

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER - A CORNERSTONE OF CONSERVATISM

By

John Theodore Melke

Prof. Westerhaus
Church History
May 8, 1992

*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Sunnyside Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin*

IN MEMORIAM



JOHN THEODORE MUELLER
1885—1967

This essay is dedicated to my parents, George and Judy Melke. Twenty-seven years ago they named me after the pastor and professor of whom this essay is about. I thank my Triune God for giving me parents who have supported me over the years in my ambition to serve the Lord full-time in the public ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. I ask the Lord's help in the future to keep me a faithful, conservative Lutheran in this task of which there is no better.

A COLLECTION OF J.T. MUELLER'S PUBLISHED WORKS

- 1926 - The Christian Fundamentals.
- Faith Unshaken.
- Five Minutes Daily with Luther.
- My Church and Others, first edition.
- 1928 - The Church at Corinth.
- 1929 - Luther's Large Catechism, with special paragraph heads and notes.
- 1930 - Address on Romans 14:7-9 at the memorial service for Mr. Erling Teigen.
- Concerning the Resurrection Body.
- Facing Our Worst Enemy-the Little Leaven.
- Verneinung der Mitteilung der Eigenschaften seitens der Papisten.
- 1931 - Atheistic Propaganda in Our Country.
- Concerning the Doctrine of Inspiration.
- My Church and Others, second edition.
- 1932 - Boys and Girls Who Became Great Missionaries.
- Heidnische Missionspropaganda hierzulande.
- Introduction to Sacred Theology.
- Lux Veritatis.
- Pensees ueber den Barthianismus.
- 1933 - Kein Modus Agendi vor der Bekehrung.
- Luther or Calvin?.
- Predestination According to Roman Catholic Conception.
- What is Christianity?.
- 1934 - Christian Dogmatics.
- Gnadenwahl nach Ewigkeit und Zeit.
- Grosse Kluft in der Lehre von der Taufe.
- Heilsgewissheit nach der Konkordienformel.
- Umstimmung Gottes im Versoehnungswerk Christi.
- 1935 - First Complete Printed English Bible.
Thy Kingdom Come.
Vereinigte Lutherische Kirche und die Verbalinspiration.
- 1936 - Brightest Light for Darkest Africa.
- The 'Other Martin' and His Significance for Lutheran Theologians in America.
- 1937 - Johann Gerhard als lutherischer Kirchenlehrer.
- The Thomasius Gospel Selection.
- 1938 - Argument against the Individual Communion Cup from the Ex Auyou.
- Can A Christian Be Lost?.
- Checking Up on Modern Luther Biographies.
- Meaning of "Fearing God".

- Professional Growth in the Study of the Confessions.
- St. Paul and Woman's Status.
- 1939 - Antichristian Teachings of Rosicrucianism.
- Christian Congregation: Its Rights and Duties According to God's Word and Our Lutheran Confessions.
- Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnisse des Glaubens Christi, in der Kirche eintraechtig gebraucht.
- Diverse Forms of Modern Rationalism.
- For What Purpose Do We Approach The Lord's Table ?.
- Means of Grace as Viewed by the Reformed.
- Modernism of Reinhold Niebuhr.
- Must We Relinquish Luther on John 5:39 and Gal. 4:4?.
- Problem Sermons for Young People.
- Theological USUS LOQUENDI of the Term CROSS.
- 1940 - Significance of the Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry.
- 1941 - Appropriating Creation to the Father.
- Faith Counted for Righteousness.
- Federal Theory of Imputation.
- Great Missionaries to Africa.
- Great Missionaries to China, second edition.
- John Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides.
- Notes on the Revised Catholic New Testament.
- Word and the Sacraments.
- 1942 - Concordia New Testament with Notes (a revision).
- Early Missionary Endeavors among American Indians.
- Koinonia: Communicatio or Communio.
- Luther's Writings of 1542.
- 1943 - In Touch with Our Historical Past.
- Sir (William Matthew) Flinders Petrie.
- Spiritual Not the Social Gospel in the Church.
- 1944 - Karl Barth.
- Meaning of "Double Honor" in 1 Tim.5:17.
- Schleiermacher, His Theology and Influence.
- 1945 - Confessional Status of Professor Otto A. Piper.
- Digest of Luther's Brief Confession of the Holy Sacrament Against the Enthusiasts.
- My Church and Others: A Summary of Teachings of Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- Soreren Aaby Kierkegaard.
- Sola Scriptura and Its Modern Antitheses.
- 1946 - Concordia Bible with Notes.
- Franz Pieper's Christliche Dogmatik, umgearbeitet und verkuerzt, in einem Band.
- Notes on the Seventy Weeks in Daniel's Prophecy.

- 1947 - Notes on Christ's Descent Into Hell.
- Notes on Emil Brunner's The Christian Doctrine of God.
- Notes on Psalm 51:12.
- Notes on 1 Cor. 14:40.
- Notes on the "Satis Est" in Article 7 of the Augustana.
- 1948 - Can We Trust the Modern Versions?.
- The Lord's Supper and the Christian Life(tract).
- Lutheran Synod Conference of North America.
- St. Paul's Usus Practicus of Holy Baptism.
- Timeless God in Time.
- 1949 - Notes on Luther's Conception of the Word of God as the Means of Grace.
- Notes on Luther's interpretation of John 6:47-58 .
- Notes on the Consensus Tigurinus of 1549.
- 1950 - The Issue Involved in the Lutheran Rejection of Consubstantiation.
- 1951 - Brief Studies: Notes on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Italy.
- God's Concurrence in Human Action.
- Lutherans in Poland.
- Where Christ is, there is the Church(critique).
- 1952 - From Thence He shall Come.
- Great Missionaries to India.
- Lutheran Doctrine of the "Autopistia" of Holy Scripture.
- Luther's Reformation: Its Background and Blessings.
- Notes on John 16:5-16.
- 1953 - John Henry Charles Fritz,D.D.
- The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Ecumenical Movement (Doctrinal Essay at Convention) .
- The Meaning of Our Savior's Ascension.
- 1954 - Are Evangelicals bibliolators?.
- Is God Just?.
- The Lutheran Confessions (tract).
- Luther's Commentary of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans.
- 1955 - Concept of God in Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.
- Transformation or Annihilation.
- 1956 - Dr. C.W. Walther as Theologian.
- Luther's Commentary on Genesis (abridged).
- 1957 - Back to the Reformers.
- The Body Christ Heads- the apostolic emphasis... is unity of Doctrine.
- Luther's Doctrine of the Atonement.
- Luther's Doctrine of Inspiration.

