

The Epistle and Gospel Collects

In *The Lutheran Liturgy*, the Missal of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, there appears after the Propers for each Sunday, and some Feasts and Festivals, a Collect for the Epistle and a Collect for the Gospel. No rubrics are found in *The Lutheran Liturgy* governing their use. That leaves one to wonder three things: First, where did these Epistle and Gospel Collects originate? Second, do these Epistle and Gospel Collects have any kind of history among Lutherans, or were they just added by the Committee that completed that Missal? Third, if our diocese desires to utilize these Epistle and Gospel Collects how are they to be employed? Are they to be added as extra Collects before the Lessons? Are they to be a part of the special prayers added to the General Prayers of the Church? Or is there some other place in the Divine Service in which they may be placed? Answers will be provided for these questions.

I. The Origin

The origin of the Epistle and Gospel Collects stems from the desire of the Lutheran Reformers to establish a pure and evangelical Liturgy for use in their churches. As Martin Luther points out in his *An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg*, “The prayer, or collect which follows, if it is evangelical (and those for Sunday usually are), should be retained in its accepted form.”¹ Most of the Collects that were in use for the Sunday service were considered pure, however, the Collects for the Saints’ Days, had become corrupted with error, and with statements that were purely full of legend. It was not desired by Luther, or the other Reformers, to use Collects that did not find strong Scriptural warrant and authentic history. Luther translated the Latin Collects for the Sundays and Feast and Festivals into German

¹ *An Order of Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg*. 1523. Luther’s Works, Vol. 53. American Edition, page 23.

following the Latin text closely. He specified that the Collect should be chanted on the “F faut”² in a monotone, facing the altar. He added very few new Collects himself.

In addition to the translations of many of the historic Collects for the Sundays and Feast and Festival days, Collects of a longer form and related in theme to the Gospels were composed by various authors. Foremost among these were the Collects of Veit Dietrich, the friend of Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon, and pastor of St. Sebaldus’ Church in Nürnberg. Also prominent were the Collects of Johannes Mathesius, who compiled Luther’s *Table Talk*, and was first made rector (1532), and eventually deacon (1541), and then pastor (1545), of the gymnasium at Joachimsthal in Bohemia. Friedrich Lochner in his work *Der Hauptgottesdienst* in the section titled “*Die Collecte*” explains it in this way:

“The Reformation period found a wealth of ancient collects among which not a few were still pure. They took a number of them, rendered them into German, but continued using them side by side with the Latin collects. Nevertheless, out of the Lutheran Church herself came numerous collects. The most prominent of these are, of course, the ones of Veit Dietrich (1541) and Johann Mathesius (1568). The collects of Veit Dietrich are Gospel collects, also called ‘Text’ collects. Therefore, these were used exclusively by young people in schools or homes and were memorized.”³

Johannes Mathesius’ Collects were first published in the *Oestreich Kirchen Ordnung*, according to Dr. Paul Z. Strodach in *Collects and Prayers for Use in the Church*, a publication of the United Lutheran Church in America from 1935, that was developed by the Committee of the *Common Service Book* to serve as a companion to that hymnal. No remnant of this Kirchen Ordnung could be found,⁴ however, five of these Collects are published in *Collects and Prayers*

² The F faut is the F on the second line from the top of the bass clef.

³ Lochner, Friedrich. *Der Hauptgottesdienst der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*. Concordia Publishing House. St. Louis, MO. 1895. Page 140.

⁴ No Kirchen Ordnung with this title exists in any of the compilations of the Kirchen Ordnung. Richter’s volume only contains the Kirchen Ordnung from 1523 to 1542, and Sehling’s four volumes on the Kirchen Ordnung from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not list it.

for Use in the Church. Four of these Collects are for the Church's year, and one is for general daily work. The one for daily work reads:

“Almighty God, Who when Thou didst send forth man from Eden, didst command him to labor in the sweat of his brow: We acknowledge that all our toil and work are in vain without Thy blessing and aid; and we humbly beseech Thee to assist us patiently to fulfill our calling, and faithfully to accomplish our work, graciously enriching it with Thy blessing, in order that the labor of our hands may prosper and in thankfulness we may consecrate the fruits thereof to the spread of Thy Kingdom and the help of the needy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”⁵

