

Liturgy and Ecumenism: What Next?

Eugene L. Brand

This year, 1998, marks the twentieth anniversary of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW) that we celebrate together with the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute of Liturgical Studies here at Valparaiso University. My personal debt to the institute goes back to 1956 when I persuaded my internship supervisor to allow me to attend the institute in Michigan. That meeting introduced me to some of the giants of the previous generation—Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Berthold von Schenk, A.R. Kretzmann and M. Alfred Bichsel—and gave me a vision of what worship among Lutherans might be. Then, following my return from doctoral studies at the University of Heidelberg, I was invited to present a paper at the 1961 institute. It was on the concept of *anamnesis*, prescient of this year's eschatological theme. And now, after fifteen years as an ex-patriot, you have invited me back. I am grateful.

It fascinates me that the institute was founded in 1948. Years ending in eight—the symbol of completion—have been stellar years for liturgy among Lutherans: Muhlenberg's *Agende* in 1748, *Church Book* in 1868, the Common Service in 1888, *Common Service Book* (CSB) in 1918, *Service Book and Hymnal* (SBH) in 1958, LBW in 1978.

One further preliminary observation: it has become commonplace to call the SBH the climax of the restoration phase of Lutheran liturgy begun with the *Church Book*. In addition to being normed by the "common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century," what has emerged as the mainstream restoration series was also influenced by an Anglican predisposition. The restoration stream that fed into this institute, on the other hand, was a Lutheranism influenced by a Roman predisposition. In the LBW these two streams flow together, refreshing one another.

In my attempt to fulfill my assignment, I will first address myself to liturgy and the striving for church unity—ecumenical matrix; inter-Lutheran and ecumenical impact—and then turn to the issue of the work

on worship and culture in the Lutheran World Federation.¹ Finally I will address the question part of my title, What Next?

*Ecumenical Matrix*²

Several times I have heard James White quoted as saying, “Why would I wish to teach ecumenics when I can teach liturgics?” Nothing a congregation does during the week is as ecumenical as its celebration of the Eucharist. Liturgical books that have exemplified the classical Lutheran confessional and liturgical heritage have all been ecumenical in character because the Lutheran intention was to reform the mainstream liturgical tradition of the Latin church, not to depart from it. From the Reformation onward, then, our liturgy has not been ours; we celebrate it in common with others. As with the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* in its various incarnations, the liturgy as Lutherans celebrate it is a reformed version of the historic Latin rite. Nevertheless, as confessional self-consciousness grew in the several churches after the Reformation (including the post-Tridentine Roman Church), ongoing liturgical revision was carried out largely without consultation with other churches or, especially where the Roman Catholic Church was concerned, sometimes in opposition to them. Thus one came to speak of the *Lutheran* liturgy or the *Anglican* liturgy.

During the nineteenth century in North America, Lutheran liturgical revisions prepared the way for participation in the ecumenical consensus of the latter half of the twentieth century. That is in marked contrast to Europe where liturgical revision quite naturally took place within the various language traditions of separate national churches. That resulted in a *German* Lutheran tradition, a *Slovak* Lutheran tradition, a *Swedish* Lutheran tradition, etc. After these various traditions had been transplanted in American soil, it was not long before Lutherans found it necessary for pastoral and other reasons to switch to English. English had not been a *Lutheran* language. That maneuver, executed mainly for survival, turned

¹See Eugene L. Brand, ed., *Worship Among Lutherans. Northfield Statement* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1961); S. Anita Stauffer, ed., *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994); and S. Anita Stauffer, ed., *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1996).

