



T h e H y m n

The term hymn goes back to antiquity. As was the case in the Old Testament, so to in the New, singing was an integral part of worship. In his letter to the church in Corinth, when addressing the subject of worship, Paul lists the hymn as an element of Christian worship. In his letters both to the churches in Colossae and Ephesus, Paul speaks of three types of music that should be used in the teaching and admonishing of church members: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (see Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16).

Most would agree that as for psalms, “the singing of psalms was an obvious carry over from the synagogue, and we can assume that the early Christian psalm singing followed the Jewish style” (Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 2). However there is some debate as to how Paul might have differentiated between the terms hymns and spiritual songs. As for hymns, it is likely a term for poetic texts in praise of Christ. Today the term generally applies to poetic verse - words arranged in some regular meter - addressed to God and sung with reverence and solemnity... in the attitude of prayer. As for spiritual song, most would consider this to be texts more subjective in nature, often speaking of one’s personal faith experience and sung with rhythmic enthusiasm.

In 1450, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in Mainz, Germany, which was followed by the development of movable type in 1454. In 1524, what is thought to be the first Protestant collection of hymns, the First Lutheran hymnbook, appeared in Wittenberg, after hymns had previously

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Music in the Lutheran Tradition

by Bálint Karosi

In sharp contrast to radical reformers such as Calvin and particularly Zwingli, Martin Luther regarded music as essential to evangelical worship. He wrote, “next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.” Luther was a singer, accomplished performer on the lute, and composed some of the greatest hymns of the Reformation. In addition to his more than seventy ascertainable hymns, he also composed simple polyphonic settings of hymn tunes, chants and secular melodies. He maintained regular correspondence with some of the greatest musicians of his time, such as Josquin des Prez and Johann Walter. His views on music, and his influence on shaping evangelical reformed worship have been discussed in great detail in Robin A. Leaver's book on Luther's liturgical music.[1]

Among the many reforms Luther introduced to evangelical liturgy, arguably his most significant musical influence was in shaping vernacular hymnody. Luther and his followers wrote hymns with strophic lyrics, set to singable melodies that often mimicked German folk tunes. He also modified and paraphrased Gregorian chants to accommodate vernacular strophic texts.[2] Luther regarded hymns as quintessential instruments to convey Lutheran doctrines to laymen and laywomen in a form they could remember, teach to each other and apply to their lives. An example of this is Christopher Boyd Brown's account of *Joachimstahl*, a Lutheran village in the sixteenth-century.[3] Brown provides a compelling study of the

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role of the Lutheran chorale in forming and preserving the community's Lutheran identity amid the persecution of Lutherans during the Counter-Reformation era. Lutherans sang hymns on the streets, in their homes, and in churches and schools as they taught their children and counseled one another in difficult times.

Much more than liturgical decoration, music played an essential part of evangelical worship. In the Catholic tradition, the words of the Mass were recited by the priest or sung by the choir in Latin, the words of evangelical worship were to be loudly proclaimed and sung by every member of the congregation. Music in worship also represented the Reformation's three Solae: *Sola Fide*, *Sola Scriptura*, and *Sola Gratia*. The texts for Luther's hymns are especially representative of these three categories. Faith-based hymns such as Paul Speratus' beautiful *Es ist das Heil kommen her* represents *Sola Fide*, catechetical hymns such as *Dies sind die Heiligen Zehen Gebot* served to educate about the Law of the commandments, whereas the

Allein Gott is a representative of *Sola Gratia*, thanksgiving for God's Grace. Music in Lutheran liturgy thus served the multi-faceted role of proclaiming the Christian Faith, educating about the scriptures and giving thanks to God for Salvation that is freely given to all.

As liturgy became vernacular, the art of speech, or rhetoric, also became increasingly important. From the mid-sixteenth till the eighteenth century, rhetoric was central to education across Europe and particularly in Germany. Rhetoric was taught in every *Lateinschule* and served as the basis for cultured speech, persuasion and organization of thoughts. Rhetorical patterns were applied to all aspects of evangelical worship as well; sermons, hymns and instrumental music were composed with rhetorical patterns in mind.

