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FROM INVOCATION THROUGH CREED: A HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS
OF THE SERVICE OF THE WORD IN THE COMMON SERVICE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Timothy William Roser .

May 1995

Approved by Wayne Schmidt
Advisor

PREFACE

The form of the liturgy has been assembled by men and is, thus, an adiaphoron, that is, not divinely inspired. This simple fact has been taken up by many in recent years as justification for departing from the historical rites of the Church. Many pastors have become self-styled liturgiologists, "slicing and dicing" the liturgy for the sake of time or variety. Often such changes occur without due concern for what is being lost, a fact which may be attributable to our collective ignorance about what we are doing in the first place.

This paper seeks to help correct that collective ignorance by offering an outline of a portion of our liturgy and a rationale for use of the texts of the liturgy. Furthermore, this paper seeks to describe the "flow" of the liturgy which provides a consistent perspective from which we may view, appreciate, and ultimately pray together our liturgy.

To describe this flow, this paper proposes to examine the Common Service from the Invocation through the Creed, determining the origins, purpose, and theological significance of each element. In addition to the historic ordinaries of *Kyrie eleison*, *Gloria in excelsis*, and Creed, the regularly used texts of the Common Service (such as the Invocation, Confession and Absolution, etc.) will be explored. The Propers will be treated briefly as liturgical elements (without analysis of the various texts available for Introits, Graduals, etc.).

Because the portions of the Service of the Word came into use at different times and under different circumstances, it will be difficult to maintain a strictly uniform approach to this study. With each ordinary, however, the primary elements of the study will remain the same: history of the ordinary, notes on doctrinal understanding throughout that history, followed by comparison with modern understanding and use. Generally speaking, Scripture is not the primary point of reference since in some cases several hundred years passed between the writing of Scripture and the first evidences of portions of the liturgy. Scripture and the Lutheran Symbols will be brought to bear as appropriate in order to measure our understanding of the liturgy today.

Thanks are due to many people who have made this research possible. Included among these are the members of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who challenged and refined my thinking as they instructed me. Thanks also to the people of the Lutheran Church of the Apostles in Alsip, Illinois, who have provided me with time and financial support over the years for graduate study, and to the trustees of the Wiebe Mission Trust Fund, who specifically financed the writing of this thesis. Finally, a special note of thanks to my wife, Ann, for her patience, loving support, and encouragement, and to my dad, the Rev. William Roser, who taught his son that there is far more to the liturgy than just going through the motions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Service of God

In the field of liturgics, as in all theology, the terms one employs reflect and sometime affect the understanding and interpretation of the issue at hand. Various terms such as "worship," "liturgy," and "service" have been applied to the actions commonly associated with Sunday morning gathering of Christians. Each of these terms is freighted with its own presuppositions and associations.

Worship from the human perspective involves man seeking God's blessings upon him. Yet to speak only of what we do is to subvert God's primary place and to look to our own works for help. Worship is not merely our action towards God, but God's action toward us which brings us before Him to receive His gifts.

The Lutheran Symbols normally discuss this and related issues using the German word *Gottesdienst*, the "service of God." The subjective and objective genitive uses of this term together lend themselves to describing the sacramental and sacrificial nature of our corporate worship. That is to say, our worship consists of God's service to us through Word and Sacrament and our service to God in response.

God serves us through His message of Law and Gospel, convicting us of our sin and revealing to us His forgiving love in our Savior, Jesus Christ. We serve God by responding to this message of good news in prayer, offering, and action, going forth to live as His forgiven people and telling others what He has done for us. Since our response is not possible without His prior action, and in keeping with the Christocentric accents of Scripture, God's service to us is the first and foremost accent of and purpose for Christians assembling in His name.

The Common Service

Many frameworks or liturgies have been developed to express this action and relationship between God and His people. The primary focus of this paper is that framework known as "the Common Service." Although officially published in 1888, the liturgy of the Common Service was by no means a new entity. It was, rather, a revision of the Roman Mass and the Lutheran Church orders which had preceded it. The texts of the Common Service have a longstanding history of use in the Christian Church as a whole and in the Lutheran Church in particular.

Cursory study of the text of this liturgy reveals that it was not assembled according to some academic standard. Perhaps a better word for its development would be "organic," as over the centuries it grew to meet the needs of the time. Each addition was tested, tried, and proven not by a single congregation nor even a group of congregations acting in concert, but by the Church at large working over the course of decades and centuries. This is not to suggest that these words are the only way

to receive God's service to us and return our service to Him. This is simply the way the Church has chosen to do so.

Many Parts, One Goal

There is a tremendous diversity of origin and history in the parts of this liturgy, a diversity that is reflected in the contents of the chapters which follow. Any search for a unifying principle would be frustrating without recognition of the primacy of God's service to us. The climax of the Service of the Word appears in the Lessons, where God's Word is read directly to us. All the other parts of this portion of the Service lead up to this one goal: to draw our attention to what God has to say to us.

What we see from the Invocation through the Creed is a flow toward the Word. Over the course of the centuries, needs have arisen in the Church, and many of those needs were addressed in the liturgy. It will be seen that each portion of the liturgy was set in place in such a way as to contribute to the primacy of the Word of God as given to us in the Lessons. Thus this portion of the Common Service, beginning as it does in the name of the Triune God, is directed toward uniting the prayers and thoughts of His forgiven people that He may bring His Word to us and that we, in turn, may repeat back His message so given in this *Gottesdienst*.

CHAPTER TWO
THE INVOCATION

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
Our liturgy begins with a prepositional phrase which we call the Invocation. By its grammatical incompleteness, this phrase has prompted many questions and differing interpretations as to its intention and meaning.

There may be more at stake in the use and interpretation of the Invocation than the tradition of a formula or a question of grammar. Discussions among parish pastors have ranged over a wide area. Some have suggested that this sentence needs to be completed so that its meaning is clearly communicated to the church of today. Perhaps it was understood by the church of the past, they argue, but our people today need help understanding it now. Others suggest that our entire theology of worship may rest upon what we do with and how we understand this formula. To alter these words or add to them would do more than change a tradition, they say. It would change the content of the faith confessed by the Church throughout the centuries.

Do we complete this sentence? If so, how? Or, if intentionally left incomplete, how do we properly understand this phrase? What theology, what doctrine is communicated through these words? By tracing the history of the Invocation as it appears in the divine service we may

be able to come to a better understanding of what we mean and to whom we are speaking when we say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

History

In comparison with many portions of the liturgy, the Invocation is a relatively late addition to the divine service. Joseph Jungmann writes, "As used here [at the beginning of the Mass], the formula, taken from our Lord's command to preach and baptize, can be traced here and there in the fourteenth century but not any earlier."¹

Apparently this formula was quietly introduced into the prayers of the priest in preparation for the service, what Pius Parsch terms "the prayers at the foot of the altar." It was expected that the priest would spend time in prayer before the Mass. These prayers first appeared in the specifically Roman liturgy of the seventh century. "This private prayer of sorrow for sin gradually developed into a formularized prayer and our *Confiteor*."² Parsch states, "The scheme of the *Confiteor* appears in the *Micrologus* of Bernold to Constance (d. 1100) and it attained its present form as early as the thirteenth century."³ Therefore we can conclude that the addition of the Invocation was part of the later development of the *Confiteor*.

¹Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite* (Maryland: Christian Classics, 1948), 202.

²Pius Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass*, translated by H.E. Winstone (London: B. Herder, 1957), 89-90.

³*Ibid.*, 90.

One might wonder what these private prayers had to do with the public liturgy. Parsch's comments suggest an answer. He notes that the priest, in his private preparations, was counseled to use a special form of liturgical preparation in the Missal, called *Preparatio ad missam*. "It consists of Psalms 83, 84, 85, 115 and 129, followed by a series of very beautiful prayers addressed to the Holy Spirit, and expresses the soul's ardent longing to be freed from sin and to possess the grace of the Holy Spirit." Parsch continues, "Laymen, too, may learn from this prayer the way in which they should prepare themselves for Holy Mass. As always, what is prescribed for the priest serves also as a directive for the layman."⁴ In other words, the public prayers of the priest would serve as the model for the congregation to imitate in their prayers of preparation for the service.

These instructions for the prayers of the priest generally appear only in more recent documents.⁵ The universal use of the Invocation at the time of the Reformation therefore remains in doubt. Luther did not include any mention of Invocation (or *Confiteor*) in either of his orders of service. The Formula Missae began with an Introit or a Psalm, the Deutsche Messe with a hymn or a Psalm in German.⁶

⁴Ibid. 87.

⁵As written in the 1800s: "Celebrans . . . producens manu dextra a fronte ad pectus signum Crucis, dicit intelligibili voce: *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*" P. Innocentius Wapelhorst, *Compendium Sacrae Liturgiae* (Boston: Benziger Brothers, INC., 1931), 119.

⁶Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, Vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 22, 69.

This is not to say that the Invocation was never used among the churches of the Reformation. Döber's Church Order for Nürnberg (1525) directs the priest/pastor to begin, "Mein aller liebsten in Got, eroffent eur herzen und last uns Got unser sünd bekennen, und sprecht mir nach mit herzlichem begird im namen des Vaters und des Suns und des Heiligen Geists! Amen."⁷ Likewise, in the Church Order for Mecklenburg (1540/1545), "De prester, . . . segge to dem volke: Mine alder levesten in godt, eröpent juwe herte, latet uns gade unse sünde bekennen, unde spreket mi na mit hertlikem begere. Im name des vaders, des söns unde des hilligen geistes, amen."⁸ Both of these formulae are immediately followed by services of corporate confession and absolution.

Even though the churches of the Reformation gradually accepted corporate confession and absolution,⁹ that should not imply that the Invocation was automatically adopted in all instances. In Mecklenburg itself¹⁰ a later *Kirchenordnung* (1552) does not mention the Invocation: "Der priester wende sich fur dem altar um gegen dem volk, und spreche.

⁷"My beloved in God, open your hearts and let us confess to our God our sin, and speak after me with sincere desire in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! Amen." Emil Sehling, ed., *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. XI, *Bayern: Franken* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1961), 51.

⁸"The priest . . . says to the people: My beloved in God, open your hearts, let us to God our sins confess, and speak with me with sincere desire. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen." Emil Sehling, ed. *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. V, *Mecklenburg* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1961), 150.

⁹Further discussion of this trend appears in the chapter on Confession and Absolution, pages 24ff.

¹⁰From which one of the Common Service forms of Confession and Absolution is derived, see pages 25f.

Mein allerliebsten in gott, eröffnet euere herzen, last uns gott unsere sünden bekennen, und um vergebung, im namen unsers herrn Jesu Christi bitten. Sprecht mir nach mit herzlichem begeren zu gott, im glauben an den herrn Jesum Christum, durch den heiligen geist."¹¹

The evidence simply does not support Luther Reed's assertion that, "The Lutheran church orders give the Invocation or take it for granted."¹² Those churches that clung closely to Luther's original service orders generally make no mention of an Invocation. It does not, for example, appear in Walther's *Kirchen-Agende* of 1856, which follows the order of Luther's *Deutsche Messe*.

Nor does the Invocation appear at the very beginning of the divine service in Wilhelm Loehe's *Agende für christliche Gemeinden* of 1844. After the opening versicle and response, "Our help is in the name of the Lord! Who made heaven and earth!" the pastor continues as in the 1552 *Kirchenordnung* of Mecklenburg, "Meine Allerliebsten in Gott! etc."¹³

In the 1884 edition of Loehe's *Agende*, however, the Invocation does appear under the heading "*Confiteor*":

"Nach Schluss des Gesangs kehrt sich der Pfarrer (und mit ihm seine Gehilfen) zur Gemeinde und spricht: P. Im Name

¹¹"The priest turns from the altar toward the people, and speaks. My beloved in God, open your hearts, let us to our God our sins confess, and for forgiveness, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to ask. Speak with me with sincere desire to God, in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit." Sehling, Vol V, p. 197.

¹²Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, rev.ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 252.

¹³Wilhelm Löhe, *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, (Nördlingen: Druck und Verlag der C.H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1844), 18.

des Vaters und des Sohnes und des heiligen Geistes. R.
Amen."¹⁴

This was the form of the Invocation, translated into English, that was utilized in the Common Service of 1888 and which has since come from there into our present usage.

A Question of Interpretation

In a recent book, Paul Bradshaw offers "ten principles for interpreting early Christian liturgical evidence." His fifth principle states: "When a variety of explanations is advanced for the origin of a liturgical custom, its true source has almost certainly been forgotten." He goes on to explain, "Indeed, the very existence of multiple explanations and interpretations is itself a very good indication that no authoritative tradition with regard to the original purpose and meaning of the custom had survived, and hence writers and preachers felt free to use their imaginations."¹⁵

We find such difficulties arising when we search for the meaning of the Invocation. Although most definitions are related, the conclusions drawn do not necessarily agree.

Some comments regarding the Invocation are brief:

"Why does the Service begin in the name of the Triune God? Because God has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and it is by His authority that the Minister

¹⁴"After the conclusion of the hymn the Pastor (and with him his Assistants) turns to the congregation and says: P. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. R. Amen." Wilhelm Löhe, *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, Dritte Auflage (Nördlingen: Druck und Verlag der C.H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1884), 15.

¹⁵Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 70, 71.

proclaims the Gospel, and for His worship that a Christian congregation assembles."¹⁶

Such an answer does speak about the doctrine of the Trinity confessed in the Christian church, but it does not address the nature or purpose of this particular formula which we call the Invocation.

Joseph Jungmann offers more substance in his comments regarding the Roman Mass:

In our present-day Mass the very first words, even before the *Introibo*, are the words of blessing which accompany the sign of the Cross, words which form a Trinitarian gateway to the whole Mass--*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.* . . . That it should appear at the beginning of Mass as a blessing text--just as it has more recently appeared at the beginning of our other prayers--is probably to be explained by the fact that the sign of "blessing," the "*signum*" *crucis* is connected with it; we begin the holy action in the power that comes from the triune God through the Cross of Christ. At the same time, in the use of this formula here, we can perceive a bridge between the two great sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.¹⁷

Jungmann here appears to agree with Luther Reed, who writes:

As used here at the beginning of the Service, however, it has the value of an "invocative blessing." As the name indicates, it is addressed to God and not to the congregation. It is an affirmation of faith, a prayer of profession--an approach similar in character to a hymn of invocation, or to the words "Our Father" at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. We formally express our "awareness" of the presence of God, we place ourselves in that presence, and invoke the divine blessing upon the service which is to follow. We confess our faith in the Holy Trinity, for whose worship we are assembled. We solemnly call God to witness that we are "gathered together" in his name (Matthew 18:20)

¹⁶The Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, *An Explanation of the Common Service* (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1908), 20.

¹⁷Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 202.

and in that name offer all our prayer, praise, and thanksgiving (John 16:23).¹⁸

Reed goes on to remind his readers that the minister's position at the altar interprets the Service. Since he only has two choices--facing the congregation in a sacramental position, or facing the altar in a sacrificial position--Reed selects the latter, concluding:

In the case of the invocation it is better to take the words as Luther, the Reformers, and the ancient church used them in this connection, that is, as primarily devotional in character and not as a proclamation addressed to the congregation.¹⁹

It is at this point of rubric that we discover dispute among Lutheran liturgists. Although he begins on a similar note, Paul Strodach's description of the Invocation challenges the sacrificial position directly:

This is called the Trinitarian Invocation. It is a declaration in Whose Name the worship is begun and is to be conducted and an invocation of His Presence. Only if it be interpreted as an act of reverence would the minister face the altar for these words; and if thus interpreted, to be consistent, he should genuflect and bless himself with the sign of the Cross as he repeats the words. However, the usage of the Church since the Reformation (until of late years) has been the minister facing the congregation.²⁰

Identifying this sacrificial posture with that of the Roman priest, Strodach continues:

As said above, the Lutheran posture since the time of the Reformation has been the direct reverse of the Roman. The minister after his devotions faces the congregation and in a tone which can be heard throughout the church declares in Whose Name the service is now begun. Literally translated

¹⁸Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 252.

¹⁹Ibid., 254.

²⁰Paul Zeller Strodach, *A Manual on Worship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), 207.

the words used are "Our beginning" (of this service) "is in the Name etc." Thus the character and intent of this action are declared, as well the consecration of purpose. . . . The Church of the Reformation made the priest's private act a *congregational* one as preparatory to The Service. . . . The "In the Name etc." is not personally the minister's declaration, but *mutual* action so attested by the *Amen*.²¹

Reflecting the obvious debate of their time, Luther Reed raises direct objection to Strodach's argument:

Some nineteenth-century scholars ignored the devotional significance of these words at this place and interpreted them as legitimatizing, or at least establishing, a sacramental basis for the entire service (even Loehe). Some altered the text itself in clumsy fashion to agree with the new interpretation and made it read "Unser Anfang sei im Namen des Vaters, des Sohns und des Heiligen Geistes." The Common Liturgy has done well to retain the historic text, and we give it its ancient and generally accepted meaning.

The minister leads the devotions of the congregation in this act and faces the altar.²²

It is impossible to deny that the Roman Confiteor was the point at which, historically, the Invocation became a part of our liturgy. It was originally part of the priest's private devotions before the service, and eventually came into public usage. The question remains whether it is necessary or proper to abandon that devotional understanding, as Strodach suggests. Or, with Reed, should we retain the form as it stands, using it as a congregational devotion--a confession of faith and a prayer asking for God's presence? This returns us to our original question: what do we mean and to whom are we speaking when we say, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"?

²¹Ibid., 208.

²²Reed, 254.

Scripture

The text of the Invocation is a direct quotation of the baptismal formula given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19. For this reason, many scholars plunge right into the connection between these words of the Invocation and Holy Baptism. Yet however descriptive Matthew 28 may be for our baptismal liturgy, it provides no clear explanation for the use of these same words as an Invocation.

It may be more fruitful for us to search for a Biblical concept of invocation that might shed more light on the use of this formula. When one compares the Latin *invoco* with the Septuagint and the Greek of the New Testament, it quickly becomes clear that the Latin usually uses *invoco* to translate the Greek ἐπικαλέω.²³

Where the word *invoco*/ἐπικαλέω is used of God's people calling on God, it generally takes the middle form. The use of the middle here may well be distinct and significant since, as Friedrich Blass notes, "NT authors in general preserve well the distinction between middle and passive."²⁴ Walter Bauer notes that when ἐπικαλέω is used in the middle, it means to "call upon someone for aid" legally, in the sense of

²³A significant exception to this occurs in Acts 19:13. There *invoco* is used to translate ονομαζειν, "to name." This "naming" is not used of believers, but of the Jewish exorcists, who "took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits" (NKJV). In other words, they were not calling on or "invoking" God's name in the same way as the believers would--and note the results of this Jewish attempt at an Invocation of Jesus (Acts 19:14-16)!

²⁴F. Blass, A. Debrunner, Robert Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §316, 165.

calling on someone as a witness or appealing to someone, or calling on a divinity.²⁵

Does the use of the middle in these contexts perhaps imply a tone of deference to a person or God who has the ability to supply what we need? Would not the active voice be used if the speaker were in control of the situation?

If the middle voice is, in fact, used for such reasons in Scripture, then how could that understanding be communicated in a text such as the Invocation? Grammatically neither Latin nor English has a distinct form for the middle voice, but perhaps we can understand an implied middle through the fact that the Invocation is left as a prepositional phrase and not completed as a sentence. The completion of the prepositional phrase (ex., with a "We begin . . . ") would assign an active agent and a verb. Who would be active, man or God? What action would that active agent be performing? For instance, if "We begin," then what is it that is begun?

The further we pursue this inquiry, the further limited are the words of the Invocation. Are such limitations the intention behind this phrase, or is it inclined to be all-encompassing?

The Church Fathers

Over a thousand years passed between the writing of Scripture and the first use of the Invocation at the beginning of the liturgy of the

²⁵Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, translation and adaptation by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Second ed. revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), s.v. *ἐπικαλεῖω*, 294.

church. An examination of the Church Fathers may help to fill this gap and provide us with a clearer perspective of how the Church intended this formula to be understood.

