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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE LUTHERAN CULTUS.*

Divine worship in the Christian Church is not an *adiaphoron*. The Lord expressly commands that His Word be heard, John 8, 47. He has only severe censure for those who forsake the Christian assemblies, Heb. 10, 25. He expressly enjoins public prayer, 1 Tim. 2, 1. 2. 8. He graciously promises His divine presence at such assemblies, Matt. 18, 20. He records with approval the public services of the early Christians, Acts 2, 42—47.

But though He has prescribed the *general* content of public worship, though He is present in the sacramental acts of divine service, declaring and appropriating to the believers the means of grace, and though He graciously receives the sacrificial acts of the assembled congregation, in confession and prayer and offerings, He has not commanded a definite form or order of divine service. It is a matter of Christian liberty whether a congregation wishes one or many prayers, one or several

* In addition to the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, the following books were consulted: Alt, H., *Christlicher Kultus*. Berlin, 1851. Cooper, F. E.; Keever, E. F.; Seegers, J. C.; Stump, J., *An Explanation of the Common Service*. Philadelphia, 1912. Daniel, H., *Codex liturgicus ecclesiae universae*. Lipsiae, 1847—1853. Fuerbringer, L., *Leitfaden fuer Vorlesungen, Liturgik*. St. Louis, 1915. Gueranger, L. P., *The Liturgical Year*. Vol. I. Worcester-London, 1895. Horn, E. T., *Outlines of Liturgics*. Second Edition. Philadelphia, 1912. Kliefoth, Th., *Liturgische Abhandlungen I*. Schwerin und Rostock, 1854. Kliefoth, Th., *Die urspruengliche Gottesdienstordnung*. Bd. 5. Schwerin, 1801. Lochner, F., *Der Hauptgottesdienst der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*. St. Louis, 1895. Synodalbericht, Nebraska, 1898, 1903. THEOL. QUART., I, VII.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

PRAYER IN GENERAL.

(Continued.)

Ps. 27, 8: *When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*

A closer rendering of the text shows that Luther's translation surpasses that of the Authorized Version, in that it hits the sense of the original admirably. Luther: "Mein Herz haelt dir vor dein Wort: Ihr sollt mein Antlitz suchen. Darum suche ich auch, Herr, dein Antlitz." The order of the Hebrew is: "To Thee hath my heart said (when Thou saidst), 'Seek ye My face'; Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek." The parenthetical clause, "when Thou saidst," is not in the original, but it helps to make the meaning clear.

"Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually"—this was the command given by David to his people, when he set up the ark in the holy Mount of Zion. 1 Chron. 16, 11. The figurative expression, "Seek ye My face," was God's command to come into His presence, to get audience with Him, to commune with Him, to pray to Him. Ps. 91, 15. This

command, "Seek ye My face," gave David courage to supplicate God in the hour of distress. In times of affliction and despondency, when the Evil One, in order to cast us into deeper gloom and finally into despair, assails us with thoughts of our unworthiness to seek God's face in prayer, we should plead this command, "Seek ye My face," in spite of the devil, as our warrant for coming to Him.—This David did. Circumscribed, the text says: Because Thou, Jehovah, who hast made a covenant of grace with Thy people, hast said: "Seek ye My face," therefore, I, David, will overcome all fears and doubts arising in my heart, and make bold to come into Thy presence. Thou hast commanded me to pray to Thee; to Thee I will pray, "Thy face, Jehovah," Thou gracious God, "will I seek."

Matt. 7, 7. 8: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

God only can give the gifts we need for body and soul, but He wants to be asked for them in prayer. Knowing how timid we oftentimes are to ask boldly, our Savior takes great pains to encourage us to pray. He condescends to make gracious invitations and precious promises. Such we find in our text.

Ask—seek—knock! "Each of these terms used presents what we desire of God in a different light. 'We *ask* for what we *wish*; we *seek* for what we *miss*; we *knock* for that from which we feel ourselves *shut out*. Answering to this threefold representation is the triple assurance of success to our believing prayer." (J. F. and B. Com.)—We observe that the promises are here unqualified: "Ask, *and it shall be given you,*" etc. But we must remember the Lord instructs His disciples, Christians. It is, therefore, presumed that they ask aright—in faith, according to God's will. 1 John 5, 14.

Ask—seek—knock! Sometimes, for reasons known to Him only, our Father does not answer our prayer immediately.

What are we to do? *Ask—seek—knock!* The fervor of our prayer must grow more and more intense—this is implied by the climax: ask—seek—knock. The woman of Canaan, Matt. 15, 23 ff., understood this art. She was in great distress owing to her daughter's being possessed of a devil. She cries unto the Lord for mercy. He answers her not a word. His disciples intercede for her—without avail. She renews her prayer, "Lord, help me." She is repulsed brusquely: the children's bread must not be cast to a dog such as she is. Her faith is sorely tried. Nothing daunted, she turns the tables on the Lord, as it were, saying: I grant I am a dog, on a dog's right I insist—to eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table. Jesus is conquered by that importunate asking, seeking, knocking, flowing from faith in His mercy, and He exclaims in wonderment: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." "And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Ps. 145, 18. 19: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them.*

What a strong encouragement to prayer this beautiful passage affords! Four times—in climactic order—the assurance of divine help is made to Christian cross-bearers who cast their care upon the Lord.

The Christians' needs are many. God is their Helper; they "*call upon Him,*" they pour out a prayer into His ears. They call upon Him "*in truth,*" *i. e.*, sincerely, with confidence that He will hear; for the *Lord* unto whom they pray is *Jehovah*, who has made a covenant of grace with them. The Christians who thus call upon the Lord also "*fear Him*"; they

approach the throne of grace not only with confidence, but also with a filial fear, with profound reverence; their prayer, both as to form and contents, moves within the confines of the Word of God.—Such are the suppliants; such is the nature of their supplication. They are to know and firmly to believe: 1. *“The Lord is nigh unto them”* with His gracious presence. 2. *“He will fulfil their desire”* since they prayed according to His will. 3. *“He will hear their cry.”* The prayer of the children of God in which they lay their needs, their wants and necessities, before Him in childlike faith, assumes the character of a loud cry in the ears of Jehovah. This He cannot and will not overhear. He will answer it; 4. *“He will save them,”* succor them. Though help may sometimes be delayed, come it will. Here is His fourfold promise. Though the answer may not be exactly as we expected it to be, still answer our prayer He will when His time has come, and in a way far superior to our thinking, in a way that is for our good.

Ps. 50, 15: *Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.*

Daily Christians call upon the Lord. But in the Christians' life there are oftentimes dark days, *“days of trouble,”* in which the waves of adversity and calamity rise to such a height as to threaten to engulf them. At such times the devil suggests: Don't pray; it is useless; God has become your enemy; He will not hear you. The devil is a liar. God says: *“Call upon Me”* in just such *“days of trouble.”* He promises: *“I will deliver thee.”* What an incentive to cry unto Him from the depths of our hearts! And when divine help has come, as it surely will come in one form or another, let us not forget to *glorify* His holy name.

“Call upon Me”—this is the divine command; *“I will deliver thee”*—this is the divine promise; *“thou shalt glorify Me”*—this is the Christian's duty and privilege.

Springfield, Ill.

LOUIS WESSEL.

(To be continued.)