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Dissension in the Making of *The Lutheran Hymnal*

Paul J. Grime

Anyone who has made any inquiry at all into the development of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (hereafter *TLH*) knows that those who worked diligently on the project were, for the most part, concerned with the hymn choices for that significant book.¹ The extensive collection of committee minutes, later compiled and corrected by the committee secretary, Bernhard Schumacher, report at length on such matters and only occasionally make reference to any discussion on other aspects of the project.² This is particularly the case with regard to the services in *TLH*. The official minutes contain barely a dozen references to any consideration of liturgical matters, with the topics under discussion usually reported with just a few sentences.³ By all accounts, the development of the non-hymnic portion of *TLH* was but a blip on the radar of those charged with producing the second English-language hymnal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Such a paucity of information might lead one to conclude that the liturgical section in *TLH* was mostly an afterthought in the minds of those who were entrusted to prepare the book. That, however, is not an accurate picture. The compilers of *TLH* did, in fact, give more than passing attention to the services, especially the chief service. What is more, there was not unanimity concerning the content and even the musical form of what eventually became known as the “Page 15” service in *TLH*.

The evidence for these assertions begins with some intriguing marginalia in a copy of *TLH* that belonged to Gervasius Fischer, a pastor in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), who served on the Sub-committee for Liturgics that

¹ The Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics for the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941).

² Minutes of the Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics, 1929–1955—Schumacher Set [including the minutes of the Synodical Conference Hymn Book Committee]; box 1; Minutes, 1929–2009; LCMS Commission on Worship Records; Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis; (hereafter cited as Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes).

³ See Jeffrey J. Zetto, “Aspects of Theology in the Liturgical Movement in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1930–1960” (ThD diss., Christ Seminary—Seminex, 1982), 613–621, for a listing in the official minutes of any reports and actions concerning the services in *TLH*.

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assisted in the preparation of *TLH*.⁴ On the inside front cover of this hymnal, Fischer noted the following.

This Souvenir Copy was received June 21, 1941 as a gift from the Concordia Publishing House. Members of Subcommittee on Liturgics:

Rev. O. Schmidt, chairman
 G. W. Fischer, sec.
 Rev. Dr. A. Wismar
 Rev. Carl Bergen
 Rev. A. Harstadt [read: Harstad]
 Dr. P. E. Kretzmann

The music of Liturgy herein is not that which we recommended. Committee favored Gregorian tones to English chants, also that music be not printed with the Liturgy to allow for greater variety of melodies to be used. Music for liturgy was to be printed in a special section of book. Committee favored some form of Eucharistic Prayer.

In that short concluding paragraph Fischer enunciated three aims of the subcommittee that were not realized in the final publication: (1) a preference for a Gregorian setting of the services rather than Anglican chant, (2) a text-only version of the service so that it could be easily sung to more than one melody, and (3) some form of a Eucharistic Prayer.

Having previously carried out some cursory research on the milieu in which *TLH* was prepared, I found Fischer's inscription to be of more than a little interest.⁵ Here was evidence that the Sub-committee for Liturgics had made specific proposals that were not implemented. For all our assumptions of *TLH* being a beloved and universally accepted hymnal, which it was, there apparently were disagreements when it came to certain aspects of its development, and disagreements that seem to have lingered beyond the publication of the hymnal.

Over the past few years Gervasius Fischer's inscription has taken me on a search. First it was off to Concordia Historical Institute to rifle through the papers of William Polack, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis who served as chairman of the synod's Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics and director of the *TLH* project. While his papers provide some useful tidbits of information, they are sorely

⁴ It was James Tiefel, longtime professor of worship and choir director at the WELS seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin, who, during a casual conversation, tipped me off to Fischer's personal hymnal and provided a scan of Fischer's marginalia.

⁵ Paul J. Grime, "The Common Service in *Lutheran Service Book*: The Enduring Influence of *The Lutheran Hymnal*," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 9–23, and "The Lutheran Hymnal and Its Role in the Shaping of *Lutheran Service Book*," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79, no. 3–4 (July/October 2015): 195–219.

lacking in material prior to the 1940s—most significantly, the crucial decade of the '30s, when *TLH* was developed. Further searches at the institute turned up little else that is of much help concerning the development of *TLH*.

One of the other members of that subcommittee, Adolph Wismar, caught my eye in that his grandson, Gregory Wismar, is a retired pastor in Connecticut who served on the Commission on Worship during my last six years with the commission. Knowing of Greg's deep interest in his family's history, I wondered whether he perhaps would have access to helpful materials from his grandfather's collection. But, alas, all of his grandfather's papers were destroyed in a basement flood in the 1960s.

There was yet another member of that subcommittee who held out some hope: Carl Bergen.⁶ Through some fortuitous connections I was able to obtain some of his personal papers. Included in those papers were not only a number of file folders containing records of the Liturgical Society of Saint James, but also a folder of materials related to the *TLH* Sub-committee for Liturgics, including minutes of several of their meetings—minutes that to the best of my knowledge exist nowhere else.

More recently, I made another advance by visiting the WELS Archives in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Fortunately, Gervasius Fischer apparently did not like throwing things away. Of his voluminous holdings, five boxes of materials held out some hope. Over the course of a day, I was able to scan over one hundred documents that pertained one way or another to the topic at hand.⁷ Very quickly, it became evident to me that a fair amount of corroborating evidence exists that sheds light on Fischer's comments in his souvenir copy of *TLH* and more generally on the development of the liturgical section of *TLH*. With any luck, what we learn on those counts will also shed some light on liturgical developments in the LCMS over the past eighty-plus years.

To proceed, I will first provide a little background to a few significant individuals who were key players in this story. Next, I will briefly review the process by which *TLH* was developed. Then I will dive into a few of the issues that animated the work of the liturgy subcommittee.⁸

⁶ I actually met Carl Bergen briefly a quarter century ago when his nephew, then Ohio District president Ronald Bergen, introduced me to his very aged uncle while I was in the district for a presentation. Had I known then what I know now, I would have peppered Carl with questions. But I did not. Nephew Ronald put me in contact with Carl's son, Daniel, who graciously sent me the papers, which, after my research is complete, will be deposited in the archives of Concordia Historical Institute.

⁷ Thanks go to my son Nathan, who assisted me that day.

⁸ While I have far more material than I can reasonably cover in a single article, there are still gaps in the data currently at hand that I can only hope to fill in one day through additional archival discoveries.

The People

Though to the best of my knowledge he did not actually figure prominently in the development of *TLH*, any investigation of liturgical activity in the LCMS in the 1930s must begin with Berthold von Schenk (1895–1974). To say that “Sam,” as he usually signed his letters, was a colorful character is an understatement. Based on his posthumously published autobiography, one could reasonably conclude that he viewed himself as somewhat larger than life.⁹ Here was a man who routinely thought outside the box. He was not afraid, for example, to preach on the street corners of St. Louis during and immediately after his studies at Concordia Seminary. When the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918—the start of his ministry—shut down the churches, he sensed an opportunity, sending out postcards around the neighborhood with biblical passages and words of encouragement, resulting in people flocking to his congregation when the churches were allowed to reopen. Recognizing that it was a long shot, he accepted a call to Hoboken, New Jersey, where a church near the slums and docks had but a handful of people still attending services. Von Schenk’s vision was to bring beauty to the people who inhabited these slums, which meant services that were richly endowed with the ornamentation of ornately colored paraments and vestments as well as “a well-regulated church music”—to use the language of J. S. Bach—that featured multiple choirs singing Gregorian chant.

