

2-1-1953

The Order of Matins

Timothy Strelow

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Strelow, Timothy (1953) "The Order of Matins," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 24, Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol24/iss1/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

The Order of Matins

By TIMOTHY STRELOW*

I

The corporate worship of the Christian Church has always been associated with certain forms. The spirit of worship, of communion with God, in all ages has expressed itself in the use of various forms and orders of worship. It is, however, a fact that there are many who use these forms of worship with a great lack of appreciation or understanding. Often the so-called minor forms of worship are rejected. This negative attitude toward forms of worship may quite frequently be due to the gross mutilation of the pure forms. A negative attitude toward Matins may also be due to its use in a partial and piecemeal manner or to a continued faithfulness to tradition, which brings with it the danger of those forms appearing to us as something out of date, as forms that are alien and lifeless. In either case, the lack of appreciation for the forms of worship is usually due primarily to a lack of understanding. Matins, the chief of the Minor Services, is here considered and studied with the aim of being an aid to understanding this form of worship. This study will omit an analysis of any musical settings for Matins, as well as any detailed study of Psalmody or Hymnody in general apart from their distinct relation to, and importance in, Matins.

The ecclesiastical terminology by which the Order of Matins is known, namely, as one of the ancient Canonical Hours or as an Office, offers a point of contact with the historical past from which the origin of Matins may be traced and its development observed. The Order of Holy Communion is the Chief Service. Matins is a Minor Service or a Major Office as contrasted with other occasional Offices or Services. Matins, however, as an order that is supplementary to the Service, is both a beautiful form of worship as well

*The author is pastor of a mission in Dallas, Texas. He was graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., in June, 1952, with the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. The article is a summary of the dissertation presented as partial fulfillment of the requirements for this degree. — ED.

as an historic form. Although the form of Matins experienced changes and stages of development during the centuries, its roots have their beginning in the days of the founding of the Church, which used this form of worship in its communion with God.

The beginning of the Canonical Hours may be traced to the ancient Jewish Hours of Prayer observed by the Jews at the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day, counting from sunrise to sunset. This observance of certain Hours of Prayer was directly related to the public and private worship of the Old Testament Jews. Centuries before the birth of Christ, David wrote in Psalm 55:17, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." Throughout the history of Israel we find certain pious Jews such as Daniel regularly observing such daily periods of prayer.¹ At the time of Christ these same Hours of Prayer were kept in the worship at the Temple. They were rich in formal character; they were expressive of the faith of the people of God in their God.

It is to be expected therefore that the early Christians would appropriate certain elements of the same into their corporate worship as well as into their private devotions. Historians give us proof that such was the case. We find references to these Hours and their use already in the Book of Acts. Peter² and John especially are mentioned in connection with the observance of "the hour of prayer."³ Also, such writers as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, and Chrysostom, likewise the *Apostolic Constitutions*, all mention the Early Christians' use of the prayer hours.⁴

The Roman historian Cabrol believes that the origin of Matins stems from the Hours of Prayer and is also directly associated with the nocturnal Vigils of the Christians. Concerning the Vigils he writes:

Generally it designated the nightly meetings, *synaxes*, of the Christians. . . . The liturgical services of these *synaxes* was composed of almost the same elements as that of the Jewish Synagog: readings from the Books of the Law, singing of psalms, divers prayers.⁵

Following this was a Eucharistic Service, and within a short time there seemed to have developed an emphasis on more readings both from the canonical and noncanonical writings of the New Testa-

ment era.⁶ Cabrol believes this to be the beginning not only of Matins, but also of all the other canonical hours.

The Synaxes for which the early Christians assembled by night, consisted of the 'breaking of bread,' preceded by the singing of psalms and hymns, litanies and collects, readings, homilies, invocations and canticles. This was at one time the whole of the official liturgical prayer. From this somewhat crowded celebration . . . the Night Office (Matins, Lauds, and perhaps Vespers) came into existence, and afterward threw out, like stars of the second magnitude, Prime, Compline, and the Little Hours of the Day.⁷

Originally the name Matins itself, meaning literally "of the morning," was used of the Office now referred to as Lauds, which was at that time said at dawn. It was then applied to the Night Office referred to above.