The other four Collects are all focused on a particular day or season in the Church's year. There is one for New Year's Day, one for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord, one for *Reminiscere*, the Second Sunday in Lent, one for Maundy Thursday, and one for Eastertide. Here is the Collect for Eastertide from Johannes Mathesius to serve as an example:

“O Lord God, Heavenly Father, Who hast created us for immortality, and through the glorious resurrection of Thy Son dost nourish us unto eternal righteousness; Who hast sanctified us through Thy Spirit: We beseech Thee, bring the dawning of the everlasting Easter Day and take us safely through death and the grave to share in the everlasting inheritance of Thy joy in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our victorious Lord. Amen.”⁶

Veit Dietrich's Collects were written based off of the Gospel readings for the Church's year. They were written to teach the Christian faith to schoolchildren. These Gospel Collects were meant to be memorized by the schoolchildren, so that godliness might be ingrained in them. They were published in his work entitled *Summaria Christliche Lehr* (Summary of Christian Teaching). These Collects have been translated into English, and were included in *The Lutheran Hymnary*, the hymnal of the Norwegian Synods, published in 1913.⁷ More will be said about their use in that hymnal in the section on the history of the Epistle and Gospel Collects.

⁵ *Collects and Prayers for Use in the Church*. United Lutheran Church in America Publishing Board, 1935, page 100. Collect number 202.

⁶ *Ibid.*, page 172. Collect number 391.

⁷ See “Collects for the Church Year”, pages 45ff in *The Lutheran Hymnary*, 1913.

The Collects of Veit Dietrich included Collects for all four Sundays in Advent, the Nativity of our Lord, St. Stephen's Day, the Sunday after Christmas, New Year's Day, the Second Sunday after Christmas, the Epiphany of our Lord, all six Sundays after the Epiphany of our Lord, all three Sundays in Gesimatide, the first four Sundays in Lent (*Invocavit*, *Reminiscere*, *Oculi*, and *Laetare*), the Annunciation of our Lord, *Palmarum*, Maundy Thursday, the Resurrection of our Lord, Easter Monday, all six Sundays after Easter, the Ascension, Whitsunday, Whit-Monday, Holy Trinity, Collects for twenty-six Sundays after Trinity Sunday (there was not one for the Last Sunday after Trinity (Trinity 27)), All Saints' Day, and for A Day of Humiliation and Prayer.

The Collect for this past Sunday, *Quasimodogeniti*, reads:

“Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee, that of Thine, ineffable grace, for the sake of Thy Son, Thou hast given us the holy gospel, and hast instituted the holy sacraments, that through the same we may have comfort and forgiveness of sin: We beseech Thee, grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may heartily believe Thy word; and through the holy sacraments day by day establish our faith, until we at last obtain salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.”⁸

Veit Dietrich was inspired to write these Gospel Collects by Martin Luther. Following Luther's example in his *House Postils* of reading the full text of the Gospel reading before preaching the sermon, Veit Dietrich desired to focus the attention of the hearer upon the words of the Gospel reading, and therefore wrote his Gospel Collects to accompany the reading of the Holy Gospel, which the preacher was supposed to preach upon.⁹ There will be more on this in the section on the use of the Epistle and Gospel

⁸ Ibid. page 60.

⁹ Note that many of the Church Orders of the 16th and 17th century *require* the preacher to preach on the Gospel reading during the Chief service of the day. Preaching on other texts were allowed at other services, such as Matins and Vespers. And at the Catechetical service, which happened in the cities either at Noon or 1 p.m. on Sundays, the preacher was to instruct the children (“the boys”) through sermons on the six chief parts of Luther's Small Catechism.

Collects. This idea of Veit Dietrich, that arose from Luther's practice, was adopted by many other Lutheran churches and provinces. Their use was even further expanded as we shall see in the next section.

II. The Practice

From their introduction into the churches of the Reformation by Veit Dietrich, the use of Gospel (or Text) Collects developed into two main practices. The first practice was that the Gospel Collects that Veit Dietrich wrote were used as replacements for the historic Collects in some places. The second practice was the development of their use as prayers that would be used either before the sermon, after the sermon, or before *and* after the sermon. We will address both of these practices in turn.

