

Book Reviews

***Pastor Craft: Essays & Sermons.* By John T. Pless. Irvine, CA: New Reformation Publications, 2020. 539 pages. Hardcover. \$22.95.**

Pastors who care for souls are in constant need of refining their craft. That craft is more specific than “continuing education.” Surely, pastors need to grow in their knowledge of God’s word and sound doctrine, just as surely as they must, through suffering, learn the way of the cross in the school of experience. However, to hone their craft, pastors also need other pastors to strengthen them through the ministry of the gospel, the power of the keys, and “*per mutuuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum*” or “the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers” (SA III 4). Those of us who have been blessed these past twenty years to have John Pless as a professor will know the treasures this volume contains. Those who are new to Pless will discover a fellow theologian of the cross with whom you can carry on that mutual conversation and consolation. It may seem odd that a book should serve as a conversation partner, but I think any pastor who reads Pless senses immediately that he is a guide for the pastoral life and one to whom we can return with questions about our craft and find answers. Any pastor who has gone back to read the sermon preached at his ordination or gone back to study the ordination rite to find strength to carry out his vocation will find similar resources of pastoral care here.

The book is a collection of Pless’s sermons and essays, most of which he wrote in his current vocation as a professor of practical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary. It is divided into three parts. The first part is a collection of sermons that includes Pless’s ordination and installation sermons for former students, as well as an anniversary of ordination sermon. These sermons address the duty and responsibility of the man in the office, but they also beautifully tie together the purpose for which Christ established the office of the ministry, namely, “that they may have faith” (AC V). They are filled with great comfort for preachers. Part one also includes several chapel sermons from CTS, occasional sermons, such as sermons for pro-life gatherings and a sermon for the dedication of his former parish, University Lutheran Chapel, on the occasion of its renovation, as well as funeral sermons for the Rev. Dr. Lowell Green, the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Korby, and Maggie Karner.

Part two is a collection of his online essays published for “The Craft of Preaching” at www.1517.org (www.1517.org/sections/craftofpreaching). These short and accessible essays revolve around the church year to help pastors prepare

for their seasonal preaching. These essays would be excellent resources for pastors who want to plan out their preaching by season or are looking for theological insights into each step of the church year. Part Three is the largest section and includes previously-published essays or presented theological papers. The subject matter of these essays reveals how Pless understands the duties and responsibilities of the pastoral office. They deal with the nature of the office of the ministry and the work of pastoral care in preaching law and gospel and administering the absolution. Pless holds up Hermann Sasse and Wilhelm Löhe as good examples of pastoral theologians and demonstrates their lasting contributions to Lutheran theology. Readers will also find essays on confessional integrity and the need for the church's clear public confession of Christ, essays on the liturgy, on doctrine, life, and the mission of the church. To name just one, his essay, "Can We Participate Liturgically in the Atonement?" is particularly helpful in critiquing some of the romantic tendencies among liturgical Lutherans that would place our action or participation in the liturgy at the center of worship. As Pless argues, "[l]iturgical forms should not simply be evaluated by standards of ecumenicity or antiquity, but by faithfulness to the gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus given to sinners to be received by faith alone" (407).

This volume will be a great blessing to pastors and thus to the church. Educated lay people, especially elders, who want to better understand the duties and responsibilities of their pastor will also benefit greatly from this book, just as so many seminarians have benefitted from Professor Pless's faithful and patient instruction these past two decades.

Jason D. Lane

***A Harvest of Lutheran Dogmatics and Ethics: The Life and Work of Twelve Theologians 1960–2020.* Edited by Carl E. Braaten. Delhi, NY: ALPB Books, 2021. Paperback. 228 Pages. \$21.00.**

Established to bring the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) into the American religious mainstream, the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau (ALPB) fosters views that are more common in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) than in the LCMS. Irreconcilable are the stances on abortion, same sex marriage, homosexuality, women and transgender clergy, and church fellowship, with the ELCA in communion with nearly every major mainline denomination. These are ho-hum issues in that the pastors of one synod are rarely inclined to discuss them with those of the other. Things are pretty well-set in cement. Since

there is little more to say, it is a surprise that no LCMS theologian is included in this book. In effecting how Lutherans in America are separated from one another, perhaps no one was of more importance than Robert D. Preus. Kurt E. Marquart was well known in the LCMS for upholding its traditional theology. There is no mention of them. Irony upon irony, the ALPB, established as a LCMS auxiliary, has cut its veins to the main artery. (See *Changeless World, Changeless Christ* [ALPB 2018]). It is as if what happened in the LCMS in the 1960s and 70s never happened—but it did happen, and it shaped how Lutheranism in America is now. Here is an opportunity for a second edition without changing the title.

