

CHAPTER XII

THE SERVICE IN DETAIL: INVOCATION; CONFESSION

On festivals and special occasions an opening hymn may be sung in procession. The custom is much to be preferred, however, of having the choir regularly enter the church in reverent, silent procession and go to the choir stalls before the hymn is sung. The congregation should rise as the choir enters the church.

The organist plays softly until the choir is in its place and the minister is in the chancel. He then leads into the hymn in which minister, choir, and congregation unite.

A hymn of invocation of the Holy Spirit is prescribed in Spangenburg and in many church orders. Austria (1571) requires: "At the beginning of every spiritual office earnest prayer must be offered to God for grace, enlightenment, and help, and the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* must be sung."

The minister may follow the choir or he may enter the chancel separately from the sacristy. He goes to the front of the altar on the chancel level, where he will reverently offer his personal devotions and remain facing the altar until the conclusion of the hymn.

If the key of the hymn is different from that of the Service the organist will modulate into the latter before the minister begins the Invocation. Valuable in any case, this is especially important if the minister is to chant the liturgy.

Sufficient time should be allowed between the opening hymn and the invocation for an adjustment of mood or spirit which may be required, particularly if the final stanza of the hymn rises to a climax. Impatience, thoughtlessness, or nervousness on the minister's part should not interfere with his giving the organist ample time to improvise an appropriate modulation. A well-constructed phrase of four or eight measures based upon a fragment of the hymn tune itself is not too much, and this should conclude with a gradual diminuendo.

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The preparation of such "improvisations" and modulations in advance is an important part of the organist's work. So far as devotional and churchly effects are concerned, the mastery by the organist of these details of the Service itself is more important than the playing of a fifteen-minute recital beforehand, however brilliant that performance might be.

THE INVOCATION

¶ *The Congregation shall rise. The Minister shall sing or say:*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

¶ *The Congregation shall sing or say:*

Amen.

Paul admonishes the faithful: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him?" (Col. 3:17. Cf. also Eph. 2:18, I Cor. 12:3.) The liturgy thus fittingly begins with the Invocation, as an act of corporate devotion.

This formula sums up all that we know of the divine Being in a brief scriptural phrase which has long been used in devotional and liturgical acts of many kinds throughout the universal church. It is used sacramentally as a solemn formula of benediction in baptism, marriage, ordination, church dedication, and various "blessings." As used here at the beginning of the Service, however, it has the value of an "invocative blessing." As the name indicates, it is addressed to God and not to the congregation. It is an affirmation of faith, a prayer of profession—an approach similar in character to a hymn of invocation, or to the words "Our Father" at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. We formally express our "awareness" of the presence of God, we place ourselves in that presence, and invoke the divine blessing upon the service which is to follow. We confess our faith in the Holy Trinity, for whose worship we are assembled. We solemnly call God to witness that we are "gathered together" in his name (Matt. 18:20) and in that name offer all our prayer, praise, and thanksgiving (John 16:23).

The invocation is not found in the early liturgies nor in the services of the Greek or the Anglican churches. In the Roman church it begins the priest's office of preparation before mass and other offices (occasional services), and is said at the beginning of sermons. The Lutheran church orders give the invocation or take it for granted. The Swedish Liturgy is an exception and does not have it at this place, though it does give it as the final benediction.

THE INVOCATION

Historically these words accompanied the sign of the cross, which began every act of devotion, including the confession of sins said by the priest and his associates privately at the foot of the altar before mass. The church orders retained the Confession at the beginning of the Service, but purified the form and made it a congregational act. The fact that it became a congregational act and the further fact that the sign of the cross later dropped from general use have not changed the Invocation's real character. The entire Confiteor, with the single exception of the Declaration of Grace which concludes it, is sacrificial in character. Its spirit is the spirit of preparation and purification.

The sign of the cross, now generally omitted in America, added the note of self-blessing. Anciently the sign of the cross was more important than the formula. It was in general use long before the cross itself was used in worship or in church building. The formula "In the Name," etc., was a verbal accompaniment to the action.

It is difficult to realize the hold which the sign of the cross has had upon popular imagination and life. Cyprian, Tetullian and many others are witnesses to its use among Christians as early as the end of the second century. Tertullian says: "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupieth us, we mark our forehead with the sign of the cross. For these and such-like rules, if thou requirest a law in the Scriptures thou shalt find none. Tradition will be pleaded to thee as originating them, custom as confirming them, and faith as observing them. That reason will support tradition, and custom and faith, thou wilt either thyself perceive, or learn from someone who hath perceived it. Meanwhile thou wilt believe that some reason there is, to which due submission is due."¹

Chrysostom concludes a glowing passage concerning the sign of the cross by saying: "When, therefore, thou signest thyself, think of the purpose of the cross, and quench anger and all other passions. Consider the price that hath been paid for thee, and then wilt thou be a slave to no man. Since not merely by the fingers ought one to engrave it, but before this by the purpose of the heart with much faith."²

As a reminder of the saving passion and death of Christ and an emblem of the mercy of God, the sign of the cross from the earliest times was accompanied by various formulas, such as "The sign of Christ," "In the Name of Jesus," "Our help is in the Name of the Lord," and "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Eventually the last came into universal use and supplanted all others. These words and the sign became a summary of the Christian faith, a simple yet comprehensive recognition of the Unity and the Trinity in the Godhead, and of the central significance of the sacrificial death of Christ.

