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MARTIN SCHARLEMANN: A JOURNEY BACK TO ORTHODOXY

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Martin Scharlemann: A Journey Back To Orthodoxy

Introduction

One of the most fascinating stories in the history of 20th century Lutheranism was the battle over biblical inerrancy in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod during the late 60s and early 70s. After years of doctrinal deterioration by liberal professors, pastors and synodical administrators, the pleadings of *Christian News* and the *Confessional Lutheran* were finally being heard. With the election of Jacob “Jack” Preus at the 1969 Denver convention, the wheels were set in motion for the most dramatic turns back to orthodoxy in the 20th century.

The battleground for the struggle between conservative and liberal factions would take place on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary. For years there had been warnings of liberal theology and the use of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. President Preus would have to do battle with John Tietjen, controversial president of Concordia-St. Louis, and the majority of the faculty. The result would be dramatic and in the end, the conservatives would rue the day.

A key figure in that struggle was Martin Scharlemann, long time professor of New Testament at Concordia Theological Seminary. Scharlemann had been the first of the conservative faculty to openly request an investigation of what he felt was “the erosion of some major accents of conservative Lutheranism.”¹ Scharlemann had sounded a conservative warning early with his *Animadversions*, in which he stated there were

¹ Board of Control – Concordia St. Louis, *Exodus from Concordia: A Report on the 1974 Walkout* St. Louis: Concordia College Press, 1974, 151.

major problems in the theological climate of Concordia-St. Louis.² In addition to these early struggles, Scharlemann was also one of the five professors that remained at Concordia-St. Louis after the walkout and even served as president of the institution until he was forced to resign due to “nervous exhaustion.”³

What makes this story so fascinating is Scharlemann’s past history in the LCMS and the Synodical Conference. Scharlemann was among the first to publicly endorse and promote tenets of neo-orthodoxy and the historical-critical method in the LCMS. With a series of papers in the late 50s and early 60s, Scharlemann caused a firestorm of protest because he had challenged the traditional views of biblical inspiration and inerrancy. He finally withdrew the papers at the 1962 Cleveland convention and publicly apologized for the trouble they had caused.

Scharlemann’s history, therefore, has led people to question the motives behind his sudden defection to the conservative camp. Opinions of Martin Scharlemann fall into one of three camps: Seminex faculty, conservative LCMS members, and those of the former Synodical Conference members (WELS, ELS).

The Seminex faculty views Scharlemann as a man who was possessed by “demon ambition.”⁴ Their depiction of Scharlemann is as follows: Scharlemann was upset at the appointment of John Tietjen for president of Concordia-St. Louis, a position that he felt he had earned. Fredrick Danker, a Seminex faculty member, offers this explanation,

² John Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 20. This paper of Scharlemann was written in response to Tietjen’s presentation *The Gospel and the Theological Task. An Animadversion* is defined as 1.) A critical and usually censorious remark or 2.) adverse and typically ill-natured or unfair criticism. Tietjen remarks, “Scharlemann no doubt intended the first meaning, but the second applied as well.”

³ BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 103.

⁴ Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 30.

From Scharlemann's own point of view, in the light of his earlier writing, his critique was not a betrayal of the faculty, but an honest appraisal of the state of theology at that moment in history. Altered circumstances required altered approaches. His gut conviction, therefore, must have been to the effect that the Synod's theology and the practice of interpretive methodology would be safest under his control at the seminary.⁵

In other words, Scharlemann felt that under his control there was a better chance of keeping the LCMS united and still progressive. The underpinning of all these arguments attributes Scharlemann's change of heart to political motives and personal ambition.

In stark contrast, LCMS officials of that era paint a very different picture. The portrait that is painted by noted members of the LCMS is one of a man that was brought to true repentance at the 1962 Cleveland Convention and then began a decade long journey back to orthodoxy. The most glowing portrait is painted by Jacob Preus,

People often talk about me being lonely. I think there is a man who has suffered as much loneliness, as much harassment, and as much unpleasantness as anybody in the church. That is Dr. Scharlemann. I think Dr. Scharlemann is a very brave man. He has a long record of service. He has been a man under fire in his own church, but he was man enough and it took great courage to come to the Cleveland convention of the Synod...and asked the church to forgive him. They rose as one and thanked him, honored him and said, "We support you." ⁶

With this version of the facts, Scharlemann becomes a staunch conservative after realizing the errors of his early, brief flirtation with historical-criticism and neo-orthodoxy.