As previously mentioned, the Invocation did not appear at the beginning of the divine service until the fourteenth century. This is not to say that this sign and formula had no liturgical use prior to that time. In various liturgies of the early church we find the Invocation formula used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the Divine Liturgy of James, the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord, for example, it states:

Then he makes the sign of the cross on that which is in his left hand . . . chalice It has been made one, and sanctified, and perfected, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.²⁶

Again in the Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles (Aadaeus and Maris) we also read:

. . . he signs the chalice, saying: The precious blood is signed with the holy body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost for ever.

. . . and signs with it the body The holy body is signed with the propitiatory blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost for ever.²⁷

The trinitarian formula was also seen as a statement and confession of faith, as Cyprian writes:

. . . it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 'And these three are one.' . . . He who

²⁶Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol VII, Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 548.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 566.

does not hold this unity does not hold God's law, does not hold the faith of the Father and the Son, does not hold life and salvation.²⁸

This confession of the Triune God was first made publicly by the Christian in baptism. Augustine makes it clear that the Church does not admit a person to the Lord's Supper without Baptism:

The Church, lastly, herself holds as her tradition, that without baptism she cannot admit a man to her altar at all.²⁹

Holy Baptism includes the receiving of the sign of the cross and the confession of the Triune God.

As we search through the Church Fathers, we note that a strong--perhaps almost synonymous--link appears to exist between the name of God (the trinitarian Invocation formula) and the sign of the cross. Signing oneself with the sign of the cross seems to predate a widespread use of the Invocation formula (apart from the use of the formula in Holy Baptism). This signing was part of the everyday life of the Christian, as Tertullian writes:

"At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on

²⁸Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol V, *Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 423.

²⁹"On Baptism, Against the Donatists" Book II. Philip Schaff, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol 4, *Augustin: The Writings Against the Manichaens, and Against the Donatists* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 434.

seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign."³⁰

Likewise Cyril of Jerusalem later commands, "Make then this sign [of the cross] . . . at every act."³¹

This action was interpreted as a calling on God--a prayer to Him--asking Him to bring about His promised protection and blessing in the life of the believer:

If thou have said, in the Name of Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, with faith, thou hast accomplished everything. See, how great things thou hast done! Thou hast created a man, and wrought all the rest (that cometh) of Baptism! . . . If thou chant this incantation with faith, thou wilt drive away both diseases and demons, and even if thou have failed to drive away the disease, this is not from lack of power, but because it is expedient it should be so.³²

At times the use of the sign of the cross takes on an almost superstitious tone. We read in Athanasius:

. . . whereas by the sign of the Cross all magic is stopped, and all witchcraft brought to nought, and all the idols are being deserted and left, and every unruly pleasure is checked, and every one is looking up from earth to heaven .

33

³⁰"The Chaplet, or De Corona." Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol III, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 94-5.

³¹"Catechetical Lectures, Lecture IV." Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol 7, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 22.

³²"Works of St. Chrysostom, Homily IX on Colossians." Philip Schaff, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol 13, *Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 303.

³³"On the Incarnation of the Word." Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol 4, *Athanasius: Select Works and Letters* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 53.

And again later: .

. . . let him use the Sign of the Cross . . . demons who are invoked by the other magicians fly from Him . . . ³⁴

Signing oneself with the cross was an act of remembrance of what God had already done for His people through the cross of Jesus Christ and given in Baptism. At the same time, it was a prayer that God would give His promised gifts to meet the need or bless the activity of the moment. This sign was therefore understood to be a sacramental and a sacrificial act at one and the same time. It was sacramental in that it recalled God's gifts given through Baptism, and sacrificial in that it was the believer's action of honoring God for those gifts and requesting God's blessing to be bestowed.

It is clear that the sign of the cross and the formula of the Invocation (the idea of which, if not the precise text, appears to have grown up with it) were used by believers in any and every action of life. It should not seem unusual, therefore, that the sign of the cross and the Trinitarian Invocation should come to be associated with the Divine Service, wherein the Lord's Supper is celebrated. Perhaps what should be considered unusual is that it took until the fourteenth century before this phrase and its accompanying sign became part of the opening actions of the Church's liturgy.

Conclusion

It can be argued that the question of the Invocation hinges on one's understanding of the liturgy as a whole. Some perceive the

³⁴Ibid., 62-63.

liturgy as the "work of the people," primarily a matter of man's action toward God. Others see the liturgy first and foremost as God coming to us.

The Greek use of the middle voice may bring to mind the Lutheran concept of *Gottesdienst*, literally translated as "the service of God." This service is two-fold: both God's service to men and man's service to God, with the former presiding. When we apply this concept to the question of the Invocation, we must ask which posture and phrasing best communicates this simultaneously sacramental and sacrificial understanding.

Making the phrase of the Invocation into a sentence imposes limitations on the depth of meaning of its words. To complete the sentence with a phrase such as, "We begin . . ." makes man the active agent in the liturgy. Such a purely sacrificial understanding could be easily construed as inconsistent with a Biblical Lutheran theology of the liturgy as *Gottesdienst*. "Our service" or "Our beginning is in the name . . ." is better, but there remains a strong emphasis on man's activity over against God's action for us.

Only the text as it stands--in all its ambiguity--permits both a sacramental and sacrificial understanding of its words. This is the formula by which God commands Baptism, His act of grace and adoption into His family. Yet these same words are here spoken facing the altar in prayer to claim God's promised presence and reverently submit ourselves to His authority and care.

The Invocation provides the liturgy with a Trinitarian confession, linked to Baptism and the believer's life in the Church. It also brings

with it a theology of prayer, calling on God because He has acted first for us (again, specifically through the waters of Baptism). Perhaps it would be more consistent with Scripture and with the Church Fathers not to see this formula as a "beginning" but as a continuation of God's presence in our lives as we are now gathered to receive His gifts with the people of God.

CHAPTER THREE

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

"Beloved in the Lord. Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, imploring him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness."¹

Thus in the liturgy of the Common Service are we called to the confession of our sins that we may receive God's absolution. But does this liturgy fully agree with and reflect our theology of confession and absolution? Has the Law/Gospel nature of confession and absolution been weakened or strengthened by our current liturgical forms? The answers to these questions are vital since our primary practical expression of the doctrine of absolution appears in the corporate forms at the beginning of the divine service.²

In order to deal with corporate confession and absolution we must take into account the development and treatment of private confession and absolution and its relation to the corporate. As will be seen,

¹Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 136.

²By the term "divine service" this paper refers to the Common Service (Divine Service I of *Lutheran Worship*), not the separate confessional service nor the services of the Hours. For a broader treatment of Confession and Absolution that does include other services, see Fred L. Precht, "Confession and Absolution: Sin and Forgiveness," in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, ed. Fred L. Precht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 322-386.

these two, corporate and private, are historically and theologically dependent rather than separate and independent elements.

The Early Church to the Reformation

Corporate confession and absolution is a very late addition to the liturgy of the divine service. It does not appear in the early liturgies, even though the early church celebrated the "mass of the faithful," from which all of the non-baptized [particular note is made of the catechumens] were dismissed.³ Surely such a mass would have facilitated the introduction of a corporate liturgy of confession had it been desired. A common interpretation and understanding of the liturgy of confession could have been assumed by virtue of catechesis. Yet the early church did not pursue corporate confession but went about its confessional practice by another route.

In the early church, confession was made on an individual basis (or by a group of individuals who were individually absolved). Essentially only two types of confession were known. The first type was the daily, personal confession to God (for "little sins"). When the sins of an individual became serious or greatly affected the life of the church, the second type, public penance, was called for.⁴ This required the individual to confess his sin before the assembled congregation and there receive absolution. Precht notes that "one of the purposes of

³Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold, SJ, *The Study of Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 187-188.

⁴Fred L. Precht, "Changing Theologies of Private and Public Confession and Absolution" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary St. Louis, 1965), 24.

public penance . . . is to enlist the aid of the faithful in behalf of the penitent,"⁵ thus receiving corporate support in dealing with sin. Although guidelines were offered at various times and places, there was no standard liturgical form known for either type of confession.

Whereas confession began as a public practice of the church, it soon became customary to make confession privately to the priest. When confession was made to the priest, it was his job to determine the nature and gravity of the sin(s) committed. He was then to assign acts of penance to the penitent. Extensive manuals of penance were published, prescribing the various penalties according to the degree of sin involved.⁶

Although strictly speaking not part of the Mass, the *Confiteor* is as close as the Roman Rite comes to a corporate confession of sins. These prayers of confession and contrition at the foot of the altar were the private preparation of priest and people.⁷ No sacramental absolution is proclaimed; rather the priest prays for God's forgiveness.⁸ At the conclusion of these prayers the *Introit* is recited, marking the proper beginning of the Mass.⁹

⁵Ibid.

⁶An example is that of Halitgar, c. 830. William A. Clebsch, Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), 23, 150ff.

⁷Pius Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass*, Translated by H.E. Winstone (London: B. Herder, 1957), 95.

⁸Ibid., 88.

⁹Ibid., 89.

The only corporate form of absolution in evidence during this period is that described by Palmer. Even though this was a corporate absolution, it apparently still involved individual confession:

During the eleventh century the custom was introduced of extending an absolution to all who were present at the divine service, and this not only on Holy Thursday but on other feasts of the year. Thus, Bishop John of Avranches (1061-1069), in his *De officiis ecclesiasticus*, has the following rule for Ash Wednesday: "In the beginning of Lent, after None has been said, let the clergy and the people, after each one has made his confession and received a penance, prostrate themselves before the altar, and in this way be absolved by the bishop or by the senior priest of the church" (PL, 147, 49). Although it is quite conceivable that this general absolution was regarded as sacramental, at least for those who had already made a specific confession of their sins on an earlier occasion, it is not likely that the absolution extended to those who had not so confessed, or to those who were guilty of graver crimes. On this latter point the prescription of Gilbert, bishop of Limerick, writing some fifty years later, is enlightening: "Let the presiding priest (*praesul*) absolve the people of pardonable offences (*venialibus*) in the beginning of Lent, of criminal offences (*criminalibus*) on the day of the Lord's Supper" (PL, 159, 1002).¹⁰

As the Roman sacramental system grew and developed, private confession grew in importance, overshadowing the few corporate forms in existence. It was made an annual requirement, and each penitent was to

¹⁰Paul F. Palmer, ed., *Sources of Christian Theology*, Vol. II, *Sacraments and Forgiveness* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959), 176.

recount all of his sins.¹¹ Eternal punishment was remitted through the absolution and temporal punishments were satisfied through penance.¹²

Private confession was thus considered the norm in the life of the pre-Reformation church. The *Confiteor* was retained as a form of individual preparation for the Mass, and corporate absolution was permissible under certain circumstances. Still, it was private confession and absolution which prevailed in the life of the Roman church, with the emphasis on confession (rather than on absolution). This was the foundation of the Roman church's confessional practice when Luther appeared on the scene.¹³

Luther, the Symbols, and the Reformation

With the coming of the Reformation and the restoration to its proper place of the doctrine of justification (by grace through faith in

¹¹"Let everyone of the faithful of either sex, after reaching the age of discretion, faithfully confess in secret to his own priest *all his sins*, at least *once a year*, and diligently strive to fulfill the penance imposed on him, receiving reverently, at least during Paschal time, the sacrament of the Eucharist, unless perchance on the advice of his own priest he judges that for some good reason he should abstain for a time from its reception: otherwise, while living let him be denied entrance into church and when dead let him be deprived of Christian burial. . . ." The Fourth Lateran Council, 1215; quoted in Paul F. Palmer, *Sacraments and Forgiveness*, 197-198 (emphasis added).

¹²"Sacramental theory developed during the scholastic period. The Schoolmen distinguished between *culpa* (guilt) and *poena* (punishment) and between *poena damnationis* (damnation) and *poena temporalis* (temporal punishment). The guilt and the eternal punishment were removed by confession and absolution; the temporal punishment was removed by doing penance. This was understood to involve three acts: contrition, confession, and satisfaction." Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 80.

¹³For further treatment of the historical development of confession during the pre-Reformation period, see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3-27.

Christ Jesus), the theology and practice of confession was also reformed and redefined. The reformers set aside the legalistic demands which had been imposed by the Roman church. Gone were the demands for annual confession and for the complete enumeration of sins. Instead of focusing on the type of sin and the necessities of punishments, penances, and satisfactions, the focus shifted to the absolution and the word of Gospel freely given therein.¹⁴

Private confession was in no way devalued in the Symbolical Books, nor was it simply subsumed under the general preaching of the Gospel. In response to the Roman Confutation, the Apology numbers Absolution ("the sacrament of penitence") as a sacrament. For, like Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Absolution has "the commandment of God and the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament."¹⁵

Luther himself would not abolish private confession, and personally cherished it. "If many thousand worlds were mine, I would rather lose them all than to have the Church deprived of the least part of this confession," he wrote.¹⁶ His Small Catechism provided a form for individual confession and absolution directed to the confessor (German: *Beichtiger*; Latin: *fratre, cui confitemur*¹⁷). Upon this confession the penitent received a clear, "dominical" absolution:

¹⁴Augsburg Confession XXV, 13.

¹⁵Apology XIII, 4.

¹⁶Martin Luther, "Warnungsschrift an die zu Frankfurt, sich vor Zwinglischer Lehre zu hueten, 1533," in John H.C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), 120.

¹⁷*Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, Zehnte Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 517.

". . . Und ich aus dem Befehl unsers HERRN Jesu Christi vergebe Dir Deine Sunde im Namen des Vaters und des Sohns und des heiligen Geists, Amen."¹⁸

Luther obviously thought such confession to be a natural and beneficial part of Christian life. "When I admonish you to confession, I am doing nothing more than admonishing you to be a Christian."¹⁹

In their many references to confession and absolution²⁰, the Symbols refer to the practice of private confession. Yet it was during Luther's lifetime that corporate confession and absolution came to be practiced as part of the divine service. One of the earliest appearances of such a form was in Andreas Döber's Nürnberg *Kirchenordnung* of 1525.²¹

The idea and practice of corporate confession was not to go unquestioned. In 1533 Luther and Melanchthon were asked by the Nürnberg city council to render an opinion regarding the custom of administering a general, public confession and absolution immediately after the sermon. Osiander, then active in Nürnberg, demanded that only private confession be exercised. The majority of the clergy of Nürnberg advocated corporate confession, although not to the exclusion of private confession.

¹⁸"And I, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." Ibid., 519.

¹⁹Large Catechism, Brief Exhortation, 32.

²⁰Augsburg Confession XI, XII, XXV; Apology XI, XII, XIII; Smalcald Articles VIII; Small Catechism V; Large Catechism IV, V; et. al.

²¹Emil Sehling, ed. *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Vol XI, *Bayern: Franken*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1961), 51-52.

In their response, Luther and Melanchthon recognized the danger of the possible decline of private confession. They noted that "the gospel has to be applied through Word and sacrament to each individual particularly, so that each individual in his conscience is tossed about by the question whether this great grace, which Christ offers to all men, belongs to him too." Nonetheless, "each absolution, whether administered publicly or privately, has to be understood as demanding faith and as being an aid to those who believe in it." Therefore Luther and Melanchthon concluded, ". . . we do not consider that general absolution is either to be rejected or to be abolished, but that nevertheless the personal application and [private] absolution should be maintained."²²

One of the most elaborate and complete forms of corporate confession appears in the Mecklenburg *Kirchenordnung* of 1552.²³ Although the text of this form is considered to be one of the direct ancestors of the form which we use today,²⁴ a distinct difference should be noted. Instead of a dialogue between pastor and congregation, the Mecklenburg form is a dialogue between the pastor and a "Kirchendiener" ("servant of the church"). After the pastor prays, "I a poor, miserable sinner confess to you, O almighty God, my creator and redeemer . . ." it

²²Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, gen. ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, Vol 50, *Letters III*, Gottfried G. Krodel, ed and trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 76-78.

²³Emil Sehling, ed. *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Vol V, *Mecklenburg* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1961), 197-198. For full text see Appendix I.

²⁴Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 258.

is this single *Kirchendiener* who responds, "O almighty, merciful God, who have given your only-begotten Son to die for us . . ."

As for the congregation, the following instructions are given:

Dieweil diese beicht, gebet und absolution, gesprochen wird, sol die ganze kirch stille sein und solchs anhören, auch mit dem priester also bekennen, beten, und die absolution zu herzen fassen, wol lernen, und fur gott oft desgleichen sprechen.²⁵

Thus Mecklenburg seems to add a didactic slant to the service of corporate confession and absolution, intending through this liturgy both to absolve and to instruct the individual in personal confession before God.

Although it is not difficult to trace the actual use of corporate confession through the *Kirchenordnungen* of the 16th century,²⁶ it is difficult to discover the reasons behind these developments. It is possible that corporate confession gained ground due to the Reformation emphasis on active congregational participation²⁷ rather than priestly performance, and that this was the congregation's involvement in the *Confiteor* of the priests. Perhaps it was seen as part of one's daily confession before God.²⁸ Undoubtedly the alleged impracticability of private confession entered into the picture: without the legalistic

²⁵"While this confession, prayer and absolution are spoken, the whole church should be still and listen to it, also with the priest thus to confess, to pray, and to take the absolution to heart, to learn it well, and to speak in such a way before God frequently."

²⁶For a table which outlines the historical relationship of the various *Kirchenordnungen*, see Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 91.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 241.

²⁸Large Catechism, Brief Exhortation, 9.

requirement of annual private confession it was believed that no one would attend at all.²⁹ Finally, the unusual addition of a *Kirchendiener* in the Mecklenburg order implies that there may have been an attempt at a didactic connection between corporate and private confession, allowing what is done in public to teach what should be done in private.

Whatever the reasons, corporate confession increased in popularity during the Reformation and post-Reformation era. Along with its growth came a growing concern for the loss of private confession. This concern was based on the fear that the absolution, now restored to its proper place, would be disregarded by the individual conscience and thus be lost to the church again. Yet even though the Reformers had considered private confession virtually necessary for the life of a Christian, it was corporate confession which eventually became the norm in the practice of the church.

Löhe and Walther

Two forms of corporate confession which preceded those we now use were those of Wilhelm Löhe and C.F.W. Walther. In 1844 Wilhelm Löhe published his *Agende für christliche Gemeinden*. At the beginning of the divine service in this *Agende* (*Die Communio oder der Hauptgottesdienst*) Löhe provides a service of corporate confession apparently based heavily on the Mecklenburg order of 1552, with the form of "absolution" we now commonly call the "declaration of grace." No longer is this a dialogue

²⁹Luther, *Letters III*, 77.

between the pastor and a servant of the church. Rather the dialogue now takes place between pastor and congregation.³⁰

It is well-known that Löhe strongly encouraged the use of private confession. In fact he could even be considered suspicious of General Confession, of which he wrote, ". . . for although even this is not to be despised and is good training . . . still in most places it is only an abuse which has arisen in the place of Private Confession."³¹ Yet this preference makes all the more curious the change made in the 1884 edition of his *Agende*. Although the text differs only slightly, the rubrics of the 1884 edition describe the pastor's concluding words [the declaration of grace] as *die Absolution* (the absolution).³² Thus it appears that, although Löhe strongly advocated and upheld private confession and absolution, he also upheld the absolution in its corporate setting.

C.F.W. Walther also upheld the principles and practice of private confession. In his *Pastoraltheologie* he includes a lengthy discussion of private confession along with pastoral guidelines as to its use.³³ Like Löhe, Walther also included a service of corporate confession in

³⁰Wilhelm Löhe, *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses* (Nördlingen: Druck und Verlag der C.H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1844), 18-19. For full text, see Appendix II.

³¹Wilhelm Löhe, "The Sacrament of Repentance." Translated by Delvin E. Ressel. *Una Sancta* Vol 10 No. 2 (1951): 3.

³²Löhe, Wilhelm. *Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, Dritte Auflage. (Nördlingen: Druck und Verlag der C.H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1884), 16.

³³C.F.W. Walther, *Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 4. Auflage (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1897), 155-168.

his Agende of 1856.³⁴ In this case, the confession did not appear as a part of the preparation for the service, but came immediately after the sermon. Here we find the dominical form of absolution used rather than a declaration of grace.

