

For the

LIFE of the WORLD

January 2004. Volume Eight, Number One



“Here I stand.
I can do no other.”

Martin Luther, 1521

Luther and Justification - p.4

Luther and Missions in the 16th Century - p.6

Luther and the Church's Song - p.9

Called to Serve - p.11



Luther Traveling Exhibit at CTS - March 7-28, 2004

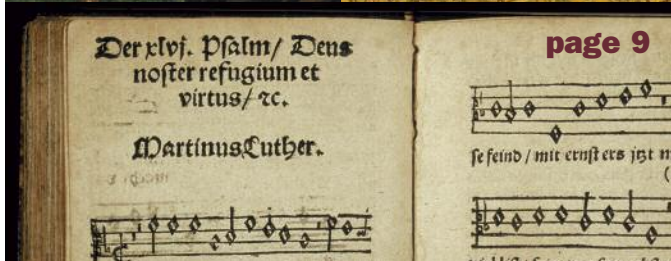

CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY
P R E S S

CONTENTS



page 7

page 4



page 9



page 14

page 25

For the LIFE of the WORLD

PRESIDENT
Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

PUBLISHER
Rev. Scott Klemsz

EDITOR
Rev. John T. Pless

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Jayne Sheaffer

ART DIRECTOR
Steve Blakey

For the Life of the World is published quarterly by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 North Clinton Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher of *For the Life of the World*. Copyright 2004. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Huntington, Indiana. To be added to our mailing list please call 260/452-2150 or e-mail Rev. Scott Klemsz at klemszsc@mail.ctsfw.edu. *For the Life of the World* is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

FEATURES

4 Luther and Justification

By the Rev. Roland F. Ziegler, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

The doctrine of justification tells us who God is: our Judge, who bore our punishment. It tells us who we are: guilty, but innocent in Christ. It shows us a foundation to stand on: Christ's righteousness, ours in faith.

6 Luther and Missions in the 16th Century

By the Rev. Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz, Associate Professor and Chairman of the Pastoral Ministry and Missions Department, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

The theology of Luther provides proper basis for missions, and much was put in practice for us already then. The immense enterprise we call today foreign missions has its roots in the Reformation.

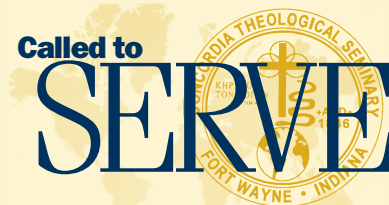
9 Luther and the Church's Song

By the Rev. Dr. Paul J. Grime, Executive Director, Commission on Worship for The Lutheran—Missouri Synod

After his initial burst of hymn writing, Luther only wrote another dozen hymns during the remaining 21 years of his life. While one might wish that Luther's creative output had continued at the fevered pace with which he began in 1523, we can give thanks to God for the truly wonderful legacy that Luther left us.

11 What Does This Mean?

12 Martin Luther Exhibit Travels to Luther Hall in March



Christ on Campus	p. 14
Substance and Meaning	p. 14
Evangelical and Lutheran	p. 16
CTS Deaconess Program...	
Reaching Out with His Care	p. 20
Fall Vicarage Assignments/ Candidate Placements	p. 22
AlumNews	p. 30

Luther and the Church's Song

By the Rev. Dr. Paul J. Grime

**True or False:
Martin Luther invented the practice
of congregational singing.**

**Answer:
False.**



One often hears statements to the effect that Luther was the first to write hymns or that he is the father of Christian hymnody. It is certainly understandable how such common understandings have come about. For example, Luther's own efforts at hymn writing were a tremendous impetus for Christian poets that continues to this day. One need only look at the thousands of hymns that are written each year to see that the Reformer began a powerful revolution of putting the Word of God into song.

But is it accurate to describe Luther's own efforts at hymn writing as being revolutionary? Hardly. The truth is that Luther's hymns, while being a bold effort that certainly encouraged others to take up the pen, were far more conservative in nature than most realize.

Before we look specifically at his hymns, however, let's first consider the context in which Luther wrote his hymns.