⁵ Fredrick Danker, *No Room In the Brotherhood: The Preus-Otten Purge of Missouri* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1977), 140.

Wisconsin Synod theologians have still another take on the Martin Scharlemann. Sigbert Becker was fond of saying, “A leopard never changes his spots” in reference to Martin Scharlemann. In other words, Becker and others were very skeptical about Martin Scharlemann’s sudden change of heart. One could even argue that most Wisconsin Synod men of this era hold the same opinion of Martin Scharlemann that the Seminex faculty did.

What is interesting about these views is that the facts support each of them. In each case, all the same facts about Scharlemann are noted. The interpretation of the facts varies due to your particular side. To the Seminex faculty, Scharlemann was a traitor. To Preus and conservative Missouri, he is a staunch confessional Lutheran. To the Wisconsin Synod, he was a man that drove the wedge deeper between the LCMS and the WELS on the issues of scouting, chaplaincy⁷ and Scripture⁸ and never really changed his positions on any of them.

Each particular view of Scharlemann is also very rigid. Either Scharlemann was a traitor, a confessor, or a wolf in sheep’s clothing. There is currently no historical view of Scharlemann that takes into account both his early higher-critical views *and* his return to orthodoxy. In short, all the various sketches of this man are selective in their reporting.

I offer a few examples of this type of selective reporting of the facts of Scharlemann’s life. Kurt Marquart, in his book *Anatomy of an Explosion*, writes,

The latter (Martin Scharlemann) had gone through considerable trials and tribulations in connection with

⁶ *Exodus from Concordia*, 102-103.

⁷ Edward C. Fredrich, *The Military Chaplaincy and Scouting*, 1954 Synodical Conference essay.

⁸ Sigbert Becker, *Why I left the Missouri Synod*. This paper is a series of articles that Dr. Becker wrote for Christian News after he left the LCMS and joined the Wisconsin Synod. Here after the paper will be referred to by the number of the article and the page number of the individual article in the essay.

some disturbing essays which he formally withdrew in a dramatic act of reconciliation at the 1962 Cleveland Convention. And now it was he who...directly precipitated the fateful investigation of the Tietjen seminary, thus decisively reversing neo-Lutheranism' brief triumph over the Missouri Synod.⁹

While Marquart does deal with Scharlemann's past, he fails to grasp the how large a problem Scharlemann's papers caused.¹⁰ Marquart also does not report that Scharlemann never actually apologized for the errors in his papers but only the unrest that they caused in the LCMS¹¹, and that Scharlemann continued to espouse his higher-critical view both in class¹² and in print as late as 1967.¹³

Wisconsin Synod historians have also been lopsided in their treatment of Martin Scharlemann. Their reports of Martin Scharlemann are usually negative. This is primarily because the dealings WELS theologians had with Martin Scharlemann end with the dissolution of the Synodical Conference in 1963. During those years, Scharlemann had been at odds with many WELS pastors and professors on the issues of chaplaincy, scouting and biblical inerrancy. While the critique of Martin Scharlemann by WELS historians is accurate during those years, one is hard pressed to find a mention of Scharlemann's later shift back to orthodox.¹⁴ Part of this lopsidedness is due to subject

⁹ Kurt Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 117-118.

¹⁰ Herman Otten, "Chicago church withdraws from the Missouri Synod." *Lutheran News* (April 1963). In this article Otten brings to the attention of his readership that Emmaus Lutheran Church withdrew from the LCMS because of Scharlemann's papers. This congregation is at present a member of the ELS.

¹¹ Becker, *Why I left the Missouri Synod*, article 11, 2.

¹² Pastor Jim Cummin, interviewed by Paul Meitner, 14 September 2002.

¹³ Martin Scharlemann, "Biblical Interpretation Today." *The Lutheran Scholar* 24 (January 1967): 9-23

¹⁴ Armin Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference: An Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001), 267-268.

matter. Another part, it would seem, comes from hard feelings and a deep sense of doubt that there was a change in Scharlemann's theology.