It was von Schenk’s interest in introducing beauty into the service that led in short order to the establishment of the Liturgical Society of Saint James (hereafter LSSJ). By natural attraction, several other pastors in the greater New York City area began collaborating with him as together they encouraged each other toward a richer liturgical practice in their congregations. Von Schenk served the last two decades of his ministry at Our Saviour Lutheran in the Bronx, where he cultivated a vibrant church life that boasted not only a large elementary but also a high school. Here, too, a rich liturgical life was fostered with weekly Communion becoming the norm.

It was at the Hoboken congregation that von Schenk met up with another player in our story, namely, Carl Bergen (1903–2000), who served his vicarage under von Schenk in 1925 and 1926. Following graduation from the seminary, he returned there to serve as von Schenk’s assistant for a year (1928–1929).¹⁰ Bergen’s particular contribution to this story was his musical training, especially his study of liturgical chant. In fact, such was his knowledge of the subject that he taught in New York City at Union Theological Seminary’s School of Sacred Music. Bergen was a key member

⁹ Berthold von Schenk, *Lively Stone: The Autobiography of Berthold von Schenk*, ed. C. George Fry and Joel R. Kurz (Delhi, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 2006).

¹⁰ Von Schenk, *Lively Stone*, 43n61.

of the inner circle that animated the LSSJ. He served his entire ministry in New Jersey congregations along the western bank of the Hudson River, with the two decades before his retirement as pastor in von Schenk's previous parish in Hoboken.

Beyond the strong influence he had in matters of music, perhaps Carl Bergen's most significant legacy in regard to this present study is the small trove of documents that he saved for posterity. For example, he carefully kept a separate file of the yearly activities of the LSSJ from 1929 until 1947, by which point the society had moved to Valparaiso University and would soon be absorbed into the latter's Institute of Liturgical Studies. During the crucial years of the LSSJ, Bergen's file folders are fairly thick, while in other years he saved only an item or two. In all likelihood, however, a number of those artifacts exist nowhere else. Bergen's meticulous filing has proven of great benefit in establishing a reliable timeline.

A close associate of Carl Bergen both in the LSSJ and in the work on *TLH* was Adolph Wismar (1884–1977), pastor during the 1930s of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Matthew in New York City, the oldest Lutheran church in America, as the congregation's letterhead proudly asserted. With an earned doctorate in Oriental languages from Columbia University, Wismar was the bona fide scholar in what might be called the nascent liturgical movement in the LCMS.¹¹ He would eventually take the reins of leadership of the LSSJ from von Schenk—not without some drama—and would rather late in his life spend twelve years as a professor of religion at Valparaiso University. He would be a key player on the *TLH* Sub-committee for Liturgics and take a particularly active role in trying to shape the final product.

Lastly, we step outside of the LCMS to give attention to Gervasius Fischer, the WELS pastor. It is important to remember that *TLH* was not solely a product of the LCMS but was a jointly developed hymnal of the Synodical Conference. Next to the LCMS, which dwarfed the other participating church bodies in both size and influence, it was the WELS that provided the most significant manpower to aid in its development. Fischer was a pastor of various parishes in Wisconsin during the development of *TLH*. He served as secretary for the *TLH* Sub-committee for Liturgics and, like a good secretary, saved a fair amount of his correspondence.

Fischer's attitude toward the church's historic rites and ceremonies was probably quite uncharacteristic from what one would have found in the majority of WELS congregations in the 1930s, not to mention from the LCMS. Within his own church body his greatest contribution was undoubtedly his persistent encouragement that congregations grow in their understanding of how the church has worshipped over

¹¹ His obituary asserted his knowledge of eighteen languages. "Adolph P. L. Wismar," obituary, *New York Times*, January 20, 1977.

the centuries and, furthermore, develop a richer practice at the local level. His most significant effort toward that goal was the publication of a two-part essay in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* titled “What Benefits May Be Derived from More Emphasis on the Study of Liturgics,”¹² and then, in anticipation of the release of *TLH*, a series of ten articles in *The Northwestern Lutheran* that were written for the laity.¹³ There can be little doubt that his efforts contributed toward the fairly strong embrace of *TLH* within the WELS, especially given the fact that the services that appeared in *TLH* were considerably more complete than anything the WELS had had prior to 1941.¹⁴

The Beginnings

The LCMS Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics, appointed by LCMS President Friedrich Pfothenhauer shortly after the 1929 synod convention, first convened near the end of November of the same year, with William G. Polack, a professor at Concordia Seminary, serving as the chairman. Already by the second meeting in January 1930, plans to bring other church bodies in the Synodical Conference into the development of a new hymnal were coming to fruition as representatives of the other church bodies joined the Missouri contingent. Henceforth, the chief committee tasked with work on *TLH* was known as the Synodical Conference Hymn Book Committee (referenced hereafter as the plenary committee).

And that is exactly what it was: a committee working on a book of hymns. For the next four years, this plenary committee focused almost exclusively on matters of hymn texts and tunes. They appointed subcommittees to focus on various categories of hymns, such as German-language hymns, English and Australian hymns, Scandinavian hymns, and hymns of ancient and medieval origin. The committee also worked from the premise that hymns contained in a core group of existing hymnals should be addressed early on for inclusion in the new book. They established a music committee to address the ever-thorny issue of tune choice as well as variants in tunes that existed in different traditions.

It was not until April 19, 1934, that the plenary committee established a subcommittee that would give exclusive attention to the services in the forthcoming hymnal. To this Sub-Committee for Liturgics the plenary committee appointed the

¹² Pts. 1 and 2, *Theologische Quartalschrift* 35, no. 2 (April 1938): 109–130; 36, no. 2 (April 1939): 97–118.

¹³ Published over ten consecutive issues from September 1940 through June 1941.

¹⁴ The first English-language hymnal in the WELS, *The Church Hymnal* (1910), contained 115 hymns and just four pages of service materials. This was soon replaced by an expanded hymnal, *Book of Hymns* (1920). Containing 320 hymns, it also had two orders (forms) of service, with the Communion service following the second. By all accounts, the liturgical chaos that reigned in much of the LCMS prior to the publication of *TLH* was also present in the WELS.

following: O. Geisemann (or W. Moll, should Geisemann decline the appointment), O. H. Schmidt (in case Geisemann declined), P. E. Kretzmann, P. Sauer, A. Wismar, C. Bergen, G. W. Fischer of the WELS, and A. Harstad of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (then the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church). As it turned out, neither Pastors Moll nor Geisemann ever served on the subcommittee. Likewise, Sauer's name never appeared in any of the extant minutes of the subcommittee.