Yet even after the exposition of the word in the sermon and the confession of sins, this dominical absolution was carefully worded so that there would be no doubt as to who was and who was not absolved:

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you *who heartily repent of your sins, believe on Jesus Christ, and sincerely and earnestly purpose by the assistance of God the Holy Ghost henceforth to amend your sinful lives*, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins, in the name of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. Amen.³⁵

Pieper explains the intention behind these words:

. . . when prior to the absolution we ask those desiring it whether they sincerely repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ, and have the good and earnest purpose henceforth to amend their sinful life, we do not mean to imply that the remission of sins is based on contrition, faith, and improvement of life. Why, this view would conflict with the very confession of the penitents, for they base their plea for grace on God's "boundless mercy and the holy, innocent, bitter suffering and death of His beloved Son Jesus Christ." Our one aim in asking those questions before pronouncing absolution is not only to keep secure sinners from becoming fortified in their carnal security, but to console poor, brokenhearted sinners. Any other interpretation of our form of absolution would contradict

³⁴Allgemeinen deutschen Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten. *Kirchen-Agende für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* (St. Louis: Druckerei der Deutschen Ev.-Luth. Synode v. Missouri, O. u. a. St., 1856), 31. For full text see Appendix III.

³⁵The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States, *Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations*, Translated from the German. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), 46 (emphasis added).

the Gospel of grace and, instead of consoling burdened consciences, would drive them into the sea of doubt.³⁶

Thus Löhe and Walther both contributed to the confessional practice of the church. Both were concerned with the preservation of private confession, and that concern was reflected in their corporate liturgies. Löhe avoided the dominical form of the Small Catechism, perhaps reserving it for private confession. In his corporate form he used a declaration of grace, different yet apparently considered no less an absolution. Walther made use of the dominical form with the addition of phrases which made clear those to whom this absolution did and did not apply. Together the two forms became the standards for American Lutheran confessional practice at the close of the nineteenth century.

The Common Service and The Twentieth Century

As previously stated, the Common Service of 1888 traces its form of corporate confession in the divine service back to Mecklenburg of 1552.³⁷ Since it is clear that Löhe also made use of the Mecklenburg form, it is possible that his practice may have had some influence on the development of the Common Service.

Walther's form for confession did not appear in the Common Service of 1888. When the Missouri Synod made the shift from German to English, it adopted the Common Service of 1888 via the introduction of the 1912 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*. This book, however, did not provide a

³⁶Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 201.

³⁷See above, page 25f.

translation of Walther's form for confession.³⁸ Not neglecting its own liturgical heritage, an English translation of Walther's 1856 *Agende* service, complete with its form of confession and absolution after the sermon, was included in the *Liturgy and Agenda* published by the Missouri Synod by 1921.³⁹

The state of private confession during this time is difficult to determine. Walther treated private confession as a distinct entity in the life of the church, as indicated in his *Pastoraltheologie*.⁴⁰ When Fritz discusses private absolution in his *Pastoral Theology*, he considers it primarily in the context of preparation for Holy Communion.⁴¹ While noting the advantages of private absolution, he speaks of its "common practice" in the past tense,⁴² thus indicating that its practice had apparently declined since Walther's day.

In *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941, both Walther's and Löhe's forms for corporate confession were reproduced, each with unusual modifications. The Löhe form was removed from the context of the Communion service. It was instead placed at the head of "The Order of Morning Service Without Communion."⁴³

³⁸Fred L. Precht, "The Preparation: Part II," *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, Fred L. Precht, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 403.

³⁹*Liturgy and Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 16-17.

⁴⁰C.F.W. Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 155-168.

⁴¹Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, 117-122.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 119.

⁴³The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 6.

Walther's form was moved from its position after the sermon to the beginning or preparation portion of the service. There it is clearly termed "the Absolution,"⁴⁴ unlike Löhe's form which receives no such title in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Moreover, the qualifying phrases which were so carefully inserted into Walther's confession are omitted in *The Lutheran Hymnal*.

When questioned about the implications of Walther's form of confession and absolution as it appeared in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, W.G. Polack, one of the chief authors of the hymnal, responded:

The General Confession and Absolution in our Order of the Holy Communion is justified because it presupposes that all join in to say the Confession, upon which the Absolution rightly follows. For those who do not join in the Absolution would have no value.

Our Committee placed the General Confession and Absolution into the order upon the request of numerous pastors throughout the Synod. We had no hesitancy about doing so because its use had long been found in the Lutheran Church and in our Synod. In the German Order it was placed immediately after the sermon and usually spoken in the pulpit. In our present English Liturgy and Agenda, it is given in the second form for the Order of Morning Service on pages 16 and 17.⁴⁵

No explanation was offered for the movement of this form to its new location nor for the omission of the qualifying phrases which had up to this point survived in English.

In current usage, Divine Service I of *Lutheran Worship* includes both forms of confession. There they are distinguished as "the absolution" (Walther's form) and "the declaration of grace" (Löhe's

⁴⁴Ibid, 16.

⁴⁵W.G. Polack, St. Louis, Missouri, to Rev. M.F. Kammroth, Hales Corners, Wisconsin, 21 October, 1944. W.G. Polack Collection, Box 11, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis.

form).⁴⁶ The notes on the liturgy contained in the *Altar Book* describe the two as follows:

Two forms of imparting forgiveness are provided. The first, the indicative-operative absolution, has its roots in private confession and small-group, confessional services. The second, the declaration of grace, was intended originally as a general or group confession in the preparation for public worship. Pastoral discernment of the needs of the congregation may well determine which form to use.⁴⁷

It should be noted also that *Lutheran Worship* includes an order of "Individual Confession and Absolution," which is offered for use "when, during consultation with the pastor, a person desires individual confession and absolution."⁴⁸

The Common Service of today, found in *Lutheran Worship's* Divine Service I, retains both Löhe's and Walther's forms of corporate confession and absolution (restoring Löhe's form to possible use in the Communion service). This corporate confession has become ingrained in our liturgical practice, and is currently far more prevalent and accepted than private confession (although the introduction of a liturgical form for private confession in *Lutheran Worship* may aid in reversing this situation). It appears that corporate confession has not been used to instruct people with regard to private confession, but has instead developed into an entity which has been viewed as a replacement for private absolution. Over the course of time both corporate and

⁴⁶*Lutheran Worship*, 137.

⁴⁷Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship Altar Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 27.

⁴⁸*Lutheran Worship*, 310-311.

private confession have gradually been reduced to little more than forms of preparation for Holy Communion, rather than treated as the sacrament which the Lutheran Symbols describe.

Scripture

The study of Holy Scripture provides us with very little in the way of examples of corporate confession and absolution (as opposed to individual confession which is described in Joshua 7, 2 Samuel 12, Matthew 9, 2 Corinthians 2, et al.). The texts generally used in discussing the doctrine of Holy Absolution⁴⁹ primarily deal with the concept of forgiveness rather than the question of corporate versus individual absolution. Yet in searching Scripture certain practices and principles come to light which prove informative to our study.

In the Old Testament, when the whole congregation of Israel shared in an unintentional sin, provision was made for corporate atonement and absolution. When the sin became known, Levitical law called for the assembly to offer the appropriate sacrifice for their sin. In this way, "the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them" (Leviticus 4:20). This forgiveness (Hebrew, כָּפַר) is not a communal reconciliation but divine absolution, for כָּפַר is used of God alone. "Never does this word in any of its forms refer to people forgiving each other."⁵⁰

⁴⁹Matthew 16:19; 18:15-18; John 20:22-23; et. al.

⁵⁰R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. II (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), 626.

It must be noted that this absolution was for the community which shared the same sin, and was not a group absolution for various sins of the people. The latter took place annually on the Day of Atonement. On that Day, the entire community was instructed to "afflict [or "humble"] your souls, and do no work at all" (Leviticus 16:29). This "affliction" would be roughly equivalent to the penitential attitude of our confession, for:

"If the general atonement made on this day was not to pass into a dead formal service, the people must necessarily enter in spirit into the signification of the act of expiation, prepare their souls for it with penitential feelings, and manifest this penitential state by abstinence from the ordinary enjoyments of life."⁵¹

The seriousness with which this penitence was to be approached was made clear in the command of God: "For any person who is not afflicted of soul on that same day, he shall be cut off from his people" (Leviticus 23:29). Nor was this "affliction" to be merely outward in nature, following the laws and customs in a mechanical fashion. Instead the children of Israel were to heed the call of God as through the prophet Joel, "So rend your hearts and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful" (Joel 2:13).

Israel was often dealt with as a corporate entity, but one must be careful not to overextend this corporate concept. Each individual is responsible for his own sin. Although the guilt of that sin may "overflow" to others (through complicity, silent approval, etc.; e.g.,

⁵¹C.F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. I *The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 405-406.

Achan's sin in Joshua 7), forgiveness is given to those who repent and believe.

The tenth chapter of Ezra offers us an instance of sin which corrupted the community: the intermarriage of the Israelites with pagan women. Called by Ezra the priest to "make confession to the LORD God," the people asked that they be dealt with individually. Each of them "gave their promise that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they presented a ram of the flock as their trespass offering" (10:19). Thus we see the repentance and reconciliation of the individual believer accentuated through this process of individual confession.

As Habakkuk declared, "The just shall live by *his* faith" (2:4). So too the New Testament placed its emphasis on the forgiveness of sins granted to the individual. Although the New Testament offers us no examples of corporate confession and absolution, words of absolution are pronounced to individuals.⁵²

Both Old and New Testaments make it clear that receiving the forgiveness of God is not *ex opere operato*, that is, "by the mere doing or observing."⁵³ God's forgiveness is predicated solely on His grace, without any merit, worthiness, or action on the part of man (Ephesians 2:8-9). If we refuse to confess our sin we reject the Word of God and His forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10). Therefore God calls us to confess our

⁵²Matthew 9:2; Luke 4:48; John 8:11; et. al.

⁵³Apology XXIV, 5.

sins, repent of them, and believe His Word lest we refuse His precious gift and perish (Luke 13:3, 5).

Thus, while not excluding the idea of corporate confession and absolution, the emphasis in Scripture rests on individual absolution. The individual believer is in no way to be "lost" in a corporate setting. He is to know and believe that God's word of forgiveness belongs to him and that he stands out as precious before God, redeemed by Christ.

Doctrine

The point of confession, corporate or private, is the absolution. This was made clear during the great theological upheavals of the Reformation. Rather than concentrating on confession and all of its detailed requirements as imposed by Rome, the Reformers diligently taught "that confession is to be retained for the sake of absolution (which is its chief and most important part), for the consolation of terrified consciences, and also for other reasons."⁵⁴ The practice of the Reformers was such that "the people are carefully instructed concerning the consolation of the Word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing."⁵⁵

The texts of our corporate liturgies of confession in the divine service must therefore be studied in terms of the Word of Gospel which they proclaim. Indeed in these relatively few words a number of

⁵⁴Augsburg Confession XXV, 13.

⁵⁵Augsburg Confession XXV, 2.

doctrines are presented. The question is whether this presentation retains its focus on the Gospel and strengthens the proclamation of both Law and Gospel.

In both forms of corporate confession we name ourselves "sinners," confessing before God both our original and actual sins. Original sin is confessed in Walther's form in the words "poor, miserable sinner," distinct from the "all my sins and iniquities" of actual sin. Löhe expressed the same thoughts with the words "by nature sinful and unclean" to describe original sin and "that we have sinned against you by thought, word, and deed" to describe actual sins. For these sins we deserve nothing but God's punishment (Walther).

We seek God's absolution not on our own merit but for the sake of Jesus Christ. Our heartfelt sorrow (Walther) and confession are forgotten as we look only to Christ for our deliverance. No synergism here--we seek the pure grace of God. For the sake (Löhe) and by the command (Walther) of Christ, that forgiveness is freely granted to us.

The office of the Holy Ministry and its authority are clearly referred to in Walther's dominical absolution as the "called and ordained servant" acts "in the stead and by the command of" Christ. Löhe, on the other hand, avoids this doctrine and instead pursues the connection of confession and absolution to Holy Baptism ("He that believes and is baptized . . . "). Since he also speaks of the growth in sanctification which results from this absolution ("increase in us . . . "), it is apparent that herein lies the strength for "the new man

[to] come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence."⁵⁶

Here we see the basic doctrines of the Gospel packed carefully together in one brief liturgical form. Yet this careful examination also brings to light the potentially troubling nature of our reliance on corporate confession. Does our liturgical practice achieve the goal of the Reformers and teach us to "esteem absolution as a great and precious thing"?⁵⁷

Sin is in no way diminished in our confession but, because of the corporate circumstances, the specific sins of which we are guilty are not named. This is not to say that we must name all our sins for them to be forgiven, for with Scripture and the Symbols we state "it is not necessary to enumerate all trespasses and sins, for this is impossible. Psalm 19:12, 'Who can discern his errors?'"⁵⁸ We must ask, however, whether we use this opportunity to confess our sins and in faith receive God's absolution or to receive the absolution without truly confessing ourselves to be sinners. The question is not one of degrees of contrition but whether or not contrition exists. As a penitent am I doing "my work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul,"⁵⁹ or have I fallen into an *ex opere operato* formula, merely going through the motions to get the results?

⁵⁶Small Catechism IV, 12.

⁵⁷Augsburg Confession XXV, 2.

⁵⁸Augsburg Confession XI, 1-2.

⁵⁹Large Catechism, Brief Exhortation, 15.

Perhaps it would be well for us to recall Walther's phrases which were omitted from our current formula. They reminded us that the forgiveness of sins was given to those "who heartily repent of your sins, believe on Jesus Christ, and sincerely and earnestly purpose by the assistance of God the Holy Ghost henceforth to amend your sinful lives."⁶⁰ Similarly Löhe's declaration of grace twice emphasizes faith in God's word of promise ("those who believe He that believes"). Such strong accents lead us to wonder what Polack meant when he presupposed "that all join in to say the Confession."⁶¹

Since we cannot look into the hearts of men, nor dare we reintroduce the legal requirements of Rome, it would seem we are locked in a stalemate over the issue. We have evolved into a liturgical situation in which people may be lost in the crowd, perhaps never really confessing and repenting of their sins, yet thinking all is well between them and God.

Our forms of corporate confession and absolution are laden with strong Law/Gospel teaching. They open to us opportunities for instruction in several related areas of doctrine. Yet a mechanical, inattentive use of these forms may undermine that same precious Gospel which we preach. Unless our preaching and teaching emphasize our sinfulness before God we cannot emphasize the tremendous gift of God's grace given to us here. Without that careful instruction in the

⁶⁰See above, page 29.

⁶¹See above, page 32.

personal application of Law and Gospel the people may not "esteem absolution as a great and precious thing."

Conclusion

The liturgy of corporate confession and absolution is a doctrinally rich treasure which the Church is hesitant to part with. Although the history of the confessional liturgy does not span as many centuries as that of other portions of the liturgy, it has become ingrained in our liturgical practice as part of the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation. Its words are a clear but simple message of Law and Gospel, a reminder of our situation before God as sinners and of His gift of the precious Gospel of forgiveness for Christ's sake.

Yet at the same time, this custom has been both a consoling and a confusing entity in the life of the church. It has been consoling in that the proclamation of the absolution is one of pure Gospel, the grace of God given to us in Jesus Christ. It has been confusing in that it has raised questions regarding contrition and the applicability of the absolution, thus potentially undermining the proclamation of Law and Gospel.

Upon reflection we find that this situation results from our reliance on absolution in its corporate form. The solution to this dilemma rests within the assumptions of the Lutheran Symbols: that the Church would continue in the practice of private confession and absolution. Luther, Melancthon, Löhe, and Walther all kept corporate confession in proper perspective through the regular use of private confession. In this way they could instruct individuals regarding the

nature of confession, bring to light the seriousness of their sin before God, and proclaim to them the pure sweet words of the Gospel. The practice of corporate confession would then serve to reinforce what took place in private.

Whether or not the Church retains the liturgies of corporate confession and absolution is a question of adiaphoron. Whether it continues to confront sinners with the Law and then, upon their confession declare to them the Gospel of God's absolution is not. Therefore even as we retain the corporate form of confession we must conclude with Luther:

"Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the Gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences and for the sake of untrained young people who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine. . . . Although private absolution is derived from the office of the keys, it should not be neglected; on the contrary, it should be highly esteemed and valued, like all other functions of the Christian church."⁶²

⁶²Smalcald Articles III, VIII, 1-2.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTROIT

The next portion of the liturgy, the Introit, rarely receives more than superficial comment. There is little dispute over the nature and purpose of this element; it is so utilitarian that it is sometimes overlooked almost entirely.

What is the source and the purpose of the Introit?¹ Commentators generally agree that the name, "Introit," is derived from the Latin *intro eo* (*it*) meaning "he goes in" or *introitus* meaning "entrance." Essentially, this is seen as a piece of liturgical traveling music, used to cover the movement of the ministers as they move up the the altar. The texts of this music were originally drawn from the Psalms.

The use of Psalmody is not unusual in the history of the Church's liturgy. The Book of Psalms has been highly prized and regularly used by the Christian Church throughout her history. She has followed the exhortation of St. Paul in his words to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

¹It should be noted that this section does not intend to discuss the selection of Introit texts, nor to critique sets of texts that have been used by the Church at various times and in various places. This chapter intends to deal with the history and use of the Introit as a liturgical element.

There are passing references to the use of Psalmody in the writings of various Church Fathers. Tertullian speaks of a "sister" who has been "favoured with sundry gifts of revelation," revelations which come through many opportunities. "Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, . . ." ² The singing of psalms is also mentioned by Cyprian, who advises Donatus:

Let the temperate meal resound with psalms; and as your memory is tenacious and your voice musical, undertake this office, as is your wont. You will provide a better entertainment for your dearest friends, if, while we have something spiritual to listen to, the sweetness of religious music charm our ears. ³

During a vigil before communion, Athanasius also employed a Psalm when the Church was surrounded by the soldiers of General Syrianus:

Now I considered that it would be unreasonable in me to desert the people during such a disturbance, and not to endanger myself in their behalf; therefore I sat down upon my throne, and desired the Deacon to read a Psalm, and the people to answer, 'For His mercy endureth for ever,' and then all to withdraw and depart home. ⁴

Eventually, Psalmody was appointed for use in the liturgy of the Church. Pope Celestine I (422-432) is considered by some to have been the first to institute the Introit as a regular part of the liturgy. The *Liber Pontificalis* says of him:

He made many regulations and appointed that the 150 psalms of David should be chanted antiphonally before the sacrifice by everyone; this was not done previously but only the epistle of

²"A Treatise on the Soul." Roberts, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 3, 188.

³"The Epistles of Cyprian, Epistle I." Roberts, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 5, 280.

⁴"Defence of His Flight." Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol 4, 263.

blessed Paul, the apostle, was read and the holy gospel, and thus masses were performed.⁵

Whether or not Celestine was responsible for this introduction, the use of Psalmody as an entrance hymn apparently developed around this time.

That the Introit was not placed in its position primarily for its theological content but for utilitarian purposes, is seen from early descriptions of its use. According to early sources, ". . . it began when the ministers began their entrance, and it ended when the procession was complete."⁶ Likewise, the Micrologus of Berthold to Constance records:

Paratus autem intrat ad altare, et facit confessionem, quia scriptum est: *Sapiens accusator est sui in principio* (Prov. XII); et antiquae legis sacerdotes primum pro se, deinde pro populo offerre soliti erant (Hebr. VII, Lev. XVI). Interim cantatur antiphona ad Introitum, quae ab introitu sacerdotis ad altare hoc nomen meruit habere. Hanc ad Introitum dici Coelestinus papa, in ordine quadragesimus quintus, instituit, cum usque ad ejus tempora ante sacrificium Epistola tantum Pauli et evangelium legeretur.⁷

Texts for the Introit were selected to "set the tone for celebration by conveying the spirit of the feast or liturgical season."⁸ Over the course of

⁵*The Book of the Popes (Liber Pontificalis) I, To the Pontificate of Gregory I* (Translated with an introduction by Louise Ropes Loomis, New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), 92.

⁶Martimort here describes information drawn from Ordo I, a document dating "from the eighth century or perhaps the end of the seventh." A.G. Martimort, ed., *The Church at Prayer*, Vol II, *The Eucharist* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 51.