Rhetorical figures or *Figurenlehre* constituted an important trend in music theory in seventeenth-century Germany that influenced such composers as Heinrich Schütz, Franz Tunder, Johann Adam Reincken and Dieterich Buxtehude. The *Stilus Fantasticus* organ preludes by Tunder and Buxtehude followed rhetorical patterns. These improvisatory works might have been written-out improvisations echoing some rhetoric of the sermon of the day. Lutheran organists in the late seventeenth century were "preaching" from the organ loft, using formulae that appealed to rhetorically-minded listeners of the time.



The Reformation also made the music of the Church accessible to all for the first time in western history; hymns were not only sung at the church but also at home. Lutheran

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families used hymns in their daily devotions and informal musical gatherings, called *Hausmusik*. As church music

migrated outside of the walls of the Church, secular music also continued to infiltrate the House of God. Subscription concert series, such as the *Abendmusik* series in Lübeck offered musical entertainment, funded by the city's wealthiest patrons. Thus music also transformed churches into communal, artistic and performances venues.

Although congregational singing with organ accompaniment was not common practice until the early eighteenth century, communal music making in Lutheran worship became a symbol for social and economic equity for the emerging democratic bourgeoisie, especially in affluent German cities such as Hamburg and Lübeck. Festival worship services became increasingly musical in step with the growing economic independence of these cities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

These lavishly musical worship services offered the full spectrum of all musical trends of the time, combining *stile antico* polyphony with the newest Italianate concerted music, strophic choral antiphons, congregational hymns, virtuosic organ interludes, versicles and psalms.[4] Cantors in large cities often had dual appointment by the church and the city council, which raised their expectations for both a meaningful worship experience and for excellent musical entertainment.

The duties of Lutheran Cantor at high-profile churches were usually divided between providing music for worship services and also for some of the main musical offerings of the

city. In addition to the weekly cantatas at St Thomas and St. Nicholas, J. S. Bach was in charge of many secular performances such as for birthdays of visiting royalty. Besides the many musical tasks and projects J. S. Bach successfully managed at Leipzig, he advertised these events via his subscription bulletins and raised extra cash for various music-related expenses. These bulletins included the printed texts of upcoming cantata performances, and were regularly distributed to paying customers. Bach's church services lasted about three hours, with a one-hour long sermon and over one hour worth of music that attracted church members and visitors alike.

Luther's contribution to Western music is way beyond his musical output. He emancipated sacred music as much as the Christian Faith itself, and helped it become a monu-

mental beacon of evangelism and of strengthening the faith and community of the Evangelical Church. The music of great Lutheran composers, especially that of J. S. Bach, continues to define and shape Lutheran identity across the centuries and all nations.

[1] Robin A. Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music* (Cambridge Lutheran Quarterly Books, 2007).

[2] One example is Luther's versification of the *Victimae Paschali* as *Christ lag in Todesbanden*.

[3] Christopher Boyd Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[4] See our reconstructed *Praetorius Organvespers* for the 2014 AGO National Conference in Boston.

<http://www.flc-bostonmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2014-AGO-Vespers-Canto-Armonico-Service-With-Live-Links.pdf>

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been distributed as broadsheets. In 1531, the Bohemian Brethren hymnbook was published in German in Bohemia. In 1535, the first British hymnbook was Coverdale's "Goostly Psalmes and Spiirituall Songes." In 1538, the Genevan hymnbook was published by Calvin at Strasbourg, France. In 1612, Henry Ainsworth prepared a hymnbook in Holland for the Pilgrims' use which they brought to America. In 1640, the first hymnbook printed in North America was "The Bay Psalm Book," published by Cambridge.