It would be two years before this Sub-committee for Liturgics received any mention in the official minutes of the plenary committee. What transpired in the meantime? What is clearly evident is that the members of the subcommittee wasted little time in beginning their work. Within six weeks of their appointment they were already meeting. The date: June 1, 1934. The location: Grace Lutheran Church in Cleveland. The impetus for such a hastily planned meeting seems clear, for it was on the last two days of May that the third conference of the LSSJ met at the very same church. Two members of the Sub-committee for Liturgics happened to be board members of the LSSJ—namely, Adolph Wismar and Carl Bergen. What better time to convene the first meeting than when several members of the subcommittee were already going to be meeting with other pastors who shared similar interests in liturgics?

We need to step back, however, and ponder the significance—one might say, surprise—of the plenary committee appointing Wismar and Bergen to the Sub-committee for Liturgics in the first place. Just seven months earlier, the LSSJ had sponsored their second liturgical conference, this one at Trinity Lutheran Church in Detroit. Though similar to the society's first ever conference in Hoboken in May 1933, the September 1933 conference in Detroit brought the LSSJ into the limelight in a way they were likely not expecting. A few months after that fall conference several pieces of correspondence passed between a few concerned laymen in the Detroit area and Polack. A letter from Walter Dreyer, written on February 11, 1934, thanks Polack for his previous reply (which is not included in Polack's papers). Dreyer explained that he was not attempting to stir up trouble but simply wanted to defend "our dear Lutheran Church and . . . preserve it from becoming tainted with Catholicism."¹⁵ Expressing his wonderment that after seven years of existence the LSSJ had never been investigated by the synod, he offered his assistance in providing information about "local conditions."¹⁶

¹⁵ Walter H. Dreyer to W. G. Polack, February 11, 1934, William Gustave Polack (1890–1950) Papers, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis.

¹⁶ Writing on his business letterhead, Dreyer closed his letter with a postscript in which he apologized for the handwritten letter, explaining that he did "not wish to let [his] Presbyterian stenographer know about this controversy!"

In his reply just a few days later, Polack fell back on a typically Missourian stance—namely, that like any other organization in the synod—he gave the Lutheran Laymen’s League and the Walther League as examples—the LSSJ had a right to exist so long as it did not promote false doctrine. And since, in his view, “liturgics belongs to the so-called ‘adiaphora,’ things indifferent,” they were within their rights to teach and promote as they pleased. He did add that he was personally interested in reactions of the laity vis-à-vis the movement and that, in general, he did not believe the heaping up of ceremonies would appeal to the majority of church members. In a subtle fanning of the flames, Polack indicated that he would like to know whether Dreyer’s opinions were reflected in the opinions of others and then concluded, “I can imagine no quicker way of discouraging our pastors from promoting the work of the St. James’ Society than to find the lay-people solidly against it.”¹⁷

It appears that Walter Dreyer did attempt to raise up the laity against the LSSJ, at least to some degree. A month later, two separate pieces of correspondence were sent to Polack on the same day. One was a brief reply from Dreyer, thanking Polack for “investigating” the LSSJ.¹⁸ The second came from C. H. Willits, who concluded his letter with the self-description “a protesting Lutheran!” With no reference to Walter Dreyer, he asked how the LSSJ could be allowed to exist, being the “menace” that they were to “true Lutheranism,” while at heart they were obviously Roman Catholics. He pointed in particular to the LSSJ’s “abominable” publication *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana* and their clear attempt to dig up “pagen [sic] ideas from the 16th century which we fought so hard to get rid of.”

Willits was not done. In an example of why archival research can sometimes be so much fun, he fulminated, “The idea of Lutheran ministers to dress themselves up in petticoats, shawls, quilts, scarfs, dunce-caps, bowing, and crossing themselves, chanting, and mumbling to themselves, smokeing [sic] incense, carrying the Crucifix on a stick, ahead of the parade, Oh! It is horrible! such Idolatry! In conclusion, he issued a call to arms: “Ye men of God arise!’ stamp out this evil with the help of God.”¹⁹

Another piece of correspondence arrived yet a week later from Nellie Dreyer (Mrs. O. H. Dreyer).²⁰ She too had read *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*. Her accusation, however, centered on the notoriety the LSSJ had gained because of their Detroit conference, citing the March 10 issue of *Literary Digest*. Though she provided no detail, her conclusion drew no punches: “We Lutherans must hang our heads in

¹⁷ W. G. Polack to Walter H. Dreyer, February 14, 1934, William Gustave Polack (1890–1950) Papers.

¹⁸ Walter H. Dreyer to W. G. Polack, March 12, 1934, William Gustave Polack (1890–1950) Papers.

¹⁹ C. H. Willits to W. G. Polack, March 12, 1934, William Gustave Polack (1890–1950) Papers.

²⁰ It is impossible to ascertain what relationship she may have had to Walter Dreyer.

shame, while Rome is silently watching the out-come. I hope I am writing to one who sees the danger of this movement and [will] take action against this society.”²¹

The reason these local reactions to the 1933 LSSJ conference in Detroit are pertinent to this study is the surprising move of the plenary committee just four weeks after Polack received that last letter. For on April 19, 1934, the plenary committee that Polack chaired—and, by all appearances, with a fairly firm hand—appointed Wismar and Bergen, two of the more prominent members of the LSSJ, to the Sub-committee for Liturgics for the forthcoming hymnal. It is somewhat puzzling what one should make of this action. Was Polack toying with Walter Dreyer in the middle of February when he voiced his doubts about the value of such an emphasis on the heaping of ceremonies, given that two months later he would give his approval to the inclusion of these “romanizing” influencers in the LSSJ on the very committee that would shape the services in the new hymnal? Or were his sympathies congruent with his comments to Dreyer (which leads one to ask whether the appointment of Wismar and Bergen was merely to appease the small but vocal liturgical wing in the LCMS, perhaps assuming that the other members of the committee, particularly the WELS representative, would moderate or blunt their views)?

There is another member of the Sub-committee for Liturgics who requires our attention—namely, Paul Edward Kretzmann. “P. E.,” as he is better known, is probably remembered most for his four-volume popular commentary on the Bible. He was, however, a jack-of-many-trades. He taught science and math, for example, at Concordia College, St. Paul, and for a time served as managing editor at Concordia Publishing House. For over two decades he was a professor at the St. Louis seminary. He published on a wide variety of topics, including a rather comprehensive book on Christian art and its use in worship.²² It is not surprising, therefore, that Kretzmann would be appointed to some committee working on the forthcoming hymnal.

Shortly before his appointment to the Sub-committee for Liturgics, Kretzmann wrote a set of nine “Aphorisms on the ‘Liturgical Movement’” that comprised a single legal-size sheet of paper.²³ The handwritten date on the archive copy reads “Feb. 1934.” While it is impossible to confirm this date, there is no reason to doubt its accuracy. The first aphorism strongly suggests that Kretzmann wrote the aphorisms

²¹ Nellie (Mrs. O. H.) Dreyer to W. G. Polack, March 20, 1934, William Gustave Polack (1890–1950) Papers.

²² Paul E. Kretzmann, *Christian Art in the Place and in the Form of Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921). While the first words of the title suggest a book primarily about art, Kretzmann is rather comprehensive in his treatment of worship, including an extensive historical overview as well as a discussion on hymnody and other topics. For more on Kretzmann, who apparently never taught liturgics at the seminary, see Zetto, “Aspects of Theology in the Liturgical Movement,” 10, 468n37.

