Introduction to the New Common Liturgy[1]

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THE Common Liturgy and Hymnal is the fruit of endeavors which began in 1944 when the United Lutheran Church resolved to delay the final revision of its Hymnal to seek "the fullest possible co-operation with other Lutheran bodies, in the hope of producing, as nearly as proves feasible, a common Lutheran Hymnal in America. Member Churches in the National Lutheran Council accepted this invitation and appointed representatives who organized a Joint Commission in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, early in 1945.

The Commission determined to prepare a standard English hymnal of literary and musical quality which should witness to the continuity and catholicity of the Church's life and which, in full agreement with Lutheran doctrine and preserving the finest of our heritages, should be suitable for use by our congregations in America today. The Commission reported a plan and a list of hymns which the co-operating Churches approved in 1946.

The success of this effort led representatives of the Augustana Church to suggest the appointment of a similar Commission on the Liturgy. The Presidents of the Churches approved and appointed representatives who met in Chicago, February 25, 1946, and recommended that all the Lutheran Churches in the country be invited to co-operate in the preparation of a Common Liturgy. The Missouri Synod, through its President, declined the invitation. Representatives of the other Churches met in Pittsburgh, June 26, 1946, and organized the Commission on the Liturgy with eighteen members. Intensive work by individuals, subcommittees,

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and the Commission itself, resulted in the presentation of an extensive and unanimous report which the co-operating Churches approved in 1948.

The Lutheran Churches in America are in process of becoming the Lutheran Church in America, a blend of many strains. The older generations worshipped in the languages of their fathers, using liturgies and hymnals authorized by Lutheran State Churches in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, etc., or English translations and adaptations of the same. While breathing a common spirit and containing many common forms, these Services were quite diverse in character. The preparation and adoption of the Common Service in 1888 helped to resolve this confusion.

This admirable work, a product of the confessional and liturgical movement which revived the church in Europe and America in the nineteenth century, was prepared by a Joint Committee representing the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod in the South. The plan of work and the excellence of its text commended it to all groups. Within a relatively few years it was included in the official Service Books of practically all the Lutheran Churches in the country, and translations in Telugu, Japanese, and Spanish carried it into the mission fields.

The principle or "Rule" which guided the framers of the Common Service, was: "the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century, and when there is not an entire agreement among them, the consent of the largest number of those of greatest weight." This decision to reproduce in the English language the consensus of the purified liturgies of the classic Reformation century, placed the project upon an objective, historical basis which limited the assertions of personal taste or preference. Thus, with few exceptions, the Common Service in its newest parts is as old as the time of the Reformation; in the order and great body of its material, it represents the pure service of the Christian Church of the West from the earliest times.

Dr. Beale M. Schmucker, in his scholarly Preface to the Common Service of 1888, describes the way in which the Reformers

early undertook to revise and purify the Liturgy of the Church, and introduce the language of the people in worship. Luther's *Formula Missae,* an evangelical revision of the Latin Mass, appeared in 1523. This was important in stating principles as well as suggesting forms. In 1524 the *Teutsch Kirchenambt* was introduced at Strassburg and in 1525 the Doeber Evangelical Mass at Nürnberg. In the same year Conrad Rupff, the Chapel Master of the Duke of Saxony and Johann Walther, his assistant and successor, aided Luther in arranging music for the latter's German Mass (*Deutsche Messe*) which appeared in print early in 1526. Bugenhagen's Order for Brunswick was completed in 1528; that for Hamburg in 1529; and his Danish Order in 1537. In Sweden, Olavus Petri published his Manual, which provided evangelical forms for Baptism, Marriage, Visitation of the Sick, and Burial, early in 1529. This was the first Protestant work of its kind, and Petri followed it promptly with his important and relatively complete Swedish Mass in 1531. Two years later, 1533, two very influential Orders were authorized in Germany—the Brandenburg-Nürnberg Order prepared by Brenz and Osiander for the prosperous and art-loving city of Nürnberg; and the Order for the city and jurisdiction of Wittenberg which superseded the personal Orders of Luther and Bugenhagen, and thereafter was used by them. During the next few years many cities and provinces in Germany issued similar Orders. Many of these retained portions of the Service in Latin but all sought to provide acceptable forms in the vernacular.