- CONTINUED -

- 1958 - Has Protestantism a Right to Exist?.
- The Final Judgment.
- Luther's Commentary on Genesis (two volumes).
- 1959 - Have We Outmoded Chalcedon?.
- Saint's Reward and God's Grace.
- 1960 - Luther's Cradle of Christ.
- Return to Reality: Preaching the Gospel of Christ.
- 1961 - Luther's 'Canon within the Canon'.
- Pauline Allusions to the Sayings of Christ.
- Tradition as a Protestant Problem.
- 1962 - Basic Christian Doctrine: Adoption.
- 1963 - The Question of Christian Certainty.

- ADDITIONS -

- 1929 - Great Heroes of the Faith and Noble Women Who Served the Lord.
- 1933 - Christliche Theologie und Religion nach ihrem Wesen und Zweck.
- 1938 - Body of Christ in the Holy Supper.

A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

- 1885 - April 5 born at Freedom (Township) Minnesota.
- 1904 - Entrance into Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1906 - Vicarage at Luther College in New Orleans, La.
- 1907 - Graduation from Concoria Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1908 - Marriage to Adeline Meibohm (Blessed with three sons and two daughters).
- 1911 - Professor at Wittenberg Academy in Wittenberg, Wisconsin until 1913.
- Post-Graduate Work at Tulane University.
- 1913 - Accepts call to St. John's in Hubbell, Michigan.
- 1917 - Accepts call to Zion in Ottawa, IL and Trinity in Marseilles, IL (dual parish).
- 1920 - Accepts call as the Professor of Exegesis and Dogmatics at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.
- Coeditor of Der Lutheraner.
- Assistant Pastor of Bethlehem Church in St. Louis until 1947.
- 1922 - Earns a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Webster University in Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1923 - editor of Die Missionstaube until 1929.
- 1927 - Earns a Doctor of Theology degree from Xexin Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1929 - Chairman of the Synodical "Young People's Literature" Board until 1959.
- 1945 - Commissioner to Bad Boll Conference in Germany.
- 1955 - Teaches at St. Louis Seminary on modified service until 1964.
- 1959 - Wife Adeline passes away.
- 1960 - Serves Vacancy at Bethany Lutheran Church in St. Louis, MO through 1961.
- 1964 - June 30 retires as profess after 44 years.
- 1966 - February 17 Incapacitated by severe stroke.
- 1967 - April 15 Soul enters heaven upon death at Lutheran Hospital.

I do not recall exactly when I first realized there is something special and unique about my first and middle name. It definitely was not during my grade school years. I was probably aware of it in high school (Michigan Lutheran Seminary) but did not give it much thought. During my five years at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin I most likely began to proudly boast about it to my friends and classmates. It was in college that I became familiar with a book entitled Christian Dogmatics which is perhaps the most well-known book written by my namesake. Yet it was not until my seminary days that I began to take an active interest into the life of John Theodore Mueller.

I always assumed my classmates and I would be assigned a church history paper to further enhance our understanding of Lutheranism. Almost immediately I wanted my topic to relate to Dr. Mueller in some form. I researched his publications which the seminary library had to offer. I wrote to various men for information. I paged through numerous publications for some insight on this man. However I was not able to find an accounting of his life. He did write a brief autobiographical sketch but at this writing has not been in my hands. In this essay I will share with you a brief biography on my namesake. I will attempt to offer some

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11231 N. Seminary Blvd. 65W
Madison, Wisconsin

insight into his importance as a cornerstone of Lutheran conservatism. In this twenty-fifth anniversary year of Pastor Mueller's death it is appropriate to pay tribute to one of this century's greatest theologians.

John Theodore Mueller was born near Janesville, Minnesota on April 5, 1885 in Freedom Township where his parents, Rev. Andrew Mueller and Ottilie Krumbholtz Mueller lived. In the decade or so following, J.T. probably never gave a thought about entering another occupation than his father's. He did take a well-travelled route toward becoming a public minister. He attended three preparatory schools of the Missouri Synod to prepare him for the lifelong work of the church. First he attended Concordia in St. Paul, Minnesota before traveling east to study at Concordia in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Finally he entered Concordia at Fort Wayne, Indiana before arriving at their seminary in St. Louis, Missouri (Mueller, M. 1967).

In 1904 at the age of nineteen J.T. Mueller entered Concordia Seminary to complete his study for the holy ministry - although he remained a student of the Scriptures his entire life. After two years at the seminary Mueller is called to serve as a teacher at Luther College in New Orleans, Louisiana. According to Dr. Mueller, "Luther College was a high school, normal

school, and theological seminary" (Mueller, M 1967). As a teacher for the high school he taught German, French, Latin, history, and christian doctrine. For the seminary he taught Symbolics, church history and history of dogma (Mueller, M).

Other than teaching at Luther College, Teacher Mueller also served as the vacancy pastor at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in New Orleans. He assisted in developing a new mission in Napoleonville, La. as well. Quite a work load for a twenty-one year old vicar! During that year he even received permission from the faculty at Concordia Seminary to study theology on his own. Before leaving New Orleans in 1907 he passed a written examination given by Dr. Francis Pieper, the president of the seminary as well as an oral examination for his upcoming graduation from the St. Louis Seminary. In June, President Pieper stated that Candidate Mueller "was well-prepared for the office of the ministry" (Mueller, M 1967). Pastor Mueller went back to New Orleans to continue to preach and teach there. He also took time to do some post-graduate work at Tulane University (Mueller, M 1967).

