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THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND USE
OF THE LITANY OF THE LUTHERAN RITUAL

Short Title:

Development and Use of The Litany

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia University, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Reverend Carl Hochstetler
June 1958

Approved by: [Signature] Advisor
[Signature] Assessor

THE ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT, AND USE
OF THE LITANY OF THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL

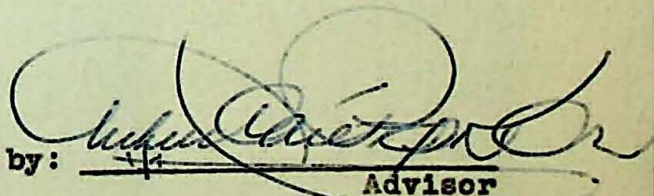
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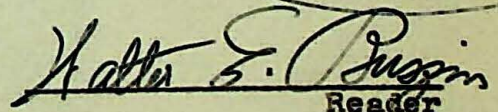
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June 1958

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Advisor



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

The object of concern of this thesis is the chronicling of the origins and development and of the historic and present uses of the litany of The Lutheran Hymnal. It will seek to answer questions such as these: Wherefrom and how did the litany come? What were its peculiar merits in times past? Is its present relative disuse due to any inherent deficiency? Could it have any values today for the corporate worship of the Body of Christ?

The original impetus for this study was derived from a reading of Dom Gregory Dix's The Shape of the Liturgy.¹ One of the theses which Dix proposes and defends with determination in connection with several aspects of corporate Christian worship is that the interest of the laity in corporate worship began to suffer and that the laity's part in worship was slowly and in many ways reduced in scope and amount by elimination or seizure by the clergy. The particular statement that encouraged this thesis is one which deals with the changes in congregational prayer in the early fourth century:

¹Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (2nd edition; Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945).

All christendom was then still at one on the way in which the public intercession should be offered--by a corporate act involving the whole church, in which nevertheless each order--laity, deacon and officiant (bishop or presbyter)--must actively discharge its own separate and distinctive function within the fulfillment of the "priestly" activity of the whole Body of Christ. . . . With us the deacon's part has completely disappeared, and the people's prayer--the substance of the old intercession, which the clergy's vocal prayers and bidding originally only led and directed--has been reduced to a single word, "Amen." If the truth be told, many of the more devout of our laity have come to suppose that intercession is a function of prayer better discharged in private than by liturgical prayer of any kind, so unsatisfying is the share which our practice allows them. . . . The old method derives from the profoundly organic conception of the church which possessed the minds of the pre-Nicene christians. Our own is the product of that excessive clericalism of the later middle ages. . . . By the middle of the fourth century the universal use of this pre-Nicene method of corporate intercession was beginning to disappear, a process in which the Antiochene invention of the "Litany" form played an undesigned part.²

To prove or disprove the accuracy of Dix's principle would have been beyond the scope of a thesis of this nature even though the thought is enticing. However, a study of one aspect of the problem, the litany, would be feasible and would also contribute to the study of Dix's thesis at a later date.

Even for such a limited study it would have been impossible to cover entirely the wealth of material concerning the litany. And so this thesis does not claim to cover the subject in its entirety. For example, it will not attempt to exploit the material which deals with its devotional

²Ibid., pp. 45-46.

content nor that which interprets and enlarges upon its text nor yet that concerning other prayers in litany form other than that "Great Litany" of the Church which we find in the form given in the hymnal of the Synodical Conference.

But we do plan, as was stated above, to trace its formation, its transmission to our generation, and its uses in the past so that we may gain an appreciation of its values and to recapture its worth, if any, for the worship of Lutheran Christians living in our nation in the present time.

In brief outline this thesis will seek to trace the litany from its earliest beginnings in Eastern Christianity to its adoption and adaptation by the Church of the West, the workings of the Middle Ages and the Reformation period upon the litany and the end results of the influences of these two periods upon our present day form and its use in the Lutheran churches of America. In conclusion we hope to outline the possibilities of future utilization and improvement with suggestions for future study.

Published books which have proven particularly helpful in this study ought to be mentioned. In regard to the ancient prayer forms of the Eastern Church, Brightman³ is invaluable. Six volumes were especially helpful in piecing

³F. E. Brightman, Liturgies Eastern and Western (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I.

together its development in the West: Dix,⁴ Duchesne,⁵ Graff,⁶ Jungmann,⁷ Reed,⁸ and Rietschel.⁹ For present-day use in America the reader is referred to the statistical survey on the matter by the author, results of which are incorporated into this thesis.

Knowing full well the dangers of finding to be true what one is already convinced is true, the writer, nevertheless, wishes already at this point to state that his studies confirmed his original belief that the litany is not a dead form, without value to Lutheran Christians of today. It is his conviction at the end of his research and consideration that the litany should be used more frequently to the great profit of all of God's people. Its present state of disuse is due not to any unsuitability but rather to misunderstanding and abuse. It is further his conviction that despite

⁴Dix, op. cit.

⁵L. Duchesne, Christian Worship, translated by M. L. McClure (5th edition; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931).

⁶Paul Graff, Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1937 and 1939), Erster und Zweiter Band.

⁷Josef Andreas Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1949), Erster und Zweiter Band.

⁸Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947).

⁹G. Rietschel, Lehrbuch der Liturgik (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther und Reichard, 1900), Erster Band.

Lutheran objection to various customs attached to the use of the litany, for example, the use of the litany in procession, the litany ought to be used even if without the older customs since its worth is to be found in its inherent quality rather than its external signs. Likewise, he is convinced that rather than being considered primarily as an act of penitence alone, in keeping with its later use the litany will be most profitably regarded and used as the general prayer of the congregation in keeping with its more ancient use. He is further convinced that a proper understanding of the great virtues of the litany on the part of the clergy and the clergy's willingness to teach their people is a necessary step before the litany can give its greatest benefits to those using it as a form of prayer.

From litany to pray. It early began in the church to refer to types of responsive prayer which are to this day in use both in the Eastern and Western churches.

It was not without forethought in the Church of the Old and New Testaments and in the pagan rituals. In the Old Testament canon one thinks immediately of Psalm 136 with its repeated refrain of "for his steadfast love endures for ever." In all likelihood this psalm was sung in an antiphonal manner in the worship of the people with the choir singing this refrain. Similarly the same refrain appears elsewhere, notably in Psalm 118. This became a congregational exclamation. There are similar actions involved in Leviticus 27:12f., for instance.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS IN THE EAST

It is to the East, the cradle of so many of the world's religions, and to the Eastern mind, so mysterious to those of us of Western culture, that we must look for the beginnings of the litany. As in so many other things in religious life, we are indebted to the people of North Africa and of the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea for the prayer forms of ancient Christianity. The word, "litany," itself shows us its birthplace. For this word comes from the Greek language which was so much at home in those places. It seems to derive from the Greek litē meaning prayer and from lissomai, to pray. It early began in the Church to refer to types of responsive prayer which are to this day in use both in the Eastern and Western churches.

It was not without forerunners in the Church of the Old and New Testaments and in the pagan rituals. In the Old Testament canon one thinks immediately of ^{the Psalms containing} (Psalm 136) with its repeated refrain of "for his steadfast love endures for ever." In all likelihood this psalm was sung in an antiphonal manner in the worship of the temple with the laity singing this refrain. Similarly the same refrain appears elsewhere, notably in (Psalm 118.) This becomes a congregational acclamation. There are similar actions involved in Deuteronomy (27:15f., for instance.)

In the literature of the Apocrypha the refrain, "Bless ye the Lord," in the (Song of the Three Children) again ^{These} encourages us to imagine the singing of a choir with a response by the laity, left simple and in repetition form so that the people, who were without service books or hymnals, could easily participate in the community worship.

Again in the New Testament we find interesting fore-runners of the litany type of prayer. First Timothy 6:16 closes with what may well be an early Christian acclamation: "To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen," reminiscent of the songs of praise of the spirits in the Book of the Revelation. St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 16, seems to imply the same sort of thing:

Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider say the "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?

But most prominent in the Gospels is the cry of Kyrie eleison of those pleading for the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ten lepers, the blind man of Jericho, the Canaanitish woman, and others used this cry to gain divine blessing and to acclaim His honor and glory, much as the pagan crowds of other lands shouted these same words to the conquering general and emperor upon his triumphant return to his homeland, laden with the spoils and slaves of battle. So Christians besought Christ, the Stronger One, to share with them the spoils of His battles with the Evil Foe. And

there was precedent for such an address to the Deity, for even before this, pagans had addressed the Sun-God with the cry, "Eleison."¹

More information as to the source of the litany is to be found in the corporate prayer life of worshipers of those days. Prayers of an extended nature concerned with the needs of the Church as a whole were a part of the worship of the temple and synagogue. St. Paul refers to this practice and encourages all Christians to continue in such prayers, in his first letter of Timothy:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.²

That this command was followed is amply witnessed to by all of the New Testament.

Additional witness to the practice of the Church is given from the writings of others, as well as from those of the Apostles. The Epistle to the Corinthians, attributed to St. Clement and dated around the year 96 A. D., tells us that such was the case in the church at Rome of that day where

¹Josef Andreas Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1949), I, 413.

²1 Timothy 2:1-4.

petitions were made for all classes and needs of men.³

What was practical in the Old Testament and inter-testamental periods and for the pagan world soon proved to be practical to the Church of the New Testament. The Didache records the prayer of the Church of only a short time after St. Clement's letter. In this prayer already we see the beginnings of a responsive congregational prayer with repeated responses such as: "To Thee be the glory for evermore" and "For Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for evermore."⁴

From these simplest of beginnings, as described above, the litany type of prayer developed. The actual process which brought about this evolution is clouded in the mists of history. The student is hampered by the limited number of documents available and the limitations of attempting reconstructions. It would be hard, if not impossible, to trace every step.

The urges and desires that fostered this development may be summarized in this way. First, the universal need of prayer, both as felt by the individual Christian and as

³G. Armand Miller, "The Church Prayer," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), III, 35.

⁴The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, the Epistles and the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, the Fragments of Papias, the Epistle to Diognetus, translated by James A. Kleist (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1948), pp. 20-21.

commanded by the Christian's God, played an important role.

Secondly
 The Christian wanted to pray. It was only natural that he would strive to develop a form of prayer that would serve him in his congregation--a prayer in which the audible portions given to the laity would tend toward simplicity for that role. Books were scarce. It would hardly be possible for a parish to provide its people with books of the liturgy. Many could probably not read them even if given one. The acclamation type of response was a natural development. Third, the beauty and power of the responsive type of prayer would commend it to the people.

In concept the litany form of responsive congregational prayer may be traced back to the second century after Christ. Some parts of it may even go back into the first century.⁵ Tertullian, writing around the year 200, states that in Africa it was customary to say a litany during the Mass.⁶ Our own liturgical author, Lochner, says that the use of Kyrie eleison can be demonstrated to have been used first in the third century.⁷ Much of this is based on conjecture and reconstruction, to be sure. However, the litany does

⁵Constance Garrett, Growth in Prayer (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 130.

⁶Benjamin Francis Musser, Kyrie Eleison (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Bookshop, 1944), p. xvi.