These Orders at first differed considerably from each other. But, after a time, there appeared in Saxony, northern Germany, and Scandinavia particularly, a definite and generally accepted type of liturgy. The Order of Government and Worship which Justus Jonas and his associates Spalatin, Cruciger, and Myconius prepared in 1539 for the Duchy of Saxony provided a typical standard Lutheran service with which the liturgies of Mecklenburg, Lüneburg, Calenberg and other North German cities and States in their successive editions were in close agreement.

The sixteenth century services were primarily translations

and revisions of the medieval Latin liturgies, with a few new features. Purity of doctrine was carefully guarded; the sermon was given increased importance; the calendar was simplified; church-song took a new flight; while the ancient musical intonations of the minister and the finest music of the choir were carefully preserved. An Order of Public Confession, the Prayer of the Church, and Exhortation to communicants and a few new Lessons and Prayers were introduced. In general, however, the whole outline and structure of the service of the Western Church for a thousand years before the Reformation was preserved, only that which was contrary to the pure teaching of Holy Scripture or otherwise objectionable being removed.

The whole series of Introits, Collects, Epistles and Gospels, which for the most part had finally been completed in the reign and domain of Charlemagne, was continued with slight changes in the German and Scandinavian liturgies of the sixteenth century. From these it came into the Common Service of 1888, and it now constitutes the basic liturgical "proper" of the Common Liturgy. There are but few of the Sunday collects which have not been in continuous use for more than twelve hundred years. With some differences in the days for which they are appointed, most of these beautiful prayers are now in use in all Roman Catholic Churches, though only in Latin; in the Lutheran Churches of Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the United States, and wherever scattered throughout the world; in the Church of England throughout the Commonwealth of Nations, and in the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country. Here is a notable example of ecumenicity and unity in the liturgical field.

In the providence of God the Lutheran Church, first of all, revised and purified the services of the Church and translated them into the vernacular at the time of the Reformation. The Lutheran revision of the Communion Service had been issued in many editions, had been tested by more than twenty years of continuous use in many States and cities, and, at Luther's own instigation, had even been provided with varied musical settings for Sundays and Festivals, and had been issued in a superb folio volume, before the

English revision of the old Service was made by the Church of England in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI in 1549.

The close agreement between this first Prayer Book of the Church of England and earlier Lutheran liturgies on the continent is explained by the fact that the Sarum and other Anglican Missals, from which the English revision was made, agreed almost entirely with the Bamberg, Mainz, and other German Missals, and with the Swedish and Danish Missals, differing with them in important respects from the Roman Missal. Archbishop Cranmer also, Primate of the Anglican Church, was intimately acquainted with the Lutheran Reformers and particularly with their work in the liturgical field. He had spent a year and a half in Germany in conference with theologians and princes, and had lived in the home of the Lutheran pastor Osiander when the latter was at work on the Brandenburg-Nürnberg Order, in 1532.

Two Lutheran professors who were called to the English universities also had a part in the preparation of the English Prayer Book. One of these, Martin Bucer, had been associated with Melanchthon and others in the preparation of Archbishop Hermann's Reformation of Cologne, 1543. Also during the years from 1535 to 1549, there had been constantly recurring conferences between the Anglican and Lutheran divines and rulers. It is thus not strange that the first and best Prayer Book of the Church of England should have so closely followed the Lutheran use as to present few divergencies from it. Changes, introduced in the Second Prayer Book of 1552 in response to Calvinistic and Zwinglian influences marred this agreement, and have persisted in many instances to the present day. Nevertheless it is important to note that these two daughter Churches of the Reformation, the Lutheran Church on the continent and the Church of England, pursued parallel paths in purifying and preserving the services of the church of the olden time, and that each, according to its genius, has further enriched the worship of succeeding generations.

The Common Service was the first generally accepted attempt to reproduce the consensus of the Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century in the English language. As an important feature

of the churchly revival of the nineteenth century it contributed greatly to the development of church consciousness and unity throughout the church in the Western Hemisphere, in spite of the fact that numerous changes in text were independently made by all the Churches which accepted it. Not a single Church today publishes or uses the Common Service precisely as it was adopted in 1888. The Common Service Book of the United Lutheran Church in 1918 filled out some of the outlines with additional Propers, extended the selections of Psalms and of Collects, and added a series of historic Graduals and a body of General Rubrics. Other Churches—the American, Augustana, Evangelical Lutheran, Missouri Synod, etc.—omitted certain parts of the original text and expanded other parts with alternate Collects, Lessons, Graduals, etc. Some of these changes are minor, others are important. Apart from other considerations, these variations in a professedly "Common Service" call for study and reconciliation.

