

**A Student's Perspective of
Professor Johannes Peter Carl Meyer
Based on the Recollections
of Some of His Students**

Senior Church History
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After reading articles written by Professor Joh. P. Meyer, published in the *Theologische Quartalschrift*¹ and the Northwestern Lutheran, it was crystal clear that Professor Meyer was a brilliant man. After this initial study I came to realize that it would be next to impossible for me to do justice in writing about this man as a professor. My initial thought was to write a two-part paper. The first part was to be a glimpse of Professor Meyer's view of the ministry as seen in his eight opening addresses and thirteen closing addresses that he preached while he was president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The second half of the paper was to be a characterization of Professor Meyer as a professor by his former students. The more I thought about it, I came to realize that I was trying to write two different papers. Therefore I have decided to write on what was to be the second part of my original paper. One of the major factors that influenced this was the response that I received back from Professor Meyer's former students. I thoroughly enjoyed reading their memories and thinking about them. It is very interesting to see how many different memories there are of one man. That is exactly what this paper will be. In this paper we will see a characterization of Professor John Meyer by his former students. What I will attempt to accomplish first will be to draw some of the common themes together and present what I feel is a picture of Professor John Meyer. Then I will record what his former students remembered of Professor Meyer.

Before we present my view of Professor Meyer based on what his former students remembered of him I think we would do well to give ourselves a little bit of background about Professor Meyer. We will do this by quoting his "obituary", as it appeared in the WLQ.

On the anniversary of Martin Luther's Birthday, November 10, 1964, the Lord brought the public ministry of a faithful Lutheran theologian, the Reverend Professor Joh. P. Meyer, to a close. It comprised a ministry of sixty-eight years in which he was active to the very end. Fifteen days before his death he preached for the last time in St. Marcus Church, where

¹ Including when it was named *Quartalschrift and the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

almost monthly for a period of thirty-seven years he had served as an assistant preacher. On the Friday before his entrance into the hospital on October 26 he had still delivered his regular schedule of class lectures. God's gift of a special measure of self-discipline, by which he made the most advantageous use of his strength and time and in which he gave little thought to sparing himself in doing the Lord's work, made it possible for him to labor effectively until the end.

Johannes Peter Carl Meyer was born on February 27, 1873, at Zittau, Wisconsin, the son of Pastor J. Meyer and his wife Meta, nee Behnken. His father had received his ministerial training at Hermannsburg under Theodore Harms, having enrolled at this mission seminary with the intention of going to Africa. He was, however, persuaded to come to America because of the spiritual needs of the many German immigrants. The Meyer family had moved to the Helweger Moor in the vicinity of Hermannsburg in 1792, when this region was being colonized under the encouragement of special government grants and benefits. His mother came from a village of Baden on the Weser River.

John Meyer was eleven years old at the death of his father, who at the time was serving a pastorate in Caledonia, Wisconsin. He was confirmed at St. Marcus Congregation, Watertown, Wisconsin and thereupon entered Northwestern College, graduating from this school in 1893 and from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, then located in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, in 1896. In the latter year he was installed as pastor of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, where he served until 1902. During this period he also ministered to congregations at Town Trenton and Fox Lake, Wisconsin.

During the 1902-1903 school year he served as instructor and dean of men at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin.

On November 26, 1903, he was united in holy wedlock with Lydia Reinke. Their marriage was blessed with three sons, John, Henry, and Arnold, and one daughter, Lydia, who survive their father. Henry and Arnold are serving as pastors in our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Mrs. Meyer passed away in 1948.

In 1903 he was called from his position at Watertown, Wisconsin, to the faculty of Dr. Martin Luther College at New Ulm, Minnesota, where he then taught Latin and Greek. In 1915 he was induced to accept the pastorate of St. Paul's Congregation at Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, where special problems called for an experienced leader. When in 1918 the presidency of Dr. Martin Luther College was vacant, he was called back to head this institution, and for the next two years labored as its administrator and as an instructor on its teacher training courses.

In 1920 he was called to the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to succeed his younger brother Herman, whose seminary professorate was cut short by a sudden death after five years of service.

Professor Joh. P. Meyer labored at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for forty-four years. From 1937 to 1953 he served as its president. Professor Meyer's principal field of teaching was that of Christian doctrine and New Testament Introduction, but during his long tenure on the faculty he also taught a great number of other courses, some for more than a decade, such as the Interpretation of Genesis, the History of the Ancient Church and Symbolics.

Throughout his public ministry, Professor Meyer served the church also in many other capacities: he was secretary of the Synodical Conference; a member of the Intersynodical Committee of the 1920's; a vice-president of our Synod; he served on our Synod's Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union, on the Advisory Committee on Doctrinal Matters, on the Board of Education—Wisconsin Synod, on the Northwestern Publishing House Board, on the editorial Board of the *Northwestern Lutheran*; he was a diligent contributor to all of our church papers; the Index of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* alone lists more than 250 items from his pen.

To the present members of the faculty Professor Meyer was an invaluable link with our Synod's and our Seminary's past. Except for an interval of twelve years Dr. Hoenecke and Professor Meyer spanned a whole century of our Seminary's existence as teachers of Christian doctrine. Professor Meyer, who studied under Dr. Hoenecke and who served in the ministry for twelve years while Dr. Hoenecke was still our Synod's leading theologian, appreciated the confessional clarity and doctrinal position which Dr. Hoenecke's teaching had given to the ministry of our Synod. In his own teaching he was intent upon preserving these gifts of God for the future ministry of our church. For a lengthy period he had also served on our Seminary faculty as a colleague of Professors Joh. P. Koehler and August Pieper, the two other men who more than any other professor exercised a very vital influence on our Seminary's theological approach. Professor Meyer deeply appreciated their stress on thorough study of Scriptures, by which future pastors would learn to draw the truths of Christian faith and life directly from the statements of Scripture in their full contextual and historical setting and would then gain aptitude to apply these truths in all their Biblical freshness to the circumstances which they meet in their individual ministry. These emphases which he appreciated in Hoenecke, Koehler and Pieper pervaded his own teaching and through it have to a great extent become emphases which characterize the preaching and teaching of the present pastors of our Synod, the majority of whom have studied under Professor Meyer.

All of his teaching and preaching was thoroughly Scripture-centered and Christ-centered. All of Scripture was for him the inspired and inerrant Word of God, not merely a record of God's past revelation but God's ever-present revelation. When he read and studied the Scriptures, it was for him as though God Himself were standing before him in all of His holy majesty and were addressing personally to him the words of his saving

love. In this way he wanted also his students to read and study the Scriptures.

The Gospel of Christ and of His gift of the forgiveness of sins was for him the heart of the Holy Scriptures, but he looked upon every word of Scripture as somehow standing in service of this Gospel and of its blessed purpose of bringing helpless sinners to saving faith and of making and keeping them rich and fruitful in such faith.

The funeral service in behalf of Professor Meyer was held at St. Marcus Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, his pastor, the Reverend Paul W. Knickelbein, officiating. The Reverend Oscar Naumann, President of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod preached the sermon on John 3:16. The undersigned spoke in behalf of the Seminary. The seminary chorus and the children of St. Marcus School sang in the service. "Remember them...who have spoken unto the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Hebrews 13:7.²

I think the first and foremost description that comes to mind when one tries to characterize Professor Meyer is that he was a man who loved the Word of God. Professor Meyer held that it was the Scriptures and only the Scriptures that determined doctrine and practice. He made this point clear in all of his classes as well as in all the articles he wrote. Simply stated, Professor Meyer stood on Scripture alone. He demanded that his students dig into the Scriptures with careful and thorough exegesis. His love for the Word of God that he instilled in those who sat in his classroom is considered by some to be Professor Meyer's greatest contribution to the Seminary.

Professor Meyer's love for the Scriptures can be seen by the fact that he made himself, by the grace of God, to be a student of the Word for all of his life. Many of his students marvel at how much material Professor Meyer could recite from the Bible. He could do this in Greek, Latin, German and English. Certainly a portion of this would have to be attributed to the phenomenal memory with which he was blessed to have. However, the fact that Professor

² Lawrenz, Carl, "In Memoriam – Professor Joh. P. Meyer," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Vol. 62, #1 (January 1965), p. 69-71.

Meyer wore out his Greek Bible every two years teaches us a lesson on the importance of reading the Bible over and over again.

Professor Meyer showed his love for the Word of God in the way that he emphasized proper hermeneutics. He stressed that each passage of the Bible must be taken in context. Each book of the Bible must be seen in its historical setting. He would repeat this again and again to his students.

