



Vicarious Satisfaction in Liturgy: Invocation

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Introduction

Lutheran Orthodoxy teaches that an indispensable part of the mighty work that God has done in Christ is atonement by vicarious satisfaction. Adversaries of Lutheran Orthodoxy deny vicarious satisfaction. They teach that God just “up and forgave” before and without the blood of Christ. They teach that Christ did not accomplish atonement on the cross and that atonement only happens when someone believes a bloodless word of absolution.

In a series of studies, the author examines how those claims stand up against established witnesses to the teaching of the Lutheran church. Prior writings in the series brought forth the orthodox Lutheran teaching of vicarious satisfaction in the Lutheran confessions of the *Book of Concord*, in explanations of the *Small Catechism*, and in Lutheran hymns.

Next, we observe the witness of the liturgy to the Lutheran confession of vicarious satisfaction. The first essay about the liturgy laid a foundation of vicarious satisfaction in the Lutheran understanding of worship in general. Based on that foundation this essay moves onward to begin looking at the parts of the Divine Service.

The Divine Service joins three services:

1. Confession and Absolution
2. Service of the Word
3. Service of the Sacrament

In this essay we look at the Invocation in the Confession and Absolution. We are not making a complete or rounded study of the Invocation; we are focusing on the vicarious satisfaction in the Invocation.

The Invocation involves vicarious satisfaction chiefly through its connection to:

1. The sign of the cross
2. Baptism
3. The trinitarian nature of the atonement
4. The Name and presence of God

Specialness of the Name

The Invocation, though simple, is at the same time referential and complex. It refers to things. The number of those things is many. The many things connect with each other into a harmonized whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Though we can know enough to be wise unto salvation, truly we cannot comprehend all that the Invocation signifies.

The Invocation is an incomplete sentence, a prepositional phrase: “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Purportedly, it has no subject and no verb. It would seem on pure grammar that nothing is happening, and no one is doing anything. Yet it throbs God as divine subject and his mighty acts of salvation as robust verbs.

Jesus reveals the Name of the Trinity when commanding Baptism into the Name. Thus, the Invocation references God as baptizer baptizing. Luther preaches that in our baptisms, though the hand of the pastor applies the water and though the mouth of the pastor says the Word of God, Christ is present with his Name. He is as present as when He walked in Israel in the days of his first coming to earth. He, not the pastor, is the one baptizing.¹ Luther preached, “I am baptized in God’s water, not by some washing maid, not by Gabriel or by the pastor or bishop or pope, but by *God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*”² John said Christ “is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” (John 1:33; see also Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16)

The Triune Name acts like the name Jesus Christ. The angel of the Lord told Joseph, “You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is Greek for the Hebrew name Joshua. It means “Yahweh saves.” This is a complete sentence in a name. The subject, Yahweh, Jehovah, the LORD, or God, does an action. God saves. As a name, Jesus is referential. His name references all that He does to save. What He does is manifold. Thus, the name Jesus blossoms in its complex reference to his mighty work.

Christ is Greek for the Hebrew word Messiah. Both mean anointed or anointed one. Prophets were anointed. Priests were anointed. Kings were anointed. Each of those offices do acts of salvation. See how this one name, Christ, blossoms at least to the extent of three anointed offices. But a greater than Moses

¹ “Christ is present in Baptism; He does the baptizing.” Benjamin T. G. Mayes, “Introduction” in Martin Luther, *Martin Luther on Holy Baptism: Sermons to the People (1525–39)*, Benjamin T. G. Mayes, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018), xvi. “Christ is present in it, baptizing, and it is His Baptism.” Martin Luther, “Sermon on Holy Baptism (1539),” in Mayes, *Luther on Holy Baptism*, 106. “He is just as present in Baptism now as He was then,” when some brought infants to Jesus that He should touch them and bless them in Matthew 19:13–15, Mark 10:13–16, Luke 18:15–17. Martin Luther, “Infant Baptism and Faith That Is Not One’s Own (1525),” in Mayes, *Luther on Holy Baptism*, 8.

² Martin Luther, “Sermon on Holy Baptism (1539),” Mayes, *Luther on Holy Baptism*, 111–112 (emphasis added).

is here, a greater than Aaron is here, and a greater than Solomon is here, so even the richness of those offices is excelled in Christ.

