Rich and Poor in an Era of Globalized Religion and Economies: Challenges to Lutheran Colleges

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broader context of our Lutheran understanding of vocation and life. Many dimensions of the ELCA Plan for Mission relate to colleges and universities, but one strategic direction in particular does: “Assist this church to bring forth and support faithful, wise, and courageous leaders whose vocations serve God’s mission in a pluralistic world.”

“Vocation and Education reflects this church’s commitment to our colleges and universities.”

In a recent interview, I was asked by a New York Times reporter what I understand to be the role of a national church denomination and its leaders given the changing landscape of American religious life. I said I believe we in churchwide leadership are called to steward the ecology of interdependent ecosystems that make up this church. There was total silence on the other end. “You’re not going to use that quote in your story, are you?” I asked. “No,” was the one word response. I was not to be deterred, so I continued, “I believe we are to build capacity and encourage imagination for our shared mission.” Not only did that statement fail to capture how we interact, the entire interview did not result in a story.

The image of the ELCA as an ecology of interdependent ecosystems is one I received from Dr. Craig Dykstra, vice president for religion at the Lilly Endowment, when he described how he sees the ELCA. It certainly is reflected in our polity. We say in our governing documents that we are a ‘churchwide organization—that reﬂects this living, changing ecology of interdependent, deep, and abiding relationships, it is within the context of our tending to and stewarding this living, changing ecology of interdependent, deep, and abiding relationships. Therefore, when I speak today about our shared commitments, it is within the context of our tending to and stewarding this living, changing ecology of interdependent, deep, and abiding relationships.”

That is a significant change from the not-too-distant past, when discussions of this relationship often focused on whether the colleges would remain church-related, whether in fact the relationship was deep and abiding; or whether there was an inevitable trajectory in American life that would lead colleges to abandon their church-relatedness. Was the relationship between culture and the church a reality that most colleges would discover with time? Implicit in these conversations was the sense that the mission of a higher education and the mission of a church body, while not congruent, were not easily compatible. As if God is opposed to free inquiry. We still debate the nature of the relationship between the church and the colleges, but I sense the question is shifting from whether colleges will and should be church-related (although that question remains with us somewhat) to the question of the content of this deep and abiding relationship or what it should be. I don’t want to minimize these various indicators of our shared relationship that reflect our shared commitments, including:

- The make-up of your boards and how many members are Lutherans
- Whether the president is or must be Lutheran
- The number of Lutheran students
- The level of financial support from the church—be it churchwide grants, synodical grants, congregational gifts, or individual gifts
- Your religion requirements
- Your understanding of your ownership both legally and how you perceive the church as “moral owners”
- Your branding and whether it includes your Lutheran identity
- How the churchwide organization reflects in structure, budget, staffing, and communication this church’s commitment to its twenty-eight colleges and universities
- The presence of ELCA clergy in your campus ministries
- How you structure church relations

All of these are important indicators of our shared commitment, yet it is a shared mission in higher education that is truly central—to our deep and abiding relationship. I believe shared mission is increasingly and rightfully becoming our focus. I am sure that each of you can share examples from your own context about how attention is being given to our shared mission, identity, and vocation, and about how these shape the life of the colleges and universities and the life of this church. Let me share just a few recent examples that I have found very helpful as I reflect upon stewarding this relationship.

The report of the Wittenberg Lutheran Identity Study Commission is a rich, thoughtful, historical analysis of Wittenberg’s Aruna, a World Council of Churches staff member, tells of worshipping with a poor Ayamara (Indian) Lutheran community high in the Andes Mountains in Bolivia. After worship she and those with her were invited to participate in a community lunch with the congregation, but she saw no signs of cooking or food. Then a long piece of cloth was placed on the ground in front of the church and the community sat down on either side of the cloth. “The women unloosened the shawls wrapped around their waists and poured onto the cloth, many kinds of potatoes. … We ate our fill and I wondered what would happen to the remaining potatoes—the surplus of which there was plenty. On a quiet signal from the elder, everyone took a share of the potatoes … Everyone, even those who had brought no food with them, took a share of the potatoes. … We were told that all congregations do the same thing every Sunday.” (Gaudenasso: “All are invited?”)