Professor Meyer's love for God's holy Word is also seen in the way he taught that Word. He felt it was important that he be understood. He spoke clearly. He used precise language. He wanted his students to understand him perfectly. Professor Meyer was a brilliant man. He would have been able to talk over the heads of his students. The Lord blessed him in giving him the ability to communicate the deep truths of the Scripture in clear and simple language. For an example of how Professor Meyer could communicate clearly and simply, I would direct the reader to a series which appeared in *The Northwestern Lutheran* entitled "Eternity". Those articles appeared from August, 1954 through April, 1957. For one example of the scholarly aspect of his writing, one could turn to the *Prolegomena* as published in the *Quartalschrift* in January, 1948.

Professor Meyer was a humble man. He considered himself to be servant of his Lord. One way in which we can see this humility is that he signed the majority of his work simply with "M". Once, when asked what it was like to have worked with men like Koehler and Pieper, Professor Meyer replied, "What's left now is Nichts."³ In this response we see his humility but we also see that the man had a sense of humor. We see Professor Meyer's humility in the fact

³ Pastor John F. Chorowsky, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 24 March 1999, e-mail.

that he was hesitant to write a Dogmatics text. He did not want his students to say, "Nixie dixit." He wanted each and every one of his students to proclaim, "This is what the Lord says!"

God blessed this man with amazing physical stamina. Professor Meyer taught at the Seminary until he was 91 years old. In the winter, he would walk to class and down to the Post Office without an overcoat. He would shovel his own driveway before any of the students could get there in the morning. He hand dug his own garden each spring. When students would drive by his house late ~~af~~ night, the light in his study would always be on. Besides being a Seminary professor, Professor Meyer served as a pulpit assistant at St. Marcus Congregation in Milwaukee. He accepted numerous preaching requests. He served on many committees as seen above in his obituary. He penned at least 795 articles in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (this includes "News and Comments" and "Book Reviews"). He was a contributing author to *The Northwestern Lutheran*. He authored the Dogmatics notes which we still use at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary today. The Lord surely blessed this man with much stamina and work ethic.

In the classroom Professor Meyer was all business from the beginning to the end of class. He would simply lecture and his students would struggle to write down as much as they could. He would have demanded that his students properly prepare for class. In Dogmatics class, his students would have been expected to prepare by doing a careful exegesis of the passages under consideration and translating the Latin and German quotations. Professor Meyer wanted his students to pay attention to him at all times. If a student started drifting off, he would fire a question at that student.

Professor Meyer was a fair professor. He insisted that the students' papers be folded in a certain way with their name on the back so that he would not be influenced before he read and graded the paper.

Most of his students say that Professor Meyer's biggest weakness was that he allowed very few questions. When he did allow questions, he would not allow follow-up questions. Sometimes he became agitated if he thought a student could answer the question by using his own common sense. In my limited experience I have found that I enjoy the classes most when the students ask the most questions. I think this is true with almost everyone who teaches. While this may well be one of Professor Meyer's biggest weaknesses, I think we should temper that with the fact that by the end of his ministry he had no doubt heard these questions for forty-four years.

It is my opinion that one of the greatest gifts with which the Lord blessed Professor Meyer was his understanding of objective justification. This is seen in his Dogmatics notes and in all that he wrote. This Scriptural truth is one that simply cannot be forgotten. In an age where people want subjective proof that their sins are forgiven, we must hold dearly to this precious doctrine. What better comfort is there than to point a terrorized or doubtful person first to the cross and tell him that Jesus gave his life for the sins of the whole world? I think Professor Meyer tried very hard to emphasize this glorious truth to all of his students.

There is one weakness that was cited in the responses that I received on which I would like to comment. For sake of convenience, I will simply copy from the response given by Pastor Hermann K. John.

His weaknesses: I did not notice any while I was a student at the Seminary. It was only after reading of Professor Meyer's involvement with the Protestants and with my father and grandfather, that I noticed some weaknesses. Yet I believe God used even these weaknesses to put into the ministry and to keep out of the ministry those whom God wanted in or out.

However, Professor Meyer's part in the eventual dismissal of Professor J. P. Koehler from the seminary was due to a weakness that did hurt the synod. Since there was so much involved with that dismissal (Wauwatosa Theology vs. Dogmatics; bullheadedness regarding the supposed meaning

of words in the Beitz paper), I find it hard to put into one sentence what I would characterize as Professor Meyer's weakness. Perhaps it had to do with an inability to take constructive criticism; perhaps it had to do with an attitude of "I'm right and you're wrong; so don't bother me with trying to understand where you are coming from."⁴

I would like to make it perfectly clear that I do not consider myself an authority on Professor Meyer's involvement with the dismissal of Professor J.P. Koehler. I would simply like to address the statement that Professor Meyer was not able to take constructive criticism as seen above in the citation. I think that may be painting with too wide of a brush. I believe there is proof that Professor Meyer could take constructive criticism and that if he felt what he had said or done was wrong he would retract what he had said or apologize for what he had done.

When there was some confusion over a statement that Professor Meyer wrote in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* for October, 1931, Professor Meyer responded by writing, "This sentence is misleading and does not adequately express my views. *It is herewith retracted.*"⁵

This retraction neither proves nor disproves the aforementioned weakness. It does however show that Professor Meyer was a big enough man to retract what he had written if it was causing confusion.

The Lord blessed our church body richly through the work of John Meyer. His love for the Scriptures, his humility, his stamina and work ethic and his sense of humor are all characteristics by which his students remember him. No doubt his students looked up to him and in some small way tried to emulate him. Throughout the years, the influence of Professor Meyer on his students has been a blessing as well. Forty-four years worth of pastors sat in his classroom on the hill. Thank God for giving us this man.

⁴ Pastor Hermann K. John, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 21 March 1999, e-mail.

⁵ Meyer, John, "A Correction," *Theologisch Quartalschrift*. Vol. 43, #2 (April 1946), p.143.

I hope that my picture of Professor Meyer as viewed through the eye of his students has been accurate. It has been an honor and privilege to learn about this man and what others remember about him.

Before we move into what Professor Meyer's students remembered about him, I will explain a bit about how I will format their recollections. I had sent out a numbered questionnaire to these men. Some responded in order by number and others simply wrote about their memories. I have kept the format in which they responded intact. I have made only grammatical and spelling changes to the text of what they wrote back. Preceding each of the responses I will list the name of the pastor and indicate the year in which he entered the ministry.

The following page is a copy of the questionnaire that I distributed. I have left it on its own page in case the reader would like to have it for reference throughout the body of the paper.

The following is a list of questions that I sent out to former students of Professor Meyer. The majority of these requests were sent via e-mail. I sent eighty-seven letters to active and retired pastors and professors. I received twenty-four responses back. I have included nineteen of those responses in this paper.

1. When you were a student at the Seminary, what was the general opinion of the students of Professor Meyer as a teacher?
2. In as much detail as you can, characterize Professor Meyer as a person; as a professor; as a preacher; as a pastor.
3. What do you feel Professor Meyer contributed to the Seminary in his four-year years of service as a Seminary professor? In your opinion, what was his greatest contribution to the Seminary? To the Synod?
4. For which classes did you have Professor Meyer as your professor?
5. Which class with him was your favorite?
6. If possible, describe his classroom demeanor.
7. Do you recall any "gems" from Professor Meyer that you think of at present?
8. What do you feel were Professor Meyer's strengths as a teacher? His weaknesses?
9. Do you remember Professor Meyer ever talking about serving with Professors J.P. Koehler and A. Pieper on the Seminary faculty?
10. Have you in any way tried to emulate Professor Meyer in your ministry?
11. What do you feel is the single most important influence that Professor Meyer had on all the pastors he taught? On you specifically?
12. Finally, please feel free to relate anything else you are able to recall that you would consider either noteworthy, humorous or interesting.

Rev. Eugene F. Ahlswede – 1962

Thank you for doing your paper on Professor Meyer. His memory is dear to me.

For me, Professor Meyer stood next to the apostles. He was one of those who had a great and positive influence on my life. He was one of those people you just didn't want to disappoint. I'm sure that many others felt the same.

Meyer stood on Scripture. Where as others might point to traditions or church fathers or dogmatians, Meyer drove us into the Bible. I remember one time he assigned a paper entitled "Haplotēs and Christian Giving". Because I so honored the man, I gave it my all. I read every commentary I could find, I studied all the lexicons and when I got my paper back he had written the comment, "Where were you when we studied this in class?" As an exegete he found that Haplotēs meant singleness of purpose and that almost all scholars had missed the point of the expression. You can see his comments in his commentary on 2 Corinthians.

Professor Meyer would not permit us to put our names on the top of our papers. He insisted that we write them on the back. He didn't want to be at all biased in his grading.

When I think of him I see him standing next to the window in the classroom. His eyes were bad. There he is squinting at his New Testament. Professor Meyer always began his class on time and he always ended his class on time. He went far to practice Christian humility. He would only sign his work with an M.

One time I helped him serve Lord's Supper at David's Star church in Jackson. I was a junior at the time. The janitor had not put out enough bread. Imagine my fear as I decided to break the wafers to make them last. When back in the sacristy, I confessed to Professor Meyer what I had done. He smiled and reassured me, "I would have done the same." Meyer had to be at the church at least one hour ahead of time. One time I took him out to David's Star and to my horror found that I had forgotten my preaching robe. We were there so early I had time to turn around, drive back to the Seminary and still have plenty of time before the beginning of the service.

My first year I was part of the Schnee Familie. We shoveled the professors' driveways before breakfast. We felt a little like the wolf in the story of the three little pigs. If we got up at 6:00 to shovel Meyer's walk, he'd be out at 5:30 and if we'd get there at 5:30, he have his walk clean by 5:00.

Imagine a round little man with a crew cut, shining blue eyes who loved the Lord and served God's people and you have a picture of Professor Meyer.⁶

Rev. Richard D. Balge – 1958

1. Some: "He looks like Santa Claus." A later district president: "When you see him up there all rosy and shiny, you could just kiss him." A bit like Joe Di Maggio: He made it look easy. He was all business, but not without occasional humor--usually anecdotal.
2. As a person: friendly as someone sixty years younger could expect.

⁶ Pastor Eugene F. Ahlswede, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 23 March 1999, e-mail.

As a professor: clear, thorough, obviously competent, capable of mild sarcasm on occasion.

As a preacher: fluent, clear, careful exposition; not much application, as I recall.

As a pastor: no personal experience, but he shared experiences from his pastoral ministry.

Impression: diligent and caring. Not ignorant of human folly or easily fooled by hypocrisy.

3. His invariable humility before the Word.
4. Exegesis of John (a Junior course then), NT isagogics, Middler and Senior dogmatics.
5. Isagogics. One problem, not caused by him: I thought more about Paul than about Jesus.
6. Dignified. Erect, well groomed, polite in laying bare our stupidity.
7. About once a year he would highlight the importance of directing people to their Savior instead of to their personal faith by saying, "Sometimes you have to tell a person, 'To hell with your faith.'"
8. See 2. above. Also, he (perhaps understandably) had no time for discussion.
9. Never! Ever!
10. See 3. above.
11. See 3. and 10. above.
12. My memory is not as good as his was. After I joined the faculty, Professor Carl Lawrenz once explained that "Nixie's" memory (Carl did not refer to him as "Nixie," always "Professor Meyer") was so good because he was a hemophiliac. His arteries apparently did not harden as most people's do.⁷

Rev. John F. Brenner – 1943

In my album, "Nixie (snow-head) Meyer is standing with his Greek New Testament in one hand and a pen in the other. Don't be foolish enough to contradict him or trap him! If you were foolish enough to try it (we had one or two idiots in our class who would try it, even though we whispered "Shut up! Shut up!") he would very quietly cut him up with a scalpel cut!

He was our professor from 1940–1943. He was a classmate of my father who would kid the daylights out of him. Seminary students would marvel at the manner my dad would kid him at a Synod Council Meeting. My father said that Meyer had a brilliant mind and was kind of a "nerd" as students today would call him.

He was our dogmatics professor and our isagogics professor. I sincerely loved him. He held the Scriptures in high regard! He would answer a question (even reciting the Greek text) down to the lowest common denominator. We pleaded with him to write his dogmatics. He declined saying it would not be proper during a period of doctrinal conflict. People might be tempted to say, "Meyer says," instead of, "Thus says the Lord. It is written!!"

⁷ Pastor Richard D. Balge, interview by author by questionnaire, given 19 March 1999, received 27 March 1999.

Meyer quoted Hoenecke and the church fathers but not his fellow faculty members. When my father died in 1962, we were at the funeral home in Milwaukee. Meyer took our young son aside and spoke to him about his grandfather for almost one hour.

He was a low-keyed but thorough preacher and teacher. He made it clear that the parish ministry was a blessed privilege, not a chore. He warned us against legalism and pietism.

As Hoenecke in his day, Meyer in our day kept the WELS on course spiritually. In the inter-synodical conflict there were hot heads on both sides in the WELS. Meyer kept a cool head. Meyer and my dad were either damned or praised during the Missouri – WELS conflict.⁸

Rev. John F. Chworowsky

Here are a few observations from the dark, dim, distant past regarding Professor John P. Meyer. I had the distinct feeling that the students had a great deal of respect for Professor Meyer. There wasn't anything especially exciting about his presentations in class. He was a lecturer, following notes of which we all had copies. There wasn't a lot of discussion either, as I recall. Still, most felt "Nixie" was a real scholar and knew about which he was lecturing. I also felt he was very kind in grading our "dog" papers, at least in my case.

As a person, I felt he was quite reserved and had a very droll sense of humor. "God was able to speak through Balaam's ass. There is probably hope for you." He used himself as the butt of that bit of humor. I never heard him raise his voice. At times he would get a sort of pained expression on his face when he thought the question was either out of place or could be answered with a person's own common sense.

As a professor, as already indicated, he was not flashy. He was very matter of fact and very thorough, although at times I felt he could have made it clearer to us just what was at stake in the points he made. Most, it seems to me, stood in awe of the man.

As a preacher I felt he was very clear and very well prepared. His sermons were extremely simple and did not rely on many stories. He seemed to me to like to use characters in the Scriptures to compare with our lives, using their biographies to apply to us. He also was rather analytical in preaching on the Psalms. Carrying out the pictures of the Psalm and applying those to the hearers. The sermons were textual and simple - and meaningful. I really couldn't speak about him as a pastor.

3. I think his great contribution was his calm and thorough way of going through the testimony of the Scriptures on each and every subject. He was not a firebrand nor did he appeal to emotions. He calmly set forth the Scriptures.
4. Dogmatics.
5. N/A
6. Calmly lecturing.
7. Note Balaam's ass above. When some of us were rather excited about having very organized filing systems, his comment was: "Don't be squirrels." He was honored to have worked among men like Pieper, Hoenecke and Koehler. He once commented about that and said,

⁸ Pastor John F. Brenner, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 29 March 1999, surface mail.

"What's left now is 'Nichts'." His nickname of course was Nixie. (Because of his white hair.)

He didn't pontificate much, but he was once a guest preacher at a congregation I served and I observed that there was a need for more families to urge their children to go into the ministry. He more or less agreed, but added, "Our people need to learn the grace of giving."

8. Strengths: Well prepared. Thorough. Knowledgeable.
Weakness: All lecture. Not much opportunity to discuss matters.
9. Yes. Cf. above. He once told me that the accusation that Koehler was too dogmatic and unbending was not true.
10. I think so, but we have rather different gifts and personalities.
11. His calm confidence in God's Word. His great respect for his colleagues and for the students he taught. He was never cruel or sarcastic. Always matter of fact.⁹

Rev. Leroy A. Dobberstein -- 1959

1. I was student from 1955-1959.
2. Professor Meyer as a person: kind, friendly and serious.
As professor: loved to teach, love for his students.
As a preacher: love for the truth; organization of the sermon, clear and precise presentation. Much content, no fluff.
3. He was life-long student of the Scriptures and instilled in his students and his church body to be the same. The synod put great demands upon this man and he was always willing to be there for his church body.
4. Dogmatics and New Testament.
5. Both. My first experience was the New Testament. I was awed at his knowledge of the New Testament. He knew it in Greek better than any of us knew it in English. In dogmatics we were awed at his knowledge of doctrine and the history of doctrine in the life of the church.
6. All business from bell to bell. Never wasted a moment. He had a pace he set for himself and did not want to be deterred from it.
8. His strength was his knowledge of Scripture, his love for teaching (and preaching) and his great love for truth of the Word.
If he had a weakness it was that he allowed little time for discussion; in fact he did not really want students asking too many questions, because it slowed him down. It was not any lack of love and respect for his students. It was just that he had so much that he wanted to share with us.
9. I won't say that he didn't. I don't recall.
10. Not consciously, though I imagine his teaching of dogmatics, at least his love for the doctrine, rubbed off on me.

⁹ Pastor John F. Chorowsky, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 24 March 1999, e-mail.