⁷"Having been made ready now he enters to the altar, and makes confession, because it is written: A wise man is accuser first of himself (Prov. XII); and priests of the ancient law first for themselves, thereafter for the people were accustomed to offer (Hebr. VII, Lev. XVI). Meanwhile is sung an antiphon to the Introit, which has deserved from the entrance of the priest to the altar to have this name. This Introit Celestine appointed Pope, in turn the forty-fifth, instituted, since up to his time before the sacrifice the Epistle only of Paul and the Gospel was read." J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus*, Vol 151 (Paris, 1880), 979.

⁸Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, Vol II, 51.

time, it even became customary to name the Sunday or Feast day from the first words of the Introit. The Gloria Patri was added to the Psalm texts to distinguish the Christian use of the Psalter and connect the Old Testament texts with the later and fuller revelation of the New Testament."⁹

Martin Luther did not overthrow the appointed Introits of his day in his reform of the liturgy. He did encourage the return to the earlier custom of the Church Fathers, restoring the fuller texts of the Psalms:

First, we approve and retain the introits for the Lord's days and the festivals of Christ, such as Easter, Pentecost, and the Nativity, although we prefer the Psalms from which they were taken as of old.¹⁰

In his German Mass, Luther developed this thought as he replaced the Introit with "a hymn or a German Psalm."¹¹

Modern commentators generally agree that the Introit sounds the theme of the day or season. Because of its utilitarian function and its thematic announcement, most say that the Introit is, properly, an element of the service that belongs to the choir.

Granted, there are times when a congregation does not have a choir available to sing or speak the Introit. When this task falls upon the minister, the question arises whether this is a sacramental or a sacrificial element in the service. Strodach focuses on the thematic nature of the Introit, introducing a rubric which appears contradictory to the historic use of this text. He suggests:

⁹It is difficult to date this addition. Reed notes the seasonal omission of the Gloria Patri from Judica to Easter in the "Roman Missal and most pre-Reformation missals." Reed, 264.

¹⁰Luther, Vol 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 22.

¹¹Ibid., 69.

When it is read by the minister, he should stand on the chancel level and invariably face the congregation: he is then acting as the announcer. . . . It is utterly incorrect usage for the minister to face the altar when he reads the Introit: doing so will destroy the primary purpose or meaning of the Introit.¹²

It is difficult to consider the "primary purpose" of the Introit to be the announcing "the fact or the central teaching of the Day"¹³ when historically the Introit has been considered primarily utilitarian. These words are used to get the minister to the altar. If the minister is already at the altar, there is no real need for this text. As for the announcement of the theme of the day, that will be repeated in the text of the Collect, the Lessons, and the hymns of the service.

Yet the Introit is not just spoken into the air. These words are addressed to someone, but to whom?

A precise answer to this question may not be possible. The Introit was apparently introduced for purely practical reasons, so that the ministers would not have to process to the altar in silence. The texts of the Psalms generally imply prayer to God, and Paul in Colossians 3:16 speaks of "teaching and admonishing *one another* in psalms" as well as "singing . . . *to the Lord.*"

Instead of looking for an exclusive choice, perhaps we can suggest that the answer is both. Whether it is the minister or the choir that sings the Introit, those who listen to its words should take up an attitude of prayer. As we direct these prayers to God, we can also "overhear" the theme of the day directed toward us.

¹²Strodach, *A Manual on Worship*, 212.

¹³Ibid., 211.

The utilitarian use of the Introit is understandable only if the rubric is observed regarding the Preparation portion of the service. According to our service books, the Preparation (or the Confession and Absolution) should take place outside the altar rail so that the music when "he goes in" may truly be an "entrance" hymn. If the minister must speak or sing the Introit, why not do so on the way up to the altar?

Jungman seems to suggest that this whole beginning portion of the liturgy is a hodgepodge of elements that make little sense. He writes, "Turning now to the Roman entrance rite, the thing that strikes us about the whole ceremonial, from the prayers at the foot of the altar to the collect, is its lack of coherence; we do not get the impression of something unified."¹⁴ Yet perhaps the thematic note of the Introit is an element which fosters unity in the opening of the service. Pragmatic in origin, its text and use can draw the minds of people up to the altar of God from which the gifts of God proceed and the prayers of the people ascend.

¹⁴Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, 190.

CHAPTER FIVE

KYRIE ELEISON AND GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Within the context of the Common Service, what is the proper understanding of the *Kyrie elesion*? The Lutheran laity, many pastors, and certain writers seem to understand these words as penitential, words which ask for forgiveness. Scholars on the other hand describe these words as petitional, not penitential, but with little explanation or discussion of the matter. What then is meant by the words, "Lord, have mercy?"

Many questions may be derived from this issue. Foremost among them for Lutherans is whether or not and how these understandings involve the doctrine of justification. Is this a repeated request for forgiveness, immediately after receiving the absolution? But if the *Kyrie* is petitional, what is the nature of its request? How is "mercy" to be understood in the liturgy?

One's understanding of the *Kyrie* relates directly to an understanding of the *Gloria in excelsis*. If the *Kyrie* is penitential, is the *Gloria* then its "declaration of grace"? If petitional, how does the *Gloria* fit in to the context of those petitions? In what doctrine does this ancient hymn instruct us?

Kyrie Eleison: Origins

The origins of the *Kyrie eleison* are rather obscure. There is little or no trace of its use in the writings of Cyprian, Hippolytus, Novatian, or Tertullian. Neither is it to be found in Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Basil, nor the two Gregorys. In the second book of the Apostolic Constitutions (c. AD 380) it is used as a prayer response, a part of a litany¹, but no rubric is provided as to whether the priest or the people speak such a response.²

The first evidence of its existence in liturgical use is in the Clementine Liturgy in the 8th book of the Apostolic Constitutions. This places it in the Greek church since "the Apostolic Constitutions is also probably of Syrian origin, dating from the second half of the fourth century."³ Here its use was clearly as a petitional response.⁴ In the Liturgy of St. James, the *Kyrie* was said by the people.

In the Western Church, the first clear reference to the *Kyrie* appears in the third canon of the Council of Vaison. This Council was held in AD 529 under St. Caesarius of Arles, and involved bishops from the approximate area of modern Provence. It was a Romanizing, not a

¹A "litany" is defined as "an ancient form of general intercession; it is a highly organized form with marked responsive character." Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 767.

²Edmund Bishop, *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 120.

³Jones, *The Study of Liturgy*, 60.

⁴As a petitional response (in the context of the Litany) the *Kyrie* survived into the liturgies of the canonical Hours, but since the subject at hand is the *Kyrie* as an Ordinary, this chapter will refrain from further in depth discussion along these lines.

Gallicanizing council. The portion of the third canon pertinent to this discussion reads:

Et quia tam in sede apostolica quam etiam per totas Orientales atque Italiae provincias dulcis et nimium salutaris consuetudo est intromissa ut *Kyrie eleison* frequentius cum grandi affectu et compunctione dicatur, placuit etiam nobis ut in omnibus ecclesiis nostris ista tam sancta consuetudo et ad matutinum et ad missas et ad vesperam Deo propitio intromittatur.⁵

Bishop notes the prescription in the opening lines for "In the Apostolic See and through all the provinces of the East and of Italy."⁶ The prescription for Matins, Masses and Vespers is clear, but the description of past practice is unclear. Further, although it is called a "custom," there is no indication of whether it was an ancient or recent custom. Therefore, the origins of the *Kyrie* cannot be projected further back with any certainty.

The use of the *Kyrie eleison* was "enjoined by St. Benedict in his Holy Rule under the name of *supplicatio Litaniae* before the year 543."⁷ The *Kyrie* is again associated with a litany in the Gelasian sacramentary. Here, in the ordination Mass, the following rubric

⁵Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 119. "And because so in the Apostolic See as also through all the provinces of the East and of Italy a sweet and most salutary custom has been introduced that *Kyrie eleison* should be more often said with great devotion and compunction, we too ordained that in all our churches this very pious custom be introduced to a gracious God at Matins, Masses and Vespers."

⁶Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 119.

⁷Archdale A. King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 234.

appears: *Et post modicum intervallum mox incipiant omnes Kyrie eleison cum litania.*"⁸

Kyrie Eleison: The Mass

As the *Kyrie* was brought into use in the Mass, it went through a transformation. In the Greek liturgies it had been the prayer of the people. In the canonical Hours, prayer was twofold: first the people prayed, then the priest summed up their prayers in the oration. The same thing originally happened in the Mass with *Kyrie* (the prayer of the people), followed by *Oremus* and then the Collect. In 5th and 6th centuries this *Kyrie* was a litany, the petitions of which were answered with *Kyrie eleison*.⁹

The *Kyrie* was then decidedly petitional. In the litany which Pope Gelasius I appointed to be sung by the "universal Church" it contained 18 petitions in all, among which were prayers "for temporal rulers, for good weather, for the catechumens, for sinners, for those in distress, for the dead, etc."¹⁰

The first undisputed attestation of the *Kyrie* in the Mass is provided in a letter from St. Gregory to John, Bishop of Syracuse. A portion of it reads:

"Some one coming from Sicily has told me that some of his friends, whether Greeks or Latins I know not, full of zeal, of course (*quasi sub*

⁸Ibid., 235. "And, after a moderate interval, then let all begin to speak the *Kyrie eleison* together with the litany."

⁹Josef Andreas Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1959), 293.

¹⁰Ibid., 294.

zelo), for the Holy Roman Church, grumble about my measures, saying: 'A nice way, surely, to put the Church of Constantinople in its place, when he is following its customs in everything.' I said to him: 'What are these said customs we follow?' He replied: 'Why, you have ordered [among other things] *Kyrie eleison* to be said (*dici statuistis*).' And I answered: 'In none of these things have we followed the example of any other Church.'

. . . We have neither said, nor do we say, *Kyrie eleison* as it is said by the Greeks. For among them, all [the people] sing it (*dicunt*) together; but with us it is sung by the clerks, and the people answer (*a populo respondetur*). And *Christe eleison*, which is never sung by the Greeks, is [with us] sung as many times [as *Kyrie eleison*]. But in non-festal masses we omit some things usually sung [with the *Kyrie*] and sing only *Kyrie eleison* and *Christe eleison*, so that we may be engaged somewhat longer in these words of supplication."¹¹

Gregory makes it clear that this was an importation not borrowed from the Greeks, directly at least. He does not provide any indication as to the age of this "custom."

As Gregory reformed the Mass (due in part to his own health) the litany was shortened and the deacon's part dispensed with in the litany on ferial days.¹² Thus the *Kyrie* was reduced to the bare "*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*."¹³

When the transfer from a threefold *Kyrie eleison* to the alternation of *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, etc.*, occurred is uncertain. Jungmann cites the *Capituli movitiarum* of AD 816, a list of

¹¹Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, 123.

¹²A ferial day is any day except Saturday or Sunday, especially a day not designated as a festival or a vigil.

¹³Jones, *The Study of Liturgy*, 234.

decrees concerning monastic reform. Here there appears an insistence that for the *Kyrie eleison* the text *Kyrie eleison, Christe elesion, Kyrie elesion* must always be used. Jungmann implies that this change was a completely new idea. By 830, this text is taken for granted in a description of Prime by Amalar.¹⁴

As was previously stated, the *Kyrie* was at this time undoubtedly petitional in meaning. After Gregory's reforms which resulted in its "simplification," a shift in that meaning began. This shift began as the *Kyrie* was used in conjunction with genuflection:

"At first, the *Kyrie* had been put in front of the *Pater noster* because the latter still took the place of a collect. Thus it had a function like that of the genuflection--as we showed earlier. It was a *humble, supplicating gesture of the community, preparatory to the priest's prayer*. It comes as no surprise, therefore, when the parallel with genuflection shows itself in other ways. In the Apostolic Constitutions one kneels before the oration, saying the *Kyrie* as response to the deacon's litany of petitions. *In the Roman liturgy, thereafter, both elements persist, but separately*. The genuine Roman form which was first used in the liturgy consisted of *kneeling down at the Flectamus genua--signal, and praying a while in silence before the oration*. The *litania* with *Kyrie*--invocation must not have been introduced until later from the East--as the language suggests--and its use was limited to specified occasions. But both *Kyrie* and genuflection or even kneeling appear again, now in a new relationship."¹⁵

Jungmann further notes congratulatory correspondence dated 774 between Pope Hadrian and Charlemagne. "It is said that since the day the king left Rome [after his visit during the siege of Pavia early in 774], priest and monks and the people of the titular churches and in the

¹⁴Josef Andreas Jungmann, *Pastoral Liturgy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), 186.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 188 (emphasis added).

poor-houses have never ceased to pray for the King day by day and hour by hour, crying out to God with loud voice in the *Kyrie eleison*, 300 times repeated, and entreating God's mercy for him on bended knee (*flexis genibus*)."¹⁶

Several other accounts of massive repetition are given. The Byzantine liturgy has a 12-fold and 40-fold *Kyrie eleison*. The west-Syrian Jacobites' "Vespers on week days during penitential seasons was ended with the *Kyrie* repeated 60 times." The 300-fold *Kyrie* (as noted above) appeared in Roman liturgy in 8th century. "From this time on [8th c.], a multiple *Kyrie* becomes, in the main, accepted usage in the Roman liturgy, in the Mass in fact. There is no mention, however, of a fixed number."¹⁷ Jungmann concludes that the above examples already show traces of the *Kyrie eleison* possibly being regarded as a formal penitential rite. The parallel genuflexions would fit in with this idea.¹⁸

Thus far this chapter has recounted the entrance of the *Kyrie* into the liturgical realm beginning in the East as part of the litany, a petitional form. It came from there by an uncertain route into the Church at Rome and from there spread throughout the Western Church. However in that transition it shifted from being a prayer of the people to being yet another work of the priests. It underwent manifold

¹⁶Ibid., 188.

¹⁷Ibid., 190.

¹⁸Ibid., 189-190.

repetition and was joined to genuflexion, there receiving the beginnings of a penitential accent.

Would that the use of the *Kyrie* could be traced with accuracy from this point on, but that would be a nearly impossible task. No liturgical uniformity existed during the Middle Ages, not even within a given region.¹⁹ Since the goal of this paper is not primarily to provide such a detailed historical tracing but to focus on the major doctrinal emphases connected to the *Kyrie*, this discussion will pass on to the next foundational period of history.

Kyrie Eleison: The Reformation

For the Roman Mass, standardization occurred at Trent. From Trent (1545-1563) to Vatican II (1962-1965) it was "an era of rigid unification and of rubricism in matters liturgical."²⁰ But the stepping stone out of the Middle Ages which this study will employ is that of Martin Luther and the understanding of the *Kyrie* at the time of the Reformation.

In truth, little comment is made by Luther regarding these portions of the liturgy. In Luther's presentation of the *Formula Missae*, he writes:

Second, we accept the *Kyrie eleison* in the form in which it has been used until now, with the various melodies for different seasons, together with the Angelic Hymn, *Gloria in Excelsis*, which

¹⁹Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1981), 4.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 256.

follows it. However, the bishop may decide to omit the latter as often as he wishes.²¹

Strodach notes that the customary use of the time was three *Kyrie eleisons*, three *Christe eleisons* and three *Kyrie eleisons*. The *Kyries* in medieval times were expanded to the point that they became Propers, each with its own musical setting. "They were one of the few places in the Mass where the people still sang the responds, and for that reason were very popular."²²

In the *Deutsche Messe* Luther continued the adoption of the *Kyrie* with still further simplification, this time in terms of repetition: "Then follows the *Kyrie eleison* in the same tone, three times instead of nine, as follows: *Kyrie Eleison. Christe Eleison. Kyrie Eleison.* Thereupon the priest reads a collect in monotone on F-fa-ut as follows . . ." ²³ Yet once again in this passage there is no indication as to what Luther understood the *Kyrie* to mean.

Perhaps a better indication of the Reformation understanding of the *Kyrie* (and the *Gloria in excelsis*) may be derived from the texts of the hymns which were developed to replace the texts of the ordinaries. The hymn *Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit* is "a paraphrase of the Latin sequence *Kyrie summum: Kyrie, Fons bonitatis, Pater ingenite*, and is of

²¹Luther, Vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 23.

²²Martin Luther, *Formula of Mass and Communion For the Church at Wittenberg in Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 6, trans. by Paul Zeller Strodach, The Philadelphia Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), note 39, p. 103.

²³Luther, Vol 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 72.

12th-century origin, if not earlier."²⁴ Polack notes that the text is variously ascribed to Wittenberg, 1541, or to Johann Spangenberg (1484-1550).

Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit,
gross ist dein' Barmherzigkeit,
aller Ding' ein Schoepfer und Regierer.
Eleison, eleison

Christe, aller Welt Trost,
uns Suender allein du hast erloest.
O Jesu, Gottes Sohn,
Unser Mittler bist in dem hoechsten Thron
Zu dir schreien wir aus Herzensbegier:
Elesion, eleison!

Kyrie, Gott Heiliger Geist,
Troest, staerk uns im Glauben allermeist
Dass wir am letzten End'
Froelich abscheiden aus diesem Elend.
Eleison, eleison!

Kyrie, God Father in heaven above,
Great art Thou in grace and love,
Of all things the Maker and Preserver.
Eleison, elesion!

Kyrie, O Christ, our king,
Salvation for sinners Thou didst bring.
O Lord Jesus, God's own Son
Our Mediator at the heav'nly throne.
Hear our cry and grant our supplication.
Eleison, eleison!

Kyrie, O God the Holy Ghost,
Guard our faith the gift we need the most
Do Thou our last hour bless;
Let us leave this sinful world with gladness.
Eleison, eleison! Amen.

It is evident that this text is neither really penitential nor petitional in nature, but creedal. The precise content of the cry "out of our heart's desire" (*aus Herzensbegier*) is not stated. The overarching focus is salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Any concept of a "petitional" or "penitential" nature to these words must be provided by the worshipper.

Thus the *Kyrie* still maintains a petitional understanding. The loss of clearly defined petitions, however, and the Lutheran emphasis on the doctrine of justification have provided a foundation to "permit" a penitential understanding of the *Kyrie*. The ramifications of those alternative understandings will be discussed shortly.

²⁴W. G. Polack, *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942), 7.

Gloria in Excelsis: Origins

The *Gloria in excelsis* was known in Christendom since the 4th century. It is seen in the liturgy of St. James, in East Syrian liturgies, and is referred to by St. Chrysostom. It was most likely "that St. Hilary of Poitiers (ob. c. 368) translated the *Gloria* from the words *Laudamus te* until the end. St. Hilary was an exile in the East in 360, and what more probable than he should have translated the hymn that he had heard so often in the Byzantine morning office?"²⁵ He probably then transplanted it from the Orient to the West.

As to the certainty of its age, King makes the pertinent observation that:

Its composition can hardly be later than the 3rd century, as the Son is not designated as consubstantial with the Father, and there is no reference to any relationship with the Holy Spirit, omissions which would be unlikely in a more recent orthodox document.²⁶

Gloria in Excelsis: The Mass and the Reformation

Pope Symmachus (AD 498-514) introduced the *Gloria in excelsis* to be used on Sundays and certain feasts. Its use in Mass is attested to by the *Liber Pontificalis* c. 530, but that use was restricted. At first it was used only in papal or episcopal Masses; the "simple priests" were allowed to use it only on Easter. Finally in the eleventh century it became available and customary in use on all Sundays and feast days.²⁷

²⁵King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church*, 238.

²⁶Ibid., 237.

²⁷Dom Benedict Steuart, *The Development of Christian Worship* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), 77.

The *Gloria in excelsis* was considered a "popular song" which was inserted in the Mass. "Adrian Fontescue describes the *Gloria in excelsis* as one of the 'private psalms' (psalmi idiotici) sung in the Church of the first centuries."²⁸ Some see it as an interruption of the flow of prayer, but Jungmann argues that since the Mass is a celebration of a feast this note of joy is appropriate. It is followed by the Collect which once again brings the prayers of the people into one unified thought and theme for that Sunday thus ending the Fore-Mass.