The addition of these canonical hours to the worship life of the Christians seems to begin about the middle of the third century. Hippolytus in the early third century gave direction for private prayer at specific hours as a daily discipline and obligation of the faithful.⁸ But we are not told as to the number of these specific hours which were to be kept. Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian knew only of the regular practice of the three appointed hours.⁹ But by the fourth century seven canonical hours are in existence and are observed by the people, even when they were not yet officially appointed to be used regularly.¹⁰ In the *Apostolic Constitutions* we find that the bishops were exhorted to urge their people to assemble regularly at various times of the day, with the result that by the fourth century "the secular clergy and the laity therefore developed daily congregational services long before the complete system of Offices was perfected by the ascetics."¹¹ Various religious exercises were prescribed for the individual hours, for example, for Matins, meditation on the divine Word; Lauds, praise; Prime, supplication; Tierce, Sext, and Nones, hallowing the day, with special emphasis on the use of Psalm 119; Vespers, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving; Compline, prayer, and committing oneself to the Lord.¹²

There seems to be no doubt that gradually the emphasis shifted, especially in Matins, to a predominance of readings in these hours. Originally there were reading, singing, and praying, all three of

which seem to have been appropriated from the synagog worship of the Early Christians. With respect to the predominance of any of these three elements, Jungmann writes:

In the earliest days of the Church reading, song and prayer were more or less of equal prominence and importance. If there was any predominance it lay with the reading. . . . Already in comparatively early times, however, the readings began to hold a preponderance over psalmody and prayer.¹³

This was the situation up to approximately the fourth century. In this century, "concomitant with, and owing to, the spread of monasticism," the predominance shifted to the use of the Psalms, especially the antiphonal chanting of Psalms.¹⁴

The chief monastic contribution, however, to the development of Matins began with St. Benedict, who formulated and prescribed a complete system of Hours and their required observance. The Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia, about 529, established seven Hours with eight services, one of the Hours being a night Hour. The entire monastic system spread rapidly throughout the West, the monasteries becoming centers of culture, education, and charitable work. It is therefore easy to understand how the use of these Canonical Hours as prescribed by St. Benedict would spread and be adopted. In the same century Gregory the Great, who had been a monk, unified the monastic system still more.

The form of the various Hours, as established by St. Benedict and generally adopted by the time of Gregory, is essentially that which the Christian Church has used ever since, especially the Western Church. Basically St. Benedict rearranged and adapted the Hours to particular monastic requirements.

The central feature in each Office was the reading of a portion of the Psalter. To this were added the reading of Scripture, homilies, hymns, canticles, and prayers. Additional elements such as antiphons, versicles, responsories, etc., later enriched the services.¹⁵

The regular observance of these seven Hours as prescribed by St. Benedict could not of course be kept in any large degree by the common people. As a result, two of the Hours became primary in importance to the people, the morning and the evening hours, or Matins and Vespers. These were used continuously from the sixth

century down to the period of the Reformation. The weekday Matins usually contained one Nocturn, which included one group of chanted Psalms, three lessons, three responsories, and three collects. In contrast to this, Matins on Sundays and Festivals contained three Nocturns, which in turn included three groups of chanted Psalms, nine lessons, nine responsories, and nine collects.¹⁶

Very little change was made in the form of Matins, although in the course of the years various parts were greatly expanded or extended. Even "extracts from Expositions or Homilies of the Fathers, or Lives of the Saints" were included. "Hence, although the Lessons were numerous, but little Scripture was read."¹⁷