What is of special interest to us as Lutherans is that when the early Lutheran settlers came here to America, they brought their Bibles, catechism, and hymnbooks with them. Then as soon as it was possible, they would invite ministers to visit their settlements, in order that they might preach to them, baptize their children, and administer the

sacraments. The point being that hymn singing was seen as important. The Lutheran church was known as the singing church, and it would continue to be known as such in the New World.

The hymns have been a Lutheran tradition. Not just a 'tradition' but a tradition with its basis in Scripture. Sadly in some Lutheran circles the hymns of the church are being set aside. Especially the article on Projection screens in this issue (page 8) lifts up this issue for us. The article may appear controversial to some, but the intent is that it might be something to think about. A good tradition is a good tradition. A tradition (i.e., use of the hymn in worship and private devotion) by means of which the Word of Christ has been learned, meditated on, and given testimony to, and taught to the next generation, is something that should not be set aside without being given some serious consideration.

Hymnals Still Have a Place in Modern Churches

By Tom Raabe

We don't hear much about the worship wars these days. At their most intense a couple of decades ago, the church was rent asunder by contentious debate about worship style, worship components, worship decorum, and practically everything else that goes on in our Sunday morning get-togethers. Every church seemed to be choosing between opposites—organ versus praise band, historic liturgy versus rock liturgies (think Chicago folk service, Marty Haugen), contemporary songs versus historic hymns—and the fallout was ugly. Voting assemblies erupted in dissonance; members on the losing side transferred out.

But now, the voices have calmed and the dust has settled. Why? It's true that some pastors declared a separate peace of sorts by establishing rival worship services: one for the traditionalists, one for the moderns. Others went the blended worship route, which, while leaving everybody a little dissatisfied—mixing pipe organs with electric guitars will do that—included enough elements from both styles to at least keep the group together.

It also could be that everybody is simply tired of fighting. Positions have calcified; viewpoints have hardened; nobody, however well intentioned, is changing anybody's mind; and to bring up the subject would only pick at the still-tender sutures.

But it's probably none of those things. The reason you don't hear much about the worship wars is that one side has won them, or is winning to the point that the other is cowering in the back pews hoping they aren't dragged out, made to wave

their arms in the air and sing "Our God Is an Awesome God."

Published in 2015, the National Congregations Study, a survey of nearly four thousand congregations from across the Christian spectrum undertaken by researchers at Duke University, found traditional aspects of worship in decline. Between 1998 and 2012, congregations that used choirs in worship decreased from 54

to 45 percent; those using organs dropped from 53 to 42 percent. The use of drums had a big uptick: 20 percent of congregations used drums in 1998, 34 percent in

2012. Churches printing bulletins fell from 72 to 62 percent. Informality in worship is way up (shouting "Amen," wearing shorts to church); formality way down (calling the minister "Pastor So and So," dressing up for services).

The survey didn't spell it out, but informal worship with contemporary Christian music seems to have carried the day. All the megachurches are doing it. Rare—practically unknown—is the church that hasn't bowed at least one knee to it.

Yes, that battle seems to be over. But maybe there's still time to save the hymnals.

Hymnals, a historic legacy of Western Christianity, have been housed in pew racks in church sanctuaries for centuries, and those with musical notation as well as words have existed since the 1830s in the United States. They have been indispensable for worship for all that time, objects of treasure both in the sanctuary and in some households. In my tradition, back in the day, many confirmands received as confirmation presents not Bibles, but engraved hymnals. They carried their



own hymnals to church.

Nobody's doing that anymore. In fact, more and more worshipers aren't even looking at hymnals once they're in church. They're looking at the front wall, at a screen attached to it, upon which are projected song lyrics, the words to the liturgy (if one is used), and perhaps even bullet-point outlines, photos, and YouTube videos.

The numbers are sketchy, and evidence is more anecdotal than empirical, but churches in all traditions, meeting in all manner of worship spaces, are increasingly fastening large white canvases to their chancel walls and leaving the hymn books to molder in the pew racks. Many churches have opted to use some form of projector technology; the National Congregations Study reported use of projected images skyrocketing by 23 percent from 1998 to 2012.

