



# You can tell a lot about a man from his library: the Löhe Collection

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The Australian Lutheran College trains pastors for the Lutheran Church and teachers for Lutheran schools. Löhe Memorial Library serves the students and teaching staff of this institution. It is named after Pastor Johannes Paul Löhe (1869-1952), who was a principal of Immanuel Seminary at North Adelaide, a predecessor of ALC. Paul Löhe was the grand-nephew of Wilhelm Löhe (1808-1872), who founded the Mission house in Neuendettelsau in Germany, which supplied many pastors to Australia in the nineteenth century. J.P. Löhe came to Australia as a twenty-year old pastor and was later appointed President-General of one of the two synods which formed the LCA.<sup>1</sup>

I have just spent the long break between semesters at ALC moving all the books in the Löhe Collection from the compactus to ‘the shed’. These books were hard to find, because most of the shelves in the compactus were double-shelved. They are now clearly on display in wooden shelves, under fluorescent lighting in a newly cleaned and fresh smelling extension of the library.

The Löhe Collection consists of many theological tomes and the fruits of a lifetime of book collecting. It includes, as expected, many volumes of theology and philosophy, more in English than in German.<sup>2</sup> The textbook that he appears to have used as a theological student, is *Dogmatik: Akademische Vorlesungen* [Dogmatics: Academic Lectures] by August F.C. Vilmar, which has his signature in the front endpaper, with the date, 1888. It has blue and red pencil underlinings throughout, and marginal notes in German and Greek. There is a letter pasted inside next to the title page. The letter,

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<sup>1</sup> Dean Zweck, 2009. ‘Wilhelm Löhe’ in *LCA Yearbook*, 2009, p.8

<sup>2</sup> Löhe Collection = 2801 volumes, at 27/07/16



dated 24/06/1929, is from fellow Pastor J.J. Stolz, and refers to Vilmar, who died in 1868, as a great prophet of the Lutheran Church.

There are a Hebrew Bible and a Greek New Testament from his student days, and a healthy collection of biblical commentaries and studies, with thirteen on the Psalms and a dozen on Revelation. He was also a keen follower of the first quest for the historical Jesus, for he has a first English edition of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1910, and the *Hibbert Journal Supplement* of 1909, titled "Jesus or Christ?" Both these volumes show evidence of close reading, with many underlinings and copious marginal notes.

The collection contains *Unser Bismarck*, c.1900, a remembrance book with copious hand drawn illustrations. Count Otto von Bismarck was the Chancellor of Prussia when J.P. Löhe was born, soon to become chancellor of a united Germany. Löhe grew up in a new and confident, even arrogant, young country, only in later life to see that country defeated and humiliated and divided again. Amongst his collection is *Der Fuehrer*, a book in two volumes by Konrad Heiden, published in 1944. In his preface Heiden writes,

*It is twenty-three years since I first attended a National Socialist meeting, saw (without particular enjoyment) Herr Hitler at close range, and listened to the flood of nonsense-or so it seemed to me at the time-that he was spouting. It was only gradually that the effects of these speeches made me realize that behind all the nonsense there was unrivalled political cunning.*

Löhe took a real interest in current affairs, and some books have a collection of newspaper cuttings pasted inside the front and back covers, and underlined with his characteristic blue and red pencils:

Graham, Stephen 1915. *Russia and the World: a study of the war.*

Keynes, John Maynard 1920. *The Economic consequences of the Peace.*

MacDonald, J. Ramsay 1910. *The Awakening of India.*

These newspaper cuttings make fascinating reading: the news of a century ago. There are some sobering books as well: *The Great Illusion*, in which Norman Angell argues in 1912, just before the Great War, the economic and social case against modern warfare.



In *Journey through the War Mind*, published a quarter century later (in May 1940, as Germany invaded France) C.E.M. Joad, an English philosopher, analyses the hatred and evil that war brings in its wake.

There are very few Australian books in the collection, but one notable exception is *An Apostle in Australia: the life and reminiscences of Joseph Coles Kirby, Christian pioneer and reformer*, by Edward Kiek (1927). Joseph Kirby was the Congregational minister at Port Adelaide for 28 years until 1908, and his main claim to fame was championing the legislation which brought six o'clock closing of all pubs and hotel bars to South Australia in 1915. Kiek, who taught at Parkin College in Adelaide, was the husband of Winifred Kiek, the first woman ordained to the ministry in any church in Australia in 1926.

There are substantial collections of the works of the early church fathers. There is, surprisingly, no edition of Luther's works, although there may have been one that went into the collection earlier, for the benefit of students. There is a set of Calvin's New Testament works. However, his interests extended well beyond biblical studies and reformation history, and the collection includes a large selection of English church biographies from the Victorian era. These extend from Lord Acton to Charles Wordsworth, Bishop of St. Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane. He also collected many books of the sermons of these English 'divines'. To complement the solid collection of English 'divines' is a pair of Victorian sceptics: the Scottish Germanophile Thomas Carlyle and the English art and social critic John Ruskin, who are represented by nearly complete sets of their works.

