

# Ecclesiology

## Topic 8 – Survey of Denominational Beliefs – Liturgical Churches

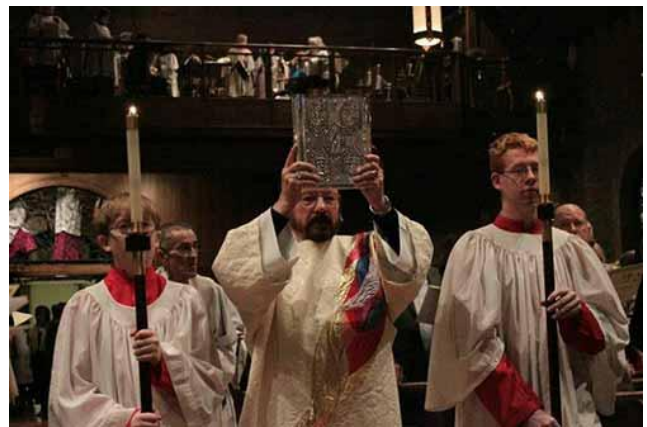
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### Introduction

According to Webster, liturgy means “a fixed set of ceremonies, words, etc., that are used during public worship.” Liturgical churches are then churches who favor certain ceremonies and rites during their public worship services.

Primarily, these are churches which have split from the Roman Catholic Church, but have retained much of the ceremony associated with Catholic services. Some of these churches are Protestant and while embracing many beliefs of the Reformation, saw in the Catholic worship style much that they believed worth preserving. For many who attend these kinds of churches, the traditional, ritualized, formally structured way of worshiping resonates in a powerful, deeply inspiring way.

“Liturgy” comes from a compound Greek word combining “people” and “work”. Liturgical churches tend to be participatory with a lot of standing, kneeling, walking, and speaking (praying out loud, reading together, or responding in some way to the worship leader) in addition to the standard sitting and singing. The kinds of things seen during these services are: the procession of vested clergy up the center aisle at the beginning of the service, the use of incense, the incorporation of religious symbols, communal recitation like the Lord’s Prayer or the Nicene Creed or some other passage, the congregation’s united response to petitions read aloud to God, the observation of a church calendar, the following of a lectionary (scheduled readings), and the formalized participation in (the sacrament of) communion. Below are pictures of some of the liturgy/rituals associated with an Episcopal service.



The main liturgical churches are Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, and Episcopal.

## Orthodox Church

The Western or Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern or Orthodox Church (OC) split in 1054. There were many issues and hundreds of years of growing apart between West and East that led to the Great Schism. The primary doctrinal issue was over the issue of the source of the Holy Spirit. In addition to this doctrinal issue, other issues were papal authority, the language of the worship services, and the use of icons.

### Source of Authority

The (OC) agrees with biblical Christianity regarding the inspiration of Scripture. However, the OC rejects sola Scriptura. The OC affirms a single source of revelation, holy tradition, of which Scripture is the preeminent among several forms. The other forms of tradition include the first seven ecumenical councils; patristic writings (especially those of the first four centuries); later councils; the OC liturgy; and canon law. The Protestant view which raises Scripture above tradition as final authority in matters of doctrine is considered by Orthodox a sin of the Reformation.

Regarding Roman Catholicism, the OC rejects the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome as well as his papal infallibility.

The OC unapologetically holds that they are the one true church of Christ on earth, which alone has guarded right belief and true worship in absolute identity and unbroken succession with the apostolic church. In other words, the non-Orthodox have lapsed from the true faith into error, if not outright heresy. The salvation of non-Orthodox is, therefore, in question.