Dr. Luther Reed in his work *The Lutheran Liturgy* states that the Gospel Collects of Veit Dietrich eventually "supplanted the historic Collects said before the Epistle in the Danish Church."¹⁰ Reed also states that most of the Collects of Mathesius, who wrote a total of 147 Collects, were incorporated into the 1571 Church Order of the Lutheran Church of Austria. Of Mathesius' 147 Collects, 111 were used as the Collect of the Day before the Lessons.¹¹ This summarizes one practice regarding the Epistle and Gospel Collects: they replaced the historic Collect in the churches of Denmark and Austria. The more common use of the Epistle and Gospel Collects follows. Or, to be precise, the use of the Gospel Collects; the Epistle Collects came much later.

Veit Dietrich envisioned the Gospel Collects to be prayed from the pulpit either before or after the sermon. These Collects, which were memorized by the children (and the hope was that

¹⁰ Reed, Luther D. *The Lutheran Liturgy: A study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*. Muhlenberg Press. Philadelphia, PA. 1947. Page 271.

¹¹ *Ibid.* page 271.

when the children grew to adulthood, they would retain the memory of these Collects) and they would pray along with the preacher the Collects, either silently to themselves or out loud depending on the particular Church order. This was meant to further drive home the meaning of the text of the Gospel and the preaching of the pastor on that text. There are several examples of this.

Friedrich Lochner in his *Der Hauptgottesdienst* in the chapter titled “*Die Predigt*” writes,

“In keeping with what Luther wrote in the *House Postil* a customary usage arose for reading the text and for the sermon. That usage was an exhortation to prayer for a fruitful encounter with the Word, which ended in the Our Father and which in some places the preacher recited, and in some places members of the congregation prayed silently with him. Later the custom arose of either reading the text or reciting Our Father or [praying it] silently, or of singing a *de tempore* hymn before the Our Father.”¹²

In this we see explained the practice of praying the Collects before the sermon, when the preacher read the Gospel text, and also the praying of the Our Father, or a hymn based on the text of the day or season. All this was meant to further ingrain in those who attended the preaching the particular theme of the day and the words of the Gospel.

These Gospel Collects were also used as prayers after the sermon to collect the thoughts of the preacher so that congregation would benefit further from what they just heard. An example of this can be found in the sermons of Johann Gerhard in his *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ*. At the end of each sermon in that book is a Collect that summarizes the preaching on the particular text. As an example, here is the Collect from his sixth sermon on the fourth part, dealing with our Lord stating, “I thirst” and His giving up His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father:

“O Lord Jesus Christ, may Your thirst which You endured on the cross quench the thirst of my soul and protect me from the eternal thirst; may Your perfect

¹² Lochner, Friedrich. *Der Hauptgottesdienst der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*. Concordia Publishing House. St. Louis, MO. 1895. Page 184.

atoning sacrifice, which You accomplished on the cross, be a comfort to my soul; give me grace that my soul thirst for You, the Fountain of Life; and, grant that I may commend my soul into Your hands at the hour of death. Amen.”¹³

From this we see the practice of praying a Collect from the pulpit, out loud, after the sermon. Another example of this is that the Gospel Collects of Veit Dietrich also found their way into the service books of the Swedish churches. The Gospel Collects were prayed by the pastor from the pulpit after the sermon.¹⁴ Olavus Petri also published a *Postil* in 1530 which gave instructions on how to preach, and what should come before and after the sermon.¹⁵ So then, we now have two practices surrounding the use of the Collects in relation to the sermon. In some places, they were prayed before the sermon, and in the Church of Sweden and other places they were prayed after the sermon.

In still other places, the practice was for the preacher to pray a Collect before *and* after the sermon from the pulpit, out loud, either with the congregation, or by himself the congregation praying silently with him. A detailed example of this is found in the Pomeranian Agenda of 1535 attributed to Johann Bugenhagen. Before the sermon the following ceremony is to be observed: First, “When the Gospel text is being read and people are walking out the church, the preacher shall earnestly exhort, chastise, and correct them so that this wicked and vexing habit, insofar as possible, may be suppressed throughout the whole community, especially among Church and School personnel.”¹⁶ Next, “After the Sermon comes the admonition of the congregation to congregational prayer for the whole of Christendom and for all sorts and conditions of men; and

¹³ Gerhard, Johann. *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Reprinted by Repristination Press. Malone, TX. 1999. Page 289.

