In 1529 the Wittenberg presses issued under Luther’s name three closely related volumes in small octavo format: his Small Catechism, revised and gathered into book form after its initial broadsheet printing; a prayerbook, the new and expanded edition of his 1522 Betbüchlin; and a new hymnal, the most expansive and well-organized of its kind to date.1 Though each was in some way a recasting of an earlier work of Luther’s—and though each would undergo further revision and expansion—the 1529 forms of catechism, prayerbook, and hymnal alike became paradigmatic both for Luther’s own further revisions of the books and for their descendents and imitators in genre. When Luther reviewed the previous decades in his Church Postil preface of 1544, he named the Catechism, prayerbook, and hymnal, along with the postils and German Bible, as the great accomplishments of the reform.2 These books formed an enduring foundation for Lutheran piety, bridging

1 Markus Jenny, “Kirchenlied, Gesangbuch, und Kirchenmusik,” in Martin Luther und die Reformation in Deutschland (Frankfurt/M, 1983), p. 305, points out the connection among these three volumes: Evangelium. Der kleine Catechismus fuer die gemeine Pfahrer und Prediger, Gemehret und gebessert (Wittenberg, 1529), WA 30,1:265–345; BSLK, pp. 501–542; BC, pp. 347–375; Ein betbuechlin, mit eym Calender und Passional, hubsch zu gericht (Wittenberg, 1529; facsimile Kassel, 1982), WA 10,2:331–470; LW 43:11–45; Geistliche Lieder auffi new gebessert zu Wittemberg (Wittenberg, 1529). The 1529 hymnal must be reconstructed from early-modern descriptions and surviving editions (the earliest from 1533, repr. facsimile: Das Klug’sche Gesangbuch, 1533, ed. Konrad Ameln [Kassel, 1954; repr. 1983]). See also Philipp Wackernagel, Bibliographie zur Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes im XVI. Jahrhundert (Frankfurt/M, 1855; repr., Hildesheim, 1987), no. 280, pp. 108–09; Markus Jenny, Luthers geistliche Lieder und Kirchengesänge, Archiv zur Weimarer Ausgabe der Werke Martin Luthers 4 (Cologne, 1985), pp. 128–30, 324–40; also Robin Leaver, ‘Goostly psalms and spirituall songs’: English and Dutch Metrical Psalms from Coverdale to Utenhove, 1535–1566 (Oxford, 1991), pp. 281–85. It is pertinent to note that German has no distinct word for hymns as opposed to other songs, apart from adding the adjective “spiritual” [geistliche] or compounding a word for “song” with the word for church). The usual term Kirchenlied is misleading if taken to suggest that the chief or only context of the songs was public worship. The identification of the songs as geistliche Lieder (or simply as Psalmen) is more common in the 16th century.

2 WA 21:200–01; cf. Luther’s location of the Church where prayer, hymns, and the Catechism are used, Von den Konzilis und Kirchen (1539), WA 50:641, LW 41:164.
between the public worship and teaching of the church and the private devotion of the household and reflecting an enduring Lutheran commitment to the use of the arts in the proclamation of the gospel.

The close connection of the three 1529 books is shown not only by their common format and coeval appearance but also by the complementarity of their contents. The program for Evangelical use of art adumbrated in Luther’s preface to the “Passional” in the 1529 Betbüchlin was carried out also in the thematically overlapping cycles of illustrations in the Catechisms and hymnal. The Small Catechism contained morning, evening, and table prayers (including encouragement to sing a morning hymn); the prayerbook included expositions of parts of the Catechism (the Ten Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, and Lord’s Prayer). The hymnal printed prayers (collects) after several of its hymns and contained a section of hymns on the Catechism.

The amphibious existence of these books between church and home was also evident. The Small Catechism addressed itself both to the “common pastor” and to the “father of the household” as those responsible for the religious instruction of children. The prayerbook included discussions of the sacraments and confession. The hymnal was organized according to the church year and the catechism and included liturgical pieces but also elements clearly intended for domestic rather than liturgical use. All three books looked to the home as their primary locus for use as well as the market from which their printers would make a profit.

Coming in the wake of the 1528 Saxon visitation, whose results severely disappointed the Wittenberg reformers, the emphasis that these 1529 books and their descendents still placed on the household calls into question suggestions that Luther and his associates quickly abandoned early confidence in the home to rely on the strong arm of the state. Luther sought to equip the household, not to abandon it. The success of not only the catechism but especially the hymnal and prayerbook in the 16th-century press suggests that the Lutheran clergy and the laity shared a common interest in the flourishing of Lutheran piety within the home. This essay seeks to illumine that piety of song.

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4 The hymn-books and songsheets of early-modern Lutheranism are catalogued in Wackernagel, Bibliographie, also containing a number of hymnal prefaces, cited as WB by catalogue number; and (for sources containing music) in Konrad Ameln &