### Nature of God including the Trinity

The OC believes in the Trinity and that the rejection of the Trinity constitutes heresy. However, they hold to a slightly different view of the Trinity than that traditionally held by the rest of Christendom, including both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The issue is the “procession” of the Holy Spirit which was the primary doctrinal issue of the Great Schism. The issue is represented by the “filioque” clause (and the Son) in the Nicene Creed which was added at the Synod of Toledo in 589 (the original Nicene Council was in 325). This is the common version of the Nicene Creed known today:

*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.*

*Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father **and the Son**; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.*

*And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

Regarding the source of the Holy Spirit, Grudem in his Systematic Theology says:

**d. The Filioque Clause:** In connection with the Nicene Creed, one unfortunate chapter in the history of the church should be briefly noted, namely the controversy over the insertion of the filioque clause into the Nicene Creed, an insertion that eventually led to the split between western (Roman Catholic) Christianity and eastern Christianity (consisting today of various branches of eastern orthodox Christianity, such as the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, etc.) in A.D. 1054.

The word *filioque* is a Latin term that means “and from the Son.” It was not included in the Nicene Creed in either the first version of A.D. 325 or the second version of A.D. 381. Those versions simply said that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father.” But in A.D. 589, at a regional church council in Toledo (in what is now Spain), the phrase “and the Son” was added, so that the creed then said that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father *and the Son (filioque).*” In the light of John 15:26 and 16:7, where Jesus said that he would send the Holy Spirit into the world, it seems there could be no objection to such a statement if it referred to the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son at a point in time (particularly at Pentecost). But this was a statement about the nature of the Trinity, and the phrase was understood to speak of the *eternal* relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Son, something Scripture never explicitly discusses. The form of the Nicene Creed that had this additional phrase gradually gained in general use and received an official endorsement in A.D. 1017. The entire controversy was complicated by ecclesiastical politics and struggles for power, and this apparently very insignificant doctrinal point was the main doctrinal issue in the split between eastern and western Christianity in A.D. 1054. (The underlying political issue, however, was the relation of the Eastern church to the authority of the Pope.) The doctrinal controversy and the split between the two branches of Christianity have not been resolved to this day.

Is there a correct position on this question? The weight of evidence (slim though it is) seems clearly to favor the western church. In spite of the fact that John 15:26 says that the Spirit of truth “proceeds from the Father,” this does not deny that he proceeds also from the Son (just as John 14:26 says that the Father will send the Holy Spirit, but John 16:7 says that the Son will send the Holy Spirit). In fact, in the same sentence in John 15:26 Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as one “whom I shall send to you from the Father.” And if the Son together with the Father sends the Spirit into the world, by analogy it would seem appropriate to say that this reflects eternal ordering of their relationships. This is not something that we can clearly insist on based on any specific verse, but much of our understanding of the *eternal* relationships among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit comes by analogy from what Scripture tells us about the way they relate to the creation *in time*. Moreover, the eastern formulation runs the danger of suggesting an unnatural distance between the Son and the Holy Spirit, leading to the possibility that even in personal worship an emphasis on more mystical, Spirit-inspired experience might be pursued to the neglect of an accompanying rationally understandable adoration of Christ as Lord. Nevertheless, the controversy was ultimately over such an obscure point of doctrine (essentially, the relationship between the Son and Spirit before creation) that it certainly did not warrant division in the church.

#### Person and work of Jesus Christ

The OC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the person and work of Christ; affirming Jesus as the second Person of the Trinity and His full deity and full humanity. The OC believes Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a Roman cross, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead.

### Nature of Man

The OC rejects the doctrine of total depravity and man's bondage to a corrupt sin nature. It believes in free will and rejects the Doctrines of Grace. The OC rejects the Biblical idea (Romans 5) of inherited (imputed) guilt. It believes that people are guilty only for their own sins rather than as a result of the consequences of Adam's fall.

### Means of Salvation

The OC believes similarly to Roman Catholicism which is essentially a works based start (baptism), middle (sacraments), and end (pre-heaven purification) to salvation.

### Other

The OC believes similarly to Roman Catholicism regarding Mary. They affirm the perpetual virginity of Mary, as well as her bodily assumption. It, however, rejects the immaculate conception of Mary because of its opposition to the doctrine of original sin.

## **Lutheran Church**

The Lutheran church (LC) had formed by 1530 following Luther's split with the Roman Catholic church precipitated by his 95 thesis in 1517. It had developed as Luther and Philip Melancthon formed the basic Lutheran confession of faith, known as the Augsburg Confession (1530), which details Lutheran theology. Luther's followers became numerous in Germany and Scandinavia. As people from these countries came to America they established Lutheran churches.