It was in New Orleans where Mueller met his wife, Adeline Meibohm. She was the youngest daughter of Dietrich Meibohm. He taught school at Bethlehem congregation in St. Louis from 1872-1892. He later accepted a

call to teach at Mt. Zion's school in New Orleans where he taught the negro congregation from 1894-1924. It is interesting to note that while in St. Louis he often met with Dr. C.W. Walther to discuss Lutheran doctrine (Wegener, M 1948). Already at this early date Pastor Mueller was associated with sound theologians of his day, preparing him for the task which the Lord gave him for many years.

In the years to come, the Lord does bless John and Adeline with two daughters, Irma and Marilyn and three sons, Armand, Norbert, and Arlo. His three sons also follow the course of their families' past by entering into the full-time work of the church as well. His one son Arlo is still alive in the state of Massachusetts enabling me to correspond with him for this essay. John T. Mueller lost his wife in 1959 and her soul awaits along with him the Ressurrection of our Lord (Mueller, M 1967).

From 1911-1913 Mueller taught christian doctrine and other courses at Wittenberg Academy in Wittenberg, Wisconsin. In 1913 he accepted a call to serve St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hubbell, Michigan. Some of his duties as shepherd of the flock included preaching in German and English and teaching about 150 students (K-8) in their parochial school.

He also carried out some needed mission work in the surrounding area (Mueller, M 1967).

In 1917 he accepted a call to a dual parish in Illinois; serving Zion Lutheran Church in Ottawa and Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Marseilles. Upon arrival he discovered that for the past twenty-eight years only the German language has been preached and taught to the congregation. Communicant membership was only forty in Ottawa and down to twenty in Marseilles. In the three years he served his Lord and the flock faithfully their mission work was graciously blessed. They were able to gain back membership of many of their confirmed Lutherans who had drifted away as well as some non-Lutherans. When Pastor Mueller left in 1920 there were 385 communicants at Zion Lutheran and around eighty at Trinity Lutheran (Mueller, M 1967). It might appear strange to us today that the German language was so prevalent in this decade. The tide obviously was turning toward the English language. Yet whatever the situation, Pastor Mueller was constantly striving to help and guide his congregation whether in German or English. His goal was to bring people into the Word of God in their own language (Caemmerer 1960).

In 1920 Pastor Mueller accepted a call to serve as a seminary professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

At the tender age of thirty-five Mueller began his long career where he graduated from in 1907; being a fixture on the campus for over forty years. Almost immediately he was chosen secretary for the faculty. By the time he reaches his fifth anniversary as a faculty member he was also the library director, teacher of systematics and exegesis, preparing for his doctor of theology degree, and contributing numerous articles for some of the Synod's publications. Some of his works were repeatedly in the Concordia Theological Quarterly, the Lutheran Witness, and the Lutheraner, of which he was co-editor until the mid 1960's. Professor Mueller also served as an assistant pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in St. Louis. He preached there often and assisted with other pastoral work. He served there until 1947. During those years he helped find congregations in Pine Lawn, Desoto, and Warrenton, Missouri which showed his continuing service and desire for mission work (Caemmerer 1967).

In those early years as professor at the Seminary, Mueller was involved in some degree with the new construction taking place on the Seminary's new site for a campus. It is a tract of land which entails about seventy acres west of St. Louis. Along with Dr. Bente the two of them help make up the committee called the

Committee on Emblems and Inscriptions. It was a subcommittee of the Building Committee whose job it was to "provide inscriptions where needed and of supplying subjects suitable for the ornamentation (in stone and glass) of an institution for the training of christian ministers" (Graebner 1926). For two years the Committee on Emblems and Inscriptions spent much labor in order to fulfill their assigned task. When the work was finally completed there were fifty-nine stones on the new campus which symbolized Christianity and 188 medallions and panels in stained glass. This much detail is truly impressive for this era and continues to remind those who walk on the campus how vital the Christian faith is in life. Prof. Mueller indeed played a major role in these decisions as a member of the seminary faculty (Graebner 1926).

During the forty-four years in which John Theodore Mueller served the Seminary on the faculty he taught more than 3,500 students in the area of exegesis and dogmatics. Over a long period of time it was easy to fall into some peculiarities in the way you teach. I was able to correspond with a pastor who studied under Professor Mueller for a year in a dogmatics class. In his letter back to me this pastor did indicate some of the nuances which accompanied J.T. Mueller.

He writes the following:

"Professor Mueller had several mannerisms that some students liked to mock and make fun of. He wasn't a tall, strong, virile man, either, like some of the other profs, especially Prof. Rehwinkel, and didn't command respect by his physical appearance" (Schmugge 1992).

There are even some other pastors who might have been even closer to Prof. Mueller who can offer some more insight. One of his colleagues stated twenty-five years ago, "he was not a shallow thinker...he was unafraid and always ready to weigh the many sides of a theological question" (Caemmerer 1967). He also goes on to state "in his youth he soon was known, especially with his penchant for publication, as a man in a hurry; in a way he was that all his life, and many of his idiosyncrasies that made him a legend in his lifetime were associated with that trait" (caemmerer 1967).

A former president of the St. Louis Seminary, Alfred O. Fuerbringer once said that "he (J.T.M.) won the hearts of the people there (Bethany Ch.). He could talk to the common man. He was widely read and worked in many fields, but he was able to communicate in a language that was understood" (Mueller, M. 1967).

Fuerbringer goes on to say:

" Dr. Mueller was very industrious and disciplined himself to a degree that few of us could equal. Above all, Dr. Mueller was evangelical. Even in polemics or in address-

sing himself to any kind of wrong he was always evangelical. He used all his gifts and performed all his labors in the interest of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His teaching as well as his preaching and writing glorified Christ" (Mueller, M 1967).