Christine, a German Lutheran delegate to the recent Assembly of the World Council in Brazil, tells about attending worship at a prosperous immigrant (German) Lutheran church along with several other delegates. During the service the pastor announced that those who had received invitations ahead of time would join the congregation for lunch afterwards, others would need to have lunch elsewhere. Christine was rather surprised about this and wondered if the pastor feared there would not be enough food for everyone who had come. Still, it seemed a breach of hospitality, especially since one of the delegates who had not received an invitation ahead of time was a Lutheran bishop from Asia. (Personal communication February 2006)

I recall these two stories of rich and poor not to make a point about “spiritual” poverty and wealth, although one might do so. Rather I tell them to illustrate two seemingly different attitudes—one open, generous and sharing, the other controlling and protective. When we think about identity and diversity in Lutheran colleges, which will be our stance?

Identity and Diversity in the Lutheran College

In his study of models of church-related colleges, Richard Hughes states that in the Lutheran approach, “the task of the Christian scholar … is not to impose on the world—or on the material that he or she studies—a distinctly ‘Christian worldview,’ as in the Reformed model. ‘Rather, the Christian scholar’s task is to study the world as it is and then to bring that world into dialogue with the Christian vision of redemption and grace.’” Hughes believes that “this theological vision is the great strength of Lutheran higher education for it enables Lutherans to take religious and cultural pluralism with a seriousness that often escapes other Christian traditions.”

In his introduction to Lutheran higher education, Ernest Simmons claims that “Lutheran identity is forged … in the dialectical tension” of what he calls “ecumenical confessionalism.” The ecumenical side can discourage “denominational ideology” by keeping the community mindful of the presence and value of other theological and denominational perspectives, “affirming diversity on our campuses.” The confessional side maintains the value of affiliation “by affirming that in the intellectual arena

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it is preferable to be self-conscious about one’s commitments, not assume such discussion is value-free.” He insists that “confessionalism as a dynamic theological expression does not seek imposed doctrinal uniformity but rather a lively and healthy confessional dialogue between traditions” (5). This understanding of identity and diversity resonates with that of Linell Cady. In her discussion of Religion, Theology, and American Public Life, she suggests that “commitment to a global community” requires an identity for both individuals and societies that reflects “a dual allegiance to both a particular history within which identity and meaning have been rooted and the global order which remains to be fully actualized” (160). Cady insists that “the impossible pretensions to neutrality and universality that underlie the Enlightenment understanding of public, and the public exercise of reason” must be unmasked (64). This caution is particularly relevant when we think about rich and poor—social class—in an era of globalized economies and religion.

PART ONE: GLOBALIZED ECONOMIES
We—and most of all the world’s peoples—are aware of living in an age of globalization. In some ways, this is a new phenomenon. Martin Luther King wrote in 1967 that “We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women ... At the table we drink coffee which is provided for us by a South American, or tea by a Chinese or cocoa by a west African.” Today we could add to King’s list the clothes we wear—underwear and shoes from China, outerwear from Guatemala, Mexico, and India. King concluded that “Before we leave for our jobs we are already beholden to more than one country.” Ulrich Beck calls this “globality”—this sense of living in a world society, without closed spaces. He distinguishes this from “globalism”—the ideology of neoliberalism—or rule by the world market (Held and McGrew 100-102).

The term “globalization” was first used in the late 1960s or early 1970s to refer to “rapidly expanding political and economic interdependence.” In their introduction to the globalization debate, David Held and Anthony McGrew define globalization as “the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interaction.” They note that the process of globalization is “deeply divisive” and “vigorously contested” because a significant portion of the world’s population is largely excluded from its benefits (4-5). This continues to be the case, in spite of Thomas Friedman’s assertions to the contrary in The World is Flat: The World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development from the World Bank admits as much. This report first notes that inequality between countries was relatively small in the early nineteenth century, but had come to account for a larger part of inequality (as contrasted to inequality within countries) toward the end of the twentieth century. It then states, “If China and India are excluded, global inequalities continue to rise, owing to the continuing divergence between most other low-income countries and rich countries” (7). Indeed, China and India have benefited from integration into the global economy. Two qualifications are necessary. First, India and China did not follow all the policy prescriptions of the dominant neo-liberal model; second, inequality has increased rather dramatically within these two countries. The Lutheran World Federation sums this up succinctly, in its “Call to Participate in Transforming Economic Globalization”—“globalization is not global in its benefits” (LWF F7).