²On this and the following section, see my chapter in Ralph R. Van Loon, ed., *Encountering God: The Legacy of the Lutheran Book of Worship for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis: Kirkhouse Publishers, 1998).

out to be the precondition for Lutheran unity on this continent. But it also set Lutherans irrevocably on an ecumenical course, since the English they employed—*Gott sei dank*—was that of the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. Probably without realizing it, they forged an alliance with the English-speaking Christian world that would profoundly influence the liturgical reform of North American Lutherans a century later.³

We have already spoken of the SBH as the culmination of the restoration phase of liturgical work among American Lutherans. One would therefore have expected it to have a long life, though only two decades elapsed between its publication and that of the LBW. One of the reasons why new work was begun less than a decade after the SBH was published was the hope of including the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in a new book and thus realizing the liturgical part of Muhlenberg’s dream of one church and one book. But another reason was beginning to surface, and it had to do with language style. The Revised Standard Version of the Bible was published in 1952 and, in an unprecedented manner, it quickly replaced the Authorized Version both in church and for personal devotion. Thus the prevailing liturgical language was, for the first time in centuries, no longer a mirror image of the biblical readings. To add fuel to the fire, it became clear in the mid-1960s that texts being proposed by the Roman Catholic International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL) addressed God as *you*. Thus the *mother church* of the Latin tradition, when it began to speak English, did so in a way that challenged the liturgical diction of her daughters, who found they could not ignore it. It was a pastoral response to a cultural problem: the disparity between twentieth-century spoken English and the sixteenth-century style of liturgies in English. Just as the change to English had been a necessary pastoral accommodation for Lutherans in nineteenth-century North America, so a more contemporary liturgical diction was clearly a necessary pastoral accommodation for twentieth-century English-speaking countries.⁴ No sputtering about linguistic crudeness or having sold out to Hemingway could stem the tide.

³When work began on the SBH in 1945, all the participating bodies had included the Common Service in their service books either as the main service or as an alternative. This was true also of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941).

⁴It should be noted that this problem of addressing God is, among the languages of Europe, unique to the English language. Though Christians in Germany, for example, have updated their liturgical texts ecumenically, the changes have not had the same impact, since one continues to address God in familiar terms. Modern English has lost the capability of differentiating between familiar and formal address.

ICEL was aware of the immensity of the task of creating a new liturgical English and sought the cooperation of others. Some cooperative efforts had already been made in North America by the Consultation on Common Texts. Another cooperative model was the Joint Liturgical Group in Britain. Since those models were already functioning, and since most English-speaking churches were increasingly aware of the pastoral need to close the gap in language, they were eager to cooperate. It would have been the height of folly and totally impractical for churches to deal with the body of common liturgical texts separately.

Just as the ILCW was getting into gear, therefore, it had the good judgment to participate in the ad hoc group that followed through on ICEL's initiative, the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET).⁵ To save itself from the red tape in which it would have been entangled had it been official, ICET deliberately remained an ad hoc group. Thus the texts it produced would be accepted or rejected on their merits and not because of any official status. The texts of the final edition of *Prayers We Have in Common* (1975) have been used in virtually all English liturgies, albeit with a few alterations.

ICET also became a network for communication among the various churches engaged in liturgical revision. It is interesting to speculate whether the *Ordo lectionum missae* (1969) would have been so widely adopted had the churches not already become accustomed to sharing with one another in ICET. In adopting its own version of that *Ordo*, the ILCW opted to side with ecumenical partners in North America (and thus with the whole Roman Catholic Church) rather than with German Lutherans who were determined to remain with the so-called "old line pericopes" (in somewhat modified form). The impasse between the Americans and the Germans brought to naught an effort begun in the mid-1960s by the Lutheran World Federation to produce a common lectionary system for global Lutheranism.

Most North American Lutherans, I think, do not realize the unique position we occupy in world Lutheranism because of our participation in the English-language community. Certainly what it does to us is mystifying to European Lutherans. Willy-nilly, it has put us in the forefront of liturgical reform among Lutherans in the "north." And it has shown us that, liturgically, we are more in tune with Nordic than with German Lutheranism. When European Lutherans undertake liturgical

⁵Members were drawn from the following Christian world communions: Anglican, Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic. The Consultation on Church Union (USA) was also represented.

reform, they mine their own language traditions though, of course, being influenced by contemporary liturgical scholarship. When North American Lutherans undertake liturgical reform we are virtually forced to work ecumenically since we have scant liturgical tradition in English to mine. That is a great blessing, and it should predispose us toward ecumenical cooperation. (That being the case, the failure of the *Concordat* was a strident *non sequitur* to everything already in place between the Episcopal Church and the ELCA.)

