

## INTRODUCTION

The Lutheran Church is a liturgical Church. Everywhere in her sanctuaries, even among heathen people, something in the form of a historical liturgy is to be found. Nevertheless she is in no danger of formalism, for she exercises no restraint in this respect upon pastors and congregations. For good reasons she simply chooses to be liturgical in her worship, and her people with all of their freedom universally follow the choice.

One of her reasons is that public worship must be preserved from individualism. The Church is a social organism, a divine and the only enduring social organism. The man who "goes to church" only for his personal spiritual profit has mistaken the character of a church service. His conception of worship is an entirely selfish one. He has failed to distinguish between private devotions and public worship, both of which are necessary. The Christian as he "goes to church" should as far as possible cease to be an individual, should realize himself as an integral part of a congregation, of a fellowship of men, of the communion of saints. The worship is a social function. He prays with others for the whole and for many great interests, not primarily for his individual needs. The Lord's Prayer, with its "we" and "us" and "our" is the ideal prayer for public worship. The worshiper may rightly go beyond even the one congregation and recognize himself as in unity with all congregations of Christians. The effort to worship publicly in this manner will soon open up an increasing joy for the Christian, as he realizes the new richness of his worship. It becomes manifest however that from this point of view a well-conceived liturgy is needed, and

that no passing thought of a single minister should determine how the many shall worship.

A second reason for liturgical worship grows out of the first one. The fellowship of ideal worship is greater than the whole company of Christians now upon earth. We may know ourselves as one in our praise of the Lord with the saints of all ages. There is unity with those who now worship Him in heaven. This is the powerful thought in the *Te Deum*: "Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory. The glorious company of the apostles praise Thee. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Thee. The noble army of martyrs praise Thee. The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee." It is the same thought of the united worship of heaven and earth which is found in all doxologies: "Praise Him all creatures here below; praise Him above, ye heavenly host." So also the "Preface" in the Communion repeats it: "Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, etc." It is an added joy therefore to the true worshiper if he may realize that he is using forms which the saints of the ages have employed. Such is the case with the historic liturgy. It has not been prepared by some committee, however wise and pious. It has grown with the centuries. The piety of all times has tested it, added what was worthy, cleansed it from what was unworthy. The fragrant incense of a ceaseless devotion of multitudes to the Saviour comes to us with the liturgy.

The Lutheran Church believes furthermore that she is justified in recommending a liturgy to her people because she has a definite faith to express. It is a distinctive faith, and is great enough to mould all of life. The places of worship are also places for the proclamation of that faith. Everything connected with the

sanctuary and with the mode of worship should be shaped so as to express most clearly, most beautifully, and most effectively what the Church confesses as the truth. It is evident therefore that greatest care is necessary so that the building and that which takes place within it shall be in harmony with the faith of the Church.

All of the above considerations have manifestly been in the heart and mind of the author of this book. A finely cultivated spirit and years of patient study speak to us through these pages. The result is of great value to all who would understand our liturgy and of priceless importance above all to those who must lead the worship of the people. We need a reverent, understanding leadership of our worship. May our pastors therefore not merely read, but study the book.

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