
Jaroslav Pelikan on Libraries, Librarianship, and Theological Education

A Remembrance

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ABSTRACT A remembrance of historian Jaroslav Pelikan who gave a plenary at Atla's 2004 Annual conference.

Some of you will remember the great Yale historian, Jaroslav Pelikan, at Atla's 2004 annual conference in Kansas City. In his plenary address, he begins by acknowledging his "enormous debt...to the entire library profession." He goes on by quoting the lyrics from an old music hall song, "You made me what I am today: I hope you're satisfied!" (Pelikan 2004, 97)

Pelikan will be chiefly remembered as one of the twentieth century's greatest church historians. Most of us think first of his work on the American edition of Luther's Works and, of course, his five-volume series, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, as evidence of that fact. Historian Mark Noll, who interviewed Pelikan in 1990 just after the release of the fifth volume of *The Christian Tradition*, referred to him as "perhaps the foremost living student of church history" (Noll 1990, 24) Noll also called *The Christian Tradition* (in an unpublished manuscript) "the twentieth century's greatest work of church history in English" (Mark A. Noll Papers).

In the 1980s and 90s this same giant among American intellectuals and educators was also advocating for a "new collegiality" between "research librarians" and "research scholars," where the latter view the former as genuine peers of equal status and partner more intentionally in the business of teaching undergraduate and graduate students. Pelikan believed that this relationship required "serious attention," and that the quality and integrity of teaching, learning,

and scholarship depended on it. He first articulated his vision of “collegiality in teaching” at an ARL conference in 1989 (Pelikan 1989) and published a version of it soon after as a chapter (11) in his book, *Idea of a university: a Reexamination* (Pelikan 1992), a commentary on John Henry Newman’s influential book. (Newman 1996)

Pelikan’s earnest plea seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Clearly, nothing systemic has changed. Pelikan did leave us an example of what he envisioned, which takes us back to the 2004 Atla conference, where Pelikan was joined in the plenary duties by Valerie Hotchkiss, currently the Library Director at Oberlin College, who coauthored with him the four-volume *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (Hotchkiss and Pelikan 2003).

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ADDITIONAL WORKS

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