymns available to English-speaking congregations around the world.⁸²

Daw's translation also moderates the *Abendmahl* of the end of the first stanza, translating it as "wedding feast." This, of course, is consistent with other translations (*TLH* says "nuptial hall"), but it still arguably lacks the specific sacramental context of the original German. If nothing else, here is Daw, a contemporary translator, with his own sacramental concerns, struggling with how poetically and musically to translate from the German:

"Sleepers, wake!" A voice astounds us;
the shout of rampart guards surrounds us:
"Awake, Jerusalem, arise!"
Midnight's peace their cry has broken,
their urgent summons clearly spoken:
"The time has come, O maidens wise!
Rise up, and give us light;
the Bridegroom is in sight.
Alleluia!
Your lamps prepare and hasten there,
that you the wedding feast may share."⁸³

Although Winkworth's translations are few in *The Hymnal 1982*, that fact is consistent with Anglican hymnals through the last 150 years. Their hymnic corpus simply relies less heavily on the German chorale, but where it does, Winkworth (and Bridges and Hedge) provides a means through which English speakers may sing these *Kernlieder* (core hymns). Daw's observation of Winkworth's reticence to create hymns that are too "angular or confrontational" she certainly would have accepted as a compliment!

What about Winkworth's contributions to *Lutheran Book of Worship* of the precursor ELCA denominations? Why had only thirty of Winkworth's texts been employed? According to Gracia Grindal, Emeritus Professor of Rhetoric at Luther Seminary and a member of the hymn text committee for *LBW*, "The committee wanted to change Winkworth because her language was so Victorian. Inclusive language was not her problem so much as the old intimate forms, thee, thy, thou.

⁸² Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

⁸³ *The Hymnal 1982* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1985), #61 and #62.

But we found when we tried to change part of the text, our efforts stuck out badly, the worst being ‘Jesus Priceless Treasure.’”⁸⁴ Grindal refers to the two excised stanzas of Franck’s text, in this case stanza 3 (“Wealth, I will not heed thee”) and stanza 4 (“Farewell, thou who chooseth”). Elsewhere, Grindal had written of her experience on the committee that she perceived that many in the church viewed the new hymnal as an “attack” on a preceding hymnal—*TLH* or *Service Book and Hymnal*—complicating the task of the committee and limiting the utility of the final hymnal.⁸⁵ Grindal had lamented the lack of traditional language in the hymnal, observing, “I kept saying that good poetry is good politics and if we made a bad revision to be PC it would stick out. The *LBW* was an attack. When we began, nothing [from] before 1970 seemed appropriate. So yes, we got rid of lots of language we didn’t like in the old 19th century hymns, but our revisions just made things worse.”⁸⁶ Phillip Pfatteicher, a member of the Liturgical Text Committee and thus not directly involved with the hymn selection in *LBW*, was responsible for placing Winkworth on the Calendar of Saints in the ELCA and Episcopal Church in his *New Book of Festivals and Commemorations* (2008). Pfatteicher’s admiration of Winkworth is tangibly evident:

Winkworth was the most productive of a remarkable group of 19th century women who opened the riches of German hymnody to English-speaking Christians. The riches of Latin and to a lesser extent Greek hymnody was made available in English by a group of male high churchmen, chief of whom is John Mason Neale. That is why I suggested we commemorate Winkworth and Neale together on the same day, July 1. Winkworth’s translations capture not just the sense but the spirit of the German originals and do so in smooth and effective and frequently beautiful English that seldom sounds like a translation but rather like very good English poetry.⁸⁷

However, Grindal’s deep respect for the nineteenth-century texts and Pfatteicher’s admiration for Winkworth’s work failed to stem the tide away from her translations, whereby the 2006 ELCA hymnal includes only nineteen of her translations, the fewest of any American Lutheran hymnal since the nineteenth century. There are certainly nuances in whatever explanation is invoked for this, but Grindal laments how the Scandinavians had no great translator as the Germans had in Winkworth:

⁸⁴ Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

⁸⁵ Gracia Grindal and Philip Pfatteicher, “Two Memoirs of Making the *Lutheran Book of Worship*,” Lutheran Forum, accessed August 2021, <https://www.lutheranforum.com/blog/2017/9/19/two-memoirs-of-making-the-lutheran-book-of-worship>.

⁸⁶ Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

⁸⁷ Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

“Had it not been for the Englishwoman Catherine Winkworth, there would have been very little good German hymnody in the English language at all. The Scandinavian languages had not benefited from such a talent.”⁸⁸ Indeed, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has continued to benefit from Winkworth’s labors.

Lutheran Service Book and the LCMS

The *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) of the LCMS contains sixty-eight of Winkworth’s texts. Joseph Herl of Concordia University, Nebraska, and member of the Hymnody Committee, offered his evaluation of Winkworth in general and her frequent inclusion in the hymnal:

It was largely a conserving element, or more precisely, a pastoral one. We didn’t want to change what we had unless there was a good reason, because we reasoned that people were already familiar with it. Our policy was essentially “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” In any case, we made very few changes for theological reasons. Nearly all were for the sake of updating the language, improving the poetry, or occasionally making the language inclusive.