²³ Folder 3, box 1, supplement 1, Paul Edward Kretzmann (1883–1965) Papers, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis.

in reaction to some recent event: “According to recent official developments and declarations, including the modified statement of objectives and policies; the ‘Liturgical Movement’ has excellent possibilities for good (provided it remains within the boundaries of Biblical and Lutheran principles and succeeds in restraining such men affiliated with it as are going off on a tangent and thereby threatening to bring discredit on laudable objectives).” What exactly were these “recent official developments and declarations”? The likely candidate is an essay that von Schenk, then leader of the LSSJ, presented at that infamous Detroit conference in September 1933—an essay that was published shortly thereafter in the first issue of the society’s journal, *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*.²⁴ The tone of von Schenk’s address was rather general and, on the whole, somewhat defensive. Repeatedly he emphasized that the society was not promoting anything new but only recovering what had been lost since the Reformation.²⁵

In response not only to von Schenk’s appeal to the liturgical practices of early Lutheranism but also to similar attitudes of all the authors in that first volume of *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*, Kretzmann issued a direct challenge in his second aphorism: “It is inadvisable to base arguments for an extensive liturgical program on the survival of certain pre-Reformation features in certain parts of the Lutheran Church; not only because exceptions are inconclusive in themselves, but also because such features may have been carried along more by conservatism and inertia than by a proper appreciation of the Biblical position and by the example of the early Christian Church.” In another aphorism he cautioned against any undue focus on externals, noting how in the history of the church this often led to “doctrinal indifference and deterioration in spiritual life.” And in yet another aphorism, he cautioned strongly against the danger of clericalism: “The form of church polity in the Lutheran Church, like that of the Apostolic Church; after which it is modeled, is strictly democratic, with no recognition of the distinction between ‘clergy’ and ‘laity,’ especially not that of a priestly or clerical order or station, and all rites and usages whose symbolish [*sic*] points in that direction are contrary to Lutheran principles resting upon the Word of God.”²⁶

²⁴ Berthold von Schenk, “Policies of the Society,” *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana* 1, no. 1 (1933): 1–6. Given that the laypeople referenced earlier had read this issue by March, the editors must have moved quickly following the late September 1933 conference.

²⁵ “We are bringing nothing new, nothing which is not our own possession. We are promulgating no new doctrines, nor are we denying any of them. Therefore, the work of the Society of St. James cannot be called un-Lutheran, nor can charges be made that the Society in its work and services is aping the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England, nor can the charge be made of Romanizing tendencies.” Von Schenk, “Policies of the Society,” 1.

²⁶ Kretzmann, “Aphorisms.”

One almost gets the sense that Kretzmann was auditioning for an appointment to the Sub-committee for Liturgics! Given that he and Polack were colleagues on the St. Louis seminary faculty, it is quite possible that they conversed about the correspondence arriving from Detroit early in 1934, exactly the time when Kretzmann apparently drew up his aphorisms. There is little doubt that Kretzmann would have read the first issue of *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*, given that the following year he published a brief review of the second issue in the seminary's journal, *Concordia Theological Monthly*.²⁷

Without further evidence, one can only speculate on the reasons why these six men were appointed to the Sub-committee for Liturgics. At their first meeting on June 1, 1934, the committee gave assignments to each of the members. Among the topics Kretzmann was to address were "Guiding principles in the whole question of liturgics in the Lutheran Church according to the accepted confessions of the church."²⁸ The very brief minutes from the meeting the following June in River Forest indicate that Kretzmann was not in attendance for what appears in any case to have been a very short meeting.²⁹

There is, however, evidence suggesting that Kretzmann may have shared his aphorisms with members of the subcommittee. That evidence consists of a two-page paper in Carl Bergen's files, specifically in the LSSJ folder marked "1934," with the heading "Concerning the Liturgical Movement." It is neither signed nor dated, though there is no reason to doubt that Bergen's filing of the paper in the 1934 folder is accurate. What makes this brief document so intriguing is how it appears to rebut a number of Kretzmann's aphorisms. While my initial consideration of this document had led me to assume that von Schenk had authored it, I am more inclined at this point to ascribe the authorship to Adolph Wismar, one of the two LSSJ members who had recently been appointed to serve on the Sub-committee for Liturgics. Perhaps Kretzmann shared his aphorisms with the other subcommittee members sometime after their June 1934 meeting, to which Wismar then responded.³⁰

²⁷ Paul E. Kretzmann, review of *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana* vol. 2, *Concordia Theological Monthly* 6, no. 4 (April 1935): 318.

²⁸ Minutes of the Sub-committee for Liturgics, June 1, 1934, papers of Carl Bergen, in the author's possession. Interestingly, Kretzmann was not in attendance at the morning session but was listed as present in the afternoon session when the assignments were made.

²⁹ These minutes, only a half-page in length, are missing from Carl Bergen's papers but are included in Fischer's files. Minutes of the Sub-committee for Liturgics, June 6, 1935, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection, WELS Archives, Waukesha, WI.

³⁰ Again, this is purely speculative. That Bergen filed the unsigned document in his LSSJ files would suggest that the document was LSSJ business and not related to the work on the Subcommittee for Liturgics. But perhaps Wismar, who at some point in the second half of 1934 had assumed leadership of the LSSJ after von Schenk's withdrawal, shared his thoughts with fellow members of the LSSJ, and thus Bergen filed the papers there. Either way, the similarities between the two documents cannot be denied.

There is yet one more curious piece of correspondence—namely, a letter that Kretzmann wrote to Gervasius Fischer a few weeks after that first meeting of the Sub-committee for Liturgics. In the letter, Kretzmann thanks Fischer for sending the minutes from their meeting. He then moves on to their shared interest: “You are right in stating that one must make a very careful study of the whole field of liturgics, in order not to be led astray by some enthusiastic utterances which have *recently been made*.”³¹ He goes on to offer helpful suggestions regarding various studies in liturgics that Fischer might want to examine. Very quickly he wraps up his short note with this advice: “One really requires a very wide background for studies of this type, otherwise there is danger of going off on a tangent.”

The letter has the feel of a seminary professor offering friendly advice to a parish pastor. In all likelihood, the two had never met before the subcommittee meeting earlier that summer, coming as they did from different synods. But at the risk of reading too much into one little letter, I have to ask whether Kretzmann was perhaps gently feeling out his new acquaintance in the hope of steering him away from what he would undoubtedly have considered to be the excesses of the LSSJ and the two members of that organization on the subcommittee.

While the archival record provides more that we might consider regarding the beginnings of the work of the Sub-committee for Liturgics, it is necessary to move on, focusing specifically on the three issues that Gervasius Fischer identified in his souvenir copy of *TLH*—namely, (1) a Gregorian setting of the Ordinary, (2) a text-only version of the service, and (3) the inclusion of a Eucharistic Prayer.