Other channels for ecumenical exchange were opened up by the policy of the Roman *Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* to involve observers in its work. Like the Anglican communion, the Lutheran communion had two, and one of them represented the ILCW. In the 1960s and early 1970s virtually no liturgical commission anywhere worked alone. There was lively interchange in the effort to bring to bear the insights of the pastoral phase of the liturgical movement. North American Lutheranism had a tiny voice in the Roman reforms just as it had had in Vatican II and was, in turn, wonderfully enriched by them. It is ironic that the Roman Mass which was a focus of the Reformation protest should become (in its 1970 form) a stimulus for cooperation.

Parallel to these ecumenical liturgical efforts were the ecumenical theological efforts that led to the publication by Faith and Order of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982). It is no accident that the Eucharist section of BEM is modeled on the structure of the eucharistic prayer. The pivotal role of Max Thurian both in liturgical reform and in Faith and Order should not be underestimated.

We began this section with the observation that the whole of the Lutheran liturgical tradition—in its best moments—has been ecumenical because it has been involved in the reform of the Latin rite. The *Missal* of Paul VI (1970) is a no less radical reform of the Tridentine Mass. Since 1970 we have worked on more or less common ground.

Inter-Lutheran and Ecumenical Impact of the LBW

Inter-Lutheran Impact. The LBW is used in other parts of the Lutheran communion as a resource for liturgical texts and hymns in English. English-speaking congregations in such large cities as Geneva, London, Oslo, Berlin, Budapest, and Tokyo also use it. The LBW has also been used as a point of reference by other Lutheran churches. The liturgical commission of the Church of Sweden, for example, took great

interest in the LBW. Its representatives came to the United States more than once to consult with persons involved in the ILCW. A similar thing happened more recently as the new service book and hymnal for the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany was being prepared. When churches in Hong Kong and Taiwan were preparing a new book for Chinese Lutherans, the LBW played an important role in the project. In this way the LBW in particular and the liturgical consensus in the English-speaking world in general have exerted an influence beyond North America.

When the late Bishop of Bukoba, Tanzania, Josiah Kibira, became president of the Lutheran World Federation, he requested copies of the LBW to use at an English-language Eucharist, which he celebrated every Wednesday in his cathedral. The practice has been continued by his successor, Bishop Samson Mushemba. Because of the multilingual situation in Africa, English is often the language of communication among Africans themselves. Thus in the chapel of the university in Harare, Zimbabwe, a largely African congregation of Lutherans gathers every Sunday to worship in English using the LBW. These examples are especially noteworthy because neither is the result of a “foreign” congregation ministering to expatriates or of North American missionaries transplanting the worship book with which they are familiar.

Laudamus, first published by the Lutheran World Federation in 1952 as a trilingual hymnal with minimal liturgical material, evolved by the time of its fifth edition in 1984 into a fuller multilingual service book and hymnal. *Laudamus* is intended primarily for LWF assemblies, but it has also been used extensively at LWF meetings and consultations where English or multilingual resources are needed. Liturgical materials are presented in English and German. English liturgies for the Eucharist, morning prayer, and compline were borrowed from the LBW, as were the English-language psalms and prayers. Through *Laudamus* the LBW has had an indirect influence on Lutherans—and especially church leaders—from all parts of the world.

Ecumenical Impact. The liturgical materials of the LBW have also had an important effect on ecumenical relations both in North America and worldwide. It has figured in at least one formal ecumenical agreement. The 1982 *Agreement* between the Episcopal Church in the United States, the American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Lutheran Church in America, in which they formally recognized one another as churches “in which the Gospel is preached and taught” and established many forms of common life, provides for “interim

sharing of the Eucharist.” Paragraph 4.b stipulates: “the eucharistic prayer will be one from the *Lutheran Book of Worship* or the *Book of Common Prayer*.” This provision reflects the role of liturgy in mutual recognition between churches.

At the first meeting of the fourth phase of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in Finland in 1995, the opening Eucharist celebrated by the Lutherans was according to the LBW (from *Laudamus*). The Roman Catholic partners were in attendance. After the service a Roman Catholic bishop who is a very experienced theologian and ecumenist was heard to say, “So what is the difference between us?” A perfect example of the ecumenical influence of the LBW!

