Praise for Preaching Is Worship

Too often homiletics speaks of the sermon as a stand-alone “event.” The preachers and scholars in Preaching Is Worship remind us well that the sermon is part of the whole “work of the people.” It is Word and Sacrament. It is prayer, praise and proclamation. Readers will find in this collection of essays diverse theological proposals and practical advice for shaping the sermon better in relation to the whole of Christian liturgical practice.

Rev. Dr. O. Wesley Allen Jr.
Associate Professor of Homiletics and Worship, Lexington Theological Seminary

Over the centuries Lutherans have been among those who have been particularly careful to recognize the centrality of preaching to Christian worship. With prayer, praise, and Sacrament, the reading and preaching of Scripture should be at the heart of Christian worship. To be sure, this was one of the major contributions of Martin Luther himself. It is encouraging to discover that this reform is honored even today.

Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old
Erskine Theological Seminary

This remarkable volume succeeds in reuniting preaching and liturgy, two subjects that in recent years have wandered down separate hallways in the academy. Readers from various traditions will benefit from engaging the richly textured theological thought of these Lutheran scholars as they discuss topics from preaching as sacrament and liturgy as Word of God to the visual arts and the church in the world. These essays are insightful and often inspiring for both the theology and practice of worship.

Rev. Dr. Paul Scott Wilson
Professor of Homiletics, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Here is a stimulating book of essays and commentary on the proclamation of the Word as an act of worship of the living God. Here we find a most fruitful linkage of the roles of pastor and priest and the church’s acts of preaching and worship. Too often we have focused upon preaching as speech delivered to a congregation; in this book we find due consideration to the sermon as an offering to a God who has so graciously offered Himself to us.

Will Willimon
Bishop, the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church
More Praise for Preaching Is Worship

In preaching, context is everything. This compilation of insightful essays sheds helpful light on many contexts. From culture to confession, from liturgy to life, these environmental factors can wreak havoc on a sermon, taking it over. Wise is the preacher who tethers himself to the Word of God while being stretched by the demands of the itchy world around him. The authors behind this volume, fellow journeyman preachers all, help us live in the tension without snapping the Gospel’s scriptural lifeline.

Rev. Dr. Scott K. Seidler
Senior Pastor, Concordia Lutheran Church, Kirkwood, Missouri

These essays are a treasure for the liturgical preacher. The first essay by Dale Meyer is a gem and is well worth the price of the book. Meyer asserts that while the sermon is framed by the context of the liturgy, the sermon has eyes into the lives of the hearers that the liturgy does not. These essays will open the eyes of the preacher to new pearls for preaching.

Rev. Dr. Gilbert J. Duchow
Retired LCMS pastor, Church Worker Caregiver for the Ohio District
Frequent contributor to Concordia Pulpit Resources

Preaching has multiple contexts—the theological tradition, the local congregation, and the wider world among them. The most usual context is liturgical worship. Preaching occurs in an assembly gathered for the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. In many and various ways the contributors to this volume explore the ramifications of this setting for the sermon. Like the Christian scribe in Matthew 13, the editors have brought out of their treasure contributions that are new and old. The inclusion of the classic essay “Liturgy and Spiritual Awakening” by the late Bishop Bo Giertz adds immensely to the value of this project. The contributors to this book offer worthwhile counsel that should be received gratefully by all who engage in this most essential task of the minister of the Word.

Rev. Dr. Frank C. Senn
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Evanston, Illinois
The Sermon in Context
Second Edition of Liturgical Preaching: Contemporary Essays

Edited by Paul J. Grime and Dean W. Nadasdy
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Bo Giertz
The Rev. Kent J. Burreson, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Assistant Dean of the Chapel at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Rev. William M. Cwirla, STM, is senior pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Hacienda Heights, California.

The Rev. Ronald R. Feuerhahn, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Rev. Carl C. Fickenscher II, PhD, is Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He is the editor of *Concordia Pulpit Resources*.

The Rev. Bo Giertz was a bishop in the Church of Sweden.

The Rev. Charles A. Gieschen, PhD, is Professor and Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He is the assistant editor of *Concordia Theological Quarterly*.