Other considerations, however, are even more important at the moment. The incorporation of all Lutheran groups within the fabric of American life, the restriction of immigration and the rapid process of Americanization, the leveling influence of the public schools, the success of many co-operative endeavors, as well as the acceptance of common confessional standards, not to mention the experience of two world wars, have made it clear that the Lutheran Churches in America are one in faith and destiny. Knit together of many strains and appreciative of proud heritages from other centuries and lands, they seek to bear united testimony to Christian truth in this our own country and time. The use of common liturgical forms will accelerate this historical process and help produce a united Church of distinctive character and strong individuality, differing in many respects from other communions in our own country and also from the Lutheran State Churches in Europe from which its component parts originally sprang.

These psychological and practical considerations, however, were not uppermost in the minds of the scholars who prepared the Common Liturgy and Hymnal. After convincing themselves that there was hope of eventual agreement, their chief thought

was to produce a representative Service Book, in full agreement with Lutheran doctrine and life, with text and music of superior quality, and in all respects a work suitable for the public services of our congregations. The final appraisal of the Book will have to do with this essential character and quality rather than with its usefulness as an instrument of Church unity, however important this latter may be.

While the Common Liturgy rests squarely upon the foundations laid by our spiritual fathers in Germany and Scandinavia four centuries ago, it contains important features which mark it as a product of the new world and the present time. The Church Orders of the sixteenth century were local or provincial reforms of the Roman Rite intended for use in a single kingdom or duchy, a city like Nürnberg, Strasburg, Cologne or Hamburg, or a town like Wittenberg or Göttingen. The theologians and jurists who edited them knew little of the worship of the Early Church or of any other part of the Universal Church. The framers of the Common Service in the nineteenth century also had their limitations. In the confused state of the church of that day, the only hope of common agreement lay in the adoption of an objective Rule which considerably limited their freedom.

We of this generation are not living in the sixteenth century or the nineteenth. Pioneer conditions no longer obtain and sectional differences are rapidly disappearing. All Lutheran groups are conscious of maturity and solidarity in this our western world and are contributing notably to its culture as well as to its political and economic development. The confessions which witness to our unity in faith give us a greater freedom than the framers of the Common Service felt they could accept. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession (VIII:38, 39) says "we maintain the old traditions in the Church for the sake of usefulness and tranquility," but the Formula of Concord (I:10:4) adds, "we believe, teach and confess that the Church of God of every place and every time has the power, according to its circumstances, to change ceremonies (instituted by men) in such manner as may be most useful and edifying."

The Common Liturgy well exemplifies both these principles. The historic principle finds expression in the fundamental structure of the Liturgy with its proper appointments for the Church Year. The principle of freedom and timeliness is well expressed by the new material which has been introduced, and which, though proportionately small in volume, is important in content and character. Four distinct ideas, taken together and held in balance, justify these new features: the decision to make changes suggested by practical experience in the use of the Common Service during the past sixty years; an awareness of contemporary conditions and needs which should be met on the liturgical level; an ecumenical outlook which appreciates values in special features of the formal worship of other communions; and a willingness to profit by the achievements of modern scholarship in recovering pertinent liturgical gems from the life of the Early Church.

Important new textual features are the revised Kyrie, the series of Old Testament Lessons, the Prayer of the Church, the Eucharistic Prayer, the revised and enlarged collection of Collects and Prayers, and the comprehensive series of Occasional Services. The musical settings to the Liturgy and the excellent body of hymns and hymn tunes are also significant features of this work not found in the Common Service of 1888.

The simple three-fold Kyrie is a fragment of an original meaningful responsive prayer which, as the first prayer of The Service, immediately followed the entrance Psalm (Introit) in the liturgies of the Early Church. This prayer was not penitential in character. It was universal in scope, with broad and objective intercessions for the peace of mind of the worshippers, for the well-being of the Church, the welfare of the city and the government, the peace of the world, etc. Each petition or intercession, recited by the minister, was followed by the simple response, *Kyrie Eleison* by the people. In the early Middle Ages some of the intercessions in this litany type of prayer were transferred to a later place in the service, and only the simple response of the people, the *Kyrie Eleison,* was kept at this place and sung responsively by the minister and the choir.

