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Issues and Concerns in Ethics

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Foreword

We live in a time when we are confronted every day by ethical issues and concerns. Whether they be of a more personal nature, like abortion and inclusive language, or of a more societal nature, like peace and the farm issue, we cannot avoid their challenge. Through them we are called to manifest the Kingdom of God in our daily living. It is to this challenge for ethical living that the articles and sermons of this issue of *Consensus* are dedicated.

In the first article Dr. Lawrence Toombs of Wilfrid Laurier University, calls our attention to the book of *Proverbs*. While traditionally this biblical text has been viewed as basically a body of prudential ethical wisdom, Dr. Toombs argues that such an approach is inadequate. A more adequate approach, he believes, would find in this book, "a model of the way in which theology and secular life may be brought into constructive contact." His treatment explores a wide variety of ethical topics, and gives to us a fuller appreciation of how this book can be an important ethical resource for Christians.

In recent history greater attention has been paid to the way our language works to exclude and discriminate against women. In the article, "The Bible and Inclusive Language," Professor Carol Schlueter of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, addresses this matter of gender bias as it relates to the Christian worshiping community. She feels that previous attempts to try to harmonize the ethical need for inclusive language with the biblical material have tended to be reductionistic. In place of these inadequate approaches she calls for a more balanced alternative. She argues that such an alternative must strike a creative balance between accurate translation and a sensitivity to the

worshipping community as an inclusive reality. In concluding her article Prof. Schlueter offers seven very helpful suggestions for bringing about the creative balance she feels is needed.

Dr. James Reimer notes in his article, "Nation and the Myth of Origin in Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought," that, "many of the major political liberation movements around the world," include a strong drive for national and ethnic identity. However, he also observes that traditional theology has been generally suspicious of nationalistic movements, because such movements have often become discriminatorily exclusive. In light of this tension Dr. Reimer addresses the question, "To what extent can particular nationalistic and ethnic characteristics inform a group's vision of social justice without fostering a new form of oppression?" He seeks to develop an answer to this question through an examination of Paul Tillich's reflections on the rise of national socialism in Germany prior to 1933. Dr. Reimer's work is a helpful resource for better understanding contemporary liberation movements.

It is generally recognized that one of the major ethical issues facing people in Canada and North America is the decline of the "family" farm. Various explanations and descriptions have been provided for this current phenomenon. However, Rev. David Pfrimmer, Director of the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary Institute for Christian Ethics, believes sufficient attention has not been given to the theological dimension of the crisis. Therefore, in the article, "The Future of Farming and Farming the Future," he seeks to draw out this dimension. He feels that three formative ethical dynamics are operative in the farm crisis. Rev. Pfrimmer closes his presentation with three suggested activities which Christians might undertake to help address this crisis.

In the final article of this issue, "The Profile of Authority for Luther's Followers," the second of four essays by Dr. Egil Grislis is presented. These essays were originally presented as lectures at the 1987 Eastern Synod/Waterloo Lutheran Seminary Leadership Conference on the topic, "Pastoral Authority in a Lutheran Perspective". The remaining two essays will appear in the Spring 1989 and Fall 1989 issues of *Consensus*.