The name Christ also blossoms into the Trinity, for the Father anoints the Son with the Holy Spirit, and without that, there is no anointing. Within time and space, this first happened when the Father conceived Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. The Father continues anointing. We see the Father anoint the Son with the Holy Spirit in Jesus' baptism. Here the harmonious circle forms again with Trinity, Incarnation, and Baptism.

God's Name is special like that. Thus, meditation upon the Invocation, though simple, will be referential and complex. Remove Baptism from the Triune Name and the Savior's name and their names cease to signify their persons and works. So, our meditation will trace the references in the Sign of the Cross, Baptism, the Trinitarian nature of atonement, and the Name and presence of God.

Many fine works have been published on God's names and how his names are different from what we, in our day and place, expect of names. In few syllables God's names pack in expansive arrays of meaning. If you wish to pursue that further, you might consider Kevin Golden, *Blessed Be His Name: Revealing the Sacred Names of God* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2021).

God's name is Himself, and his giving of Himself to us.

Sign of the Cross

Significance of the Sign and Words

From early times the sign of the cross accompanied all kinds of acts of devotion.

It is difficult to realize the hold which the sign of the cross has had upon popular imagination and life. Cyprian, Tertullian 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 and 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.³

Granted, by the time of the Reformation there was a reaction "against the excessive and superstitious use of the sign of the cross."⁴ But its use had not begun that way.

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.⁵

The sign and words together are:

- Simple yet comprehensive

³ Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy, a Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947). 253. [It has been noted that editions of *The Lutheran Liturgy* bearing the same copyright date have varying paginations. Vernon P. Kleinig, "Lutheran Liturgies from Martin Luther to Wilhelm Löhe," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62.12 (1988): 125–144, 129, n. 10.]

⁴ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 254.

⁵ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 253.

- Trinitarian
- A reminder of the saving passion and death of Christ and of the central significance of the sacrificial death of Christ.

Thus, we already can anticipate the connection of the Invocation with vicarious satisfaction in the sacrificial death of Christ.

The Invocation using the words of Matthew 28:19 as we do now is not found in the early liturgies, the services of the Greek churches, the services of the Anglican churches, nor in the Roman church. In the Roman church, the Invocation begins the priest's separate office of preparation before mass (and other occasional services),⁶ but even this did not appear until the 14th century.⁷

The Invocation is "a uniquely Lutheran contribution to the development of the Divine Service."⁸ It appears in the Strasburg Kirchenambt by Köpphel in 1524.⁹ "It appears that the Döber Mass Nürnberg (1525) is the source of this practice."¹⁰ The Nürnberg 1525 along with a few others are believed to be the source for the Invocation's appearance in the Common Service and subsequent hymns.¹¹ "The Lutheran Liturgy, at least in its German development, gave the Invocation a prominence and importance not found in the Roman Mass or any other liturgy."¹² "The Lutheran church orders give the invocation or take it for granted."¹³

What brought the Invocation, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," into the Divine Service? In *Companion to the Services*, Mark Surburg says:

These words, which were used as a blessing in various rites, most likely came into use here because of the presence of the sign of the cross that was already being used; in other words, the use of the sign of the cross preceded and attracted the Invocation.¹⁴

The connection of the Invocation with the Sign of the Cross immediately evokes the sacrificial death of Christ and his vicarious satisfaction for our sin. The words and the sign go together. As we have seen, in the non-excessive, non-superstitious use of the Sign of the Cross,

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.¹⁵

Together the Sign-Invocation, so to speak, is "a reminder of the saving passion and death of Christ and

⁶ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 252.

⁷ Mark P. Surburg, "Confession and Absolution in the Divine Service," in Paul J. Grime, ed., *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2022), 449. In the Roman church, an invocation of the Holy Spirit was used in Mass and was thought to be the moment of transubstantiation. In some Roman orders, a triune invocation appears at other times in the service.

⁸ Surburg, "Confession and Absolution," 450.

⁹ J. W. Richard and F. V. N. Painter, *Christian Worship: Its Principles and Forms*, 2nd rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1892), 229. See also William D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship: Its Development and Forms* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 88.

¹⁰ Surburg, "Confession and Absolution," 450, n. 107.

¹¹ Surburg, op cit., 450, n. 105.

¹² Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 254.

¹³ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 252. Cf. Roser: "The evidence simply does not support Luther Reed's assertion that, 'The Lutheran church orders give the Invocation or take it for granted.'" Timothy Roser, "From Invocation through Creed: A Historical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Service of the Word in the Common Service," Master of Sacred Theology Thesis, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, May 1, 1995, 8.

