

1997

From the Publisher

James Unglaube

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

Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Unglaube, James (1997) "From the Publisher," *Intersections*: Vol. 1997: No. 2, Article 2.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol1997/iss2/2>

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.

Purpose Statement

This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-eight colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Division for Higher Education and Schools of the ELCA. The publication presently has its home at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio which has generously offered leadership, physical and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the inauguration of the publication.

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators which have addressed the church - college/university partnership. Recently the ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College conference. The primary purpose of INTERSECTIONS is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- * Lifting 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

With the arrival of issue Number 2 of *Intersections* we are well into the maturing of the Vocation of a Lutheran College project. In August, 1996 we gathered for the second annual conference on this theme. We heard from Walter Bouman of Trinity Lutheran Seminary on just "What is Lutheran; What is the Lutheran Tradition." The following pages capture on the printed page his words to us at the conference. His thoughts can be summed up by the headings for the major sections of his paper. He said that the Lutheran tradition is biblical, catholic, evangelical, sacramental, and world-affirming. I was particularly taken by Walt's words in speaking about the Lutheran tradition being worlds-affirming. He talked about the world as being, "... received, enjoyed, served as God's Gift." As we think about location, not of the college as institution for a moment, but as what we instill in the minds and hearts of our students, this kind of stewardship of creation takes on special meaning.

The conference included three presentations on "How is the Lutheran Tradition Embodied in its Colleges and Universities," Wendy McCredie from Texas Lutheran University and Baird Tipson from Wittenberg University shared their thinking set in the context of the institutions they serve. In Barid's presentation, included in this edition, he concludes by speaking about "... five fundamental things that every Wittenberg students should be able to do upon graduation." He makes the case that all five grow out of the Lutheran roots of Wittenberg. They state that Wittenberg wants every graduate to:

- + respond with understanding to the depth and complexity of the human condition
- + recognize, define, and solve problems
- + develop a sense of vocation
- + assume leadership
- + take moral responsibility

They look good.

Wendy's paper concluded with words about her perspective on the reasons we serve these institutions. She said that we "... do so because in large measure [we] share the concern. . . for justice and for the non-judgmental search for truth. She said that many of us would claim "... that [we] engage in action for the sake of love and justice for our neighbors. She goes on to say that "[i]t is this commitment to the non-judgmental understanding that promotes action for the sake of love and justice that unities us. It is we who embody both individually and collectively the Lutheran tradition." The Vocation of a Lutheran conferences have been an opportunity for all of us to gain a greater understanding of that tradition.

Bob Vogel, in his presentation: "Coherence - And Now what? challenged many of us on the campuses and in the church to think about how we make this tradition of which we are a part more real in the way we do our work. In speaking to those of you who serve on the campuses he said:

Many have expressed what a joy and blessing it is to be a part of places like ours where you can be totally engaged in what you are doing. You don't have to leave your beliefs, your values, your feelings at home when you go into the classroom and when you are talking with students or colleagues. You can talk about your own beliefs and values. You can share what you hold to be the meaning of life.

For all that the Lutheran tradition in higher education may mean theologically, and how it has expressed itself historically, it comes to life and has its meaning on the campuses in how we give expression to it in our own lives and the ways we lead them and share them.

The planning committee which serves this project is now engaged in plans for the third conference, which will also be supported by the Lilly Endowment out of funds still available for the 1996 grant. We are also contemplating the direction for future issues of *Intersections*. We are considering putting in place a vehicle to provide opportunities for scholars on our campuses and elsewhere to engage in writing and sharing on this topic. In all of this your thoughts are always welcome. Your evaluations of the two conferences continues to help shape future events.

The Vocation of a Lutheran College project really lives, however, through the continuing and broadening dialogue taking place on your campuses. We are excited by the proposals we received from you about these activities. We are anxious to stay in touch with how they proceed. Thanks to all of you for your interest and your commitment to exploring the tradition in which we live and serve.

James M. Unglaube
Director, Colleges and Universities
ELCA Division for Higher Education and Schools
January, 1997

From the Editor

An Invitation

Those of you who read the first issue of *INTERSECTIONS* and have this one in hand probably recognize a pattern. Both of these first two issues have much the same format: 1) a lead essay previously delivered at a Vocation of Lutheran College Conference and 2) several responses. The question therefore naturally arises, will all issues of *INTERSECTIONS* look like this? The answer is no, definitely not.

While we plan to devote one issue each year specifically to continuing the dialogue initiated at these conferences, we also intend another issue which is more open-ended, open-textured, and shaped by the kinds of essays, reviews, poems and/or other artwork you, our readers, send us. We'd be particularly interested in getting letters about things we've already published, things that may have inspired, puzzled or upset you. The idea is to engender engaged discussion. We hope, in fact, to receive so much good stuff from you to necessitate publishing more than twice a year. We aren't presently set up to do that, but it would be a nice problem to have.

Thus far a trickle of interesting manuscripts have begun to come in. We are in process of planning an exciting summer issue which will be sent out to your campuses first thing in September. So please write us and share your good work with us and thereby with your fellow faculty / administrators at the other ELCA colleges and universities.

Turning Toward Learning

Every semester I have a class of about 30 seniors read some selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. What they read includes the following sentences: "Learning and study [*theoria*] seem to be the only activities which are loved primarily for their own sake. For while we derive an advantage from practical pursuits beyond the action itself, from study we derive nothing beyond the activity of learning." These sentences never fail to draw a response, usually a disbelieving hoot of laughter. But frequently a student will say, "Not only is study useful for other ends, but that's the only reason that it's pursued at all. No one would study just for the sake of learning. It's not like it's pleasurable or something. If I didn't think the diploma would get me a job, I wouldn't be studying at all." At this point we usually have an interesting discussion about how an otherwise intelligent Hellene like Aristotle could have gotten this so wrong.

I am not the only person who has noticed that many students are not well disposed toward learning for its own sake. Many faculty colleagues (at my own and other institutions) testify to an array of facts: a) Students rarely pursue a reference or a suggestion to read something in addition to what is assigned. b) Even assigned material may be skipped if "it won't be on the test." c) Faculty are, consequently, spending more and more time "policing assignments." I, for example, find it necessary to have my students turn in daily reading reports on assigned reading. Failing to require this I find only about 1/5 of my students will read the assignments in a timely manner. d) Faculty who require substantial amounts of work from students (even in traditionally high-pressure majors like pre-med) are frequently blamed, negatively evaluated, and even verbally assaulted for expecting the quantity and quality of work they do. e) There is an alarming increase in cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty across the country. Frequently students respond to the "inconvenience" of being caught and punished by saying: "After all, I just wanted the grade, not to really learn that stuff."

Faculty gatherings over lunch or coffee often turn toward complaining about the lack of learning motivation in students. The problem is, of course, that our complaining about it does nothing toward addressing the problem. So my focal question is: "What can a college/university do to help turn students in a positive way toward learning?" I will not claim that it's a problem that can be "solved" or eradicated because the sources of it lie so deep in our culture. By the time students arrive in college the attitude may already be quite firmly set. But the question is: "What can we do to *help* turn students toward learning?"

Neil Postman, in his recent book, *The End of Education*, argues that this alienation toward learning takes place as commonly as it does because