Conservatives are not the only ones who are selective in their treatment of Martin Scharlemann. The Seminex faculty also glosses over the deeper issues when it comes to this man. John Tietjen writes,

The provisions of Matthew 18 were again the subject of a conversation I had, this time with Martin Scharlemann in early February 1970. In my continuing efforts to reach out to him, I had asked him to come to my office. There, wisps of gray hair combed back on his head, his pale face set in a passionless pose, his lips slightly parted, Scharlemann told me that he considered the situation at CS to be so intolerable that he was seriously thinking about asking the president of the Synod to conduct an investigation.¹⁵

Tietjen paints Scharlemann as a man bent on bringing Concordia down. Tietjen, however, fails to point out that for over two years Scharlemann had been pleading through channels for change. Tietjen also fails to mention that for months he had ignored Scharlemann's pleas to deal with Professors Kalin and Klein, who, in Scharlemann's opinion, were actively undermining the doctrine of inspiration.¹⁶

The problem with all these views is that each has a personal "axe to grind" when it comes to Martin Scharlemann. Each particular view of this man must fit him in the context of their version of the events. This has led to an unbalanced and stereotypical view of a man who played such an important role in the LCMS' return to orthodoxy. There is a need for a fresh historical perspective of this man – one that takes into account both his flaws as a theologian and his contributions to orthodoxy. In particular,

¹⁵ Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 27.

a study is needed to chart the change that occurred in Scharlemann as well as the causes for those changes.

This is the focus of this project. Through books, essays, articles and personal interviews, this project will, first, chart Scharlemann's change from liberal to conservative. This paper will show that the academic freedom and cautious use of the historical-critical method that Scharlemann has so vigorously argued for in the 50s had now grown into a radicalism that was out of his control and threatened to destroy the synod and seminary. Next, this study will explore two catalysts for Scharlemann's change:

- 1.) The political and social foment of the 60s had seeped into the LCMS colleges, parishes, and seminaries through the use of the historical-critical method. Scharlemann's military service and socially conservative stance led him to deeply fear communist and Marxist elements that were appearing in the LCMS and at Concordia. Scharlemann became convinced that continued use of the method would eventually destroy the church and the faith of its members.
- 2.) The work of conservative scholars shocked and at times insulted him into a more confessional position. Their well thought out writings and positions caused Scharlemann to reevaluate his earlier theological stance.

With this as an outline, one will be able to see that Scharlemann did have an actual change that was brought about by political, pastoral and theological concerns. It is

¹⁶BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 22.

the hopes of this paper to offer a fair, balanced and objective view of the Martin Scharlemann.

Part I: Scharlemann's journey from liberal to conservative.

A Flawed Course

Martin Scharlemann had plotted a course for himself that had mirrored the Missouri Synod into which he entered. He had entered Concordia-St. Louis in 1931, the last active year of Professor Francis Pieper. Pieper's influence was felt in every corner of the LCMS. All current professors and pastors had learned their theology from him or from his monumental *Christian Dogmatics*. During his lifetime, he was a living connection to Walther and the founding of the LCMS.

The church, however, was beginning to chafe under what some considered rigid dogmatism and lack of fresh applications and fresh exegesis. The cracks were beginning to show. In the 1930's LCMS missionary Adolph Brux began to publicly challenge the LCMS doctrine of fellowship.¹⁷ In 1941, the LCMS entered into the military chaplaincy program.¹⁸ In 1944, scouting was officially accepted by the LCMS.¹⁹ The confessional position of the LCMS, which was once thought to be unbreakable in the Synodical Conference, was beginning to splinter.

Larger cracks in the LCMS orthodoxy were beginning to show. In 1945, "A Statement" of 44 was released in the synod. This statement, signed by prominent

¹⁷ John Brug, *People's Bible Teaching Series: Church Fellowship* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 73.

¹⁸ Fredrich, *Military Chaplaincy and Scouting*, 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

members of the LCMS, openly advocated a change in the Missouri stance on fellowship. This decade also saw fraternal discussions between the ALC and a further distancing from the WELS and ELS.

