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Consensus: 25th Anniversary

Eduard R. Riegert

Managing Editor

The year of our Lord 1999 marks the 25th anniversary of *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology*. Begun in 1974 by the Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in Canada (see “The Birth of Consensus – Twenty Five Years Ago”, by founding editor Norman J. Threinen, *Consensus*, 26/1, 2000), the journal was in 1986 taken over by the two seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (WLS), Waterloo, Ontario. Under their sponsorship, *Consensus* continues its mission to provide theological edification, to nurture theological research, to serve as a theological resource for the ELCIC and ecumenically, and to undergird the practice of ministry and service among clergy and laity.

The publication of *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* was authorized in November 1974 by the Division of Theological Studies (later the Division of Theology) of the Lutheran Council in Canada as a medium for the Division’s study conferences devoted to the promulgation of Lutheran unity in Canada. More specifically, the editor articulated two purposes of the journal: (1) “...to enable Lutherans to struggle with the implications of the Gospel for the mission of our church in Canada”; (2) “...to be a vehicle for sharing with Lutheran pastors and lay persons documentary results of the official merger negotiations”.¹ Until 1985 major contributions to the journal emerged from annual Spring and Fall meetings of the Division; occasionally other papers and sometimes sermons and book reviews were also published. The editor through all these years from 1974 to 1985 was Dr. Norman J. Threinen. An Editorial Committee of three persons oversaw the journal; from 1975 until 1979 these were David Granskou, William Hordern, and Adrian

Leske; from 1980 to 1981, 7/1, these were Egil Grislis, William Hordern, and Adrian Leske; from 1981, 7/2 until 1985, 11/3, these were Egil Grislis, William Hordern, and John Wilch.

When the Lutheran Merger Commission assumed the task of seeking inter-Lutheran pulpit and altar fellowship (a mandate originally given the Division of Theological Studies), the Division "turned its attention to other subjects, most notably the relevance of Luther today and crucial areas in contemporary ethics. So it was that in these latter years *Consensus* came to claim the full implications of its sub-title, 'A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology'." ²

At the end of 1985 the Division of Theology was terminated. The impending formation of the ELCIC and the movement toward autonomy of the Lutheran Church-Canada (LC-C), reduced the Lutheran Council in Canada to a small operation, and made a Division of Theology redundant. I had been a Lutheran Church in America-Canada Section appointed member of the Division since 1979, and chair of the Division since 1981. The survival of *Consensus* became thus also a personal concern.

At the Spring 1985 meeting of the Division the future of *Consensus* formed a large part of the business agenda. An Advisory Committee consisting of Mr. Walter A. Schultz (Executive Director of the Lutheran Council in Canada) and Drs. Norman J. Threinen, Egil Grislis, and Eduard R. Riegert was appointed, and the then serving members of the Division were appointed to serve as the Board of Directors: Egil Grislis, William Hordern, Eduard R. Riegert, Norman Threinen, John Wilch.

By the Fall 1985 meeting of the Division it was clear that neither the restructured Lutheran Council in Canada nor the to-be-constituted-in-1986 ELCIC would be able to take any responsibility for *Consensus*. Furthermore, Concordia Seminary in St. Catharines (an LC-C institution) had just begun its own journal, and therefore there was neither hope for nor interest in *Consensus* from the LC-C constituency. The last action of the Division was to recommend a letter be written to Canadian Lutheran seminaries and colleges informing them of the conclusion of *Consensus* and urging creative action "to continue a joint Canadian scholarly journal". At the conclusion of that meeting the Division of Theology was declared ended. *Consensus* was an orphan.

I thereupon spoke with Dr. Richard Crossman (WLS), who at once

proposed that *Consensus* be adopted by the two ELCIC seminaries. Dr. Roger Nostbakken (LTS) responded favorably, and, by telephone, an Editorial Board made up of representatives from each Seminary and Dr. Egil Grislis was agreed to. On 17 February 1986, at the Holiday Inn in Winnipeg, Crossman, Grislis, Nostbakken, and Riegert met to formalize the adoption. Walter A. Schultz was invited to the meeting to assist in the transition. The Editorial Board established at this meeting (Nostbakken and Kleiner from LTS, Crossman and Riegert from WLS, and Grislis) has remained constant until the retirement of Nostbakken and the accession to the presidency of LTS of Dr. Faith Rohrbough.

Because WLS had access to a publishing program at Wilfrid Laurier University, it was decided to locate the publishing activities there. As a result, Riegert subsequently became the Managing Editor and Nostbakken became the chair of the Editorial Board.

1986 was something of a frantic year. The fourth Number of the 1985 year had not yet been published, and the Post Office informed us (through the Lutheran Council in Canada) that unless a fourth Number appeared by 18 June 1986 *Consensus* would forfeit its second class mailing privileges and be liable to pay first class postage on the three Numbers that had been produced. We cobbled together Vol. 11, Number 4, 1985 (Riegert and Crossman are listed as editors) and got it mailed in time.

The experience led the Managing Editor to make a number of proposals to the Editorial Board (26 May 1986). These included a biannual publishing schedule; the combining of 12/ 1 and 2 into one volume, to consist of the papers of the Lutheran-Anglican Dialogue 1983-86, to be edited by Riegert; the inclusion of sermons in each Number; and the appointment of a Book Editor. Nostbakken replied for the LTS faculty, agreeing to these main concerns, and proposing that each Seminary assume responsibility for editing one Number per year. Later that same year Robert Kelly agreed to be the Book Editor, and the offices of Managing Editor (Riegert), Production Manager (Crossman), and Homiletical Editor (Riegert) were created. Richard Crossman created the logo and the cover design. In September 1986 the Editorial Board, meeting in Waterloo, approved the administrative structure.

In 1990 a new section in the journal was suggested which, in 1991, became the present "Studies and Observations" section. Dr. Robert Kelly, who had proposed it initially as a "public forum", became its editor and

served in that capacity until 1998, by which time the section had become also a place for worthy unsolicited articles and briefer pieces; he was succeeded by Dr. Timothy M.J. Hegedus. Dr. John H.C. Neeb succeeded Kelly as Book Editor in 1991; upon Neeb's untimely death in 1997, Dr. David S. Jacobsen assumed that responsibility.

Because the publishing facilities were available at Waterloo, Dr. Richard Crossman, as Production Manager, has, since 1985, overseen and been part of the production, publication, circulation and financial operations. Bette E. Smith was Production Associate from 1986 to 1994, when she turned that responsibility over to Donna Erb, while yet retaining financial oversight. From 1990 to 2000 Patricia Porterfield has served as Circulation Manager, and, starting with this Number, has been succeeded by Karen Gastmeier.

The installation of a new publishing program during 1997-98 has brought with it significant changes in personnel and responsibilities. Most important of these is the recognition of the two Seminary heads, Dr. Richard Crossman and Dr. Faith Rohrbough, as publishers of the journal. Such recognition is long overdue, since it is the institutional commitment to scholarly publication that has made – and continues to make – *Consensus* possible. Donna Erb, who has inaugurated the new program and implements it, is now Production Manager.

In the world of scholarly research and publication, the rescue of *Consensus* and its growth into a genuine “Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology” are singular achievements, and of large importance for the scholarly and ecclesiastical communities not only in Canada but beyond its borders.

NOTES

¹ *Consensus*, 1/1, January 1975, p. 2.

² Eduard R. Riegert and Richard C. Crossman, eds., “The Future of *Consensus*,” *Consensus*, 11/4, October 1985.