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## Foreword

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## Foreword

In his classic lectures *On the Idea of a University* John Henry Newman emphasized the study of theology among the disciplines of the university. Newman's recognition of the place of theology in the university derived from his belief that all branches of knowledge are essentially inter-connected: he wrote, "That only is true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence."<sup>1</sup> Behind this view of the inter-dependence of various types of knowledge lay Newman's belief that ultimately God is the source of all truth. Thus theology must necessarily take its place among the various disciplines that are studied within the academic context of a university insofar as they are engaged with truth. It would be interesting to speculate on what Newman might have to say about how the university has changed in the modern world.<sup>2</sup>

While Newman's *Idea of a University* is still sometimes invoked in defense of maintaining the "liberal arts" within the university curriculum, his view of the inter-connection of the university disciplines has been largely abandoned today. As well, theology has become notoriously absent from the agenda of modern secular academia. In the mid-1990's, when British novelist Susan Howatch devoted some of the proceeds from her best-selling "Starbridge" novels to fund the Starbridge Lectureship in Science and Theology at Cambridge University, one commentator sarcastically compared it to endowing a chair in the study of fairy tales. Indeed, the study of theology is even seen by some today as antagonistic to the goals of the modern university. It is against the background of this present situation of theology within the modern university, and of the relationship of Christian faith to other branches of knowledge, that the essays in this issue of *Consensus* should be read.

The essays in this volume are selected from papers originally delivered at a conference held at the University of Prince Edward Island in the fall of 2004 under the theme "Faith, Freedom and the Academy," including the keynote lecture by Stanley Hauerwas. I would like to express my thanks to my friend Dr. Joe Velaidum, organizer of the conference at UPEI, for his collaboration in producing this issue.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Lutheran tradition has been the strong connection between faith and the academy. Lutherans have never believed that scholarship is inimical to faith or that faith needs to be protected from academic learning. Rather, the best of scholarship should enhance and be of service to faith. Of course, Luther himself was a university professor, and he affirmed and made use of the best scholarship of his day. At its best, the Lutheran tradition has always embraced the Augustinian notion of “faith seeking understanding.” The essays in this issue of *Consensus* are presented with the conviction that the relationship of faith and the academy is still enormously significant today, for Lutherans as well as for the wider Christian community.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> John Henry Newman, *On the Idea of a University*, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 99.
- <sup>2</sup> See the essays by Frank M. Turner, “Newman’s University and Ours” and George M. Marsden, “Theology and the University: Newman’s Idea and Current Realities” in Turner’s critical edition of *On the Idea of a University*, pp. 282-301 and pp. 302-317.