¹⁴ Reed, Luther D. *The Lutheran Liturgy: A study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*. Muhlenburg Press. Philadelphia, PA. 1947. Page 271.

¹⁵ The Lutheran Liturgical Association. *Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association*. “The Swedish Lutheran Liturgies”, Vol. 2. Pittsburgh, PA. 1906. Page 19.

¹⁶ *Die Pommersche Kirchen-Ordnung und Agenda*. 1535. *Ceremonien*, page 78.

this prayer is closed with the Our Father.”¹⁷ Then, “Before the pastor leaves the pulpit, he shall frequently throughout the year [*oft des Jahrs*] exhort the people to remain in the church for communion, and he shall implore God to keep His catholic Church faithful to His holy Word and to a right use of the Sacraments among us [*bei uns*] and thereby sanctify and govern many elect hearts.”¹⁸ And then, “After that, when the preacher exits [the pulpit], he shall have a psalm sung in German that is in accordance with [*überein kommt*] the day or season [*mit der Zeit*] and the [proper] Gospel, or [he shall have] the Our Father sung or the Ten Commandments.”¹⁹ This is the ceremony governing the prayers before and after the sermon by the pastor and congregation while the pastor is in the pulpit.

Note that the congregation is exhorted and admonished both before and after the sermon to attend to the sermon and the Sacrament. Apparently, there was a common practice of people leaving the church either during the sermon or before the Lord’s Supper. It was seen as part of the pastor’s duties to admonish the people to stay and hear God’s Word expounded by the pastor, and to avail themselves of the opportunity to receive the Lord’s Body and Blood and thereby receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. These Collects and Exhortations were meant as a tool to impress upon the congregation the importance of God’s Word, so that they might take it to heart, and thereby grow in faith toward God, and produce fruits worthy of faith.

The Pomeranian Agenda even explains further on in the work from where this practice originated. In the section titled, “Form of the Congregational Prayer, Before and After the Sermon”²⁰ it writes, “In Doctor Martin Luther’s *House Postil*, Viet Dietrich has put, at the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. The Ten Commandments here refers to Luther’s hymn based on the Ten Commandments, “That Man a Godly Life Might Live” TLH 287.

²⁰ Ibid. page 322.

beginning and at the end of that book, how one can exhort the people to [prayer], and the preacher can follow, that same form.” It then goes on to give a full example of how this ceremony should be used “For the further instruction of those who need a primer.”²¹

“The Congregational Prayer before the sermon. ‘Dear Christians, we are gathered here in the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ to hear the holy divine Word as we have God’s command that we should pray to the Holy Ghost; therefore pray [*bettet*] from the heart to God the heavenly Father that He, through Christ our Savior [*Rittler*], would give the Holy Ghost to make God’s Word powerful in our hearts, to lead us into all truth, [and that the Holy Ghost would] teach, enlighten, govern, comfort, and sanctify [us] to eternal life. Therefore say [*saget*], ‘Our Father...’”

“Another one. ‘Dear friends in the Lord Christ, in order that we might profitably study and hear the holy divine Word; that God’s Name in us [and that] His Kingdom [may] come to us, grow and increase in us [and that] His holy will be done by us, [and that] the devil’s will, [and] the world and our flesh thereby be mortified [*zerstöret*]; therefore we, by God’s command and gracious promise through Christ, pray to the Holy Ghost to empower God’s Word in us: Therefore pray [*bettet*] from your hearts through Christ, saying, ‘Our Father...’”

“Another one. ‘Dear devout [people] in Christ, let us pray to the Holy Ghost [that He] if His divine Word lead us into all truth, sanctify our hearts to true knowledge and fear of God, that we may hear His divine Word to pious learning, confidence, and edification [*Verbesserung*] and through that same power in the faith of Jesus Christ [that we may] live eternally, in Whose Name say [*saget*], ‘Our Father...’”

