

# Consensus

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## Foreword

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## Foreward

Welcome to the newly redesigned and slightly renamed *Consensus: A Canadian Journal of Public Theology*. There has been a lot of work done behind the scenes to lay down foundations that will ensure that this journal, supported by Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon, will provide a helpful and hopeful public voice, not just for Lutherans, but for all interested theologians who want to take theology seriously as a viable voice in the public sphere.

With this issue we also welcome a new slate of editors to the journal. Mary Joy Philip (WLS) and Gordon Jensen (LTS) are the new editors-in-chief, and Greg Sennema is the associate editor. All of us invite you to read the offerings. Furthermore, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary has worked out an agreement for Wilfrid Laurier University Library to publish the journal. Among other benefits, this arrangement will also eventually allow our readers access to the back issues of *Consensus* – a decided bonus!

In the last few years, both Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon have sponsored conferences exploring the relationship between Islam and Christianity. In May of 2013, David Grafton spoke at LTS about the problems encountered in trying to compare basic tenets of Islam and Christianity, providing some very helpful ways to make such "comparisons" in a more constructive way. The problem, he suggests, in his two articles, is that many studies have tried to compare the Bible to the Quran, and Jesus to Muhammed. What is overlooked in such comparisons, however, at least from a Lutheran perspective, is that the function of the Quran is more comparable to the "Word of God," which holds ultimate authority in Lutheran thought, while the Bible provides commentary on this "Word," in a manner that is similar to the function of the *Hadith*, *Sira*, *Tarikh* and *Tafsir* in Islam. Grafton also proposes that we might consider comparing Muhammed to David, rather than to Jesus.

Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, in conjunction with the Canadian Institute of Intercultural Dialogue, held a symposium in September of 2012 which focused on the contribution of Fethullah Gülen and his Hizmet Movement that has originated in Turkey. These articles provide insight into this movement within Islam. In the first article, Semiha Topal, from the School of International Letters and Cultures Department at Arizona State University-Temple Campus, tackles the thorny question of the role of women in Islam, in general, and the Hizmet movement in particular. She deftly points out the problems the surface in trying to answer this question, and provides helpful perspectives. In a second article from this symposium, Faruk Arslan, who is in the Master of Social Work program at Wilfrid Laurier University, explores the limitations and strengths of the Hizmet movement in Canada, focussing his attention primarily on the obstacles encountered in trying to establish Hizmet-supported schools in Ontario, in particular. Finally, Nazila Isgandarova, of the Ontario Multifaith Council, delves into the relationship between Islam and secularism as it has developed in Turkey, the birthplace of the Hizmet Movement.

Each of these articles is a helpful exploration that may serve to make conversations between Muslims and Christians more constructive and fruitful. We hope you enjoy these articles, as we continue to wrestle with what it means to be a person of faith in a country that seeks to be a cultural and religious mosaic.

Two sermons, one by Robert Kelly, recently retired professor of Systematic Theology at WLS, and the second by Ali Tote, pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Saskatoon with a PhD in Community Health at the University of Saskatchewan, are included in this volume. Tote's sermon was preached on the second morning of the 2011 National Convention of the ELCIC, held in Saskatoon.

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