Reed cites Luther as saying of the *Gloria in excelsis* that it "did not grow, nor was it made on earth, but it came down from heaven." Yet he goes on to state that Luther made no reference to the use of it in his German Mass.²⁹ The metrical version of the *Gloria, All' Ehr' und Lob soll Gottes sein*, (All Glory Be to God Alone)³⁰ very closely parallels the text of the *Gloria in excelsis*. No new accents are brought to light regarding any unique interpretations. The important thing to note is that Luther readily adapted this "popular song" into the vernacular for the use of the people. Thus even Luther's metrical version of this "private psalm," this simple song of praise, leaves it virtually unchanged from its 4th century beginnings.

²⁸King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church*, 237.

²⁹Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 273.

³⁰Polack, *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, 177-178.

Kyrie and Gloria: The Twentieth Century

Luther Reed reports that the Common Service, the object of this study, was based on the Muhlenberg Liturgy of 1748 and a broad study of the Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century.³¹ For this reason it is easy to see the parallels between the Roman Mass, Luther's *Formulae Missae* and *Deutsche Messe*, and the liturgy of the Common Service.

Prior to Reed's comprehensive work on the subject others wrote instructional commentaries on the liturgy of the Common Service. One of these, set in catechismal form, asks and gives answer to the following questions:

52. What is the office of the Kyrie?

The congregation, realizing its infirmity from indwelling sin, calls upon God for that grace which has been announced and offered in the Introit.

53. Why is the prayer thrice uttered?

Because the grace for which it asks is from God the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

54. By what is this cry for mercy succeeded?

By the Gloria in Excelsis. This part of the Service strikingly reproduces the order of events related in Luke 18:35-43. There the blind man in his misery cried for mercy. So do we in the Kyrie. He cried persistently. We utter the same prayer three times. His prayer was answered. Our petitions are likewise granted. Then he and "all the people with him" glorified and gave praise unto God. So our Kyrie is followed by Gloria in Excelsis.³²

The first portion of this explanation is ambiguous due to the clause "realizing its infirmity from indwelling sin." The grace "announced and offered in the Introit" could refer to the forgiveness of sins (since it follows the Absolution). More likely it simply refers to a gift from God

³¹Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 179-180.

³²The Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, *An Explanation of The Common Service*, 27-28.

in accord with the theme of the day. The nature of the "petitions" which "are likewise granted" also remains ambiguous, for the definition of "mercy" is never explored. These could be requests for forgiveness or, in parallel with the example of the text (Luke 18:35-43), a request for specific action on the part of God. The problem is left unresolved.

Another writer of the same period offered these comments as an explanation of what is going on here. After the Confession, Declaration of Grace, and Introit (which sounds the keynote for the day), Baltzly notes:

"But whenever God's wonderful thoughtfulness and love are mentioned there must result to the believer a *sense of unworthiness*. 'As even the apostle who leaned on Jesus' breast fell as dead at the manifestation of the divine glory in the beginning of the Apocalypse, so the devout worshiper, after hearing of God's favor, remembers that even though he be a forgiven child of God rejoicing in the consciousness of sonship, nevertheless he still lives on earth and *sin still exists within and around him*.' (Jacobs in Christian Worship, p. 164.) There arises therefore naturally upon the first hearing of the sublime theme of Scripture and the consequent praise of the Holy Trinity a feeling of unworthiness which is expressed in the *plaintive* Kyrie: . . . (Ps. 123:3; Mat. 9:27, etc.)³³

Again these words could be taken either way, until one reads his description of the relationship that the *Gloria in excelsis* has to the plaintive cry of the *Kyrie*:

"With the compassionate words of Jesus unto all who thus cried unto him, and his wonderful benefactions to all such petitions, in mind, the minister encourages the devout worshipers in the words with which the angels quickened a *despairing* world: 'Glory be to God on high.' . . . At once, faith in the hearts of God's people is aroused to action, and

³³Rev. Oliver D. Baltzly, *The Morning Order of Worship* (Burlington, Iowa: The German Literary Board, 1909), 18-19 (emphasis added).

they celebrate his divine goodness and love and mercy in that majestic song of the ages."³⁴

Baltzly acknowledges the two aspects of worship: sacrificial and sacramental. He sees both of these active in the order of worship, but in his understanding, "up to this point the Sacrificial has been preeminent--confession has been made; exalted praise has been offered."³⁵ The petitional nature of the *Kyrie* is thus obscured, allowing the *Gloria* to be understood as a thankful response for the answered prayer for forgiveness of sins.

Reed also traces the history of the *Kyrie eleison* and the *Gloria in excelsis*. He cites a longer form of *Kyrie eleison* and is very careful to point out the petitional nature of these words:

The Common Liturgy restores the *Kyrie* to its original form and seeks to invest it with its original significance as a congregational acclaim of the Lord as he comes to meet with his people as they begin their worship, and as an objective, unselfish intercession for peace and the good estate of the church, the state, and the world.³⁶

Reed finds the penitential element developing in two ways. First, in the second *Book of Common Prayer* the words "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law" were introduced as a refrain after each commandment in the Decalogue. Coupled with the loss of the Introit and Gradual and the transfer of the *Gloria in excelsis* to the end of the service, the penitential accent developed in Anglican worship. Although Reed credits Roman and Lutheran liturgies, for they "introduce

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., 20.

³⁶Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 269-270.

the elements of worship and praise early in their services, and sustain this mood," he is very unhappy with the musical setting provided. "Dr. Gilbert's simple alternate in C-minor has been inserted by request. Unhappily its feeling of heaviness suggests the erroneous conception of the Kyrie as a penitential text."³⁷

Streng, undoubtedly building on the work of Reed, states that "the Kyrie is *not* a plea for forgiveness. . . . we now dare to ask God for other blessings we need."³⁸ He relates the *Kyrie* to the litany (*Ektene*), finding a favorable comparison with the extended form of the *Kyrie* in the *Service Book and Hymnal*. Streng's understanding of mercy is that it is "the withholding of deserved punishment, though in the Deacon's Prayer it has the accent of 'Lord, listen, please.' All or any of our petitions are fulfilled only through the mercy of our God."³⁹ He ties this into the *Gloria in excelsis* by saying that in its three parts God "shows his mercy (as in the *Kyrie*) by receiving our prayers."⁴⁰

From these citations it is clear that the modern Lutheran liturgical understanding of the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria in excelsis* seems to be returning to that of the ancient church. The *Kyrie* is once again a petitional response, a fact which the newer liturgies are making even clearer. The *Gloria in excelsis* remains a hymn of praise, unfortunately never rising to prominence from its non-descript status. Together, the

³⁷Ibid., 272.

³⁸William D. Streng, *Toward Meaning in Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 33.

³⁹Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰Ibid., 39-40.

Kyrie and *Gloria* provide a Trinitarian focus that "sets the stage" for the Word through prayer and thanksgiving.

Alternative Understandings: Kyrie as Penitential

As it has been made clear, the understanding of *Kyrie eleison* is disputed. The layman's understanding seems to run the *Kyrie* as a repentant, penitential plea for forgiveness. Some typical references to support this view are found in Psalm 51:1,⁴¹ Isaiah 55:7,⁴² and Jeremiah 3:12.⁴³

The *Gloria in excelsis* has not received much comment among those who pursue this view. It would be assumed that this Ordinary would then serve as some sort of declaration of grace or as an anthem of praise for the forgiveness received (N.B., this reception is understood, not declared). Because of the lack of clarity regarding this understanding of the *Gloria in excelsis* (and partly due, no doubt, to its "slow" musical setting), it is often simply omitted from the liturgy without compunction.

There is some potential validity to this line of argument. One could argue that since Confession was made on an individual basis the combination of *Kyrie* and *Gloria in excelsis* served as a preparatory

⁴¹"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions" (NKJV).

⁴²"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (NKJV).

⁴³"Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD, 'And I will not cause My anger to fall on you; for I am merciful,' says the LORD, 'And I will not remain angry forever'" (NKJV).

confession and absolution in the context of the Mass. There is, however, no evidence of Confession having been a part of early liturgies. Corporate Confession and Absolution seems to be a relatively recent liturgical development.

A second problem arises within the context of the Common Service. If these Ordinaries are viewed as confessional in nature, they mark an immediate repetition of the Confession and Absolution which has just occurred in the service. It is true that the gifts of the Gospel are without measure, that the Christian receives everything from God and then still more. It is also true that he is *simul iustus et peccator*, standing ever in need of forgiveness. It is still further true that forgiveness will be received again thirty to forty minutes hence in the Lord's Supper. This immediate juxtaposition of Absolution and a penitential *Kyrie* (separated only by the Introit), however, seems to deny the power of the Absolution. At best, it may serve to confuse those who have just received that Absolution.

The final result of this understanding is that the Collect becomes isolated as a separate element. Rather than flowing out of the prayers of the people and bringing them into a focus appropriate to the day (that is, "Proper"), the Collect must direct the congregation's thoughts down a new path: petitional prayer to God.

Alternative Understandings: Kyrie as Petitional

The other possible liturgical interpretation of the *Kyrie* which has been presented in this chapter is that of the *Kyrie* as petitional. This means the *Kyrie* is essentially a prayer which makes a specific request,

the words *Kyrie eleison* being the prayer of the people for God's answer to that request. The obvious difficulty with this interpretation is that the simple text used in the Common Service is not specific.

The question arises as to how to rectify this difficulty. No simple answer exists. Modern liturgical forms reflect the petitional understanding by including actual petitions,⁴⁴ but the *Kyrie* of the Common Service is not "adorned" in this way. Perhaps this will remain a matter of education at the congregational level as people are taught to pray in the context of worship.

Such an understanding of the *Kyrie* permits a simple and logical explanation of the *Gloria in excelsis*, for it is the same definition with which this song of praise originated. This prayer is kept from excessive solemnity as in a festive tone the assembled believers rejoice that their prayers are indeed heard and answered by God. For this God is glorified.

Finally, the flow of the liturgy remains uninterrupted. All of the prayers of all of the worshippers are brought together into the one focal thought, the theme of the day, stated in the Collect.

Scripture

An investigation into the Old Testament use and understanding of "*Kyrie eleison*" proves informative to this study. Very few cries of this nature are only for the forgiveness of sin. Some well-known examples have been cited above. These passages should be seen in the light of other passages. The most problematic to a merely penitential understanding of

⁴⁴As does the *Kyrie* of Divine Service II: *Lutheran Worship*, 159-160.

mercy are those passages which say, 'Lord, have mercy (that is, 'Lord, forgive me') and destroy my enemies.'⁴⁵ For this reason perhaps these passages should be understood as comprehending "mercy" in the sense of forgiveness as a subset of a greater definition of mercy which runs in Scripture.

In the Septuagint the Greek word *ελεω* is the word used to translate *רחם* and (more rarely) *רחמים*. The concept communicated goes beyond an attitude or disposition in the one from whom "mercy" is requested. Although based on trust and loyalty, the focus is on a real (tangible) action. "It must be emphasised that *רחם* primarily denotes, not a disposition, but the act or demonstration of assisting faithfulness. . . . It is typical that normally *רחמים* and *רחם*, too, denote the act or expression of love rather than the emotion."⁴⁶

Perhaps the Prophets best illustrate the relationship which *ελεω* exhibits between petition and action. In their preaching, the lack of mercy is generally due to sin and apostasy. The positive exercise of mercy, however, repeatedly involves the concrete act of restoration of Israel to the promised land by Yahweh (ex., Ezekiel 39:25; Amos 5:15; Zechariah 1:17).

⁴⁵"I said, 'LORD, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.' . . . But You, O LORD, be merciful to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them" (Psalm 41:4, 10): "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by" (Psalm 57:1). (NKJV).

⁴⁶Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), vol. 2, s.v. "*ελεος*," by Rudolf Bultmann, 480-481.

Thus the Old Testament use of ελεεω involves action and petition, not (primarily) repentance. Forgiven by God, the prayer is for further, *specific* gifts, and it expects a clear action--not merely a change in attitude. The concept and usage go beyond forensic justification. Only when sin is clear and devastating to the worshipper do repentance and forgiveness seem to be the focal accent of ελεεω (Ps. 25:16; 51:1; Is. 55:7; 59:2; Jeremiah 3:12).

In the New Testament, mercy is understood more frequently in terms of forgiveness. This is especially true of such familiar passages as 1 Timothy 1:13, 16⁴⁷ and 1 Peter 2:10⁴⁸. Now that God's salvation in Jesus Christ is made clear, the believer who also claims himself to be "chief of sinners" now asks for and rejoices in that merciful forgiveness of God.

An attempt at understanding cries for mercy solely as penitential, however, must confront the numerous Gospel references in which it is a petition for healing (ex., the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15:22, blind Bartimaeus of Mark 10:47, the ten lepers of Luke 17:13, et. al.; cf. Philippians 2:27). God's mercy is expressed in action, not simply in a change of attitude on His part. Thus the Old Testament understanding of ελεεω carries on into the New Testament, where it is expanded and fulfilled by the saving eschatological actions of the Christ.

⁴⁷"Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. . . . However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (NJKV).

⁴⁸. . . who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (NKJV).

Doctrine

This paper has shown how the primary understanding of the *Kyrie* remains petitional in liturgical use. Such use is defended by Scripture, which adds to it the full understanding of the nature of prayer. Therefore as the *Kyrie* is studied and used in the liturgy, it should be studied first in the light of the doctrine of prayer and not in terms of repentance. This distinction is made plain in the words of Pieper:

What is back of this wonderful situation, that a man who is dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27) and--more than that--a sinner, dares to speak with the majestic and holy God as a child talks with his father (Matt. 6:9)? The Holy Ghost has engendered in him the faith that God is gracious to him because of Christ's vicarious satisfaction and both bids him to pray and promises to hear his prayer. In other words, prayer presupposes justifying faith.⁴⁹

Pieper also summarizes the words of Luther saying that "dividing prayer into thanksgiving and supplication fully covers the ground."⁵⁰ As Luther put it:

With God we cannot deal in more than two ways, namely, thanksgiving and petition. In our thanksgiving we praise Him for the gifts and graces already received; in our petitions we praise Him for the gifts and graces we desire. (St. L. X:2204)⁵¹

This provides the connection between the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria in excelsis*. The *Kyrie* has been the petition; the *Gloria* is the thanksgiving.

⁴⁹Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol III, 78.

⁵⁰Ibid., 77.

⁵¹Ibid., 77.

Although both of these Ordinaries have Sacrificial rubrics (i.e., directed toward God), there is an anamnetic quality inherent in the prayer they offer. That is to say even though the prayer is to God, the words remind the worshipper what God has done for him. An indirect proclamation takes place as the worshipper overhears a description of God's actions.⁵² The references to Scripture may not be explicit within the context of the Ordinary. They may nonetheless serve as devotional reminders of the accounts of Scripture and even entire loci of doctrine.

The only direct Scriptural reference in the *Gloria in excelsis* is to Luke 2:14, the song of the angels at the birth of Christ. Here the worshipper confesses his praise with the angels, and that in itself may serve as a reminder both of the perfect praise offered to God in heaven and of the work of His messengers (ἄγγελοι). Perhaps also, considering the familiarity of Luke 2, the incarnation of the Son of God may be indirectly referenced.

The *Gloria* is often seen in three parts, much like the structure of the creed. The first lauds the Father, repeating some of the more prominent names used of Him in Scripture. Here juxtaposed are the titles of great power and might with the familiar, personal title of "Father." Since this is in the context of prayer already, perhaps a reference to the use of "Father" in the Lord's Prayer may be read in.⁵³

⁵²Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 141.

⁵³"God would by these words tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear father." Luther's Small Catechism: *Lutheran Worship*, 302.

The second part magnifies the Son with references to what He has done for the whole world in His work of redemption. Here the images of John 1:29 are echoed in the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The words "have mercy" need not pose a further confusion in this context. Like the *Kyrie eleison*, a penitential understanding is not required. These words can be understood to be a petition which can be made based on what Christ has already accomplished.

The third part of this hymn glorifies the entire Trinity, with a passing reference to the Holy Spirit. No explicit statement is made regarding the relationship of the three Persons of God, but the general implication is that of equal glory with the Father, thus implying what was later more clearly defined as "Trinity."

Conclusion

For a consistent approach to the flow of the liturgy in the Common Service, it has been shown that it is best to speak of the *Kyrie eleison* and the *Gloria in excelsis* in terms of prayer. If these two Ordinaries are understood as a whole, then they describe a continuous prayer consisting of petition and thanksgiving. The *Kyrie* marks the petitions, making specific requests of God. The *Gloria in excelsis* is not an intrusion on this prayer, rather it serves as a blessed supplement of praise which also keeps our prayer from excessive solemnity. Understood in this manner, these two elements may then be brought into focus and "collected" in the Collect proper to a given day.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SALUTATION AND THE COLLECT

The Salutation

Like the Introit, the liturgical greeting which we know as the Salutation does not receive extensive treatment in commentaries on the liturgy. The fact that it has been so unquestioningly received by the Church is most likely related to the apparently Biblical origins of this greeting. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament make use of this greeting:

"This Scriptural phrase captures the thoughts of five particular passages: In Ruth 2:4, Boaz returned from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you;" Judges 6:12 recalls an angel appearing to Gideon saying, "The Lord is with thee;" Gabriel greeted Mary in Luke 1:28 with the words, "Hail, thou art highly favored; the Lord is with thee;" and two passages from Paul's letters record the words, "The Lord be with you all," (2 Thessalonians 3:16) and "The Lord be with your spirit," (2 Timothy 4:22).¹

One of the earliest references to the use of the Salutation in the liturgy of the Church dates to c. AD 200, where it appears at the beginning of the Offertory of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, what we would today call the Preface to Holy Communion.² Since that time, the Salutation has also been spoken before the reading of the

¹Gregory Schultz, "Liturgy as Word of God," Concordia Student Journal, Easter 1989, 22-23.

²Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 20.

Gospel, prior to the Benediction, and before the Collect of the Day. It appears that the Salutation has held this last position since the development of the Collect.³

The Salutation has been and remains a pivotal element in the liturgy. We have here a simple, Scriptural greeting extended not from man to God but from man to man, in this case from pastor to people and, in response, from people to pastor. This expression of unity becomes even clearer as we consider the response to the Salutation, "And with your spirit."

There are essentially two interpretations of these words. The first simply being "And with you, too," as an acknowledgement of the pastoral greeting and a return of this greeting from people to pastor. Parsch writes, "The response *Et cum spiritu tuo* (and with thy spirit) is in the singular, and in the liturgy is addressed to the priest. The expression is a Hebraism, meaning, simply, 'with you, too.'"

Another meaning has arisen relating to the fact that these words are spoken in the singular to the priest/pastor who presides over the service. As Parsch continues:

However, from another aspect, it is not altogether correct to translate the phrase *Et cum spiritu tuo* simply "and with you too", for the liturgy imparts a special significance to the words "thy spirit". It envisages here the power of orders conferred upon the celebrant and would say in effect: "And with the Spirit (*pneuma*) that is in you by reason of your ordination". It is for this reason that the greeting is not addressed to anyone below the order of a deacon."⁴

³The Eastern Church has maintained a similar style of greeting, using the phrase, "Peace be with you" rather than "The Lord be with you."

⁴Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass*, 122.

Jungmann also discusses the meaning of this response, suggesting:

*"We can best understand the Et cum spiritu tuo as a popular consensus in the work of the priest, not that the congregation here gives the priest authority or power to act in its stead, but that the congregation once more acknowledges him as the speaker under whose leadership the united group will approach almighty God."*⁵

Although we may seek to downplay the Roman doctrine of ordination in our interpretations of the Salutation, this greeting and its response can nonetheless serve "as constant reminders of the pastoral relationship while renewing the ties of faith and common purpose in further acts of prayer."⁶

In the Lutheran Church the pastor has, in fact, been given his authority over the congregation by virtue of the call which has come mediately through the congregation. Thus we could say that the response is both an affirmation of the congregation giving the pastor "authority or power to act in its stead" as well as acknowledging him as their leader as they approach God in prayer.

Such theological interpretations of the Salutation and its response can only be sustained if the current rubrics are observed. It was and remains the practice of the Roman Catholic church to reserve these words for a minister at or above the rank of deacon. Although the *Kirchenordnungen* are not quite as clear in this matter, they essentially continue the Roman rubric by designating these words for the Pastor

⁵Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 243-244.