¹⁴ Surburg, "Confession and Absolution," *Companion to the Services*, 449.

¹⁵ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 253.

an emblem of the mercy of God.”¹⁶

Evangelical Liturgical Reform

As such, the Lutheran addition of the Invocation to the Divine Service has a distinctly evangelical character that coordinates with other evangelical reforms of the Mass.

Under the Papacy, the Roman church taught that the sacrifice of Christ atoned only for original sin and not for actual sins. The *Augsburg Confession* says:

At the same time the abominable error was condemned according to which it was taught that our Lord Christ had by his death made satisfaction only for original sin, and had instituted the Mass as a sacrifice for other sins [daily sins, both venial and mortal¹⁷]. This transformed the Mass into a sacrifice for the living and the dead, a sacrifice by which sin was taken away and God was reconciled. ... [F]aith in Christ and true service of God were forgotten.¹⁸

In was necessary for Luther to reform the Canon of the Mass to remove the many elements that smacked of man offering a sacrifice to God.¹⁹ He purified the evangelical character of the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper. The recovery of the Gospel impacted not only this part of the liturgy, but other parts. Just as Luther tied the Sacrament of the Altar to the cross, so also the Sign of the Cross and Invocation together commence the Divine Service on the evangelical footing of the full vicarious satisfaction of Christ for all sins.

Baptism

The Invocation recalls our Baptism and that the whole Christian life is a life of repentance and returning to our Baptism. In turn, Baptism is connected to the vicarious satisfaction.

In *Companion to the Services*, Surburg says:

Christians are baptized into the name of the triune God (Matthew 28:19) and receive the sign of the cross, which is marked upon them. The sign of the cross made during the Invocation declares that through Holy Baptism we have shared in the saving death of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3–5). The Invocation is a confession and reminder that God made us His own through Holy Baptism, when He placed His name upon us and rescued us from death and the devil.²⁰

Thus,

In those churches where the baptismal font is located at the back of the nave, the Confession and Absolution may be conducted in that location, underscoring absolution as a return to Baptism.²¹

¹⁶ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 253.

¹⁷ Alternate translation from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Readers Edition of the Book of Concord*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul Timothy McCain, Concordia Publishing House, 2006, 48.

¹⁸ Theodore G. Tappert, trans. and ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1959), Augsburg Confession, XXIV.21–23, 58; James L. Brauer, ed., *Worship, Gottesdienst, Cultus Dei: What the Lutheran Confessions Say About Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 57.

¹⁹ Bryan Spinks, *Luther’s Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass* (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove, 1982), Republished in 2020 by Synoptic Text Information Services, Inc.; Carl Fredrik Wisloff, *The Gift of Communion: Luther’s Controversy with Rome on Eucharistic Sacrifice* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964); Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship, an Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958).

²⁰ Surburg, “Confession and Absolution,” *Companion to the Services*, 450.

²¹ Surburg, “Confession and Absolution,” *Companion to the Services*, 451. Citing LC IV 74–75 and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), AE 36:124.

Trinity and Our Baptism

In the Divine Service, in the preparatory rite of Confession and Absolution, we begin with the Invocation: “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19) This reveals the Trinity. The name of God is singular: name, not names. The persons are three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ reveals this name of God in his commission to baptize into the Name. All by itself, this gives the Invocation trinitarian and baptismal significance.

Trinity and Christ’s Baptism

All four evangelists tie the Trinity to the Baptism of Christ.

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16–17)

And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:10–11)

Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21b–22)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:29–34)

John’s was a baptism of repentance. Jesus had no sin of his own for which to repent. John, therefore, tried to prevent Jesus’ from being baptized. But Jesus told him to allow it “to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus already was fully righteous, so for whom was He fulfilling all righteousness? He did this for us, to give us his righteousness.

Luther captured the primary meaning of his Baptism: “[Christ] accepted it from John for the reason that he was entering into our stead, indeed, our person, that is, becoming a sinner for us, taking upon himself the sins which he had not committed, and wiping them out and drowning them in his holy baptism (AE 51:315)²²

There we see the active obedience of Christ in his fulfilling all righteousness and “sins which he had not committed.” We see substitution in “into our stead, indeed, our person,” and in “for us.” We see satisfaction in “wiping them out and drowning them.”

