

Maranatha Baptist Seminary

MARTIN LUTHER'S THOUGHTS ON MUSIC - WITH APPLICATION FOR TODAY

A Report

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Course
GCM5100L Philosophy Of Music

by

Jared H. Mielke

January 2017

Martin Luther, the great Reformer, forever changed the world. People of all denominations have been influenced by his thinking. He disagreed with the Catholic Church on more than just doctrine. Even his music philosophy differed from the Catholic Church. Martin Luther understood the impact of hymns in teaching, the role of music in training, and the power of music in worship. The church of today would do well to study his thoughts on music and make application of his ideas in contemporary worship.

Hymns Teach

Luther believed that hymns teach and that the teaching must align with Biblical truths. Luther believed that the words teach doctrines.¹ Since only the Bible can produce faith, he believed in the importance of having hymns that are Scripturally based.² Luther was quite adamant that the texts of the music used in worship be based on the Bible. He did not tolerate Catholic doctrines taught through music. Luther believed that hymns must “preach the Word of God and bring it near to the people” instead of communicating one’s own emotions or ideas.³ Luther saw the power of combining music with text, and he wanted to make sure that the people heard truths from the Bible in their songs of worship. Melanchthon described Luther as wanting hymns “to *preach* the word of God”

1. John Fraiser Rev., “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther” (video of lecture, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, LaGrange, Kentucky, August 22, 2012), accessed January 9, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3Cdz0x_uVY.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

to the people in the church building.⁴ The hymns were sermons.⁵ They were not simply sentimental time-filling hymns. In churches today, it would be wise to think of Christian music as preaching the Bible to the singer and to those who listen. This mindset would be more Biblical than focusing solely on being concerned that the people feel good or that lots of people want to come hear the music.

Luther believed that people needed hymns in their language. Martin Luther wrote a letter to Georg Spalatin. In the letter he said, “Following the example of the prophets and fathers of the church, I intend to make vernacular psalms for the people, that is, spiritual songs so that the Word of God even by means of song may live among the people.”⁶ Luther’s desire to place the texts of the music in the language understood by the people makes sense because of the power of the words and because a person cannot worship if not understanding what is said. This idea was unlike the Catholic Church’s philosophy of using Latin in worship services. Luther faced the problem that there were few if any hymn texts in German, and Luther was saddened that there were not many people able to write new texts for the congregational hymns.⁷ In 1523 he said, “Poets are wanting among us, or not yet known, who could compose evangelical and spiritual songs,

4. Gracia Grindal, “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther’s Hymns: Hymnody Then and Now,” *Word and World* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 178-87, accessed January 10, 2017, https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/26-2_Renewing_Worship/26-2_Grindal.pdf.

5. Ibid.

6. Robin Leaver, “Elisabeth Creutziger, the Magdeburg Enchiridion, 1536 and Reformation Theology,” Pitts Theology Library, 1995, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://pitts.emory.edu/collections/digitalcollections/lectures/leaver-kessler.cfm>.

7. Grindal, “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther’s Hymns,” 178.

as Paul calls them, worthy to be used in the church of God.”⁸ Because of having to create church music for the German language, Luther took some of the liturgical songs that the people knew well, and he translated the Latin text into German and adjusted the tunes as needed.⁹

Luther made sure that the gospel was well represented in the music of the church. “Martin Luther’s hymns preached the gospel. Their rhetorical device was downward, from God to us. Changing liturgical emphases have altered the direction in many contemporary communion hymns in which we now address God. The change is not without major theological significance.”¹⁰ Many of today’s church music songs are man-centered instead of God-centered. Shifting the focus back to God would be helpful for the modern church’s worshipping of God.