With the advance of the Reformation the question inevitably arose among the followers of Martin Luther as to whether or not the canonical hours including Matins and Vespers should be retained. While his comments on the breviary offices were always realistic and sometimes strongly critical, in general Luther spoke highly of all the Canonical Hours, but desired that especially Matins and Vespers should be retained. However, Luther favored the shortening or simplification of Matins. One of the chief effects of the Reformation on Matins was the introduction or addition of a sermon into the service. This was undoubtedly due to Luther's strong emphasis on the preaching of the Word. However, the sermon was usually included only on Sunday. In effect Luther's Matins became a combination of Matins, Lauds, and Prime, especially, however, of Matins and Lauds. Another development in the use of Matins in the Reformation period is the combined use of the vernacular together with the traditional ecclesiastical language in connection with the use of Psalms, lessons, and hymns.¹⁸

The use of Matins in the Reformation period was not confined to the church schools, although it was used there primarily. It was also used in simplified form for supplementary congregational services. This was true also of Church Order in other countries to which the Reformation had spread, such as those of Bugenhagen in north Germany and Denmark.¹⁹

The fact that Matins was used principally in the church schools but not in the congregations eventually resulted in a near loss of Matins to the congregations, particularly after disorganization caused by the Thirty Years' War. This was also partially due to the fact

that Matins was used not only in the vernacular, but large portions were also retained and sung in Latin. The liturgical degeneration which followed the Thirty Years' War continued throughout the following decades into the eras of Pietism and Rationalism. Neither Pietism nor Rationalism made any attempt to reintroduce Matins to its proper place in the liturgical life of Christians.

In the nineteenth century, the churchly revival succeeded in restoring Matins to deaconess motherhouses and similar religious communities in Europe, but was only occasionally successful in the restoration of congregational use of Matins.²⁰ Various efforts were undertaken for a liturgical restoration and reformation, which finally found their fruition in the publication of several liturgical books. The *Mecklenburg Cationale* of 1867, the *Kirchenbuch* published by the General Council in 1877, and *The Common Service Book* of 1888 each included the Order of Matins for congregational use. The Missouri Synod's Baltimore Hymnal in 1892 also contained the order of Matins, but the "Grey Hymnal," published by the Missouri Synod in 1905, did not. In 1912, however, the Missouri Synod's *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-book* again included Matins, as does the current Hymnal of 1941.

II

The following discussion of the various parts of Matins is primarily an analysis of the real nature and character of the individual part both in itself and also in its relation to the whole of the service.

The Hymn of Invocation

The rubric here permits the use of an opening hymn, although this seems to be inconsistent with the opening versicles which appear to be the actual beginning of the service proper. If a hymn must be used, it should be a hymn of praise, thanksgiving, prayer, or any hymn dealing with the morning or the opening of a service. If there is a choir, the hymn is sung by both the choir and the congregation. The general consensus of historical tradition seems to be that if there is a choir in Matins, there may also be a procession, either with or without the singing of a hymn.

Our rubrics imply that Matins will be said at the altar, with the officiant facing the altar for sacrificial acts, and the congrega-

tion for sacramental acts. Another viewpoint allows the officiant to conduct Matins from a clergy stall or prayer desk. Both views have some justification.

The general rubrics in existence today say nothing as to the place of the organ or its function in Matins, much less specifically for or against a prelude, postlude, and so forth. If a prelude is used, it should by all means be in keeping with the proper spirit of the entire service, the spirit of prayer and praise. Throughout the service the organ should be used in a way which will definitely aid in producing continuity and a devotional atmosphere in the service.

The Versicle and Gloria Patri

The congregation is here directed by the rubric to rise and remain standing to the end of the Venite. These opening versicles are the proper liturgical introduction to Matins. They may be said or sung. Consistency should prevail throughout the service. Historic tradition dictates that if one part of the service is said, all parts should likewise be said. Matins should either be said throughout, or be sung throughout, in which latter case it is called Choral Matins.

The first versicle is Psalm 51:15, and the second is Psalm 70:1. The Gloria Patri is based on various passages, such as Rom. 16:27, Eph. 3:21, Phil. 4:20, and Rev. 1:6. These versicles are definitely sacrificial, a prayer asking the Lord for aid in praising Him, a petition beseeching God to use His power in us to enable us to praise Him properly. It is most fitting to make this request in this first worship hour of the day.