11. His love for Scripture. Our need to grow in our knowledge as long as we live.
12. His walks without a hat and coat no matter how cold the weather. I think of a man with great energy. His light in his study was always on. He was not a young man when I had him, but worked like a man in the prime of his life. His church body put a great demand on his talents and his willingness to serve.¹⁰

Rev. Charles H. Flunker -- 1965

2. I remember Professor Meyer as a humble man. Although he was gifted with much knowledge of Scriptures, he never made a big point of the fact that he knew a lot. He just kept on humbly teaching it ALL.
3. He was a steady, reliable "both feet on the ground" kind of man in regards to doctrine. In every generation the devil unleashes more attacks on the truth. Professor Meyer's voice maintained a steady course for the truth that does not and cannot change. Practical learning is important at the Seminary level, but nothing is as important as learning the TRUTH.
5. Dogmatics, for the reason mentioned in #3, though I didn't fully realize it at the time. He had a well-laid out course that was thoroughly taught.
6. Serious, straightforward, no "wrinkles".
10. I learned from him that the Kingdom of God is increased through a steady teaching of the TRUTH, not through gimmicks. I have found this to be true in 33 years of ministry.
12. He was an example of God's rich grace. Imagine being an active professor, teaching daily, up to 3 weeks before entering eternity. A blessing of God's grace. I am an outdoors person, so I admired him as he almost to the end hand dug his garden each spring. At age 90, after years of experience, he said he still got "butterflies" in his stomach before preaching a sermon, out of respect for the Holy Word of God being handled by a sinner. I never forgot that. He was also a very hardy man physically. In the middle of a snowstorm he would come to class without a hat, earmuffs or gloves!¹¹

Rev. Joel C. Gerlach -- 1953

1. 1950-53. Some frustration with his teaching style, awe at his tremendous grasp of his subject matter.
2. Person: exemplary humility
Professor: a great scholar
Preacher: average
3. To the Synod: stability in a time of controversy and turmoil.
4. Dogmatics, Romans

¹⁰ Pastor Leroy A. Dobberstein, interview by author by questionnaire, given 19 March 1999, received 29 March 1999.

¹¹ Pastor Charles H. Flunker, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 19 March 1999, e-mail.

5. Dogmatics
6. No nonsense, keep on schedule. He used the lecture method, as did the others.
7. At an Arizona-California District Convention during the 60's, Meyer was the essayist (Synod and Church). He was in his mid 80's. When he came to the end of part I after 45 minutes of delivery, District President IG Frey interrupted him and asked him if he would like to stop at that point and continue later. Meyer looked at Frey and said with a chuckle, "Why, Mr. Chairman, are you getting tired?"
8. Strength: grasp of Scripture, the Confessions and dogmatics.
9. Not particularly.
10. No
11. The importance of sound exegesis.
12. I was a middler when Nixie celebrated his 80th birthday. The student body sponsored a party for him. We had asked his daughter what we could get him as a gift. She told us that his Webster's Unabridged Dictionary was worn out. A new one on a stand would be welcomed. So we bought a walnut stand on wheels and a new dictionary. At the presentation in the dining hall, his gift was in a corner under a sheet to be presented at the appropriate time. But when the present was to be presented, the sheet was ceremonially removed, and under it was a motorcycle which belonged to the son of the kitchen and grounds supervisor. After Meyer recovered, we gave him his dictionary. He said he would have preferred the motorcycle.¹²

Rev. Vilas R. Glaeske – 1965

1. The general opinion was that Professor Meyer had lived with the 12 apostles and that he had traveled with Paul on his journeys. He knew the NT that well.
2. As a person: He was very disciplined. A person could set his clock according to Professor Meyer's schedule. He was a courteous man. He had a sense of humor. He was intolerant of mediocrity.

As a professor: He was mostly interested in imparting knowledge in the sense that GPA was not all that important. He marked papers with "excellent, good, passable, barely passable, poor, not passable." I'm not sure any more of all the designations! He was precise and wanted his students to gain the same precision.

As a pastor: He was concerned to keep a pulse on the parish. So he served as a pulpit assistant at St. Marcus. His sermons were meticulously crafted and delivered in the same precise manner. He was nervous before preaching and even in his nineties he said he would lose his breakfast before the service. I suspect that was a "bit" of exaggeration. He did say, however, that if a person approached the pulpit in a casual way he should quit because he wasn't taking God's Word seriously any more.
3. I think he would give his students a "not passable" if we said anything other than "his emphasis on the Scriptures as the Word of God." THE WORD, THE WORD, THE WORD!

¹² Pastor Joel C. Gerlach, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 22 March 1999, e-mail.

4. New Testament Isagogics - Junior

I don't remember my middler schedule.

He died November 10, 1964, my senior year. I only had him a short time - for dogmatics.

5. The little I had with him in dogmatics was the best. Since I can't remember the middler class, it must not have been as exciting!
6. He stood behind the podium and lectured with a Cross-pen in his hand. The look of his beady eyes was penetrating. He was all business and wanted you with him at all times. His voice was not strong, but it was clear.
7. No!
8. His insight into the material he presented was a strength.
A weakness in my opinion was that he only incorporated a few of his personal experiences into his presentation. When he did do so, it made the content much richer.
9. I don't recall such references.
10. I've never considered myself in his league! That in itself might be an emulation. We used to say of him that he was so humble he could be proud of it!
12. Focus on the Word!¹³

Rev. Hermann K. John – 1962

I was a student at the Seminary from the Fall of 1959 until my graduation in the Spring of 1962 - yes, only three years. Vicarage was not mandatory in my day. I vicared part time during my senior year. I vicared at St. Marcus in Milwaukee - where Professor Meyer was a member.

I have the highest regard for Professor Meyer. I am most thankful that my father never told me about his difficulties with Professor Meyer. It was not until after my father's death (in 1973) while I was going through some of my father's papers that I realized what a problem my father and grandfather had with Professor Meyer because my father took sides with Professor J.P. Koehler in the Protestant Controversy.

I had Professor Meyer for dogmatics class. He would have us write dogmatics papers about once a month. His dogmatics notes were mimeographed sheets of paper bound in a folder. Each Bible truth in his outline was supported by numerous Bible references and some quotes (usually in Latin) from the dogmaticians. Each class period was spent with students taking turns looking up and reading the Bible references and translating the Latin quotes. Many students found this a very boring way to study dogmatics. Others found it quite interesting since it gave the student a very thorough study of each doctrine. However, I believe we learned most from the research we had to do in order to write our dogmatics papers. Already before entering his class, the students knew that Professor Meyer had a reputation for assigning difficult dogmatics papers.

¹³ Pastor Vilas R. Glaeske, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 29 March 1999, e-mail.

You ask if I recall any "gems" from Professor Meyer. For some reason this has always stuck in my mind. It did not take place in the classroom but in the hall of the classroom building. It was the custom at the seminary for the students to assemble in the hall between classes and sing happy birthday to any professor celebrating a birthday that day. It was Professor Meyer's birthday. After the students finished singing, Professor Meyer spoke a few words. On this particular occasion, he gave the following definition of the word grace: "It is the unmerited and unmotivated love of God." For some reason, those two descriptive words regarding God's love have always stuck in my mind.

I had the unique privilege of getting to know Professor Meyer outside the classroom as well as inside the classroom. In my second year at the Seminary, Professor Meyer's grandson asked a favor of me. Since he was going to be spending that year studying in Europe, he was looking for someone to take his place in driving Professor Meyer to his Sunday preaching engagements. Apparently Professor Meyer did not care to do the driving on Sunday mornings. I agreed to do this. So for one school year, I drove Professor Meyer to wherever he had to preach. I do not remember a single thing that we talked about on those trips. I am surprised that Professor Meyer didn't talk about his difficulties with my father. However, one thing did make an impression on me which influenced me for my preaching ministry.

One morning as we were walking around the church where Professor Meyer was to preach (we had arrived at the church before anyone else), Professor Meyer suddenly remembered that this particular morning was the special anniversary of some important event in the life of that congregation or of the synod - I don't recall which. The point being, Professor Meyer had not thought of this anniversary event until just 30 minutes before the church service. Then when Professor Meyer began his sermon, he used that anniversary event as the introduction to his sermon. My immediate response, being a student who had been taught by Prof. Hoenecke the proper way to write sermons, "How can Professor Meyer do that? He could not have written that introduction down and memorized it the way I was taught to do it." It was then that I realized: "It is O.K. not to memorize your sermons but to speak from the heart. It is also O.K., if the Spirit moves you, to make a change in your sermon, even at the last minute, yes, even while in the pulpit itself." So, for the first few years of my ministry, I continued to memorize my sermons, but ~~I~~ then I forced myself to learn to speak without memorizing. So for the last 30 years, I have not "written" a sermon; I have preached from a very detailed outline. I find that this makes it much easier for me to speak from the heart to the heart. So in answer to your question #10, I believe I have tried to emulate Professor Meyer in his method of preaching. Among his many gifts, I believe Professor Meyer was a good preacher.