Luther realized the power of music to help in the Christian’s spiritual walk. Luther said that music is to be used with attacking Satan and not just to be used because it is “tradition.”¹¹ Because of the power of Christian music to help Christians in spiritual warfare, Luther wrote,

We know that music, too, is odious and unbearable to the demons. Indeed I plainly judge, and do not hesitate to affirm, that except for theology there is no art that could be put on the same level with music, since except for theology [music] alone produces what otherwise only theology can do, namely a calm and joyful disposition. Manifest proof [of this is the fact] that the devil, the creator of

8. Ibid., 178-179.

9. Charles Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 93.

10. Grindal, “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther’s Hymns,” 178.

11. Fraiser, “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther.”

saddening cares and disquieting worries, takes flight at the sound of music almost as he takes flight at the word of theology.”¹²

He also wrote hymns for use outside of the church. One hymn in particular he wrote with the intended purpose of being led by the father in devotional use with his family; the text was based on the Apostle’s Creed.¹³ Luther also set the Lord’s Prayer to music.¹⁴ Modern Christians should be encouraged to use hymns and Christian music outside of church for their personal and family devotions.

Besides just teaching Biblical doctrine, Luther also used music to teach truths about Lutheran martyrs. Luther’s first and “most unique hymn” entitled *A New Song Shall Now Be Begun*, was written after the first two martyrs of the Lutheran reformation were burned.¹⁵ Writing this hymn was an excellent idea, for it helped allow the news of the martyrs’ death be heard far and near and to be delivered in honor of the martyrs instead of the news being twisted and modified to fit an agenda of the Lutheran enemies.¹⁶

Martin Luther knew that children can learn from hymns. He believed that hymns could teach doctrine, and that children needed hymns to help with their learning because

12. Janet Muth, “Music Education That’s Needed in the Church,” *Issues in Christian Education* 42, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 29, accessed January 9, 2017, <https://www.cune.edu/resources/docs/Issues/ISSUES-2008-42-2-fall.pdf>.

13. Fraiser, “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther.”

14. Leaver, “Magdeburg Enchiridion, 1536 and Reformation Theology.”

15. Fraiser, “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther.”

16. Ibid.

sermons alone were not enough.¹⁷ Many churches today have somehow adopted the idea that children can only handle simple Sunday school choruses. With careful presentation and teaching of quality hymns to children, numerous children's workers in churches would soon realize the usefulness and impact hymn teaching can have on children's understanding of Biblical truth. Children are more capable of understanding truths than many adults recognize. Although the presentation of the hymns would need to be at a child's level, the children do not need to just be babied with choruses.

Luther also believed that good music created better people and that good music would shape their desires. Because of this, he knew it was important to teach music to the youth in order for them to "have something whereby [the youth] might be weaned from the love ballads and ... [sensual] songs and, instead of these, learn something beneficial and take up the good with relish."¹⁸ From Luther's example, today's church can learn the importance of teaching hymns and Christian music to children. Not only will it increase the doctrinal understanding of the young people, but it will help shape their musical senses and offer them some music of quality instead of being drawn to sinful, sensual songs. In contrast to many lyrics today in church worship that are not based on the Bible, a return to hymns and Christian songs based on the Bible would be helpful for the spiritual life of the church. Even many of the old hymns do not have Biblical words, and, therefore, those hymns should be discontinued from the repertoire of worship music.

17. Ibid.

18. Scott Aniol, *Worship in Song: A Biblical Approach to Music and Worship* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009), 131.

Both old and new worship music needs to be shifted in order to weed out the hymns and song with unbiblical texts.

Luther believed that God meant for Christians to “gladly and willingly sing and speak about it [the Gospel] so that others also may come and hear it.”¹⁹ Because of Christ’s love for us, we should want to sing to God and about God. The singing of Paul and Silas in the prison is an example of Christians who were suffering yet were still joyfully singing about God. The singing drew the unbelieving prisoners who might have otherwise escaped during the earthquake. Paul and Silas showed that singing can be carried outside of the church. Maybe more unbelievers would be drawn to Christ if Christians cheerfully sang while working outside in the yard or while running errands.