What Might Have Been

It was the third meeting of the Sub-committee for Liturgics, which took place on October 22–23, 1936, back in Cleveland, when the intentions of the committee members began to become apparent as three of the issues came into clear view. Taking the second point first, the minutes clearly state that the subcommittee’s preference was for a single version of the service without any music to “avoid the tendency to sing only one melody, even though others are given in other parts of the hymnal.”³² A clear example of what they meant by that can be found in the predecessor hymnal, the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* of 1912 (hereafter *ELHB*). The last section of hymns in that book, under the heading “Chants,” included Johann

³¹ P. E. Kretzmann to Gervasius W. Fischer, July 25, 1934, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection; emphasis added.

³² “Minutes of Third Meeting of Committee on Liturgics,” October 22–23, 1936, p. 3, papers of Carl Bergen.

Spangenberg's 1545 setting of the Gloria in Excelsis.³³ It seems evident that most congregations simply sang the Anglican chant setting of the Gloria as it appeared in the printed service and seldom, if ever, turned to the back of the hymnal to sing this alternate setting.

Included in the minutes of that third meeting of the subcommittee is a detailed listing of different musical settings for most every part of the Divine Service. For example, for the Kyrie they proposed the following settings.

The music in *ELHB*, but revised
 Kyrie No. 16 (Ferias) Mode 3
 Kyrie X (Orbis Factor)
 Farced Kyrie (Gott Vater in, No. 7)

For the Gloria in Excelsis, the minutes gave the following settings.

Gloria No. 568 (the Spangenberg setting, with meter changes to be suggested by Bergen)
 Gloria in Excelsis XII (Per Cuneta)
 Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr
 All Ehr und Lob soll Gottes sein

And so it went with every other part of the service. In addition to the musical settings that appeared in the Common Service in *ELHB*, the sub-committee proposed other settings, mostly Gregorian in style, as alternates: a setting of the Creed from the St. Dunstan edition, the Sanctus in both Gregorian Modes 3 and 5, and the Agnus Dei in Modes 5 and 6.³⁴ Anyone familiar with the Liturgical Music section in *Lutheran Service Book* will quickly recognize what the subcommittee members were proposing: alternate settings of the Ordinary.³⁵ The only difference that the subcommittee members envisioned was that the actual order of service in the front of the new hymnal would have had no music at all, just texts that could be sung to any number of settings.

A month later, the chairman of the subcommittee, the Reverend Otto Schmidt of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Valparaiso, gave the first report of the subcommittee's work to the plenary committee. Included in that report was their recommendation to print no music within the orders of service and to include a variety of

³³ *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, [1912]), 482–485 (no. 568).

³⁴ "Minutes of Third Meeting of Committee on Liturgics," 3–4. Several Gregorian settings of the liturgy were published in the series The Saint Dunstan Edition, such as Charles Winfried Douglas, *Missa Marialis: A Festival Service for the Holy Eucharist Adapted to the American Liturgy and Harmonized for Accompaniment*, The Saint Dunstan Edition (New York: H. W. Gray, 1915).

³⁵ The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, ed., *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 942–963.

musical options, including Gregorian chant tones, elsewhere in the hymnal.³⁶ Schmidt apparently wrote to Fischer shortly after that meeting, because in a December 11, 1936, letter from Fischer to Kretzmann, he recounted Schmidt's description of a "lively discussion" concerning their proposal of a text-only service.³⁷

The subcommittee continued to maintain that preference at their 1938 meeting.³⁸ In 1939 the subcommittee met again, this time joined by the Music Subcommittee for the hymnal,³⁹ during which time they apparently had a significant discussion on this preference of the Liturgics Sub-committee. The minutes list the following reasons that were given.

1. The music currently used (Anglican chant) was "far from being good."
2. "To print a strange setting would be confusing."
3. Including the music makes it impossible for the service to be clear (*übersichtlich*).
4. Vespers and Matins are often spoken throughout. It is difficult to read the text of a canticle when it is interspersed with the music.
5. The service music is usually sung by rote. "Congregations shouldn't be discouraged from singing various melodies—simpler ones in the country, more elaborate settings where the people have more musical training. Uniformity to the extent that all sing the same melodies is nowhere found, nor desirable."⁴⁰

What follows in those 1939 minutes is truly fascinating. While the Music Subcommittee did not want to "go on record" as supporting the recommendations of the Sub-committee for Liturgics, they did give general approval to several proposals. First, they agreed that no music would be included in the Preparatory Service—that is, the Confession and Absolution. Second, there would be two settings of the chief service, the first using the extant music—the Anglican chant—from *ELHB*, and the second an entirely new setting. The minutes go on to identify the musical chants—primarily Gregorian—that they intended to include in that second setting.

That is the extent of any official deliberations of the Sub-committee for Liturgics on the matter of a text-only setting of the chief service. Undoubtedly

³⁶ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, November 13, 1936, 99.

³⁷ Gervasius Fischer to Paul E. Kretzmann, December 11, 1936, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

³⁸ Minutes of the Subcommittee on the Liturgy, October 18, 1938, p. 1, papers of Carl Bergen. There is no indication whether this was the fourth meeting or an intervening meeting occurred in 1937.

³⁹ Members of the Music Sub-committee present were Emil Backer, M. Lochner, W. Buszin, H. Haase, and [B.] Schumacher. Minutes of the Subcommittee on Liturgics, October 17–18, 1939, p. 2, papers of Carl Bergen.

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Sub-committee on Liturgics, October 17–18, 1939, 3.

conversations took place between members, though I have to date found no such correspondence. Various members of the subcommittee would meet with the plenary committee in the coming years.⁴¹ There are references here and there to the possibility of including several settings, though it is unclear how detailed the discussions were. What is striking, however, is how late in the development of *TLH* the plenary committee continued discussing these ideas. At the beginning of June 1939 the final report for the proposed hymnal was issued. That was less than two years before CPH would release the first printing. Yet as late as November 1939 they were still discussing matters as fundamental as whether there would be one or two settings of the chief service. While the contents of the hundreds of hymns and their tunes had essentially been settled—though plenty of minor details still remained—fundamental decisions regarding the services lingered quite late in the process.

The plenary committee's action at that November 1939 meeting was to include the familiar Anglican chant setting in the front of the hymnal and a Gregorian setting in the back.⁴² At the June 1940 meeting, Professor Polack reported on the most recent meeting of the Music Sub-committee. Now less than a year before the publication of *TLH*, it was the Music Sub-committee that apparently pulled the trigger and opted not to include a Gregorian setting of the chief service anywhere in the hymnal.⁴³ Of some significance is the notation in the plenary committee's minutes that Polack had attended that meeting of the Music Sub-committee. Equally significant, there is no indication that any member of the Sub-committee for Liturgics attended either of these meetings.

This background begins to shed some light on the comments that Gervasius Fischer recorded in the front of his souvenir copy of *TLH*. Up until the very last minute, the Sub-committee for Liturgics was continuing to work—one could say “negotiate”—in good faith with the plenary committee regarding a text-only order of service, only to have their work undone at the eleventh hour by another sub-committee. There certainly were tensions in the air during the half-decade of development. In a letter dated July 13, 1937, for example, Wismar wrote to Fischer after learning, apparently belatedly, that the plenary committee was planning on reviewing the work of the Sub-committee for Liturgics again. In a rather candid moment, he began, “Didn't even know the High Mightinesses were going to meet and give our contributions the once over. After all, one cannot expect much from men who make the fatal mistake . . . [of] this stupid assumption of absolute conformity to

⁴¹ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, June 23, 1937, 104–105; August 26, 1937, 107; November 11, 1937, 111; January 18, 1939, 125; and November 15, 1939, 135. Between these January and November 1939 meetings the minutes report multiple discussions—with no details—on the liturgical portion of the hymnal at which no members of the subcommittee were present.