⁷Friedrich Lochner, Der Hauptgottesdienst der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895), p. 105.

appear in fully developed form no later than the end of the fourth century in the rite of the Syrian Church as recorded in the Apostolic Constitutions.⁸

Here the old distinction between the mass of the catechumens and the mass of the faithful is observed. At the conclusion of the mass of the catechumens following the sermon, those not entitled to remain for the Communion were dismissed in stages, each dismissal preceded by a litany prayer. These classes were called upon to stand in this order: the catechumens, the energumens, those in the last stages of preparation for baptism and the penitents. The deacon called upon them to rise each in turn; the congregation would kneel, responding to the various bids by the deacon on behalf of each group with Kyrie eleison. Those for whom the prayer was given apparently did not pray for themselves at this point. After these bids and their following responses, however, the catechumens and the others in their turn were exhorted to rise and to pray for themselves. After this they received the blessing of the bishop in the form of a collect, and the deacon ordered that they "depart in peace." After all four groups were in turn prayed for and blessed and dismissed, the prayers for the faithful

⁸ Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (2nd edition; Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 477.

themselves followed, much in the same form without the dismissal.⁹

Certain aspects of this routine are somewhat obscure and debated by liturgical scholars, but the outline is sufficiently clear to obtain a good idea of the procedure.

A rather charming touch is given in the rubric that all are to respond with the Kyrie eleison, especially the little children. One is reminded of the praise of the children in the Temple on Palm Sunday and again of Luther's own wish that the children especially take part in the litany.¹⁰

As one surveys the practices of various churches and their liturgies, one finds the expected variations and developments that always are present when various people and lands are involved. Jungmann states that originally the bids were made by the bishop rather than by the deacon.¹¹ He adds that the deacon in the passage of time took over this function. In this he sees the connection between this more ancient prayer form and the ektene form so common in both the Mass and the daily Office of the modern Eastern

⁹F. E. Brightman, Liturgies Eastern and Western (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), Vol. I, Sec. I, Chap. I, pp. 3-9.

¹⁰Martin Luther, "Vom Kriege wider die Tuerken, 1529," Saemtliche Werke, edited by Johann Konrad Irmischer, XXXI (Erlangen: Verlag von Carl Heyder, 1842), 45.

¹¹Jungmann, op. cit., I, 592.

Orthodox Churches.¹² In this form the litany becomes only a dialogue between the deacon and the people with a heavy emphasis on the part of the deacon, the people remaining only a chorus of sorts.

Those interested in discovering in greater detail the course of the litany form of prayer in the ancient and Eastern churches are referred to Brightman's edition of the texts.

This, in brief, however, is the first step in the evolution of our own litany. We must next turn our attention to the Western churches, especially those of Gaul and Rome, where the next steps were taken.

¹²Cf. Prayer Book for Eastern Orthodox Christians, edited by Peter H. Horton-Billard and Vasile Hategan, translated by Michael G. H. Gelsinger (New York: Association Press, 1944), for Syrian usage;

The Divine Liturgy (New York: Greek Archdiocese of North and South America, n.d.), for Greek usage;

The Orthodox Liturgy (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), for Russian usage;

The Eastern Orthodox Prayer Book, edited by Fan Stylian Noli (Boston: The Albanian Orthodox Church in America, 1949), for Albanian usage; and similar books.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WESTERN CHURCH

This new kind of prayer, born in the fertile religious imagination of the East, was not long in making itself at home in the West. In all likelihood it was brought back by pilgrims from the West to the holy places of the East, for already in those early days such pilgrimages had become fashionable. Jungmann reports that around the year 390 a female pilgrim from Gaul was at Jerusalem and upon her return to Gaul reported that the deacon had read a list of petitions and that as he read, a group of boys answered him each time with Kyrie eleison.¹

All liturgical scholars are convinced that the connection between the litanies of the East and those of the West is beyond debate. However, just how the connection is to be demonstrated and how the changes came to pass are not simple things to prove.

Die sogenannten irenischen oder diaconischen Gebete der morgenlaendischen Kirche sind mit der abendlaendischen Litanei eines Geschlechtes, ohne dass wir doch nachweisen koennten, wie sich diese aus jenen allmaehlich entwickelt hat.²

¹Josef Andreas Jungmann, Missarum Sollemnia (Wien: Verlag Herder, 1949), I, 414.

²Wilhelm Loehe, Agende fuer christliche Gemeinden des Lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Zweite vermehrte Auflage; Nordlingen: Verlag der C. H. Bech'schen Buchhandlung, 1853), p. 149.

The form of the early litanies of the West have not been preserved for us. But it is assumed that they were probably modeled after those in the Apostolic Constitutions. Whatever their form, there were many of them. They appear early in the Mozarabic rite of Spain, the Gallican rite of Gaul and the Ambrosian rite of Milan. In the last of these the litany still has a part during the Lenten season when the deacon sings his litany from the Gospel ambo in two forms on alternating Sundays.

Our main concern is with the liturgy of Rome, which became the dominant order of the West and the chief ancestor of our Lutheran ways of worship. Of it Jungmann states: "Nach Rom kann das Kyrie nicht frueher als im 5. Jahrhundert gekommen sein."³ This Kyrie, he also informs us, was a portion of the litany. However, by the year 529 in which the Synod of Vaison met, some form of the litany had become a regular part of the Mass in Rome.⁴

We must now take a look backward before we can go on. The old form of prayer for the faithful in both the East and the West was fairly constant at first. It appeared after the dismissal of all those who had no place in the prayer life of the congregation itself nor in the celebration of the Communion. These prayers of the faithful have

³Jungmann, op. cit., I, 413.

⁴Ibid., I, 416.

a marked resemblance to our Bidding Prayer for Good Friday which is considered an accurate monument to the ancient prayers. They began by the announcement of a subject of prayer by the deacon (in the East) or by the officiant (in the West). Then the congregation was bidden to kneel, and it prayed in silence. After an appropriate length of time, the congregation was bidden to rise. The bishop then closed that round of prayer with a collect. Then the whole process was repeated with another subject and another and so on.⁵

While this mode of prayer could hardly be improved upon, it was significantly changed and became the deacon's litany. In the original form it gave dramatic expression to the universal priesthood of all Christian people, giving a significant role to bishop, deacon and laity. The newer litany form, as was remarked earlier, left the bishop almost entirely out and did not do much better for the laity in the final analysis.

But it was new; and the new always has its attractions for those who wish to be progressive and up-to-date. And so the effort was made to bring this new litany into the Service at Rome. But while the local situation and developments in the East gave the litany an honest role to play in the

⁵Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (2nd edition; Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 42.

worship of the Church, in the West that role was still being adequately played by the old general prayer of the faithful. The fact of the matter was that the litany simply was not needed in the Western Church. But it was new and modern, and many wanted it to find a place in the Western liturgy. The old prayers were old, and that was reason enough for many to wish their removal.

Gelasius I, who sat as Bishop of Rome from 492 to 496, seems to have been the man who worked out the necessary accommodations ^{for incorporating the new litany.} While there is no explicit evidence to prove this, all of the circumstances point to him. He apparently placed a litany, the so-called Deprecatio Gelasii, between the Introit psalm and the ancient hymn which followed it.⁶ This litany became a general prayer for the Church, and the old general prayers were removed from their place and partially absorbed into the expanding Eucharistic Prayer.⁷

And so things remained until the next great liturgical innovator at Rome ascended the bishop's throne. That was Pope Gregory the Great, who ruled in the final years of the 500's and the first years of the 600's. We do not know if the Deprecatio Gelasii, the ^{step} Intercessions of Gelasius, were

⁶Jungmann, op. cit., I, 418.

⁷Cf. Jungmann, op. cit., I, 416; and Dix, op. cit., p. 450.

still being used in Gregory's day. It is suspected, however, that it was either this same litany or a similar one that was the object of his reformer's zeal. It is known that he made it the practice of reducing the litany to a simple Kyrie on non-festal days.⁸ The full litany was still to be used on festal days. What his motives for this change might have been are not clear. Perhaps he felt the strangeness of a general prayer between the Introit and the hymn. Perhaps he felt the Service ought to be shortened at this point to favor expansion elsewhere. Whatever the cause might have been, it resulted in the litany being finally eliminated from the Service on all but a few days of the year. To this day the Roman liturgy reflects the old, pre-Gregorian order on Easter Eve and on the vigil of Pentecost where the Kyrie and Gloria in Excelsis are omitted and the litany is used. In this instance the closing Kyrie of the litany serves as the Kyrie of the Mass.⁹

The fact that the Kyrie had had an independent existence in Eastern worship and possibly in Milan also probably made the change somewhat easier for Gregory to achieve.¹⁰

⁸Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 54.

⁹A. L. Hamer, "The Liturgical Influence of Gregory the Great," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), V, 4.

¹⁰Jungmann, op. cit., I, 420.

However, scholars are inclined to believe that Gregory's Kyrie came from the litany rather than from this independent source because of a letter Gregory wrote to Bishop John of Syracuse about the year 590. (Already then the liturgical innovator was regarded as a potential danger!) Gregory felt he had to defend himself against the charge of introducing a Greek innovation. To defend himself he pointed out the differences between his practice in Rome and that of the Greeks. First, he said that among the Greeks the clergy and people both say the Kyrie and that in Rome the clergy sings first and then the people respond. Secondly, he points out that the Greeks know nothing of Christe eleison as is sung with Kyrie in Rome. Finally, Gregory comments that in Rome they simply leave out everything but Kyrie and Christe eleison. Jungmann, the source of the above, concludes from this that this could only mean that the invocations of the litany were removed and the response alone remains on non-festal days.¹¹

Once the process of the decay of the litany in the Mass began, it was eliminated almost as quickly as it had been added. The first Roman Ordo, dated about 240 years after Gregory's change, indicates that the Kyrie without litany is firmly established, that even this has passed from the laity to the choir and that the number three is the

¹¹Ibid.

accepted number of times it is to be sung. Perhaps in the hinterland the litany hung on longer than this, but it could not have been much longer.¹²

And so the cycle was completed as far as the Mass was concerned if our reconstruction is reasonably accurate. For the beginnings of the litany are to be found in the simple prayer of Kyrie eleison. It then grew into a most fruitful form of prayer. And then it shrank again into the original form. In the end, however, it was sung by the choir or the clergy instead of by the laity.

Among the Eastern churches, of course, the litany form of prayer still has a prominent part in the liturgy. There it appears several times and in several forms.

This year (1958) several of the Lutheran churches of America will issue a new Service Book. An interesting though debatable change has been made in the Kyrie with the addition of optional petitions. Luther D. Reed states of this:

The simple three-fold Kyrie is a fragment of an original meaningful responsive prayer which, as the first prayer of The Service, immediately followed the entrance Psalm (Introit) in the liturgies of the Early Church. This prayer was not penitential in character. It was universal in scope, with broad and objective intercessions for the peace of mind of the worshippers, for the well-being of the Church, the welfare of the city and the government, the peace of the world, etc. Each petition or intercession, recited by the minister, was followed by the simple response, Kyrie eleison by

¹²Ibid., I, 421.

the people. In the early Middle Ages some of the intercessions in this litany type of prayer were transferred to a later place in the service, and only the simple response of the people, the Kyrie eleison, was kept at this place and sung by the minister and the choir.