Musical Training

Luther was musical, and he saw the importance of music and training in music. God had gifted Martin Luther with gifts in music. He played the lute, and he loved to use it when writing music besides playing for personal enjoyment or for his friends.²⁰ The lute was often connected with the “peasantry.”²¹ Therefore Luther’s playing of the lute was significant because he thought that music “belonged” to everybody and was not just for the rich or solely for church use.²² Besides playing the lute, Luther played the flute

19. Gracia Grindal, “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther’s Hymns,” 178.

20. Fraiser, “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther.”

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

and was a singer and composer.²³ Luther was a great musician and received much training in music theory. He was acknowledged as gifted among his peers.²⁴

Instead of viewing music as being from man, Luther rightfully viewed music as being a gift from God. He therefore had a high regard for music. In the preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae iucundae* ("Delightful Symphonies," 1538), Luther wrote, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise."²⁵ Further in the preface, he wrote, "The gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words."²⁶ Luther believed that God created music, and that music was not merely fashioned by man. Because music was a gift from God, he endeavored to use music for God's glory. Today, the church ought to cherish music because music comes from God. As such, music has great strength, and God is pleased when the church serves God through the means of music.²⁷

Luther understood that not everyone has the same types of gifts or even the same level within each gift. Luther mentioned that God distributes varying gifts, and within the

23. Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture: Combined Volume*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 165.

24. Fraiser, "A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther."

25. Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 168.

26. Ibid.

27. Fraiser, "A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther."

gift of music God gives differing levels of ability.²⁸ Luther said that when a person is both gifted and trained in music, “it is possible to taste with wonder (yet not to comprehend) God’s absolute and perfect wisdom in his wondrous work of music.”²⁹ Luther knew that a musician with talent who also received musical training should create music for God’s honor. He further believed that church services should only use music written by “fine musicians” and “learned people.”³⁰ Luther viewed music and words as gifts from God to worship God.³¹ The contemporary church would do well to heed Luther’s advice of striving to use the best music in church.³²

Because Luther believed music was God’s present to man, he believed that music must be used as part of worship in church, unlike Calvin who held that only *a capella* singing of Psalms should be allowed in church.³³ Of the many leaders in the Reformation, Martin Luther was the solitary leader to view music as vital enough in worship that he was willing to give music “his personal attention and direction.”³⁴ During a time when several churches removed their organs, Luther and his followers helped to keep and promote the demand and use of organs in churches. Whereas in many places the organ

28. Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 168.

29. Ibid.

30. Scott Aniol, *Worship in Song: A Biblical Approach to Music and Worship* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009), 182.

31. Ibid., 129

32. Ibid., 182

33. Fraiser, “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther.”

34. Charles Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music*, 92.

was being shunned or even destroyed, organ music thrived in Lutheran churches.³⁵ Luther did not agree with the idea of removing organ music and organs from churches. He said, “I am not satisfied with him who despises [instrumental] music, as all fanatics do.”³⁶ Luther was especially not tolerant of those who did not like music or were unmoved when hearing music. When referring to beautiful music as multiple voices sounding together in polyphony, Luther said, “But any who remain unaffected are unmusical indeed and deserve to hear ... the music of the pigs.”³⁷ The application for today is that all Christians should sing at least in the congregation. Even those who are unable to carry a tune should sing with the congregational worship. Ephesians 5:19-20 and Colossians 3:16 give the mandate for all believers to sing, with no exception clause.

Martin Luther had high demands on pastors knowing music. Because of music’s huge connection to shaping and training people’s emotions and the responsibility of pastors to lead and train their congregations, Luther believed in the importance of having pastors be educated in music. He did not think pastors should be ordained unless they had received music teaching, and he also thought it was dreadful for people to “want to be theologians when they cannot even sing.”³⁸ Although having pastors that can sing on pitch would be beneficial for churches, there is no Bible verse that lists singing on key as a requirement for a pastor. However, because music shapes the emotions, pastors today

35. Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 95.

36. Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 167.

37. *Ibid.*, 168

38. Scott Aniol, *Worship in Song: A Biblical Approach to Music and Worship* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009), 169.

need to be trained in music. Having pastors be trained and knowledgeable in music would help cause more churches today to use Biblical music.³⁹ The pastors would also then be able to help shape the emotions of the people and produce a desire for better music.⁴⁰ Churches should encourage their leadership to attend music seminars and to read books on music so that the pastors can be knowledgeable on making Biblical music choices. Pastors should also allow for times throughout the year when either the pastor or a guest speaker teaches about music and the Bible.