⁴² Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, November 15, 1939, 135.

⁴³ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, November 15, 1939, 141.

Luther.” With no little hint of irony, Wismar asserted, “Not even the great Martin could save the rubric on the sign of the cross. Probably the gents don’t believe that Martin put that rubric into the Small Catechism.” He is rather honest in admitting that the pushback they were receiving from the plenary committee should not be that surprising: “For the present one need not get unduly exercised over what one could pretty well have prophesied.” Instead, he urges Fischer to press forward.⁴⁴

This honest assessment of Wismar leads us, finally, to the third comment in Gervasius Fischer’s hymnal—namely, the recommendation of the Sub-committee for Liturgics to include a Eucharistic Prayer in the forthcoming hymnal. When that topic is mentioned in our circles, we usually think back to the mid-1970s when a proposed Eucharistic Prayer for *Lutheran Book of Worship* raised some concerns. That the committee charged with preparing the services for *TLH* was seriously advocating for a Eucharistic Prayer forty years earlier is quite surprising. While the minutes of the plenary committee make a number of references to work on the “communion liturgy,” those minutes never provide enough specificity to give anyone a hint as to how extensive the subcommittee’s proposal actually was.

In the case of the Eucharistic Prayer, it is evident that both the impetus behind the proposal and the driving force to carry it forward rested with one man: Adolph Wismar. The minutes of the subcommittee’s first meeting make no reference to a Eucharistic Prayer. The only comment that may have hinted at the possibility was in one of the assignments given to Wismar and Carl Bergen—namely, that they consider what additional materials might be included in the hymnal. The minutes from what must have been a brief meeting in 1935 make no mention of any proposed change in the service, but the October 1936 minutes report a discussion on the inclusion of a Eucharistic Prayer that would “include the Sanctus, Benedictus [qui venit], and Pater Noster,” and that “it was decided that Dr. Wismar prepare and [sic] article to appear in the *Quartal Schrift* and *Concordia Theological Monthly* explaining the change and giving reasons for, and justification of the proposed change.”⁴⁵

It is clearly evident that Wismar expended a considerable amount of energy over the next eighteen months on promoting a Eucharistic Prayer for *TLH*. In the waning months of 1936 he wrote his short essay “Versuche zu einer Abendmahlsliturgie,” an “attempt at a communion liturgy.” Published sometime in 1937 in volume 5 in the LSSJ’s journal, *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*, the article consisted of twelve pages of historical and theological analysis, followed by his “attempt” at both a long and short form of a Eucharistic Prayer. At the very outset, he referenced Friedrich

⁴⁴ Adolph Wismar to Gervasius Fischer, June 13, 1937, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

⁴⁵ “Minutes of Third Meeting of Committee on Liturgics,” October 22–23, 1936, p. 1, papers of Carl Bergen.

Lochner's *Der Hauptgottesdienst* in order to promote the regular Sunday celebration of the Eucharist in the congregation.⁴⁶ Clearly, Wismar's promotion of an expanded form of eucharistic praying was not merely the desire to reprimatinate some ancient practice but was born out of a desire to deepen an appreciation of the Sacrament of the Altar.

Even a cursory review of Wismar's proposed Eucharistic Prayer reveals just how radical it was.⁴⁷ As evidence, consider the proposed fixed Preface in place of the Western church's longstanding use of Proper Prefaces. One can hear echoes from, among others, the early church anaphoras of Basil and the Liturgy of St. James:

It is truly meet, right, becoming and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God. Wherefore unto Thee, almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, we render now this offering of thanksgiving (or: sacrifice of praise). For Thou in the beginning didst create our nature in the image of Thy holiness and righteousness and thereafter, when through sin we had lost Thy divine likeness and through our disobedience had brought upon ourselves everlasting death, Thou didst mercifully restore us unto Thy favor and didst quicken us with the strong (glad) hope of everlasting life through Thine only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, through Whom the angels praise, the archangels adore, the heavens and all its powers together with the blessed seraphim and all the spirits of just men made perfect in unanimous exultation laud Thy divine majesty. With them permit us now to lift up our voices and to extol and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee and saying. . . .⁴⁸

Unique features of Wismar's proposal include (1) the inclusion of the Words of Our Lord, the Verba, within the prayer that recites the saving work of Christ; (2) the placing of the sign of the cross not at the words "body" and "blood" in the Verba but instead at what he calls the Prayer of Consecration; (3) dividing the Sanctus into two parts, with the *Benedictus qui venit* coming after the consecration; and (4) placing the Pax Domini prior to the Agnus Dei. Concerning that second point, the Prayer of Consecration, Wismar shows a clear affinity for the Eastern church's ancient

⁴⁶ Adolph Wismar, "The Communion Liturgy," *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana* 5, no. 1 (1937): 1. See Friedrich Lochner, *The Chief Divine Service of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church*, trans. Matthew Carver, ed. Jon D. Vieker, Kevin J. Hildebrand, and Nathaniel S. Jensen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2020), 5.

⁴⁷ A thorough analysis of Wismar's proposal and the subsequent workings of the Sub-committee for Liturgics as they attempted to "sell" it to the plenary committee is beyond the scope of this present investigation.

⁴⁸ Wismar, "The Communion Liturgy," 14.

anaphoras and offers four different options. As an example, consider his second option, remembering that this follows at some length after the Verba:

Doing this, therefore, in remembrance of Him, we beseech Thee to look with favor upon these Thy gifts of bread and wine, which we set before Thee according to the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and pray Thee, through Thy Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, to bless † this bread and this cup, and, according to the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, make this bread and this cup the means whereby we receive the Body and the Blood of our Lord, even that Body which was given for us, even that Blood which was shed for us. . . .⁴⁹

In his prefatory comments to the proposed rite, Wismar goes to some length to defend his proposal. He cites everyone from Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Chrysostom to Martin Luther and David Hollaz in support of what he acknowledges to be a far different approach from what anyone in the LCMS had ever experienced. He exhibits a dismissive attitude when he says that “no reputable liturgy that has come to our notice undertakes to omit” the Prayer of Consecration.⁵⁰ From that statement, one could conclude that he did not view the Common Service currently in use in the LCMS as being all too reputable.

During 1937, Wismar and the subcommittee worked to promote his proposal. In November 1937, he, Bergen, and Kretzmann met with the plenary committee, at which meeting they discussed the proposed rite. In response to the proposal, the committee resolved to include Wismar’s “Short Form” in the report that they would include in an upcoming issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. The minutes indicate, however, that their proposal was “to be submitted by mail to the members of the committee, and if the majority object, then it is not to be printed.”⁵¹ Presumably some of the committee members were not in attendance. The proposal was not included in that published report, so a reasonable conclusion one might draw is that someone did, in fact, object.