Separated from the petitions which had given it meaning, the simple *Kyrie Eleison* came to be regarded as a cry of penitence. Medieval symbolism gave it a nine-fold form with three petitions addressed to each member of the Holy Trinity. Luther's Orders established the simpler three-fold form, but failed to restore the fuller text or the objective character of the prayer. The Anglican Prayer Books perpetuate the medieval penitential conception by connecting the Kyrie with the recitation of the Decalogue ("Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law"). Regarded merely as a cry of penitence, the simple Kyrie is repetitious and out of place following the Confession and Absolution. Its fragmentary text gives no hint of the real character and content of the original prayer. The restoration of the fuller and historically valid form gives meaning and life to this element in the Service. The restored petitions have peculiar pertinence for our own time and for all time, and they follow the Confession and Absolution with entire propriety. Their sincerity and breadth of spirit lift the thought of worshippers above concern for self to levels of unselfish intercession for others.

The inclusion among the Propers of a series of Old Testament Lessons, with the indication of a specific one which may be read before the Epistle, is a return to the universal practice of the Early Church. Except for the Psalter, the Old Testament Scriptures have largely dropped from formal Lutheran worship. The restoration of this primitive Christian use, with its wealth of history and prophecy, should strengthen and enrich our Services today.

The Prayer of the Church is the traditional General Prayer, with a better name and text. The latter preserves the essential ideas of the *Allgemeines Kirchengebet* which appeared in a variety of forms in the liturgies of the sixteenth century. Its simple, idiomatic phraseology is an improvement upon the stilted translations of excerpts from various Church Orders which first appeared in the Church Book in 1868, and was carried over into the Common Service of 1888.

The Eucharistic Prayer is a feature found not only in all early Christian liturgies but in the Service Books of practically every Christian communion today—whether Eastern, Roman, Anglican, or Protestant. A general pattern for such a Prayer was set in the fourth century and consisted, with some variation in the order of parts, of a post-Sanctus with continuing notes of adoration; a recital of the Dominical Words; the *Anamnesis,* a review of the suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord; an exalted ascription of praise and thanksgiving; the *Epiclesis,* or Invocation of the Holy Spirit; and a petition for the realization of the spiritual blessings of the Sacrament by all communicants. During the medieval centuries false doctrine and improper ceremonies disfigured this Prayer.

All the Reformers denounced the corrupted text and several attempted revisions, Archbishop Cranmer's draft for the English Prayer Book being a notable example. Luther's radical reform at this point was in sharp contrast to his otherwise conservative procedure. His two Orders of Service omitted the entire Canon except the Words of Institution. These he retained in connection with the Lord's Prayer, directing that both should be chanted aloud. The majority of the Church Orders followed his example, and the bare recital of the Verba without a vestige of the prayer forms in which the Words of Institution had always been imbedded, came to be recognized as a Lutheran peculiarity, unique in liturgical history.

Scholars in all periods have questioned this solution. Several sixteenth century Orders surrounded the Verba with pure prayer forms. Among these were the Kantz Order, 1522; the Strassburg Order, 1525; Pfalz-Neuberg, 1543; Austria, 1571; as well as the English Prayer Book, 1549. The liturgical revival of the past century produced similar forms in Loehe's Agende, 1844; the German liturgies of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, 1855, and of the Joint Synod of Ohio, 1863; Bavaria, 1879; and Russia, 1898. The liturgy of the Lutheran Church in India, 1936, has a fully developed Eucharistic Prayer. The new liturgy of the Church of Sweden, 1942, has a briefer form. Bishop Brilioth of that

Church says Luther's "operation left a gaping void . . . a central problem of the Lutheran Rite still awaits solution."

Believing that historical, doctrinal, and devotional requirements can best be met by a properly worded Eucharistic Prayer, the Common Liturgy provides such a Prayer which includes within its structure the narrative of the Institution as in practically all other Christian liturgies, ancient and modern.