One other close friend of Mueller's was Martin Franzmann who at the time of Mueller's death was chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In the memorial service held in the chapel of Concordia Seminary on May 11, 1967 Franzmann had this to say.

"Surely the imperative of 2 Timothy 2:15 was a live imperative in the life of this man. 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.' John Theodore Mueller lived with a high sense of accountability...there was in his disciplined regimen a directedness and an intensity of living. He 'did his best,' and it was an unremitting, strenuous best; but what made his best really good was the fact that it was a best presented to God" (Franzmann 1967).

Martin Franzmann also writes,

"His theology orbited around the Savior whom he loved and the Word at which he trembled. His high sense of accountability and his hard work issued in healthy teaching. He was orthodox...he liked the word, and he liked what it denoted. He was passionately concerned about the pure of our Confessions' pure doctur- and was not ashamed to be caught with a prof-text in his pocket" (Franzmann 1967).

I concluded some personal remarks from those who knew John Theodore Mueller with the one above because it is the thoughts surrounding it of which I wish to speak about at length in the rest of this paper.

There were turbulent waters in the Missouri Synod throughout much of the time in which Professor Mueller was on the Seminary faculty. As early as 1938 the Missouri Synod was meeting with the American Lutheran Church (ALC) in hopes of winning them to their basis of truth. Unfortunately the Missouri Synod compromised its position on doctrinal matters in such documents as the "Statement of the Forty-Four" in 1944 and the "Common Confession" in 1949 (Sweet 1985). Most of the blame was placed on the Seminary in St. Louis.

Up until the mid 1940's the faculty at the Seminary was teaching the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation to the future pastors in the Missouri Synod. By the end of World War Two there appeared to be a "new" method of Biblical interpretation being introduced at the Seminary (Pless 1986).

Some pastors in the field began to show concern at this change. Criticism was geared toward those professors at the Seminary who earned doctorates from secular universities. This was never the position held by the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod. In the 1920's however, faculty members such as Paul E. Kretzmann, Walter A. Maier and John T. Mueller were doing this very thing. There was a movement toward earning doctorates in order to make them appear to be more

scholarly to their students as well as offer them an opportunity to discover what other colleges and universities were teaching (Pless 1986).

One example of the concern pastors had clearly is revealed by this exchange of letters between Martin Graebner and his brother Theodore. Pastor Martin wrote this:

"concerning these men (Kretzmann and Mueller) and their ungodly degrees...I consider these professors no longer useful to the Church. Both should at once resign or at the very least, return their titles to the heretics who conferred them, and make a public apology" (Pless 1986).

The accusations above surprisingly come at an early time in the Synod, namely 1927. Martin's brother Theodore wrote him back stating this:

"I confessed intense misgivings regarding the entire matter of university degrees or their equivalent. We are not only teachers in Concordia Seminary but are to be examples of efficient and consecrated workers in Christ's vineyard...a number of things will follow: 1) the more ambitious and gifted students will turn to the university. 2) of these some will lose their faith. 3) Some will be warped in their religious views... 4) Some will absorb Modernism and instead of dropping out will remain with us. 5) Working from within, such unfaithful professors and ministers will first of all destroy the personal standing, if possible, of those who oppose them... 6) They will certainly in the end gather disciples about them and thus make Modernism an issue also in the Missouri Synod" (Pless 1986).

Theodore's brother Martin then wrote to Professor Kretzmann part of the following:

"I regard the action of you and Prof. Mueller as the beginning of the end of our orthodoxy. When the future church historian will trace the downfall of Missouri Lutheranism he will point to you...Our young men will get the impression, that the St. Louis Seminary is all right (sic) in its way, but that for real efficiency one must attend other schools of theology" (Pless 1986).

Granted there were apparent problems among the Seminary faculty. Some of them participated in fellowship talks with the ALC. This led to some dissention within the faculty and throughout the Synod. At a faculty meeting President F. Pieper stood up to tell everyone present that each one of the professors was in some way deviating from the Word of God except for himself and Prof. Kretzmann. This accusation included men like Theodore Graebner, John Fritz, William Arndt, Walter A. Maier, W. Gustav Pollack, Theodore Engelder, Theodore Laetsch and J.T. Mueller (Pless 1986).

There is evidence that during the 1940's the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation was accepted and taught at St. Louis. By the 1950's a change had taken place. Herman Otten who began his studies for the ministry at St. Louis in 1952 writes:

"During the years we were at Concordia Seminary we also discovered how the liberals manage to control the press and to a large extent the books featured in the seminary bookstore. The seminary's theological publication was in the hands of liberals ever since the days when Dr. Martin Marty was a student there" (Pless 1986).

By the year 1957 at a faculty meeting in St. Louis, Professor Martin Scharlemann stated that the Bible "contained errors." Many on the faculty then, like Prof. Martin Franzmann and Mueller reacted violently (Pless 1986). Statements like these are just some of the evidences of the unrest going on around the Missouri Synod and its Seminary in St. Louis. Yet throughout all these years one man, John Theodore Mueller, remained as a cornerstone of conservatism. His writings (which are numerous) defend him entirely.

One of the most outspoken pastors concerning the issues in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (name changed in 1947) is Herman Otten, editor of the Christian News. Shortly after J.T. Mueller's death Otten states in his publication,

"while there still are a few Scriptural theologians on the faculty of this seminary, in a certain sense Dr. Mueller's passing marks the end of an era...The Concordia Seminary faculty of 1967 no longer upholds the same Scriptural theological position so faithfully defended by the faculty of 1926. Dr. Mueller recognized this and repeatedly expressed his grave concerns to us. He frequently urged us to tell responsible officials what some of his colleagues on the seminary faculty were teaching... Dr. Mueller was particularly concerned that the doctrine of Holy Scripture was being attacked by some of his former students now teaching on the seminary faculty...Dr. Mueller deplored the fact that the present administration of Concordia Seminary defended the liberals on the Seminary faculty" (Otten 1967).