¹ Tertullian, *Of the Crown* (Oxford Trans.), p. 165.

² Chrysostom on St. Matt. *Hom. liv.* (Oxford Trans.), pp. 735-37.

The church at the time of the Reformation reacted against the excessive and superstitious use of the sign of the cross which had characterized the late Middle Ages. It did not abolish it, but endeavored to restrict its use to significant occasions, such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, the benediction at the end of the service, etc. Luther kept it, together with a form of the invocation, in his directions for morning and evening prayer in the *Small Catechism*. Thus he says: "In the morning when thou risest, thou shalt make the sign of the cross and say: May God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, grant it"—a paraphrase which breathes the spirit of prayer even more definitely than does the original *In Nomine*, etc.³

The church orders took for granted the use of the sign of the cross with the Invocation by the minister at the altar as part of his private devotion before the Service. When this became a public congregational act, the sign of the cross was gradually dropped. The formula which had accompanied it for so many centuries, however, remained as an invocation, that is, a solemn recognition of the Holy Trinity, and a petition for the divine presence and blessing. Thus the Lutheran Liturgy, at least in its German development, gave the Invocation a prominence and importance not found in the Roman Mass or in any other liturgy.

This discussion reveals the difficulties which arise in attempting to classify parts of the liturgy too mechanically. Some are not wholly sacramental, others are not entirely sacrificial. There is a blending of these elements in some parts of the Service. Since, however, the minister by his position at the altar interprets the Service, and as there are only two positions he can take, it is necessary to determine the prevailing character of each part. In the case of the invocation it is better to take the words as Luther, the Reformers, and the ancient church used them in this connection, that is, as primarily devotional in character and not as a proclamation addressed to the congregation.

Some nineteenth-century scholars ignored the devotional significance of these words at this place and interpreted them as legitimatizing, or at least as establishing, a sacramental basis for the entire service (even Loehe). Some altered the text itself in clumsy fashion to agree with the new interpretation and made it read "Unser Anfang sei im Namen des Vaters, des Sohns und des Heiligen Geistes." The Common Liturgy has done well to retain the historic text, and we give it its ancient and generally accepted meaning.⁴

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

³ "Das walt Gott, Vater, Sohn, Heiliger Geist, Amen." Luther apparently combined in this form references to both the usual *In Nomine* and the other formula, *Deus in adjutorium*, also frequently used with the sign of the cross. Cf. *WA* 30¹, 392-93.

⁴ The principle underlying the orientation of the minister was affirmed for the

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The rubrics at the beginning of the musical settings of the Service should be noted. They state that "Intonations provided for the Minister's parts of the Services represent a permissive use. They are not to be considered directive. The preparatory office up to the Introit may be said."

The Amen is sung promptly and firmly, though with devotional spirit and moderate volume of tone.

It is questionable whether it is wise to suggest exact tempos. The author would certainly not desire to do this throughout the work. Local conditions differ greatly with respect to the size of church buildings and of congregations, and other details. There also are very real differences in the "moods" of the settings. We must also allow for proper differences in judgment and taste, and not attempt to regiment our worship severely.

It may be helpful, however, to suggest a metronome tempo of M.M. $\text{♩} = 84$ for the first Amen of the service, at least in the first setting. Most later Amens, such as those following the collects, etc., may be taken more rapidly. "Percussive" and similar thoughtless and undevotional effects are absolutely to be avoided. The final Amen of the Service should again have significant breadth and solemnity and be held to a slower tempo.

THE CONFESSION OF SINS

¶ *The Minister shall say:*

Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart, and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching him, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to grant us forgiveness.

¶ *The Minister and Congregation may kneel.*

¶ *They shall sing or say:*

Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.

R. And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

Anglican communion at the Savoy Conference in 1661, in the reply of the bishops to the proposals of the Puritans. The latter desired that the minister should face the people throughout the service, as this was "most convenient." The bishops replied: "The minister's turning to the people is not most convenient throughout the whole ministrations. When he speaks to them, as in Lessons, Absolution, and Benedictions, it is convenient that he turn to them. When he speaks for them to God, it is fit that they should all turn another way, as the ancient church ever did" (Edward Cardwell, *A History of Conferences and other Proceedings Connected with the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer* [2nd ed.; London: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1891], p. 353).