### Source of Authority

One of the key differences between Luther and the Roman Catholic Church was the issue of authority. Luther argued that the Scripture was the sole authority for determining belief and practice. Traditionally, the LC has believed in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture alone.

### Nature of God including the Trinity

The LC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of God, including the doctrine of the Trinity.

### Person and work of Jesus Christ

The LC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the person and work of Christ; affirming Jesus as the second Person of the Trinity and His full deity and full humanity. The LC believes Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a Roman cross, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead.

### Nature of Man

The LC believes in the original sin and total depravity.

### Means of Salvation

The LC believes in salvation by grace through faith. However, it understands that the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures and the Sacraments to create such faith. It believes that baptism takes the grace of God earned by Jesus at the cross and applies that grace to the individual. As such they believe that baptism is necessary for spiritual regeneration.

### Other

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)

- The Bible is inspired and inerrant, the Confessions are a clear and accurate articulation of biblical truth.
- Salvation is by Jesus Christ alone, given to us as a gift by grace through faith in Him. Universalism is rejected.
- Women cannot vote in congregational meetings nor serve in public ministry (no authority over men in any way in the church).

- Functional view of ministry (no pastoral "office" per say—all members are ministers of Christ, pastors are men called to the specific vocation of preaching/teaching and administering the Sacraments). All forms of ministry are divine calls.
- Close Communion (only baptized believers who share their distinctly Lutheran confession of faith in *all* points of doctrine may commune).
- Marriage is a sacred institution between one man and one woman. Homosexual behavior is sin.

#### Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)

- The Bible is inspired and inerrant, Confessions are a true and binding exposition of all scripture and serve as authoritative texts.
- Salvation is by Jesus Christ alone, given to us as a gift by grace through faith in Him. Universalism is rejected.
- Women are free to vote in congregational matters, and may serve publicly in humanly established offices as long as those offices do not include any of the distinctive functions of the pastoral office.
- Believe in a pastoral "office" of ministry, pastor has received a divine call from God, and no one is to preach, teach, or administer the sacraments without a regular call. Only the pastoral office is divinely established, while all other church offices are human institutions. Only men may be called to the pastoral office.
- Close Communion (only baptized believers who share their distinctly Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper may commune; agreement in all doctrinal matters is not necessary).
- Marriage is a sacred institution between one man and one woman. Homosexual behavior is sin.

#### North American Lutheran Church (NALC)

- The Bible is inspired, Confessions are valid interpretations of the faith of the Church and true witnesses to the Gospel.
- Salvation is by Jesus Christ alone, given to us as a gift by grace through faith in Him. Universalism is rejected.
- Women and men are free to serve in all aspects of congregational life and ministry.
- Believe in a pastoral "office" of ministry, pastor has received a divine call from God and includes qualified men and women.
- Open Communion (all baptized believers are welcome to commune).
- Marriage is a sacred institution between one man and one woman. Homosexual behavior is sin.

#### Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

- The Bible is inspired, the Confessions are valid interpretations of the faith of the Church and true witnesses to the Gospel.
- Salvation is universal. What God has done in Christ is done for all in the world; God's act in Christ is the way that all come to God. Universalism is accepted.
- Women and men are free to serve in all aspects of congregational life and ministry.
- Functional view of ministry (no pastoral "office" per say - we are all ministers of Christ, pastors are men or women called to the specific vocation or "rostered ministry" of preaching/teaching and administering the Sacraments).

- Open Communion (all baptized persons are welcome to commune). In practice, all are welcome to commune, sometimes including non-human partakers (pets).
- Accepts and supports monogamous, same-gender relationships. Allows non-celibate gays and lesbians to serve as clergy. The individual church may choose to call or not call gay or lesbian clergy.

### **Anglican Church / Episcopal Church**

The Church of England or the Anglican Church was born in 1534 when King Henry VIII used his divorce from Catherine of Aragon as the grounds to free England from papal obedience. The parliament declared Henry “Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England.” Because this separation was more political and economic than doctrinal, the Church of England retained an essentially Roman Catholic position.