Another favourite author is Cardinal John Henry Newman: 8 out of 35 titles on the catalogue. Again, there is a newspaper cutting inside one of these books: *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: being a history of his religious opinions*. The edition Löhe holds is from 1888, but the cutting (from 1913) is advertising a reprint of the original edition from 1864. Newman is the man who left the Church of England in 1845 for the Roman Catholic Church. The newspaper article refers to a rumour in 1862 that he was considering a return. His savage response:

*"I do hereby profess ex animo, with an absolute internal consent, that Protestantism is the dreariest of possible religions; that the thought of the Anglican service makes me shiver, and the thought of the Thirty-nine Articles makes me shudder."*

Löhe's favourite Victorian ecclesiastical author appears to be Frederick Denison Maurice, who is represented by over twenty books. He has a well-marked copy of his



*Theological Essays*, first published in 1853. This is the book, addressed to Unitarians, which cost Maurice his professorship of theology at King's College, London, when he argued against a belief in eternal punishment after death. Towards the end of the book (p.411), Löhe has thickly underlined the sentence, "*eternal life is the knowledge of God and eternal death is Atheism, the being without him.*"

There is a biography of the extraordinary Methodist preacher, William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army with his wife Catherine Booth. There is also a two volume biography of Catherine. Even more interesting are the books they wrote themselves: *Papers on Aggressive Christianity* (1891) by Mrs. Booth, and *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), by General Booth, complete with a coloured chart showing the Salvation Army's way out from destitution, despair and death: "Work for all".

Most interesting for this reader are the comprehensive collection of the works of Friedrich Max Müller, who was a leading scholar of the study of religion in the nineteenth century, and the first translator of the *Rig Veda* into English. Although he was born in Germany, most of his working life he spent in England, and all these works are accessible in English. One has the title, *India: What can it teach us?* This is a course of lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge in 1892. One thing has been highlighted here (p.64):

*We are all very apt to consider truth to be what is trowed by others, or believed in by large majorities. That kind of truth is easy to accept. But whoever has once stood alone, surrounded by noisy assertions, and overwhelmed by clamour of those who ought to know better - he knows what a delight it is to feel in his heart of hearts, this is true - this is sat (Sanskrit) – whatever daily, weekly, or quarterly papers, whatever bishops, archbishops, or popes, may say to the contrary.*

The collection of philosophy includes the classical philosophers, eg. an Oxford edition of the works of Aristotle edited by Immanuel Bekker, dated 1837, in eleven volumes, with text in Greek and apparatus in Latin, a real scholar's edition. However, he did not collect the works of any of the German philosophers. There are only bits and pieces: an idiosyncratic biography of Nietzsche by Anthony Ludovici and *Nietzsche's Madness* and the correspondence with Wagner. There is little of Hegel here, and that little includes, *Hegel's Charlatanism Exposed*, by M. Kelly. The English philosophers are all represented, from Hobbes and Locke to Hume and Mill, father and son. His sympathies appeared to lie with the clarity and pragmatism of English philosophy.



There are some real oddities as well: *Modern Babylon's Downfall Followed by the Triumphant Millennium After Armageddon, Now Fast Approaching Which is Proved by the Death of the Late Emperor of Germany*, by Th. Polack and published in Adelaide in 1888. In this book, the author proves to his own satisfaction that the British Empire is the Babylon referred to in the book of Revelation.

One notable inclusion is a complete set of the Works of Jacob Boehme 1575-1624, a German mystic who obviously had a profound effect on Pastor Löhe. In one of these books, *The Threefold Life of Man*, I found a copy of a letter he wrote on 3rd August 1920, to a man who had advertised in the *Melbourne Argus* for a set of Boehme's works. He says, "Boehme is a gold-mine of Divine Wisdom, but hard work it is to get at the precious metal. I myself am but a poor disciple of his." He laments that he possesses only two of his works, and signs himself "in the fellowship of the master's Master". It is pleasing to note the inscription in the first volume of the collected works: "*Dem lieben Vater, J. P. Loeh, von Hedwig & Max Loeh.*" [To our beloved Father, from Hedwig & Max Loeh]. Dated 1936, this shows that two of his children knew of their father's desire and satisfied it.

Finally, there is a most unexpected inclusion, Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1941, the first Nobel Laureate for Literature from India. The collection contains *Gitanjali = Song offerings: a collection of prose translations made by the author from the original Bengali*, published in 1913 in London and Tagore's *My Reminiscences*. In *The Awakening of India*, mentioned above, was a hand-written copy, by the owner, of a poem written by Tagore in Bengali on the last day of the nineteenth century. It was published in the book *Nationalism* in 1918.

### *The Sunset of the Century*

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-  
red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred  
the naked passion of self-love of nations in its  
drunken delirium of greed, its dancing to  
the clash of steel and the howling verses of vengeance.

So what have I learned about the man from his library? He may have been less conventional in his theology than his positions of seminary principal and church president would suggest. He had a genuine interest in the wider world outside the institutions in which he served. I think he felt more comfortable in his adopted language of English than in his native German. This reflects the fact that he spent much longer in Australia than he did in Germany, and two world wars made his native



tongue a despised one of ‘enemy aliens’. And he was a bibliophile who really loved rummaging amongst second-hand books to pick up a bargain.