This prayer preserves the historic form and unity of the Communion Office, which, from the Preface to the Lord's Prayer, and including the narrative of the Institution, is one great act of prayer and thanksgiving. The separation of the Words of Institution from their historic connection, and their bare recital without liturgical introduction or conclusion, as in the text of the Common Service, makes a definite break in this act of prayer, even though the rubric requiring the minister to face the altar shows that the church regards the entire action as a prayer. Popular understanding, however, believes that the prayer form concludes with the Sanctus and the Lord's Prayer (according to the present arrangement); and that the recitation of the Verba is something different—either a solemn proclamation or warrant for the celebration of the sacrament, or a formula of consecration.

The Eucharistic Prayer incorporates the Words of Institution within its structure just as many collects and prayers recall passages of Scripture and use them for the foundations of their petitions. The Dominical Words lose none of their grace and power as they are thus recalled in an act of remembrance and devotion in the larger framework of prayer. The traditional form and unity of the liturgy are preserved, and the church is protected from suspicions concerning mechanistic and materialistic conceptions of the Sacrament which seem implicit in the repetition of the Verba alone. The prayer continues and expands the thought of the Preface and the Sanctus. These exhort to thanksgiving but give no reason for thanks except the limited references in the Proper Prefaces.

The Eucharistic Prayer is a pure text in the order of the Creed. Addressed to God the Father, it recalls the life and re-

demptive work of our Lord and invokes the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit. It makes manifest, as no other single part of the Service does, the meaning of the Sacrament, its relation to the Last Supper and the total significance of the redemptive ministry of our Lord. It is in full agreement with the example and command of Christ Who "blessed" the bread, and "gave thanks" for the cup. All of this rich and exalted devotional material is compressed within a few brief paragraphs in the form and mood of prayer, which is the only way in which we can address God.

Those who do not wish to use the Eucharistic Prayer and who desire to continue the present order, may use the alternate form authorized by the Churches. This consists simply of the Words of Institution and the Lord's Prayer, without introduction or conclusion, and in this order.

The section, Collects and Prayers, has been prepared on the basis of the seventy-seven items in the Common Service of 1888 and additional prayers in the Common Service Book of 1917. This material has been thoroughly revised and expanded to meet modern conditions and needs. Many prayers from early Latin sources and the German Church Orders have been omitted. Sixty-five new prayers from ancient and modern sources in Europe and America have been included, some having been composed by members of the Commission.

The section on The Occasional Services is unusually complete. Its preparation involved many difficulties because of the great variety in the forms and customs of the co-operating Churches. Agreement in the text of The Service and of Matins and Vespers was easier to attain because these services are based upon revisions of the medieval Missals and Breviaries, Latin service books which were relatively uniform in all European lands before the Reformation. Lutheran reform in all countries in the sixteenth century proceeded along parallel lines. In consequence our Churches in America had a common order and a great body of common liturgical material in the matter of these principal public services.

The Orders for Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Marriage, Burial, Ordination, and other Occasional Services, however, are based upon extensive revisions of the ancient Latin Manuals or Rituals for parish priests, and of the Pontifical, the service book for bishops. These books differed greatly in different areas in medieval times. Many local and national peculiarities persisted in the different European countries after the Reformation and came in translation into the service books of our Churches in America. Other differences are due to the uneven results of the confessional and liturgical revival which swept across Europe a century ago. Some Lutheran countries made quite full recoveries of lost or neglected material, while others made only partial recoveries. In every country much new material was improvised. As a result the Orders for these Occasional Services as found in our present service books in America differ greatly in character and completeness. Many are fully developed along historic lines; others are simple, even rudimentary in form.

The texts proposed by the Commission are inclusive in character. The fundamental pattern of each Order, practically identical in all the Churches, has been filled out with Scripture passages, collects and prayers, ceremonies and other detailed material from one or another Lutheran use, or, very occasionally, from some other proper source. Thus, a rich body of approved liturgical material is provided for those who desire it. Permissive rubrics provide flexibility and make possible a simple, briefer service when this is desired. Essential material has a *shall* rubric; optional material is introduced by a *may* rubric.