That, however, did not end the matter, because negotiations continued. In addition to Wismar’s original proposal that he published in *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*, I have discovered four other versions of the long form of the rite that various parties issued in 1938. It is clear that the subcommittee members made the subsequent revisions in an attempt to make it more palatable to the powers that be. After some initial revisions made by the subcommittee in October 1938, Wismar made further adjustments, which he then sent out to all the members of the LSSJ. In his cover

⁴⁹ Wismar, “The Communion Liturgy,” 14–15.

⁵⁰ Wismar, “The Communion Liturgy,” 7.

⁵¹ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, November 22, 1937, 111.

letter, dated December 9, 1938, Wismar revealed just how dear this cause was to him: "If we are ever going to get anything like a fuller communion Liturgy into our hymnal, we must get it NOW. *Ergo and summa summarum*, if you think the enclosed meets the needs of the case, write Prof. Polack that you think this arrangement will do."⁵²

The lobbying effort was on. Wismar knew that he was fighting an uphill battle. Earlier in the process he had written to Fischer, "Unfortunately too many men have for years thought of the Sacrament in only one way. Hence, as soon as they come upon ideas that, albeit warranted in themselves, are new to them, they make a face as though their mother-in-law had walked unexpectedly in on them."⁵³ Later, he would write even more cynically,

Isn't it just what one expected? The joke is that, if the illustrious leaders of liturgical development in the Synod[ical] conference wanted to "bleib[t] beim alten" [stay with the old], there was not the slightest need whatever of having a committee sit on the slack of its pants to suggest this or that. I don't see that our meeting these boys will do a *partoile* [*sic*] of good. They can outvote us on any given proposition. As it looks to me, they will. So the thing stacks up into a waste of good money and valuable time. What ought to be done is to fire that committee and begin all over again. True, that would take a few years more, but in the end it would pay.⁵⁴

In January 1939, the plenary committee kept the negotiations going by asking Wismar to condense his proposed rite before their next meeting.⁵⁵ In February, Otto Schmidt, the chairman of the Sub-committee for Liturgics, wrote to Fischer, indicating that the plenary committee would soon be meeting again, which it did February 8–10, and that he expected a final decision regarding the proposed Eucharist Prayer. While the minutes of that meeting indicate that the services were discussed at several sessions, they provide no details.⁵⁶ Toward the end of February, Schmidt, who had attended that meeting, wrote to Fischer with his assessment of the status of the Eucharistic Prayer proposal:

As to Wismar's order, what you felt seems to be the sentiment also of others. Mainly, however, the idea now seems to be that it would not be wise to print, even if there were not other objections, since the printing of another order

⁵² Adolph Wismar to William G. Polack, December 9, 1938, papers of Carl Bergen.

⁵³ Adolph Wismar to Gervasius Fischer, August 24, 1937, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

⁵⁴ Adolph Wismar to Gervasius Fischer, August 31, 1937, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

⁵⁵ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, January 20, 1939, 125.

⁵⁶ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, February 8–10, 1939, 125.

might break down this plan of having uniformity and that it would make for more confusion. That's not quite consistent, of course, because the hymn book is to offer additional and optional material on other fields. However, also this matter is to come up at the next meeting. I think Wismar's order is much improved now over what was first presented, and since 95% of the people would never even take the trouble to read it in their books there might be very little danger of confusion and variation of usages invited by printing this as an alternate order on page 197 or wherever it would be.⁵⁷

With that phrase "the sentiment also of others" one can only assume that Schmidt was reflecting the sense of the conversation at the previous meeting. The die was cast. The minutes of the plenary committee's next meeting on March 9 drove a stake in the proposal in a single sentence: "After another discussion of the Preface (Holy Communion) presented by Rev. A. Wismar, it was resolved not to include it in the provisional copy of the next hymn book."⁵⁸

There is, however, still more to the story. Just a few days before that fateful decision, Fischer made one last attempt to rescue Wismar's proposal by redacting it yet again. At the top of his revisions he wrote, "retaining original sequence of thought, dignity of style, but eliminating all unnecessary phrases (redundance), and simplifying and clarifying thoughts expressed."⁵⁹ Thus, it was the WELS representative who made one last attempt to salvage the grand dream of Wismar and others, particularly in the LSSJ. Following the meeting, Fischer went a step further with a rather honest assessment of the process that was being followed in the development of *TLH*. He began, "I sincerely hope, Prof. Polack, that I have made myself clear. The various fields represented in a hymn book like ours are too great in scope to be mastered by a committee with your present set up, especially for the wind up of the job. And under such an arrangement our new book simply cannot be the product of scholarly work." With great tact he expressed his admiration for the work that Polack and the various subcommittees had done for an entire decade on the hymns: "In the field of hymnology you have done the hardest work and I give you all the confidence, especially since that is also your personal field, that this will be as good a job possible under present day conditions." It was, however, in the matter of the services that Fischer became most blunt:

However, judging from what I heard at the last meeting, I fear that there is still much too [*sic*] be done[,] and liturgically and musically our hymn book will

⁵⁷ Otto Schmidt to Gervasius Fischer, February 21, 1939, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

⁵⁸ Syn. Conf. Hymn Book Committee minutes, March 9, 1939, 127.

⁵⁹ "Proposed Revision of Wismar's Preface—GWF," March 4, 1939, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

not come up to the high standard that it might. My complaint is not in regard to your committees [*sic*] decision in some of the matters of our committee, but the way you passed on them. Every statement you read with reference to Preface (as we have it!) was debatable, and it could have easily been shown just for that reason Wismar's suggestion [*sic*] were quite logical.

Fischer continued with the suggestion that there would be wisdom in not rushing to complete the project but in taking another year in order to do it correctly. He expressed his firm belief that frankness "among brethren" was vitally important. Curiously, however, he closed with the request that his comments not be shared beyond the plenary committee, perhaps in order to protect himself from those within his own church body who might disagree.⁶⁰

In the margins of his letter to Polack, Fischer indicated that he was sending a copy to Wismar. Shortly after receiving that copy, Wismar wrote to Fischer in a tone that leaves no doubt as to his level of frustration:

I fully expected the committee to turn that order down. From the very outset that illustrious college of cardinals appeared to be extremely suspicious of anything that came from us. Why[?] I don't know. Rather peculiar in view of the fact that we at no time said anything that savored of unorthodoxy. But then, they're the doctors. We had to go in with the understanding that the final decision rests with your large committee. Furthermore, we had to go in with the understanding that we would not sit in with the large committee at its final decision.

Above all I am very grateful to you for repudiating any implication of heresy. Of course, the man is entitled to his opinion. But one cannot raise the charge of heresy without being able to make it stick. In that item one must either put up or shut up. *Also, meinen allerbesten Dank, mein lieber Fischer, fuer deine Bruederlichkeit in dieser Sache.* [So, my very best thanks, my dear Fischer, for your brotherliness in this matter.] After all, as you point out, the liturgy contains not a single statement that we do not imply in our ideas of

⁶⁰ Gervasius Fischer to William G. Polack, [March 13, 1939], Gervasius William Fischer Collection. Only the third page of Fischer's letter is extant. It is only because he mentioned Polack's name at the top of the third page that one can identify the recipient. And the date can be ascertained from a letter that Arthur Voss, one of the WELS members of the main hymnal committee, wrote to Fischer, in which he referenced the latter's letter to Polack on March 13. Arthur Voss to Gervasius Fischer, March 21, 1939, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection. In Voss' comments on the liturgy, he expressed his opinion that Wismar's proposed rite did not appeal and that the generally accepted orders, presumably the Common Service, were best. He certainly did not see it as a reason to hold up publication any longer, commenting that the Wisconsin Synod needed a new hymnal much more than Missouri or the Norwegian Synod did.

consecration. More, it fully agrees with the official teaching of our Church. And if that be heresy, well, that's a new brand of the stuff.