²² The Lutheran Study Bible (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1582 n. 3:15. The citation to AE is to Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: American Edition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing Houses; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press; and Philadelphia: Fortress Press).

Baptism and the Cross

Recalling Christ's Baptism recalls the cross.

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." (Matthew 20:20-23)

Whereas their mother made the request, in answer to Jesus' question, "They said to Him, 'We are able.'" We shall see about their ability and his. Gethsemane reveals that the cup is the cross. (Matthew 26:39, 42, Mark 14:36)

In the ancient world, unknown thousands were crucified. Crucifixion was an important method of capital punishment particularly among the Persians, Seleucids, Carthaginians, and Romans from about the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. None of those atoned for even their own sin, let alone the sin of another, and let alone the sin of the whole world. The weight of Christ's cross was not the wooden crossbeam that Jesus carried until he couldn't. (Mark 15:21) The weight was the burden of sin that He carried for us to the finish. (John 19:30) In his suffering and humiliation for us, He could not carry the wood. But they, who declared, "We are able," could not carry the sin. Jesus carried the sin. That was the cup. That was the baptism.

Jesus said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25) In the Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus delivers to us his gift and testament of his cup, his Baptism, his blood. Luther says Baptism, "is like the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross." (LC 4.37)

Hearing the Invocation recalls Christ's cup of baptism, the cross, his bearing our sin, and his giving us the benefits of his atonement to us in the Lord's Supper.

Baptism, Name, and Remission of Sins

The Baptism of John was a baptism for the remission of sins. "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Mark 1:4) "John the son of Zacharias ... went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Luke 3:2b-3)

Christian Baptism is for the remission of sins. "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.'" (Acts 2:38) In the Nicene Creed we confess, "I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins."

Jesus makes the connection between his Name and the remission of sins during a post-resurrection appearance to his disciples.

He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46-47)

Martin Luther says in the *Large Catechism*,

Where God's name is, there must also be life and salvation. ... [I]n Baptism there is pure salvation and life. This is not through the water ... but through the fact that it is embodied in

God's Word and institution, and that God's name abides in it. (LC IV.27)

Hearing the Invocation of the Name recalls Baptism and the remission of sins.

Baptism and Exodus

The Exodus was, among other things, a type of Baptism.

All our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:2)

First, the blood of the Passover Lamb, then Baptism in the Red Sea, followed by “the same spiritual food” and “the same spiritual drink.” The “same” means that, as a type, the food and drink were the same as ours in the Lord’s Supper. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper at Passover. (Matthew 26:17–19; Mark 14:12–16; Luke 22:7–15) “He said to them, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’” (Luke 22:15)

Jesus associated his crucifixion with Passover. He said, ““You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” (Matthew 26:2) Indeed, his crucifixion was on the Preparation Day of the Passover. (John 18:28, 39; 19:14)

Paul says, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” (1 Corinthians 5:7) Jesus in the Passover Lamb. In connection with his Baptism, John called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29, 36)

John’s reference is not limited, however, to the Passover Lamb. Another outstanding type of the sacrifice of Christ happened when a lamb was substituted for Isaac, “Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’” (Genesis 22:8) John also “alluded to the scapegoat carrying the people’s sins away” on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16.²³ As to this, *The Lutheran Study Bible* notes:

Luth: “[The Son of God] says to me: ‘You are no longer a sinner, but I am, I am your substitute. ... All your sins are to rest on Me and not on you.’”²⁴

In the transfiguration, “Two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” (NKJV Luke 9:31) It is interesting that the word for “decease” that Luke uses is the same word the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses for “exodus.” But one need not have the Septuagint or even a Greek New Testament to see this. The English Standard Version renders the word as “departure” and provides a note that says: “Greek *exodus*.”

The death of Christ is our exodus, our way out of sin. Christ’s death is our exodus from death and entrance into the baptized life. Not too many people think of their deaths as accomplishments. But Moses and Elijah spoke of the death of Christ which He was about “to accomplish.” It accomplished vicarious satisfaction for our sins. He died bearing our sins and accomplished our salvation saying, traditionally, “It is finished” or “It is completed” (Lexham English Bible; The NET Bible Free, Second Edition), or “It has been accomplished” (The Literal Standard Version).

Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

²³ *The Lutheran Study Bible*, 1778 n. 1:29.

²⁴ *Ibid*, citing AE 22:167.