“Reminder. In such prayer, the preacher can also look at the Text [for the day] that he wants to preach on and, using the occasion of the feast day, choose that same source (the text for the day) and ending to exhort the Christian congregation from the Word of God to pray for grace to the Holy Ghost.”²²

Thus, we see an example of how before the sermon from the pulpit the pastor was to exhort the congregation to prayer, in order that they might ask the assistance of the Holy Ghost that they might listen to the sermon intently and thereby receive the benefits from hearing his preaching on the Word of God.

Next is given an example of the Collect and Exhortation after the sermon from the pulpit by the pastor:

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. pages 322-323.

“The Congregation’s Prayer after the Sermon. ‘[My dear friends in the Lord Christ], (after) having heard the holy divine Word, therefore now, according to God’s command and fatherly promise, we make our common Christian prayer; and firstly to give thanks to God our Father in Heaven for all His mercy and benefits, especially for sending His Beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world for us and establishing the same [Lord Jesus Christ] as Mercy Seat [*Gnadenthron*] and Savior, and through His saving Word has revealed the same; and has established His Kingdom among us through the Gospel and the holy Sacraments, and has sent the Holy Ghost and eternal life to all the faithful, and therewith [along with those things] diverse temporal [*fleischlich*] and spiritual gifts [both] here and in eternity or in this world and the world to come [*zeitlich und ewiglich*] and daily showers us with gifts, for which we give thanks to Him; for all which we thank Him and owe Him laud and praise.

‘But I admonish [you] all in the Lord, that each one go into his [own] heart, [and] recognize his many and gross sins, to which we are born [and] wherein all have sinned [and] done ill and wrong by transgressions against God’s Commandments [and] against God and neighbor with wicked desires, thoughts, words, and deeds by which we have awakened God’s righteous anger against us and daily have deserved nothing but sheer [*eitel*] anger, punishment, and damnation.

‘But God is merciful, longsuffering, and of great mercy, and He does not gladly punish sin, as He says in His divine oath: “As surely as I live, I desire not the death of sinners, but rather that they turn [from their wickedness] and live”; therefore let everyone in their hearts repent themselves of their sins and misdoings, and confess to the Lord their trespasses, and pray God the Father to forgive them their sins by His mercy and for the sake of His beloved Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and that He take not His Holy Ghost from them, [but] that He would create in them clean hearts, [and that] He would turn from us His divine wrath and [our] well-deserved punishment and show us His eternal mercy.

‘Further, pray for the needs of all Christendom [*der ganzen Christenheit*], for all sorts and conditions of men; that the Almighty and Merciful God would establish [*wolle*] the Kingdom of His dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, [and] mercifully preserve [us]; destroy Satan’s kingdom; [that He would] not take from us His holy divine Word because of our great thanklessness and wickedness, but rather that He would purify the same [thanklessness and wickedness] and increase it [the purified will] in us for the sake of His most holy Name; that He would preserve the preaching office in pure teaching, and perform the same for the right use of the most holy Sacraments; to bless us with godly unity and Christian discipline [*Ordnung*]; to give us faithful teachers of the Gospel and govern them with His Holy Ghost and clothe them with righteousness and that through their lives God’s Name be praised.

‘Pray [*bettet*] that God would be pleased [*wolle*] to accompany His Word with His Holy Ghost and grant that the Word increase in our hearts, and to increase faith in us; to bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; to turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Word and His Name to grant succor to all heavy hearts and to those who are heavy-laden or imprisoned that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not

to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

‘That the Almighty, Most Merciful God might suppress the outrages of the Antichrist in the Papacy, suppress the Turks and all sects and banditry; that He would prevent and correct all disunity, disorder, and all offenses in the catholic [*christlichen*] Church; that He would deliver His poor Christendom from all false teaching, apostasy, error, disunity, disorder, persecution, and tyranny; that He would bring to naught the crafts and assaults of the enemy; that He would bless and preserve the churches and schools with wholesome Christian discipline [*Ordnung*]; that He would beat down Satan under our feet; that His heavenly [Kingdom] may come and His Name be hallowed and praised.

