

2007

From the Editor

Robert D. Haak

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections>

Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Haak, Robert D. (2007) "From the Editor," *Intersections*: Vol. 2007: No. 26, Article 3.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol2007/iss26/3>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Intersections* by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

From the Editor

We live in a culture which claims to take seriously the “doctrine” of separation of church and state. For many in our community, this concept is integral to our way of being religious in the world. We assume that this is “just the way things are” for us as Americans and Christians (and Lutherans).

We engage in lively debates about the role religion should play in our lives and in our public institutions. We wonder if the religious persuasion of our presidential candidates might have an effect on their performance in office. We debate if “wise-men scenes” should be allowed into the town square. Should a non-Christian be allowed to chair a religion department at one of *our* colleges? From a Lutheran perspective, what should be the role of our beliefs in relation to the culture? More pointedly, should our “Lutheranism” have any real effect on how we operate as “Lutheran colleges”? Or is this just a vestige of our pasts that for all practical purposes is best left to the side.

I suspect these questions would be strange to those whom we look to as founders—Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon. We sometimes forget that they lived and taught in a world far removed from the ideas of “separation of church and state”—on the other side of interminable wars that led to the development of this concept. How did they imagine the relation of what they were doing within and to the culture around them? Specifically, how did they imagine the effect of their ideas on the educational practices and institutions of their day? A related question is whether our “Lutheranism” should have any discernable effect on how we identify ourselves among the institutions of high education today.

These are the issues addressed by the authors of the articles included in this issue. They clearly believe our “Lutheranism” does and should have an effect. Ernie Simmons and Sabine O’Hara outline some of the values that characterize our “Lutheran” institutions. Colleagues from Wartburg College reflect on how these values connect to practical life on the campus.

I wonder if we could (or should?) develop a list of “Lutheran” values that characterize our institutions. The first question might be to discover what would be on that list. If we were to develop a list of “Lutheran” values that characterize our institutions, what

would be on that list? The articles in this issue would propose that Lutheran colleges take seriously...

- that the world and its problems are complex;
- that there is real evil in the world and within each of us;
- that suffering is a part of the human experience;
- that discourse within our community and beyond our community is crucial;
- that there are values that transcend the merely physical;
- that education must pay attention to place, including the world itself;
- that all institutions (including colleges) should be self critical;
- that lines that divide are often less important than those which unite.

Surely other values could be added to this list. As Simmons suggests, should “pursuing the common good” be added to that list? It is hard to imagine that anyone would argue too strenuously against that idea. But what would holding that value (or any of the values on this list) actually mean as we take seriously the practicalities of operating real institutions on our campuses? That question might lead to some very interesting conversations.

Upon entering this conversation we might find the list we developed is less significant than the conversation(s) that we had in developing the list—the process rather than the product might be that which characterizes us. But even that possibility raises questions. What sort of conversations should we be having? In what contexts? Who should be allowed into the conversation? Should some voices be privileged?

I challenge each of you to explore these issues on your campus... and I make the offer to provide this forum to share the results you achieve. This may be the place where the conversation you begin can continue in the larger community of Lutheran colleges and universities.

ROBERT D. HAAK | The Augustana Center for Vocational Reflection, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois