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Gordon Jensen

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Re-examining Lutheran Theology

Gordon Jensen

volume editor

We welcome you to this volume of *Consensus*. It has been a year since the 500th anniversary commemoration of the Lutheran Reformation. The two volumes published by *Consensus* last year, under the excellent and able direction of Dr. Joy Philip, explored many avenues of the impact the Reformation still exerts in Lutheran and ecumenical circles today. In many ways, however, it was a year of “Luther overload.” Why then, yet another volume with a focus on Lutheran roots?

This issue began as a result of a November 2017 course taught at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon by Dr. Timothy Wengert, professor emeritus at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Some of the articles came out of that class, and they fit nicely with a growing collection of articles submitted to *Consensus* in the last few years. We have gathered these articles together, for they cause us to re-examine and re-think the positions took on some topics that are often taken for granted.

The first three articles revisit Luther and Lutheran thought on theological themes. Grozli begins with an overview of Luther’s writings on Baptism, followed by Mtata’s exploration of Luther’s thoughts and prayers. Hordern then follows with a reflection on the “sacrament” often forgotten by Lutherans, confession and absolution.

The fourth and fifth articles reflect on ecumenical connections in the Reformation era. The first, written by the Canadian Anabaptist scholar Walter Klaassen, is a provocative exploration of the theology of the cross themes in the Anabaptist reformer Pilgram Marpeck. Given the official apology by the Lutherans to the Mennonite community at the 2010 Lutheran World Federation Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, this article is a helpful reminder that theological themes are not exclusive to one or two theologians. Rather, they belong to the whole community. John Caswell Boyd’s article challenges us to re-examine the Lutheran Confessions as an ecumenical document, while bringing Orthodox theologians into the conversation.

In the section on Studies and Observations, Roger Uitti, professor emeritus of Old Testament at Lutheran Theological Seminary, explores the vexing question of what is, exactly, Old Testament theology? Moreover, can we actually talk about a theology of the Old Testament today? Harold Ristau, associate professor at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, considers the challenges of defining spirituality and says that spirituality is not viewed so much as a quality, but as the consequence of a reality, due to a change of position before God.

The two book reviews in this volume look at two books well worth reading; one dealing with shared ecumenical ministries, and the other exploring the relationship between Lutheran theology and secular law and ethics. We hope these reviews whet your appetite to give these books a close reading. The issue also posts two sermons, one by Prof. David Schnasa Jacobsen and the other by Pastor Tanya Ramer.

Enjoy your reading!