(Romans 6:3-4)

Hearing the Invocation recalls the Exodus, Baptism, and the death of Christ, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Baptism, Burial, and Resurrection

In Hebrew symbolics, being submerged under water was a sign of burial and rising out of water was a sign of resurrection to new life.

God destroyed all mankind except Noah and seven of his family by the waters of a flood. The world was buried under water. Those eight were carried through the waters by an ark to dry land and new life. (Genesis 6-8) This is Baptism, burial, and resurrection through the ark. Hence, the church architecture of naves.

The pharaoh who knew not Joseph spoke to the Hebrew midwives and said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.” (Exodus 1:16) When the midwives, shall we say, declined, then “Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, ‘Every son who is born [LXX to the Hebrews] you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.’” (Exodus 16:22) This would be death by burial under the waters of the river.

A man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river’s bank. (Exodus 2:1-3)

When the daughter of pharaoh came down to bathe in the river, “she saw the ark among the reeds.” (Genesis 2:5) She sent her maid to draw the ark from the water. When she opened the ark, she saw the child. She “called his name Moses, saying, ‘Because I drew him out of the water.’” (Exodus 2:10) The name Moses means “drawn out” or “drawn from water.” Here again is Baptism, burial, and resurrection through an ark.

So, Paul says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

Peter ties the baptism through Noah’s ark to Baptism and vicarious satisfaction.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:18-22)

Noah’s ark as type and our Baptism as antitype are well known from this passage.

But also observe the elements of vicarious satisfaction. Christ is “the just.” That references his righteousness by his active obedience. The just “for the unjust” and “for sins” reference substitution. Christ, the just, is the vicar (substitute) of the unjust, us sinners. “Suffered” and “put to death in the flesh” reference his passive obedience of suffering the Law’s penalty of death for sin. “Bring us to God,” and “good conscience toward God” reference satisfaction. “Once” also references satisfaction. Unlike the Levitical sacrifices and the Aaronic priesthood that did not make satisfaction and hence kept being repeated, Christ made his sacrifice once for all. It made full and final satisfaction, and therefore it was made once and not repeated.

Subtract vicarious satisfaction from the antitype and there would be no Christian Baptism.

Paul says,

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:11-14)

Here again, Paul shows the imagery of burial by immersion under water. See also in the passage the indissoluble bond between Baptism and vicarious satisfaction. Verses 14 (ESV) says, “Having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”²⁵ *The Lutheran Study Bible* note on this verse says,

2:14 *record...legal demands*. The debtor kept a handwritten bill of indebtedness; in this case, it is the record of all our violations of God's Law. This record is wiped away by Jesus' death on the cross.²⁶

The work of Christ on the cross was not merely to make a grand gesture of a free-floating general amnesty that results in atonement only if and when someone believes a bloodless word of absolution. No. Christ atoned there and then on the cross. Christ blotted out the judgment with his own blood. He cancelled the record of debt. He nailed that record to the cross, showing that it was exhausted and fulfilled in his death. My faith is not what blots out the judgment. Christ's blood blots it out. Faith does not cause justification but merely receives it. All this is tied to Baptism, and thus it all is tied to the Triune Name and referenced in the Invocation.

In the Lutheran church, we make no law about the mode of applying water in Baptism. Pouring or lavering is good because it shows the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:33, 10:45, Joel 2:28-32, Ezekiel 39:29, Isaiah 32:15) Sprinkling is good because it shows being sprinkled clean by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22). Immersion is good because it shows burial and resurrection, as Paul depicts in Romans and Colossians. Some of Luther's comments about this probably would surprise many Lutherans. In *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* he says:

Baptism [*Die Taufe*] is *baptismos* in Greek, and *mersio* in Latin, and means to plunge something completely under the water, so that the water covers it. Although in many places it is no longer customary to thrust and dip infants into the font, but only with the hand to pour

²⁵ NKJV: “Having wiped out the handwriting of [NKJV note 9, alt. “certificate of with its] requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

NASB: “Having canceled the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

NIV: “Having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.”

HCSB: “He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.”

ISV: “Having erased the charges that were brought against us, along with their obligations that were hostile to us. He took those charges away when he nailed them to the cross.”

LEB: “Having destroyed the certificate of indebtedness in ordinances against us, which was hostile to us, and removed it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.”

NET: “He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.”