Just imagine how I, as a senior, entered the pulpit at St. Marcus once a month with fear and trepidation as I saw Professor Meyer sitting in the audience. "Who am I," I thought, "to be preaching to Professor Meyer?" Yet Professor Meyer was gracious enough, after the church service, to thank me for bringing him a message from God's Word.

Now to answer some of your questions directly:

1. I believe the students greatly respected Professor Meyer as a teacher.
2. As a person, Professor Meyer showed great humility.

As a professor, well prepared for his classes and able to impart his knowledge to others.

As a preacher - par excellent.

As a pastor, I have no way to evaluate him.

3. His contribution to the seminary was an emphasis on dogmatics, but not to the exclusion of an emphasis on a study of Scripture in context first and foremost. I believe Professor Meyer's experiences with the Protestant Controversy and with Professor J.P. Koehler had an influence on Professor Meyer in this regard: Scripture first, dogmatics second.
4. I only recall having Professor Meyer for dogmatics.
5. NA
6. His classroom demeanor: He did not have strange idiosyncrasies like looking out the window while lecturing, or sitting on the desk. He was always professional. I believe he stood throughout the class period. I do not recall him using the blackboard very much.
7. "Gems" (see above note about the definition of grace)
8. His strength: He relied on the Holy Spirit through the Word to be our teacher. He did not use dramatics or flowery language.

His weaknesses: I did not notice any while I was a student at the Seminary. It was only after reading of Professor Meyer's involvement with the Protestants and with my father and grandfather, that I noticed some weaknesses. Yet I believe God used even these weaknesses to put into the ministry and to keep out of the ministry those whom God wanted in or out.

However, Professor Meyer's part in the eventual dismissal of Professor J. P. Koehler from the seminary was due to a weakness that did hurt the synod. Since there was so much involved with that dismissal (Wauwatosa Theology vs. Dogmatics; bullheadedness regarding the supposed meaning of words in the Beitz paper), I find it hard to put into one sentence what I would characterize as Professor Meyer's weakness. Perhaps it had to do with an inability to take constructive criticism; perhaps it had to do with an attitude of "I'm right and you're wrong; so don't bother me with trying to understand where you are coming from."

9. Professor Meyer never talked about it in my presence.
12. Professor Meyer's involvement in the failure of my dad to graduate caused dad's parents and brothers and sisters to form a definite dislike for Professor Meyer. This became evident during my first year at Northwestern Prep. One day, early in the school year, as I was walking to the home of Professor Hilton Oswald to take piano lessons from Trudy Oswald (Trudy is a sister of my dad), Professor Meyer's grandson Joh P. Meyer asked if he could come along with me. I saw no problem with that. When Trudy opened the door to let me in and asked who my friend was, and I replied "John Meyer," her words were: "Well, look what the cat dragged in!" I was raised on a dairy farm, so I knew the meaning of that expression, but I did not know why my dear Aunt Trudy had used that expression to describe my friend John Meyer. It was not until just a few years ago that I discovered that it had to do with the bad feelings the John family had over the way Professor Meyer had treated my dad.¹⁴

¹⁴ Pastor Hermann K. John, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 21 March 1999, e-mail.

Rev. Harold R. Johne -- 1953

In my opinion Professor Meyer was a very valuable gift from the Lord to his Church in general and to our synod in particular. He was highly respected, apparently by all who knew him or knew of him. I believe that this was true especially because he was deeply immersed in Scripture, all of it, Scripture as a whole. When he referred to individual passages he treated them not as fragments but in full appreciation of their context both historical and scriptural. This is something all of us need to continue to work at as long as we live. The only way to do this is by reading, studying all of the Bible from cover to cover again and again.

I'll try to answer your questions according to number:

1. Excellent in spite of his age. Very humble, precise, thorough, not a powerful preacher but his thoughts were crystal clear. Had a subtle sense of humor. I believe that Professor Meyer was extremely sensitive about doing or saying anything that in any way would be offensive to his Lord or to another person. It is for this reason, I believe, that he always seemed to be restrained, never fully relaxed.
3. See first paragraph.
4. NT isagogics and dogmatics.
5. NT isagogics
6. Restrained with regard to any show of emotion; very precise in what he said; clear.
7. Because of his crisp way of answering questions in dogmatics class, we students spoke of a formula for solving all theological questions, namely, "Nixie dixit."

Once when one of our classmates pulled the sort of thing that you would put a man in the "Leper Colony" for, we decided that as punishment we would have him translate all the Latin quotations in dogmatics class for a week. Several of us went over to Professor Meyer's house to ask if this was OK. He just grinned and then said something that amounted to something like this: "Why bother asking me? Just do your thing. I'll play along." And he did.

8. Clarity, thoroughness, not dynamic.
9. Yes. Once he gave an evening lecture on the Protes'tant controversy. I felt his presentation was very even handed, fair.
10. In my NT isagogics courses at the seminary I tried to follow his basic approach. That meant trying to understand the various letters, etc. of the NT in their historical setting, trying to understand the NT in keeping with what it is, in keeping with the kind of material/literature the Holy Spirit chose to give us.
11. See No. 10.

12. He put the best construction on things sometimes to the point of being naive. He was open about the fact that the time remaining for him in this life had to be short.¹⁵

Rev. Harris P. Kaesmeyer -- 1951

My greatest and lasting impression of "Nixie" (as we called him) was his genuine humility as also illustrated of his not willing to write a dogmatics textbook and preferring to always teach his beloved Scriptures.

Note also the fact that he would sign his articles in the Northwestern Lutheran and the Theological Quarterly with a simple M.

A second abiding and lasting impression was his determined use of simplicity, using simple vocabulary and simple sentences - a refreshing change of the convoluted expression of many theological writers of his day.

An anecdote comes to mind. During the 10-minute interval between classes, many of us would go downstairs to have a smoke and usually returned to the next class a bit late. If it happened to be his class next, he would usually stand at the door and chide us with the words: "You should not let an old man beat you to class," with a little smile on his face.¹⁶

Rev. Keith C. Kruck – 1965

You know you are getting old when seminary students ask you to relate church history from personal experience. Thanks a lot. You really made my day!

Professor Meyer was a real gem. He died in my senior year at seminary. I had him all three years for something.

Regarding "Nixie":

1. He was good, thorough; certainly knew NT Greek and was "the authority" on anything theological.
2. As a person: good sense of humor.

Professor: photographic memory -- recited whole chapters of Bible in English, German, Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

Preacher -- held your interest.

3. He kept us in the Word, in the Word, in the Word. He kept us faithful to the Confessions; He guided us through many controversies, especially with LCMS over fellowship. He emphasized objective justification every chance he got.
4. NT Isagogics (not sure for what else).
5. Going through Acts and Paul's journeys.

¹⁵ Pastor Harold R. Johne, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 25 March 1999, e-mail.

¹⁶ Pastor Harris P. Kaesmeyer, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 31 March 1999, e-mail.

6. He did not move around much, except to get closer to the windows so he could read the Greek better. He was all business. When we missed, we had to go up and excuse at the beginning of the next class. I missed one day because I woke up with a terribly sore throat and lots of nasal congestion. So the next day I said, "I'm sorry I missed yesterday, Professor, but I had a bad cold." He looked at me and said, "Did you ever have a good one?" I felt like crawling back to my seat....
7. Guess above is one gem. We used to like to ask him all kinds of questions. One day after the bell had rung and he wanted to leave, he simply said, "You know, I believe that in heaven this what we are going to do for much of eternity -- sit around God's throne and ask him all these questions."

Another time we were celebrating Dr. Peter's 40th anniversary in the ministry with a Sunday night chapel service and reception in the dining hall. All the professors got up then and said a few words. Professor Meyer said, "Well, this is an anniversary for me, too. It is now 40 years since I came to the Seminary! (He was in his late 40's at the time he came, I think.) And the text that was used tonight was the same text my Pastor preached on when I was Confirmed." There were a few groans in the background by students. Someone usually added, "And it was a sunny day, too..." He had perfect recall. We could hardly remember what had heard in church that morning!

