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# Word and worship: essays on preaching and liturgy

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## FOREWORD

*Lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of what is prayed is the law of what is believed. For liturgiologists this formula expresses the conviction that liturgy shapes belief; others argue that the formula can be read backwards, too, to say that beliefs shape liturgy. Surely both readings are true—though we often fail to note the doctrinal import of our liturgies, prayers, hymns, rites, and practices, overly confident that doctrine must naturally hold the upper hand!

This little formula expresses both the harmony and the tension that mark the relationship between the doctrine we profess and the sermons, rituals, and liturgies we enact. Perhaps nowhere, in contemporary North American Lutheranism, is this more observable than in the several efforts to define “forms of ministry”. On the one hand our doctrine speaks of “one office” of Word and Sacrament; on the other hand, again and again we have arrived at the place where we in effect have developed an “office” of oversight and “offices” of service in addition to the office of Word and Sacrament. Our practice strains our doctrine; our doctrine forces us to think critically and to be vigilant (see “Studies and Observations”).

The four essays presented in this section directly or indirectly lift up the inter-action of faith and practice. The companion articles by Eric Dyck do so directly by examining the 1978 marriage and funeral liturgies of the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. In both of these he detects a shift from “office” (which is highly functional in nature) to “paschal mystery” (which is metaphoric and sacramental in nature). In the case of the marriage service, the metaphor of *covenant* nuances marriage toward sacramentality in that the covenant of marriage witnesses to God’s covenant with the Church through Christ. In the case of the Burial of the Dead, the deceased becomes a

symbol of the paschal experience. The close analysis of these rites introduces us to the thinking of their framers, and may well surprise us by clarifying what we are really saying and doing!

Likewise, "A Hermeneutic for Preaching" also directly examines the relationship between what we believe and what emerges from our pulpits. Richard Crossman takes seriously the conviction that "revelation occurs in, with, and under culture", and therefore the way in which the preacher answers the question of the relationship between the Scriptures and the current historical context of the listeners, bears directly on the way of preaching. The reader may see an example of Crossman's methodology in the sermon section of this Number.

Similarly, the essay, "Preaching on Social-Ethical Issues", attempts to hold both poles in balance. Effective preaching on what has been called "controversial issues" requires, according to Riegert, a climate and a context in which "real life" can be brought into the community of God in such a way that "the mind of Christ" can struggle with competing worldviews and powers. It is precisely in this "social" realm that congruity or incongruity between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* is revealed most tellingly.

Eduard R. Riegert