The Rev. Paul J. Grime, PhD, is Dean of the Chapel and Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The Rev. Dale A. Meyer, PhD, is the tenth president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Rev. Dean W. Nadasdy, DLit, is senior pastor of Woodbury Lutheran Church, Woodbury, Minnesota.
The Rev. John Arthur Nunes has served as president and CED of Lutheran World Relief (LWR), a $35 million global organization, since 2007.

The Rev. David J. Peter, DMin, is Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Rev. Robert C. Preece, DMin, is senior pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas, and first vice president of the Texas District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The Rev. David R. Schmitt, PhD, holds the Gregg H. Benidt Memorial Chair in Homiletics and Literature at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

The Rev. James A. Wetzstein, MDiv, is University Pastor at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana.

The Rev. Kenneth W. Wieting, DMin, is pastor of Luther Memorial Chapel, Shorewood, Wisconsin.
Foreword

Preaching Is Worship. There is not much to argue with there. Given the Lutheran understanding of justification as something spoken and done by God through the Word and the means of grace (AC IV and V), it is natural to affirm that preaching is worship. Yet one has the sneaking suspicion that there are unexamined definitions, unspoken assumptions, and unsettling conclusions embedded in that innocuous phrase. If preaching is worship, then the consequences are significant for the people of God, for their worship, and for the preaching that, in some sense, defines worship. Notice, it does not say Worship Is Preaching. There is more to Christian worship than preaching. Forgiveness and reconciliation are worship. The Lord’s Supper is worship. Prayer and praise are worship. Fellowship in the Body of Christ is worship. Ritual is worship. Yet other than Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, it is difficult to conceive of anything as formative and fundamental to Christian worship as preaching. In preaching, the Body of Christ is addressed by God’s Word. In being addressed the people gathered take on identity (flesh) as the living, worshiping Body of Christ. The words of preaching are the words of a Father to His children. As paternal words of rebuke, mercy, and love, they are the very heart of the conversation of the family of God gathered at the Father’s supper table. The Word of God fills the worship, and in the preaching it becomes the personal address of God to this gathering of His family. All the other things that are Christian worship are claimed by this gathering through the preaching of the Father through His Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the worship of God’s people. He has spoken to us. He has preached!

So when one says preaching is worship, one is saying something life-affirming for the people of God. That is why it is important to discuss how the Church preaches in worship and how the Church worships through her preaching. This collection of essays is now, more than ever, a vital contribution to that discussion. Originally published in 2001 by Concordia
Publishing House as *Liturical Preaching*, it is now reissued in a second edition with two new essays. Why is this collection useful in republication? Much has happened in the ten years since its original release. New hymnals and additional worship resources have been introduced, including the 2006 publication of *Lutheran Service Book* by the LCMS. Issues relative to worship continue to be central points of conversation within many denominations. In a culture often ambivalent to and at times in conflict with the practices of Christian worship, the Church continues to ask how it might best embody its life together before God publicly in worship. Amid these developments the relationship between preaching and worship is still of central importance. The people of God should know what it means to hear the Word preached within the corporate worship gathering. And they should know how to worship in ways that reflect their encounter with the preaching of God’s Word. These essays have as much to contribute toward shaping a healthy and holistic relationship between preaching and worship as they did ten years ago. Preaching is worship, after all.

Because preaching is one of the means by which the gifts of God in Christ are given and the Holy Spirit awakens faith, it is fitting that sainted Swedish Lutheran Church Bishop Bo Giertz’s classic essay “Liturgy and Spiritual Awakening” is included as an appendix in this second edition. While Bishop Giertz’s essay is not directly concerned with the relationship of preaching and worship, it does ground both worship and spiritual awakening in the Word of God. Preaching looms in the background. As Giertz says, “The deepest significance of liturgy lies in the fact that it is a form which the Spirit Himself has created to preserve and deepen the life which He has awakened in the church”—a life awakened through the *preaching* of the Word. Preaching awakens; liturgy preserves and deepens. So, in the same vein, these essays speak to preachers who proclaim the Word in the corporate worship of God’s people. Like Giertz’s essay, they call preachers to preach the Word that awakens the people of God in the living garden of the liturgy. The liturgy waters the soil into which the Word of God is sown. It is a good place to plant.