Separated from the petitions which had given it meaning, the simple Kyrie eleison came to be regarded as a cry of penitence. Medieval symbolism gave it a nine-fold form with three petitions addressed to each member of the Holy Trinity. Luther's Orders established the simpler three-fold form, but failed to restore the fuller text or the objective character of the prayer. The Anglican Prayer Books perpetuated the medieval penitential conception by connecting the Kyrie with the recitation of the Decalogue ("Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law"). Regarded merely as a cry of penitence, the simple Kyrie is repetitious and out of place following the Confession and Absolution. Its fragmentary text gives no hint of the real character and content of the original prayer. The restoration of the fuller and historically valid form gives meaning and life to this element in the Service. The restored petitions have peculiar pertinence for our time and for all time, and they follow the Confession and Absolution with entire propriety. Their sincerity and breadth of spirit lift the thought of worshippers above concern for self to levels of unselfish intercession for others.¹³

And so, perhaps, another turn in the cycle has begun in the Church, with the Kyrie regaining its original place in at least an abbreviated litany.

At the same time that these things were happening within the Mass, the litany was also the object of much thought and care in regard to a very special kind of ceremony outside the Mass. Almost at the same time that Pope Gelasius I was incorporating a litany into the Mass (ca. 495)

¹³Luther D. Reed, "Introduction to the New Common Liturgy," Lutheran Quarterly, II (August, 1950), 260-261.

the litany was finding special favor in Gaul as the liturgical text for a highly specialized form of religious procession. The two movements were inter-related, for as the litany became more popular in the processions, the people became more determined that the litany had to have a part in the Mass.¹⁴

The idea of a procession of the clergy and laity seems very often to us today to be without religious merit. That this is so is probably due to Luther's objection to processions (objections that were based more upon the abuses in the processions than on the processions themselves) and also to the strong streak of Puritanism that runs through American Christianity. But the idea of walking for religious purposes while singing psalms and offering prayers is a very ancient idea and one that is a part of many religions other than our own.

It is known that by 347 a Christian confraternity at Antioch, directed by Flavian and Diodore, promoted the singing of psalms with brief responsive choruses.¹⁵ We also have the witness of St. Basil in Cappadocia and St. John Chrysostom at Antioch that in the East litanies were sung in public procession, often in competition to the processions

¹⁴G. Rietschel, Lehrbuch der Liturgik (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther und Reichard, 1900), Erster Band, pp. 360f.

¹⁵Shepherd, op. cit., p. 54.

of the Arians.¹⁶ This reminds the writer immediately of the situation in New York City on May 1. The Communist Party marches on that day to celebrate the revolution and the more patriotic element of the city marches for "I Am An American Day!" The parade with the largest audience and the biggest bands is regarded as most successful. Although this type of competition is not of the most noble conception, we shall find it again playing a part in developments in Rome regarding the use of a litany outside of the Mass.

The case for religious processions using the litany has been put this way:

The mystical body's love and unity in prayer is manifested in the humble supplications of the . . . processions. Walking in any liturgical procession is, I repeat, always an outward manifestation of the one great sacrament: Christ and His Church.¹⁷

Not only is the idea of religious processions regarded by many as one of the best ways of establishing communion between God and His Church and between members of that Church, but many feel that the use of the litany without procession weakens the effectiveness of the litany.

In the Christian Church the earliest form of procession was the singing of the Litanies, with stations or stopping places for special prayers. This feature is preserved in our Litany, the meaning of which can

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷For Pastors and People, edited by Wilfred Tunink (Conception, Mo.: Conception Abbey, 1951), p. 158.

only be fully brought out if it is sung in procession and stations made for the prayers.¹⁸

Although it is quite likely that the use of litanies in procession in Gaul had several independent beginnings, the attempt that has captured the heart of all of Western Christianity was due to Mamertus, the Bishop of Vienne, around the year 470.¹⁹ Any number of circumstances are cited as causes for his institution of litany processions: the invasions of the Burgundians, earthquakes and floods, lightning striking the royal palace, and famine among the people. Whatever the cause or causes Mamertus ordered the clergy and laity with much fasting to spend the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Day occupied in procession while singing the litany. Through these prayers it was hoped that the affairs of the people of that area would take a turn for the better.

The idea behind the selection of these three particular days for the processions may be found in the Gospel for Rogate Sunday, the Fifth Sunday after Easter.²⁰ This selection exhorts Christian people to the practice of prayer. Connected with this, if not at that time then at

¹⁸Percy Dearmer, The Parson's Handbook (12th edition; London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1932), p. 254.

¹⁹L. Duchesne, Christian Worship, translated by M. L. McClure (5th edition; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), pp. 288-289.

²⁰St. John 16:23-30.

some later time, was the idea that on Ascension Day the Lord ascended to His Father in heaven. It seemed only natural that Christians ought to concentrate on prayer in the days immediately preceding the commemoration of this event so that He might, as it were, take them with Him to His Father.²¹ Since this was the season of planting in that area, the litany was said particularly in the hope that God would bless the new crops.

The observance of these Rogation Days in Gaul was not a light one. Before the procession began, all concerned had to fast rigorously. They received ashes on the top of their heads in token of their repentance and were sprinkled with holy water. Then the clergy and the people, headed by the cross of the chief church, set out. They walked barefooted, singing the litany, psalms, and antiphons. Upon reaching the station church for the day after a circuitous route enclosing the farm lands of the parish, the Mass was celebrated. And these processions lasted six hours!²²

Whatever their length, they became exceedingly popular. Perhaps this was because the litany was commonly spoken in

²¹For Pastors and People, op. cit., p. 164.

²²Abbot Gueranger, The Liturgical Year, translated by Laurence Shepherd (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1952), VI, 132.

the vernacular in Gaul.²³ By the year 511 they had already become so popular that they were officially recognized by the Council of Orleans which decreed: "Rogationes i.e. litanias ante ascensionem Domini ab omnibus ecclesiis placuit celebrari."²⁴ It also decreed that all laborers must be released from their work to go on the processions.

From Gaul these Rogation Processions spread to other lands. They spread to Germany and Rome in the early 800's. In Rome they were called the Lesser Litanies. Rome had at this same time developed its own litany processions which were called the Greater Litanies. More of them shortly. They also reached England where additions were made that we shall also discuss later. In Spain the litany procession took place in the week after Pentecost and also in November, which was the time of sowing there.²⁵ In 694 the seventeenth council of Toledo appointed the litany to be used once a month. Gaul also decreed that the litanies be used in preparation for all the high festivals. In time the litany became a regular part of the Church's worship in many

²³Yngve Brilioth, Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic, translated by A. G. Hebert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), p. 74.

²⁴R. Morris Smith, "The Sources of the Minor Services," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1900), II, 52.

²⁵William D. Maxwell, An Outline of Christian Worship (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 289.

places on Wednesdays and Fridays, but the living tradition that brought the litanies to us was the litany processions of Rogationtide.

While all this had been developing in Gaul, similar processional litanies had begun to develop in Rome for the same purpose but from other reasons. On April 25 the pagan Romans, especially the young people, crossed the Milvian Bridge to sacrifice to Robigus, the god who protected grain from frost and rust. It was customary for the Church to attempt to defend its members from the pernicious influence of pagan ritual and ceremony by establishing a parallel ritual at the same time. And so the Roman litany processions began. While the pagan Romans set out in procession from the Flaminian Gate, across the Milvian Bridge and from there on to a sanctuary some distance off, the Christian processions followed the same route to the bridge and from thence to one of the churches in Rome.²⁶

A further development in Rome came with Pope Gregory the Great. After his elevation in January, 590, a severe flood was followed by pestilence in Rome. Gregory delivered a sermon and requested the people to perform a Litania Septiformis, a seven-fold litany. The people were to divide themselves into seven choirs or groups and each was to start out from a different church and march to a common

²⁶Duchesne, op. cit., pp. 287-288.

destination. These seven groups consisted of the clergy, the men, the monks, the virgins, the married women, the widows, and the poor and children. Each of these groups marched in procession, singing litanies until they had reached the church of St. Mary the Great. This was on April 25.²⁷

At this date St. Mark was not yet associated with April 25. At first these processions were simply called the Greater Litanies to distinguish them from the many other litany processions of the Church, especially the Gallican litany processions of Rogationtide, which as we saw earlier were referred to in Rome as the Lesser Litanies. Later, however, the date of April 25 became known as St. Mark's Day and the procedure for both the Greater and Lesser Litanies became standardized, and both were directed toward the blessing of the fields by the Lord. Christian farmers recognize perhaps better than their urban contemporaries that all the rain and sunshine come from God and that in order to have crops they must be blessed by God.

And so a new contribution to the worship of the Church was made by the West. The East had developed the litany form and to this day makes great use of it. But the West contributed the thought of associating the litanies with a procession on a fixed date for a pre-determined purpose.

²⁷Smith, op. cit., p. 52.

Changes also were made in the content of the litany type of prayer used in the West. Again we must state that just when and how some of these changes came about is not known at present.

One of the changes that occurred ^{in the Western usage} concerned the response of the laity. We have already mentioned the part of the acclamation, Kyrie eleison, in the litanies. As time passed, other responses were added to fit with additions and changes in the petitions offered up. In addition to eleison the laity was taught to say miserere, exaudi nos, parce nobis, and similar phrases; and when it became the fashion to invoke the saints, ora pro nobis.²⁸

Through additions to the petitions the litany took on more and more the nature of a general prayer. One of the last innovations has been referred to above, the invocation of the saints. The oldest extant form of the litany text is in a Fuldensian codex, and this text contains no invocation of the saints. However, a ninth century document directs petitions to Mary, the saints, and the angels.²⁹

The process by which the invocation of the saints became a part of the litany, which later became known as the Litany of All Saints because of these invocations, was

²⁸C. Armand Miller, "The Church Prayer," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), III, 43.

²⁹Ibid.

something like this. At the times when the West was developing the Rogationtide and St. Mark's litany processions, the East, which had produced the litany form, was embarking upon a new venture, litanies made up of invocations of the saints and special devotions to the Cross and to Christ as the Lamb of God.³⁰ This idea was brought to Rome by a Syrian Pope, Sergius I, 687-701. While it did not catch on in Rome at first, it did in England in the 700's. Due to the Irish and Anglo-Saxon movements toward the continent, this addition of the invocations came to Gaul and from there to Rome.³¹ It is one of the ironies of history, similar to the defeat of the litany in the Mass by the Kyrie eleison which had given birth to the litany, that the invocation of the saints, which was one of the few Anglo-Saxon contributions to the worship of the Church in the West, was one of the first victims of the early English reformers. One of the first things that Cranmer did was to limit severely these invocations in his new English litany in 1544.³²

Before the year 1000 the litany had settled into almost the same shape in which we know it. It began with a series of Invocations of God, calling upon Him for audience at His

³⁰Shepherd, op. cit., p. 54.

³¹Dix, op. cit., p. 479.