‘Let us hope and pray for the temporal authorities, for [both] rulers and subjects: May the Lord God grant peace and concord to our emperor, kings, princes, and all in authority; for the confession of divine truth; for good and peaceable Christian government; for the blessing of success against the Turks and all our enemies, and against all those who resist God’s Kingdom and [the] general peace and order; and for all those [inadvisedly] counseled to engage in strife or warfare, that the Lord would guide their feet into the way of peace.

‘Especially pray for our dear rulers in this land; for the noble, princely house of Stettin and Pomerania together with the whole province; for all conditions of men, [for] nobility, cities, [and] for this city, [both] rulers and subjects; [for] city-dwellers and country folk in all places; may God bless them body and soul, and keep them in godly and peaceful comity [*Regiment*], and may He grant them the Holy Ghost, wisdom, and obedient subjects. May He, through the Holy Ghost, grant to all conditions of men to love God’s Word; may the administrators of churches and schools undertake their duties with seriousness and steadiness, and may they be true to their oaths and duties to administer law and justice, to seek peace and pursue it, and to protect and relieve all distressed persons, the poor, the forlorn, widows, orphans, and schoolmasters; and may God mercifully spare us from discord and contentions, and may He deal not with us after our sins, but rather according to His great mercy.

‘Pray for the regulation of homes. May the Lord be pleased to preserve the holy estate of matrimony with God-pleasing modesty and true fear of God by all persons, old and young, especially children and servants in all dutifulness, honorably and obediently to live and be brought up. Also, that the merciful God would provide their daily bread to every person; give seasonable weather and turn aside all damaging storms. The fruits of the earth to bless and protect. Show His mercy to us all that we with thankfulness, and to the praise of His Name, may use His divine gifts in the fear of the Lord and to the praise of His Name. Commend all pregnant and nursing women, all sick persons, and all who travel by land or by sea to the gracious Lord’s divine protection; all who are in danger or distress of body or soul, of life or property, and all who need His divine protection: May God the Father show Himself present with them by merciful consolation and help. And deliver from distress us and all who call upon the Name of His only Son our Savior Jesus Christ. With His holy angels to protect and defend us from the devil and from all evil so that we, with the whole of Christendom, may eternally thank God the

heavenly father through Jesus Christ His Son, in the Holy Ghost, for all His boundless goodness and lovingkindness. Therefore, lift up your hearts to God, saying, Our Father....’

“This form is given here that the parish administrators and preacher hereby might be reminded of the general necessities of all Christendom. According to the occasion, they may use this very form or whatever a given occasion might demand.”²³

The congregation is once more exhorted, after the sermon, to prayer by the pastor from the pulpit. Note that “the parish administrators and preacher” were to use this form so that they “might be reminded of the general necessities of all Christendom” and thereby remind the congregation of all of the needs of all of Christendom. They were also given the freedom to use whatever form might best fit the occasion. The praying of the Epistle and Gospel Collects would fit into this category.

Another example is from the Church Order of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel from 1569 attributed to Martin Chemnitz and Jakob Andreas. Regarding the practice before the sermon it states:

“Thereupon follows the sermon. And the Gospel of the Sunday or festival shall be read once again to the people, and then explained for approximately one hour using Christian exposition, which is of service for edifying the church and comforting and improving those who hear. Moreover, so that hearers may learn and retain something specific from the sermon, preachers shall, at the beginning, divide their sermon into several sections which they intend to discuss and address. They shall then repeat and explain these points, and at the conclusion of the sermon briefly rehearse them and bring them to the hearers’ mind. This not only helps the hearers to learn and retain something specific from the sermon but also causes preachers to study all the more diligently beforehand and to confine themselves to treating specific topics and not simply to pile up words however they come to mind.

“But before the sermon, the priest may exhort the people to pray as Christians, that God would give them the Holy Spirit to treat His Holy Word profitably and to take it to heart, that they might amend their sinful lives, obtain comfort and strengthening of their faith, and thereafter live in a Christian and blessed manner. Thereupon an Our Father shall be spoken or *Nu bitten wir den*

²³ Ibid. Pages 323-327

*heiligen Geist*²⁴ be sung. But during Christmastide: *Ein Kindelein so lübelich*,²⁵ etc. And during Eastertide: *Christ ist erstanden*,²⁶ etc.²⁷

The admonition is again to be put forth by the pastor to the congregation that the Holy Ghost would open their hearts and ears to hear the holy Word, and thereby “obtain comfort and strengthening of their faith.”