The Dominant Paradigm
Globalization, for some, is another name for transnational capitalism. That certainly is the dominant form of economic globalization. It is also called neo-liberalism, because it advocates opening markets (liberalization), promoting exports and foreign trade, deregulation including labor and environmental standards, and privatization of public owned enterprises. This is what Ulrich Beck referred to as “globalism” or the rule of the world market. These policies have been imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank as part of structural adjustment programs in one hundred or so countries as conditions for restructuring loans. Neo-liberalism has also been called the Washington consensus, since the policies are advocated by the US Treasury, which plays a leading role in these international financial institutions. The World Trade Organization and transnational corporations are also key actors in the development of neo-liberal globalization. Two-thirds of world trade is accounted for by transnational corporations, who also control about one-third of the world’s productive assets. Of the top one hundred economies in the world, only forty-nine are countries fifty-one are corporations.

Held and McGrew conclude that neoliberal economic globalization has not transcended the old North-South division of the world but superimposed on it new kinds of divisions along gender, ethnic, and ecological lines. Those who have studied its impact on women claim that it is “both liberating and exploitative.” For instance, Atha Cravy and Patricia Fernandez-Kelly concluded in their separate studies of women who do factory work in Mexico and Central America that even low paid jobs give women “a modicum of independence.” But at the same time there have been “devastating assaults on workers of both sexes” (Brubaker 60-64).

MARK S. HANSON

Reflections on Our Shared Commitments

IT IS A PRIVILEGE for me to be with you and to thank you for your exceptional leadership. Although it has been four years since I was with this group last in Sarasota, I appreciate the opportunity to be with many of you on your campuses and in other gatherings.

This academic year, I have been on five of your campuses, maintaining my commitment to support the twenty-eight colleges and universities of this church and to be with students. Last week I was on two campuses—Dana and Luther. I was so impressed as I listened to the students share their passions and their faith and reflect their varied experiences in the classroom and in the world.

I often comment that the current generation of students seems increasingly clear that they want to be part of a church that matters in which faith matters, worship matters, commitment matters, Jesus matters, the Bible matters, and the experience of God matters. They also want to be part of a church that makes a difference. They want to be part of a church that makes a difference in their personal lives of faith, in families, and in neighborhoods; a church that makes a difference in confronting the issues of HIV/AIDS, global warming, poverty, war, and peace. They are impatient with a church that seems turned inward and preoccupied with what appears to students to be secondary, even insignificant, issues. I recognize that I am not describing all students, but significant numbers of them. I believe your schools, your faculty, your staff, and your boards are creating the context that nurtures and encourages such commitments.

When I have the opportunity to talk with personally with you who are presidents, my appreciation for the complexities of your callings always grows. The incredible expectations that you will have a major role in raising funds; in balancing budgets; in increasing enrollments, but reducing or at least maintaining discount rates; attending to alumni expectations while increasing your participation in the annual fund; recruiting and retaining gifted faculty; building relationships with civic and corporate leaders; tending to relationships with the church. Should I continue or did you come to Florida to distance yourselves from those realities?

You have my deep respect and profound gratitude, I want to say a special word of thanks to the four presidents who will be completing or have completed their calls this year: Jon Moline, Texas Lutheran; Steven Tirio, Millard; Paul Formo, Bethany; and Bob Ubbelohde, Finlandia.

I am privileged to address you today, but it is my churchwide staff colleagues who daily tend to our relationships with you with great dedication and imagination—Stan Olson, Mark Wilhelm, Arne Selbyg, Marilyn Olson, and Myrna Sheie. They are advocates for you, interpreters, and accompaniers.

The last time we met it was not yet clear how we would restructure the churchwide organization, including personnel and budgets to undergird our strategic Plan for Mission. You as presidents and board chairs were very helpful and sometimes critical in shaping what is now the Vocation and Education program unit. I believe Vocation and Education reflects this church’s commitment to our colleges and universities within the

MARK S. HANSON is the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This address was first presented at the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) on March 1, 2007. This article is reprinted with the permission of the ELCA and the Bishop’s office.
There is an understanding that the relationship between the colleges and the "churchwide" is another expression of diversity mentioned by the Bishop. Some embrace the relationship closely; others hold it much more gently. Some parade their "Lutheran-ness" on their website. Others mention it as part of the "historical background."

With all this diversity, what does it mean to be a "Lutheran" college or university? I would suggest that this question itself is one that is well worth asking (and attempting to answer) on each of our campuses. I would also suggest that the annual Vacation of the Lutheran College conference is a productive place for these conversations to continue. By the time you get this, this year's conference will be upon us—held this year at Augustana College in Rock Island, IL from August 2-4th. You can check with the conference office to find out more about how to attend.