In the second versicle we look forward more to the multiple activities of the day just beginning, to its evils and its duties, petitioning the Lord to deliver us from all the evils of the day and to help us in all the duties of the day. Only one verse of Psalm 70 is here used, whereas originally in monastic use the entire Psalm was repeated "on waking," or while going from the dormitory to the chapel.²¹ That brings us directly to the Gloria Patri. Historically the Gloria Patri came into use at this point due to its use at the conclusion of every Psalm. Thus Psalm 70 was followed by the Gloria Patri. When this Psalm was later shortened to only one verse, the Gloria Patri was nevertheless retained. Actually, however, the Gloria Patri is here a brief but definite and clear profession

of faith in the Holy Trinity as well as an unmistakable ascription of praise to the eternal God. Therefore its use at the beginning of the service of Matins is most appropriate. The Gloria Patri is concluded or followed with "Amen, Alleluia!" This combination of "Amen, Alleluia" is found in Ps. 106:48 and Rev. 19:4. The Alleluia, which is Hebrew for "Praise ye the Lord," again reverts back to the primary emphasis in Matins of praise.

The rubric directs that the Alleluia be omitted during the Penitential Seasons, such as Pre-lent and Lent. Anciently, at this time, was sung instead, "Praise be to Thee, O Lord, King of eternal glory."

The Invitatory

Having made the profession of faith in the Holy Trinity in the Gloria Patri, we now proceed in the service to worship and praise the eternal God. The first step toward this end is the Invitatory, which is a versicle composed of two parts issuing a call to worship. Properly speaking, the Invitatory must always be connected and used with the Venite. The Invitatory given in the Order of Matins is termed the Common Invitatory because it is common to a large number of occasions. It is based on verse six of Psalm 95, which is also the Venite. The first part is a clear invitation and exhortation to worship and praise the Lord, while the latter part gives the reason for such worship and praise. The Western Church has always used the Invitatory in a variable form. Some light may be shed on the historical use of the Invitatory and the origin of the various Proper Invitatories through the following explanation of the origin of the Invitatory. "It may have come into the Liturgy from the custom of the early monks whose duty called them to wake their brethren for the Night Office. This they did by intoning passages of Scripture appropriate to the day or season."²²

The Invitatory in Matins parallels the Antiphon in its use, and like the Antiphon it varies with the occasion. It should be noted that the various seasons of the Church Year and certain days have special Invitatories designated for use in those particular seasons or on the particular day. These are given in the *Lutheran Hymnal* on pages 95—101. In each one of these Invitatories we find both a call to worship and a characteristic fact of the particular season or day as the motive for such worship. As in the case of the anti-

phon, the Lutheran rubric leaves no option concerning the use of the Invitatory, but directs that the whole Invitatory be repeated after the Venite. It is preferable to have a single voice sing the whole Invitatory before the Venite, while after the Venite it should be sung responsively, the first part by a single voice, and the latter part by the whole choir or congregation.²³

The Venite

It has already been pointed out that the Invitatory and the Venite should be considered together, since they together form the call to worship. The Venite, which is the Latin for the first word of the Psalm, O come, is actually Psalm 95:1-7, the last four verses being omitted. It is distinctly an invitation and exhortation of believers to believers to join together in singing praises and thanksgiving to God.

The first use of the Venite in Matins is attributed to Pope Damasus (died 384). Its original use came about in this way. The monastic brothers began Matins with the Psalms, but invariably the brothers would arrive at the chapel after Matins had begun. It was first permitted, therefore, that one could be late up to the end of the second Psalm in the first Nocturne. Then the custom arose of chanting two Psalms before beginning the Nocturne, so that the brothers could all assemble in time before the beginning of Matins. The second of these two Psalms was Psalm 95 or the Venite as we know it.²⁴