With that necessary prolegomenon, Braaten has produced a readable overview into theologians who, in their time, made a difference in the synods that now comprise the ELCA. R. Sponheim, Philip Heffner and Ted Peters are largely unknown in the LCMS. Robert Bertram and Edward Schroeder may still be familiar to LCMS septuagenarians and those older. Of interest is William H. Lazareth, one-time bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan Synod. One evening, with members of the Fort Wayne faculty, he bemoaned the decline of his parent synod. Regarding good works, he proposed a “second use of the gospel,” but could not totally reject the third use of the law, which remains cliché among up-and-coming theologians (71). He was willing to talk about coming to an accommodation on the issue. Gerhard Forde is also one of Braaten’s chosen twelve and coined the phrase “radical Lutheranism,” a program that offers a caricature of the Lutheran doctrine of justification that holds to the first and second uses of the law but not the third. Christians spontaneously do good works, and so there is no need for the law. God is also exempted so that justification takes place by faith in the preached word without Christ making an atonement for sin. God forgives simply because he can and is merciful (40–44). Braaten includes himself as the twelfth theologian. Self-critique is the reverse image of the one who has sin throwing the stone at himself. Theological self-flagellation is rare. His approach to his subjects is relaxed with no axes to grind, and so he gets at the core of the matter without malice. This is a delightful read. It should be noted that Braaten, along with Robert Jensen and Forde, two of his twelve subjects, was involved in the *Christian Dogmatics*, a textbook of sorts for the ELCA.

David P. Scaer

***Philologia Sacra und Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift: Studien zum Werk des lutherischen Barocktheologen Salomon Glassius (1593–1656)*. By Armin Wenz. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020. 894 pp. Hardcover. \$181.99.**

In this thorough and instructive monograph, Armin Wenz examines and analyzes the works of Salomon Glassius and demonstrates his enduring contributions to the field of biblical hermeneutics. The book is the fruit of Wenz's decade-long research project under Johann Anselm Steiger in Hamburg and presents Glassius as a premier representative of the Lutheran exegetical tradition in the early modern age. This work also establishes Wenz, the newly appointed professor of New Testament at the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* in Oberursel, Germany, as one of the world's leading scholars on Glassius and biblical hermeneutics in the age of orthodoxy. Glassius's greatest contribution to Lutheran hermeneutics, and the central text in Wenz's investigation, is his multi-volume work *Philologia Sacra* (1623–1636). These volumes served as the Lutheran Church's standard text for biblical hermeneutics until the late eighteenth century. Beyond the surviving copies of his *Philologia Sacra*, Glassius's influence on the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod came by means of the *Kurfürstenbibel* or *Weimarisches Bibelwerk* (1641), which was published in St. Louis into the early twentieth century. The Bible included Glassius's editorial additions to each chapter of Holy Scripture and his instruction for biblical interpretation in the Bible's preface. Based on Paul's words to Timothy (2 Tim 3:14–17), Glassius's preface set out a clear doctrine of Holy Scripture and provided them with keys to using and applying Scripture “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

Wenz's work stands in stark contrast to modern approaches to biblical interpretation from post-Enlightenment interpreters. Generally, modern interpreters tend to fall into two common errors. Either one divests Scripture of its authority by casting doubt on its divine authorship (historical-critical), or else, in response to higher criticism, one subjects Scripture in equally rationalistic ways to proofs that demonstrate little more than the Bible's historical or doctrinal correctness. As Wenz contends in this work, both tendencies miss the true aim of Scripture, which is to bring salvation in Christ to the fallen human race. Although LCMS pastors may not be easily taken in by higher criticism, they should be aware that the latter tendency to limit our interpretation of the Bible down to the dogmatic assertion of inerrancy and the correctness of its historical facticity is, in light of this study, not Lutheran-Orthodox, but a by-product of Enlightenment thinking. Wenz argues that Glassius avoids both of these extremes by teaching the clarity of the

sensus literalis to establish divinely revealed doctrine, on the one hand, and the complexity or polyvalence of the *sensus mysticus* to illustrate the doctrine through allegories, types, and parables on the other. In Glassius's writings one finds a highly developed academic discipline for interpreting Scripture. But it is not academic philology as a theoretical science. In him, Wenz argues, all the major disciplines of theology come together for the interpretive task with the practical aim to care for and save souls.