³²Ibid.

throne of grace. These Invocations were answered by the laity with the cry, "Have mercy." Then came the invocation of the saints. In the earliest of times during which this was the practice only classes of saints were named. But as time passed, the saints were mentioned by name to the point of tediousness. These invocations were answered by the laity with, "Pray for us." Then followed the Deprecations, petitions for deliverance from all forms of evil. The title "Deprecations" can be traced back to the Latin deprecare, to avert by prayer. To these the parish responded, "Deliver us, O Lord." Then followed the Obsecrations (from obsecrare, to ask on religious grounds) which consist of a series of entreaties addressed to the Lord in which His redeeming acts are recalled. To this again the laity responds, "Deliver us, O Lord." Then came the Suffrages or supplications on the behalf of those praying and all others in the Christian family. To these the laity responded: "We beseech Thee to hear us." It was these Suffrages which gave the litany its character as a general prayer which plays an important part in the attitude of the Reformers toward its use in the new evangelical churches. The litany then continued with the Agnus Dei, another innovation from the East. Then followed a few more invocations including a Kyrie to frame the litany together with the opening Kyrie. Then followed the Lord's Prayer. Psalm 70, "Deus in adiutorium," was followed by a series of

Whole page

petitions. The litany was closed with a series of collects. This same pattern is still the shape of our Lutheran litanies with certain obvious omissions. The Roman litany remains essentially the same today despite the fact that the Church of Rome permitted greater variety and freedom in the use of the litany for many years than it did in other things.

In summary then we might outline the early developments of the litany in the Western Church in this manner. Once it had been introduced from the East, the litany form of prayer became exceedingly popular. Although we may not be able to trace every last step of its growth and although admittedly much of what we do know is the result of conjecture and deduction, it can be said that the litany had two lines of development. One was within the Mass. In this case the litany was forced into a liturgy that had no real need of it. It was made a part of the introduction, being placed between the Introit or entrance psalm and the hymn which soon became standardized in the Gloria in Excelsis. Here the litany was in much the same form as in the Eastern liturgies. Despite this innovation by Gelasius, Gregory felt compelled to reduce the litany to the acclamation which had given birth to the litany, Kyrie eleison. In a short time, therefore, the litany had been adopted and cast out again, leaving behind only an echo.

The second path of development was outside of the Mass in the form of religious processions. It was here that the lasting contribution was made, and it was in this form that the litany gained a permanent part in the worship of the West. In Gaul the litany became fixed for Rogationtide and in Rome on April 25, later to become St. Mark's Day, in both cases to beseech God's help for an immediate emergency. But later it became a form through which to ask God's blessing upon the agricultural work of the community. Other than a few occasions in the Roman Mass where the litany is observed in its place where the Kyrie now exists, its main place in the West is in connection with these days of special intercession.

CHAPTER IV

ADAPTATIONS WITHIN GERMAN LUTHERANISM

The litany and the litany form of the Western Church proved to be a great favorite with the Christian folk of Western, Central, and Southern Europe. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that the litany could satisfy needs that other forms of worship at that time did not. The simplicity of the responses, for one thing, enabled the laity to take part in the worship of the Church even though the Mass might be somewhat obscure to them. In fact, the people were encouraged to give themselves over to extra-liturgical worship. Their love for the litany and the litany form led to the development of many litanies. In fact, by the year 1601 some eighty litany-type prayers had gained circulation, so popular was the form. Pope Clement VIII in that year forbade the use of any in the church's public worship except the litany of All Saints and that of Loreto.¹ (In later years, three more were accepted by the Roman Church, those of the Name of Jesus by Pius IX, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus by Leo XIII, and of St. Joseph by Pius X.) The so-called "leisen" hymns grew out of the old cry of Kyrie eleison which had been a part of the litany, but separated

¹Benjamin Francis Musser, Kyrie Eleison (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Bookshop, 1944), p. xxi.

in the Mass. (Already by 519 there is a tendency to replace the Greek phrase with the Latin, Deus, miserere nobis, in the litany.)² Metrical litanies were also developed for the laity. These were continued after the Reformation and find a place in most Lutheran and Anglican hymnals to this day. In many cases it is hard to find much of a connection with the litany other than the repetition of a fixed petition in the hymn.

The processions which were a part of the use of the litany in most instances were also a cause for the litany's popularity. During the Middle Ages the litany was sung in procession on Sundays and Festivals before the Mass, on Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent after the Office of Nones, on the Rogation Days and on St. Mark's Day and in times of special necessity.³ So great an influence had the Rogation Days, for example, that liturgical students in the Middle Ages speak of three great penitential seasons, ranking Rogationtide with Advent and Lent.⁴

In addition to this the litany was prayed in the

²Ludwig Schoeberlein, Schatz des liturgischen Chor- und Gemeindegesangs (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht's Verlag, 1865), I, 725.

³Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 54.

⁴G. Rietschel, Lehrbuch der Liturgik (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther und Reichard, 1900), Erster Band, p. 168.

churches with the people kneeling on Easter Eve, Pentecost Eve, at ordinations and after the Office of Terce during Lent.⁵ In some parts of England the litany was sung each Sunday before Mass.⁶

It was only natural that an element of worship that played such a major part in the devotional life of the Christian people of the day would ^{be of interest to} (come under the scrutiny of) the reformers in the sixteenth century.)

Luther had no objections to the litany as such. He did object to the superstitious practices which accompanied the processions as well as to the all too human conduct of the folk while in the processions, such as seeking prominent places. He questioned the wisdom and propriety of the seemingly endless repetitions of the petitions in the way in which they were oftentimes used. And, of course, the invocation of the saints was abhorrent to him. Because he did not hesitate to criticize these faults, the litany fell into disuse, especially after the days of Carlstadt's "reforms" from 1520 to 1521.⁷

Apparently Luther's attention was momentarily distracted by weightier matters. It must not be thought

⁵Shepherd, loc. cit.

⁶Musser, op. cit., p. xv.

⁷Martin Luther, Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), VI, 243.

however, that he did not esteem the litany as a mode of prayer. Gerber is quoted by Loehe as stating in his Historie der Kirchenceremonien in Sachsen: "Luther hat die Litanei fuer das 'beste Gebet gehalten so nach dem Gebet des h. Vaterunser' auf Erden kommen sei."⁶ Yet from 1521 to 1528 there is no record of the litany being used by Luther or the Wittenberg church. Suddenly in 1529 we find the litany established in that city.⁹

There seem to be two causes for Luther's ^{sudden} interest in the litany. The first of these was Luther's continuing desire to foster congregational worship. The second was the invasion by the Turks.¹⁰ In his essay, "Vom Kriege wider die Tuerken" of 1529 Luther urges the use of the litany to appeal to the Almighty for protection against the Turk.¹¹ Perhaps it was for this specific purpose that Luther prepared his two reformed versions of the litany of All Saints, the Latina litania correcta, and the Deutsch Litaney, both coming from the period 1528 to 1529 in all

⁸Wilhelm Loehe, Agende fuer christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Zweite vermehrte Auflage; Noerdlingen: Verlag der C. H. Bech'schen Buchhandlung, 1853), p. 150.

⁹Luther, op. cit., VI, 243.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 244.

¹¹Ibid., p. 245.

likelihood.¹² Which came first is unknown, although Strodach conjectures that the Latin preceded the German as a test vehicle.¹³ Essentially both are the old litany of All Saints in recognizable form. Luther omitted the invocations to the saints as well as the petitions for the Pope and the departed faithful. His petitions in many cases are more concise and specific. He left out the opening and closing antiphon, about twelve suffrages and Psalm 70. Luther added about twenty-five new petitions. The person seeking to study these changes more closely and the variations between the two litanies and the older litany of the Church before the Reformation is directed toward the wonderful parallel column treatment in Luther D. Reed's The Lutheran Liturgy of various litany forms on pages 619 to 632, and to the similar treatment in Volume VI of the Philadelphia Edition of the Works of Martin Luther on pages 249 to 260, and to the helpful notes in Reed on pages 547 to 548 and on pages 550 to 552.

Luther himself provided music for both of the litanies from his pen. He recommended that two choirs sing the prex and the respond antiphonally with the congregation joining in on the respond. On weekdays he wished the litany to be

¹²Hereafter referred to as the Latin litany and the German litany, respectively.

¹³Luther, op. cit., VI, 246.

sung, by a boys' choir. The responding choir should be mixed in the congregation to help the laity learn their part.¹⁴ Many churches, however, found that even where it was not possible to follow these directions, the litany was also useful when the pastor read the petitions and the choir and the congregation, or the congregation alone, sang the response. In some places the choir boys, kneeling before the altar, sang the petitions.¹⁵

From the very beginning Luther's Latin litany did not have a very large following.¹⁶ This was natural in a day when the Lutherans were emphasizing the necessity of worshiping in the language of the people and also in a day of intense nationalism. But Luther's German litany caught the fancy of the laity and spread quickly. It was published with the Small Catechism, in hymnbooks and prayerbooks, and of course in the various church orders.¹⁷ His litany was used throughout Germany, Austria, and Scandinavia. It was adopted and adapted by the Hussites for their own use.¹⁸

¹⁴Ibid., p. 245.

¹⁵Loeche, op. cit., p. 153.

¹⁶Schoeberlein, op. cit., p. 727.

¹⁷Luther, op. cit., VI, 245.

¹⁸Charles Krauth Fegley, "The Bidding Prayer, Litany, and Suffrages," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), VII, 142.

Cranmer drew upon it for his own revision of the litany in England.¹⁹ So popular was the litany of Luther that Markgraf Georg of Brandenburg by special order in 1533 insisted upon the use of the litany, which had not been specifically stated in the church order of Brandenburg-Nuernberg.²⁰

As time went on, the usual procedure was to use the German litany on Sundays in the chief service when Communion was not celebrated. It was quite usual to use it as a conclusion to the service when no one appeared for the Communion. Because of its somber mood, it was regarded as too long and unfitting to be used when the Communion was celebrated.²¹ On weekdays the litany was to be used in Latin.²² Wednesdays and Fridays, the old days of fasting and penitence, were especially recommended as in keeping with tradition, especially as each Friday was regarded as a Good Friday just as each Sunday is regarded as a little Easter Day.²³

¹⁹Shepherd, op. cit., p. 54.

²⁰Loeche, op. cit., p. 151.

²¹Ibid.

²²Luther, op. cit., VI, 245. But cf. Paul Graff, Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1937), I, 224, where it is stated that the German litany was used on Wednesdays and the Latin litany on Fridays.

²³Graff, op. cit., I, 121.

Naturally, there was considerable difference in adherence to these ideas. Usually it was the larger cities that continued a pattern of many week-day services. Smaller communities often contented themselves with Wednesday and Friday services. The matter of finding qualified singers also tended to lessen the use of the Latin litany.

And after this chaos! At first the litany was so highly regarded that sermons were delivered about it and commentaries were written about it. Thus John Andrew Lucius, court preacher to the Elector of Saxony in Dresden, appended to his volume of sermons on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, Die Offenbarung des heiligen Apostels und Evangelisten Johannis (Dresden: Christian Bergen, 1670) a ninety-two folio size page commentary on the litany in fifty-five chapters. For a considerable time the older traditions held sway. But newer ways of thinking and doing kept gaining in strength. Unfortunately many of these newer ideas and trends were based on misunderstanding of the nature of the litany and what was even worse, on misunderstandings of the nature of Christianity.

Luther led the way back to the older way of regarding the litany as a general prayer as was its former use before the development of the litany into a processional and penitential prayer. But the old idea of the use of the litany as a penitential prayer could not be denied, especially with the development of the morbid fascination of

repentance that developed within the Lutheran Church as time went on.