The essays in *Preaching Is Worship* till the soil and water the garden of the preacher so that the Word preached may spiritually awaken and strengthen the Body of Christ in worship. The essays divide nicely into three thematic categories: “Preaching in the Divine Service,” “Liturgical Context Shaping Preaching and Its Content,” and “Liturgical Preaching’s Method and Purpose: Preaching *from*, *to*, *within*, and *for* the Church.” The various essays explore the interweaving threads of the relationship between preaching and worship.
Five essays contribute to understanding the relationship between preaching and worship in the Divine Service. Dale Meyer’s “The Place of the Sermon in the Order of Service” stresses that the sermon does not stand alone. As a living voice it finds its roots in pastoral care relationships in the parish and uncovers the treasures of the liturgy for the hearer to possess them. Such a living voice in worship always proceeds by using Law and Gospel in balance, avoiding negligence or obsession, as David Schmitt contends in his essay “Law and Gospel in Sermon and Service.” The worship context demonstrates that the sermon is a living event with different types of discourse, all of which should be honored and kept in balance. David Peter further pursues the shape of balanced preaching in his essay new to the volume: “Balanced Preaching: Maintaining a Theological Center of Gravity.” He advocates for preaching that keeps the vertical and horizontal dimensions of preaching in balance, warning against the threats of overextended preaching on the active righteousness plane. He discusses resources from the worship context that can assist in maintaining that balance. Finally, Robert Prececy’s essay, “Sacramental Preaching: Holy Baptism,” and Kenneth Wieting’s essay, “Sacramental Preaching: The Lord’s Supper,” emphasize preaching that takes a baptismal shape and that proclaims the Christ present for His people in the Supper at the center of Christian worship.

Five essays focus on the ways in which the liturgical context can shape preaching and its content. In “Preaching through the Seasons of the Church Year,” Charles Gieschen contends that sensitivity to the themes and cadence of the church year can assist the pastor in proclaiming sermons that are Christocentric and consistent with the proclamation of the rest of the service. Attending to the church year involves “Working the Lectionary,” as Carl Fickenscher makes apparent. Attending to the lectionary’s themes and how it works produces sermons that better reflect the biblical text and its formative impact. The biblical Word is read in the context of the liturgical words, themselves composed of the biblical Word. And, as William Cwirla indicates in “Unfolding the Meaning of the Liturgy,” that means the preacher is called to underscore what God is doing for us here and now for our salvation in this corporate worship service. Included in that liturgical context is hymnody, which, as Paul Grime indicates in “Hymnody and Preaching,” provides ideas, imagery, and language to enrich the preaching of Christ. Hymnody can paint a visual image of Christ, but so can visual images themselves. In “Preaching and the Visual Arts,” Dean Nadasdy calls for the preacher to act as artist and poet, engaging the imagination by employing visual imagery alongside and within the proclaimed Word.

The final essays turn toward the method and purpose of preaching out of the worship context. These three essays elucidate preaching that is from,
to, within, and for the Church. In “Liturgy as Story,” James Wetzstein examines the benefits and pitfalls of an inductive approach to preaching. One of those benefits is that the liturgy provides a source of experiences for proclaiming the meaning of the text through the stories it tells, thereby calling hearers to identify themselves within the salvific story. Further potential for holism in preaching is manifested in John Nunes’s essay, “Preaching within the Faith Community.” Here the holism and immersive nature of the liturgical context shapes preaching that encompasses the totality of the life of the people of God in public faith and service among the nations of the world. Lastly, Ronald Feuerhahn calls preachers to preach not only from, to, and within the church, but for the Church. The liturgical context makes the preacher aware that he preaches a message of death and living hope to the world by the authority of the Lord who will come again.

What, then, are the gifts received from reading these essays? They include a renewed appreciation that the worship of the Church is the arena for the activity of God through His Word and a refined homiletical practice that reflects the conviction that preaching is worship. Unexamined definitions, unspoken assumptions, and unsettling conclusions? Not any longer. For here, in the worship of the Church, God is at work and He is preaching mightily!

Kent J. Burreson
August 18, 2011
The preaching task is arguably the most important work of the Christian pastor. Seminary training assumes as much with its emphasis on the study of the biblical languages and the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. The people will expect nothing less as they wonder—even before their new pastor arrives—whether they have received a good preacher. And pastors will demand of themselves their very best as they proclaim the Word of God to their people each week. Preaching is important.