²⁶ *The Lutheran Study Bible*, 2046 n. 2:14.

the baptismal water upon them out of the font, nevertheless the former is what should be done. It would be proper according to the meaning of the word *Taufe*, that the infant, or whoever is to be baptized, should be put in and sunk completely into the water and then drawn out again. ... This usage is also demanded by the significance of baptism itself. For baptism, as we shall hear, signifies that the old man and the sinful birth of flesh and blood are to be wholly drowned by the grace of God. We should therefore do justice to its meaning and make baptism a true and complete sign of thing it signifies.²⁷

If the word “baptize” itself, and the types of Baptism in the Old Testament (Noah’s ark, Moses’ ark, the cleansing of Naaman, etc.) are deemed insufficient to connect with the cross and vicarious satisfaction, then consider the sign of Jonah and Psalm 42. Jesus said,

An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:39–40)

He says again, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” (Matthew 16:4) So, then, let us look at that sign. Jesus’ words in themselves depict burial under water. But look at what Jonah says of it (Jonah 2:3):

For You cast me into the deep,
Into the heart of the seas,
And the floods surrounded me;
All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

“Into the deep.” “Into the heart of the seas.” “Floods surrounded me.” “All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.” These are Jonah’s words while experiencing the type which finds its antitype in Christ’s cross and burial.

In Psalm 42, hear Christ (v 7):

Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.

The psalmist, and I assert he prophetically for Christ, “talks like Jonah, who used similar language to describe his actual experience of sinking into the breakers and waves of the sea.”²⁸

The Invocation of God’s Name that recalls Baptism, the cross, and burial, all of which evokes vicarious satisfaction.

Baptism and Penance

As we have seen, Roman theology underestimated the atoning work of Christ. It taught that the sacrifice of Christ atoned only for original sin. This led to the need for further sacrifice to make satisfaction for actual sins. On that basis, the Mass was transformed from a sacrament to a sacrifice that the priests offer to God.

In similar fashion, Roman theology underestimated Baptism.

Although it purified a person from previous sins, if one was baptized as an infant (as most people of that time in Europe were) and if infants have no actual sins (as some people think), then Baptism would remove only original sin. That is to say, practically speaking, for most

²⁷ Martin Luther, *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* in AE 35.29

²⁸ Timothy E. Saleska, *Concordia Commentary: Psalms 1–50* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2020), 650.

people Baptism was seen as having no saving benefit.²⁹

This again led to the need for other satisfactions. Baptism “was a prerequisite for salvation, to be sure, but what would save a person would have to be something else, since Baptism applied only to past sins.”³⁰ Something besides the full vicarious satisfaction of Christ delivered in Word and Sacrament was seen to be needed. This manifested itself in many aspects of Roman theology. Luther preached,

For no sooner had we taken off the children’s shoes, and they had emerged from the blessed font, then they [the Papists] took it all away by this preaching: “You lost Baptism and soiled your christening gown long ago by sinning; so now you have to think about repenting of your sin and making satisfaction for it by fasting, praying, going on pilgrimages, and making endowments until you are reconciled to God and so return to His favor.”³¹

“For sins that might follow Baptism … one had to resort to the sacrament of penance”³² and the making of satisfaction in connection with penance. Roman theology separated penance from Baptism and made it into a distinct sacrament. Along with this were manifold abuses about how confession is to be made, what sort of absolution the priest would announce, and the works of satisfaction that a Christian had to do for forgiveness.

Luther did not discard the value of contrition and penitence, of course. But he correctly connected it to Baptism. Penance, rather than a free-standing sacrament requiring us to make satisfactions because of the deficiency of Baptism, is simply a return to the grace of Baptism³³ and the full vicarious satisfaction by the sacrifice of Christ.

Consistent with this, notice where Luther placed the Office of the Keys or Confession and Absolution in the *Small Catechism*. He located it with Baptism.

The “enriched” version of the *Small Catechism* that appeared in June 1529 offered “A Brief Way for Ordinary Believers to Confess before the Priest”; this was appended to the *Baptismal Booklet* in the German version, but was inserted already, right after the treatment of Baptism, in the Latin version.³⁴

Individual confession and absolution is properly placed between Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It marks the point where the *significatio* of Baptism is made specific, the daily drowning of the old man when the guilt is disclosed in the presence of a Christian brother, as well as the daily breaking forth of the new man, empowered by the divine absolution.³⁵

“Through repentance we partake once again of the saving power of Baptism.”³⁶ Luther preached,

Even if I fall from it, I am nevertheless baptized and am a Christian. I am baptized in God’s water, not by some washing maid, not by Gabriel or by the pastor or bishop or pope, but by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this washing is *consecrated and mingled with the blood of Christ*, the Son of God.”³⁷

²⁹ Mayes, “To the Christian Reader” in *Luther on Holy Baptism*, viii–ix.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Martin Luther, “Sermon on Holy Baptism (1534),” Mayes, *Luther on Holy Baptism*, 47–48.

³² Mayes, “To the Christian Reader,” xv.

³³ Albrecht Peters, *Commentary on Luther’s Catechisms: Confession and the Christian Life*, Thomas H. Trapp, trans. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 3–4.

³⁴ Peters, *Confession*, 4.

³⁵ Peters, *Confession*, 29.

³⁶ Mayes, “To the Christian Reader,” x.

³⁷ Martin Luther, “Sermon on Holy Baptism (1539),” Mayes, *Luther on Holy Baptism*, 111–112 (emphasis added).

The keys to the power of Baptism are the Word, the Name, and the blood of Christ. These are joined together. Since God places his Triune Name upon us in Baptism, and since Confession and Absolution are a return to Baptism, *ibi est*, the Invocation of the Triune Name of God is tied in our liturgy to the preparatory service of Confession and Absolution. “Together they [the Sign of the Cross and the Invocation] became the beginning of the *Confiteor*.³⁸ As might, then, be expected, “When the Invocation first appears as the only option for beginning the service, it occurs in rites that have a confession at the beginning of the service.”³⁹ It is all a tightly wrapped package.

Trinitarian Nature of Atonement

One of the most compact statements of the atonement in Scripture is in Hebrews 9:14.

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

We see the Father in “to God.” We see the Son in “Himself” which refers back in the sentence to “Christ.” We see the Holy Spirit in “the eternal Spirit.”

We see vicarious satisfaction, both Christ’s active obedience and his passive obedience, not for himself but for us. “Without spot” references the righteousness and merit of Christ in his active obedience. No one else has succeeded in living without spot. “The blood of Christ” references his passive obedience in suffering the Law’s penalty of death for sin. We see his mediation for us in “offered Himself” and the surrounding context in which this verse is part of an explanation of Christ as our High Priest. We see satisfaction in “cleanse your conscience” and “serve the living God.”

No other religion reveals God as triune, and thus no other religion can offer atonement by vicarious satisfaction. In any unitarian religion, there is no possibility of one divine person offering himself on our behalf to another divine person, and doing so through a third divine person, as only Christ Jesus can and does. Only with the Trinity is there any possibility of having a Mediator who can atone.

In other words, the revelation of God as triune is married to the revelation of Christ’s atonement by vicarious satisfaction. Thus, just as the Invocation recalls our Baptisms and Christ’s Baptism, it also recalls Christ’s substitutionary atonement for us.

The Name and Presence of God

Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:20) How can this be? The presence of the Lord strikes fear.

When Adam and Eve had fallen into sin, they were afraid. Adam said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10) At Bethel, “Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid.” (Genesis 28:17) At the burning bush,

He said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:5–6)

When Moses was on the mountain,

all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off. (Exodus

³⁸ Surburg, “Confession and Absolution,” *Companion to the Services*, 449.

³⁹ Surburg, *op cit.*, 450, n. 107.

20:18)

When Moses came down from the mountain, “Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.” (Exodus 34:30) “Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, because we have seen God!’” (Judges 13:22) Isaiah saw “the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.” He cried,

Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The LORD of hosts.

How, then, can we sinners survive the presence of God? How can we draw near to God?

[Christ] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. (Hebrews 7:24–27)

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19–22)

By his sacrificial blood, by his vicarious satisfaction, and by his eternal priesthood, Christ opened the new and living way for us to enter and draw near with confidence and full assurance of faith. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesian 2:13) Because we are baptized into his Name, we can gather in his Name and in his presence.

Sacrificial or Sacramental

Luther D. Reed sees the Invocation as a devotional act addressed to God⁴⁰ which would make it sacrificial rather than sacramental. He acknowledges, however, that others treat it as sacramental, “even Loehe.”⁴¹ Paul Zellere Strodach also takes a position directly opposite to Reed and gives plausible reasons.⁴² In *Companion to the Services*, Mark Surburg says,

A case can be made that the Invocation as used in the settings of LSB is the *formal beginning* of the congregation’s preparation for the Divine Service.