A Cautious Reformer

Following his courageous stand before the emperor, Charles V, in 1521, Luther was whisked away for his own safety to the Wartburg Castle. During his absence, reforms in Wittenberg began to accelerate rapidly. Much to Luther's disappointment, several of his colleagues chose to change the religious practices far quicker than Luther thought advisable. As a result, the laity—still trying to come to a fuller understanding of the Reformation teaching—were confused and even scandalized. Unrest broke out, churches were vandalized, and religious artwork was intentionally destroyed. Very quickly, the Reformation was developing into a revolution that would surely invite the wrath of the emperor.

Though Luther's prince, Frederick the Wise, still considered the political situation too volatile and preferred that Luther stay put, Luther insisted on returning to Wittenberg. After a nine month absence, that's precisely what Luther did during the first week in Lent in 1522. Upon his return, he immediately entered the pulpit and on eight successive days preached a series of sermons that called for calm and patience, emphasizing as always the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

If it is accurate to summarize Luther's activity prior to his stay at the Wartburg Castle as the development of his Reformation theology, then

the period following his stay can be described as a working out of the implications of that teaching. If the people were going to accept these new insights into God's Word, then they needed to be taught.

The Word for the People

If the people were to know the truths of God's Word, then they needed the Word. It was that need that led Luther to begin his translation of the Bible into German. During his stay at the Wartburg Castle, Luther translated the entire New Testament in just 11 weeks—a rate of 1,500 words per day! And he didn't stop there. After returning to Wittenberg, Luther took up the Old Testament, completing the first five books (the Pentateuch) in a little over six months. As his teaching duties increased, his translation work slowed. Nevertheless, he eventually completed the entire Bible, as well as the Apocrypha, and continued to revise his translation until his final days. Such was his love for the people that he labored endlessly to give them God's Word in their own tongue.

There were, however, other ways to bring the Word of God to the people. Toward the end of 1523 Luther wrote a letter to Georg Spalatin, court chaplain and secretary to Frederick the Wise. In this letter Luther challenged Spalatin and others to write hymns in German: "Our plan is to follow the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers of the church, and to compose psalms for the people in the vernacular, that is, spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may be among the people also in the form of music." Not surprisingly, Luther had already taken his own advice and was busy setting the Word of God to song.

Is it accurate to describe Luther's own efforts at hymn writing as being revolutionary? Hardly. The truth is that Luther's hymns, while being a bold effort that certainly encouraged others to take up the pen, were far more conservative in nature than most realize.

Building on the Past

Within the period of one year, beginning in late 1523, Luther wrote approximately two dozen hymns. This initial flurry of activity suggests that he may have suddenly discovered a gift for hymn writing. Of course, it didn't hurt that he was also a trained musician. This burst of creative activity, however, also parallels Luther's initial work of translating the Bible. Realizing the opportunity and potential, it were as though he

couldn't help but engage the task at hand.

So where did Luther begin? Not surprisingly, this cautious reformer built on that which came before him. This included the Word of God itself, as well as hymns that already existed. One can divide Luther's total hymn corpus of approximately three dozen hymns into five fairly even categories.

Psalm Hymns. Luther's initial foray into hymn writing consisted of writing paraphrases on six psalms (12, 14, 67, 124, 128, 130). Of these, probably the best known is his hymn based on Psalm 130, "From Depths of Woe I Cry to You" (*LW* 230, *TLH* 329). In each of these hymns Luther followed his own advice that "the sense should be clear and as close as possible to the psalm." Yet, he recognized that the text had to flow naturally with the music; hence, his further advice: "Maintain the sense, but don't cling to the words; rather translate them with other appropriate words." Luther's translation criteria did not prevent him, however, from the interpretive task. Particularly in these Psalm hymns Luther revealed his christological interpretation as he pointedly included references to Christ in his paraphrases.



After his initial burst of hymn writing, Luther only wrote another dozen hymns during the remaining 21 years of his life. While one might wish that Luther's creative output had continued at the fevered pace with which he began in 1523, we can give thanks to God for the truly wonderful legacy that Luther left us.

only alludes to the general thoughts of the Psalm. It is also interesting to note that this hymn was not written at the same time as the other paraphrase but five years later.