Power of Music

Music is powerful and adds to worship. Luther agreed with Pythagorean's ideas that music which connects to the mathematical connection will "be beautiful and will give pleasure to the observer."⁴¹ Luther, however, disagreed with Pythagorean in that Luther believed that music was created by God. Luther knew that music added power to the words. He knew that just words did not have the power of "emotional enrichment" as when combined with music.⁴² He knew that music was necessary "to encourage true piety and religious fervor."⁴³ Luther understood that "notes bring the text to life."⁴⁴ Using the Bible to decipher Platonic ideas, Luther believed that "music can enhance the emotions

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., 104

42. Ibid., 129

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

and ennoble the soul,...[and] when united with sound theology [music can] – provide adequate means for expressing right piety for God.”⁴⁵ With making application for today, churches should be careful what kind of music they connect with the lyrics because the music can powerfully affect the emotion of the hymn or song. May the music be evaluated so as to enhance a focus on God instead of focusing of human pleasures.

Luther has been famous for asking the question, “Why should the devil have all the good music?”⁴⁶ Sadly, this question has been used by Christian rock musicians to validate their idea of using the world’s music for Christian purposes. However, Luther meant that the devil/Catholic church should not have all the good composers.⁴⁷ Luther admired the music of Heinrich Isaac and Josquin Des Pres, but they were Catholic.⁴⁸ Luther was stating his desire that Lutheran musicians be of the same quality of talented musicians as the Catholic musicians.

Luther made a huge impact on worship music through his establishment of congregational singing. He desired for people to be actively involved in the worship at church. He was not the instigator of the novel idea of congregational participation in worship, for the idea used to be practiced in church before being slowly relegated away from the ordinary members.⁴⁹ Starting congregational singing was not a brand new idea

45. Ibid.

46. Townsend Rick Dr., “Jared’s Class Notes for Advanced Aural Skills’ Discussion On Aesthetics” (lecture, Maranatha Baptist University, Watertown, WI, February 12, 2014).

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music*, 92.

of Luther, for he had learned of the Hussites who used congregational singing.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, more than anyone else, Luther has done more to make “hymn singing ... the principal means of expression” in church.⁵¹ Instead of people singing non-liturgical religious music after the Mass, as was sometimes done on certain days in the church calendar, Luther started having the congregation sing hymns during “the reformed Mass.”⁵² Martin Luther knew the importance of having people worship corporately together in song. Just like he firmly believed that every person in the church should be able to have the Bible in their own language, he also wanted “the music of the church to be distinctly congregational in nature.”⁵³ Luther desired the music used in church to be in the “vernacular” and to be “text-driven.” To accomplish this goal, Luther wanted new texts to be written in German and for new tunes to be created in the “church’s traditional musical forms.”⁵⁴ He understood that the music helped the people learn and remember the doctrines of the Bible.⁵⁵ To accomplish this goal, “Luther wanted hymns that were simple enough so the people could understand them, be moved by them, and be brought

50. Ibid.

51. Vincent Lenti, “The Earliest Lutheran Hymn Tradition as Illustrated by Two Classic Sixteenth-Century German Chorales,” *The Hymn* 50, no. 2 (April 1999): 17, accessed January 10, 2017, http://www.hymnary.org/files/articles/Lenti,%20The%20Earliest%20Lutheran%20Hymn%20Tradition_0.pdf.

52. Ibid.

53. Aniol, *Worship in Song*, 64.

54. Scott Aniol, “The Hymnody of the Christian Church,” Religious Affections Ministries (blog), September 1, 2010, accessed January 10, 2017, <http://religiousaffections.org/articles/hymnody/reformation-hymns/>.

55. Grindal, “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther’s Hymns,” 179

to faith by them”⁵⁶ Though Luther did not want to downgrade the Gospel, he wanted to stay away from terminology that was not understandable and thereby not edifying for the people. He saw the crucial need “to avoid new-fangled, fancied words and to use expressions simple and common enough for the people to understand, yet pure and fitting.”⁵⁷ For churches today, it is wise to not use texts of music that are filled with complicated and unknown words. If the text is difficult to discern the meaning, either the hymn or song should be dropped, or the song leader should explain the text for the audience. God commands us to “sing with the understanding.”⁵⁸

Luther used the music of the people. Unlike today’s culture, in the time of Luther there was no division between sacred and secular “in terms of conventional use.”⁵⁹ The lack of division between sacred and secular was because of the Catholic Church’s control over every aspect of life and worship. This meant “the Church most significantly influenced folk culture, not visa [*sic*] versa.”⁶⁰ The folk culture was shaped by the church instead of the church being shaped by the folk culture.⁶¹ For this reason, the secular

56. Ibid., 180

57. Grindal, “The Rhetoric of Martin Luther’s Hymns,” 179.

58. 1 Cor. 14:15 (Authorized Version).