After the sermon the following was to take place:

“At the conclusion of the sermon, the ministers of the church shall always briefly remind the people not to cast into the wind the preaching of the Word of God which they have heard, but immediately to appropriate it, each for himself, for repentance, true faith, and conversion. Then the minister shall lead the people in the following general confession, and likewise absolve the penitent but proclaim God’s earnest wrath upon the impenitent.”²⁸

After this Public Confession and Absolution then followed:

“Thereupon the people shall once more be exhorted to pray and to give thanks to God collectively for the preservation of the whole Church of God and the true doctrine, and for faithful and true teachers, that God would send out faithful laborers into His harvest [Matt. 9: 38]. They shall pray for the authorities, temporal peace, and the increase of the fruits of earth, and, in summary, for the needs of the whole Church and of particular persons who desire Christian prayer, a rough example of which is indicated in the following.”²⁹

Then would follow an Exhortation similar to the one published in the Pomeranian Agenda, which we looked at above. After that, the following rubrics are given:

“Whenever something occurs for which special petitions should be made—such as for particular persons who are sick, for women who are in labor, and for whatever other needs and concerns of the land or of particular persons that may arise—these shall also be added to this general prayer with a few words.

“Additionally, preachers shall take care to exhort the people gladly to resort to communal prayer when they have concerns. And when the prayer has been answered, and they are delivered from the indicated concerns, they should not

²⁴ “We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost” TLH 231

²⁵ “To Us Is Born a Blessed Child” Found in *The Lutheran Hymnary* (1913) #189

²⁶ “Christ Is Arisen” TLH 187

²⁷ Chemnitz, Martin and Andreae, Jakob. *Church Order of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel*. 1569. Reprinted by Concordia Publishing House. St. Louis, MO. 2015.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

withhold their thanks from the minister of the church, so that God may also be thanked publicly by many people.

“This prayer shall be offered after the sermon has ended and not between the reading of the Gospel and its exposition, so that the people will much better retain the content of the Gospel after it is read and not be brought by the prayer to forget it and entertain other thoughts. An exception to this is when a woman is in labor or someone else is in the throes of death and requests communal prayer. Then a special intercession may be offered before the general prayer, or after the reading of the Gospel, since in this case even a slight delay could be detrimental.

“The preacher shall at times also exhort the people to remain in church during the general prayer and Communion.

“When the prayer after the sermon has ended, those who desire to go to Communion shall immediately approach the chancel and kneel.”³⁰

Then follows several examples of Exhortations that can be used, much like the ones above in the Pomeranian Agenda.

This should suffice for examples. However, similar instructions are given in other *Kirchen-Ordnung*. These practices fell out of use in some places and took on a different character and use in others. We will look at that now.

III. The History

Now that we have seen examples of how these Collects were used, let us look at how they were employed throughout the years after the time of the Reformation up to our present day. Specifically let us look at their use in hymnals of the Twentieth and Twenty-First centuries.

E. K. Johnson writes in his paper “The Liturgy of the Norwegian Lutheran Church,” found in the *Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association*, when discussing the structure of the liturgy in the Norwegian Church writes, “*Sermon*, preceded by a Prayer from the Pulpit and closed with the *Gloria Patri*.”³¹ This practice of prayer from the pulpit after the sermon was also seen in the Swedish Lutheran Church liturgy. This practice was further developed in 1614 under

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The Lutheran Liturgical Association. *Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association*. “The Liturgy of the Norwegian Lutheran Church”, Vol. 7. Pittsburgh, PA. 1906. Page 44.