Since J.T. Mueller wrote so many articles and essays (see list at end of this essay) one can easily see firsthand how he viewed Scripture with all its important doctrines. In an article published in the Christianity Today (he contributed to it often) entitled "Return to Reality: Preaching the Gospel of Christ" Dr. Mueller firmly makes some statements worth looking at. For instance:

"Many church members realize that any substitute for gospel preaching not only fails to give them abiding spiritual values but also insults their christian convictions...God's saints will listen when he speaks to them; they are interested only in the theology of Jesus Christ and his free and full salvation" (Mueller, J.T. 1960).

Dr. Mueller offers some very sound advice as well in this article concerning future preachers. Allow me to share some of his insights.

Today the Christian pulpit again needs dedicated preachers who are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...truly converted and consecrated preachers are still the most needed gifts of God for the pulpit today. The Christian pulpit cannot use any Sauls; it needs Pauls, that is, twice-born believers who first give themselves to Christ and then devote all that they are and have to the proclamation of Christ's free and full salvation. It is the grievous mistake of many modern theological professors and preachers that they approach the Gospel mysteries from the intellectual point of view and try to search out infinite divine wisdom by their finite, rebellious minds. They want to understand and not believe. Like Thomas, they want to see the risen Lord before they trust him" (Mueller, J. T. 1960).

If the underlined words (my emphasis) do not clearly portray Dr. Mueller's view on what he was accused of by Martin Graebner then nothing will. Professor Mueller most definitely did not use his studies at secular universities to bring in any new teachings into the Seminary in St. Louis.

There is perhaps no other Biblical doctrine more important than the doctrine of our Lord and Savior's triumphant resurrection. Dr. Mueller sets forth this doctrine quite clearly, along with confessing his faith, in an article which appeared in Christian News in May 1967. Here are a few excerpts.

"The Christian doctrines of the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul are articles of faith. The truth of these doctrines is established by Scripture and not by scientific inquiry... We even hear of some who say that it is not important to believe in the resurrection of the body so long as one believes in Christ's atonement. This is an old heresy. St. Paul wrote about false teachers "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." In his great resurrection chapter Paul shows that denial of the resurrection of the body is also a denial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and becomes a rejection of the Christian faith as such" (Mueller, J.T. 1967).

Dr. Mueller was a man who loved to quote Dr. Martin Luther all his life. He along with Luther was concerned about holding to the clear truths of Scripture. In another article which appeared in Christianity

Today he firmly supported Luther and his teachings by writing the following.

"While moderns usually cite only those passages of Luther's writings which make him appear as championing a liberal view of Scripture and commonly do not publish such quotations in their proper context, they omit those clear and unmistakable statements of Luther in which he very emphatically professes his acceptance of all the canonical books of the Bible as the divinely inspired and authoritative Word of God ...Dr. Francis Pieper quotes many more passages to show that Luther without reservation accepted all the canonical books of Scripture as divinely inspired and authoritative" (Mueller, J.T. 1961).

It is most likely that the situation in the LCMS during the years of Mueller's occupancy on the Seminary faculty brought him much grief and heartache. Yet even in his last years on the staff he could boldly write these words.

"...scores of believing Christians, while spurning the idiosyncracies and errors of misleading rationalistic theologians, still cling to this divine Word and by the grace of God come to the knowledge of the truth, as they heed the admonition: 'Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace...(He.13:9). With Peter they say: 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy,' namely, the divinely inspired Bible; and this is a 'more sure word of prophecy,' because 'holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pe. 1:19-21). (Mueller, J.T. 1963).

He had a large impact on pastors in the LCMS for many years. It was through him that they learned the valuable doctrines associated with his dogmatics class.

As their professor he taught them how to do exegesis.

Here are a few comments from some of his classmates.

First of all, Richard Caemmerer who served Dr. Mueller as a student secretary wrote this about his mentor.

"He was the last to claim perfection for himself. He was the first to claim by faith the forgiveness of sins and peace with God which was through our Lord Jesus Christ. He sought to share it with Christians, even the simplest of them, and to defend it ^{from} with calumny...He believed in redeeming the time. He could work so fast; how he could be satisfied with the classic scaffolding and make so little creative embellishment some of us wondered. His language often opened to the past rather than stimulated to new discovery...He appreciated each moment as it came. He enjoyed a good laugh, and good food and drink with good friends. But he had no time for idle talk, or for hobbies as far as I know. He was a man who found his joy in working at his craft, as well as he could, and without interruption" (Caemmerer 1967).

One pastor who had Professor Mueller for dogmatics years ago wrote to me some interesting insights about his professor. He stated,

"Some of the students used to belittle him because they felt he didn't do much "original" thinking, but mostly translated and copied from Pieper and other great dogmaticians. That may be true in a sense, but is there much "original" thinking that a dogmatician can do? I would think a dogmatician's greatest contribution would have to be just what Mueller did, translating previous works, analyzing them, comparing them with Scripture, and compiling them. He was, after all, considered to be one of the greatest authorities on dogmatics during his time, and certainly must be looked up to as one of the giants in that field" (Schmugge 1992).

Due to the compromises made in the LCMS during Mueller's lifetime you can imagine this had an effect on the

church body as a whole. Pastor Schmugge went on to write this about the situation which prevailed.

"I think his book (Christian Dogmatics) had more influence on me than he himself did. He, of course, was the man behind the book, so he did, therefore have a strong influence. Much of his influence may have been because our generation looked with reverence on Luther, the writings of the Book of Concord, Walther, and Pieper; and Prof. Mueller was carrying on their teachings. During the dozen years after I graduated, his influence at Concordia Seminary and in the LCMS as a whole must have diminished, being affected by the influence of liberal theologians. For by the early 60's, the LCMS had slipped to where the ELS and WELS felt that the Synodical Conference fellowship had been destroyed" (Schmugge 1992).

