

# FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN



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## TWO EULOGIES AND A BOOK

PASTOR TROY

I received a wonderful gift a few months ago – a book. It was the kind of book that pastors love to have on their shelves to consult and read. It was a hardback book entitled, “The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations / Third Edition.” The book was a gift given directly from the translator and editor: Michael W. Holmes. It’s an important book for the study of early Christianity from 75 to 150 A.D., a collection of letters addressing the rise of the church amidst a variety of social, religious and political climates. (Also in print is an English-only translation).

I remember meeting Michael the first year I was here. The son of Bill and Shirley Holmes, he introduced himself as professor of New Testament at Bethel College in MN. The conversation was immediately stimulating as I was familiar with professors at Bethel, and eventually we stumbled onto the realization that we had both studied at Princeton Seminary. Michael had received his PhD from there from the great New Testament scholar Bruce Metzger just before he retired – and the conversation has continued to be stimulating as we share theological sympathies.

The book, though, has a special significance attached to it. The inside of the book is dedicated to two men: William R. Holmes and Bruce M. Metzger. In the preface, Michael writes:

*The two men to whose memory this book is dedicated never met, and had they done so, might not have had much to talk about, so different were they from each another: one the prototypical Western dairyman and outdoorsman, the other the quintessential Ivy League academic and scholar. Yet in the attitudes and the outlooks they passed on to me, they shared much more in common than either realized. Coincidentally, their passings are closely tied to this book, in that I began the task of preparing for the publisher the manuscript of the revised Greek text and notes shortly after returning from my father’s funeral, and sent the completed*

*file to my editor a day before receiving the news of my Doktorvater’s passing. Consequently this volume will always be linked with my memories of them and all that each in his own way meant to me, and thus I dedicate it in memoriam.*

If you remember, Michael preached for us after Christmas, a little less than a year after preaching at his own father’s funeral – Bill Holmes. After learning that Dr. Metzger (*Doktorvater* is a doctoral thesis advisor) had passed, almost a month to the day of his father, he was asked to compose a eulogy that was posted on-line in memory of Dr. Metzger. Two eulogies – both within a difficult month in memory of two men who shaped him in profound ways, sandwiching the publication of an important book for the study of early Christianity. Two different kinds of writing – both important in communicating, albeit in different ways, what God is up to in this world.

I remember talking with Shirley after she had received one of the first copies off the press from her son. And she told me, beaming, “Troy, you need to read the preface.” I did, and I marvel at the unique ways in which God works his own will in our lives. A dairyman and a scholar, both Presbyterian men, worlds apart, used by God to shape lives in fatherly way. And the only appropriate response is an acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty that is defined by purpose, meaning and love. This I find in these two eulogies and a book. Surprised by God, once again.

Happy Father’s Day