8. His thoroughness and love for the original languages. He wore out Bibles. Every two years the students chipped together and bought him a large print Greek NT. He literally wore the corners of the pages away -- from reading it so often -- and he could recite it by heart! That always made a deep impression on me. He knew it so well and yet still studied it constantly! His weaknesses were more from old age than anything -- eyes and ears going, etc.
9. Yes, I think so. He mentioned President Reim a lot too. He had just left when we were there. He had much admiration for Koehler and Pieper.
10. If so, only in this -- trying to be a better, more faithful student of the Word in the original.
11. Get into the Word, study and read the Word, rely on the Word, quote the Word, teach the Word. The Word is everything. His untiring zeal for the Word.
12. He was always studying -- we students would take a break from studying and go for a drive and every time we passed his house, his study light was on! The Word can never be studied too much!

He also was eager for exercise. He always had a garden, cut his own grass and shoveled his own driveway and half the road in front of his house -- all before the plows even came through. He never wore a topcoat -- just his suit coat and vest, maybe a scarf around his neck and gloves. But never a hat or coat. He walked to classes. He had a full head of snow-white hair, always neatly combed and in place. At synod meetings after delegates had debated an issue for some time, he would finally get up and speak. And that was it. Whatever he said, no one would ever dare to contradict. End of debate. Such respect and love everyone had for him. It was amazing and beautiful to see.¹⁷

¹⁷ Pastor Keith C. Kruck, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 19 March 1999, e-mail.

Rev. David P. Kuske -- 1959

1. He was well-respected even though we all knew that he was beginning to slip a bit because of his age.
2. Professor Meyer was not easy to get to know as a person. In those days we did not have a lot of opportunity to converse with faculty members. When we did, Professor Meyer was rather quiet and would often speak only when spoken to by a student. When he preached in chapel his message was simple and direct. His preaching style was rather quiet and straightforward.
3. Professor Meyer had a very clear understanding of doctrine and was able to communicate doctrine clearly. This was perhaps his greatest contribution to us as students. At the seminary, he not only taught but also served as president. Administration in those days was a lot less complicated than now. But the seminary president is often called to serve on committees dealing with doctrine or inter-church relations. Having him as a representative of the seminary and the WELS in such matters was a comforting thought to us all. The contributions he made in the doctrinal controversy with the LCMS was probably one of his greatest contributions to the synod. His commentary on 2 Corinthians was another. His commentary on the Augsburg Confession is also a gem.
4. I had Professor Meyer for Junior Isagogics (all year), Junior exegesis of John (for half a year when Professor Blume became ill and Professor Meyer took over that class), and for Middler and Senior dogmatics (all year, both years).
5. Perhaps the Junior Isagogics because of the depth of understanding he brought to that class.
6. He would come into the classroom with his unique short white hair "butch" haircut, his white mustache, and his black suit with pants that were about an inch higher than the normal off the floor. He would walk in with quick, short steps, mount the podium, look around briefly to see if there were any absences, and then plunge right into his lecture. His method was straight lecture. I don't recall him ever involving the students, except in John where students had assigned verses which they were to briefly summarize for the class with follow up comments by Professor Meyer. He was soft-spoken. He was very logical and spoke in simple language and sentences, so he was easy to follow. The breadth and depth of understanding he had from his many years of teaching NT isagogics and dogmatics was evident to us all. He would stick strictly to the subject at hand and rarely go off on a tangent. So you had your pencil ready and spent the period taking notes, trying to capture as much as possible of the information he was sharing with you.
7. One thing that Professor Meyer repeated constantly that stuck with me is the little story he would tell about the Irish woman when the word "hope" would come up in class. To contrast biblical hope to her hope about her dead husband he would say, "The word hope in Scripture does not mean what the little Irish lady said when her husband died, 'I hope he is where I know he ain't.'"
8. Strength = The presentation of deep insights into Scripture in a simple, clear way.
Weakness = You could not pursue a point beyond one question with him. If a student asked a question about a point, he would not always recognize the person and let him ask the question. If he did allow a question, he was obviously perturbed with that student or another student asked a follow up question about that same point. Or, if he had answered one question and another student had another question on another point, he was also perturbed.

You could tell his agitation in such instances because he would tend to get a little red color in his face and begin to rock back and forth ever so slightly from side to side on his feet. You learned quickly as a class that only a few questions per class were allowed, and they had to be spaced out a bit. This was particularly frustrating to me in dogmatics class, so though many students thought his dogmatics class was his best class, I didn't share that opinion.

9. No, but when I came to the faculty in 1973, I do recall some of the older faculty members at that time who were contemporaries of Professor Meyer (e.g. G. Hoenecke, C. Lawrenz, I. Habeck) making some brief remarks about how the Protes'tant Controversy and the resultant antipathy of Pieper and Koehler were things that Professor Meyer did not want to talk about. That was a trying time in Professor Meyer's life, and he seemed to feel that it was best that he say little or nothing about it since as a faculty member he was involved in that whole chapter of the WELS and seminary history.
10. I guess I haven't thought of consciously trying to do so. But I suspect that the depth of his understanding has often encouraged me to never be satisfied with having gained enough background in teaching a seminary course but to seek to try to keep growing in knowledge and understanding year by year.
11. His simple proclamation of God's Word without in any way trying to call attention to himself, and his constant pointing to the context of a passage in explaining its meaning. The Lutheran approach of letting Scripture interpret Scripture was modeled in a wonderful way for us who had him as our teacher.
12. A couple of memories come back to me when I think of Professor Meyer.
 - Before I came to the seminary as a student, Professor Meyer was still accepting preaching invitations. When I was a student, he seldom, if ever did that any more. Apparently as he grew older, he would not trust himself to drive to a Sunday morning preaching engagement, but would ask for a student volunteer to drive him to the church. I sort of envied those who had an opportunity like that to get to know him better and maybe pick his brain about a few things on the way to that destination.
 - Another memory is that he would regularly walk down every morning to the post office on Main Street in Thiensville. The post office at that time was the third or fourth building on the west side of the road just south of what is now the junction of Buntrock Rd. and Cedarburg Rd. (Hwy. 57). The building is still there; it is the one with the high staircase on the front of the building. Anyway, the student body appointed about four Juniors to go down during the morning break and pick up the seminary mail at the post office because there was no mail delivery and everyone in Thiensville had to pick their mail up at the post office. What was so memorable about Professor Meyer was that he never wore an overcoat or hat. So there he would be, walking down the hill with no hat or overcoat even on the coldest days of winter. The elderly gentleman with the bushy head of white hair and the black suit was a sight everyone knew well.
 - As a junior, I was on the snow shoveling crew. Every morning it snowed, when we came to Professor Meyer's house, he had his sidewalks and driveway completely cleared of snow. We tried getting up as early as 5:00 A.M. to try to get there before he had done it, but we never succeeded. Except once. We came at 6:00 A.M. and to our surprise, Professor Meyer did not have everything clear of snow. We started

cleaning off, and shortly Professor Meyer came out in his black suit and tie. He stood there and apologized to us for a couple of minutes. He said that he had overslept and was truly sorry that we had to clear his snow off for him

- One final story. When I came to the Seminary as a professor, at the end of the first quarter Professor G. Hoenecke told us a story about Professor Meyer. It seems Professor Meyer prided himself in completing his courses ahead of time and giving the last couple of classes off each quarter for the students. So about a week before the quarter ended, the faculty could expect Professor Meyer to inquire of them when they would complete their classes for the quarter. The standard reply was that they would have to hurry to finish. Professor Meyer would tell them with a wry smile that he figured he would be done a day or two early. (Maybe that is why he didn't allow many questions?!)¹⁸

Rev. Robert Krueger -- 1959

1. We had a great respect for his opinion and scholarship and enjoyed listening to him. He was evangelical in his approach to his subject and the students.
2. He was humble and down to earth. Sermons and lectures were understandable and practical. I believe he very consciously wanted to avoid having his name associated with a particular "brand" of theology. His concern was to get to what Scripture said and taught not what he or others said or taught.
3. The attitude in #2. It was time of strained relations with the LCMS especially and WELS pastors were impatient, including the then Seminary President, Edmund Reim. He was patient and understanding and a valuable influence though I don't remember anything he specifically said. I rather felt that if Professor Meyer could wait, so could I, and so should others have done.
4. I remember having him for the Gospel of John and for doctrine.
5. I would choose doctrine because it more often occasioned his personal views, insights, comments and practical experience in doctrinal application. What I also remember was his insistence in studying the Gospel of John that we let John speak to us. He didn't want us using commentaries - only Greek dictionaries and grammars. He was also good at detecting when someone had used a commentary. I think he knew what every commentator on John said and wrote. We credited him with a phenomenal memory and I think we were right.
6. Classroom demeanor was calm, understanding, NOT authoritative. You could tell that just saying, "excuse me" for missing a class was not enough. He wanted details. My impression would be that he would never miss a class or meeting without a good reason. He expected the same of his students.
7. He did insist on dealing with the original languages of the "dog slugs" and reading them in the original language as well as translating them. He was well aware that we had pre-prepared translations.