The Office Hymn

The use of the Office Hymn is not optional as was the case with the opening hymn. The rubric directs that this hymn shall be sung. This is in complete accordance with the historical use of only one hymn in each Office. Its position at this point in Matins is of significance. Having received and accepted the invitation to worship the Lord in songs of praise, the worshiper now actually engages in a song or hymn of praise. This hymn virtually sets the keynote for the entire service and is usually a hymn of praise exclusively, although not necessarily. It should be in harmony with the rest of the service, such as the Psalmody, the Lection, and so forth. Since the rubrics do not direct that the hymn be one of the Office Hymns that were written and anciently used specifically for Matins, it seems

wholly permissible to use either one of the ancient Office Hymns or any other hymn suitable for an Office Hymn. However, every Office Hymn should include a doxology in the same meter and rhyme pattern as that of the Office Hymn.

The Psalmody

Throughout the centuries, ever since the Psalter was written, the faithful have used it in their services of praise. It may be expected therefore to find the use of Psalms in Matins. When the keynote of the day or the service has been given in the Office Hymn, the service quite naturally and smoothly flows ahead with the Psalmody. The Psalmody includes the Psalms proper and also their antiphons. The Psalmody as a whole is devotional, like hymnody, and therefore sacrificial in character, a corporate act of worship and prayer.

The Antiphon

The direction of the rubric is that an antiphon may be used with each Psalm. "The antiphon is a Psalm verse, or other sentence from Holy Scripture, recited or sung immediately before each Psalm, or each group of Psalms, and before the canticles, except the *Te Deum*."²⁵ An antiphon is used in the same way as the Invitatory. It may be sung by a single voice before the Psalm and is repeated after the Psalm by the entire choir or congregation. Its function or use today is primarily to give the key to the meaning of the respective Psalm, or Canticle, especially as it is related to the individual service, day, or season.

The rubrics governing the number of antiphons in relation to the number of Psalms used leave the number of antiphons optional. Therefore, according to circumstances one may use either one antiphon for each Psalm or one antiphon for all the Psalms. Ordinarily, "both common practice and the implication of the rubrics in the Matins and Vesper orders commend the use of an antiphon for each Psalm."²⁶

The Psalms

Two chief considerations in the use of Psalms in Matins are the number of Psalms to be used and the manner in which they are used. Medieval tradition dictates that there should be at least three used in each Matins service.²⁷ The use of the *Gloria Patri* at the

end of each Psalm (or at least at the end of the whole Psalmody) is a historic practice. It signifies that the Psalms which the believers of the Old Testament used, and which we use today, expressed their faith and belief, which faith and beliefs are identical with those which we confess in the New Testament era. Various tables suggesting the choice of Psalms for Matins may be found in the *Lutheran Hymnal*. According to tradition, the Psalms should be sung. If the Psalms are read or sung responsively, this should be done verse upon verse rather than half-verse upon half-verse. Musical settings of the Psalter are available to congregations desiring to use them. On Trinity Sunday the Athanasian Creed may replace one Psalm (or the whole Psalmody).

The Lection

The reading of a portion of Scripture has always been one of the most important parts in any service of worship. This is especially true in Matins, where the emphasis already in its early and ancient use was on the reading of the Word. On Sundays and festivals two lessons are read, one from the Epistles and one from the Gospels. Note should be taken of the difference between "lection" and "lesson." "Lection" describes the total number of lessons read from Scripture; "lesson" describes an individual portion of Scripture which is read, whether it be all or a part of the whole "lection." The rubrics direct the announcement of a lesson as a "lesson," not as a "lection." After the reading of the Word of God, the reader or officiant says, "But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us," and the congregation expresses its thanks in the response. The given versicle with its response is optional, but invariable. The response expresses our continual need for the mercy of God; it indicates and offers up to God our thankfulness for His holy Word, in which we receive His mercy. The first thought is our failure in living according to God's Word, and therefore our plea for mercy; but the second thought is that of thankfulness to God for His mercy, which again is given to us in His Word.