Preaching, however, does not occur within a vacuum. Preaching is contextual. Multiple contexts surround the sermon and impact the sermon, even when the preacher is unaware of them. Homiletics may identify as many as seven preaching contexts: theological, literary, historical, personal, cultural, pastoral, and liturgical. The last of these is the primary focus of this book.

In surveying the literature of homiletics, we find very little that intentionally addresses preaching from the perspective of liturgy. This collection of essays contributes toward filling that gap. All of the essayists in this volume are preachers. Most are parish pastors. A few teach at seminaries. All bring to their preaching a deep love for the broader task of worship.

All these essayists assume that the sermon can never be viewed, either in its preparation or in its hearing, completely apart from its immediate context. Even within Christian traditions that do not follow a “liturgical” pattern of worship, the sermon is surrounded by prayer and song, often in a very organized, if unacknowledged pattern. The sermon is ultimately an act of worship itself. Here God graces the listener with His Word, written in the Scriptures and proclaimed by the preacher. He graces the Table with His presence, the visible Word served by the celebrant. Altar and pulpit are in fellowship. Hence liturgical preaching. While we offer this book to the entire Church, we work from the Lutheran tradition. The essayists locate the sermon within the framework of Word and Sacrament, where exposition of
the Word of God, proclaimed to the baptized, leads to feasting on the Bread of Life at the Table of the Lord. We know that in many churches there are unbaptized participants for whom liturgy, symbols, and proclamation can lead to saving faith in Jesus Christ. With the wider Church we assume and promote the use of a lectionary and the observance of the church year.

The context of the sermon is, however, defined somewhat more broadly by several of the essayists. Some explore the Law/Gospel dialectic and its influence on both sermon and service. Others consider new approaches to homiletics in light of the liturgical context. Here is a look at preaching and its relationship to the community and world; there, the place of the visual arts in the preaching task.

As preachers approach the text, they must consider a bewildering number of liturgical influences. How does this reading relate to the other readings? Are there portions of the liturgy to which this text speaks? Where are we in the church year? How will my people “hear” this text? How can I proclaim specific Law and specific Gospel that will both cut to the heart and soothe the soul?

To subject every sermon in its various stages of preparation to the countless suggestions that are contained in the following pages would be frustrating, if not impossible. Our hope is that the ideas that are offered here will stimulate preachers to take up the preaching task with renewed vigor and joy as they proclaim Jesus Christ, whose word is life, who is the Word of life.
“What’s Otto doing out there?” I asked.

Glancing out the window of the sacristy door as I vested, I noticed Otto Segelhorst walking toward the cemetery. While some folks were coming at the last minute into the church, Otto was going his own way. He had a knack for doing that. He regularly raised the eyebrows of people who never questioned what we now call “conventional wisdom.” There was little conventional about Otto. He thought his own way and did his own thing, so it wasn’t at all out of character for him to be going into the cemetery just minutes before the bells would ring.

“Oh, he’s going to visit his wife’s grave,” said Roy, our custodian. “Otto says that the sermon is the main thing; what comes before the sermon isn’t as important.”

Don’t get the wrong idea. Otto was a faithful member, a very faithful member of our church. A retired farmer, he was one for whom the Sunday sermon held a special place. He looked forward to it, made sure he was always there. So it is with God’s people; they are there for the preaching. Of course, there are mundane ways to explain their presence: family habits (Otto’s family members were devoted churchgoers), community culture (in this little town going to church was the right thing to do), providing moral instruction for the children. These and the like were contributing factors for attending preaching in the 1970s, the decade of this little story. Although times change, there still is nothing new under the sun when it comes to human conduct, so social reasons still account in some measure for church attendance. That said, such earthly explanations are pedestrian compared to the most essential reason God’s people come to hear us. They keep coming because they want to hear a good word from the God who has called them to be His own possession. “Whoever is of God hears the words of God” (John 8:47).
That the pulpit has a special place in their hearts is evidence of God’s quiet working through the decades. You in your ministry, I in mine—we’re not the first through whom God has worked in the lives of His people. There were others before us. When parishioners tell us about old pastor so and so, they’re telling us that there were faithful stewards of the mysteries before us, predecessors who were good at speaking Jesus’ words of spirit and life. In our tenures we’re more like the people who pass out water to runners along the route: we’re refreshing the saints and guiding them along their heaven-bound way. So they keep coming to hear preaching—not because of us, but because through us they want to keep hearing that good and compelling word from God that draws them on.