Over the next fifty years, certain doctrinal changes were introduced, most of them coming from the Reformation occurring on the European continent, along with the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which is still used today as the order for services in the Church of England. When England began to colonize other parts of the world, they brought Anglicanism along with them. In America, after the Revolution, the “Anglican” church there felt it better to be known as the Episcopal church (EC) as it is known today. The Church of England is a mixture of Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox traditions along with the ideas presented in the Reformation.

The Anglican church as a collective is known as the Anglican Communion which is comprised of national churches (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and many other countries in Africa and Asia), each headed by its own archbishop with most being governed within those states. The Episcopal Church has bishops of dioceses, but the hierarchical structure generally ends there.

Within Anglicanism there is the distinction between the “high church” which holds more strongly to ritual and tradition and is therefore more Catholic-like and the “low church” which is more Protestant-like. The high church/low church distinction is especially evident in Anglicanism, but also exists in the United States.

In America, however, there have also been a few spinoffs from the Episcopal church. The Reformed Episcopal Church in America is more Protestant-minded, the Episcopal Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of America is more conservative, and the Anglican Catholic Church is more aligned with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

The Church of England separated itself from Roman Catholicism not so much on the basis of doctrine but because of political reasons. Therefore, Anglicanism shares much in common with Roman Catholicism, while also maintaining some traditions seen more clearly in Eastern Orthodoxy.

- Apostolic Succession: The Anglican church has a system of bishops and archbishops, who they assert have authority similar to that of the Apostles’, but makes no comment concerning authenticity as has the Roman Catholic church.
- Traditions Concerning the Scriptures: The Anglicans are more akin to the Eastern Orthodox, using all of the Apocrypha (save 3 and 4 Maccabees). Anglicans also say that the Apocrypha is placed in a lower level of emphasis than the Old Testament.
- Traditions Concerning Sacraments: The Anglicans are between the Roman Catholics and the rest of Protestantism concerning sacraments. They believe that there are two sacraments of necessity, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, yet still hold that the other five sacraments of the Roman Catholic church, confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, anointing of the sick, and confession, are “sacramentals”. They are good to do but not as necessary as baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

- Traditions Concerning Mary: The Anglicans do not place as much emphasis on Mary as the Roman Catholics do, although she is still looked upon as the mother of the church, among other titles.
- Traditions Concerning the Saints: The Anglican church accepts the existence of saints, although the process of canonization is not practiced. The notion of relics and other such things is rejected.
- Traditions Concerning Sin: The Anglican church believes that a priest/bishop has the authority from God to remit sins, and allows for its members to give confession to the priest. This action is not required to continue within the church as it is in Roman Catholicism.
- Traditions Concerning Consecration: The Anglican church has monks and nuns, although celibacy is not required for the clergy.

Even though the Church of England shares much in common with Roman Catholicism, it did not turn a blind eye to the doctrines developed on the European continent in Lutheranism and Calvinism. Let us examine these similarities now.

- Lutheranism: Faith Alone: The Anglican church accepts being saved by faith alone and that the work performed is done by God.
- Calvinism: Total Depravity: The Anglicans agree that man has fallen short and can do nothing to come to God; man cannot do any good work.

#### Source of Authority

The EC believes the Bible is divinely inspired; however, the church allows its members great freedom in interpreting its doctrines. The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds are accepted. The use of the Book of Common Prayer in worship is stressed more than the acceptance of particular beliefs.

#### Nature of God including the Trinity

The EC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of God, including the doctrine of the Trinity.

#### Person and work of Jesus Christ

The EC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the person and work of Christ; affirming Jesus as the second Person of the Trinity and His full deity and full humanity. The EC believes Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on a Roman cross, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead.

#### Nature of Man

The EC believes in the original sin and total depravity.

#### Means of Salvation

The EC believes that salvation comes through Christ alone, that justification is by faith alone, that works above and beyond our duty to God do not add to our salvation.