It was into this climate that Martin Scharlemann entered his ministry. It was a climate that seemed to suit Scharlemann. Scharlemann's ministry in the LCMS seemed to follow this new, progressive movement. He was one of the first to serve in the military chaplaincy program and rose eventually to the rank of brigadier general.²⁰ Not only did he serve as a chaplain, but he also wrote many of the field manuals and served at the Military Chaplain School in Carlye, Pennsylvania.²¹

Scharlemann, however, was an academic through and through. He received post-graduate degrees from both the University of St. Louis and Union Theological Seminary. His exposure to contemporary biblical hermeneutics at these institutions profoundly affected his view of biblical interpretation and the course that he felt the Missouri Synod should take. Over the next few years he would begin charting a course for "new hermeneutics" in the Missouri Synod and cautiously advocating that the synod to follow his advice.

Most of Scharlemann's recommendations can be found in a collection of his essays entitled *Toward Tomorrow*.²² This book, although published in 1960, is a collection of essays delivered between 1955 and 1960. In the book, he deals with subjects ranging from welfare to hermeneutics. The essays in this book epitomize what

²⁰ Richard Klann, "Martin Scharlemann 1910-1982: An Appreciation," *Concordia Journal* 8 (November 1982): 203.

²¹Ibid, 203.

²² Martin Scharlemann, *Toward Tomorrow* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960).

Scharlemann sees the theological as well as social course the Missouri Synod should take. In his section of theological essays, he writes the following in his introduction,

*Theological method, like theology itself, keeps moving. The techniques of one age are not of another. The essays presented in this section are intended to cover certain problems of our contemporary church life in such a way as to illustrate a method that appears to be reasonably adequate also for tomorrow.*²³

Scharlemann viewed of the theological climate of the LCMS as one that was recovering from the near death of theological stagnation. In his essay, “Creative Scholarship in Our Profession,” Scharlemann states,

*Some of us grew up at a time in our church when there was little more than discouragement for anyone who even remotely hinted at an interest in scholarly research. Any individual with a bent in that direction was usually thought of as putting on airs or nourishing and unhealthy personal ambition. Perhaps we shall never know how narrowly our church body escaped developing a fatal case of intellectual arteriosclerosis in those decades.*²⁴

Scharlemann’s view of the synod’s theological bent and practice during the years in which he attended seminary is less than stellar. For years confessional subscription for many in the LCMS had been based upon allegiance to the writings of Pieper and Walther. This type of stagnate theology caused many to chafe. (The Wisconsin Synod was spared from a great deal of this atmosphere due in part to size and in part to the efforts of the

²³ Ibid, 83.

²⁴ Ibid, 146-147.

Wauwatosa theologians.) There were even stories of families that passed off classroom notes from brother to brother.²⁵

Scharlemann, a young and eager theologian, was among the first to look for a new freshness in biblical studies. His studies at the University of St. Louis and Union Theological Seminary must have seemed like a breath of fresh air to him. The Missouri Synod was starting on a new course and Scharlemann saw himself as one to provide the theological impetus. Scharlemann was also a man to back up his words with his actions. Scharlemann supported chaplaincy and, consequently, he became a chaplain. He supported higher education and “creative” scholarship and was printed and published more than 200 articles in various scholarly journals between 1955 and 1974.²⁶

Scharlemann’s main emphasis in these years was hermeneutics. He felt that there was a need to change the current Missouri Synod position on how Scripture was viewed. Current biblical research at the university and college level was challenging the doctrine of inerrancy as it was taught in the Missouri Synod. Scharlemann thought that many of the problems arose from an archaic or inadequate understanding of the doctrine of inerrancy.²⁷ He said as much when interviewed in the early 80s,

When I came to the seminary in, '52, our theology was pretty frozen. No new question had been asked for decades...because there was a kind of assumption that all the questions of theology had been answered, when in fact new questions arise in theology all the time, and this was a very, very, unwholesome atmosphere in which to live...So I began to write some of those essays...I took up the question of inerrancy...My own idea was that we ought not even use the word because it has a Reformed background and

²⁵ Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood*, 9.

²⁶ (Klann 1982, 203.)