Perhaps an initial challenge to modern Lutherans is Glassius's teaching that both the literal and mystical sense are rightly understood as the Holy Spirit's intention. He taught that the distinction between the literal and mystical sense is necessary, since the words in many passages (*verba*) are not identical to the subject matter (*res*) or the Holy Spirit's intention. According to Wenz (chapter five), Glassius's easily misconstrued statement that "the sense of Holy Scripture is twofold [*sensus duplex est*], literal and spiritual or mystical" was, in fact, his attempt to find a middle way between the extreme positions of the Calvinists on the one hand and the Roman Catholics on the other. The Calvinist interpreters, according to Wenz, asserted that there is one literal sense in every passage of Scripture, and thus the mystical sense could be little more than an application or accommodation of each literal sense. In other words, the mystical sense is never the intended sense of Holy Spirit, but is an application of the preacher drawn from the literal sense. On the other side, the Roman Catholic interpreters maintained that every biblical text has various meanings or senses, which constantly leaves in question the clarity and sufficiency of Scripture. Wenz shows that for Glassius not every passage of Scripture has a mystical sense, as Rome argued; rather Scripture itself reveals which passages should be interpreted mystically, since the significance in certain passages is not found in the words, but in the signified thing (205–207). Wenz demonstrates how Glassius's precise treatment of the biblical text leads to a greater confidence in the Bible's clarity, efficacy, and sufficiency. The book is divided into eight chapters of varying length. The longest chapters are chapters six and seven, which cover Glassius's exegetical works and his homiletical-pastoral application of Scripture (pages 251–405 and 407–762, respectively).

Chapter one offers readers an analysis of Glassius's life and work and includes a helpful overview of the current literature on Glassius. Wenz makes a convincing case for Glassius as a premier theologian in whom academic excellence, philological exactness, and dogmatic clarity are beautifully blended with pastoral care and a refined homiletical craft. In chapter two, Wenz describes Glassius's approach to theology as "sacred philology" and the use of figurative interpretation as a form of devotional literature. Wenz draws on Glassius's devotional book *Arbor vitae* (*Tree of Life*, 1629) to argue that theology as sacred philology corresponds with the aim

and goal of Scripture as “the self-mediation of God in Christ through the Spirit, in that theology intellectually and artistically lays hold of this self-mediation in its fullness and then holds it forth again and again [in preaching]” (72). Chapter three examines Glassius’s doctrine of Holy Scripture and its implications for faithful interpretation in accord with the *analogia fidei*. Wenz shows how Glassius taught the authority and many characteristics of Scripture not as a wooden doctrine, but to draw out the proper relationship between Scripture and the church’s proclamation through the divinely established office of preaching. “The principle,” writes Wenz, “that Scripture interprets itself is not a ‘self-mechanized interpretation,’ since God Himself in Scripture gives to the preaching office the ministerial function of interpreting the Holy Scriptures by means of proclamation” (108–109). Chapter four describes Glassius’s philological analysis of Scripture according to its own style, sacred grammar and sacred rhetoric. Chapter five is where Wenz takes up the important distinction between the literal and mystical sense of Scripture.

In chapter six, Wenz explores Glassius’s exegetical works and demonstrates how Glassius’s rules (*canones*) of biblical interpretation established an academic discipline in its own right that would lay the groundwork for the rhetorical application (*rhetorica sacra*) of the biblical text in the sermon. Glassius, like many other orthodox interpreters, used *collationes* or collections of intertestamental passages to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Wenz draws on many examples from Glassius which apply this intertestamental hermeneutic and build constellations of verses to interpret, for example, the names or titles of the Son of God and their significance for His person and work. The collections of Old and New Testament passages, argues Wenz, provides the interpreter of the two Testaments not merely with a promise-fulfillment motif or a reduction of the intertestamental passages down to a narrowly defined Christological interpretation, but a rich, multifaceted proclamation of Christ, His church, and the eschatological hope of all believers. For Glassius, exegesis leads to preaching in such a way that the sermon both identifies the doctrinal content of biblical passages and then amplifies the doctrine through the Bible’s own interwoven narratives and rich illustrations. In chapter seven, Wenz explores primarily from Glassius’s own sermons his homiletical and pastoral application of Scripture. Here one finds in great detail how the attention Glassius gives to Scripture’s grammar and sacred rhetoric flourishes in his preaching. Wenz’s thorough analysis is replete with biblical images, metaphors, and figures, as well as analogies from nature that Glassius had used to paint Christ before his hearers and teach the whole counsel of God.

If readers are looking for a healthy dialogue with current sources to understand where Glassius and biblical interpretation in the Age of Lutheran Orthodoxy fit into modern conversations, they will have to wait until the end of the book. In the final summary chapter, Wenz engages with modern sources and makes a case for Glassius's place in the history of biblical interpretation and how the breadth of his work intersects, sometimes unexpectedly, with various scholarly conversations. For example, Wenz sees his work on Glassius intersecting with Hamann research and Johann Georg Hamann's interest in God's condescension in human language, as well as with the Stanford literary scholar, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and his book, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, 2004). Although Wenz faithfully and thoroughly presents Glassius's work in the previous seven chapters, he misses some opportunities to build an argument from the wealth of material and to weigh Glassius against current scholarly conversations. More interaction with present scholarship throughout the book would perhaps have helped underscore the importance of the many examples that Wenz gives from Glassius's works. The goal of this monumental work, however, was to present the philological and homiletical contributions of Glassius to Lutheran theology and biblical hermeneutics. Wenz's book succeeds in giving us a great deal of Glassius and is an invaluable contribution to advanced studies in confessional Lutheran hermeneutics and preaching.

Jason D. Lane