With this second understanding of the Invocation, its baptismal character comes to the fore. God placed His name upon His people in Holy Baptism. This leads us to see the Invocation as God’s action, similarly to how He placed His name upon His people in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 12:5, 21; 1 Kings 9:23; Ezra 6:12; Nehemiah 1:9). Speaking the Invocation while facing the congregation “serves to highlight the sacramental nature of the Invocation. Just as

⁴⁰ Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy, a Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947). 252, 254. [It has been noted that editions of *The Lutheran Liturgy* bearing the same copyright date have varying paginations. Vernon P. Kleinig, “Lutheran Liturgies from Martin Luther to Wilhelm Löhe,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62.12 (1988): 125–144, 129, n. 10. I cite page 252 in the edition given to me by my parents.]

⁴¹ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 254.

⁴² Paul Zeller Strodach, *A Manual on Worship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), 207.

God's name was placed on us at our Baptism, so is His name placed on us as we prepare to come into His presence." This makes the Invocation parallel to the Benediction, where, once again, God's name is placed on the congregation.⁴³

In my simple-minded understanding as a layman, because the Invocation has so much to do with Baptism, and because Baptism is a sacrament that Christ gives to us, not a sacrifice that we offer to God, without a lot of analysis, it seems obvious that the Invocation is sacramental. Having said that, as a confession of faith that, by our Baptism, we are in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy spirit, it has a sacrificial aspect. Reed himself say:

This discussion [of the Invocation] reveals the difficulties which arise in attempting to classify parts of the liturgy too mechanically. Some are not wholly sacramental, others not entirely sacrificial. There is a blending of these elements in some parts of the Service.⁴⁴

That happens in the Kyrie. We pray, "Lord, have mercy." At the same time as it is a petition for mercy it is a confession of faith that the Lord *has* mercy. Thus I will not deny a sacrificial aspect in the Invocation, but I continue to assert that there is a pronounced aspect of the sacramental in it. This is amplified by the fact that what is about to happen is the announcement of Absolution, which is decidedly sacramental and again tied to the vicarious satisfaction of Christ.

A Name Is Worth Thousands of Words

They say, "A picture is worth a thousand words." In the case of God's Name, a name is worth thousands of words. I said "thousands" because this essay is several thousand words. But really, "The Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" is worth more than that.

To the Hebrews, names meant more than they usually do among us today. We have seen, for one example, that Moses means "drawn from water." Parents gave their children names that insightfully revealed their story or character. As rich as that is, it does not begin to intimate how God views his Name.

Frequently in the Old Testament the word "Name" in reference to the Name of God means God himself. His Name is said to do things, including mighty acts of salvation. That is because his Name means Himself. In putting his Name on us in his gift of Baptism, he delivers to us all the rich benefits of his atoning sacrifice including forgiveness, life, salvation, peace, and the presence of God. As Jack D. Kilcrease put it so well in his doctoral dissertation later turned into a book, the atonement and justification are "the self-donation of God."⁴⁵

John says of one of his visions, "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads." (Revelation 14:1) The writing of the Father's name on our foreheads is based on the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion.

In another vision John saw that Christ "was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God." (Revelation 19:13) His name is The Word of God. Christ speaks. He is not silent. He gives himself to us in communication. And again, this is tied to his "robe dipped in blood."

In another of John's visions:

he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life,

⁴³ Surburg, "Confession and Absolution," *Companion to the Services*, 4551-452.

⁴⁴ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 254.

⁴⁵ Jack D. Kilcrease, *The Self-Donation of God: Gerhard Forde and the Question of Atonement in the Lutheran Tradition*, Dissertation, Marquette University (2009); Jack D. Kilcrease, *The Self-Donation of God: A Contemporary Lutheran approach to Christ and His Benefits* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5)

All these unimaginable blessings and blisses are tied to the Lamb and the writing of his Name on our foreheads. He already gave us his Name in our Baptisms. We recall all this at the beginning of the Divine Service with the Invocation “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Liturgy Your Friend

The Invocation is 16 words. Saying it takes about four seconds. The richness of what it signifies that we have seen in this essay (and there is more where that came from) is overwhelming. We cannot appreciate the expanse, the depth, and the eternity of what God gives us in his Name in four seconds. But the Church has wisely been using it for years. Thanks to repetition, you can appreciate something different each time, approaching over time a more complete appreciation of being baptized “in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Amen.