He concludes with a note of resignation:

So my advice is just to forget the whole business. I fully expect that we shall find we are through anyway as far as the new hymnal is concerned. I mean this. Our ideas and those of the large committee quite evidently will not mix. They have the final say. Ergo, we have really nothing to say, no matter what we say. Ergo, furthermore, we are finished. There will be no further need to ask us about anything except, perhaps, what we think of the weather. And what we think of the weather will not affect anyone or anything.⁶¹

That is the extent of the evidence I have been able to gather to date concerning the demise of Wismar's proposed rite. He would make an attempt at delaying the publication of *TLH*, but to what specific aim it is not clear.⁶² Though there were issues still awaiting decisions, the topic of Eucharistic Prayer was not one of them.

Conclusions

No one can dispute that several members of the Sub-committee for Liturgics had some far-reaching ideas that were never going to be included in *TLH*. That the proposals I have examined received as much consideration as they did is actually quite astonishing. In particular, the more realistic of the proposals—that the hymnal include a collection of settings of the Ordinary that could be used depending on a congregation's musical predilections and capabilities—remained on the table until nearly the end. It is unfortunate that when the Gregorian setting slated for the back of the book was dropped, the proposed section of Ordinary settings also seems to have vanished, with just a few metrical paraphrases scattered in among the hymns.⁶³

The concept of including more than one setting of the chief service was obviously not realized in *TLH*. Two decades later, as work began toward its revision, the Commission on Worship, under the leadership of Walter Buszin, commissioned several new musical settings of the Ordinary by Healey Willan and Jan Bender. In

⁶¹ Adolph Wismar to Gervasius Fischer, March 15, 1939, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection.

⁶² Adolph Wismar to members of the LSSJ, June 27, 1939, papers of Carl Bergen. "We talked the matter over at the meeting of our study club in Brooklyn and the men there felt that if only someone will start the ball rolling, we can perhaps stop the hymnal for the time being. Let's be prepared to get out a protest and broadcast it."

⁶³ Examples include "All Glory Be to God on High" (*TLH*, 237), "All Glory Be to God Alone" (*TLH*, 238), "We All Believe in One True God" (*TLH*, 251, 252), and "Isaiah, Mighty Seer, in Days of Old" (*TLH*, 249). Curiously, the editors of *TLH* placed all of those alternate settings of the Ordinary in the Trinity section of the hymns.

the introduction to those settings, Buszin wrote, "It is in keeping with the best traditions of the Lutheran Church to vary the musical settings of the Service and to provide settings which fit the season." By way of example, he asked, "Why should the same musical setting be used on Advent Sunday, on Christmas Day, on Good Friday, on Easter Sunday, and on a Day of Humiliation and Prayer, when in each case the spirit and character of the day varies so greatly?"⁶⁴ I cannot help but hear echoes of that joint meeting between the Liturgics and Music Sub-committees, a meeting Buszin attended.

Given that the Sub-committee for Liturgics was formed more than four years after the plenary committee and the four hymn subcommittees, one gets the clear sense that the services in the forthcoming hymnal were not a top priority. This may be partially due to Polack's expertise in hymnody. Still, he was the liturgics professor at the St. Louis seminary, so the subject matter would hardly have been foreign to him. Nor should the need for careful attention to such matters have been. After all, the state of liturgical practice in the LCMS was nothing to brag about. Especially with the transition from German to English, many congregations apparently failed to make use of the services in *ELHB*, opting for all sorts of homegrown variations. Various articles and letters to the editor of *The Lutheran Witness* in the early 1930s complaining about a lack of liturgical uniformity culminated with the attention-grabbing essay "Our Liturgical Chaos" by Theodore Graebner, another of Polack's seminary colleagues.⁶⁵ One could perhaps speculate that it was the growing concern over such matters that led the plenary committee to appoint a special committee to prepare the services for *TLH*.

Absent additional correspondence from some of the key players, like Polack and Kretzmann, it is difficult to draw any further conclusions. Because these two players were on the same faculty in St. Louis, I have to assume that they had frequent conversations on these matters, which in effect deprives us of knowing their opinions on them. Because of this lack of source material, Polack is rather difficult to figure out. He could at one point write to Gervasius Fischer, "Personally, as you know from the meetings I had with your committee, I favor most of the suggestions

⁶⁴ Healey Willan, *The Order of Holy Communion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 2. While the Willan and Bender settings were published in 1959, the Commission on Worship also envisioned at that time a third setting. This setting, using plainsong chants, was prepared by none other than Carl Bergen and did not appear until 1967. Carl Bergen, *The Order of Holy Communion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967).

⁶⁵ Theodore Graebner, "Our Liturgical Chaos," in *The Problem of Lutheran Union and Other Essays* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), 135–166. A few years earlier, an unsigned letter to the editor complained of the liturgical confusion experienced when visiting other Missouri Synod churches. *The Lutheran Witness*, June 9, 1931, 206. Later, another letter spoke in favor of the journal's efforts to advocate greater liturgical uniformity. *The Lutheran Witness*, February 14, 1933, 57. See also Zetto, "Aspects of Theology in the Liturgical Movement," 5–8.

that you have made.”⁶⁶ Yet, it appears that at critical points Polack was working behind the scenes to blunt the more radical proposals. That may have been what he intended all along. In an undated, typewritten manuscript titled “The Historical Background of *The Lutheran Hymnal*,” Polack sums up the plenary committee’s views on the liturgical portion of *TLH* in this way: “As to the liturgical section of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, the committee held it to be within the scope of its work to make no changes in the liturgies as such but to simplify the rubrics as much as possible, to correct any discrepancies, to supply the most necessary general rubrics, to add the graduals for the Sundays, feasts, and festivals in the church year, to provide the introits, graduals, collects, etc., for the minor festivals, etc.”⁶⁷

Whatever the motives, there can be no doubt that *TLH* was a smashing success. I cannot help but think that some of that success was due to the times, especially the United States’ entry into World War II just months after the hymnal’s release. The time had come for the nation to come together in unity, and no doubt the church did also. But once the war had ended and times began to change again, it probably should not have come as a surprise that calls for a revision of *TLH* would begin to bubble up from the congregations. And so the work would start all over again.

⁶⁶ William G. Polack to Gervasius Fischer, September 6, 1937, The Gervasius William Fischer Collection. The meeting referenced was likely that of the plenary committee that Fischer attended to bring the subcommittee’s report.

⁶⁷ William G. Polack, “The Historical Background of *The Lutheran Hymnal*,” 8 (emphasis added), William Gustav Polack (1890–1950) Papers.