²⁷ Mark Braun, “A Tale of Two Synods” (Ph.D diss., Concordia Theological Seminary – St. Louis, 2000), 286

usually misleads people when they read it. In fact, it often keeps people from reading the Bible because they are scared to run into some problem, since inerrancy suggests that everything is in neat order, which, of course it isn't, in Scripture. Well, of course, as soon as you start tinkering with the word "inerrancy" you get into trouble.²⁸

Scharlemann, therefore, believed that the most important step in the new course being charted for the Missouri Synod was to reform the doctrine of inerrancy. By using current biblical scholarship, judiciously, the LCMS could form a doctrine that squared with scholarship and still maintained a Lutheran character.

Scharlemann began plotting this course already in 1953.²⁹ After six years of study, Scharlemann delivered his blueprint for change in a series of papers that challenged the traditional Missouri Synod doctrine of verbal inspiration and inerrancy. These papers were meticulously written and carefully worded. The papers couched neo-orthodox concepts of inspiration and inerrancy in Missouri Synod language. If one was to follow these papers, in Scharlemann's opinion, you could come to a doctrine of inspiration that squared with modern scholarship and did not set parishioners up for a spiritual fall when they ran into the "evidence" of modern scholarship.

The most troublesome portion of these papers was Scharlemann's contentions that Scripture contained errors and did not give the kind of certainty that the traditional Lutheran doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy gave. In the paper, Scharlemann makes bold statements like, "...revelation did not consist of some teaching or idea about Him,

²⁸ Mary Todd, *Authority Vested: A Story of Identity and Change in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 180.

²⁹ Martin Scharlemann, "Bible as witness, record and medium." (photocopy), pg 3. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon.

but the very person of the Messiah.”³⁰ He also states, “Our everyday language is much too shallow to contain the Biblical revelation without major and even fatal adjustments.”³¹

The effect of these papers Scharlemann could not anticipate. Fredrick Danker put it best when he said that Scharlemann’s paper had the effect of “a fifty car collision on a turnpike with police car flashers piercing through the fog.”³² Scharlemann’s paper was a direct affront not only to the doctrine of inspiration, but it confirmed the worst fears that some in the soon-to-be-dissolved Synodical Conference.

The fallout of Scharlemann’s blueprint was an even deeper division in the Synodical Conference and a deep division in the Missouri Synod as well. When Scharlemann read the first of his “exploratory” papers at a faculty meeting, the reaction by many of the older faculty (Franzmann, Roehrs and Mueller) was almost violent.³³ Robert Preus, then a new faculty member, was shocked at the contents and assertions that Scharlemann made, but even more surprised that Scharlemann continued undaunted with his papers.³⁴ As time moved on, however, Scharlemann began to show his frustration at the synod’s lack of appreciation of his formulations and the uproar the papers were causing.

The uproar was great. The *Confessional Lutheran* and the *Lutheran News* made Scharlemann and his papers the focus of their concern (or attack in some cases) from 1959 to 1964. Hundreds of letters and petitions asking for clarification or disciplinary actions against Dr. Scharlemann poured into both Concordia-St. Louis and the Missouri

³⁰ Ibid, 8.

³¹ Ibid, 7.

³² Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood*, 5-6.

³³ (Braun 2000, 286.)

Synod headquarters. Paul Eickmann, long-time professor of Hebrew at Northwestern College, was at that time a young WELS pastor in Crete, IL. He was among those who had heard the paper delivered at the LCMS' Northern Illinois Pastors Conference. He was shocked by its contents.

In concern, Eickmann wrote a letter to Carl J. Lawrenz and sent a copy of the letter to Scharlemann. In the essay, as Eickmann recalls, Scharlemann directly denied the inerrancy of Scripture while agreeing that it is the inspired word of God. This concern was relayed to President Lawrenz of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. In a note that accompanied the copy sent to Scharlemann, Eickmann added, "I hope that I have not misrepresented your position on the inerrancy of Scripture," but "I consider your doctrine a dangerous false teaching in the church."³⁵

Scharlemann replied to Eickmann while on sabbatical in New York. In response, Scharlemann wrote,

I am very sorry to receive this letter, because it is a very thorough misrepresentation of the essay...and the discussion that followed. I regret that you did not find it convenient to get your facts straight before writing to Professor Lawrenz.