⁶Reed, 277-78.

rather than allowing a *Kirchendiener*⁷ to speak them. Today, the *Lutheran Worship Altar Book* calls for the Salutation to be spoken by the presiding minister.⁸

What is the purpose of the Salutation at this point?

"Older commentators usually cling to a consideration only of the content of this greeting, stressing the fitness of the wish that the Lord might be near and God's favor accompany their praying, as he, the priest, offers up to God the prayer of all. But the form of the salutation, this direct address to the people, is not explored. For why does the priest just here turn to greet the people? . . . The *Dominus vobiscum* recurs every time the congregation receives an invitation or a special announcement The *Dominus vobiscum* thus has a clear relation to the action that follows; it serves to focus our attention."⁹

If we assume that part of the function of the Salutation is to focus attention on the next portion of the liturgy, it is natural that the Salutation precede the Collect of the Day.

Thus the Salutation offers us a Biblical greeting between pastor and people, a reaffirmation of the office of the Public Ministry and its place in the conduct of the service, and a focusing of attention on what is about to transpire, namely, the Collect of the Day.

The Collect

The greatest point of disagreement regarding the Collect does not involve its history, form, or use. It is a question of simple

⁷As was done in the corporate service of Confession and Absolution in Mecklenburg. See Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. V, 197-198.

⁸*Lutheran Worship Altar Book*, 27.

⁹Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 241.

definition and application of the term: to what, precisely, is the word "Collect" applied?

Citing Lochner's conclusions from Luther, Calvör, and the *Kirchenordnungen* of 1544, Saar states:

Scholarly speculation has come to posit two propositions about the etymology of the word "collect." The term refers either to the collecting of the congregation for worship or to the gathering of the people's petitions. Most scholars conclude that the term's origins are simply ambiguous.¹⁰

Jones is less equivocal, claiming:

The name derives from the Gallican rite: *collectio*, later *collecta*; and refers to the *function* of the prayer, to its collecting or summing up of the people's intercessions, not to the *occasion* of its use, at a collection or gathering of the people before a procession, as was once thought.¹¹

One must consider what the implications might be for postulating an either-or stance on this question. If one argues that this prayer only gathers petitions, then is the presence of the people really necessary to conduct the liturgy? On the other hand, if the term refers to gathering the people, then, practically speaking, how is that done? Upon examination of the placement and function of the Collect in the broader scope of the liturgy, perhaps we should argue that the gathering of the petitions of the people is the practical manner in which the people are gathered for worship.

Prayer itself is nothing new to the life and worship of the Church. Both Old and New Testaments record the practice of regular prayer, both on an individual as well as a corporate basis. It has been

¹⁰David P. Saar, "Let Us Pray," *Logia*, III (July 1994): 13.

¹¹Jones, *The Study of Liturgy*, 183.

noted that the Book of Acts quotes a complete prayer uttered "with one mind" after the release of Peter and John, and some have seen in this an anticipation of the Collect-form.¹²

The Collect is not a prayer text, but a specific, five-part form of prayer which the Church has employed for centuries. Although the origin of this single-sentence prayer of the day is uncertain, Jones notes that the Collect was not a feature of the liturgy in the time of Celestine I (422-32). He suggests that "the *oratio prima* of the Roman rite was apparently introduced by Leo I (440-61) or his immediate predecessor."¹³ Studies by Cross further suggest that the Collect form probably did, in fact, pre-date Leo. He argues that the development of the Roman proper was probably precipitated by "an official change from Greek to Latin in the Roman liturgy which . . . probably took place between 360 and 382."¹⁴

Parsch supports a pre-Leonine origin:

The Collect in its specifically Roman form makes its first appearance in the oldest extant Leonine Sacramentary, the textual matter of which certainly dates back to the fifth and sixth centuries. In this sacramentary we find the Collects already in full flower, and in such profusion that we may regard this period from Leo I to Gregory I (450-550) as the heyday of the Roman Collect.¹⁵

According to the Leonine Sacramentary, two Collects were often employed for the same day. By the time of the Gregorian Sacramentary

¹²Ibid., 357.

¹³Ibid., 183.

¹⁴F.L. Cross, "Pre-Leonine Elements in the Proper of the Roman Mass" *Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1949): 196-197.

¹⁵Parsch, *The Liturgy of the Mass*, 125.

and the *Ordo Romanus I* (dated to the seventh century) there was only one.¹⁶ The use of multiple Collects returned by the eleventh century, increasing from one to as many as seven in number before the Epistle.¹⁷

In his reforms of the Roman Mass, Luther called for a reduction to only one Collect before the Epistle. Luther was willing to retain the Collect in its accepted form, "if it is evangelical (and those for Sunday usually are)."¹⁸ Luther himself translated and adapted many Collects, and nearly all of his Collects have been traced to pre-Reformation sources (missals, breviaries, etc.)¹⁹

These ancient prayers came into English through the Anglican Church and its *Book of Common Prayer*. Translators, especially Thomas Cranmer, sought to maintain the Latin structure of the Collects as they were brought into English. "The English and the continental Reformers were also at one in seeking to relate the Collect specifically to the liturgical Lessons."²⁰

Since it is not the purpose of this chapter to discuss the texts of the propers, a lengthy discussion of which Collects were in use at what time is not appropriate. It may be helpful, however, to discuss the Collect form which has survived down through the centuries.

¹⁶Ibid., 126.

¹⁷Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 283.

¹⁸Luther, Vol 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 23.

¹⁹Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 283.

²⁰Reed, 284.

As previously stated, the structure of the Collect consists of five parts. First is the address, that is, to whom we are speaking. Second is the basis of our petition. This states our reason for going to God with our request, citing something that God has done or promised. Next comes the petition proper, that for which we are asking. Fourth is the purpose of the petition, our statement of what will happen after God grants this request of ours. Finally, the prayer closes with a doxology, giving all glory to God who hears and answers prayer. The address, petition proper, and doxology are always included in a Collect; the basis and purpose of the petition may or may not be included.

An example of this five part form may be found in the Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter²¹:

- (Address) Almighty God, merciful Father,
- (Basis) since you have wakened from death
the Shepherd of your sheep,
- (Petition) grant us your Holy Spirit
- (Purpose) that we may know the voice of our
Shepherd and follow him that sin and
death may never pluck us out of your
hand;
- (Doxology) through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who
lives and reigns with you and the
Holy Spirit, one God, now and
forever.

In a sense, this five-part form offers a mini-lesson in the theology of prayer. It is to the Triune God that we address our prayers, and to Him we give all glory in the doxology. We bring our petition to God in faith, knowing that He will hear and answer us as He

²¹*Lutheran Worship*, 52.

has promised. Basing our petitions on that which God has first done for us keeps our requests in accord with His will and with the confession of the Church. The result which we anticipate from our prayers likewise serves as a way to measure our request against the will of God. Thus the use of prayer forms such as the Collect serve to remind us that through our Savior, Jesus Christ, our prayers are indeed heard at the throne of God and answered.

Conclusion

The Salutation and Collect together serve numerous and important functions in the course of the divine service. The Biblical greeting of the Salutation may serve as a reminder of our doctrine of the Office of the Public Ministry, even as it calls attention to the importance of the prayer which is to follow.

To seek distinctions between the Collect gathering people or gathering their petitions may be a search for something that does not exist. Instead the Collect should be seen as the distilling of the thoughts and hearts of many people, leading those assembled to focus on one particular thought, the theme for the day.

The focus of this prayer by its very form is not on man, but on God. Address and basis, purpose and doxology are all concerned with the will of God, and thus bring our thoughts and prayers in line with God's will on the specific theme chosen for the day. The theme of the day which is here sounded not only petitions God to answer our request but also prepares for His Word which we are about to receive.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE LESSONS AND THE GRADUAL

The Lessons

The reading of the Lessons is the most ancient portion of the liturgy, originating in Old Testament practice. Oesterley suggests, "The antiquity of the practice may be gathered from the fact that it was believed to have been enjoined by Moses himself: '. . . When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing' (Deut. xxxi. 9 ff.).¹ Specifically we see this practice developed in the book of Nehemiah, where Ezra reads from the Law during the Feast of Tabernacles:

Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. (Nehemiah 8:18a)

Again Scripture records,

And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God. (Neh 9:3)

Regular reading from the Scriptures was a normal practice in the Jewish synagogue, a practice in which Jesus Himself participated (e.g., Luke 4:16). St. Paul confirms this common practice in his words recorded in the Book of Acts, "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even *the voices of the Prophets which are read every*

¹W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925, 38.

Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him."² That this practice was to be brought into the Christian Church can be seen in Paul's words to Timothy, "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13).

Of this passage Kelly notes:

Scripture reading (lit. 'the reading') denotes, primarily, the public reading of the O.T., which at this time was the Church's Bible. This was a feature of the synagogue service (Lk. iv. 16; Acts xv, 21; 2 Cor. iii. 14), and was immediately adopted by the Christian congregations. This is in fact the earliest reference to the use of Scripture in the Church's liturgy. Specifically Christian documents, however, like the letters of Paul and other leaders or the revelations of prophets, were also read out (Col. iv. 16; I Thess. v. 27; Rev. i. 3), and this practice is probably also envisaged here.³

Judaism and Christianity did not officially separate until the end of the first century, and then primarily at the instigation of Judaism. We can therefore conclude with some confidence that "the worship of the early church was built on the same foundation as Jewish worship of God."⁴ The synagogue of the first century probably read the Scriptures as a continuous reading from week to week, definite cycles of readings not being established in the synagogue until after the end of the second century.⁵ Thus it was natural for the early Church to read the Scriptures as had been done in the synagogue: in a continuous reading or *lectio continua* fashion. Thus Justin Martyr records:

²Acts 13:27, emphasis added.

³J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), 105.

⁴Ferdinand Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church*, trans. by David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 33.

⁵Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), 112.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.⁶

The number of lessons read in the service varied at first. The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles calls for two readings from the Old Testament (Law and Prophets), followed by the singing of a Psalm ("the hymns of David"), then a reading from Acts and the Epistles of Paul, and finally from the Gospels.⁷ Western Syrians added a third division to the Old Testament, the books of wisdom literature, which, along with two readings from the New Testament, also gave them a total of five readings. In Spain there were only two readings before the Gospel, one from each of the Testaments. The Byzantine liturgy called for only one reading before the Gospel.⁸

Eventually it appears the number of Lessons stabilized at three, one from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament. This was not to remain the situation for long:

In the fifth century the church of Constantinople began to reduce the normal three lections to two by the abolition of the first (from the O.T.). Rome followed suit in the late fifth or early sixth century, though the process was slower at Rome; the full three lections are still found provided for a few days in the year in the seventh century Roman lectionary list known as the 'Wurzburg Capitulary'. Indeed it may be said that the process of 'dropping' the O.T. lesson was never completed at all in the Roman rite, since the Wednesday and Saturday Ember Days still retain two and five O.T. lections each in the Roman missal; and on the weekdays of Lent and certain other days it is not the O.T. lesson but the epistle which has vanished. . . . It is sometimes suggested that the possession of three lections is a

⁶Justin Martyr, First Apology, lxvii; Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol I, *The Apostolic Fathers--Justin Martyr--Irenaeus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 186.

⁷ANF Vol VII, 421.

⁸Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, Vol II, 62.

characteristic of the 'Gallican' rite while two is 'Roman'. But all rites, or at all events all Western rites, were three lection rites in the early fifth century.⁹

This remained the custom in Gaul and Spain, as well as in some uses in Milan, until the seventh century.¹⁰

It was around this same era, as the Old Testament reading was being eliminated, that the first lectionaries were formed. The earliest of these were drawn up for ferial days, and it was not until the seventh century that the first complete lectionaries appeared.¹¹ The lectionaries marked a decisive move away from the *lectio continua* approach to the Lessons. Instead, the Church developed a series of readings that were chosen according to the pattern of the Church year.

The Gradual and The Gospel

Two points should be noted before continuing the history of the Lessons. The first is the development of the Gradual, the second is the elevation of the importance of the reading from the Gospel.

Use of psalmody in the service of the Word has already been attested to by Tertullian.¹² The singing of these Psalms between the Lessons is directly spoken of in the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles:

⁹Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1945), 471.

¹⁰Jones, *The Study of Liturgy*, 185.

¹¹Ibid., 186.

¹²"A Treatise on the Soul," Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol III, 188.

But when there have been two lessons severally read, let some other person sing the hymns of David, and let the people join at the conclusions of the verses.¹³

Different regions offered variations on the placement of this Psalm.

Augustine's Lectionary records that the psalm was to be sung between the last two of the three Lessons, with nothing between the first two.¹⁴

In time, this psalmody was reduced to a few verses which were musically embellished by the cantor, depriving the people of their participation in its singing.¹⁵ It became known as the Gradual, the term probably chosen because these psalm verses were to be sung from a *gradus* or "step." Reed suggests that the Gradual originally appeared in two parts. The first part reflected the nature of and was sung before the Epistle, the second part was the Alleluia, sung as a prelude to the Gospel. When the number of Lessons was reduced to two, these two parts were united into one chant before the Gospel.¹⁶

There is very early attestation for special respect which was to be accorded the reading of the Gospel. This reading was specifically reserved for a deacon or presbyter,

And while the Gospel is read, let all the presbyters and deacons, and all the people, stand up in great silence; for it is written: "Be silent, and hear, O Israel." And again: "But do thou stand there, and here."¹⁷

¹³Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol VII, 421.

¹⁴Jones, *The Study of Liturgy*, 186.

¹⁵Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, Vol II, 64.

¹⁶Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 295.

¹⁷ANF VII, 421.

The reading of the Gospel was further highlighted by various prayers and responses prior to its reading. An example of this is found in the Liturgy of St. Mark (dating to c. AD 400). The Epistle reading (here termed, "The Apostle") is followed by the Hallelujah, after which the Deacon and the Priest ask for the Lord's blessing. Incense is offered, the Deacon calls the people to "Stand and let us hear the holy Gospel," at which point the Priest and people exchange the Salutation.¹⁸

In short, the use of Psalmody at this point in the liturgy developed from a distinct element sung by the people to a mere highlight for the reading of the Gospel. The responses preceding ("Glory to you O Lord") and following the Gospel ("Praise to you, O Christ") further highlight the Gospel, acknowledging the Lord who comes to us in His Word and confessing the Christ there revealed to us and present in our Service.

The Lessons and the Gradual from Luther to the Present

Luther retained the shorter Graduals in his Latin mass, excluding the longer ones. As he wrote, "In church we do not want to quench the spirit of the faithful with tedium."¹⁹ In Luther's German mass he moved away from these snippets of the Psalms, restoring participation to the congregation by directing, "After the Epistle a German hymn, either 'Now Let Us Pray to the Holy Ghost' or any other, is sung with the whole choir."²⁰ Luther also

¹⁸See above, page 74, regarding the focal nature of this greeting.

¹⁹Luther, Vol 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 24.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 74.

essentially retained the lectionary of his day, although he complained that whoever had chosen the Epistles was a "superstitious advocate of works."²¹

Although various lectionaries were eventually developed by the Reformers and those who followed them, the basic structure of this portion of the liturgy remained the same. There were generally two Lessons, the Epistle and the Gospel, joined by a Gradual or hymn. The predominance of the Gospel was recognized by the ceremonies attached to it, particularly the fact that the congregation was instructed to stand at this point.

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that this situation substantially changed. With the development of the *Service Book and Hymnal* in 1958²² a movement began to restore the regular use of the Old Testament reading.²³ The typical one-year lectionaries were later augmented into a three-year series, completed in 1973.²⁴ Finally, the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *Lutheran Worship* made specific provision for the reading of the Old Testament in the liturgy. *Lutheran Worship Altar Book* suggests the renewed importance of this reading as it directs, "If only two readings are used in

²¹Ibid., 24.

²²The Commission on the Liturgy and The Commission on the Hymnal, *Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1958), 3.

²³In the *Service Book and Hymnal*, provision was made for the Old Testament reading in the text of the liturgy. *The Lutheran Hymnal* also made provision for a third reading, although not necessarily that of the Old Testament. In the general rubrics it states: "In the Service other Scripture lessons may be read before the Epistle. The Epistle and Gospel shall always be read." *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), 4.

²⁴The Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, *The Church Year, Calendar and Lectionary* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 13.

the Divine Service, it is appropriate to omit the second reading so that both Old and New Testaments are heard."²⁵

This three Lesson arrangement has allowed the restoration of psalmody between the first and second readings. As the rubric notes, "The GRADUAL FOR THE SEASON or the appointed PSALM is sung or said."²⁶ The Verse or the Alleluia is then sung between Epistle and Gospel.

This greater use of the Scriptures has restored to the Church treasures of which she had deprived herself for centuries. The renewed use of the Old Testament and the Psalms marks a move back toward the practices of the early Church, practices which, in turn, were drawn from the pages of Scripture itself.

²⁵*Lutheran Worship Altar Book*, 25.

²⁶*Lutheran Worship*, 140.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CREED

The Creed, another part of our *Gottesdienst*, originated in the New Testament Church. As readily as we may see the connections of the Creed to the catechumenate and Holy Baptism in the early church, the purpose of the Creed in the liturgy is not so clear. To whom are we speaking, and what is the nature of this statement which we make?

Are we speaking to God, and does that then make this statement a prayer? Are we using this as a password for the Lord's Supper, assuring one another that there are no heretics present? Are we reciting our lessons as a dutiful catechism class so that the priest or pastor can be sure that we have learned those lessons? Or are we speaking to one another, that we may hear what God has done and so be built up in this shared confession? As one may readily see, categorizing the Creed in any of these ways could mark it primarily as a sacrificial or a sacramental document--it is either us going to God or God coming to us.

It is easy to take various positions and see divergent purposes in the use of the Creed, and one or more of the aforementioned questions may point to a reasonable understanding of it. This chapter, however, is not seeking the answers of modern theologians, but the answer of the

historical Church, and its intentions behind placing the Creed in the context of the liturgy.¹

Antecedents of Christian Liturgy

In searching for the original purpose of the Creed in the liturgy, it is difficult to know precisely where to begin to look. Oscar Cullmann cites five simultaneous causes for the development of the rule of faith, the first confessions of the church: (1) Baptism and catechumenism; (2) Regular worship (liturgy and preaching); (3) Exorcism; (4) Persecution; (5) Polemic against heretics. Under the heading of "Regular worship," Cullmann offers us a probable source as he writes:

"The need to confess one's faith according to a fixed text manifested itself in every gathering of the community. The believer wants to confess with the brethren before God what unites them before Him. It was already so in the worship of the synagogue, where one, in pronouncing the *Shema*, confessed with all Israel that Yahwe is *one*. The confession of faith is pronounced within the *liturgy* at every *divine service* of the primitive Christian community."²

It is impossible to support Cullmann's statement that the Creed was used "at every divine service," since no such records of early Christian liturgies exist. Nonetheless, the historical connection between the Jewish synagogue and the early Christian church is one

¹This chapter will not address the development of the individual texts of the Ecumenical Creeds as we know them today, for this is another area of study altogether and has been thoroughly treated elsewhere. Instead the focus here is on the liturgical meaning and purpose of creedal formulas.

²Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (trans. by J.K.S. Reid, London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), 21-22.

recognized by scholars since the end of the seventeenth century.³ As Evelyn Underhill wrote, "Christianity in its origin was a Jewish sect; and its Founder and His first disciples were believing and practising Jews. It still bears many marks of this ancestry; and nowhere more prominently than in its liturgical life."⁴

The Twelve Apostles were Jewish, raised in the traditions of the synagogue. No doubt they attended the services of the synagogue according to the example of their Master Jesus, who went regularly "as His custom was" (Luke 4:16). Since the New Testament records no particular directives from the Lord regarding liturgical forms for worship, it is natural to assume that His disciples adopted what they already knew well: the worship patterns of the synagogue.