The humbling truth is that even if somehow the hearer in front of you has never heard a clear Gospel sermon, you still are not the first. Through the Word, through the liturgy, through the creeds, through Baptism, God Himself was working in that heart before you ever prepared the sermon, put on your robe, and entered the pulpit. And the Law of God is always at work, whether it’s recognized or not. How often the Gospel is spoken by laypeople with no ordained person in sight! That reminds us, our titles aside, that the power is in the Word and not in the speaker. “The Lord gave the word; Great was the company of those who proclaimed it” (Ps. 68:11 NKJV).

We’re not the first and—more humility called for—we’re not the only ones with messages. In our society every TV, every computer, every radio is a potential pulpit telling people what they should believe. In this media saturation there is no dearth of religious broadcasting. Some media ministries we judge as good; others we find wanting. Whichever, our listeners hear the voices of those religious and secular shepherds too. In our so-called post-modern environment, many have chosen to be spiritual but not religious, to get their Christianity from any place and every place but not exclusively from the local congregation and from the properly called pastor. While the call documents don’t tell us how to deal with this pervasive competition, our joy is that people keep coming to hear us, that the pulpit of the congregation is still a commanding place. “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’ ” (Ps. 122:1).

That is the implicit contract of Sunday mornings. People come to church expecting to be persuaded about some divine truth. They’re not hostile as they take their places in the pews (unless the last church meeting happened to be a debacle). They may be lukewarm, but they are still warm enough to come and be roused by the Spirit’s sword. With you they have a contract: “Pastor, we’ve come to be persuaded through you of some truth that is good for our lives and that is from God.” Seen through a theological lens, this “contract” is an expression of their baptismal covenant. God claimed them
as His own, forgave their sins, and now they come looking for mercies, for words that bring and illumine the loving kindness from the God of their baptismal covenant.

Diplomas on our walls, the jots and tittles of good theological education, expensive vestments, leadership skills and seminars—thank God that a broader perspective than all that comes from aging in pastoral ministry. As a young seminary graduate, I was so enthralled with what I was doing in ministry. It is so easy to confuse our egos with God and His work. Rationalizations abound. “Lead us not into temptation.” Now I know better, that we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously as we hone our pastoral skills and as we prepare for weekly worship. We weren't the first, aren't the only ones, and won't be the last. You and I are only stewards and that for only a short time. No, we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously, but the work of preaching? Yes, indeed, for sooner or later the faithful come into church looking to that special place, the pulpit, for a good word from God. That's the place where we fulfill our part of the “contract,” our call from God through His people to prepare and deliver sermons that inspire them with the mercies of God. It is, indeed, holy ministry.

“Ready?” asked Roy.
“Yup; let's do it.”

Roy left the sacristy and went to the steeple where he and brother Earl rang the bells for worship. God’s people were present—except Otto, who now was in the cemetery at the grave of his dear wife.

Some years ago I was invited to join in the observance of 150 years of Lutheranism in New Zealand. As one small part of that celebration I was asked to sit on a panel for a general discussion about the life of the church today. The first question put to each of us was the predictable icebreaker “What do you do?” One panel member had a brief and simple answer. A Danish pastor serving a church in Sydney said, “My job is to preach the Gospel.”

“Good for you!” I immediately thought. After all, the society in which we minister tries to seduce us from Law and Gospel as we go about sermon preparation. Pop psychology, social action, congregations thriving with activities, entertainment—they all try to replace theological content in our sermons. Not that they don't have some legitimate role in preaching, but meeting felt needs has to be ancillary to the ultimate goal, the salvation of souls. So, when this pastor said, “My job is to preach the Gospel,” I reacted with immediate approval.

Then the audience was invited to join in with their own questions and comments. An older woman stood up in the back of the room and told us that she had been born in Sweden but emigrated to New Zealand as a young
During the presidential campaign of 1996, Senator Bob Dole made a campaign speech. When the oration was over, the Republican candidate attempted to correct his image of being cold, impersonal, and disconnected from the people by making physical contact with the audience. He moved to the edge of the platform on which he had been speaking, leaned over the railing, and reached out his hand to the crowd below. In an effort to connect with his audience, he stretched horizontally and extended himself beyond the guard rail. But as he reached out, the rail gave way, and Senator Dole came tumbling down into the crowd and onto the ground. Neither he nor those under him were seriously hurt by this incident, though a few minor bruises were sustained.¹

Senator Dole’s intentions were good. He sought to reach out and connect with the people. He endeavored to make contact with his audience. He intended to repudiate his reputation of being cold and aloof by extending himself out to the people. But the resulting accident didn’t benefit him or those on whom he fell.