While this great diversity is evident to those of us within the group called "Lutheran colleges and universities," Randy Balmer's contribution shows us that we have some commonalities that may be more evident to those looking at us from the outside. It may be like someone telling me that I look just like my brother. (I'm not sure either of us sees this as a compliment!) Sometimes we can see ourselves better through eyes of "the other." We might well be pleased with what Randy Balmer sees when he looks our direction.

José Marichal and Pamela Brubaker talk about other sorts of diversity—that those from our places in our communities and in the world. Each of them sees opportunities in these diversities. Storm Bailey argues that being Lutheran is precisely that which makes us embrace the diversities we find. We do not embrace diversity in spite of the fact that we are Lutheran but because we are Lutheran. This surely is a theme that our administrators and faculty need to say in a variety of ways—to each other and to students and to the communities in which they find themselves. What else can we say about ourselves because we are Lutheran?

We are also glad to reprint a talk given in chapel by Jaime Schillinger at St. Olaf. This piece might well remind us of the importance of worship, of liturgy, to our formation as communities. Here we are bound together in the story that we tell and that "tells us" from ancient times into the ever renewing present. This also is a gift of Lutheran theology that calls us to unfold and blossom.

Again, I invite you to consider submission of materials that speak to the concerns of the Purpose Statement at the front of this issue. Please submit your work (preferably in electronic MLA format) to me at BobHaaK@augustana.edu.

The vast majority of copies of Intersections are distributed through an office on your campus (different on each campus). If you find this forum valuable—and want to ensure that you receive your own copy and not be at the mercy of whomever distributes the newsletter at your institution—please send a note indicating your interest to LauraOMelia@augustana.edu. You will be added to our direct mailing list.

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In a special issue of the journal Feminist Economics focused on gender and globalization, the editors point to the negative impact of globalization on non-market goods and services, including reproductive work. Values and social relationships that do not adhere to market norms of self-interest and profit maximization are demeaned. "Thus, a significant proportion of women's contribution to the economy is relegated little or no importance, as symbolized by the underestimation of unpaid work in national and international statistics." (Benner, et al. xiii).

Economist Dianne Elson notes that economic globalization impacts processes of both production and social reproduction, although little attention is given to the latter in the globalization literature. "What is left out of account is the process of social reproduction in which women invest time and money in the education and socialization of children; and in nutrition and healthcare for children and adults." There is an assumption that "social reproduction will always accommodate itself to savings and investment decisions made in the public sphere." But Elson notes that this can only be taken for granted "if people can live on fresh air or women's unpaid work is available in unlimited supply." "Serious crises in social reproduction continue in many parts of the world. The impact of these crises differ by class, race/ethnicity, and region—but women bear the brunt.

Sociologist Saskia Sassen calls this "the feminization of survival."

PART TWO: GLOBALIZED RELIGION

In his book Global Religions, sociologist Mark Juergenmeyer points out that "Although there are regions of the world that serve as dense centers of gravity for certain religious traditions, much of the world is less certain as to its religious identity, and always has been" (5). He thinks about religion in terms of culture, which he has long found to be a fruitful approach. "It is understandable that the cultural elements would move as people have moved," Juergenmeyer suggests, "if one thinks of religion as the cultural expression of people's sense of ultimate significance." It also is understandable, then, "that they would interact and change over time just as people have." He asserts that although most all religions traditions claim some unchangeable "ultimate anchors of truth," it is irresistible that every tradition also contains within it "an enormous diversity of characteristics and myriad cultural elements gleaned from its neighbors." All of this is part of the "globalization of religion" (5).

Juergenmeyer identifies three types of global religions. The first is global diasporas—religion is global in that it is related to the global transportation of peoples. Judaism and Hinduism are examples. These are not generally universal religions, open to converts, but the religious expression of particular peoples.

The second type is transnational religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. These religions are open to converts and spread with the transnational acceptance of their religious ideas. The third type is the religion of globalization—new religions that emerge as expressions of new interactive societies. This type is also the religion of plural societies. Interestingly, he gives Christianity its origins in the Roman Empire as an example of the religion of plural societies. Finally, Juergenmeyer suggests, it is possible that a global civilization with its own global religion is evolving (5).

Juergenmeyer examines the relationship of religion and the state. He suggests that "The same Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam that provide for some rulers a supportive ideology have been for others a basis for rebellion" (6). A rather crude religious legitimation of transnational capitalism links the market to God. Before his downfall, Enron CEO Ken Lay told a reporter that he believed in God and he believed in the market. Theologian Harvey Cox has written that the Market now is God—it is seen as omniscient, omnipresent, and all powerful—what some call "market fundamentalism." Buddhist author David Loy thinks that the religion of the market is the primary competitor to more traditional religions.