So, in a last-ditch effort, possibly a death rattle, let me lay out the case for hymnal-singing and against use of these omnipresent, disagreeable screens.

Which is the first point: screens are eyesores. In churches that don't look like traditional churches, they almost fit. The accoutrements of contemporary worship dominate the space—guitars and microphones and drum kits and music stands and keyboards and amps—and behind that, you expect to see giant luminescent slabs on the wall. The incongruous fixture in these rooms is the altar.

In a traditional sanctuary, on the other hand, in a worship space with subdued natural lighting and pews and steps leading to a chancel housed with time-honored appointments like an altar, a pulpit, a lectern, and historic symbols of the faith, the screens jump out and slap your aesthetic sensibilities upside the head.

Why are they there? Some reasons are practical. They get worshipers' heads out of the books and pointed up toward the front; this amplifies the volume during the songs. Also, the screens free up worshipers'

hands—no fumbling with books. Parishioners with weak eyes can see the words on the screens better than they can the words in a hymnal. For seekers—visitors, the unchurched—they make worship immediately more accessible.

But they also possess a less practical appeal. We live in a visual culture. The control screens have over everyday life is staggering. Between tablets, laptops, smartphones, and e-readers, not to mention all those hours at the office staring at a computer screen, and then coming home to watch another screen for the evening's entertainment, there's no getting away from the bits and bytes, the ones and zeros. In that environment, why not worship with screens in church? They're everywhere else.

In a culture that treasures the new, the convenient, and the informal, and plants a sloppy wet kiss on every new tech toy, the appeal of worship screens is easily explained.

The downside is that they eliminate hymnals from the worship life of the church. Screens come in; hymnals go out. And with them goes everything those books contain and represent.

On the practical level, it becomes difficult to teach new songs on a worship screen, primarily because there are no notes. Worship screens work only because worshipers already know the melodies, which may be why the worship playlists at contemporary services are so curtailed—the same songs tend to be sung over and over.

Pastors who want to expand their congregations' musical repertoire with new hymns have at their disposal six hundred or seven hundred time-tested, theologically sound, tradition-approved specimens, all with notes and musical staves, located right there in the pew racks.

Theology will suffer as hymnals fade off the scene, as the rich repository of theological teaching contained in the old hymns will be lost. The language in some hymns may be an obstacle for some, but the lyrics in those old hymns teach the faith far

better than most of the praise choruses that dominate contemporary services. The old hymns were carefully crafted with theology at the forefront—the hymns presented doctrine; they told the saving story of sin and grace.

On a grander scale, what effect do worship screens have on worship? Are they truly neutral, as is said about much technology, and can be beneficial when used well and deleterious when ill-applied? The argument is made that screens do not affect the larger whole. We have the same worship we had when we worshiped without screens, we are told; we simply added the screens. Instead of people looking down at their books, now they're looking up at the wall—everything else is exactly the same.

But it's not. Worship screens cannot help but change worship. Hymnals are decidedly old school, but sometimes the old ways have too many benefits to abandon. For one, hymnals promote good congregational singing. They present more than the words to a hymn—they feature the notes and staffs themselves. Everybody sees the same notes, so everybody knows where the song is going. Even the musically untrained—and the less musically inclined—can stumble through an unfamiliar hymn for at least a few verses, following the notes up and down the scale, noting the changes in note values, until, by the third or fourth stanza, they have sufficient command of the melody to put gusto into their words. These people would be standing mute if they were watching words on a screen. As for the musically adept, hymnals add sophistication. These folks can sing parts if they want to—the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass lines are all there on the page—thus bringing harmony into congregational singing.

When churches use screens, if you don't know the song, you don't sing. You don't know how many notes to assign to a given syllable or whether the melody goes up or

down. There is no musical notation to fall back on. It's like singing completely unfamiliar songs from a karaoke machine.

