

Handling the Word of Truth: Law and Gospel in the Church Today

by John T. Pless
Concordia: St. Louis

In *Handling the Word of Truth* John T. Pless seeks to take insights from Walther's classic *Law and Gospel* and to apply them to specific challenges in the church today that seek to mute our clear witness to God's law and gospel. In each of the book's 13 chapters, Pless groups brief quotations from Walther – along with frequent quotations from Luther – around one specific current challenge to law and gospel proclamation. The quotations from Walther and Luther are also illuminated by specific scriptural passages that establish the points Walther and Luther were making.

As far as the helpfulness of this book for those who stand in pulpits Sunday by Sunday, the brevity of the book (114 pages, not counting a Luther sermon in the Appendix) prevents the author from plumbing to any depth the thirteen issues he deals with in each of the book's brief chapters. While the contemporary issues Pless identifies are very real, those who are familiar with the depth of Walther's insight in *Law and Gospel* will often be disappointed by the relatively light treatment possible in such a short book. Most preachers would be far better served to note the current challenges to law and gospel proclamation and to plumb again for themselves Walther's classic presentation.

But while Pless' book may prove a bit "less filling" for the purpose of the preacher, the book still could serve well as a Bible study on Law and Gospel for congregational members. The book's brief chapters, which each include study guide questions, could make for good discussion in a Bible class setting.