¹⁸ Pastor David P. Kuske, interview by author by questionnaire, given 19 March 1999, received 30 March 1999.

8. He did not ignore questions or problems or even opposing opinions. I felt we learned by having to get into the subject matter personally and actively vs. passively. No weaknesses of which I can think. I expect he was a good critic of his method and effectiveness.
9. I don't really remember him talking about serving with Koehler and Pieper. I remember anecdotes about professors and others that he shared but nothing specific. I don't remember him ever quoting them.
10. I remember that he wanted our papers handed in and folded in a certain way with our names on the backside of the last page. He said he did not want to be influenced by the name before he read the paper. I tried that for a time but students didn't seem to like it or understand it. In teaching doctrine I made sure that we first looked at what Scripture said and the pertinent passages before considering the statements of others.
11. To let Scripture determine doctrine and practice. Personally I feel we may be getting a bit away from that by trying to become too detailed and all-inclusive when it comes to matters of practice and casuistry. I can't help but wonder if he wouldn't say that we are becoming too prescriptive when it comes to the practical applications of doctrine and Scripture instead of dealing with each case and circumstance individually.
12. Nothing to add that I can think of. I thought it a privilege to be at the seminary when Professor Meyer was there. I admired his scholarship along with his attitude that it wasn't his word but God's that we should learn and remember. I enjoyed hearing his personal experiences and practical insights.¹⁹

Rev. Waldemar O. Loescher – 1961

Yes, I did have the privilege of sitting at the feet of the honorable late Professor of our Seminary, J.P. Meyer. He taught us dogmatics. We referred to the Latin statements under dogmatics as "Dogslugs". He would add many of his own comments. Generally, he followed the dogmatics by Dr. Adolph Hoenecke. I still have all of Professor J.P. Meyer's duplicated dogmatic outlines, and use them occasionally. They do come in handy.

The nickname by which we students referred to the honorable professor was "Nixie". But I really do not know the etymology of this name. Perhaps someone else told you.

We all did consider him as a man, worthy of high esteem, as humble as he was in his general demeanor. He was a great gift of the Lord to His Church. Though he continued to the age of 91, if my memory serves me correctly, until about three weeks before the Lord called him home, he stayed sharp of mind all the way through his life. So the word trickled down to our ranks at the time of his departure. We referred to this marvelously gifted professor who had such a fantastic memory, as the man with the mind of an elephant. He just didn't forget things that he had learned in his days and kept on teaching to his students.

I still enjoy, now and then, referring to his book, "MINISTERS OF CHRIST", when I work on a text from 2. Corinthians. It seems to me that most of that book appeared in *WLQ* in smaller installments. It is a great commentary.

¹⁹ Pastor Robert H. Krueger, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 31 March 1999, e-mail.

I recall an occasion when the passage, 1 Corinthians 3:21 b, was under discussion. Some of the students in the classroom appeared on the drowsy side. At that time the honorable professor stepped up to my desk and asked if I had my German Bible along, which I did. He noticed such things. He then asked me to read how Dr. Luther translated the passage, which I was happy to read, "...denn es ist alles euer." Then he said, "I understand you grew up in Saxon Germany," to which I replied affirmatively. He next asked, "And how do you say these words in the Saxon dialect," to which I replied, "dos is ollis eier." (Pronounce the vowels with Latin values) Then he walked away at first snickering, and then chuckling. What I couldn't figure out is how he knew the Saxon dialect of the German language. (In the dialect that statement sounded as if you were saying in high German, "That is all eggs," instead of "All things are yours.")

I recall one of the first dogmatics paper he assigned. We were to explain James 2:24 in light of Romans 3:28. I just waited too long to do what I thought would be a decent job. The last day I managed to put my thoughts together in a two and one half page paper, double spaced. I thought I'd be lucky to get a "D". Was I surprised when the paper came back with an "A-" on it. It sort of shocked me. I asked him about it and he said that he appreciated a short paper which was to the point.

I also recall a prophecy he once ventured, stating that one of the members of our class would very likely become the President of the Synod one day. It took us a while to figure out that in all likelihood he was in his George Goble type of humor referring to the classmate Spike Borgwardt, who was steadily dating the President's daughter. The late brother Oscar Nauman was President in those days. And Spike never wanted to give a whole travel log on Monday at dinner, after he had dated Myrna.

We knew that men like John P. Meyer, E.E. Kowalke, Carl Schweppe, and Carl Lawrenz were men who in our estimation rated at least as high as many a university professors who were distinguished with one or more doctor titles. But those men did not regard it that important that they should be so distinguished. For they were servant-minded when they filled their very important positions of training future church workers. Of course, this is not implying that all who hold doctor titles today are also proud men or women. I'm very confident that in our circles this is not the case. Those old timers just wouldn't go out of their way all that mush in order to obtain such distinctions.

I thank the Lord for having had the opportunity to learn at the feet of such men. I wish many a time I had spend my time more diligently in getting fuller use out of all their wisdom.

His Word is what really matters after all the earthly stories have been told and forgotten. Those men learned from one whom we do so honor as doctor, namely, doctor Martin Luther. They imitated Martin Luther as a man faithful to the Holy Word of our God.²⁰

Rev. Armin J. Panning – 1957

1. I was a student at WLS during the years 1953-57. Professor Meyer was held in the highest regard by the student body. I'd say it was between him and Professor Lawrenz for being the most respected professors on campus.

²⁰ Pastor Waldemar O. Loescher, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 5 April 1999, e-mail.

2. Person: Professor Meyer was a very friendly and congenial person, but we all stood somewhat in awe of him. He was quite a big man—rather heavy-set -- with a full head of snow white hair. His appearance was somewhat more impressive than his voice, which was rather high-pitched and quavery. He was a very humble man, holding doors for students and almost insisting that they enter ahead of him.

Professor: In the classroom he was quite business-like -- bent on finishing the material. He started precisely at the bell and quit precisely at the bell. There wasn't much "small talk" or anecdotal material shared in class, but he did have a few jokes appropriate to the subject matter that he told every year. We had the impression they were probably penciled in on his class notes.

Preacher: Professor Meyer was an excellent preacher who saw profound things in the text, which he explained with remarkable simplicity and clarity. He liked brevity with exactness, and didn't preach very long-- probably 15-18 minutes when many veteran pastors went on for a half-hour or more. I don't have any experience with him as a pastor, although he was closely connected with St. Marcus congregation in Milwaukee for most of his seminary years, preaching there once a month, I believe.

3. I would think that Professor Meyer's greatest contribution at the seminary would be a love for the Word that he had such a remarkable gift of conveying to aspiring young theologians. His grasp of the Scripture, and particularly of the NT in Greek, was absolutely amazing. He inspired us to think that we could learn to read the NT as Greek -- not merely translate it, but read it.

His major contribution to the synod would have to include the sizable amount of written material he produced in the many *Quarterly* articles he wrote and also in his commentary on Second Corinthians. He was furthermore a pillar in the Intersynodical discussions, always maintaining a good balance between loving admonition to weak brothers and firmness over against false teachers who were straying from the truth.

4. NT isagogics, homiletics and middler and senior dogmatics
5. NT isagogics, by all odds!
6. Very business-like; always strictly on task; took all the extra periods he could get when other professors were gone to meetings (One day we had him four hours in a row); often finished his courses early.
7. Professor Meyer could be a bit sarcastic at times. One of my classmates once tried to excuse his absence from class by explaining that he had gone to attend his uncle's funeral. To which Professor Meyer responded with the question, "But did it take three days to bury him?"
8. Strengths: His outstanding grasp of the material; his clarity and conciseness in expounding the Word; his obvious love for the gospel; his work ethic (up at dawn; teaching until in his 90's, etc.)

Weaknesses: It almost seems disrespectful even to try and remember weaknesses in someone who was such a model and pattern to me as Professor Meyer was. Perhaps he could have been a bit more generous in allowing class time for student questions. He always seemed so bent on finishing his course material that one occasionally was left with the impression that it was viewed as an imposition if someone "held him up" with a question.