Hymnals discourage distraction and allow greater concentration on the lyrics of the hymn. Screens do the opposite. They promote distraction. A lot of churches surround their projected lyrics with background features against which the on-screen words are set—maybe waves are lapping at the words, maybe sunbeams are tickling the ends of the lines. Then there are the inevitable technical faux pas: misspellings, deleted commas, misplaced apostrophes, slides that are slow to advance, even wrong slides popping up on occasion.

You can't beat a plain old book with black letters and black notes on white paper to keep your focus on to what you're singing. There are no surprises there, no distractions; you get only what you expected.

Also, singing from a hymnal offers the worshiper theological context. You see the whole hymn with all the verses. Many hymns are constructed as theological “stories”—they take the worshiper on a salvation journey, from sin to grace. When singing from a hymnal you get to see that story unfold; you can review where you've been and preview where you're going in the hymn. You get the whole drift of the lyrics, the full content, whereas screens typically give you no more than a single verse.

Worship screens will kill hymnals, though not at first. Long after Gutenberg, books were still being hand-copied or printed from woodblocks—as an exercise in nostalgia or by technophobes unwilling to face the future. But, as Nicholas Carr puts it in his book “The Shallows,” “The old technologies lose their economic and cultural force. . . It's the new technologies that govern production and consumption, that guide people's behavior and shape their perceptions.” We hymnal-singers will take

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Why Churches Should Ditch The Projector Screens And Bring Back Hymnals

By Tom Raabe

Christians need to understand that relying on screens and other technology is not leading to better worship, it's ruining it.



A couple of decades ago, churches split in a grand debate over worship. Contentious arguments raged over every aspect of worship style, components, decorum, and practically everything else. Every church seemed to be choosing between opposites—organ or praise band, historic liturgy or rock liturgies, contemporary songs or historic hymns. The fallout was ugly. Assemblies erupted in dissonance and members on the losing side transferred out.

Years later, the voices have calmed and the dust has settled. Some pastors declared a sort of “separate peace” by establishing rival worship services—one traditional, one modern. Others went the “blended worship” route. While this included enough elements from both styles to at least keep the group together, everyone was left a little dissatisfied. Mixing pipe organs with electric guitars tends to do that.

Perhaps we no longer hear about the worship debate because everyone is simply tired of fighting. Positions have calcified. No matter how well-intentioned, few minds are being changed. Bringing up the subject only tears open wounds that haven't quite healed.

More likely, the reason you don't

hear much about the worship wars is that one side has won. It may not be a total victory, but one side is clearly winning while the other is cowering in a back pew hoping a pack of millennials doesn't make them wave their arms in the air and sing whatever Chris Tomlin or Bethel Music wrote that morning.

Informality at Church Is Increasing

Published in 2015, The National Congregations Study undertaken by researchers at Duke University surveyed nearly 4,000 congregations across the Christian spectrum. It found that traditional aspects of worship were in decline. Between 1998 and 2012, congregations that used choirs in worship decreased from 54 to 45 percent; those using organs dropped from 53 to 42 percent. Use of drums increased from 20 percent to 34 percent of congregations between 1998 and 2012.

While churches printing bulletins fell from 72 to 62 percent, the use of projected images rose by 23 percent. Informality in worship is way up (shouting “Amen,” wearing shorts to church) and formality is way down (calling the minister “Pastor So and So,” dressing up for services).

The survey didn't come right out and say it, but informal worship with

contemporary Christian music (CCM) seems to have won the worship war. All the megachurches are doing it. It's hard to find many churches that haven't bowed at least one knee to the modern, informal trend.

For those who attend their church's traditional service, the demographic trends are not encouraging. Ushers for these services might as well require an AARP card for entry. At my church, the number of kiddos who trotted forward for the children's sermon last Sunday was zero. It won't be long until "old-timey" Protestants are searching out liturgical worship services like Catholics have to search out a Latin Mass.

While the larger worship war seems to be over, there might still be time to save at least one element of the traditional service: the hymnals.

