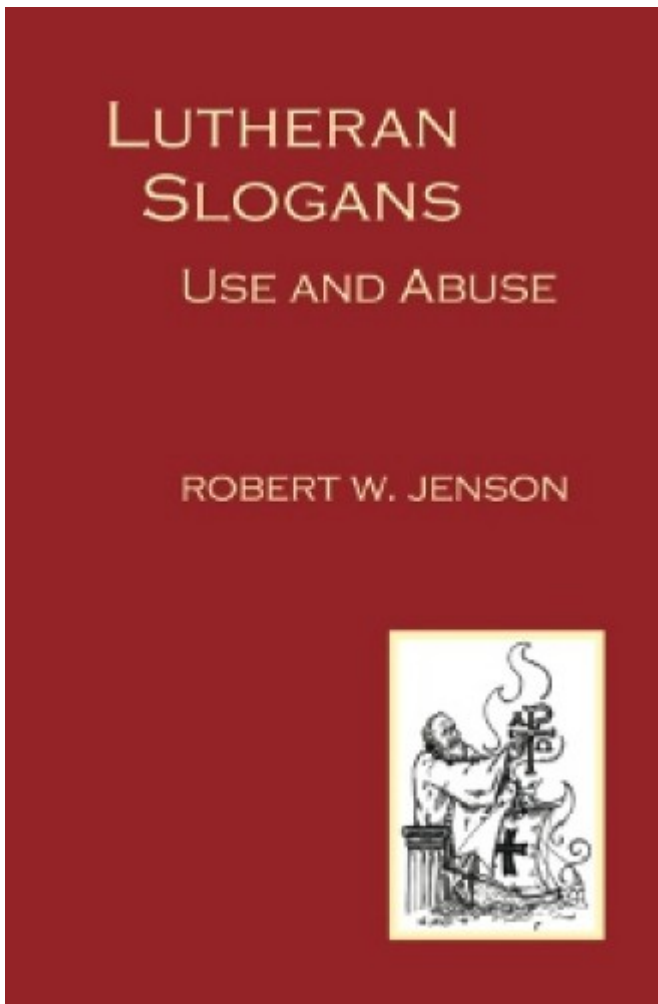


Lutheran Slogans, by Robert W. Jenson

Books in the [January 11, 2012](#) issue

## In Review



### **Lutheran Slogans**

by Robert W. Jenson

American Lutheran Publicity Bureau

Slogans are necessary, Jenson says, both for practical reasons (we need shortcuts in arguments) and rhetorical ones (we need vivid ways of summing up a position). But problems arise when slogans become "untethered from the complex of ideas and

practices which they once evoked." Jenson defines a slogan as "a placeholder for and pointer to a constellation of arguments and propositions" and proceeds to examine some classic theological slogans (such as "justification by faith," "sola scriptura," "priesthood of all believers") that often get twisted out of shape. For example, "justification by faith" is often used as a stand-alone summary of the Christian message—in which case faith can easily be construed as another kind of "work" or achievement ("Have I really believed?"). The phrase is meant, he says, not as a summary of the gospel but as a rule about the gospel for preachers that directs them to focus their message on God's saving work in Jesus rather than on human accomplishments.