The Responsory

The Responsory is a variable part of Matins which was originally sung after each lesson. Today the best usage appears to chant the Responsory only after the last lesson. In chanting the Responsory,

one may "have the opening words of the responsory sung either by a cantor, or by the officiant, the choir or congregation joining in up to the verse. . . . The remainder is rendered by having the cantor or officiant sing the verse and the Gloria Patri, with the choir or congregation making the responses."²⁸ Two complete series of settings are available for the Responsories, one by Max Reger, and the second by J. F. Ohl.

The Sermon

This element of Matins is an addition of the sixteenth century. The ancient Order of Matins had no sermon or address whatsoever. Matins was a service primarily of praise and thanksgiving and prayer. Only with the Reformation emphasis on the preaching of the Word did the Sermon enter the Order of Matins. The rubric at this point is permissive and uses the adjective "brief" to describe the sermon or exhortation.

The Offerings

Again the rubric is here permissive due primarily to the fact that Matins are often conducted at times when no offerings are gathered. When, however, an offering is gathered, this is a fitting place in the service to do so. Upon hearing the Word of God either in the Lection or the Lection and the Sermon, the worshiper is anxious to use that which he has also in material goods to extend the Kingdom of God here in this world and to build up the *Ecclesia* of God.

The Canticle

Once again in the service the worshipers respond after having heard the Word of God in a joyous song of praise and thanksgiving, this time in a special type of song called a Canticle. Anciently there were seven of these, plus the Te Deum. Except the Te Deum, all were taken from the Old Testament and were sung to one of the Psalm tones. The Lutheran Hymnal, in addition to the four printed out in the orders for Matins and Vespers, gives nine canticles for use in worship, found on pages 120—122. For convenience they are listed here together with the source or sources on which they are based and the day on which they are traditionally used.

<i>Canticle</i>	<i>Day Used</i>	<i>Source</i>
Benedicite Omnia Opera (The Song of the Three Holy Children)	Sunday	The (Apocryphal) Song of the Three Holy Children, 35, 37-65 (Daniel 3, 57-87), a paraphrase of Psalm 148
Confitebor Tibi (Song of Isaiah)	Monday	Isaiah 12:1-6
Exultavit Cor Meum (Song of Hannah)	Wednesday	1 Sam. 2:1-4, 6-10
Cantemus Domino (Song of Miriam and Moses)	Thursday	Ex. 15:1, 2, 6, 11, 13, 17-18
Domine, Audivi (Song of Habakkuk)	Friday	Hab. 3:2-6, 13, 18-19
Audite, Coeli (Song of Moses)	Saturday	Deut. 32:1-4, 9, 36, 40, 43
Ego Dixi (Song of Hezekiah)	Tuesday	Isaiah 38:10-20
Beati Pauperes (The Beatitudes)		Matt. 5:3-12
Dignus Est Agnus		Rev. 5:12-13; 15:3-4; 19:5-6

The proper use of these Canticles is given in the rubrics of *The Lutheran Liturgy* on page 422. The two chief Canticles used in Matins are the Te Deum and the Benedictus, which are discussed below.

The Te Deum Laudamus

Undoubtedly this Canticle is one of the greatest songs of praise ever written. Its use in Matins at this point is, as it were, a grand climax to that part of Matins in which the faithful sing their gratitude and praise to God, including the various responses and the hymn. All are beautiful expressions of praise, but none are more eloquent than the Te Deum. The greater part of the Te Deum proper resembles a paraphrase on the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Cast in the form of rhythmic prose (or of a hymn when sung), it is an exalted combination of praise and prayer. This is in complete harmony with the entire order of Matins. In fact, as such it is also a bridge between the former part of Matins, which is primarily praise, and the latter part, which is primarily prayer. The credal confessions form the basis for the several universal petitions which follow. The first main section is similar to the Preface or Sanctus in *The Liturgy*. The second section commemorates Christ's redemptive work, as does the Creed, and on this basis proceeds with the petitions and supplications. The concluding section gives the Te Deum its character as a morning Canticle with its prayer for the

Lord "to keep us this day without sin." Neither the Gloria Patri nor any Antiphons are used with the Te Deum. The best usage dictates that the entire congregation join in singing the Te Deum in standing position.