During the many years John Theodore Mueller contributed to the Christianity Today he was often asked to write his beliefs on what the future might hold for Christianity along with other leading scholars. I would like to close this section of the essay with some valuable quotes by Dr. Mueller to once again prove he remained a cornerstone of conservatism. He writes:

"Christianity's influence upon the secular thought of the next decade will no doubt be decided by its teaching of the divinely inspired Bible with its greatly needed message of the divine Law and of the Gospel of salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It was Scripture with its saving message of Law and Gospel that kept perishing Rome from destruction, and today, when the vices of Rome threaten to destroy our Western way of life, which our pious fathers reared upon the foundation of the Christian faith, the Christian Church must again oppose the spread of atheism, Communism, materialism, lawlessness, and reckless bloodshed with the saving Word of God. If the Church will fail in

its duty of stressing seriously and constantly the divine Word there will be nothing to keep secular thought from utter decay and to hold up the ruin toward which also our Western world is heading" (Mueller, J.T. 19).

"The greatest gain for Christianity in our century is represented no doubt by the remarkable revival of conservative Christianity with its emphasis on the inerrant Scriptures and Christ's vicarious atonement; the amazing spread of the Bible at home and abroad...the ardent spread of the Gospel by Christian missions; in short, by the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy: 'This gospel preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come' (Mt. 24:14). Christianity's greatest loss is represented by the terrifying spread of unbelief and atheism in both Communistic and so-called Christian countries. But also this loss agrees with our Lord's prophecy in Mt. 24:3-13" (Mueller, J.T. 19).

Throughout all the research I carried out for this essay I was overwhelmed by Dr. Mueller's wide variety of subjects in his ^{writings} (theses.) He seemed to cover every area that might have been a concern both in his day and in the days to come. What a joy it was to read his writing on Holy Scripture since his thoughts coincided with my thoughts which we both gleaned from Scripture. If there was one item which upset me in my research it was simply the surprise at not finding any mention of his passing away in 1967 after a year-long illness; in the LCMS official publication, the Lutheran Witness. I pondered the reason why for awhile even asking various associates. But I stumbled across an old publication recently called the Confessional Conservative Lutheran which might answer the

question. In one of the issues dated already back in 1949 the editor, Rev. Paul H. Burgdorf writes,

"that the Lutheran Witness staff today is actually contending against the Scriptural confession of the Missouri Synod on which its fellowship rests and is misusing that official organ of the church toward causing offense and division contrary to the doctrine which we have learned" (Burgdorf 1949).

What this simply means to me is that the official publication of the Synod of Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the Lutheran Witness, only wrote in it the liberal views that were rampant throughout the Synod in the 1940's to 1960's. It would not want to publish anything about the end of an era of a man so conservative whom they despised. Unnamed ministers would most likely agree with me on this point. Yet it is with much satisfaction and utmost relief when I say that I feel privileged to bear the name of so great a dogmatician and theologian. Let me conclude with some words written by J.T. Mueller's only surviving son, Arlo.

"Dad, from what I appear to ascertain, is the best and most warmly remembered of all the members of the faculty who served before and contemporaneously with him. Always he was not only an educator but also a friend. If Christians actively maintain and depend their doctrinal position in absolute loyalty to the Holy Scriptures and champion Christ's cause with all diligence and orthodoxy - this is the attitude of his entire life and much that he would still be urging and encouraging if he were yet living in today's world" (Mueller, A. 1992).

Even now John Theodore Mueller can be considered to be a cornerstone of conservatism. Thanks be to God for giving us such a faithful witness through him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burgdorf, Paul H. "The 'Lutheran Witness' Once and Now on the Principles of Church Fellowship and Unionism." The Confessional Lutheran vol. 10:no.3 March 1949 26.
- Caemmerer, Richard "John Theodore Mueller A Tribute." Concordia Theological Monthly vol. 31:no.12 December 1960 725-726.
- "On Time." For the burial of Dr. John Theodore Mueller, April 19, 1967.
- Franzmann, Martin "Approved Workman in Memoriam John Theodore Mueller." Concordia Theological Monthly vol. 38:no.8 September 1967 499-500.
- Graebner, Theodore Concordia Seminary. Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, Missouri, 31,71-72.
- Mueller, Arlo M. Letter to the author. March 26, 1992.
- Mueller, John T. "Return to Reality: Preaching the Gospel of Christ." Christianity Today. vol. 4:no.13 28 March 1960 3-5 (523-525).
- "Luther's 'Canon Within the Canon'." Christianity Today. vol. 6:no.2 27 October 1961 8-10 (72-74).
- "The Question of Christian Certainty." Christianity Today. vol. 7:no.22 2 August 1963 13 (1065).
- "Modern Christianity's Crucial Junctures." Christianity Today. vol. 8no.1 11 October 1963 31-32.
- "I believe in the Resurrection." The Lutheran News. 15 May 1967 6.
- Mueller, Martin W. "Dr. Mueller, Last of Non-Specialists." Lutheran Witness Reporter. 7 May 1967 3.
- Otten, Herman The Lutheran News. 15 May 1967 3.
- Pless, Joel Essay "Cancer at Concordia." 1986 6,8-10,16-17,33, 100.
- Schmugge, Frederick Letter to the author. April 2, 1992.

Sweet, David T. Essay "Wisconsin - Missouri Break - A Result of Doctrinal Compromise." 1985.

Wegener, M. "Short Biographies of Some Outstanding Teachers of the Missouri Synod." Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly. vo. 10:no.4 January 1948 172.

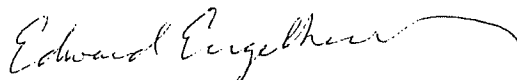
Westra, Thomas Essay "Missouri's New Direction - 1962 and 1973." 1985.

John Melke
N81 W15085 Appelton Ave.
Apt. 116
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051

Dear Sir,

I looked for the bibliographic information on J. T. Mueller which you requested and was unable to find more than the Memoriam in the July-August 1967 edition of Concordia Theological Monthly (which you had already seen), a sermon delivered by Martin Franzmann at his funeral which is in the following issue of CTM (Sept. 1967), and the obituary in the June 1967 Der Lutheraner. I also checked with the Concordia Historical Institute to see if they had anything special. They had only the same information and a collection of his writings and papers. Apparently no one has prepared a biography of his life. This would entail a study of his papers, writings, and interviews with family members. I am afraid this is the only route that I can recommend. If you should decide to pursue this further the collection at the Historical Institute (which is on our campus) and our library would probably be most helpful.