"It was in the synagogues that the immortal forms of Jewish and Christian liturgy came into being," writes Eric Werner.⁵ The Jewish synagogue is thus the most likely source for the liturgical formula which was fashioned into our Christian Creeds. Neufeld notes that, "When one attempts to locate a 'confession of faith' in early rabbinical Judaism, it immediately becomes apparent that the literature is quite devoid of explicit creeds or theological formulas."⁶ Describing the

³"When it occurs in the writings of the Dutch Protestant theologian, Campegius Vitringa." Paul F. Bradshaw, "The Search for the Origins of Christian Liturgy: some methodological Reflections," *Studia Liturgica* 17 (1987): 29.

⁴Evelyn Underhill, *Worship* (USA: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 193.

⁵Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 2.

⁶Vernon H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 34.

Torah as the Creed of the Jews, he admits, is "too broad in scope," and instead concedes, "The confession which served more precisely as Judaism's *homologia* was the *Shema*'."⁷

An examination of synagogue worship provides us with a perspective of how the Jews understood the liturgical purpose of the *Shema*'. The ordinary daily services of the Jewish liturgy consisted, already in pre-Christian times, of two primary elements: (i) the *Reading of Scripture*, and (ii) *Prayer*.⁸ This latter was composed of the *Shema*'⁹ and the *Tephillah* (petitions).

The paragraphs of the *Shema*' were generally recited in a framework of benedictions, two preceding and one following the *Shema*'. The first benediction, *Yotzer Or* ("He who creates light"), deals with and expresses gratitude for God's Creation. This was followed by *'Ahavah Rabbah* ("With great love"), which thanks God for His love manifested through the giving of the Torah to His people. Following the *Shema*' came *Emeth we-Yatziv* ("True and firm"), better known as *Geullah* ("Redemption"), which thanks God for His Redemption of Israel from Egypt.¹⁰

⁷Ibid., 35.

⁸Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, 36-7.

⁹The *Shema*' is actually a concatenation of three Pentateuchal passages: Deuteronomy 6:4--Deuteronomy 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41. (For full text, see Appendix IV.) Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Brocke, ed., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy* (London: Burns and Oates, 1978), 48.

¹⁰Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, 46. See also Millgram, *Jewish Worship*, 99-100. One might here take note of the creedal parallel of the first and third benedictions to the first and second articles of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, although this similarity may be purely coincidental.

Placed at the beginning of the Prayers of the synagogue, the *Shema'* was consciously distinguished from the prayers themselves. "The *Shema'* is not a prayer, if we understand prayer as man's word addressed to God; it is God's word addressed to man. That is why the Rabbis, always careful in their choice of terminology, speak about the *geri-ah* ("reading", "recitation", "proclamation") of the *Shema'*, thereby distinguishing it from *tephillah*, their word for prayer."¹¹ Yet the placement of the *Shema'* in the liturgy indicates that it was also distinct from the reading of the Torah and the Prophets.

Thus the *Shema'* stood as an independent entity, an affirmation of faith considered to be "doxological" in nature.¹² That is to say, although not a prayer, this confession was an echo of God's words, spoken to describe Him and credit Him for what He has done for His people.

Moving from the synagogue to the New Testament, we find numerous allusions to what may have been a settled form of creedal statement (Romans 6:17; 2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 10:23; 2 John 9; Jude 3).¹³ Kelly notes, "There is plenty of evidence in the New Testament to show that

¹¹Petuchowski and Brocke, *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 48.

¹²Raphael Posner, Uri Kaploun, and Shalom Cohen, ed., *Jewish Liturgy: Prayer and Synagogue Service through the Ages* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1975), 74.

¹³F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Ante-Nicene Church* (New York: E.S. Gorham, 1912), 20.

the faith was already beginning to harden into conventional summaries."¹⁴ What form this "doctrine" may have taken is unknown.

Vernon Neufeld provides an extensive study of the confession, the *homologia*, of the Christian Church as it is recorded in the New Testament. This *homologia* found expression in the worship of the early Christian congregation, being utilized in the worship of the early Christian congregation in the liturgy and/or hymnody of the church (Philippians 2:5-11; see John 20:19-28). Here believers unitedly confessed their faith in Jesus as Lord (I Corinthians 12:3) or as Christ (I John. 4:2), and expressed praise and worship in a manner similar to the traditional service of the synagogue when the *Shema'* was recited.¹⁵

In contrast, Delling suggests that there is no trace of the *Shema'* in primitive Christian worship. (This is true in later liturgies, but we have no concrete documentation on the forms of early Christian worship.) The reasons which he gives for this are:

"First because the decisive thing for the Church was the confession of Christ Jesus But further, the *Shema* in its very nature does not correspond to the Christian Church's relation to God: it stresses the formal acknowledgment of God by means of outward signs (by tassels on the garments) and prayer straps; Jesus caustically refers to them as amulets. The Church held firmly in these matters to the adverse attitude of Jesus."¹⁶

¹⁴J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd. ed. Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1972), 13.

¹⁵Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, 145. Note that according to Neufeld the *homologia* is not yet the creed as we know it, but the confession of the church. Detail regarding the precise content of that confession is not directly relevant to this paper.

¹⁶Gerhard Delling, *Worship in the New Testament* (trans. by Percy Scott, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 7.

While this may be true, one can also see cause for the elimination of the *Shema*' when one considers the historical progression of the period. Ferdinand Hahn¹⁷ outlines this progression, breaking it down into five periods which are helpful in understanding this era: (1) The worship of the Aramaic-speaking community; (2) The worship of Hellenistic Jewish Christianity; (3) The worship of Early Gentile Christianity; (4) the Worship of the Subapostolic Period; (5) Worship in the Apostolic Fathers and Justin. Although the details of Hahn's work are drawn from historical-critical principles, Hahn's basic outline accurately illustrates the cultural movement of the Christian Church from its Jewish origins into the Gentile world.

It is likely that the Apostles adopted and adapted the liturgical practices of the synagogue into the Christian assembly. To ignore the creedal element altogether might imply the inadequacy of their religion over against Judaism. In keeping with the proclamation of the New Testament, the *Shema*' would have been replaced with a bold confession of the truth about Jesus Christ. Such a confession is seen in the Christological hymns already in evidence in the New Testament (Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; et.al.).

Whatever liturgical form this confession might have taken, its basic structure would have been carried throughout the Gentile world since the preaching of the Gospel generally began in the synagogues of the cities.

¹⁷Hahn, *The Worship of the Early Church*.

On the basis of this connection it is hypothesized that the Apostles drew on the liturgical confession of the *Shema*' to form their own confession of faith. In doing so, they imported the synagogal understanding of Creed as doxology, a praise-filled reflection of what God has done for us. To test this hypothesis we move to an examination of the liturgical practices of the early church. Were the early forms of the Creed doxological in nature, and did they maintain their doxological character?

The Ante-Nicene Christian Church

As far as can be determined from ancient records, the ante-Nicene church did not maintain an independent creedal statement in its liturgy. This does not mean that there was no concern for creedal formulation. On the contrary, careful search uncovers creedal phraseology, although in somewhat different contexts.

In the East, the writings of Ignatius offer no liturgical commentary on the Creed. In his letters he does make repeated use of phrases which were later incorporated into the formal Creeds of the church. His letter to the Philadelphians is of particular interest. "If any one preaches *the one God of the law and the prophets*, but denies Christ to be the Son of God, he is a liar, even as also is his father the devil, and is a Jew falsely so called, being possessed of mere carnal circumcision" [emphasis added].¹⁸ This clause seems directed against those who adhered to the Jewish confession, "Hear O Israel, the

¹⁸Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume I, 82.

Lord our God, is one." If so, this would lend support to the hypothesis that part of the concern for creedal formulation grew out of the *Shema* of the synagogue.

In the West, Justin describes the order of the liturgy in summary form:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.¹⁹

Two chapters earlier in this same work, Justin described the eucharistic liturgy of his day:

"Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. . . . And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water . . . "20

¹⁹From Chapter lxvii of "The First Apology of Justin," Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume I, 186.

²⁰Ibid., 185.

These descriptions make no allusions to the use of a separate statement which we would term a Creed, although they do indicate a division between the service of the Word and that of prayer and Sacrament.

Reginald Woolley describes similarities between synagogue and Justin's "form of service which was ordinarily a preliminary to the Eucharist."²¹ In drawing his parallels, Woolley notes that the *Shema* is gone, then comments in a footnote, "It is interesting to note that even this was represented in later times by the introduction of the Creed. But this of course was unconscious."²²

Or was it? And was it introduced only "later"? When we turn to the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome (c. AD 215) we find elements of the Creed already in existence, not as an independent element but as part of the prayers, specifically as part of the eucharistic prayer.

We render thanks unto thee, O God, through Thy Beloved Child Jesus Christ, Whom in the last times Thou didst send to us <to be> a Savior and Redeemer and the Angel of Thy counsel; Who is Thy Word inseparable <from Thee>, through Whom *Thou madest all things* and in Whom Thou wast well-pleased; <Whom> Thou didst send from heaven into <the> Virgin's womb and Who *conceived* within her was made flesh and demonstrated to be Thy Son being *born of Holy Spirit and a Virgin*; Who fulfilling Thy will and preparing for Thee a holy people stretched forth His hands for *suffering* that He might release from sufferings them who have believed in Thee; Who when He was betrayed to voluntary suffering that he might abolish death and rend the bonds of the devil and *tread down hell* and enlighten the righteous and establish

²¹Reginald Maxwell Woolley, *The Liturgy of the Primitive Church* (Cambridge: University Press, 1910), 30.

²²Ibid.

the limit and demonstrate the *resurrection*: Taking bread .
 . .²³

Similarly, the Apostolic Constitutions²⁴ incorporate a similar pattern of creedal elements into the eucharistic prayer there given. In the course of this prayer, the following phrases appear:

For Thou, O eternal God . . . didst by Him make this visible world, and all things that are therein. . . . Holy also is Thy only begotten Son our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, . . . He was made in the womb of a virgin, . . . suffered many things . . . was delivered to Pilate the governor, . . . was condemned . . . nailed to the cross, . . . died, . . . was buried, . . . He arose from the dead the third day; . . . He was taken up into the heavens, and is sat down on the right hand of Thee, who art His God and Father. . . . [Verba] . . . He is to come with glory and power to judge the quick and the dead, . . . send down upon this sacrifice Thine Holy Spirit, . . . that those who are partakers thereof . . . may obtain the remission of their sins, . . . and may obtain eternal life . . .²⁵

Although the *Shema*'/Creed disappeared as a separate element in the liturgy of the early Christian Church, its concern for the recitation of God's deeds apparently continued in the text of the Eucharistic Prayer. This prayer of thanksgiving maintained its foundation in the Biblical revelation of God, a revelation now amplified by the New Testament recounting of the incarnation and passion of Christ. The recitation of

²³Dom Gregory Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome* (London: The Alban Press, 1937, 1991), 7-8 (emphasis added).

²⁴Various dates have been suggested for this document, possibly as early as the Apostolic Tradition or as late as c. AD 375.

²⁵Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume VII, Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896), 487-9.

salvation history was therefore apparently treated as a necessary foundation for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

From the Council of Nicea to the Roman Mass

When one reads the statements of the Ecumenical Councils which formed the first universally and officially recognized Creed (the Nicene), it becomes apparent that liturgical considerations were not a fundamental concern. Over the years a number of heresies were addressed, and numerous anathemas were pronounced. However, for all the work that was done in composing and refining the text of the Creed, the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon gave no directives for its liturgical use in the Church.²⁶

In spite of this lack of directive, it appears that the Creed was in use liturgically in the Church, particularly in the East. In Asia Minor, Basil proposed the use of the Nicene Creed in a number of his letters, usually as a way to bring about peace in situations of apparent

²⁶It might be suggested that the liturgical use of the Creed was considered by those present to be a natural outcome of the work of the Councils, and they consciously avoided implementing a canon which would be seen as a liturgical law. Although possible, even a casual reading of the canons of the Councils sees a tremendous attention to legalistic detail. For the use of the Creed in the liturgy to be intentionally bypassed without mention seems unlikely.

division.²⁷ Perhaps most telling of these comments is that which he writes "To the Church of Antioch":

"Now I accept no newer creed written for me by other men, nor do I venture to propound the outcome of my own intelligence, . . . but what I have been taught by the holy Fathers, that I announce to all who question me. In my Church the creed written by the holy Fathers in synod at Nicaea is in use."²⁸

Admittedly, as with most of the writings of the Church Fathers, the precise nature of this "use" is not known:

In "The Epistle of Cyril to Nestorius with the XII. Anathematisms," Cyril of Jerusalem alludes to the common use of the Creed in the liturgy. After quoting and expounding on the Nicene Creed, Cyril apparently describes the continuation of the service:

"We will necessarily add this also. Proclaiming the death, according to the flesh, of the Only-begotten Son of God, that is Jesus Christ, confessing his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, we offer the Unbloody Sacrifice in the churches, and so go on to the mystical thanksgivings, and are sanctified, having received his Holy Flesh and the Precious Blood of Christ the Saviour of us all."²⁹

Considering that Cyril's letter was intended to bring about correction in a heretic, the practice to which he refers must have been commonly

²⁷"Let us then seek no more than this, but propose to all the brethren, who are willing to join us, the Nicene Creed." Letter CXIII, To the presbyters of Tarsus, placed in 372. "My own opinion is . . . that you should confess the faith put forth by our Fathers once assembled at Nicaea . . ." Letter CXIV, To Cyriacus, at Tarsus, placed in 372. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume VIII, St. Basil: Letters and Select Works* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1894), 189-90.

²⁸Letter CXL, dated to 373. Ibid, 204.

²⁹Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume XIV, The Seven Ecumenical Councils* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 203.

accepted and in place for some time. Otherwise Nestorius could have accused Cyril of introducing something new and heretical himself.

Theodore of Mopsuestia offers further comment, specifically on the Nicene Creed. As he speaks of the mysteries given in the new covenant, he posits the question:

"Now which is the faith and which are the promises through which we have our part in mysteries in the hope of these heavenly gifts in which we will delight? These are found in the profession of faith which we make before Christ our Lord at the time of our baptism."³⁰

He describes the Creed as the foundation of the faith, without which one falls into heresy. Then Theodore continues:

"It is, therefore, with justice that our blessed Fathers placed faith like a foundation in the forefront of our teaching and of the mystery of our covenant, and it is with right that they intimated to us to begin from there and say: *I believe in one God, Father Almighty.*"³¹

Thus not only was the Nicene Creed used catechetically, but it appeared in the liturgy immediately prior to the celebration of the "mystery of our covenant," that is, the Lord's Supper.

The situation in the Western Church was somewhat different. Ambrose and Augustine both make mention of the Creed, but only in a catechetical and not a liturgical context. Ambrose writes: "We ought, also, specially to repeat the Creed, as a seal upon our hearts, daily, before light, and to recur to it in thought whenever we are in fear of

³⁰A. Mingana, ed., *Woodbrooke Studies*, Volume V, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Limited, 1932), 21.

³¹*Ibid.*, 24.

anything. For when is the soldier in his tent or the warrior in battle without his military oath?"³²

Augustine described the Creed as "a rule of faith briefly compiled so as to instruct the mind without burdening the memory. It is expressed in few words, from which, however, much instruction may be drawn."³³ Elsewhere he wrote, "For this reason the Creed is called the *symbolum* because in it the approved belief of our fellowship is contained and by its profession, as by a password, the faithful Christian is recognized."³⁴

It was not until c. AD 473 that the Nicene Creed was specifically prescribed for every liturgy. This action was taken by the monophysite patriarch of Antioch, Peter 'the Fuller', not to support the orthodox faith but to substantiate his claims to membership in the Orthodox Church in spite of the heresy he professed.

After the procession of the oblation, Duchesne writes:

". . . the recitation of the Creed occurred. According to Theodore the Reader, this custom was first introduced at Antioch by the bishop Peter the Fuller, in 471, and afterwards at Constantinople by the patriarch Timotheus, in 511. Peter and Timotheus were reckoned among the most zealous opponents of the Council of Chalcedon. Their

³²Concerning Virgins, to Marcellina, his sister, Book III. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Volume X, St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1894), 384.

³³Sermon 213. *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, Volume 38, St. Augustine: Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons* (trans. by Sister Mary Sarah Muldowney. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), 121.

³⁴Sermon 214, *Ibid.*, 142.

innovation was not, however, abolished after the Eastern Churches came back into the orthodox Communion."³⁵

A footnote then adds: "One of the things most urgently insisted upon by the Monophysite party was the abrogation of every formulary of faith later than that of Nicaea-Constantinople. It is certain that in the introduction of the latter into the liturgy, they meant to protest against the definition of Chalcedon."³⁶

The Nestorian community incorporated its Creed as a regular element in the liturgy. Evidence of this is found in the homilies of Narsai, who served as a teacher at Edessa for 20 years, and died in Eastern Syria, c. A.D. 502. Narsai wrote:

"This did the 318 priests seal; and they proscribed and anathematized every one that confesses not according to their confession. The Church confesses according to the confession of the Fathers, and she employs their confession also at the time of the Mysteries. At the time of the Mysteries her children thunder forth with their Faith, reciting it with mouth and heart, without doubting.

"And when the Faith has been recited in due order, at once the herald of the Church gives the command to pray."³⁷

Thus Narsai, like the Rabbis of the synagogue, clearly distinguished their Creed from prayer. Eventually this heretical practice became a permanent fixture of the Byzantine liturgy.

In later Eastern liturgies, we find the Creed recited near the beginning of the Mass of the Faithful. An example of this appears in the Syrian Rite in the Liturgy of St. James (dated to approx. 700). The

³⁵Mgr. L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution* (trans. by M.L. McClure, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1903), 84.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Dom R.H. Connolly, trans., *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 6.

Mass of the Catechumens concludes with the reading of the Gospel. The Mass of the Faithful then begins with the Prayers, followed by the Great Entrance. After this the priest leads in the Nicene Creed, followed by the Kiss of Peace, the Inclination, the Offertory Prayers, and the Anaphora (the Eucharistic Prayer, which retains its doxological language and duplicates much of the creedal formula).³⁸ With slight variations, this placement of the Creed became the normal format of the Eastern liturgy.

The Western Church was slower than the Eastern Church in fixing the Creed into the liturgy. A directive to incorporate the Creed appears at Toledo in AD 589, and apparently in the ninth century Charlemagne moved the Creed to a position immediately after the Gospel.³⁹ It did not appear in Rome, however, until AD 1014, and then only under pressure from Emperor Henry II. "Bernon, Abbot of Reichenau, relates that in his presence the emperor Henry II induced Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024) to adopt this custom; before this it was unknown to the Roman Church (*De off. Missae*, c. 2; Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, vol cxlii. p. 1060)."⁴⁰

In contrast to Eastern practice, however, the Creed was recited after the Gospel rather than after the beginning of the Mass of the Faithful. Apparently Emperor Henry's concern was the threat of heresy

³⁸F.E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 38-49.

³⁹Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 146.

⁴⁰Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution*, 172.

invading the Church. His insistence that the Creed be included in the liturgy was intended to fortify the Church against this threat and encourage it to follow in the doctrine of Holy Peter.⁴¹

Thus from early on the Eastern Church retained a creedal element in the liturgy, eventually placing the Nicene Creed after and completely separate from the Service of the Word. In the West, the Creed moved to the end of the Scripture readings, near if not at the end of the Service of the Word (whether or not a Sermon followed the Gospel is uncertain). Essentially, this placement parallels that of the *Shema'* in the Jewish synagogue. Not only do both Creeds follow the Scripture readings, but the *Shema'*/Creed stands at the beginning of the Jewish Prayers and the Christian Eucharist, the next significant portions of the liturgy.

Because of these parallels it is suggested that the Creed and the *Shema'* serve the same liturgical purpose: as doxologies which are concerned with the repetition of God's Word and actions that He may receive glory for what He has done. Since this purpose had remained virtually universal since the time of the Apostles, the Church Fathers felt themselves able to forego comment on the liturgical use of the Creed.

This doxological understanding became lost or obscured in the course of the history of the Church. Discussion of and defense against heresy became the primary subject of writings involving the Creed. Rather than a liturgical formula which spoke back to God what He gave to us (*homology*), the Creed's purpose became that of a standard for

⁴¹Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus*, Tomus CXLII, 1061.

measuring orthodoxy. Yet it was this concern for pure doctrine which introduced the Creed into the liturgies of the West. With an unexplained shift from its ancient placement to a position after the Gospel, the question arises whether the doxological nature of the Creed was thus obscured.

