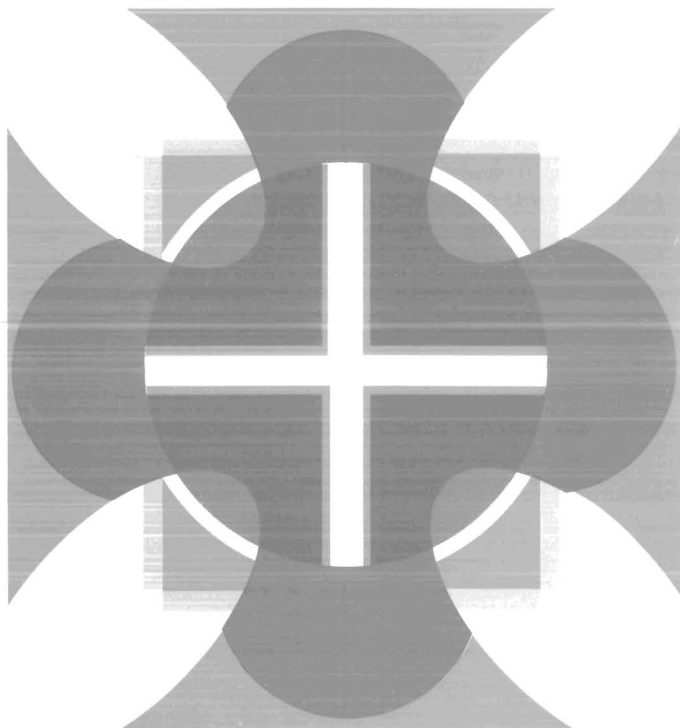


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Carl Stamm Meyer

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We present this issue as a tribute to our colleague, Carl Stamm Meyer, who was called home by our Lord on Dec. 17, 1972. Few deaths are timely, but from our human point of view his was particularly untimely. He still had too many important things to do, it seemed to us, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod needed his continued historical learning and sensitivities very much. His *magnum opus*, the definitive history of our Synod, remains unwritten, and the Synod will not have the benefit of the self-understanding that is so essential for understanding the past and planning the future and that can be gained only from the historical perspective. As a

result, we may continue to fail to understand the real strengths and weaknesses of our Synod and may continue to fall prey to those who use their picture of the past to propagandize for a future that they can trust only to the degree that they can determine it.

Because Carl S. Meyer trusted in God and in His rule and guidance of the church, he lived courageously and hopefully, and he taught his associates to live this way. It is fitting that his last published major work bears the title, *The Caring God*, issued by Concordia Publishing House less than three months after his death. His foreword to this collection of essays clearly reveals his faith and his method. He affirms his conviction that God is in charge, fully so, but he also boldly identifies the unanswered and often-threatening questions that attend the doctrine of providence.

“Charlie,” as he was known to those close to him, demonstrated this same method in his approach to historical teaching and research. He was a forthright conservative in his theological position and his interpretation of the past, yet he frequently stressed that change is at the center of all history. His awareness of the inevitability of change helped him to understand and cling to that which is unchangeable, the grace of God he had experienced in rich and saving measure in his Lord Jesus Christ.

He was in every sense of the term a “historian’s historian.” In the words of Marcel Bloch, he submitted himself unreservedly to the “tyranny of the facts.” He demonstrated their tyrannical power in an article published in the April 1972 issue of this journal (“Walther’s Theology of the Word,” pp. 262-83). His patient research into the writings of C. F. W. Walther led him to the conclusion that there were strong biblicistic elements in Walther’s thought. In spite of his deep admiration for Walther, he felt himself compelled as an historical theologian to share his unwelcome insight with his readers.

As a teacher, Carl was capable and precise. His students usually began with a dislike for his insistence on dates and facts, but this dissolved as he made clear the essential relationship between facts and generalizations.

He was a remarkably diligent and prolific scholar-writer. Busy as he was with numerous national and international committees and associations, he never refused a request by this editor or by the Synod he loved and served with all his talents and energies.

In the controversy that centered around the seminary during the last years of his life, Carl was a tower of strength for his colleagues. He always maintained his integrity, guiding and admonishing us according to his own lights. But there was no question as to where he stood on the Gospel and the Word of God.

Two virtues characterized him in a complementary way: confidence and humility (to which some might add a strong dash of stubbornness inherited from his German forebears). His confidence stemmed from his conviction that he had collected the important facts in the matter and that his interpretation would hold water. His humility was simply a basic ingredient of his character. Few people knew that he was one of a small number of Americans who were Fellows of the Royal Historical Society of England.

At the time of his death, Carl S. Meyer was graduate professor of historical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and executive director of the Foundation for Reformation Research.

We of the staff of CTM feel ourselves individually and corporately impoverished by the loss of a cherished friend and a valiant and valued brother. "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!" (2 Tim. 1:18)

Herbert T. Mayer