The Benedictus

Originally this Canticle was a part of Lauds, but at the time of the Reformation it was incorporated into Matins. It is the Song of Zacharias, recorded in Luke 1:68-79. The form is Jewish, but the content is thoroughly Christian and universal. The entire Canticle is a hymn of praise to God for the incarnate Word of God. It reiterates the promises of God in the Old Testament concerning this Word and rejoices in the fulfillment of all these promises. The first section speaks of the hope of the Messiah, who will bring spiritual deliverance, to the end that the faithful might serve Him without fear. The latter part of the Canticle is addressed to the forerunner of this Messiah, who would precede the Messiah and herald His coming. The Gloria Patri is added to the Benedictus, which again symbolizes the unity of faith with believers of time past. This Canticle is usually used as an alternate to the Te Deum according to the rubrics.

The Prayers

The caption "The Prayers" here embraces the service from this point to the end of the service. In thankfulness and realizing their need the faithful offer up to the throne of grace their prayers of praise and petition, of thanksgiving and supplication. This whole latter part of Matins is variable. Instead of the form given in the Order of Matins in the *Lutheran Hymnal* the Canticle may according to the rubric be followed by the Suffrages, the Morning Suffrages, or the Litany.

The Kyrie

The first of the prayers used in Matins is the Kyrie, also called "the Lesser Litany." The name itself is the Greek form for "Lord." It is based upon such Biblical sources as Ps. 51:1; 123:3; Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; and Mark 10:47. The important element is the earnest cry of the faithful, not only for forgiveness of sins, but also for divine help and mercy in every need and distress. In reality

PRITZLAFF MEMORIAL LIBRARY

CONCORDIA SEMINARY

ST. LOUIS, MO.

the Kyrie here serves as a prelude to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer and the other prayers which follow. The rubric implies that the Kyrie be said or sung together by all.

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer at this point in Matins is most appropriate. It includes both praise and supplication. It expresses the personal needs of the individual as well as the universal needs of all men, and particularly the special requests of all the faithful.

The Salutation

The function of the Salutation is here not only that of a preface or introduction, but it is also, and much more so, a prayer that God will hear the joint petitions of the officiant and the congregation which the officiant offers up audibly for the entire congregation.

The Collect for the Day

The rubrics governing the Collect for the Day and all succeeding Collects in Matins are given in *The Lutheran Liturgy* on page 418. The first Collect used is usually the Collect for the Day. The use of the Collect for the Day in our Order of Matins relates our prayers to the particular Day or Season of The Church Year.

Special Collects

After the Collect for the Day additional collects may be said. Traditionally the number of such Collects used is five or less, due to the historic tradition that the total number of collects used should be an odd number and should not exceed seven.²⁰ The special collects may be in the form of memorials or *ad libitum* collects.

The Collect for Grace

The final collect used in Matins is the Collect for Grace, which is invariable. It is also listed at times as a Collect for Protection During the Day. A versicle may be used before this collect. In this case the versicle usually used is the following:

℣: Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise.

℟: And with Thy honor all the day.

The emphasis in the Collect for Grace on the desired help and guidance, direction, and protection is most fitting at the beginning

of the day. The versicle given above and the collect together form a proper conclusion to the entire service. The response of the congregation is "Amen," signifying that the prayer was the united prayer of all the assembled faithful.

The Benedicamus

This versicle is an invitation to the congregation once more to give thanks, while the response is a final giving of thanks by the congregation for all grace and mercy received.

The Benediction

This familiar New Testament Benediction, which should be used without variation, is a blessing, a sacramental act, imparted only when an ordained clergyman officiates. It is a fitting dismissal from the service, which the congregation acknowledges responding with "Amen." In giving this Benediction, according to the traditional form historically associated with all blessings, the right hand only is raised in blessing while the left hand is held flat against the breast. The Sign of the Cross is made at the words "Our Lord Jesus Christ." After the response to the Benediction by the congregation there should be a silent prayer by all before leaving the church or chapel.