59. Scott Aniol, “Did Luther Use Tunes from Love Songs?,” *Religious Affections Ministries* (blog), October 27, 2011, accessed January 10, 2017, <http://religiousaffections.org/articles/articles-on-culture/did-luther-use-tunes-from-love-songs/>.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

music was very similar to the church's music.⁶² Edwin Liemohn described the sacred/secular connection as "Those who taught and those who studied [music] were associated with the work of the church, and many melodies written for secular texts were produced by the same men who wrote melodies for church use."⁶³

Luther also carried over some of the musical traditions from the Catholic Church. He did use some of the inherited sacred tunes from the Catholic Church and combined the tunes with a translated text (the ones that were Biblically accurate). He realized, however, that doing so would not have a pleasant sound or be as beneficial as using the German language for the text. He said that "Both the text and notes, accent, melody, and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection; otherwise all of it becomes an imitation, in the manner of apes."⁶⁴ This belief led to the creation of a new type of church music. "Luther's genius was combining the best sophisticated art music with accessible folk music forms. The result was the Lutheran chorale, a congregational music form that was both good and appealing."⁶⁵ Even within this new genre of music, Luther was not against polyphony in the hymn tunes, unlike some other reformers.⁶⁶ Luther enjoyed the beauty of polyphonic music, and he said, "We marvel when we hear music in which one voice sings a simple melody, while three, four, or five other voices play and trip heartily around it and adorn the tune wonderfully with

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Aniol, *Worship in Song*, 64-65.

65. Ibid.

66. Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 167.

artistic musical effect, thus reminding us of a heavenly dance where all meet in a spirit of friendliness, caress, and embrace.”⁶⁷ Luther wisely created the chorale by using a blend of elements between the *high art* forms which had been predominantly used in the Catholic Church and the “debased forms of folk art” to make a new church music form that was easily learnable even for the nonmusical person but still possessed quality and God-honoring elements of music.⁶⁸ He “took the best of high culture and combined it with the best of folk culture” to make it attainable for people in the congregation.⁶⁹ For the modern church, this practice of combining quality music with music of today is very difficult because the secular music of the culture is no longer saturated under the church’s influence. Therefore, Luther’s practice of using the people’s music is quite different from the modern approach of using rock music for worship.

Even in his creation of “a new interaction between church music and culture” Luther was selective in how he used folk music.⁷⁰ Luther was wise and very selective in using music of the culture for hymns. He did not use just any and all forms of music.⁷¹ Even though there were lots of “dance and drinking songs” available, he did not use those songs because he believed “those [tunes] with rhythms too intense for use in the

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Aniol, *Worship in Song*, 66.

70. Ibid., 64-65.

71. Ibid., 65.

church.”⁷² Robert Harrell explained that in Luther’s hymns, “the rhythmic basis of the chorales lies in the word accents instead of dance rhythms.”⁷³ Ulrich Leupold said, “He [Luther] never considered music a mere tool that could be employed regardless of its original association but was careful to match text and tune, so that each text would have its own proper tune and so that both would complement each other.”⁷⁴ Luther did not simply use every secular tune possible. He stayed clear from music “that stimulated the base passions.”⁷⁵ In one case where Luther used a complete secular tune for one of his hymns, he later removed the tune and used a different tune due to being “embarrassed to hear the tune of his Christmas hymn sung in inns and dance halls”⁷⁶

Sadly, there is a commonly held idea that Martin Luther used a bar tune for *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. This myth has been used to justify using the world’s secular music styles for Christian music. Contrary to the popular myth, Luther composed the tune *Ein’ Feste Burg ist unser Gott* known in English as *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.⁷⁷ The tune did not come from a bar. The tune was a “bar form,” but that does not mean it came from a bar.⁷⁸ Bar form had nothing to do with the location of the tune, for it described the musical structure or format of the tune. “Bar form was a common musical

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Aniol, “The Hymnody of the Christian Church.”

