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Foreword

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Foreword

Not long before his untimely death, Timothy Lull listened respectfully through a presentation I made calling on Lutherans to embrace the fact that we understand the Gospel in a more radical way than many and take up a mission as a counterculture in the midst of a consumer society. At the end he said something that has been with me ever since. In effect he said, "That's all great, but you've got to tell us more. What does this counterculture look like?" This issue of *Consensus* is an attempt to put forward some ideas that can stimulate some conversation about what a Lutheran version of a Gospel-centered counterculture might look like.

To help the process I have asked several people I have known for some time and whose work I respect to contribute their thoughts. The authors for our feature articles are more than just people whose work I respect, and I respect their work not just because they are good scholars and creative thinkers. They are also people who take grace seriously and who ask regularly what difference the Gospel makes in the way we actually live and work in the world. That is really the theme here.

Gary Simpson, whom I met years ago when we were both refugees from the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in California, thinks about what difference the Gospel makes in our political life.* **Alan Tjeltveit**, who was a student in the first seminary-level course I ever taught, wonders what difference grace might make in the way we think about and practice psychology. **Don Irvine**, now retired from the Huron College Faculty of Divinity, uses his discovery of Luther's "Treatise on Good Works" to explore the implications of radical grace for the way we do ethics. The **article I have contributed** is a modest proposal about a Gospel-based ecclesiology.

There is some diversity here: Gary and I are Lutherans, Alan and Don Anglicans; Gary and Alan are Americans, Don and I Canadians. Interestingly, all of us spent time living on the West Coast in crazy places like California and British Columbia. What unites us and the articles we have written is a passion for the Gospel understood as radical grace.

None of these articles is a survey of the "assured results" of a consensus of scholars. Each is a bit speculative, a bit beyond the point where we can say that we know what we are talking about for sure.

We are taking risks in order to get a conversation going. We think that the risk is worth taking, for we all believe that the church will need to respond creatively to its current place in the world. We hope that we will irritate you just enough to keep you talking.

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