Other significant features of the Book include the addition of the Festival of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs, to the Calendar, thus completing the historic cycle of three minor festivals in close proximity to the Feast of the Nativity; new Proper Prefaces for Advent and All Saints' Day; an alternate Absolution after the preparatory Confession of Sins; alternate Post-Communion prayers; permissive use of the historic and generally accepted word "catholic" instead of "Christian" in the Creeds; and a limited number of changes in the case of difficult or archaic ex-

pressions in the text of the Authorized Version of the Scriptures, which latter is retained as the normative text throughout.

Minor additions and refinements include proper Introits, Collects, etc., for several feasts in the Calendar; the lengthening of several brief Epistles; the appointment of a new Gospel for Trinity Sunday and of optional alternate Gospels for the First Sunday in Advent and the Ninth Sunday after Trinity. There also is a change in the order of parts after the Sermon, the Offering immediately following the Votum. This restores the historic association of the Offertory with the Prayer of the Church. Mention may also be made of the new Lectionary for Matins and Vespers, and of the use of the word "Alleluia" instead of "Hallelujah" in the text of the Graduals and throughout the Services.

These new features, taken together, distinguish the new Common Liturgy from other liturgies and mark it as a distinctive American Lutheran Use. They are not mere novelties, but rather, for the most part, restorations of historic forms and usages from different periods of the church's liturgical development. A few are of recent origin, as in the case of some of the new Collects and Prayers. The text of the Prayer of the Church also is new, though based upon sixteenth century thought forms. The provision for a second service on Easter Day and the Prefaces for Advent and All Saints' Day follow Anglican and Scotch Presbyterian precedents. The alternative Absolution, certain Introits and Collects, and the Gospel for Trinity Sunday are drawn from medieval sources. The text of the Kyrie, the structure and most of the text of the Eucharistic Prayer, the plan of an Old Testament Lesson before the Epistle, the Festival of the Holy Innocents, the word "catholic" in the Creeds, the alternative Post-Communions, and the new order of parts after the sermon are all restorations of features from the worship life of the church prior to the medieval centuries in which Roman corruptions and disfigurements developed. We welcome these features in our services today as contemporaries in time and place of origin of the Preface and the Sanctus in the Holy Communion, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Te Deum, the Collect for Grace, the Collect for Peace, and other

liturgical gems already imbedded in our own liturgy and in the rites of the Universal Church.

Basically, then, the Common Liturgy is a blend of the historic German, Scandinavian, and American Lutheran uses of the sixteenth and twentieth centuries with the additions of features which round out its final form and express its contemporary and ecumenical spirit. All variations in the text of the Common Service have been reconciled. All new features have been introduced by common agreement.

Prepared for the use of two-thirds of all the Lutherans in the United States and Canada, the Common Liturgy is a work of large proportions. It presents the full Lutheran Service with all its provisions for all who wish to use it. Those who desire a simpler service may use its principal parts in their order, omitting such items as sung introits, graduals, antiphons, responsories, etc., and passing over minor festivals in the Calendar without observance.

Similarly there is room for ample variety in the matter of architectural appointments, musical settings, ceremonial, etc. Some parishes may desire, and may have the resources to provide, full and ornate services. Others may desire or only be able to conduct services of much simpler character. Freedom and flexibility of this sort are a Lutheran birthright. Every service, however, whether elaborate or simple, sung or said, should be within the framework of the common Rite authorized by the Church. The simplest service should not omit essential or important parts or change their order. The most ornate structure should not incorcorporate extraneous or unauthorized texts within its structure. Under all circumstances and conditions the integrity of the Church's Rite should be respected and conserved.

In keeping with this conception of unity in essentials and variety in non-essentials, three complete musical settings are provided for the text of the Liturgy. These settings, as well as the rich variety of tunes in the Hymnal, represent our three great musical heritages from Latin Christianity, from continental Lutheran areas in Germany and Scandinavia, and from sources

within the English speaking world. Whichever setting is used, the constant endeavor should be to promote congregational participation in the highest possible degree.

Next to the Bible and the Catechism, the Common Liturgy and Hymnal will be the church's most valuable instrument of devotion and instruction. The new Book is more than an evidence of the church's maturity and solidarity in this, our land. Its use over wide areas will bring synods and congregations much nearer the ideal cherished by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg more than a century and a half ago: "One Church, One Book."

May our Lord, the Great Head of the Church, accept and bless this labor of love, to the edification of His people and the glory of His most Holy Name.