76. Ibid.

77. Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music*, 93

78. Aniol, “The Hymnody of the Christian Church.”

form that was nurtured in the Church. It is a form consisting of two identical musical lines followed by a contrasting section: AAB.”⁷⁹ The church needs to be aware that the bar form for *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* involves the musical phrases and does not mean the tune came from a bar. This knowledge will help answer critics who wish to use the world’s music for church. Another interesting fact about *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* is that the text is a paraphrase of Psalm 46.⁸⁰ A chorus has also been written for the hymn, but it destroys the flow of thought in the hymn.⁸¹

Because Luther wanted “vernacular church music” he used “more accessible forms with which common worshipers could more easily participate.”⁸² However, as seen above, Luther did not simply use every secular tune as the people knew it. Instead, he sorted out sinful tunes and adjusted some tunes. His practice of using secular tunes is different than today’s idea of using rock music for Christian text, because rock music is a genre that originated from secular culture with ideas of rebellion and sensuality built into the music.

God is not against new songs. Actually, the Bible calls for creating new songs.⁸³ The church today should prayerfully consider how to write new songs with Biblical text and God-honoring music, and the church should continue to use already established

79. Ibid.

80. Fraiser, “A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther.”

81. Ibid.

82. Aniol, “Did Luther Use Tunes from Love Songs?.”

83. Psalm 33:3 and Revelation 5:9.

hymns that meet those qualifications. The next concept for the modern church to consider is whether or not the wording or poetry of the music is understandable. If the congregation does not understand what they are singing, then they cannot be blessed or drawn to worship God. Therefore, the hymn or chorus should either be replaced with something that is understandable, or the song leader should take time to explain the text's meaning. In desiring to understand the text, the church should not succumb to using soupy, shallow texts. The congregation should be taught to exercise their brain and to grow in the ability to understand text. Some occasional archaic wording can be beneficial and help remind the congregation that they are building off of a tradition of many other Christians before them.⁸⁴ Overall, the church and the individual members need to be pursuing God and desiring to know His will about music. Scott Aniol placed high importance on being willing to obey and follow God before one will be able to discern what kind of music one should listen to. "If you are not actively pursuing sanctification; if you are not daily in God's Word, striving to know His mind and think His thoughts; if you are not willing to give up what might be legitimately your right, then you cannot expect to discern what music styles are pleasing to the Lord."⁸⁵

With current new music and even with well-established music from the past, the modern church needs to exercise discernment over which hymns or songs it will use in worship. There are plenty of people who are not gifted writers of music or text but yet

84. John M. Frame, *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 1997), 19.

85. Aniol, *Worship in Song*, 42.

have written songs that are sadly sung in church.⁸⁶ The congregation needs to be trained to see that they do not need to hold onto the poorly written hymn texts and tunes of the past. Due diligence must be made to help them see the problem of using texts that are not suitable for worship. It is vital to train the congregation to appreciate and enjoy quality church music, and Etherington put it well when he said, “Unless strenuous efforts were made to arouse as much enthusiasm for good music as exists for bad, the battle would be lost from the start.”⁸⁷ Oftentimes people think that just because they really enjoy a certain song or genre it must mean they are truly worshipping God with it. This way of thinking can be shown faulty by the simple fact that enjoying the acts of stealing, lying, or violence does not make it glorifying to God. God is the determiner of what pleases Him. Our personal pleasures are not the determiner. Just because someone sings louder with some music than with other music “does not necessarily mean that it is helping them in their worship, but simply that they find the tune attractive.”⁸⁸ Charles Etherington provided three issues to remember in the picking of music for worship at church. “First, it [the music] must enable the congregation to express themselves in an idiom with which they are familiar; second, it must be the best music which they are capable of appreciating; third, it must assist in turning their minds Godwards.”⁸⁹ This mindset of looking to God for wisdom and in worship is desperately needed today in churches. This thinking is different than the seeker-friendly idea of utilizing whatever the people like

86. Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music*, 254.