This tendency to regard the litany as a Bussgebet instead of as a Gemeindegebet was particularly strong in south Germany where even into the early twentieth century Lutheran Christianity took on a very severe tone.²⁴ This linking of the litany with days and services of humiliation and prayer is still current in American Lutheranism as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

One result of the trend was the establishment of the litany as the general prayer for days of humiliation and prayer.²⁵ The rubrics of the Common Service of American Lutheranism in regard to the litany still make this provision. In some instances the litany is indicated as a replacement for the prayer of confession at the beginning of the Communion service.²⁶

Outside of the chief service, a variety of extra services of penitence and prayer also arose, specifically a Bussgottesdienst. In a typical service of this sort, for example, the litany is prayed after a public confession made

²⁴Schoeberlein, op. cit., p. 726.

²⁵Rietschel, op. cit., I, 463.

²⁶Graff, op. cit., I, 156.

after the penitential address.²⁷ In some orders these services are called for monthly and in some even weekly.²⁸ At times even the text of the litany is added to it to give it an additional penitential tone.²⁹

For quite some time the old connection between the litany and the changing of the seasons and the blessing of agricultural work continued. The Rogationtide program was not always necessarily kept tied to that particular part of the year, however. We hear of Hagelfeiertage, of Betwoche, and of the Fruehlingsfeste. These might be held at Rogationtide. But other days were open also for such observances. The Monday of Rogation week, the Monday after Exaudi, the first Sunday in May, the three Fridays after Pentecost, and all manner of other days were used. Graff believes that the reason for the continuing of this sort of observance can be found in the fact that such spring-time observances go back to the ancient customs of the Germanic peoples.³⁰ The Ember days also were remembered by the use

²⁷Paul Graff, Geschichte der Aufloesung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1939), II, 166.

²⁸Ibid., I, 221.

²⁹Ibid., p. 225.

³⁰Ibid., p. 139.

of the litany.³¹ A typical service might include hymns, a sermon dealing with an appropriate subject, such as God's protection over the fields, or the power of prayer, the litany and the collect for the harvest.³² A full observance of Rogation Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in the old manner with processions is recorded in the Order for Public Prayers for Stendal as late as 1541, however.³³

The litany also ^{kept} a place in the main service and in various lesser services as a general prayer as indicated by Luther. It was used in various ways: read, sung by the choir alone, sung antiphonally between choir and congregation, and sung by choir boys and the congregation. It could be used as a general prayer during times of special need, an echo of the origins of the litany processions.³⁴ It appeared between the Epistle and Gospel in some orders.³⁵ But usually it appeared after the sermon in place of the general prayer.³⁶ Among other uses, the litany found use at ordinations where it was used three times, in place of

³¹Schoeberlein, op. cit., p. 726.

³²Graff, op. cit., I, 140.

³³Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Processions in the Lutheran Church," in Sursum Corda (Reformation, 1939), pp. 14-15.

³⁴Graff, op. cit., I, 224.

³⁵Rietschel, op. cit., I, 368.

³⁶Loeche, op. cit., p. 153.

the Creed, at week-day preaching services, at Matins, at Vespers in place of the Magnificat, at funerals, on Good Friday, and in a fantastic number of other places and occasions. / Those interested in the myriads of uses given to the litany are referred to Graff.³⁷

In all of this confusion and misunderstanding can already be seen the seeds of decay and abuse. Hard as it may seem, in time this prayer was spoken by the pastor alone. A responsive prayer without responses! This naturally took away all of its meaning and purpose and made it boring.³⁸ Changes were made in the text for political reasons, additional petitions were added, others removed to produce an abbreviated version. Late in the sixteenth century and early in the seventeenth century some orders began grouping the petitions much as is customarily done today in our own churches.³⁹ Fewer and fewer congregations sang it, and more and more spoke it. An effort was made in 1629 to encourage more singing, but by 1644 it was obvious that this effort had failed. Some parishes said it in winter to speed up the service during cold weather and sang it only in

³⁷Supra, p. 40, f.n. 23; and p. 43, f.n. 27.

³⁸Theodor Kliefoth, Liturgische Abhandlung (Schwerin: Verlag der Stiller'schen Hof-Buchhandlung, 1861), VIII, 244.

³⁹Loeche, op. cit., p. 153.

summer!⁴⁰ Kliefoth complains that the litany fell into disrepute because it had fallen into disrepair, and its disrepute became an accusation against it for the purpose of ignoring it. His words of condemnation of the clergy could well be used for many similar situations:

First they would not have the congregations sing the Litany with the necessary result that it became unfamiliar. Then they used the ignorance of it on the part of the congregation as a reproach against it.⁴¹

But it was not just the litany that suffered in those days. There were too many destructive forces on the loose for the litany to escape harm and neglect and misunderstanding. In the eighteenth century all things churchly suffered under the movements called pietism and rationalism. The very arts themselves also were in a state of flux, and this also put pressure on the worship forms of the church.

The pietists objected to the litany for several reasons. They did not like its objective character and regarded it as not useful for the worshipping Christian. Kliefoth observes that for the pietist the simple objectivity of the litany lacked Wortfuelle, Salbung, and Herzensdrang!⁴²

The rationalists objected to it, too, for other reasons.

⁴⁰Graff, op. cit., I, 224.

⁴¹G. Armand Miller, "The Church Prayer," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), III, 44.

⁴²Kliefoth, op. cit., VIII, 243.

One writer and editor of a collection of liturgical forms comments that he refused to include any form of the litany because the litany is "die Geburt der Zeiten des in die christliche Kirche eingeführten Aberglaubens." It reminds him too much of the praying of the priests of Baal with its repetition of the responses. Still another reason given was that the litany reveals an unchristian fear of the devil.⁴³

The musical world was also in ferment at this time. The beauty of the older forms and of the old Lutheran music was lost on a generation that looked for a more operatic style in its church music. Johann Sebastian Bach himself represents the Old Guard in music and was definitely not in harmony with the musical spirit of the times.⁴⁴ The litany was omitted from hymn books and church orders in some instances because the old melodies were regarded as ugly. In the place of the litany a pretty penitential hymn was suggested. A hymnal prepared for Braunschweig in 1791 has a note from its editor that he has left out the litany because he was sure very few would like it and that in its

⁴³Graff, op. cit., II, 167.

⁴⁴It is interesting to note that a record remains of the use of the litany in Bach's own hand. Bach wrote down for his own use the order of service in Leipzig on December 2, 1714. The litany finds a place after the Epistle. It is sung. A Chorale and the Gospel follow. The Bach Reader, edited by Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel (New York: W. W. Norton, 1945), p. 70.

place he has put a new hymn with a "gewoehnliche Melodey von einem wuerdigen Manne verfertigt."⁴⁵

The union movement between Lutheran and Reformed bodies did not help the litany either, for the litany had always been a stumbling block for the Reformed. Kliefoth comments: "Die ersten Berliner Gesangbuecher aus dem 17ten Jahrhundert, welche den dortigen Unionsbestrebungen dienen, fangen gleich mit der Weglassung der Litanei an."⁴⁶

New prayers in responsive form labeled as litanies for all manner of specific causes were prepared. Their relation to the historic litany of the Church would be hard to demonstrate on the basis of their texts despite their name of litany. Some were done in rhythmic form.⁴⁷

But this terrible situation did not go unchallenged. Around the middle of the nineteenth century voices were raised to call the Lutheran Church back to its heritage-- voices that could not be ignored. ^{many others} Kliefoth and Schoeberlein ^{Loche} were undoubtedly responsible for the revival of interest in the liturgical and musical heritage of the German Lutheran church.

In 1865 Ludwig Schoeberlein issued his Schatz des liturgischen Chor- und Gemeindegesangs which recorded some

⁴⁵Graff, op. cit., II, 189-190.

⁴⁶Kliefoth, op. cit., VIII, 243.

⁴⁷Graff, op. cit., II, 167.

of the finest musical settings for the liturgy of the Lutheran Church. In it he included three musical settings of the litany, two by Michael Praetorius and one by Melchior Vulpius. He also included an introduction on the litany, its history and use. He told his readers of Luther's high esteem of the litany and of the fact that Luther preached many sermons about the litany. He especially encouraged the responsive use of the litany and insisted that for the full effect to be gotten it must be sung.

In der plastischen Kuerze der Gedanken und in der antiphonischen Form liegt eine besonders anziehende Macht dieses Gebetes. Und gesungen klingt es gar feierlich und tiefergreifend.⁴⁸

At just about the same time Theodor Kliefoth issued a series of works in liturgics, among them a volume on the litany. But he is remembered best by his eight volumes of the Liturgische Abhandlung, issued between 1854 and 1861. He suggests that the Lutheran pastors ought to give up the Kirchengebet spoken from the pulpit and use the litany instead. He also wishes to have the litany sung by the choir and the congregation, points out the virtues of the litany, and indicates what sort of errors the pastor must be on guard against in his use of the litany.⁴⁹

Still another writer, Wilhelm Loehe, made his distinctive contribution. More will be said about his

⁴⁸Schoeberlein, op. cit., I, 729.

⁴⁹Kliefoth, op. cit., VIII, 368.

contribution in the next chapter. In the second edition of his Agende fuer christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses he also devotes space to the litany and encourages its use. Loehe's influence reached across the Atlantic to the new churches in the mid-west of the United States. Characteristic of his attitude is this statement:

Es gibt kein Mittel, den Geist des Gebetes herbeizubringen, viel weniger eins, ihn zu ersetzen; aber wo man beten kann, da lege man einmal das moderne Vorurtheil gegen die Litanei nieder, bete und erfahre, fast haette ich gesagt: man genieesse.⁵⁰

And so the Reformation movement that could so well have used the litany in its program of returning the worship of the church back to the laity, despite the urging and work of Luther, was hampered and hindered and weakened in its effort by many forces. But the work of the reformers was not lost due to a revival of understanding and interest. We now turn our attention to the churches in America which had come from Europe and were children of both the constructive and destructive forces mentioned in this section.

⁵⁰Loehe, op. cit., p. 155.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENTS IN AMERICA

The Lutheran churches in America are in fact nothing more than extensions of the parent churches in the homelands of the Lutheran settlers of America. Therefore, we must expect that the practices of the parent churches in regard to the litany were continued as much as was possible in the new churches. In many cases the new churches continued to follow closely the traditions and practices of the old churches. Many of the American churches used imported liturgies. But because of the confusion resulting from conflicting traditions, the influences of the dominant Reformed churches, and the necessities of the frontier, changes were not long in coming, many of them for the worse.

The materials available to the writer do not permit him to give an exhaustive survey of early American practices in regard to the litany. The earliest liturgy to which he found any reference in regard to the litany is dated 1806, the Book of Hymns and Liturgy of the Lutheran Church, prepared by the Rev. Ralph Williston, approved by the current president of the New York Ministerium.¹ In this liturgy the

¹D. M. Kemerer, "Early American Lutheran Liturgies," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), IV, 89.

officiant may direct either the Te Deum or the litany to be used after the sermon. This liturgy is heavily indebted to the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal church in America.