If our celebrations of the Eucharist are so similar and if our baptisms create a common bond, what is it that still requires us to be separated?⁶ The high degree of liturgical convergence, primarily between Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Lutherans, but also among some Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans has prepared the soil for more formal agreements of full communion.

Regarding church unity, it is my judgment that we are quickly approaching the end of what can be accomplished by theological dialogue. Not that all major differences have been settled, but we are close enough that we know *how* they will be settled. What is needed is the courage to go ahead. And that means facing the so-called non-theological factors. The appropriate church authorities must receive formal agreements. But such action means little if they are not also received by all the faithful. Soil that has been prepared by the reception process is ready for planting the formal agreements. Then the plants need nourishment and care by a continuing reception process. As many people are saying today, including Pope John Paul II in his great encyclical *Ut unum sint*, the success of the ecumenical movement requires a conversion in how we regard churches other than our own. We need to ask ourselves whether our massive attention to those things that divide us has blinded us to the great things we share in common. Next to the Bible, chief among these, surely, is the rite of the Latin church.

I have often thought that one of the most important steps forward in the reception of our liturgical convergence was the funeral mass of Robert Kennedy. Because the mass was in English and televised, millions of

⁶On this point, see my Berakah Address to the North American Academy of Liturgy: Eugene L. Brand, “Response to the Berakah Award: Ecumenism and the Liturgy,” *Worship* 58 (1984): 305–15.

Lutherans and other Protestants, for the first time in their lives, recognized their common bond with Roman Catholics.

When we think about the future of liturgy, we ought to think in ecumenical terms. If the liturgical tradition of the Latin church is a common possession—one that helps us overcome our divisions—does not our baptismal unity forbid us to deal with it unilaterally?

There is another issue in liturgical revision/renewal that also demands our attention, and that is culture. Since this challenge faces all the mainline churches in each place, we should find ways of dealing with it ecumenically, just as we have done regarding language. Indeed, the question of language in the liturgy is a major cultural question.

Issues of Worship and Culture: Work of the Lutheran World Federation

When Lutheran churches in North America abandoned their mother tongues for English, they engaged in contextualization or inculturation. That goes on yet today in other parts of the world where Lutheranism was established by immigration. For African and Asian churches, inculturation or contextualization has mostly to do with music, ceremonies, vestments, architecture—all those cultural issues that combine to make Christianity *at home* rather than being perceived as a foreign import.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been occupied with issues of worship and culture for some time. These issues had already surfaced in the period prior to the 1970 assembly as the result of increasing membership from Africa and Asia. When a worship desk was established in the LWF Department of Studies in 1982,⁷ contextualization was high on

⁷Concern with worship in the LWF has been periodic. The original structure had a Commission on Liturgy as one of its five study commissions. Its major report, *Basic Principles for the Organization of the Main Worship Service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (1958), breathed the spirit of the recovery phase of the liturgical movement. After the Minneapolis Assembly, worship was integrated into the Commission on Theology, a typical Lutheran thing to do. After Helsinki (1963) a separate commission for Worship and Spiritual Life was formed that included members from the “Third World,” and the issue of “liturgical indigenization” was put on the agenda. From Evian (1970) to Dar es Salaam (1977) nothing was done in worship except the ill-fated attempt at a new lectionary mentioned above. Work in worship resumed in 1978 under the direction of a co-opted staff person from Lutheran World Ministries in New York, and it grew into a desk in the Department of Studies in 1982. That desk was phased out two years later, and no work was done until after Curitiba (1990) when a desk for Worship and Congregational Life was established in the Department for Theology and Studies. That desk survived the 1997 Hong Kong

the list of projects. Already in 1978 an international consultation had taken a first step with its statement, "The Identity of the Church and the Nature and Function of Worship."⁸ Then in 1981 a consultation for pastors and theologians from Asia and Africa was held at the Tantur Center in Israel that dealt with "The Significance of the Jewish Heritage for the Task of Contextualization." The "Tantur Report on Worship" was published together with the "Northfield Statement on Worship" in *Worship Among Lutherans* (Geneva, 1983).