Hymnals Are Disappearing

Hymnals are a wonderful legacy of Western Christianity. They've been housed in pew racks in church sanctuaries for centuries. Since they first appeared in the United States during the 1830s, hymnals have been indispensable for worship—objects of treasure both in the sanctuary and in households. In my denomination, many received engraved hymnals as confirmation presents.

Churchgoers used to proudly carry their own hymnals to church. Nobody's doing that anymore. In fact, more and more worshipers aren't even looking at hymnals in church. Instead, their gaze is fixed to the front wall and a screen attached to it.

On this screen, everything from lyrics, to announcements, to YouTube videos is displayed. Churches in all traditions, meeting in all manner of worship spaces, are fastening large white canvases to their chancel walls and leaving the hymn books to molder in the pew racks.

A report from 2004 indicated that almost 60 percent of churches used

some form of projector technology at last once a year. Another study from 2011 estimated that two-thirds of Protestant churches employed a large-screen projection system. In a last-gasp effort, here's the case for bringing back hymnals and ditching those awful screens.

Screens Don't Belong In Church

To the first point: they're horrifically ugly. In churches that don't look like churches, the sort that instinctively prompt you to look for basketball nets and a scoreboard, they almost fit. Screens feel at home among the accouterments of contemporary worship that also dominate the space—guitars, mics, drum kits, keyboards, and amps—and behind that, typically giant luminescent slabs on the wall.

In a traditional sanctuary, on the other hand, with subdued natural lighting, pews, and steps leading to a chancel, the screens jump out and slap your aesthetic sensibilities. Housed next to time-honored trappings of ecclesiastical tradition like an altar, a pulpit, and a lectern, screens just don't fit.

So why are they there? Some reasons are practical. Screens elevate worshipers' heads out of hymnals and up toward the front, which amplifies the volume during the songs. Screens also free worshipers' hands. Parishioners with weak eyes can often see words on a big screen better than words in a hymnal. For visitors or the unchurched—"seekers," as they're often called—screens remove the learning curve required to read music.

Projector Screens Reflect Our Tech-Obsessed Culture

In our visual culture, screens possess another, less practical appeal. The control screens have over our daily life is staggering. We spend countless hours at the office staring at a computer screen then come home to watch another big, flat screen for our evening's entertainment.

Between tablets, laptops, smart-phones, and e-readers, there's no getting away from the bits and bytes, the ones and zeros. With all this, why not worship screens in church too?

In a culture that treasures the new, convenient, and informal, and plants a sloppy wet kiss on every new tech toy, the appeal of worship screens is easily explained. The downside is that as we eliminate hymnals from the worship life of the church, we lose everything they contain and represent.

It becomes difficult to teach new songs on a worship screen, primarily because there are no notes. Screens only work when worshipers already know the melodies. Worship "playlists" at contemporary services are often meager because the same songs tend to be sung over and over.

If you're not already familiar with the tune, you cannot sing from a screen. There are no instructions on how many pitches you must devote to each syllable. In cases like these, most just end up keeping their mouths shut. This also limits the complexity of the songs' music and words, because it's easier to learn simpler songs when new ones are introduced without sheet music.

Hymnals Provide Deep, Theologically Rich Worship

As hymnals fade, theology also suffers. The rich repository of religious wisdom contained in hymns will be lost. The old-fashioned language of hymns may strike some as unusual, but their text teaches the Christian faith far better than most of the praise choruses that dominate contemporary services. Old hymns were carefully crafted with theology at the forefront. Traditional hymns present doctrine clearly and beautifully convey the gospel story of saving grace.

Traditional hymns present doctrine clearly and beautifully convey the gospel story of saving grace.

On a larger scale, how do worship screens affect worship? Are they like other technology—truly neutral, beneficial when used well and deleterious when ill applied? We still have the same worship, they say. We simply added the screens! Instead of people looking down at their books, now they're looking up at the wall—everything else is exactly the same!

