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Much of the discussion of the Lutheran identity of Lutheran colleges and universities is focused on Luther. However there are other important figures in the establishment and formation of these institutions. Wilhelm Löhe, the spiritual father and benefactor of Wartburg College and Wartburg Seminary is one of these figures.

Biography and Historical Context

Löhe was born in 1808 in Fürth, an industrial and manufacturing center near Nürnberg where he grew up in a middle class household.[1] The faith that he knew was a blend of seventeenth-century Lutheran orthodoxy and eighteenth-century Pietism. Löhe's father died when he was still a boy so his upbringing fell on the shoulders of his mother whom he adored. His mother valued education and encouraged him to go to school. Löhe was a good student and graduated from the prestigious Melanchthon-Gymnasium in nearby Nürnberg. (It should be noted that although Nürnberg was near, his attendance still demanded a sizeable commitment from both the pupil and his mother). After graduation, Löhe began theological studies at Erlangen (also nearby) where he spent all but one semester of his studies. Upon completing his studies at Erlangen, Löhe served a series of congregations as vicar. In the 1830s there were more pastors than congregations and Löhe was already a controversial figure so he was not quickly called to a congregation. Finally in 1838 he was called to serve a congregation in a tiny village in the hinterland of Franconia: Neuendettelsau where he served the remainder of his life.

A few key features of Löhe's life bear upon his understanding of education.

First, he grew up in an industrial and manufacturing center and was thus well aware of the effects of the Industrial Revolution. He experienced firsthand how industrialization affects the lives of people. Industrialization attracted people to cities where they often only experienced misery and squalor. Education, Löhe was persuaded, was a way out of the drudgery of life in a factory or worse, unemployment.

Second, his father's death left his mother in a difficult situation. She knew that education was a way out for her son, thus she became one of his most important champions during his studies.

Third, these experiences (the Industrial Revolution, his father's death and his mother's encouragement of education) together shaped his passion for and sympathy with those who were less fortunate. An important component of his mission strategy had to do with what today we call "service." His mission endeavors were often shaped by people's physical and economic needs. "Not only are [Christians] to proclaim the Word, they are to live the Word." (Ratke 183) Even his understanding of worship, particularly of the Lord's Supper, is shaped by his concern for those who are poor and hungry: "The eucharistic table should not be a table where some whose bellies are full feast while others are distracted from the rich blessings of the redemptive meal because their bellies grumble with hunger."[2] (Ratke 120)

The fourth relates to Löhe's own experience of education. His theological studies at Erlangen were enriched by the example of a geology teacher who was a fervent and active Christian. This experience contrasted sharply with the example of his own theology professors at Erlangen and his experience in Berlin. In Berlin he was dismayed by the example of Hegel (he couldn't see

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any practical application or implication of Hegel's philosophy in either Hegel's teaching or personal life) and encouraged by the example of Friedrich Schleiermacher. He disagreed violently with Schleiermacher but admired him for his expression of Christian faith.

Education

Löhe's understanding of education emphasized the following main points:

Teaching and education are about formation. People are transformed by what they know, and, I might add, experience. Löhe writes: "Every cause has an effect. Every word has power. Every lesson changes something in those who are taught and not just within the field or the type of the knowledge, but in all of [the student's] being. Every lesson, in other words, makes humans better or worse. ... In a word, teaching and education [*Bildung*], teaching and formation are inseparable." ("Einige" 373) Students can become better or worse people as a result of their education. Who students become cannot be separated from what they learn in schools. More than that, teachers who educate just with words in the classroom are doing only half of the job. Löhe states, "I don't want to say that instruction, which is given only through words, does not educate in any way whatsoever, but it certainly doesn't educate to the degree that it might when it should and could educate [*bilden*: also "form"]." ("Einige" 376)

Not just teachers, but institutions as well are involved in this endeavor named education. It is too much to lay the burden of teaching or formation on the shoulders of those who are at the front of the classroom. Any institution that lays this burden on its teachers is shirking its responsibility. Schools, colleges, and universities are about education in its fullest sense. Schools must be aware of this responsibility and be prepared to teach more than mere knowledge. Education "encompasses and educates the whole person." ("Einige" 378)

Teachers are whole persons too. They teach in places other than the classroom; and they teach in other ways besides through words. If students are to be understood as whole persons, then teachers are as well (and, for that matter, institutions of higher education). "Teaching and life are of one piece."[3] ("Einige" 376) That is, teachers teach with their actions and lives as much as they teach with their words. Just as a sacrament is the Word of God made visible, so should our teaching make our values visible.

Teachers need to be learning as well. I've already said that teachers are whole persons and that they model in their actions and their personal lives what they teach. Presumably one of the things that teachers teach is that the life of the mind is a worthy life. They teach students that learning is valuable. Teachers, who should have the best interests of their students at heart, must be involved in learning themselves. "Teachers should always be learning and researching, always asking questions." ("Aphorismen" 418)

Education is not neutral. It is—or ought to be—religious. Education sanctifies. I have already hinted at the neutrality of education and teachers. They are not. They cannot be neutral when education is about the communication and transmission of not just knowledge and skills, but also values. "All education is religious: Religion sanctifies even the so-called worldly means of education so that it is no longer merely worldly." ("Einige" 373) Löhe is saying here that the values of Christianity—love, mercy, justice, peace, service, etc.—sanctify the world. They make it holy. Education, at its best, is about overcoming hate, evil, injustice, and self-centeredness.

Education is not just for the present. Clearly, if we as whole persons are about teaching the whole person, our concern is not just for the immediate present, for practical and utilitarian ends. "Whoever is educated only for the present ... but not for eternity, is actually defrauded with this education, because they really are not being educated." ("Einige" 373) Education is about providing students with the tools they need to meet the future with confidence and hope.

Educational institutions need to be whole institutions. I have already mentioned this, but it needs to be highlighted. Educational institutions are not only about proclaiming the Word, but living the Word. If there is a dissonance between the values of the institution and what it practices, then there is a problem. A school can hardly talk about the importance of meeting a person's physical needs so that they are not hungry or live in poverty if its employees are underpaid. It can hardly talk about the importance of wholeness if its faculty and staff are stretched and stressed by the busyness of committee meetings and other institutional commitments. It can hardly talk about the importance of wholeness if its faculty haven't the resources to be engaged in research and learning.

Conclusion

Education is for the whole person. While knowledge is clearly the primary "commodity" that a college has to offer, it is not the only one. A college committed to education offers values and faith as well. A college committed to education witnesses to the truth it teaches not just in the classroom with words, but in its policies and its practices as well. Finally, education is a communal activity that involves not just students and teachers, but administration and staff—indeed the entire college—ought to be actively engaged in this important endeavor.

Endnotes

1. That Fürth is an industrial and manufacturing center can be seen in the fact that the *Adler,* the first train in Germany, traveled between Fürth and Nürnberg.

2. Löhe wrote: "The obligation remains for us to care for our poor brothers, and if we do not hold an agape feast like the ancient Christians, we are not released from mercy. Undoubtedly we go in an unworthy manner to God's table if we do not care for our brothers at the altar, if they do not have, in addition to the heavenly riches of the sacrament, their allotted share of earthly food also" [*Prüfungstafel und Gebete für Beicht- und Abendmahlstage: Beicht- und Kommunion~büchlein für evangelische Christen (Zum Gebrauch sowohl im als außerhalb des Gotteshauses)* in *GW* VII/2:287].

3. Löhe goes on to say: "The more teachers recognize their calling [vocation], they must all the more give all of their being to this calling [vocation] as an example of what their teaching can achieve." ("Einige" 373)

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