The third section of the "Northfield Statement," "Christian Worship in Its Cultural Context," set the issue of contextualization in the dialectic between "authentic" and "relevant." It noted that the context of worship includes not only those presently involved, but "all the saints of God, past and present." "Authenticity," it goes on, "preserves a community's catholicity and enables its universality. Christian worship should be recognizable as such by any Christian from anywhere" (§19). But it continues:

The universal character of the Church is not well expressed by an artificial liturgical culture or language which would be the same everywhere. The insistence of the Reformers on worship in the language of the people testifies to that. Rather the universality of the Church requires it to be "at home" in all places and with all cultures. For the sake of effective witness, therefore, the task of contextualization is unavoidable. A study of the many cultural transitions in the history of all the liturgical traditions should encourage today's Christians to make their own contributions ... (§23).

When she was appointed to the LWF desk on Worship and Congregational Life in 1990, Anita Stauffer made worship and culture the centerpiece of her program, building on previous work but giving the issue expert attention. She assembled an international, interdisciplinary team to carry out the multiyear program. It began in 1993 with biblical and historical foundations, giving special attention to how worship was contextualized in the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures of the day. It then moved to explore contemporary issues and questions, employing case studies from various parts of the world. Then regional study teams identified issues needing attention, and their findings were the basis for a third session of the study group in 1996. Papers and statements from the

Assembly. See J.H. Schjørring, et al., eds., *From Federation to Communion. The History of the Lutheran World Federation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 206ff.

⁸Published in *A Lutheran Agenda for Worship* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1979).

first two phases have become important contributions to the discussion internationally.⁹ Work continues, with a final consultation scheduled for Chicago in May of this year [1998]. Ecumenical participants have been involved from the beginning, and the study has been coordinated with another study carried out under the auspices of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

It is difficult in such a presentation as this to summarize the results of the study thus far. The *Cartigny Statement* (1993), set the stage:

the Christian assembly for worship, with its music and its spatial environment, stands at the intersection of Christian faith and cultural patterns. Out of this complex interplay of Christianity and culture, three areas for consideration readily become apparent—the cultural, the countercultural, and the transcultural ... Therefore, the task of relating worship and culture is ultimately concerned with finding the balance between relevance and authenticity, between particularity and universality, while avoiding eclecticism and/or syncretism. While it is clear that each church in its cultural context will need to ask these questions for itself and find answers appropriate to its own situation, it is also clear that this inquiry will require each church to attend to the experiences of the other churches and to the treasures of other cultures (§3.2, 3.6).

At the Hong Kong session in 1994, Gordon Lathrop, who together with Anscar Chupungco is a resource person for the study, put forward a series of “critical principles” for evaluating the liturgical use of a cultural symbol:

1. Is this a strong and real symbol or complex of symbols with a deep social resonance? Does it carry hope and human identity in its use?
2. Does it accord with the Christian doctrines of creation, sin, and justification? Or, rather, can it be subverted to serve them?
3. Does it accord with the baptismal dignity of the people of God? Is it capable of being genuinely and graciously communal?
4. Set next to the biblical Word, does it illuminate God’s gracious, saving purpose? Is it best exercised as a verbal symbol?
5. Can it serve and sing around the central signs of Christ, around Word and sacrament used especially on Sunday? With its use, are Word and sacrament still *central*, more clearly and locally *central*?¹⁰

⁹See Stauffer, *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*, and Stauffer, *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity*. Both volumes have also appeared in French, German and Spanish. The latter volume contains a fine bibliography on worship and culture.

¹⁰From Stauffer, *Worship and Culture in Dialogue*, 149.

The *Nairobi Statement* (1996) builds on the *Cartigny Statement* but reflects the regional research that took place in the meantime. Under the heading, “Worship as Transcultural,” it describes a “core” of elements which are shared across cultures and which express the transcultural unity of the church. It is this core which provides “a solid basis for authentic contextualization” (§2.1–2.3).