We also didn’t have enough time to examine existing translations thoroughly. In almost no case did we go back to the original language to determine how close the translation was, and if stanzas were missing, we rarely knew about them.⁸⁹

This process, then, was not about being “conservative” in a mere political or social sense, but simply acknowledging that past usage has shaped the way people sing and believe. This committee took this concern seriously, in a manner that arguably the editors of *LBW* and *LW* could have heeded to produce more successful products. Paul Grime, project director for *LSB*, concurred with Herl’s analysis, saying:

I suspect that our decision to use many of her translations as a starting point was predicated on the reality that that is what the Synod had used by and large for all of our previous English-language hymnals. There was that conserving principle that was at play in many of our decisions. Of course, this didn’t prevent us from correcting a few obvious problems. Most notable was “Wachet Auf” where at the end of the second stanza we worked toward a clear reference to *Abendmahl* as the Lord’s Supper.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Grindal and Pfattheicher, “Two Memoirs of Making the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.”

⁸⁹ Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

⁹⁰ Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

Stephen Starke, a prominent hymnist and translator in his own right who served on the *LSB* hymn text committee, noted this conserving principle which guided the committee, and that this often brought them back to texts from *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Starke addresses how this conserving principle arguably led to *LSB*'s favoring Winkworth's translations:

As far as her translations being "favored" in *LSB*: one of the initial filters our Hymnody Committee worked with was determining the "base" text, that is, which text would we use or with which text would we start. Should we use the text as it appeared in *TLH*, *LW*, or *HS '98*? We looked very carefully at the *TLH* texts and sought to retain many of those just because we hoped to woo the *TLH* congregations to the forthcoming hymnal and because *LW* has messed up some beloved texts in the effort to update language. Returning them to *TLH* was "down-dating." So I guess that could mean that we favored our own Lutheran material and did not search that far afield into other traditions. If I am recalling correctly, there were occasions, on further examination of some of Winkworth's translations that we noted the omission of an original stanza or stanzas—untranslated stanzas, that is—and often those omissions were of a sacramental nature. She was not alone in such omissions; it may have been a sign of the times in which the texts were translated, perhaps reflecting the Sacrament had fallen into sad disuse.⁹¹

It seems, then, that Winkworth still maintains such a prominent status in LCMS hymnody for the following reasons:

1. *The "conserving" principle.* From a pastoral concern, it seemed sensible to use language that people already knew. This principle probably partially developed due to the failure of the compilers of *LW/LBW* to engage with such a concern, leading to a rejection of those hymnals in so many quarters. Although only tangentially related, the fact that the LCMS has been, arguably, a theologically "conservative" denomination explains why this has worked in Winkworth's favor in the LCMS while not in the ELCA.
2. *The "faithful" principle.* Winkworth's texts are, in general, highly faithful to the original German, meaning that Winkworth conveys the original Lutheran doctrine faithfully in most instances. This fidelity to Lutheran doctrine, of course, has always been a concern for the LCMS in general. That Winkworth channeled her efforts on the German chorales, and that the LCMS has largely been of German background, has contributed to the acceptance of her work.

⁹¹ Correspondence with the author, September 2019.

3. *The “lacuna” principle.* There is not much alternative to Winkworth’s texts. The LCMS had translators in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as Martin Guenther (1831–1893), Carl Janzow (1847–1911), and August Crull (1845–1923), but their output was less, and their usage less frequent, with Crull having only fourteen appearances in *LSB*. F. Samuel Janzow, long associated with Concordia Chicago, translated all of Luther’s hymns and his work is employed twelve times in *LSB*. Stephen Starke is probably one of the most notable hymn writers in the LCMS, but his work is more comprehensive than Winkworth’s in that his efforts involve translations from several languages as well as writing new hymns. Winkworth’s work benefitted the church’s hymnic repertoire because of its singular focus on the German chorales.

Conclusion

Winkworth holds a deservedly high place in American Lutheran hymnody. As Erik Routley observed, “The judgment of Percy Dearmer was that her *Lyra Germanica* ranks with the devotional classics of the nineteenth century.”⁹² Robin Leaver assesses Winkworth’s import as “The greatest translator of German hymns . . . she was able to catch the spirit and thought of the German originals and express them in a truly authentic English style.”⁹³ Her combination of theological, poetic, and literary acumen resulted in providing to Lutheran congregations in America much of their hymnic heritage which otherwise would have been limited. The words of the German chorales come to life in the English language through her efforts, and they “sing well.” If that variation of *lex orandi lex credendi* is true, and that singing promulgates belief, generations of Lutherans have Winkworth to thank, in part, for their catechetical development.

⁹² Erik Routley, *Hymns and Human Life* (London: John Murray, 1952), 223.

⁹³ Carlos R. Messerli, ed., *Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2005), 32.