In the love of Christ,



Edward Engelbrecht
Reference Assistant
Concordia Seminary Library
801 DeMun Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63105
1/9/92

March 26, 1992

Dear John:

Thank you for your letter of the 21st telling of your projected research paper on the general theme "Jethuanism" with specific focus upon and reference to my father, Dr. John Theodore Mueller, whose name you perpetuate. I will try to be as helpful as possible under present circumstances, which in particular involved having returned home from an extensive hospital stay just shortly ago and which finds me still in the process of recuperation with only limited activity as ordered by my cardiologist. Let me hope that my small assistance will prove of some value.

The enclosed writings and documents (some original pieces and some copies) fairly comprehensively summarize the life and work of my father as well as the respect and esteem in which he was held by his colleagues and by the clergy-at-large. gleanings from this material may supply you with meaningful insights and perspectives that may be of value to you in structuring and shaping your paper.

At this 25th Anniversary of his Translation from the Church militant to the Church Triumphant, dad, from what I appear to ascertain, is the best and most warmly remembered of all the members of the faculty who served before and contemporaneously with him. Always he was not only an educator, but also a friend. Probably his finest and most valuable legacy to the Church and to his fellow men everywhere was his translation (in 1954) of Franz (Francis) Pieper's "Christliche Dogmatik" from the German language to the English - still used, I believe, as the fundamental and basic text-book on the subject of dogmatics. If Christians actually maintain and defend their doctrinal position in absolute loyalty to the Holy Scriptures and champion Christ's cause with all diligence and orthodoxy - this is the attitude of his entire life and work that he would still be urging and encouraging of to men yet living in today's world.

Dad would feel very complimented and honored to know about you as his namesake and about your anticipated paper. Perhaps he does not know.

I am now in my 10th year of retirement (at age 65) after 42 years in the ministry. My last congregation was in North Bergen, New Jersey, where it served 33 years. In 1991 my congregation (I am "pastor emeritus" of Our Saviour) had me down from the Cape to celebrate my 50th Ann. of Ordination. They went "all-out", and what a

great day and grand affair that was! A most wonderful climax to the year of ministry — and how the time had flown before and after! The last 10 have gone the fastest.

My wife, Areta Louise, came from a Ukrainian Greek Lutheran Church — St. John's in Libertyville, Illinois, the Rev. Wm. Lehmann the then pastor. I met her in West Palm Beach, Florida, in 1945, where she had come along with an aged couple, Henry and Wilhelmina Groth. We were married in Libertyville in 1946, and she has been a source of great inspiration and blessing throughout the year. I add these personal notes to impress how small a world it is. The President of my West Palm Beach congregation in the early 40's, Elmer W. Hecht, is currently a citizen of Milwaukee. Then I have some relatives on my mother's side, the Meibohms, in Milwaukee.

God be with you and bless your studies and most commendable resolves! Let me know if I can be of further help.

Sincerely, in His redeeming love,
Alois R. Mueller

P.S. This comes to you promptly because it will probably take you until Easter to decipher this horrendous scribble.

New Haven, Missouri
 April 3, 1992

Dear Mr. Melke,

Sorry that I just do not have the time to answer the piles of mail I get without a secretary.

ed

Several times I've comment on J.T. in CN. You might check the indexes in CN.

I had J.T. as a prof during the last years of his teaching at the sem and was often invited to his home or office to discuss what was being taught at the sem. He was greatly concerned about liberalism on the part of various professors including Caemmerer, who I believe preached his funeral sermon. I wasn't there so I just can't say for sure without checking the records. Caemmerer had worked for J.T. as a student assistant. J.T. was also concerned about Piepkorn, Pelli and some others. Unfortunately, during his last years, after retirement age, he did not have tenure and feared that if he spoke up he would not be asked to teach various graduate classes. He told me that the sem would come up with some excuse like his poor eyesight. He constantly urged me to tell some top leaders what was going on in various classrooms. He asked me to visit Grueber, a former VP living in Milwaukee, who had asked J.T. for some information about seminar teaching. My visit to Grueber in 1956 led to Grueber's being invited to St. Louis to tell the sem about his concerns.

J.T. wrote much excellent material. Check your library. J.T. encouraged me to become a journalist besides being a pastor or prof. He was all for CN and even sent a token of support.

God's blessings,

John A. Allen

April 21, 1992

Dear John,

I'm sorry I have been so long in responding to your letter. I am handling an ELS vacancy in Ames, Iowa, trying to spend half time there and half here taking care of things at home. Although the driving is less than five hours each way (except for road construction tie-ups), I find that, with packing and unpacking, essentially two days are used up each week in just that. It has kept me especially busy during Lent, with the midweek service to prepare besides S.S. opening, Bible class, Sunday services, confirmation class, and shut-in visits. But now that Holy Week is over, a little of the pressure is off.

This is probably too late now to help you with your paper, but I can't really tell you much about Prof. Mueller, anyway, even though I did have him for dogmatics classes. I had to work my way through the Sem, and didn't have time to do much except take notes in class and try to get what studying done that I could while riding buses to and from work. There was no time to engage in bull sessions with fellow students and no time to try to discuss things one-on-one with the profs.

Prof. Mueller had several mannerisms that some students liked to mock and make fun of. He wasn't a tall, strong, virile man, either, like some of the other profs, especially Prof. Rehwinkel, and didn't command respect by his physical appearance. Some of the students used to belittle him because they felt he didn't do much "original" thinking, but mostly translated and copied from Pieper and other great dogmaticians. That may be true in a sense, but is there much "original" thinking that a dogmatician can do? I would think a dogmatician's greatest contribution would have to be just what Mueller did, translating previous works, analyzing them, comparing them with Scripture, and compiling them. He was, after all, considered to be one of the greatest authorities on dogmatics during his time, and certainly must be looked up to as one of the giants in that field.