Many preachers have a similar good intention. They make a heartfelt effort to reach out in their sermons to people and their needs. They go to great lengths to connect with their hearers. They attempt to relate to their hearers and impress upon them the relevance of the sermon.

This desire is laudable. Preaching that does not connect with the audience is not effective preaching. Regrettably, much preaching does not reach out to the people. It remains aloof, austere, impractical, impersonal, irrelevant, and overly transcendent. Such preaching is disconnected from the people for whom it is delivered. In contrast, the preacher who loves and cares for his flock will seek to present sermons that touch the lives and the personal needs of people.

¹ A video of this incident may be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWib8GrIIA.
Sometimes the preacher’s passion to connect with those who are listening to him, however, may lead to an extreme. It may cause the preacher to lose his balance, so to speak. He overextends horizontally. This is not in a physical sense, as in leaning too far out of the pulpit so that he falls! Instead, the loss of balance is in the content of the sermon. He overextends the human focus or horizontal reach so that the vertical dimension of the sermon is eclipsed. When this happens the sermon becomes more anthropocentric than theocentric. Thus the preacher hurts both his own ministry and the spiritual lives of those for whom he is called to care. And that is indeed a tragedy far worse than any physical misstep such as Bob Dole experienced.

**THE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL DIMENSIONS OF PREACHING**

The essays of this volume focus on the context of worship in which preaching takes place. One manner in which the context of preaching may be visualized is by use of a spatial matrix involving vertical and horizontal axes. Every sermon should have a vertical aspect and a horizontal aspect. Furthermore, these dimensions should be in balance in the homily.

The vertical dimension refers to the theocentric focus of the sermon. Thus it is heavily theological. In the vertical dimension, attention is given to God’s work of creation, salvation, and sanctification. It focuses on who God is and on what He has done and continues to do for us. It presents for us the relationship God has established with His people. In this sense it is *vertical*, in that it communicates the relationship of God with humanity, especially of God coming to us in Jesus Christ to redeem us from sin and to reconcile us to Himself.

This vertical dimension to preaching is evident in all faithful Law and Gospel preaching. The vertical emphasis is especially distinctive of the Reformation and of the preachers who are heirs of this tradition. It is preaching that centers on the Gospel message of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This vertical dimension is unabashedly theological, theocentric, Christocentric, and doctrinal.

However, the vertical dimension does not exclude concern for human beings. On the contrary, this concern is inherent to the vertical axis of theology. The Gospel does not transcend the realm of human creatures but transforms it. In the incarnation God invades into the human realm, and

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2 These designations of the vertical and horizontal aspects have been employed by a number of commentators on preaching. Two recent examples are Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 74, 216; and Timothy Saleska, “The Two Kinds of Righteousness! What’s a Preacher to Do?” *Concordia Journal* 33, no. 2 (April 2007): 136–45.
LITURGY AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Bo Giertz

TRANSLATOR’S INTRODUCTION

It is an ancient and treasured custom in the Church of Sweden that when a new bishop is elected in any diocese of the country, he writes a pastoral letter intended in the first place for the ministers of the diocese. This “Herdabrev” is usually a very personal word of encouragement and pastoral counseling which serves to introduce the new bishop to his pastors and people. Sometimes the letter is brief and can be contained in a few printed pages but frequently the letter is long enough so that it becomes a book of considerable size. Anyone who wants to make a study of the history of the Church of Sweden cannot neglect the study of these pastoral letters because in almost every instance they mirror and reflect the current state of religion and become the interpretation of the leadership of the Church of the message of the gospel for the contemporary scene. It is obvious that a man elevated to the office of bishop will take this assignment seriously and give to the writing of the pastoral letter his ablest skill. The document is intended to express the incumbent’s best literary exposition of his aspirations in the fulfillment of the episcopal task of proclaiming the message and directing the activity of the Church.

