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Theology of the cross: theory and practice

Richard C. Crossman

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FOREWORD

The "Theology of the Cross" has been an important motif in theological thinking, not only among Lutherans but also among all Christian denominations, since the time of Luther. This edition of *Consensus* focuses attention on this motif. In each new age and context the question needs to be raised, what if any significance does this motif continue to hold for us? It is to this question that this issue is directly and indirectly addressed. In so doing it explores the theory and practice of the "Theology of the Cross".

Douglas John Hall gets things started by re-examining Luther's understanding of this motif. Hall believes that Luther's understanding was marked by four characteristics: a) a realistic appraisal of the world, b) a view of God that takes seriously the "real humanity" of Jesus, c) a sensitivity to where God and "the devil" are contending in the world, and d) a hope for justice that recognizes that a struggle yet remains which will necessarily include suffering. It is Hall's contention that contemporary theological reflection needs to continue to pay attention to these characteristics.

Timothy Hegedus continues the enquiry by raising the question of how Douglas Hall, a major contemporary Canadian theologian, employs the Theology of the Cross in his own theologizing about contemporary culture. He finds Hall's contextualizing of theology to be a significant contribution to the meaning of this motif for our time. However, he raises a question about the place of the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments (means of grace) in Hall's approach.

Oscar Cole Arnal furthers the task by turning his attention to manifestations of the Theology of the Cross in Canadian history. There he finds a number of historical figures and movements which stand as examples of what cruciform living

looks like in contemporary life. He suggests that Christians today should recover this cruciform dimension of their history and build upon it for a more fulfilling future.

Richard Crossman next considers what contemporary writers on church renewal have to say about how the church should deal with the cruciform shape of its decline in well-being. He finds there are three divergent basic approaches taken to this reality. He argues that a way must be found to reach beyond the divergence of these approaches while still affirming their fundamental insights.

In addition to the above articles on the theme of the Theology of the Cross, we include two of general interest. Egil Grislis' "Authority and Pastoral Practice" is the fourth and last of a series of lectures originally delivered to the 1987 Leadership Conference of the Eastern Synod (ELCIC) and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, which we have been publishing one at a time over the past two years. Here he explores the question of the relation between Christian authority and pastoral practice, a concern clearly related to realizing a theology of the cross.

Hartmut Horsch examines the impact of contemporary electronic media on the presentation of the Biblical witness as a written/spoken Word. He finds the insights of Neil Postman to be most helpful in pursuing this task. He raises the question of the degree to which the influence of image media contributes to a theology of glory and a loss of theological substance.

Richard C. Crossman
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary