

# Theologian Giants out of Missouri

Colleagues, With the death of Jaroslav J. Pelikan [b. 17 Dec. 1923] on May 13, 2006 one of the super-nova theologians who grew up in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod has arrived at rest in peace. The Pelikan family were Slovaks, JJP's father also a pastor in the "Slovak district" of the LCMS, into whose ministry JJP was also ordained upon graduation from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. But he was larger than life already in his early years, and stories (legends? myths?) still circulate in Missouri of his antics and superstar achievements beginning at prep-school in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

One such work of super-erogation shortly after seminary graduation (and getting his Ph.D. "in the same year," so it is said) was tackling Luther. Prime-mover for, and co-editor of, the monumental 55-volume edition of Luther's Works in English, Pelikan was "the" Luther scholar of America during his early years as teaching theologian. That also received global attention as he was chosen to be president (even with all those Germans there!) of the "International Luther Research Congress" in the 1970s.

In his middle years he literally moved "out" of Missouri, but kept Lutheran connections while teaching "out in the world," initially at the University of Chicago and then many decades at Yale—publishing "big" theological works year after year, that are now classics. I just googled his name on the www and got 297,000 hits.

In 1998 he moved out of Lutheranism into Russian orthodoxy, no longer resisting the slavophile double-helices that were in his genes. When his life-long buddy (from prep-school days onward),

Bob Bertram, asked him about this move, he responded: "Bob, it was finally time, I thought, to become de jure what for years I was de facto."

[For me he was a triple blessing, my teacher at three different schools. And when our daughter went to Yale he was her teacher too.]

An obit for Jaroslav Jan Pelikan was in the May 16 New York Times, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/16/obituaries/16PELIKAN.html> Perhaps it's still there for you to read when this ThTh post gets to you.

The St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary announcement was concise, clear and crisp: "Dr Jaroslav Pelikan falls asleep in the Lord. Christ is Risen!"

2. Another superstar "out of Missouri" is Martin E. Marty. Like Pelikan, MEM is also an historian. [I remember JJP telling us in a 1950 seminary class that he chose church history rather than systematic theology as his bailiwick, "because in the LCMS you don't get into trouble for merely reporting on what OTHER people taught." Did MEM do likewise? Why didn't I learn that lesson?] Marty's interests and publications too go across the spectrum. I got "only" 225K Google-hits for his name. Just for fun go to the following web address and "click around" on MEM. [www.illumino.com](http://www.illumino.com) Don't miss the link to "doctorates."

3. Another "out of Missouri" giant is Frederick Danker, about whom I circulated a notice last week concerning his honorary doctorate from the Dominican "Aquinas Institute" here in St. Louis. Greetings for Fred came my way from 50 of you which I've handed over to him. The one from Marty points to Fred as one in 6 billion: Dear Ed: Do carry my

greetings to Fred. That tribute ["world's #1 N.T. lexicographer"] you pay to him (who of us can hear with so little challenge that we are "the world's best" at something, as he certainly is) is much in place—as is that of the Aquinas people. I can't even picture picturing the careful work that has to go into something like that. [sc. Fred's 1100-page lexicon to the Greek New Testament] How many ELCA folk are "best in the world," other than that we all are, on the *iustus* side of the *simul* formula.

4. Another one is Norman Habel. Really an Aussie Lutheran, professor of Old Testament—and umpteen other things, Norm lived and worked some 20 years "in Missouri." His latest venture is a "Season of Creation" to be tucked into the Church Year around the time of the Day of St. Francis of Assisi October 4. Want to know more? Check this website [www.seasonofcreation.com](http://www.seasonofcreation.com) Besides making the case for such an addendum to the liturgical calendar (already in use in Australia) Norm offers a panoply of goodies for doing so everywhere.
5. A much younger shining star, also "out of Missouri," is Kathryn Kleinhans, theology professor at Wartburg (Lutheran) College, Waverly, Iowa. Evidence of where she is coming from and where she is heading is also on the internet this week.

I'm proposing her essay as the theology posting for today's ThTh #414. Rather than reprinting it, I'll tell you where to find it in cyberspace. It's KK's article for the June issue of THE LUTHERAN, monthly magazine of the ELCA. She has the cover story "Lutheranism 101." It's previewed on the magazine's website.

Here's the  
address: [http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article\\_id=5895&key=34751023](http://www.thelutheran.org/article/article.cfm?article_id=5895&key=34751023)

Peace & Joy!  
Ed Schroeder