Contextualization is seen as “a necessary task for the Church’s mission in the world, so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures.” The preferred method is “dynamic equivalence” which

involves re-expressing components of Christian worship with something from a local culture that has an equal meaning, value and function. Dynamic equivalence goes far beyond mere translation; it involves understanding the fundamental meanings both of elements of worship and of the local culture, and enabling the meanings and actions of worship to be ‘encoded’ and re-expressed in the language of local culture (§3.1–3.2).

Worship is also described as “countercultural” and as “cross-cultural.” In the latter instance, when elements of one culture are used in another to express the fundamental unity of the church, they should be used with understanding and respect. Cross-cultural worship “is especially needed in multicultural congregations and member churches [of the LWF]” (§5.1–5.2).

The *Ditchingham Statement* (1994)¹¹ emanated from a worship consultation under the auspices of Faith and Order (WCC) that has already been mentioned. Its purpose was broader than the LWF study project, since it reinstated worship as a programmatic concern of Faith and Order after some years of benign neglect. But Ditchingham does contain a major section on the inculturation of worship that reflects differences between a mono-confessional (LWF) and a multi-confessional (WCC) approach. Still, the Ditchingham Statement is quite compatible with the findings of the LWF studies.

Initially the LWF studies on worship and culture were undertaken with the primary purpose of giving Lutheran churches born of missionary endeavors, especially those in Africa and Asia, *permission* to employ elements of their own cultures in worship, and to encourage them to do so. For a host of reasons, major resistance to this shift often comes from the local Christians themselves, so they must be challenged—not dictated to—by the larger Christian community so that the gospel may take root in

¹¹In Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, ed., *So We Believe, So We Pray*, Faith and Order Paper 171 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995).

local soil, and not remain a hothouse plant. Here the need for contextualization/inculturation is quite clear.

Things are not so clear in Europe and North America. It seems to me that the ELCA faces four problem areas in relating worship to culture. The first is the ongoing need to respond to an ever-evolving cultural context. But is there *an* American culture today? Our multicultural context is not only the coming together of several ethnic cultures; it is also a hodgepodge of age cultures. Not only that, but due to the boon of audio and visual recording, all musical cultures of the past are omnipresent. Contextualization, therefore, is not only a problem in Africa and Asia; it is an ongoing problem in this country, too. In a way it is a more complex problem for us.

Second, we have an increasing number of bicultural and multicultural congregations, requiring some sort of melding of two cultural contexts. I have more questions than answers. Is the so-called “Anglo culture” monolithic? Let us not forget that the Lutheran mergers of the 1960s were bicultural at least! Is even the African-American culture monolithic? Working with both Africans and African-Americans in Geneva, I noticed marked cultural differences between them. Christian communities ought to be able to get beyond “politically correct” positions on the part of both groups in order to deal with the issue at the depth it deserves.

Third, there’s the question of how we reflect culturally the fact that Christianity is a global religion. It will mean reading from the same scriptures, sharing the same basic liturgical tradition (itself a universal melding)—in other words, using the authentic core. And we will more and more embellish that by sprinkling our own cultural adaptations with music or even texts from other cultural traditions. Our hymnals and service books are increasingly full of African and Asian items. On occasions such as Pentecost or when cross-national partnerships (sister congregations or synods) are celebrated, this borrowing may be quite prominent.

Finally, in places where multiculturalism includes multilingual situations, a way has to be found to accommodate that. Close to 50% of the members of our English-speaking Lutheran congregation in Geneva were people from various parts of the world who had English as a second language. I imagine that situation is rare in the ELCA.

What Next?

Culture. Periodically we need to update liturgical texts so they do not function as foreign bodies in today's culture. But the more specific language challenge at the moment targets so-called sexist language, and that challenge involves not only the issue of inclusive language but also how God is addressed. Likely it is a more difficult problem in the English-speaking sphere than in other language areas. We, all of us, need to keep working at it and not try to palm it off on "the feminists" to solve. Since we are dealing with the liturgical texts themselves—and many are directly quoted from scripture—the test of authenticity must be applied quite rigorously. Until we reach a solution to this language issue, it will not be possible to do any meaningful revision of our liturgy.