*I regret that you, too, have been victimized by the half-truths that the **Confessional Lutheran** crowd peddles. This is certainly one such instance.*

My basic contention is that the term "inerrancy" is improperly used of Scripture. And this is quite something different from wanting to throw overboard what we usually think of when we in our circles use the word.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid, 286. Preus is also attributed with "leaking" these papers, which were intended only as an exploratory exercise, to the synod at large. While this rumor is unsubstantiated, it seems reliable.

³⁵ Ibid, 307.

³⁶ Ibid, 307.

Scharlemann also could not understand why there was such a great uproar over his papers. To his way of thinking, his plans were not advocating doctrinal changes, as Eickmann, the *Confessional Lutheran* and others had suggested. His changes were merely pedagogical and philological.

To a certain extent, he was right. Scharlemann had clearly stated in his papers were “not meant to be the final word on the matter” but exploratory in nature.³⁷ Scharlemann was concerned that the LCMS lose nothing of its doctrinal grounding. This is evident from his comments in his essay “Creative Scholarship in Our Profession.” While in the essay he vigorously argues for freedom of expression in religious scholarship, he also gives this cautionary warning,

*We have heard much about academic freedom in the past years. Frequently interest in this kind of liberty was mouthed by individuals who used the very climate and opportunities of freedom to destroy it. Such men forgot or ignored the fact that the other side of freedom is responsibility. Even academic freedom is not license.*³⁸

Scharlemann felt that there was a time that the synod must take an honest look at itself and distinguish between biblical truth and old applications and formulations of biblical truth. Marquart even admits that the charges of theological stagnation and a call for fresh exegesis were needed.³⁹

To a larger extent, however, he was wrong. Scharlemann had misdiagnosed the problem in the Missouri Synod. While Scharlemann thought that he was fixing the

³⁷ (Scharlemann 1959, Introduction.)

³⁸ Scharlemann, *Towards Tomorrow*, 146.

problems he saw in the LCMS, in reality he had attacked the very underpinnings of Scripture and Lutheran Orthodoxy. Sigbert Becker points that out clearly when he writes,

*If I said there is a discrepancy, a mistake, I have made up my mind; I have said, I have so much knowledge that I say, these men made a mistake. I am at least sure of something. I have put myself above Scripture and place my words into the mouth of God. Thereby I prejudice you towards believing that Scripture can err. This is a logical fallacy. I am begging the question by assuming that there are discrepancies.*⁴⁰

The unrest finally had to be dealt with. The solution to the Scharlemann controversy was neither discipline nor acceptance of his position. It was an apology. Scharlemann, at the 1962 Cleveland Convention, apologized for the unrest that he had caused. This was a political maneuver and it did not satisfy the conservatives in the LCMS.⁴¹ Scharlemann never apologized for his errors, only the unrest that they caused. While the conservatives of the LCMS later used this apology as proof of Scharlemann's orthodoxy, this event was not the point in time that Scharlemann changed his course.

He apologized for the unrest caused by his papers, but continued on with his course of action for another five years in print and in classroom. Pastor Jim Cummins, an LCMS pastor in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, relates this story,

In 1964, I was in my senior year at Concordia-Springfield when I was chosen to represent my class for an annual student exchange at Concordia-St. Louis. While there I sat in on Dr. Scharlemann's class on biblical interpretation. I became troubled by some of the comments that he was

³⁹ Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 10.

⁴⁰ Werfelmann, "Outline for Discussion of Essay, 'The Bible as Record, Witness, and Medium,'" 5, 7-8. Quoted in Mark Braun, *A Tale of Two Synods* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002), pg 290.

⁴¹ Becker, *Why I Left the Missouri Synod*, 11, pg 2.

making about inerrancy and inspiration. I finally asked Dr. Scharlemann, "Is the Bible true?" Dr. Scharlemann answered with, "I believe that Jesus is true." This troubled me immensely.⁴²

As late as 1967, Scharlemann was still trying to endorse his version of inerrancy and the use of the higher-critical method in a series of articles that appeared in the *Lutheran Scholar*. In the article "Biblical Interpretation Today," Scharlemann writes,

- *The development of form criticism, with its interest in literary types, helped immeasurably at this point in laying bare for our reflection the needs of the early church in terms of her life, her liturgy, her preaching and her teaching.⁴³*
- *Behind the text is the life of Israel and the church. This dimension is almost completely missing from Fundamentalist interpretation, chiefly because it rejects the historical-critical method. From its beginnings, Fundamentalism has refused to distinguish between some of the false presuppositions of criticism work and the method itself, thereby depriving itself of one way of becoming a part of the living thrust of Scripture.⁴⁴*

If one were to place Scharlemann on a theological spectrum in the mid to late 60s, you would have place him solidly in the liberal camp. Yet, by the end of the decade, he would be the whistleblower at Concordia-St. Louis. What happened?