Early in 1949 Pastor Bo Giertz was elected to the diocese of Gothenburg as bishop. Bishop Giertz was already known to all the church public of his country as well as to the wider public by a very large literary production, which has made him probably the outstanding writer of his time on religious questions. A series of historical novels, short stories, sermons, and monographs on various questions has issued from his pen. He is a young man whose gift of interpreting the life of the spirit is marked by uncommon brilliance and spiritual sensitivity. In his own religious development he comes out of a background of evangelical awakening and liberalism. But his spiritual pilgrimage has led him to

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an understanding and sympathetic appreciation of many of the currents of religious life in Swedish Lutheranism. He has a profound appreciation of the high-church liturgical movement as well as of low-church evangelicalism. If one should characterize the type of piety which is most congenial to his spirit, it would be as a broad evangelical orthodoxy that makes him congenial to the atmosphere of West Coast Lutheranism in Sweden.

The portion of the pastoral letter which is found in translation in this brochure is a section which deals with the place of liturgy and awakening in the life of faith. It deals with a religious question that is perennial in the church. And it is because the bishop reveals such a profound appreciation of the values of religious awakening and evangelical piety on the one hand, and of the time honored values of liturgical worship on the other, that this section has been lifted out for translation. We in the American churches will do well to ponder the problem that the bishop discusses in these pages. It is toward an understanding both of liturgy and spiritual awakening that this document is here-with published.

Clifford Ansgar Nelson
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
St. Paul, Minnesota

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

If we wish to know what true Christianity means, how the church of Christ lives and works, and how a soul is saved, we must seek to understand three great heritages of the church. We must go back first to the days of the apostles, martyrs and church fathers; then we must ponder the message of the Reformers; and lastly, bring to remembrance the blessed spiritual leaders in the last century through whom God gave the church great awakenings from which all future generations may learn.

This is the threefold heritage of which we have been made stewards and which is to be made a living possession. It is ours to preserve and to pass on. We are to learn lessons from the past that are to be a vital force in the present. It is the risen and living Lord who wrought all this in the past. To hold fast the old heritage is to abide in Him. For then it is at the same time something new, renewed by the Resurrected Christ Himself. In the measure that we live by the resources which built the church in days of old, will Christ give us clear instruction for the way we must walk today.

This, then, is our program: to learn of the past that we may be prepared to meet the coming day; to immerse ourselves so deeply in the great life
stream of the church that we may be equipped to proclaim the Word of God in a new age, and to modern men and women, and to live His life in the manner which the new century in the history of the church demands.

(Closing paragraphs of the introductory portion of the Pastoral Letter in which the chapter on “Liturgy and Spiritual Awakening” appears.)

**Liturgy and Spiritual Awakening**

The Word of God creates the church. Already in the days of the primitive church the Word of God gave to the life of the church those forms which have continued through the centuries. This includes both those forms which seem to be more or less improvised and spontaneous and those which appear fixed and unchangeable. It is true both of that side of the life of the church which we call awakening and that which we call liturgy. Both are the creation of the Word, and both belong to that heritage which we are called to preserve.

Both liturgy and awakening were found in the apostolic church. They are spoken of already at Pentecost. “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?” That is awakening. “And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple” and “Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.” That is liturgy.

Both liturgy and awakening have been with the church throughout her entire history. The manner in which they appear is of course very unlike. Awakening is like a flickering flame above a bed of coals. It gleams forth, spreads itself, rises toward heaven, and then seems to be gone again. Its connection with the ancient church seems to be broken by intervals of darkness. And yet the connection is there, because the Spirit is one and the same, even He who pricked the hearts on the day of Pentecost; and the Word, which lights the mysterious flame, is the same Word of power that once passed over the lips of the apostles.

The relation of liturgy to the apostolic age is obvious. It has flowed through the centuries like a ceaseless stream. It had its first deep sources in the synagogue. It is not only that a few words have remained in continuous use since that time, such as Amen, Hallelujah, and Hosanna, but the whole structural form of our order of worship shows clearly its relation to that worship which Jesus Himself shared in the synagogue at Nazareth and in which, as a grown man, he officiated when He was invited to read and interpret the Scriptures. To the ancient worship of the synagogue the apostolic church added the Holy Communion, that new creation which she received from the Savior Himself and which is the center of all liturgy. As it