Bicultural and multicultural situations are likely to increase as the ELCA becomes more and more an "American" church. Because of our confessional allegiance to the authentic core of Christian worship, changes will come largely in the areas of music and hymnody, styles of preaching, and modes of ritual behavior. Regarding hymnody, an effort to offer pieces from a variety of American cultures was made already in the LBW. It has been accelerated in *With One Voice* (WOV) and other supplemental publications. That is good and necessary, and over time it can result in hymns in languages other than one's own being understood and becoming much loved. But I would like to register two caveats. In both cases I refer to ongoing contexts of worship in congregations or institutions, not to special ecumenical or international celebrations.

The first caveat is an observation born of my years in multilingual situations in Geneva and elsewhere. If worship consists of a steady diet of new items in languages I do not understand, even if I can sing them phonically, I will be undernourished. I have been browbeaten by several well-intentioned song leaders in LWF or WCC gatherings who say, "Sing! Don't worry about the words. They don't matter." But in worship the words *do* matter. And congregations need a richer diet of song than incessant ejaculations of praise and simple exhortations to follow Jesus. At the deepest level, worshipers are short-changed if one language in a multilingual situation is not accorded predominance. It is better to worship in one's second language using texts that reflect mature Christianity than constantly to be subject to multilingual pabulum.

Second, a very important issue in inculturation is discerning and holding fast to the authentic core that ecumenical documents call the *Ordo*.

Almost always *Ordo* has to do with the Jewish roots of Christian worship. *Ordo* is the operational term used in the fine introduction to WOV, and I have no quarrel with it. My quarrel is rather with those who “have no more than an itch to produce something novel,”¹² to borrow a phrase from Luther.

These people are quite prepared to jettison the Western Mass, clothing the *Ordo* with a hodgepodge of bits and pieces that strike their fancy. They have been misled into thinking that Luther’s *Deutsche Messe* is a precedent for what they do. I believe that our Lutheran ethos requires us to preserve and hand on a tradition that has been entrusted to us, a tradition that is not merely theological. Our vaunted liturgical freedom all too often has become freedom *from* our liturgical tradition. I think our situation in North America carries with it different cultural obligations from the situation, say, in Africa.

Americans cannot say that the liturgical and musical culture developed in Europe is alien to our culture. Our forebears brought it with them and transplanted it here. If we ignore it, we impoverish ourselves and others. We are rooted religiously and culturally in the Western Mass, and that means more than observing the *Ordo*. There should be permission occasionally to sing another hymn of praise than the *Gloria in excelsis*. But when the *Gloria* is jettisoned completely—not even sung at a Christmas Eucharist—something is wrong. Similarly, our congregations have a cultural obligation to preserve the best of our German and Scandinavian heritage in hymnody. Not being concerned about this or even being unaware of it is symptomatic of our so-called postmodern society. The role of liturgy in such a society has most recently been discussed penetratingly by Frank Senn in the epilogue to his *Christian Worship*.¹³ Our future efforts at contextualization—and they are necessary efforts—must not overlook our obligation to pass on the Lutheran variety of catholic tradition in its fullness. Especially in the area of music, it is one of the greatest gifts we have to offer others.

The cultural challenge facing American Christians in the postmodern era is much greater than contextualization or multicultural sharing. It is to preserve the historical connectedness of the church back over millennia to God’s mighty acts in the past, but understood in terms of the future

¹²Preface to the German Mass and Order of Service (1526), in *Luther’s Works*, vol. 53, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 61.

¹³Frank Senn, *Christian Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 693 ff.

which God has already established in Christ. It requires re-imagining the church eschatologically. And that runs head-on into present cultural trends, requiring the church to emphasize and build on its countercultural heritage. Though it cannot and should not eschew the culture entirely, the church's mission today, as always, is to transform the culture by proclaiming and embodying in worship the coming reign of God.