Latin Hymns. Another important biblical source for Luther's hymns was the rich treasury of Latin hymns. These are hymns with which Luther and others would have been well-acquainted. In all, Luther translated seven of these hymns. Perhaps the most familiar is the hymn "Savior of the Nations, Come" (*LW* 13; *TLH* 95). By choosing these hymns Luther demonstrated a great respect for the church's tradition, recognizing that these hymns which had shaped the faith of countless generations were still valuable expressions of the Christian faith. In his work as a translator, Luther began a practice that also continues to this day as hymns from every age, not to mention location, are translated into countless languages.

Medieval German Hymns. Contrary to popular opinion, Christians in Germany did sing hymns in German *before* the Reformation. There was, in fact, a strong tradition of folk hymns that were quite popular with the people. Luther tapped into this tradition, often augmenting and strengthening the popular versions of these hymns, thus bringing them

Scripture Hymns.

Unlike John Calvin (another 16th-century reformer), who held to the conviction that only paraphrases of the psalms were suitable for congregational singing, Luther looked beyond the psalms and borrowed from other sources, both biblical and non-biblical. Among his Scripture hymns are two on the Ten Commandments, another on the Lord's Prayer, and hymns on texts from Isaiah 6:1-4, Luke 2:29-32, and Revelation 12. Also included in this category is his most famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress." While this hymn is often considered to be a paraphrase of Psalm 46, it is much freer than Luther's other Psalm hymns, and

into conformity with his Reformation teaching. In fact, Luther went so far as to describe some of these changes and additions as "improvements." Among the nine hymns in this category are hymns for Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, as well as his famous hymn on the Nicene Creed, "We All Believe in One True God" (*LW* 213; *TLH* 251). It is important to note that the melodies for these hymns were already existing religious songs. These tunes, as well as the tunes for Luther's other hymns, were not borrowed from secular songs, but from the religious melodies of his day.

Original Hymns. Finally, we come to the category that one generally thinks of when speaking of hymn writing. Among these are the hymns "From Heaven Above" (*LW* 37/38; *TLH* 85) and "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" (*LW* 353; *TLH* 387). Despite being original hymns, several of these hymns still followed patterns that were currently in use, such as the ballad and the carol.

Teaching the People in Song

While the preceding classifications are convenient for describing the sources of Luther's hymns, there are other ways of categorizing the hymns. For example, Luther wrote several of his hymns specifically for liturgical use. In place of the creed, one could sing "We All Believe in One True God." Or in place of the Sanctus ("Holy, Holy, Holy") in the communion liturgy, Luther provided his versification of the account of Isaiah's vision in the temple.

Another category that draws on hymns from several sources is Luther's catechism hymns. For each of the six chief parts of the catechism Luther wrote a corresponding hymn. In some cases the hymn stanzas are more general and are not intended to parallel closely the catechism text. But in several cases, the similarities between hymn and catechism are remarkable. Consider this stanza from Luther's Ten Commandments hymn, "Here Is the Tenfold Sure Command" (*LW* 331; *TLH* 287):

Curb anger, do not harm or kill,
Hate not, repay not ill with ill.
Be patient and of gentle mind,
Convince your foe you are kind.

Have mercy, Lord!

Now hear Luther's explanation of the fifth commandment from the Small Catechism: "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need." Perhaps the most surprising observation is that Luther composed this hymn five years *before* he completed the catechism!

Conclusion

After his initial burst of hymn writing, Luther only wrote another dozen hymns during the remaining 21 years of his life. While one might wish that Luther's creative output had continued at the fevered pace with which he began in 1523, we can give thanks to God for the truly wonderful legacy that Luther left us. Not only are we able to sing Luther's hymns in our own day, we also benefit from the rich treasure of Lutheran chorales and Christian hymns that have been and still are being written to this day. We can rejoice that God gives us His good gifts of verse and song to instill the Gospel in the hearts and minds of the faithful.

Toward the end of his life, Luther wrote the following summary of Christian hymnody, a fitting summary to this brief survey of his hymns: "Like Moses in his song [Exodus 15:2], we may now boast that Christ is our praise and song and say with St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 2:2, that we should know nothing to sing or say, save Jesus Christ our Savior."

The Rev. Dr. Paul Grime is Executive Director of the Commission on Worship for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.