87. *Ibid.*, 255.

88. *Ibid.*, 257.

89. *Ibid.*, 257-258.

because Etherington's goal is to use music that pleases God and to train the congregation to appreciate that type of music.

The modern church has much for which to be grateful for Martin Luther's work in church music. Because of Luther we have congregational singing in our language. Luther gave us the gift of personally and corporately singing in church. The church has then misused these gifts by incorporating the modern musical language of the people even though the rock music of the people is drastically different than the people's language used by Luther. This musical practice has then been abused and mistaken to utilize the sensual style of rock music and to adapt it for the sacred use of worshipping God.

After examining Martin Luther's knowledge about the impact of hymns in teaching, the role of music in training, and the power of music in worship, the modern church should see what aspects from the Reformation can be applied today. Luther believed in the supreme importance and authority of the Bible. He also believed in the power of Biblical truths being set to music. May the contemporary church utilize the significance of wedding quality God honoring text with excellent God-honoring music. May the modern church also not miss the opportunity to teach truths to children through the use of exceptional music. Because God created music and gave it to man for use in worship, Luther realized the importance of solid musical training for the church's leadership and music writers. Today, may churches be diligent in equipping music writers and pastors to be knowledgeable in what the Bible says about music. Luther bestowed to churches the wonderful blessing of congregational singing while aiming to not compromise in music value. In following his example, churches ought to seek for

exuberant corporate singing without capitulating to worldly fads in music. Church members need to hear the truth and be ready to answer those who may falsely use *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* as a tool to incorporate rock music into the worship of God. Just as Luther sought to serve God, may the contemporary church strive for knowing and following God's will in music.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aniol, Scott. "Did Luther Use Tunes from Love Songs?." *Religious Affections Ministries* (blog), October 27, 2011. Accessed January 10, 2017.
<http://religiousaffections.org/articles/articles-on-culture/did-luther-use-tunes-from-love-songs/>.
- Aniol, Scott. "The Hymnody of the Christian Church." *Religious Affections Ministries* (blog), September 1, 2010. Accessed January 10, 2017.
<http://religiousaffections.org/articles/hymnody/reformation-hymns/>.
- Aniol, Scott. *Worship in Song: A Biblical Approach to Music and Worship*. Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2009.
- Bonds, Mark Evan. *A History of Music in Western Culture: Combined Volume*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010.
- Etherington, Charles. *Protestant Worship Music*. 2nd ed. N.p.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Fraiser, John Rev. "A History and Celebration of the Hymns of Martin Luther" (video). Lecture, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, LaGrange, Kentucky, August 22, 2012. Accessed January 9, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3Cdz0x_uVY.
- Frame, John M. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 1997.
- Grindal, Gracia. "The Rhetoric of Martin Luther's Hymns: Hymnody Then and Now." *Word and World* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 178-87. Accessed January 10, 2017.
https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/26-2_Renewing_Worship/26-2_Grindal.pdf.
- Leaver, Robin. "Elisabeth Creutziger, the Magdeburg Enchiridion, 1536 and Reformation Theology." Pitts Theology Library. 1995. Accessed January 9, 2017.
<http://pitts.emory.edu/collections/digitalcollections/lectures/leaver-kessler.cfm>.
- Lenti, Vincent. "The Earliest Lutheran Hymn Tradition as Illustrated by Two Classic Sixteenth-Century German Chorales." *The Hymn* 50, no. 2 (April 1999): 17-25.

Accessed January 10, 2017.

http://www.hymnary.org/files/articles/Lenti,%20The%20Earliest%20Lutheran%20Hymn%20Tradition_0.pdf.

Muth, Janet. "Music Education That's Needed in the Church." *Issues in Christian Education* 42, no. 2 (2008): 29.

<https://www.cune.edu/resources/docs/Issues/ISSUES-2008-42-2-fall.pdf>.

Rick, Townsend Dr. "Jared's Class Notes for Advanced Aural Skills' Discussion On Aesthetics." Lecture, Maranatha Baptist University, Watertown, WI, February 12, 2014.