the authority of Gustavus Adolphus in the Church of Sweden when he commissioned an updated Church Order for use in the Swedish Lutheran Churches. The rubrics outlined for the sermon are very similar to Chemnitz's Church Order. "*The Sermon*, preceded by a Swedish Hymn, is closed with prayers, and a new Confession of Sins is given here to be used at the minister's pleasure."³² The Confession is a translation of the one given in the Brandenburg-Nuremberg Church Order, 1533. The 1614 Swedish Liturgy goes on to say, "These prayers in the pulpit close with the *Lord's Prayer* and a Swedish Hymn sung by the congregation."³³

Moving into the Twentieth century we find that the list of Gospel Collects was retained by the Norwegian Lutheran Churches. This is seen in their hymnal *The Lutheran Hymnary* (1913). It is evident from the research, that Veit Dietrich's Gospel Collects enjoyed popularity in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. It makes sense then, that the Norwegian Lutherans in America would seek to preserve their use. Obviously, Veit Dietrich wrote his Gospel Collects in the German language. These were translated into English by the Committee that was in charge of the Collects for *The Lutheran Hymnary*. The rubrics given for the use of the Collects is: "The first Series of Collects is to be used with the first Service; the second Series, together with the Introit, to be used with the second or Common Service."³⁴ The first Series of Collects are the Gospel Collects of Veit Dietrich. When used in this service it replaces the historic Collect. The Collects in the second Series are the historic Collects and would be used in the "Common Service" or Holy Communion.

³² The Lutheran Liturgical Association. *Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association*. "The Swedish Liturgies", Vol. 2. Pittsburgh, PA. 1906. Page 23.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod, The Hauge's Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and The United Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. *The Lutheran Hymnary*. Augsburg Publishing House. Minneapolis, MN. 1913. Page 45.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) also preserved the Gospel Collects of Veit Dietrich in their hymnal *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (1996). They also list the historic Collects with the Veit Dietrich Collects. The rubrics listed under *The Sermon* in *The Divine Service, Rite One*, state,

“The pastor may introduce the sermon with a prayer. After the prayer he may greet the congregation with an apostolic greeting (Romans 1:7^[35]), announce and read the sermon text, and conclude with the brief prayer of John 17:17^[36]. Following the sermon he may close with the *Gloria Patri*. He shall then pray the prayer of the Church.

“On Festival days the following order may be observed. He may introduce the sermon with a prayer for the day. Before reading the text he shall deliver an exhortation (*exordium*) explaining the festival. The congregation shall sing the festival verse or hymn. The usual order then shall follow.”³⁷

Which is all very similar to what we have shown above in the Pomeranian Agenda and the Church Order of Martin Chemnitz.

That brings us to the Epistle and Gospel Collects that are in *The Lutheran Liturgy* the Missal of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. They are not from Veit Dietrich. Nor are they from Johannes Mathesius. So, what is their source? They come from the English Synod of Missouri and Other States, which later became the English District of the LCMS. They were originally published in *Liturgy and Agenda* (1916), and a second edition was published in 1921. They were printed after the Introit and the historic Collect. Unfortunately, just like in *The Lutheran Liturgy*, no rubrics are given in this work governing their usage. However, as we can see from above there is an established usage among Lutherans for these Collects. They either replaced the historic Collect,

³⁵ “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (NKJV)

³⁶ “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (NKJV)

³⁷ The Worship Committee of The Evangelical Lutheran Synod. *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. MorningStar Music Publishers, Inc. St. Louis, MO. 1996. Page 48.

or were attached either before or after (or before and after) the Sermon. From this we can determine how best to utilize them in our diocese if we desire.

We set out at the beginning to determine what were the origin, history and practice governing the Epistle and Gospel Collects. In summary, the Collects developed first out of the need to find Collects that taught the pure Gospel, and so many new Collects were written. Then, from the practice that Martin Luther established in his *House Postils* of reading the text before the sermon, Veit Dietrich wrote Gospel Collects to be learned in the schools, and this practice grew into use of both prayers and exhortations before and after the sermon in many *Kirchen-Ordnung*, or were used to replace the existing, historic collects, such as was done in the churches of Denmark and Austria. The Epistle and Gospel Collects found in *The Lutheran Liturgy* developed from this history. It is the recommendation of the author to use these Collects in relation to the sermon, either before or after, as they have been used by our Lutheran forefathers, if they are to be retained in our diocese.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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