A liturgy of 1838 which was prepared for the Pennsylvania churches has no mention of the litany whatever.²

The first edition (1844) of Loehe's liturgy, dedicated to Friedrich Wyneken, one of the leaders of the group of churches involved in the formation of today's Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, has no mention of the litany either.³ But the second edition (1853) of this work is full of historical matter concerning the litany and is also full of praise for the litany. Loehe includes the texts of both the German and Latin litanies of Luther and a form of the deacon's litany of the Orthodox churches.⁴

Another stream of American Lutheranism, the General Synod, issued in 1847 an English language version of the 1843 German liturgy prepared for the synods of Pennsylvania,

²Liturgie oder Kirchen-Agende der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Pennsylvanien und den benachbarten Staaten (Libanon, Pa.: Gedruckt fuer Heinrich Diezel, 1838).

³Wilhelm Loehe, Agende fuer christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Noerdlingen: Druck und Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1844).

⁴Wilhelm Loehe, Agende fuer christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Zweite vermehrte Auflage; Noerdlingen: Druck und Verlag der C. H. Beck'schen Buchhandlung, 1853).

New York, and Ohio.⁵ This contains no litany. However, in 1881 the General Synod issued another liturgical work.⁶ This does contain a litany. It is not based on either the German or the Latin litanies of Luther, but upon the form of the litany prepared by Cranmer for the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. It is prescribed for days of humiliation and prayer and may be used before communion and "at other appropriate occasions."

The United Synod of the South had its own Book of Worship which contained a litany, according to Reed.⁷ So also the Church Book of the General Council of 1868.⁸

Despite the varied origins of the various branches of the Lutheran Church in America and also despite the vast differences in usage prior to the twentieth century, current practice in regard to the litany is, in form at least, highly unified. This can be attributed in a large part--I am inclined to say entirely--to the preparation and adoption of the so-called Common Service in 1887 and 1888 by the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of

⁵A Liturgy for the Use of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Baltimore: General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, 1847).

⁶The Liturgy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1881).

⁷Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), p. 196.

⁸Ibid.

the South. Whatever its faults, it did succeed in a large measure to achieve its goals of improving the liturgical usages of the churches in America and in providing a common liturgy for all Lutheran churches in this country. Even those groups which played no part in creating the Common Service on the whole soon adopted it.

The text of the litany of the Common Service is, it is implied by Fegley, based upon the Latin litany of Luther.⁹ However, upon a comparison between the two litanies of Luther and that of the Common Service, it can be seen that our present English language litany is a careful and wise blending of the two of Luther with enriching additions and changes.

The present rubrics for the litany of the Common Service as revealed by the present service book of the United Lutheran Church in America, the child of the three groups responsible for the Common Service, are as follows:

The Litany may be used at The Service on Sundays, except on Festivals or when there is a Communion.

It may be used at Matins and Vespers, except on Festivals; the ancient Litany Days being Wednesday and Friday.

It may be used alone on Days of Humiliation and Prayer, or as a Penitential Office, or at specially appointed times.

⁹Charles Krauth Fegley, "The Bidding Prayer, Litany, and Suffrages," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), VII, 147-148.

When said at The Service, it shall be used instead of the Form of General Prayer there appointed, and be followed by a Hymn and the Benediction.

When said at Matins or Vespers, it shall immediately follow the Canticle, and after it shall be said the Benedicamus and the Benediction.

When used as a special Office, the Order shall be: The Minister shall say: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Then shall be said one or more of the Psalms with the Gloria Patri. A brief Lesson with the Response, and a Hymn may follow. Then shall the Litany be said, and after the last Collect shall follow this Benediction: The Blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

The Responses shall be sung or said by the Congregation.¹⁰

Paul Zeller Strodach, the chairman of the committee on rubrics, indicates that the seasons in mind for the use of the litany "as a special Office" were Advent and Lent and that this Office would be appropriate for the afternoon.¹¹ He also states that on days of humiliation and prayer, the litany is automatically the general prayer.¹²

The Lutheran Liturgy, the liturgical guide for The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, has the following rubrics for the litany:

The Litany may be used at Vespers on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, on Days of Humiliation and Prayer, and at Matins on Sundays when there is no Communion.

¹⁰Reed, op. cit., p. 554.

¹¹Paul Zeller Strodach, A Manual on Worship (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. 291.

¹²Ibid.

The Responses should be sung or said by the Congregation. They may be repeated after each phrase or only at the end of each group.¹³

The General Rubrics that went into effect on Easter Day, 1955, and that are included in copies of The Lutheran Liturgy printed since 1954, provide in addition:

In connection with the Order of Morning Service, "the Litany may be used instead of the General Prayer, except when there is a Communion" (p. 421).

At Matins, "instead of the Prayers appointed, the Suffrages, the Litany or other Prayers may be used" (p. 423).

At Vespers, "instead of the Prayer appointed, the Suffrages or the Litany or other Prayers may be said" (p. 424).

The litany of the Missouri Synod liturgy is identical to that of the Common Service except that the opening Kyrie is in the traditional manner of Luther rather than in the six-fold manner of the Common Service.

The Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod's Hymnal and Order of Service permits the use of the litany "instead of the General Prayer . . . during Lent, on Sunday Rogate, and on special occasions." It provides no litany collects. Other than this it is like that of the Common Service.¹⁴

¹³The Lutheran Liturgy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.).

¹⁴The Hymnal and Order of Service (Rock Island: Augustana Book Concern, 1925).

The American Lutheran Church in its American Lutheran Hymnal provides the litany with the rubric that it can be used in the Morning Service at the place of the General Prayer. It can also be used at Vespers. Unlike most other hymnals, this provides a musical setting labeled "Barnby's Arrangement of Tallis' Responses" instead of the more usual setting by Spangenberg.¹⁵

The Altar Book of the Evangelical Lutheran Church provides the litany of the Common Service with the permission that it be used for the General Prayer if there is no Communion in the service and that it may also be used at Vespers.¹⁶

In short, these liturgical books today all provide a litany of the Common Service text with rubrics that reflect the past usages of the Church. The mention of Wednesday and Friday reflects the ancient practice of the Church of the West, (as does the mention of Rogate Sunday). The use of the litany on days of humiliation and prayer reflects post-Reformation usage. The permission to use it in place of the General Prayer, of course, gives evidence of the Lutheran conviction that the litany's real role is as the prayer of

¹⁵American Lutheran Hymnal: Music Edition, edited by an Inter-synodical Committee (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1930), pp. 183f.

¹⁶Altar Book with Scripture Lessons and Collects (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1952), p. 62.

the Church rather than solely as a penitential prayer. The setting up of the litany as a separate office may reflect the custom of penitential-prayer-meeting-type services in the German Lutheran churches and possibly Church of England practice.

The essential thing is that the litany has been provided for most American Lutherans in a good, if not perfect, and a standardized text.

The next problem to be discussed is: "Do the American Lutherans who have this prayer at their disposal know it and use it?"

To attempt to find the answer to this question, the writer undertook a written post-card survey. A description of the methods and results follows.

A post card of the two-part kind, with one-half to be used by the sender and the other half by the person replying, was used for this survey. The recipient was informed that this was part of a study of the litany and that he was requested to answer the questions on the other half as best he could. He was further assured that a negative answer was as valuable as a positive answer and should be sent in, too.

The questions were stated in such a manner that they could be answered simply by circling a "Yes" or a "No" which followed each question.

The first question asked was to determine whether or not the person had used the litany recently.

"During the last 12 months have you used the Litany?

Yes No"

Those answering this question in the affirmative were asked four more questions to determine the time and type of service at which the litany had been used.

"At the main Sunday service? Yes No"

"At Sunday Matins? Yes No"

"At Sunday Vespers? Yes No"

"At a weekday service? Yes No"

The next four questions were placed to determine the liturgical season or date on which it had been used. These dates were selected to represent the traditional uses of the litany. The very first one reflects a use of the litany in our churches in America.

"During Lent? Yes No"

The following two questions on this phase of the use of the litany reflects the usage of the Western Church and its processional days.

"On Rogate Sunday or a Rogation Day? Yes No"

"On April 25? Yes No"

The fourth question in this group is based on post-Reformation usage and the permissive rubric in the Common Service.

"On a Day of Humiliation and Prayer? Yes No"

The tenth question sought to determine the frequency of use in the last twelve months.

"How many times altogether? 0 1-4 5-12 13-26
27-52 53-100"

The next question dealt with the manner in which it was used in the services.

"Spoken? Sung or Chanted? In procession? Kneeling? Standing?"

The final question was intended simply as a way of finding out if the person who had been polled had done anything out of the ordinary in regard to his use of the litany.

"Did you use any special features? Yes No"

Room was left at the bottom of the card under the word "Comments."

This questionnaire was sent to clergymen of three bodies within American Lutheranism. One group selected was the United Lutheran Church in America as representative of the body which produced the Common Service and which has its roots deepest in American life. The second group selected was The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, the group to which the writer belongs and which represents the Germanic immigrations of the later 1800's. The third group selected was the Evangelical Lutheran Church to represent the new group to be called The American Lutheran Church and the Scandinavian heritage.

Cards were sent to a number of clergymen, not less than five per cent of each body's parish clergy. The method followed was that every twentieth name was selected from the clergy rosters of these three bodies, allowing additional names to make adjustments in the event some of those addressed might not be in the parish ministry.

Several questions as to the accuracy of the results have arisen in the mind of the writer. The first of these is quite simply how accurate such a mode of selection might be to obtain an accurate profile of each body. To help determine the reliability of this method, the writer handled the cards returned to him in this way: Each card as received was placed in one of three groups, one group of cards for each of the three church bodies. From each of these groups were taken all cards indicating that they had been sent in by ministers not serving in a parish. The remaining cards of each group were then sorted into three smaller groups, divided in the order in which they were received. These three groups within each major group were set up to serve as a control on the accuracy of the sample.

Two other questions as to the accuracy of the results of the poll have arisen since the poll was taken. Correspondence with clergymen of at least one of these three bodies indicates that in their minds there was a confusion between the words "litany" and "liturgy." Whether this was the case with pastors of the other two bodies, I do not know.

I am inclined to discount this problem as having any significant bearing on the sample for several reasons. The pastors in question had indicated on their reply cards that they had used the litany more than fifty-three times a year. If more pastors had made the same error, the results would be unbelievable, for most of those reporting the use of the litany reported using it from one to four times a year. It could hardly be that the bulk of these pastors used the liturgy of their church so seldom. In addition to this, the comments added to the cards indicate in many ways that those commenting knew the difference between "litany" and "liturgy." But it must be admitted that this mistake may very well have had some effect on the results.

The other question is this: How many of those who indicate use of the litany have distinguished between The Litany and the various prayers in litany form that are in circulation? This question is harder to answer. Where the reply indicated a possibility of this confusion or where a letter drew this sort of response, the card was placed in the negative reply category instead of the positive. We must admit, however, that it is quite likely that some replies of this sort have not been detected. On the basis of the replies on the cards and in letters, we are confident that most instances of this sort would come from The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church

A total of 119 of these survey cards were sent to pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Of these, seventy-nine cards, or 66.38 per cent, were returned. Eight of these were set aside as unusable for one reason or another. This left seventy-one replies to be tabulated. Table 1 on the following page lists this tabulation.