Some adherents of these "traditional" religions are searching for and finding common ground to resist neo-liberal economic globalization. For instance, all the world's religions share the belief that one is responsible for meeting another's needs. Religious and secular groups are forming coalitions to advocate for alternative forms of economic globalization. The World Council of Churches, a fellowship of over three-hundred Christian Protestant and Orthodox denominations from over one-hundred countries, is an example of a "transnational religion" engaged in resistance to neo-liberal economic globalization. The WCC is an official observer at and participant in the United Nations and its various international agencies (as is the Lutheran World Federation). It has participated in the meetings of the World Social Forum, which brings together thousands of people and groups committed to social and economic justice. The WCC engaged in encounters with the World Bank and IMF at their invitation. It understands its role to be "bringing the cries of the people." The WCC was urged by delegates to its 1998 Assembly to challenge economic dynamics which were causing so much suffering to peoples in the South. Since then the WCC has held several regional consultations on economic globalization, in conjunction with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Lutheran World Federation. This work resulted in a common critique of neo-liberal globalization and development of an alternative paradigm, "economy of life." "An economy of life calls for a world
of just, participatory, and sustainable communities. A full description of the vision can be found in “Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE),” a background document for the Ninth Assembly of the WCC in February, 2000. A crucial element of this alternative paradigm is to make “people’s work, knowledge and creativity” the driving forces of economic activity, rather than capital owned and controlled by a small, extremely wealthy elite. There is a place for markets in this alternative, but they are not the final arbiter of value. Water, for example, is a basic need and public good which should not be reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold for profit. An economy of life seeks to promote cooperation between individuals, communities, and nations, rather than competition. This paradigm gives greater material and moral value to care work, and addresses the gender imbalances associated with care work.

It is important to know that there are already many alternatives in place in different parts of the world. The work of the indigenous community in Orissa, India, is one inspiring example. Under the leadership of William Stanley (an Indian Lutheran) and Sasi Prabha, the village of Parsul created an existing small dam into a small scale hydro-electric project. It produces just enough electricity for the needs of the village, and a battery charging facility for a neighboring village. The villagers contributed their labor. Two young people have been trained to run the power plant, completely managed and supported by the people. Besides providing electricity for home use, it also runs a grinding and milling machine. This saves the village women, who were leaders in the movement, many hours of grinding grain by hand (Gnanadason Listen to the Women 18-19).

Finance and trade are also addressed in an economy of life. The purpose of an international financial system should be to enhance justice, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. Trade should aim to serve just ends—“ethical, sustainable and equitable production, exchange and consumption of goods and services to meet the needs of all humankind and the earth.” It argues for trade that protects human rights and the earth through effective labor and environmental regulations (WCC 14-15).

The WCC, LWF and other ecumenical bodies have sent petitions to the World Trade Organization asserting the need for countries to address their concerns. (summer of 2001). After the failure of the most recent round of trade negotiations (2001), the director of the WTO asked to meet with the WCC and other bodies to discuss their concerns.

Conclusion
How is all this a challenge to the colleges? Part of our task as college and university professors, I have claimed elsewhere, is to educate for critical citizenship, or, to use the words of Darrell Jodock, “to enable young men and women to discern what makes for justice and what preserves and enhances human dignity” (18). Given the hegemony of the neo-liberal model, it is crucial that students are encouraged to question its underlying assumptions, for instance, that growth and profit are the primary ends of economic activity or that the market should be the primary arbiter of value. The Lutheran World Federation and the WCC offer useful resources for this task.

Raising awareness of global issues, including wealth and poverty, is an appropriate task for liberal arts colleges. Exposure trips, study abroad, speakers—all are useful approaches. Adding a unit on an aspect of globalization—one or two weeks long—can be a good way to incorporate such concerns in humanities and social science classes. Films and/or case studies are helpful in making the topic and issues come alive for students. I supplement these with background material on key actors, their values and assumptions, and relevant policies and dynamics.

Since students can feel overwhelmed with the suffering and injustices they are exposed to in films, I include a few specific policies and proposals that address these problems. For instance, I introduce students to the Millennium Development Goals, which aim to reduce poverty and improving education and health. Target rates and deadlines are an important part of the plan. We read a brief article by a staff person at the IMF discussing actions, such as increasing trade and aid, necessary to meet these goals, and an article from Jubilee USA claiming that these are not adequate without cancellation of the external debt of low-income countries. (Most of these materials are available on websites.) Students write a short essay discussing the importance of a few of the goals and comparing the approaches to meeting the goals. I have also focused on global issues that are closer at hand—migrant workers in the garment industry in the Los Angeles area and/or migrant farm workers in the fields of our country. Sometimes we have formal debates on topics such as debt cancellation, with teams of students representing different positions.