You asked about his influence on me and on the Church in general. I think his book had more influence on me than he himself did. He, of course, was the man behind the book, so he did, therefore, have a strong influence. Much of his influence may have been because our generation looked with reverence on Luther, the writers of the Book of Concord, Walther, and Pieper; and Prof. Mueller was carrying on their teachings. During the dozen years after I graduated, his influence at Concordia Seminary and in the LCMS as a whole must have diminished, being affected by the influence of liberal theologians. For by the early 60's, the LCMS had slipped to where the ELS and WELS felt that the Synodical Conference fellowship had been destroyed.

When theologians succumb to the influence of "higher criticism", what the Bible teaches no longer has any meaning for them. But I would think that anyone who accepts the Bible as verbally inspired would have to accept Mueller's dogmatics, because it represents the Bible's own teachings.

*Blessings to you and Larla, and
may our Lord bless you as you
receive your Call and enter into
the work of the ministry.*

Sincerely, in Christ,
Fred Schmugge



Concordia Historical Institute

801 DeMUN AVENUE

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63105

Tel. No. 314-721-5934 sta. 320

ESTABLISHED 1847 • INCORPORATED 1927

August R. Suellow
Director

James J. Waltke
President
Joyce L. Sauer
Vice President
Scott J. Meyer
Secretary
Harold A. Olsen
Treasurer

28 April 1992

Gladys L. Grovender
Jerzy Hauptmann
Kermit H. Ratcliffe
Walter L. Rosin
Robert W. Selle
Joseph B. Wilson
John C. Zimmermann

John Melke
N 81 W 15085 Appleton Ave.
Menominee Falls, WI 53051

RE: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH PROF. J T MÜLLER

Dear Mr. Melke:

Thank you for your telephone call of 24 April in which you requested information on an autobiographical sketch by Professor J T Müller.

After checking our collections, we note that we do have have such a sketch here, but we cannot guarantee that it is the very one you're looking for.

Our fee for photocopy work is 50¢ per page, this comes to \$3.00 for the six pages. Our policies require payment in advance for this service. Please make your check payable to Concordia Historical Institute. When we receive your payment, we will complete your research request as soon as possible.

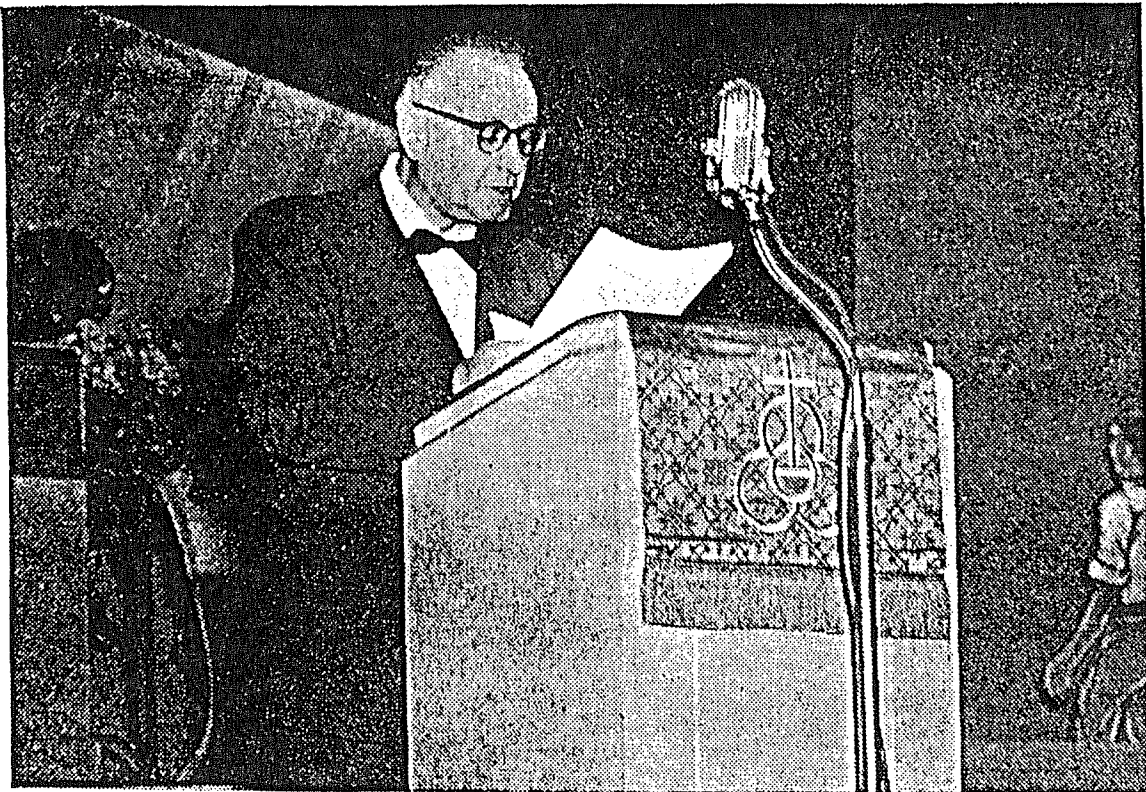
The enclosed Bulletin #30 explains our fee system in more detail. You may notice that fees for Institute members are considerably cheaper in some cases than those for nonmembers. We invite you to become a Concordia Historical Institute member and have enclosed a brochure for this purpose. Lower research fees are just one of the many benefits of membership.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet your research needs. If we can help in any other way, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Cordially,

Roy A. Ledbetter
Reference and Research Assistant





This picture was taken in 1953 at the forty-second Synod Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Dr. J.T. Mueller read his essay entitled, "The Ecumenical Movement and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod." It appeared in the Lutheran Witness as a four-part series later that same year.