III

The spirit of Matins is first of all a spirit of unity, a spiritual union of people with people. Matins is not to be just another form or ritual, but rather a living, vital expression of the faith of those who participate in this service and in this particular form of worship, which is corporate worship. The spirit of all corporate worship is the spirit of unity among all those who worship together in like manner, including, in Christian worship, all believers on earth as well as myriads of saints and legions of angels, multitudes of Prophets, Apostles, and martyrs of ages past and the faithful of the present. The realization of this will make one conscious that there are no boundaries or limitations when believers worship. Congregational barriers fall by the way, years and decades and centuries lose their limitations. When any group of believers joins together in worship, and in this connection does so using the form of Matins, that group does not worship alone as a single group, but rather it

worships together with the whole *Ecclesia* of God. This is vividly brought out in various expressions in the Te Deum.

Moreover, the spirit of Matins is the spirit of praise. The worshiper must never lose sight of the content or the spirit of Matins. From the beginning of Matins to its very end there is one spirit—the spirit of praise to God. Almost every sacrificial act of the worshiper in Matins is an additional act of praise, from the versicle to the hymn to the response to the Responsory to the Canticle—all build up to one grand climactic paean of praise.

The one primary purpose of Matins is to provide an opportunity for individual believers to join together in corporate communion with God, to praise Him for all His blessings, to praise Him for His grace and mercy, for establishing and preserving His *Ecclesia* on earth, for the blessings received through the Word, and to praise Him for the privilege of worshipping Him together with all the saints and angels. There should be no doubt about the fact that the Church in our day has not fully realized this purpose of Matins and does not use this form of worship to its fullest possibilities. Before the Church can accomplish any such ideal goal in respect to the use of Matins, instruction will have to be given concerning the necessity, importance, and value of having services additional to the chief service of the holy day. *Matins is not to take the place of the chief service on Sunday.* Matins is *supplementary* to the chief service. As such, however, it is difficult to conceive of a finer order of worship for the congregation, especially for early or daily services.

Matins is unusually adaptable with its variable parts and extremely flexible. It may be used in its simplicity or in rich liturgical and musical elaboration. No one can give a group of specific directions to a congregation or any other group as to how they should conduct the service in their midst. Each group must decide for itself. Only, however, when the congregation understands what Matins is, will it begin to appreciate this liturgy. When the congregation knows some of the history of Matins and understands its character and function, then it will be a service which the congregation will not only enjoy, but also one toward which they will eagerly look forward.

St. Louis, Mo., and Dallas, Tex.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ 1 Dan. 6:10. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."
- ² Acts 10:9.
- ³ Acts 3:1.
- ⁴ F. R. Webber, "Matins and Vespers," *Pro Ecclesia Lutherana*, II, (1934), 43.
- ⁵ *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, c. 1907—12), X, 51.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy* (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg Press, c. 1947), p. 364.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ R. M. Smith, "The Sources of the Minor Services," *Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association* (Pittsburgh: Lutheran Liturgical Association, c. 1906), II, 35.
- ¹⁰ Webber, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- ¹¹ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 364.
- ¹² F. E. Cooper, *An explanation of the Common Service* (6th revised edition; Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c. 1941), p. 75 f.
- ¹³ Joseph Jungmann, *Liturgical Worship* (New York: Frederick Pustet Co., 1941), p. 75.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75 f.
- ¹⁵ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 365.
- ¹⁶ Webber, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
- ¹⁷ Francis Proctor, *A History of the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1892), p. 234.
- ¹⁸ E. T. Horn, "Luther on the Principles and Order of Christian Worship," *Lutheran Church Review*, X (July, 1891), 245 f.
- ¹⁹ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 366.
- ²⁰ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 367.
- ²¹ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 384 f.
- ²² Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 386.
- ²³ A. C. Piepkorn, "The Rubrics Governing the Use of the Minor Propers of Matins and Vespers," *American Lutheran*, XIX (September, 1936), 16. It should be noted that this article was written before the current edition of the *Lutheran Hymnal* was published.
- ²⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- ²⁵ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 371.
- ²⁶ Piepkorn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ²⁹ Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 400.