Maybe so. But probably not. We may not want screens to change how we worship, but they certainly will. They definitely change the sermon-receiving "experience." Images on the screen constantly interrupt attention. They do change the view, and they do put the technology front and center, rendering it visible where it used to merely exist subtly in the background. While singing in a modern service, it's hard not to start thinking about things other than the music. Will the slide change at the

right time? Will the correct slide come up next? "Oh, look, there's a typo!" It's hard not to see how technology distracts

from the meaning of the words we sing.

Screens represent a move away from permanence to the transitory. The words contained in a hymnal were printed in a book that was published with care. Inked on the paper accompanied by notes and staves, hymnals were real. The words on the screens may look like the words in the book, but they lack substance. They'll disappear the moment the switch is flipped off.

To Save Worship, We Must Rediscover Hymnals

If circumstances don't change, worship screens will eventually kill hymnals—although it may be a slow, painful death. Long after Gutenberg, books were still being hand-copied or printed from woodblocks. In his book "The Shallows" Nicholas Carr points out, "The

old technologies lose their economic and cultural force. . . . It's the new technologies that govern production and consumption, that guide people's behavior and shape their perceptions." We traditionalists may take the hymnal with us to the grave, while economic forces will push publishing companies away from producing new hymnals and revising old ones.

Does any of this matter? Will the warnings of traditionalists bring any worship screens down from the chancel walls or lead congregations to rethink installing them in the first place?

Maybe the whole thing is moot. How long before implanted hardware in our brains will allow us to

download hymns and project them directly onto our retinas? Voila! No more screens.

Those who wish to see the Christian faith prosper, however, should consider the long-term effects that replacing hymnals with screens will have on worship and faith itself.

What technology giveth, technology taketh away. The musical and theological repertoire of the church will be constricted. Even marginally unfamiliar hymns will slide out of the public consciousness, forgotten forever—and worship will be impoverished for it.

Tom Raabe is a writer and editor living in Tempe, Arizona. This article was first published in RealClearReligion and is reprinted here with permission.

("Hymnals" continued from - page 7)

the hymnal to the grave with us. As screens push hymn books out of the racks, economics will push publishing companies away from producing new hymnals or revising old ones. Eventually there will be nothing but screens.

The long-term effects of that will be dire. The musical repertoire of the church will be constricted; old favorites will dominate hymn selection; even marginally unfamiliar hymns will slide off the radar entirely. Wor-

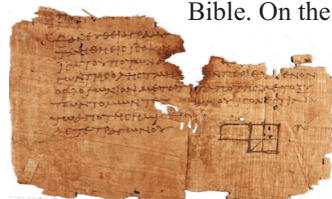
ship will be impoverished. The theology of the church will lose one of its most effective—certainly its most poetic and beautiful—transmission vehicles.

That would be a bad thing, for church music, for the church's theology, and for the church overall.

Tom Raabe is a writer and editor living in Tempe, Arizona. This article was first published in RealClearReligion and is reprinted here with permission.

Earliest Known Manuscript of a Christian Hymn

"In 1896, in a garbage dump in the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus near Cairo, two archeologists made an amazing discovery! Preserved for thousands of years were fragments from nearly every book from the Hebrew and Christian



Bible. On the back of one of the papyri, written in Greek with both lyrics and music notations, is thought to be the oldest known Christian hymn, from around the 3rd Century AD, translated: ". . .let the luminous stars not shine, let the winds and all the noisy rivers die down. And as we hymn the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Let all the powers add, 'Amen. Amen.' Empire, praise always, and glory to God, the sole giver of good things. 'Amen. Amen.'"

Table Talk
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The LMS-USA is Lutheran Church body describing itself as *Biblical, Confessional, Evangelical, Liturgical and Congregational*. It is a 'Forum' in which there is an on going discussion of theological issues and concerns among clergy and lay alike. The LMS-USA meets annually for a Theological Conference and this publication, besides carrying news of the Ministerium and Synod, functions also as a vehicle for this continuing dialogue.

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