Teaching students about universal human rights—social, economic and cultural as well as civil and political—is also a useful strategy for addressing issues of religion, globalization and economic change. Theological and ecumenical Larry Rasmussen contends that the church’s universal vision and conviction is of “the necessary, full inclusion of the excluded, on egalitarian terms.” Universalism and egalitarianism are both “assertions of faith itself, whether or not they also have secular grounds.” These assertions are “the converging Christian ground for one of the lasting moral achievements of modernity itself—universal human rights.” (148-9).

Rasmussen’s stance is not an endorsement of unreconstructed liberalism, with its pretensions to neutrality and universality.
Purpose Statement: This publication is by and largely for the academic community of the twenty-eight colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Vocation and Education unit of the ELCA. The publication has its home at Augsburg College, Rock Island, Illinois, which has generously offered leadership and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the publication. The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators that have addressed the church-college/university partnership. The ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College Conferences. The primary purpose of Intersections is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- Linking up the Vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities
- Encouraging thoughtful dialogue about the partnership of colleges and universities with the church
- Offering a forum for concerns and interests of faculty at the intersection of faith, learning, and teaching
- Raising for debate issues about institutional missions, goals, objectives, and learning priorities
- Encouraging critical and productive discussion on our campuses of issues focal to the life of the church
- Serving as a bulletin board for communications among institutions and faculties
- Publishing papers presented at conferences sponsored by the ELCA and its institutions
- Raising the level of awareness among faculty about the Lutheran heritage and connectedness of their institutions, realizing a sense of being part of a larger family with common interests and concerns.

From the Publisher: Most issues of Intersections include papers delivered at the annual conferences on “The Vocation of a Lutheran College,” organized by the Vocation and Education unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for the colleges and universities that are related to the ELCA. But most of the papers in this issue grew out of a pan-Lutheran conference organized by the Association of Lutheran College Faculties in the fall of 2006. This is an association of Lutheran faculty from public and private institutions, and from Lutheran colleges affiliated with different church bodies. The ELCA is an ecumenical church body, committed to friendly and cooperative relations with people and organizations of many faith backgrounds. We have no difficulties working with and discussing issues with Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Jews, Muslims, or with other Lutherans who are not feeling at home in the ELCA. We know we can learn from them, and we hope that they will learn something from us.

It is always challenging to work with people who are not ecumenically oriented, who believe that they or their church body have the whole truth and do not need to learn from anyone else. We who are in the ELCA also know the truth, but we recognize that the truth that we know may be limited. Just like the disciples who were following Christ, we try to figure out what his sayings mean, and some times we discover that we have misunderstood him. We think that this applies to all humans. While God is infallible, we humans are not.

The ELCA view is a good foundation for institutions of higher education. Like the faculty members at the Lutheran colleges, the ELCA professes. Like the faculty members, we recognize that what we profess is subject to change based on new research, new discoveries, and new insights. That is the beauty and the value of the conferences of the ALCF. They bring together faculty who know the truth, truth that has set them free. And these faculty members listen to each other, and they may learn the conferences with a different truth than when they arrived. We hope that the articles in this issue will encourage you to attend future ALCF conferences (and, of course, “Vocation of the Lutheran College” conferences!), and we hope that they will add new insights to your truth, so you will be a professor with a stronger base from which to profess.

Rather, it is a reaffirmation of “the valuable parts of the liberal Protestant heritage” too often rejected by postmoderns and communists: “commitments to public participation, justice, and critical reflection on inherited traditions” (Bounds c18).

At its heart, this open, generous stance comes out of the shared life and struggle of peoples struggling against “the all-pervasive neo-liberal logic that undergirds and directs economic globalization as a totalizing system” (Bloomquist 44). This is an affirmation of justice and human dignity. Part of our academic work, I contend, is to develop a richer understanding of rights, particularly universal human rights. Our aim is, as Peter Pense (JWU staff for international affairs and human rights) eloquently charges, for “all people of faith and goodwill” to claim and use them on behalf of our communities and on behalf of the whole human family, in order to remove rights purposed to the process of globalization” (118).

Works Cited