Only seven pastors report having used the litany during the last twelve months. This represents only 10.92 per cent of those tabulated. The three groups divide themselves almost perfectly; however, with such a small number of samples this may not mean too much. Two of the seven pastors report using the litany on Sundays and three report using it on a weekday. Two pastors gave no indication as to what sort of service it was in which the litany was used.

Five of the seven had used the litany during Lent--the favorite time of the liturgical year for all three church bodies. One pastor reported using it on Rogate Sunday or on a Rogation Day. No answer was received in reply to my request for further information on this. Five pastors used it between one and four times; one, five to twelve times; one gave no number. Five of the seven reported using the litany in spoken form. Two either kneeled or had their people kneel. Two had it chanted or sung. At least one of these cases reported that he spoke and the laity chanted their part.

TABLE 1

USE OF THE LITANY IN THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

	GROUP 1		GROUP 2		GROUP 3		TOTALS	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Last 12 Months?	2	22	2	21	3	21	7	64
Sunday Service?	0		1		1		2	
Sunday Matins?	0		0		0		0	
Sunday Vespers?	0		0		0		0	
Weekday Service?	0		1		2		3	
Lent?	2		1		2		5	
Rogationtide?	0		0		1		1	
On April 25?	0		0		0		0	
Day of Hum. & Pr.?	0		0		0		0	
1 - 4 Times?	2		2		1		5	
5 - 12 Times?	0		0		1		1	
13 - 26 Times?	0		0		0		0	
27 - 52 Times?	0		0		0		0	
53 - 100 Times?	0		0		0		0	
Spoken?	1		2		2		5	
Sung or Chanted?	0		1		1		2	
Procession?	0		0		0		0	
Kneeling?	0		0		2		2	
Standing?	1		1		2		4	

The question naturally arose if there was any apparent reason for this relatively low percentage of use. This question was never answered directly in any of the letters which the writer received from Evangelical Lutheran Church ministers in reply to his letters requesting information and opinion. But a few of the comments he received may give a hint of the cause.

"Only time I ever heard it was at the Seminary. We used it once."

"The Litany is foreign to many of our people--unfortunately."

"Too heavy for laymen, although I personally like it."

"This beautiful service is not used enough in our church! Its Unum Sanctum emphasis definitely belongs." This was from the one pastor who reported using it more than four times a year.

The United Lutheran Church in America

A total of 170 cards were sent to pastors of the United Lutheran Church in America. Of these, 130 were returned. This represents 76.47 per cent of those sent out. Eleven of these were put aside because they had been mistakenly directed to non-parish ministers or the reply was such that the accuracy of the reply was highly doubted. The tabulation of the remaining 119 cards can be found in Table 2 on the following page. Over half of these had used the litany in

TABLE 2

USE OF THE LITANY IN THE
UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

	GROUP 1		GROUP 2		GROUP 3		TOTALS	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Last 12 Months?	23	17	24	16	20	19	67	52
Sunday Service?	3		4		6		13	
Sunday Matins?	1		2		1		4	
Sunday Vespers?	2		3		4		9	
Weekday Service?	12		17		15		44	
During Lent?	22		22		21		65	
Rogationtide?	0		1		0		1	
On April 25?	0		0		0		0	
Day of Hum. & Pr.?	4		10		6		20	
1 - 4 Times?	14		19		10		43	
5 - 12 Times?	8		3		9		20	
13 - 26 Times?	1		0		2		3	
27 - 52 Times?	0		0		0		0	
53 - 100 Times?	0		1		0		1	
Spoken?	21		18		21		60	
Sung or Chanted?	3		7		1		11	
In Procession?	0		0		1		1	
Kneeling?	4		6		4		14	
Standing?	15		15		10		40	

the past twelve months, 56.30 per cent to be exact. There is greater variation between the three groups here than in the previous list. One group has 57.5 per cent affirmative answers, the others 60 per cent and 50.2 per cent. Although the litany was used with some frequency during Sunday services of one sort or another, the predominant use was at week-day services held during Lent. Forty-four pastors reported use of the litany at mid-week services, and sixty-five stated that they used the litany during Lent. We shall find something of the same sort in regard to The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

Several pastors indicated use of the litany on the traditional Greater and Lesser Litany days. However, after correspondence the writer discovered these affirmative replies were stenographic errors. One use in Rogationtide remains. No reply has been received to our inquiry to that pastor.

Another source of many affirmative replies has been the use of the litany on days of humiliation and prayer. Good Friday and the last Sunday after Trinity may account for all of these reports.

Most of the reports indicate use of the litany fewer than twelve times during the year. One reports use of it more than fifty-two times.

Sixty, that is all but seven, of the pastors reported that the litany was spoken in their parish. However, eleven indicated that the litany was sung or chanted. This seems to indicate that at least seven of these congregations follow the option of having the pastor speak the petitions and having the laity sing the responses. The only pastor of any of the three church bodies reporting the praying of the litany in procession happens to belong to the United Lutheran Church.

It would be hard to say on the basis of this poll why the United Lutheran Church has a higher frequency of use of the litany than the Evangelical Lutheran Church or the Missouri Synod. The Rev. Dr. Edgar S. Brown, Executive Director of Worship of the United Lutheran Church in America, in a letter to the writer, states:

Just why the ULCA pastors should report a greater use of The Litany, I don't know. In my own experience it has always been a part of the devotional life I knew, both in church and at school. In my parish we used it frequently during Lent. But why it should have more appeal among one group than another is hard to say. Perhaps among those who use it there is less feeling about "vain repetitions."

One of the pastors, in replying to the writer's survey card, stated: "This highly-formalized type of prayer is strange to the congregation; a little too constricting for my own worship also." Another pastor stated: "I do not think it satisfies the need of my people. It is too formal and lengthy in these modern times." Another reason given

by pastors for disapproval of the litany was the "presumptuous phrase" asking for perpetual victory for our nation over all its enemies.

One layman of the United Lutheran Church, replying for his pastor, observed that much depended upon the pastor. This ties in well with another pastor's confession: "It is a fine thing and should be used more widely than it is. I guess we are too lethargic to teach its use to our people." One such pastor indicated that once his parish had been introduced to the litany they expressed a "desire for further use."

Another problem that hinders greater use seems to be the fear that some will regard it as "too Romish." And yet, the pastor who used the litany from fifty-three to one hundred times in the last twelve months stated: "I feel this should be used weekly in the Church. Our general prayer is too inarticulate and long."

In closing, it is of interest that 51.8 per cent of the parishes in communities having less than 2,500 population used the litany, and 57.4 per cent of the urban parishes reported the use of the litany. It would seem, therefore, that the old agricultural emphasis in the use of the litany in procession has little or no significance for these parishes today.

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

Two hundred and twelve pastors of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod received cards on this survey. One hundred and fifty-five cards were returned, or 73.1 per cent. Six were set aside. One card was returned by the post office, the addressee not being located.

The range between the three groups of cards is less than ten per cent, being from 46 per cent usage to 37.1 per cent. The over-all return on this set of cards indicates a use of 42.2 per cent by the Synod.

As in the case of the United Lutheran Church, the greatest use of the litany is seen during the season of Lent and generally at a week-day service. Again there were no reports of the litany's being used in connection with the observance of St. Mark's Day. There is one report of use of the litany at Rogationtide. All but four of the ministers said that the litany was spoken in their services. Three stated that it was chanted. However, in checking, the writer discovered that in at least two of these cases this meant that the pastor spoke his part and the laity sang theirs.

Forty-eight and five-tenths per cent of the urban parishes reported using the litany, but only 28.2 per cent of the rural parishes used it.

TABLE 3

USE OF THE LITANY IN THE
MISSOURI SYNOD

	GROUP 1		GROUP 2		GROUP 3		TOTALS	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Last 12 Months?	23	26	21	29	19	30	63	85
Sunday Service?	7		4		6		17	
Sunday Matins?	1		1		4		6	
Sunday Vespers?	1		2		2		5	
Weekday Services?	14		14		15		43	
During Lent?	17		13		13		43	
Rogationtide?	1		0		0		1	
April 25?	0		0		0		0	
Day of Hum. & Pr.?	8		4		5		17	
1 - 4 Times?	16		16		16		48	
5 - 12 Times?	7		4		2		13	
13 - 26 Times?	0		1		1		2	
27 - 52 Times?	0		0		0		0	
53 - 100 Times?	0		0		0		0	
Spoken?	21		20		18		59	
Sung or Chanted?	2		1		0		3	
In Procession?	0		0		0		0	
Kneeling?	4		0		1		5	
Standing?	14		9		7		30	

It will be noted in several instances in the tabulation for the Missouri Synod that the number reporting use of the litany is greater than the total reported for the various types of services. This may be due to the fact that a number of pastors are using the litany apart from the services. One pastor used it as a part of the watch service on the evening before a funeral. Several indicated they were using it as an opening devotion before society and congregational meetings. A congregation in Hawaii used it as a part of their New Year's Eve service. Many pastors reported that the topic discussion issued by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League for the ladies' societies of the Missouri Synod did much to create interest in and appreciation of the litany.¹⁷

A highly indicative comment appeared on the bottom of one card: "I have retired. I have not used the Litany while in office." Comments were also received to the effect that the litany was Romish and useless. These latter represent only a minute proportion of those adding comments.

In summary, it must be said that the earliest practice reflected the attitudes and customs brought over by the immigrants to America. The weakening effects of pietism and rationalism seemed to have been aggravated by the

¹⁷George Hoyer, "To Give All Nations Peace," in Lutheran Woman's Quarterly, XIV (July, 1956), 16-17.

predominant Reformed character of church life in America. The frontier nature of much of Lutheran church life also contributed to this. However, upon the development of a more stable and settled way of life and a renewal of appreciation for the worship of the Church, the litany, which had always had its supporters, regained much popularity and today plays a part in the life of a good number of Lutheran parishes. How deep and meaningful a part it plays may be open to question, but that is something which cannot be determined here. What can be done to make that part more meaningful and what can be done to lead others to a deeper appreciation of the litany will be discussed, among other things, in the next chapter.

The use of the litany by so many parishes of the Lutheran churches in America as revealed in the survey cited in the previous chapter bears witness to the fact that the litany today is not only something found in the hymnals of the churches but also something which plays a part in the life of many congregations.

The need, therefore, is not so much to force life into a lifeless corpse as it is to reveal to a greater circle of Christians the life that is in the litany. Considering the richness of the litany of our hymnals, this is not an overwhelming task. There are many special contributions that the litany and by the very nature make to the prayer life of the Church.

CHAPTER VI

FUTURE UTILIZATION

Whatever else may have been proved by this record of the development of the litany which we find in The Lutheran Hymnal today, one fact stands out. From the very beginnings of the Christian Church many Christians, both of low and high degrees of fame, have found in the litany form of prayer a most valuable aid to their worship of the Lord of the Church. The citations by great students of the worship life given in this thesis witness to that. The great acceptance of the litany form of prayer by Christians of so many times and of so many places and for so many purposes witnesses to that. The use of the litany by so many parishes of the Lutheran churches in America as revealed in the survey cited in the previous chapter bears witness to the fact that the litany today is not only something found in the hymnals of the churches but also something which plays a part in the life of many congregations.