Ecumenical. First of all, we dare not reverse our ecumenical commitment in liturgical reform. If anything, we must intensify it. We must find better ways of making it clear to people that the liturgical tradition is an ecumenical treasure that is not the property of any confessional group. The closer reforms get to the core or *Ordo*, the truer this is. Our efforts must include heightening people's awareness of the great consensus evidenced by our liturgical books. Even where eucharistic hospitality cannot be extended or accepted, we need to experience the worship of others and they need to experience ours. Success here will, more than anything else, create a positive climate for ecumenical reception; it may even result in lobbying for it. The logic is simple: if our worship is so much alike, what necessitates our separation at the altar? Is what separates us so powerful that we in practice do not recognize the baptismal rights of others?

Second, the ELCA has scheduled an event in November to begin the process of defining goals for the next major revision of our liturgical and musical heritage. That is right and salutary. Since I have made this point publicly and in print before, you will not be surprised by my judgment that the LBW will be the last Lutheran service book in North America.

Anglicans and Lutherans worldwide should consolidate their liturgical traditions and expertise in a new generation of service books. Largely through historical accidents the two traditions became separated, and it is high time to get them back together. This work should be done with the participation of Roman Catholics, even though the present state of progress toward church unity would likely exclude them officially from working on a common service book with churches with which they are not in full communion. Inviting their participation would demonstrate our conviction that the tradition we are dealing with is not only ours, but that it is not just theirs either. To the degree that other Christian world communions are interested in such an endeavor, they should be welcomed warmly.

The English-speaking group of Anglican and Lutheran churches should take the lead in this project both because of the common language and because they already have much experience in cooperation. It is, of

course, ironic, that European Anglicans and Lutherans who are separated by language already have declared either “full communion” via the *Provo Declaration* or pulpit and altar fellowship via the *Meissen Agreement*, while the ELCA is still only in what one could call pulpit and altar fellowship with the Episcopal Church. Nevertheless, in the hope that the 1999 Churchwide Assembly will act in a manner consistent with actions it took prior to 1997, the ELCA, together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, would be in a position to invite North American Anglicans to mark the new millenium with work toward a common service book. Under the auspices of the Anglican Consultative Council and the LWF, the work could eventually be expanded to include Anglicans and Lutherans in Great Britain and Ireland and, from that base, Lutherans in the Nordic Countries and mainland Europe. The product of this effort would provide models for new Anglican-Lutheran liturgical books in other parts of the world.

Full Roman Catholic participation would mean that ground would be prepared for that day when the Roman Catholic Church finds it possible to join together with evangelical catholics everywhere in common liturgical books. That, of course, awaits some sort of solution to the “Petrine problem,” a problem which may be resolved sooner than one may think.¹⁴

Before we try to initiate the ecumenical task in liturgy that I believe we Lutherans in North America are uniquely positioned to undertake, we need to clarify our own liturgical commitment. We cannot expect other Christian world communions, especially the more “catholic ones,” to deal seriously with us only on the basis of our theological stance. On that point, at least officially, we have few worries. But we must also present a clear profile in liturgy and ministry. The agreement on *interim eucharistic sharing* illustrates this. In most of the rest of the Lutheran world, pastors and congregations are not at liberty to do whatever they please in worship. Service books are authorized by democratic process, but once authorized, they are to be followed. The murky liturgical situation in the ELCA badly needs clarification, and standards, once they are commonly arrived at, must be upheld. Otherwise we are no church but a mess of individualist/congregationalist pottage contained only by formal allegiance to a set of sixteenth-century documents. As theological confessions go, they have served well, but they are no longer enough. In my view, we are in rather desperate need of additional kinds of apostolic cement.

¹⁴See, for example, §95–96 of the encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) and the discussion it has triggered.

On the other hand, North America could still be the land of ecclesial opportunity, poised as it is between the brittle churches of Europe and the burgeoning churches of the “third world.” Americans have the advantage of sharing two millennia of being church with our European sisters and brothers without being captive to that history. And we share an experience of a geographically expanding church, independent of the state, which has some parallels with those churches more recently planted by missionaries. To fulfill this possible destiny, however, we will need to shed our dreadful myopia and, in all humility, beg the guidance of the Holy Spirit in offering ourselves in Christ to God’s purpose for the whole church and therefore for the whole world.