Luther's Use of Creed in Liturgy

Martin Luther apparently accepted the placement of the Creed in the Roman liturgy, for both his *Formula Missae* and *Deutsche Messe* retain it. Focusing on the catechetical aspects of liturgy, Luther was more concerned with the placement of the sermon than he was with the use of the Creed.⁴² His hymnic translation of the Creed retained the objective nature of the text, without indications of any comment on its liturgical purpose.

As most of the Church Fathers before him, Luther employed the Creed as a teaching resource. "The latter [the Ten Commandments] teach us what we ought to do; the Creed tells what God does for us and gives to us. . . . But the Creed brings pure grace and makes us upright and pleasing to God."⁴³ His Genesis commentary describes the Creed as something we preach to ourselves in order to pray: "You will never pray

⁴²Luther, Vol 53. *Liturgy and Hymns*, 25.

⁴³Large Catechism, II, 67-68.

successfully in private unless you have preached to yourself either the Creed . . ."⁴⁴

The link between Creed and prayer was a close one for Luther. He even describes the Creed as a prayer in his commentary to the Galatians (" . . . as our Creed confesses and prays . . ." and " . . . we confess and pray the same thing in the Creed . . ."⁴⁵) and in "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests" (" . . . also prayer such as . . . the Creed . . ."⁴⁶). However, the Reformer never develops these thoughts beyond passing mention.

We must be wary of drawing precise conclusions from Luther, for the liturgical use of the Creed was not in question in his day. However it is clear that the doctrine received in the Creed was for him the foundation of the prayer life of the Christian. Perhaps it is for this reason that, for Luther, the Creed was a pivotal point used both for preaching and for prayer, a statement received from God and spoken back by the believer.

⁴⁴Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, Helmut T. Lehmann, gen. ed. Vol 2, *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 6-14*, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 333.

⁴⁵Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, Helmut T. Lehmann, gen. ed. Vol 26, *Lectures on Galatians 1535, Chapters 1-4*, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 278, 280.

⁴⁶Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, Helmut T. Lehmann, gen. ed. Vol 38, *Word and Sacrament IV*, Martin E. Lehmann, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 178.

From the Reformation to the Common Service

The *Kirchenordnungen* of Luther's day and beyond continue the Western practice of saying or singing the Creed after the Gospel. In fact, the cities of Sachsen and Mecklenburg prescribed the chanting of the Latin Creed by the priest, followed by the congregational singing of "*Wir glauben alle an einen gott.*"⁴⁷

The Creed retained this position in the service down to the present, its meaning and purpose essentially unquestioned. In a catechetical commentary on the Common Service, the questions are posed:

83. Why have we a Creed in the Service?

Because it is necessary to state publicly our acceptance of the truths of God's Word. The most appropriate place for such a confession of faith is in the principal Service. Matt. 10:32; 16:15-18; Rom. 10:9.

84. Why is a Creed recited at this point in the Service?

In it the congregation owns its acceptance of the Word of God just read, and recalls and confesses in a brief summary the whole faith of the Gospel, a part of which is brought to its attention on that day.⁴⁸

Luther Reed posits two different approaches to the Creed, one catechetical, the other a doxological response to the reading of Scripture.

As used in this place in the Service it enables the congregation to view and review the whole horizon of the church's belief before giving attention to the exposition of a particular doctrine or idea. From a somewhat different point of view it may be thought of as a corporate expression

⁴⁷Sehling, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Vol V, 198.

⁴⁸The Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, *An Explanation of The Common Service*, 39.

of praise and thanks, reciting what God has done for our salvation.⁴⁹

Beyond these comments, most of our service books offer no interpretations. Most are concerned simply with the traditional use of the Nicene Creed in celebrations of Holy Communion and the Apostles' Creed with other services.⁵⁰

As previously stated, numerous views have been postulated in regard to the meaning and purpose of the Creed. A cursory examination of some of these perspectives may help to further define what the Creed is by realizing what it is not.

Theodore Jennings suggests the Creed to be an oath of loyalty comparable to the Pledge of Allegiance. "The faith of which it speaks is not belief or trust, but faithfulness."⁵¹ At stake for him are not the assertions of the Creed but the individual's commitment.

Such an anthropocentric view does not fit in with the theocentric nature of the Creed. For Jennings, the Creed may be spoken to God, but the focus is on the response of the subjective "I"--what "I" will do because of this. Yet throughout its history the Creed has been an objective description of God, reciting what He has done, not on what I will do. Liturgically, a statement of "my" actions would probably be expressed through the prayers which follow the Creed.

⁴⁹Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 302.

⁵⁰*Lutheran Worship Altar Book*, 27.

⁵¹Theodore W. Jennings, *Loyalty to God: the Apostles' Creed in life and liturgy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 17.

Geoffrey Wainwright claims that "The address of the creed is to the world, at least in the sense that it reminds believers of the faith by which they entered the Church and which they are now charged to spread among humanity."⁵² As laudable as a missiological emphasis may be here, we can find no historical support for such a view. This is particularly true when we recall the closed nature of the Mass of the Faithful in earlier liturgies where the Creed was recited.

Finally, William O. Fennel opens up numerous possibilities for the Creed: doxology, hermeneutic guide, ecumenical instrument, instrument in aid of mission. The first, doxology, he appears to present as the most appropriate for liturgical understanding. In this regard he writes:

The *Credo* is not simply, or even primarily, a statement of *things* that are believed. It is rather an act of grateful, humble commitment to the God who, announcing who he is by what he does, calls forth faith in men. Faith means trust, on the basis of credibility, not credulity. The confession of faith is an act of joyous commitment into the hands of God who is as he has shown himself to be in his saving acts. So the confession of faith of which we are speaking here is a saying back to God, in the shorthand of the creed, what is believed concerning those acts of his whereby he has achieved for us our eternal good--and a saying of it in confidence and joy.⁵³

Unfortunately, Fennel's answer to the question of purpose is essentially a multi-fold answer--he tries to incorporate all aspects of use into its purpose without prioritizing. He does this to support the Apostles' Creed in the face of those who would replace it. The polemic of his

⁵²Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Sermon and the Liturgy," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 28(4) (1983): 341.

⁵³William O. Fennell, "The Uses and Authority of a 'Liturgical' Creed or Confession of Faith," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 15(1) (1969): 24-25.

article does not allow for an objective look at a "primary" use of the Creed.

Modern scholars go off in various directions, using the Creed to meet whatever needs they have for it. Not that this is wrong; in fact it may be wholly appropriate for the Creed to be employed in this way, but it distracts from the basic question of, "Why is the Creed in the liturgy?"

Conclusion

For all that the Creed has been used, virtually no comment has been made regarding its liturgical purpose. The meager evidence we have only allows us to draw possible parallels and derive plausible conjectures. No firm conclusions regarding the liturgical use of the Creed can be supported by the available data, mostly because of the simple lack of data available.

What sort of conclusion can we then draw? In a very real way, the recitation of the Creed is much like the signing of a receipt for a package. When we say, "I believe," we are acknowledging that all of this has indeed been delivered. Upon receipt it is only natural for us to begin unpacking what we have received and to begin to make use of it.

The *Shema*' of the synagogue was such a doxological statement, one which acknowledged the receipt of God's gifts in the Word and of His command to perpetuate that Word from generation to generation. The Christological hymns of the New Testament and the Eucharistic Prayer of the Ante-Nicene Church maintained the doxological aspect of the Creed while shifting the emphasis of this confession to rest upon the Christ

and the New Testament which He has given us. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Church regularized that same confession into a formula which was universally recognized. Although it shifted position in the West, it still maintained its place as a response to God's action and a recollection of what God has done for us.

It is possible, however, to read into the Creed many different meanings and purposes. Therefore we must be wary of importing our theological presuppositions in ways which may alter what the Creed presents: a bare, plain, objective statement of the simple facts from Scripture regarding who God is and what He has done for us. Modern polemics may also divert us from an examination of liturgical purpose as they seek to answer questions which are not so objective in nature.

In terms of *Gottesdienst*, then, the Creed is not sacramental or sacrificial--it is both. More precisely, the recitation of the Creed is a mirror point at which the sacramental gifts of God become sacrificial. To whom are we speaking? To God, glorifying Him by repeating for Him what He has said to us. The rubric for speaking the Creed in a sacrificial position (facing the altar) is thus justified in a unique way. We are not praying, but answering God back with His own words, proclaiming with joy that we have received His name and the fullness thereof.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

God serves us through His Word and Sacraments. We serve God in the response of our lips and our lives. From the Invocation through the Creed the focus of the liturgy remains on the Word of God. This Service of the Word unites the prayers and thoughts of God's people in preparation for the gifts He gives us in His Word. These very same gifts enable us to repeat back what God has said to us that we may live rejoicing in His gifts.

We have seen that the first element established in the worship life of God's people was the reading of God's Word in the Lessons. Over the course of centuries the Church made use of different portions of that Word, sometimes reducing its presence to brief selections from Epistle and Gospel. Yet even then this Word, particularly the Word of the Gospel, was revered as the climax of the first half of the Service, fittingly designated "the Service of the Word."

All other portions of this Service developed around the Lessons. First among these were the prayers before the readings. Eventually these were formalized into the Collect with its introductory Salutation. The *Kyrie eleison* and *Gloria in excelsis* were also incorporated into the structure of the Service as part of the prayers of the people.

Increased formality in the conduct of the Service led to the introduction of the Introit, a Psalm that covered the entrance of the priests. These ministers offered their own private prayers as they prepared to bring God's Word and Sacrament to His people. This collection of private prayers, in turn, formed the foundation of an entrance rite which later developed into the Invocation and the Confession and Absolution in Lutheran liturgies.

Additions to the liturgy sometimes had multiple benefits. The Creed provided a repetition and reflection on what had been just heard in the Word of God. It also provided a preventative measure against the introduction of heresy by renewing the Church constantly in confession of her faith. Likewise, as private Confession and Absolution lost popularity during and immediately following the Reformation, the introduction of a corporate form prevented the loss of Absolution in the life of the Church. It also provided the means by which sinners would humble themselves before God and receive His forgiveness in preparation for hearing His Word. Thus the Creed and the Absolution were not set into the Service as ends in themselves; they were set into a context that accentuated the centrality of the Word of God.

So from the Invocation through the Creed, the liturgy flows toward the Word of God. It does not begin with man or man's action, but "In the name" of the Triune God. Recognizing our position before God as sinners, we confess and receive His forgiveness so that we may stand in His presence to hear His Word. The Introit brings the ministers to the altar--they have confessed and been forgiven as well.

Many people are gathered, with many thoughts and prayers which distract us from hearing God's Word. These petitions are united in the ancient request, "Lord, have mercy," followed immediately by the prayer of thanksgiving first sung by the angels. Our diverse prayers being distilled into one united prayer, pastor and people greet one another, then join in a united prayer that anticipates the theme of the day which will be delivered in the Gospel.

At last, united in heart and mind as the people of God, we hear His Word as it is delivered to us in the Lessons. How do we know that we have heard His Word aright? In the words of the Creed we speak back to God what He has spoken to us.

Much more could be said about the flow of the liturgy, and still more remains to be explored in the individual elements of that liturgy. Liturgical language is biblical language. On that foundation it is also doctrinal language. This paper has demonstrated that these liturgical elements reveal a deeper meaning when their language agrees with Scriptural use. Such agreement permits the depth of teaching contained in Scripture to be applied to the language of the liturgy, thus defining and establishing its meaning. The flow of the liturgy then remains intact, and the words of these elements provide a form of worship that has true doctrinal substance.

Those who would seek to change what we have should consider the flow toward the Word of God that exists in the Service of the Word. This flow was not constructed haphazardly by some committee, but has been established by the consensus of the Church over the course of centuries. To fully appreciate this flow, each component part must be

understood by itself and in the context where the Church has placed it.
By grasping all of these elements together we may appreciate and rejoice
in a common confession of faith in this service of God.

APPENDIX I

KIRCHENORDNUNG VON MECKLENBURG 1552

Die sol, wie vorhin in diesem lande geordnet und im brauch ist, mit der gemeinen oder öffentlichen beicht, gebet und absolution, durch den priester angefangen werden. Nemlich also.

Der priester wende sich fur dem altar um gegen dem volk, und spreche.

Mein allerliebsten in gott, eröffnet euere herzen, last uns gott unsere sünden bekennen, und um vergebung, im namen unsers herrn Jesu Christi bitten. Sprecht mir nach mit herzlichem begeren zu gott, im glauben an den herrn Jesum Christum, durch den heiligen geist.

Denn kniet der priester nieder, fur den altar, und ein ander kirchendiener order custos neben in, und spricht der priester mit lauter stimme.

Unser hülff stehet im namen des herrn.

Antwort der Chor.

Der geschaffen hat himel und erden.

Der priester.

Ich armer sündiger mensch, bekenne fur dir, o allmechtiger gott, meinem schöpfer und erlöser, das ich gesündigt hab, nicht alleine mit gedanken, Worten und werken, sondern das ich auch von natur sündig und unrein bin, in sünden empfangen und geboren. Ich hab aber zuflucht zu deiner grundlosen barmherzigkeit, suche und begere gnade, um des herrn Jesu Christi willen. Herr sei gnedig mir armen sünder.

Der ander diener antwort dieses gebet.

O allmechtiger barmherziger gott, der du deinen eingebornen son für uns in den tod gegeben hast, wollest dich unser erbarmen, und um desselben deines geliebten sons willen, uns alle unsere sünd vergeben. Auch deinen heiligen geist uns geben, der in uns wares erkenntnis deines göttlichen wesens und willens, dazu waren gehorsam gegen dir anzünde und vermehre. Uff das wir das ewige leben, durch deine gnad, um des herrn Jesu Christi willen erlangen, amen.

Der priester spricht hernach diese absolution.

Der allmechtige barmherzige gott hat sich unser erbarmet, vergibt uns warhaftiglich alle unsere sünd, um seines lieben sons willen, den er um unsert willen hat in den tod gegeben, und hat macht gegeben, gottes kinder zu werden, allen, die an seinen namen gleuben, gibet uns dazu seinen heiligen geist, wer gleubt und getauft wird, sol selig werden. Das verleihe uns gott allen, amen.

Dieweil diese beicht, gebet und absolution, gesprochen wird, sol die ganze kirch stille sein und solchs anhören, auch mit dem priester also bekennen, beten, und die absolution zu herzen fassen, wol lernen, und fur gott oft desgleichen sprechen.

APPENDIX II

AGENDE FÜR CHRISTLICHE GEMEINDEN DES LUTHERISCHEN BEKENNTNISSES HERAUSGEGEBEN VON WILHELM LÖHE - 1844

Der Pfarrer wendet sich zum Volke und spricht:

Meine Allerliebsten in Gott! Eröffnet eure Herzen! Laßet uns Gott unsre Sünden bekennen und im Namen unsers Herrn Jesu Christi um Vergebung bitten. Sprechet mir nach mit herzlicher Begierde zu Gott, im Glauben an den Herrn Jesum Christum, durch den heiligen Geist!

Hierauf kniet der Prarrer, gegen den Altar gewendet, nieder, desgleichen das Volk an seinem Orte. Jener spricht und mit ihm das Volk:

Bekennet dem Herrn, den Er ist gut, und Seine Barmherzigkeit währt ewiglich. Ich sprach: ich will dem Herrn meine Uibertretung bekennen, da vergabst Du mir die Missethat meiner Sünde.

Darauf betet der Pfarrer allein fort:

Ich armer, sündiger Mensch bekenne Gott, dem Allmächtigen, meinem Schöpfer und Erlöser, daß ich nicht allein gesündigt habe mit Gedanken, Worten und Werken, sondern auch in Sünden empfangen und geboren bin, so daß meine ganze Natur und all mein Wesen vor Seiner Gerechtigkeit sträflich und verdamlich ist. Darum fliehe ich zu Seiner grundlosen Barmherzigkeit, suche und bitte Gnade. Herr, sei gnädig mir armen Sünder!

Die Gemeinde betet mit gemäßigten Stimmen weiter:

Der barmherzige Gott wolle sich unser aller erbarmen, uns unsre Sünde verzeihen und uns den heiligen Geist geben, auf daß wir durch denselben Seinen göttlichen Willen erfüllen und das ewige Leben empfangen. Amen.

Der Pfarrer steht auf, wendet sich zu der noch knieenden Gemeinde und spricht:

Der allmächtige, barmherzige Gott hat sich unser erbarmt, Seinen einigen Sohn für unsre Sünde in den Tod gegeben und um Seinetwillen uns verziehen, auch allen denen, die an Seinen Namen glauben, Gewalt gegeben, Gottes Kinder zu werden, und ihnen Seinen heiligen Geist verheißen. Wer glaubt und getauft wird, der soll selig werden. Das verleihe Gott uns allen!

Pfarrer und Gemeinde sprechen hierauf zusammen: Amen.

APPENDIX III

KIRCHEN-AGENDE FÜR EVANGELISCH-LUTHERISCHE GEMEINDEN UNGEÄNDERTER AUGSBURGISCHER CONFESSION - 1856

Nach Beendigung derselben [die Predigt] spricht der Prediger die allgemeine Beichte und Absolution.

Beichte.

Nachdem wir das Wort Gottes haben angehört, so wollen wir uns auch vor der hohen Majestät Gottes jetzo demüthigen und erstlich also beichten und sprechen:

O allmächtiger Gott, barmherziger Vater, ich armer, elender, sündhafter Mensch bekenne dir alle meine Sünde und Missethat, damit ich dich jemals erzürnet und deine Strafe zeitlich und ewiglich wohl verdienet habe; sie sind mir aber alle herzlich leid und reuen mich sehr und ich bitte dich durch deine grundlose Barmherzigkeit und durch das heilige, unschuldige, bittere Leiden und Sterben deines lieben Sohnes Jesu Christi, du wollest mir armen sündhaftigen Menschen gnädig und barmherzig sein. Amen.

Absolution.

Auf solch euer Bekenntnis verkündige ich euch Allen, die ihr euere Sünden herzlich bereuet, an Jesum Christum glaubet, und den guten ernstlichen Vorsatz habt, durch Beistand Gottes des heiligen Geistes euer sündliches Leben forthin zu beßern, kraft meines Amtes, als ein berufener und verordneter Diener des Worts, die Gnade Gottes und vergebe euch an Statt und auf Befehl meines Herrn Jesu Christi alle euere Sünde, im Namen Gottes des Vaters, Gottes des Sohnes, Gottes des heiligen Geistes. Amen.

APPENDIX IV

THE SHEMA¹:

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.
(Deuteronomy 6:4)

Praised be His Name, whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your might. And take to heart these words which I command

¹Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Brocke, ed. The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy (London: Burns and Oates, 1978), 22-23.

you this day. Teach them diligently to your children. Repeat them at home and away, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, let them be a symbol between your eyes, and write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

(Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

If you will indeed listen to the commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, then I will give rain to your land in its proper season, the autumn rain and the spring rain; and you will gather in your grain, your wine and your oil. I will let grass grow in your fields for your cattle; and you will eat and be satisfied. Take care lest you be tempted to turn aside to serve other gods and to worship them. For then the wrath of the Lord your God will be kindled against you. He will close the heavens, and there will be no rain. The earth will not yield its produce; and you will soon disappear from the good land which the Lord is giving you. Therefore, impress these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul. Bind them as a sign upon your hand, and let them be a symbol between your eyes. Teach them to your children, speaking of them at home and away, when you lie down and when you rise up. Write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. Then your days and the days of your children will be long as the days of the heavens over the earth, on the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers.

(Deuteronomy 11:13-21)

The Lord said to Moses: Speak unto the Israelites and say to them that, in every generation, they shall attach fringes to the corners of their garments, and bind a thread of blue to the fringe of each corner. Such shall be your fringes. When you see them, you will remember and fulfill all the commandments of the Lord; and you shall not wander after your heart and your eyes after which you are wont to go astray. It is in order that you will remember and fulfill all My commandments and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I, the Lord, am your God.

(Numbers 15:37-41)

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