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The great emphasis that our churches today are placing upon the universal priesthood of all believers and the role of the laity in God's plans for the Church's impact upon the world is far better served in a prayer form of this sort where the laity is given a vocal part in the prayers of the Church than in a prayer where they can only listen and to which their only contribution is a vocal "Amen."

Further, through the use of the litany the sense of fellowship and unity between the worshipers is stimulated. Doing things together in the service of God does this far more effectively than all the recreational activities ever devised. As Brillioth observes:

In the litany, the Eastern liturgies, and the Gallican, possessed a form of prayer in which the sense of fellowship could be stimulated through the active part taken by the congregation. . . . The disappearance of the litany-form from the Roman mass is one of the symptoms of the weakening of the note of fellowship.
 . . .¹

The litany, by the very fact that it is a fixed form and that it encompasses such a multitude of needs for all men, aids in the broadening of our concern for other men and helps the Christian in a much superior fashion to obey Saint Paul's injunction that we pray for all men than do most of the ex corde prayers offered by pastors at the place of the General Prayer. In this the litany shares in the virtues

¹Yngve Brillioth, Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic, translated by A. G. Hebert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), p. 31.

of most fixed, liturgical prayer forms.

It is the very purpose of the liturgy to recall to us and revive in us what we should pray for and how we should pray. Call it a mechanical crutch, if you like. Yet how far would our intercessions reach beyond the circle of our immediate preoccupations without a guide, such as for example, the Litany? Would we, in these days [the Second World War] be so ready to pray: "That it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts?"²

The litany also helps overcome one of the great problems connected with the use of the long pastoral prayer: the attentiveness of the laity. In a responsive prayer such as the litany much of this problem is eliminated. That this problem is real and concerns many can be seen in the permissive rubrics in some liturgies for congregational responses after individual paragraphs in the General Prayer, thereby making the General Prayer a sort of litany, and also in the various prayers of the novelty litany type that are being circulated by well-meaning synodical departments, such as litanies for missions, family life, and the like.

And finally, the litany, if sung, as properly it ought to be, unites all these advantages mentioned above with the strength that music lends to all public worship.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle that stands in the way of this profitable utilization of the litany by greater numbers of Christians in our churches is the ignorance of,

²Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., The Living Liturgy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 9.

and resulting disinterest in the litany on the part of many members of the clergy. As Kliefoth indicated in his day, a certain form of vicious circle exists in this matter. The pastors do not use the litany; the people forget it; therefore, the pastors do not use it. And because of the lack of use and lack of knowledge the usual accusation of "It's too [Roman] Catholic" is brought against it, as is the case in almost everything else that is not familiar. Just as the words "Let us pray" are mentally translated into "Get up," so also the thought "It is different" brings up the mental translation "It is Roman."

Another charge brought against the litany is that it is an evidence of "dead formalism" and consists of mere "vain repetitions." This in spite of the praise of many great pray-ers in the Church, including Martin Luther, whose word is accepted in almost every other respect in our churches. It is significant that these complaints are exactly the same sort of complaint that was lodged against the litany and almost everything else of liturgical value during the days of pietism and rationalism, those destructive forces which had so much to do in molding the nature of our Lutheran churches in America.

The real key to a better appreciation and greater and more profitable use of the litany, in fact, of all corporate prayer, therefore, is the training and education of the clergy. When the clergy itself comes to value the litany

as a valid devotional form, then they will be able to lead the laity to the same appreciation even though there may be corrosive forces in our society and in the non-Lutheran church bodies of America which may retard that process.

Certainly, the litany must not be thrown at an unexpected congregation which has never seen it before. Nor for that matter can a parish which has not been trained in the use of the litany be expected to gain the greatest value from its use. Its history will have to be outlined, words will have to be defined, and its value must be expressed. It will need practice by smaller groups and for less formal uses at first. This is especially true if it is to be sung. And that it be sung is highly desirable. Although it must be hoped that the usual Spangenberg version will some day be replaced by something more musical, it does have the virtue of simplicity. It can easily be learned by congregations even without choirs. Where there is no choir, the petitions should be sung or said by the pastor, and the responses sung by the laity. It may be possible in smaller groups to divide the group into two halves, each side saying one part. Where there is a choir, a section of the choir, a number of cantors, or the pastor may sing the petitions and the congregation, or the congregation and the choir, sing the responses. The writer, serving a relatively small parish of less than one hundred communicants, has found this to be a relatively simple matter once it was attempted.

The most obvious use for the litany in our churches will undoubtedly be as an occasional alternate to the General Prayer as is permitted by the rubrics of most of our liturgies. Most modern liturgical students are agreed that the litany ought to be regarded as a Gemeindegebet and not as a Bussgebet. Luther also had this opinion. Yet even when it is used as a penitential prayer during Lent or on a day of humiliation and prayer, its broadness of view and its objectivity are a pleasant and healthy change from much of the sentimental breast-beating in many penitential prayers. Not only does the litany serve well as a General Prayer for the Common Service, in which case it is followed by a hymn and the Benediction, but it may also be used in Matins and Vespers as a pleasant and profitable alternate to the prayers which close these minor services. If used in this way, it should be followed by the *Benedicamus* and the Benediction.

Possibly, too, the litany's association with the Rogation Days may once again become a part of the life of our congregations. The very wholesome and necessary emphasis on the rural churches by the various synodical boards on rural life and on the problems of rural churches and the linking of the conservation program with the stewardship concept by groups such as the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts in cooperation with the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of

America and the National Lutheran Council and National Catholic Rural Life Conference may encourage more and more rural congregations to observe the Rogation Days in the traditional manner.

Certainly the need for God's blessing upon the farmers' work is obvious to all those serving rural parishes. And yet it is astonishing how little material is available in our synod's liturgical works that really is useful and applicable to rural life and work. It is even more astonishing how little praying is done in our rural parishes specifically for their own needs. The only usual exception is in times of drought when the great cry is for a community prayer service.

Pastors would be serving their people well if the Rogation Days were re-established in our rural parishes at least. This is tacitly permitted by our liturgy through the rubrics on the use of the liturgical colors in which the traditional use of violet is permitted for the three Rogation Days, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday between Rogate Sunday and Ascension Day.³ Possibly pastors may feel that the entire set of customs may be undesirable or impractical or too big a jump to attempt all at once. But at least some aspects of the Church's traditional observances for

³The Lutheran Liturgy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 426.

these days can be introduced to good effect.

The writer served two rural parishes in West Texas during 1955 and 1956. In an effort to serve the specific needs of his people and at the suggestion of his district officials, he used Rogation Sunday at both churches and in both years as a day of prayer for the agricultural work of the community. The Order of Morning Service was used. The sermon one year dealt with the necessity of prayer and the other year with man's stewardship of the earth. In place of the General Prayer the litany was used that day. Just prior to the litany the hymn, "Christ, by Heavenly Hosts Adored," a hymn of prayer for the harvest (in the Lutheran Hymnal, number 566), was sung, and Psalm 103:1-5 and Psalm 104:13-15, 35b were spoken. The litany was followed by Psalm 70, and in place of the usual collects a prayer for God's blessing upon the agricultural work of the nation was spoken.

The writer does not mean to hold this procedure as ideal. But he does wish to illustrate the fact that the Rogation Day idea can be introduced with very little effort and that with even a minimum of guidance can become a source of rich blessing to the parish. The congregations of themselves began to reason: "This is very fine for us. But really, all of the people of our community could profit by such a service of prayer." So the idea was formulated that such a service should be held again the following year on

Rogate but that on the next three days prayer services based on the litany should be held at three farms, selected because of their location. The members were to be encouraged to bring their friends to these services. So the purposes of evangelism were also to be served. The plan was never carried out because the writer soon after accepted a call to an urban parish. The point, however, remains: The very same needs which were the causes of the Rogation Days are still present with us today and can still be served in much the same fashion as in the past. We should not let our personal distrust, if such we have, of processions, for instance, keep us from attempting to serve our congregations by means of the traditional forms of the Church. Processions are not essential to the observance of the Rogation Days.⁴

Even though the Rogation Days may not have the same sort of appeal in cities as they do in rural areas, they still may serve a very useful purpose in urban congregations. City folks especially need to be reminded that the highly-processed food and clothing which reaches them needed

⁴ Helpful materials for the observance of the Rogation Days in rural parishes can be obtained from The National Association of Soil Conservation District, League City, Texas. Those interested in the use of processions on these days are referred to Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Processions in the Lutheran Church, Part IV," in Sursum Corda (Pentecost, 1940), II, 33f., and to A Manual of Ceremonies For The Parish Observance of the Rogation Days (Des Moines: National Catholic Rural Life Conference, 1933).

God's blessing at its beginning stages. And the Rogation Days may also be directed toward the needs of city-dwellers. Such intentions as improvement in labor-management relations and laboring conditions, racial harmony, world peace, and the unity of the Christian Church are just as significant in the life of the city man as rain and sunshine are to the farmer. And they can be served by the Rogation Days as well as the farmer's needs are.

The litany's helpfulness to us may be improved perhaps by a few textual changes. The petition for travelers on land and on the sea would profit from the addition of the phrase "and in the air" as is done in the Albanian liturgy.⁵ In this day of ecumenical thinking, a petition for unity might well be added. Our missions and missionaries might be remembered as they are in the liturgy of the Church of South India.⁶ And while it may be defensible from a theological point of view, Luther's petition, "To give our nation perpetual victory over all its enemies," does not sit well today in the hearts of many people. This petition can surely be reworked or omitted entirely.

⁵The Eastern Orthodox Prayer Book, edited by Fan Stylian Noli (Boston: The Albanian Orthodox Church in America, 1949).

⁶An Order of the Lord's Supper or The Holy Eucharist (Revised edition; Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1954).

In conclusion, no better appreciation of the litany of our Church can be given than that given by Wilhelm Loehe in his Agenda already referred to.⁷

The Litany in its Lutheran form is like the magnificent cathedrals of the Middle Ages, which become the more dear and precious to the heart the more the beauty of symmetrical form and plan is recognized. . . . The deeper the heart sinks itself into this prayer, the stronger its cry, and the more will its worship become the song of Moses and the Lamb--the song of the New Covenant. What a beginning, continuation and ending are here, how thoroughly evangelical; how absolutely in accord with the doctrines of our Church. . . .

In the use of such a form there is no room for weak sentimentality or idle talk; nevertheless it allows before all other forms the pressing of specific petitions; for its spirit is as elastic as its form is rigid. Here is room for every sigh of the heart. . . .

To the indifferent the Litany is indeed a lengthy and formal affair. Sung or said by Christless souls it is certainly only a shell, a lifeless form. But when used by the earnest Christian, it contains power, spirit, and life. No one who has never used it should pass judgment on it, for if there is a spirit to pray, prayer is certainly possible by means of the Litany. But where there is no spirit of prayer there can also be no prayer, no matter whether the words are after a form as rigid as that of the Litany or as formless as the words of those who reject all forms of worship.⁸

⁷Wilhelm Loehe, Agende fuer ohristische Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Zweite vermehrte Auflage; Noerdlingen: Druck und Verlag der C. H. Bech'schen Buchhandlung, 1853).

⁸Translated by Longaker, as found in Charles Krauth Fegley, "The Bidding Prayer, Litany, and Suffrages," in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association: Volumes III-VII (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, 1906), VII, 148-149.

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