9. There was never any reference to Koehler or Pieper. In fact, we couldn't get him to speak of the Protestant matter.
10. My NT Isagogics methodology is straight from Meyer. I just wish I taught the material as well as he did!
11. I think he imparted an evangelical spirit rooted in the gospel by everything that he said in the classroom, wrote in his numerous articles, and preached in the many pulpits he filled in his long career.
12. Professor Meyer never wore a topcoat. In the 1950's we had to go down to the post office on Main Street in Thiensville to get our mail. You could daily see Professor Meyer take his walk downtown to get the mail. If it were beastly cold he occasionally would wear ear-muffs and gloves, but never a coat.²¹

Rev. Robert L. Sawall – 1959

I spent only one year at the seminary. I came up from Concordia, Springfield, IL. I had to work full time to support my family with five children and attend school. How I did envy those who had the time to study. My time was so limited for the sake of survival, that I don't recall the niceties concerning classroom, etc. But I do have one outstanding, life changing and comfort securing experience with Nixie.

Professor Meyer was an approachable man. His superior academic ability never was an obstacle for him to reach his students on the level that he found them. For me, Professor Meyer was always delight and a class to look forward to.

I was always troubled about my salvation because of my background. From Kindergarten through 8th grade I attended our local Lutheran elementary school. I had three years of confirmation instruction. Although my high school years were public education, I had all dedicated Christian teachers. But when I entered the University, my moral and spiritual values were challenged. At first everything was repugnant to me. After two years in University, I enlisted in the military and trained with the 101st Airborne Division. We then went into intensive training to attack N. Korea. The intense training erased all reference to my Christian upbringing. By the grace of God, I was one of very few men chosen to leave active military service to train men in "inactive" service to ready them for battle. I survived while many perished.

I was not aware of my emptiness spiritually and morally until someone shocked me by telling me that it would have been better if I would had been killed in Korea. This was not the only incident. I was bewildered and returned to my hometown pastor and asked if he would re-instruct me because, indeed, I was lost. This was the beginning of the Lord preparing my heart to study for the ministry. I married. The Lord blessed us with children. Finally, I couldn't stand it any more, I had to study for the ministry.

With five years at Concordia and then the final year at Mequon, I couldn't shake the idea that having known my Savior, Jesus Christ, only to abandon him, that perhaps I would do it again. I wrote mini essays and gave them to different professors. They were dismissed with

²¹ Pastor Armin J. Panning, interview by author by questionnaire, given 19 March 1999, received 31 March 1999, e-mail.

a comment that I was thinking calvanisticly. But one day Professor Meyer asked me, "What is really troubling you?" And I told him my story. In a few brief strokes, he painted a new picture of life with the assurance of salvation. He said, "My son, your problem is that you are trusting your faith. Your faith never died for you. Your church didn't die for you. Your pastor didn't die for you. Only Jesus Christ died for you. Focus on him always and you have the assurance of eternal life."

Never had anyone been so precise and so pointed in giving me the assurance that I longed for. It was a window that opened. Up until that moment, I was not sure that I would accept a call although graduation was only a few months away. After my meeting with Professor Meyer, (I will ever thank God for this man) my life had a whole new dimension - one of joy and absolute confidence in Christ, my Savior.

Professor Meyer breathed an evangelical spirit. I know of no one who did not love him.²²

Rev. Ronald W. Uhlhorn – 1961

I have received your e-mail request of March 19th with questions about Professor John P. Meyer. I was a student at WLS from 1958 until graduation in 1961. I will simply list the questions in number, and then give answers if I am able to do so.

1. I believe in those days Professor Meyer was held in awe by the students- because he had taught so many years - because of his tremendous memory, great knowledge, especially about the Greek New Testament.
2. I do not remember him as a preacher and pastor. As a professor I remember his memory (he once told me all about my distant relatives of several generations back); his memory of past Synod and Synodical Conference meetings. I remember also his precise and to the point teaching methods.
3. In my opinion his greatest contribution to the seminary and to the Synod was to share and to teach his great respect and love for the Holy Scripture. Professor Meyer knew the Bible, read it, taught it and always pointed his students to Scripture and only Scripture for answers.
4. I only remember having him for dogmatics.
6. I don't think I can answer this.
7. A "gem" might be his remarks when the student body sang for his birthday, a custom that was done for each professor on his birthday. After each of the times we sang during my three years as a student he told us, "Next year I will be home in heaven, this is the last time you will sing for me." As I said he was there again the next year.

Not so much a "gem" perhaps but a classroom answer I always remember is this: we were students during the fellowship controversy with the LC-MS. Students had many, many questions, and also every kind of application question you can think of. Perhaps a little tired of all such questions, Professor Meyer told us, "You be sure that you keep your confession clear before the world." I treasure it, because in difficult situations in my ministry, I

²² Pastor Robert L. Sawall, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 19 March 1999, e-mail.

remember those words - not is this absolutely right or wrong, but in "gray areas" is my confession as a Christian and confessional Lutheran clear.

8. His strength was his love for and knowledge of Scripture. As for weaknesses, he sometimes did not want to engage in long discussions, but then when we had him he had been teaching 40 years already and had heard most of our "questions of great wisdom."
9. No.
10. I can't say specifically, but I do encourage pastoral conferences and younger pastors - study the Scriptures, that is what is needed above all else. I feel I learned that at the Seminary, especially from Professor Meyer.²³

Rev. David J. Valleskey – 1962

1. That he was an excellent teacher who knew the Scriptures, especially the Greek NT, better than anyone we had ever known.
- 2a. As a person: I don't have much to say about this. I don't recall that Professor Meyer ever got very close to the students (at least not to me) in my day. It may have been different in earlier days, perhaps; or perhaps this was just my personal recollection.
- 2b. As a professor: He was a scholar. His dogmatics notes, a reworking of Adolph Hoenecke's notes, are still in use today, as you know. He was conversant in German, of course. He knew Latin very well. He was an excellent NT exegete. He also had no trouble with Hebrew.
- 2c. As a preacher: I never heard him preach, so far as I recall.
- 2d. As a pastor: I don't know.
3. His dogmatics notes were probably his greatest contribution. He was also a strong and solid voice during the Wisconsin/Missouri deliberations beginning in the 1940's and continuing through 1961.
4. New Testament isagogics, dogmatics, and Romans, I believe.
5. New Testament isagogics.
6. He stood right at his podium in the classroom. I never recall him moving about the room at all. The way he taught NT isagogics is the way I taught the course also (though I don't claim to possess the knowledge of the Greek language Professor Meyer possessed). It's also pretty much the way Prof. Panning teaches the course. You get the students into the Greek text, do a considerable amount of translating in class, explain the more difficult sections, offer an application to the ministry as time permits and then move on.
7. Even in his late 80's Professor Meyer could spot a person whose attention was wandering or who might be dozing off. He'd immediately throw out a question at that person to get him back on track.

²³ Pastor Ronald W. Uhlhorn, interview by author by questionnaire, sent 19 March 1999, received 21 March 1999, e-mail.

- 8a. Strengths: Unsurpassed knowledge of the subjects he was teaching. A deep, and yet humble, trust in all that God said in his Word. An ability to get through mountains of material. A very logical, razor-sharp mind.
- 8b. Weaknesses: At least by the time we had him (in his late 80's) he did not enjoy spending time on questions from members of the class. He seemed to have a set amount of material he intended to cover in a class hour and looked upon questions as getting in the way of his goal. So, he tended to give very short answers and then moved on.
9. No.
11. A reverence for the Word and the need to let it and it alone determine doctrine.
- 12 It was interesting that Professor Meyer, so far as I knew, almost always did his studying while standing. His study (now Professor Biven's home study) had (still has?) a stand for books that enables one to study while standing up.

I never saw Professor Meyer wear a coat or hat, even on the coldest of days, even when he walked downtown to the post office. This is amazing to such a person as I, spoiled by 20 years of living in balmy California. I bundle up any time it gets down below 50 degrees.²⁴

So we have seen a characterization of Professor Johannes Peter Carl Meyer. It is obvious that the man loved the Word of God. It is obvious that Professor Meyer played an integral role in training the future pastors of our Synod for forty-four years. It is obvious that the Lord blessed our small church body by giving us this man. I hope that this glimpse of Professor Meyer causes us to appreciate the deep impact he brought to the WELS. May the Lord continue to give us men like Professor Meyer who will continually go back to the Scriptures, and only the Scriptures, to determine doctrine and practice. We thank God for Professor Meyer and men like him!

²⁴ Pastor David J. Valleskey, interview by author by questionnaire, given 22 March 1999, received 24 March 1999, e-mail.

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