

# People

News in the [May 30, 2006](#) issue

**Jaroslav Pelikan**, widely viewed as the preeminent scholar of Christian history, died May 13 of lung cancer at his home in Hamden, Connecticut. He was 82. The Yale emeritus professor and theologian, former president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, wrote more than 30 books, including the acclaimed five-volume series, *The Christian Tradition*. Born in Ohio, Pelikan followed his pastor-father into the Lutheran ministry. He received his Ph.D. at age 22 and taught at Valparaiso University, Concordia Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago before joining the Yale faculty in 1962. In 1998 he and his wife were received into the Orthodox Church in America at St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, New York, and he was active in OCA matters. Well into his retirement Pelikan continued to publish. His 2005 book *Whose Bible Is It?* explored how language and cultural differences led to differing biblical interpretations. The year before, Pelikan and French philosopher Paul Ricoeur shared the \$1 million John W. Kluge prize for lifetime achievement in social sciences. Pelikan was asked in 1983 by the National Endowment for the Humanities to deliver the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, the highest honor the U.S. government confers in that field. President Clinton appointed him to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. In 1992-93 he presented the Gifford Lectures in Scotland, another hallmark of scholarly achievement.

**William P. Thompson**, 87, a top administrative figure among Presbyterians in the last half of the 20th century and a former president of the National Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, died April 27 at a Christian retirement community in suburban Chicago. As stated clerk of the northern Presbyterians, Thompson worked diligently for denominational reunion with his counterpart in the southern church, James Andrews. Thompson's death after declining health occurred about seven weeks after Andrews died in an auto accident. For one year after the 1983 merger that created the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the two men served as co-interim stated clerks. Thompson, a lawyer from Wichita, Kansas, became the northern church's stated clerk in 1966. Once a staunch defender of the policy of denying ordination to noncelibate gays and lesbians, Thompson changed his mind during retirement and repeatedly expressed his regret

for his earlier stance. He headed the World Alliance of Reformed Churches from 1970 to 1977 and doubled as NCC president from 1975 to 1978.

**John C. Trever**, 90, among the first Americans to examine the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls to surface in 1948, died April 29 in Lake Forest, California. Trever took photographs of some scrolls containing the book of Isaiah, which were shown to him in Jerusalem by Syrian monks and were said to have been found by a Bedouin shepherd in a cave the year before. His photos of three manuscripts are now housed at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center at the Claremont School of Theology. The photos aided scholars because those scrolls later deteriorated. Trever worked for the National Council of Churches in the late 1940s and early 1950s, promoting the then-controversial Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

**Rose Thering**, 85, a Roman Catholic nun internationally recognized for fighting anti-Semitism and improving ties between Catholics and Jews, has died. She succumbed to kidney failure May 6 while living at the Siena Center of the Sisters of St. Dominic in Racine, Wisconsin. Thering returned to her native state after she retired last year from Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, where she was professor emerita of education and the namesake for the Sister Rose Thering Endowment for Jewish-Christian Studies. "For a half-century, she was an uncommon, inspired voice of reconciliation and dialogue among Christians and Jews," said Robert Sheeran, Seton Hall's president. Her 1961 doctoral dissertation at St. Louis University discussed religious texts that portrayed Jews as Christ-killers. It was used a year later by Cardinal Augustin Bea to draft portions of the Vatican document *Nostra Aetate*, which ruled that Christ's death "cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today."