⁴² (Cummins 2002.)

⁴³ Martin Scharlemann, "Biblical Interpretation Today: Part I" *Lutheran Scholar* 24 (January 1967), 13.

⁴⁴ Martin Scharlemann, "Biblical Interpretation Today: Part II" *Lutheran Scholar* 24 (April 1967), 41.

Scharlemann recognizes his flawed course

The years 1967-1968 were pivotal years for Martin Scharlemann. Already in his *Lutheran Scholar* articles, one could sense that he was making a turn back to a more orthodox understanding of verbal inspiration and inerrancy. In the articles he attacked not only the limitations of Fundamentalist biblical interpretation, but also of classic liberalism and even neo-orthodoxy. One gets the sense from reading these articles that Scharlemann is bending over backwards to salvage the usefulness of the latter. He concludes one article with the words,

Looking back along the road we have come, we might summarize our evaluation of liberal hermeneutics by repeating the observations that it works with presuppositions drawn from philosophy rather than from Scripture, that it fails to employ those categories of function and history in which the Scriptures move also in terms of recapitulation, that it provides no bridge from the individual to the community of God's people, and that it is helpless to move men to take their place among God's children of all generations for the purpose of engaging in the noblest of all activities: worship. So why use the presuppositions of this method? We do not.⁴⁵

Was this the same Scharlemann as before or was there a change? Dr. Richard Klann, Scharlemann's long time friend and associate at Concordia seemed to think so. After Scharlemann's death in 1982, Klann had this to say,

*We spent many hours together discussing the origins and the development of the principles of the historical-critical method, from Spinoza's **Tractate** to the eighteenth century rationalists, from Schleiermacher to Bultmann and his **epigoni**, and the prevailing critical methods of interpretation in contemporary seminaries. The turning*

⁴⁵ Martin Scharlemann, "Biblical Interpretation Today: Part I" *Lutheran Scholar* 24 (January 1967), 22.

*point came toward the end of the decade: it was no longer enough to study the issues; one must begin to take a stand regarding them. Since Lutheran principles of interpretation are neither biblicistic nor historical-critical but confessional and pneumatic...it is necessary to oppose both.*⁴⁶

Scharlemann changed because he saw the methods he advocated had taken a form that threatened to destroy the seminary and synod.

Please permit a crude illustration. Scharlemann in the 50s to the mid 60s was a type of theological Dr. Frankenstein. He was looking for something new and fresh to bring to the LCMS scene. He had made a creature from the “best” of neo-orthodoxy and the historical-critical method and unleashed this creature into the LCMS. The creature, however, was now out of his hands and going its own way. Dr. Scharlemann was beginning to realize that the course that he had once thought so promising, had turned out to be a destructive to both the men that he trained and to himself personally.

How had the climate of the Missouri Synod changed since Scharlemann first put forth his scholarship in the late 50s and early 60s? First of all, the climate of the seminary was considerably different. During the mid to late 60s, the character of Concordia-St. Louis had radically changed. While Scharlemann had argued for a climate of “creative” scholarship, he had also warned against the abuse of such a climate.⁴⁷ By the late 60s, he realized that his warnings went unheeded and his worst fears realized. He became troubled at the type of “loose” and “radical” scholarship that was being produced. What troubled him even more that he began to realize that the cause of the problem flowed

⁴⁶ (Klann 1982, 204.)

⁴⁷ Scharlemann, *Towards Tomorrow*, 146.

from the undermining of the authority of Scripture, stemming from the use of the historical-critical method.

Scharlemann had no problem discussing different ideas in connection to Biblical hermeneutics. It was healthy and promoted objectivity on the part of the exegete. Scharlemann, however, never endorsed such radical departures from orthodoxy as those now being endorsed by members of his own faculty.⁴⁸ By 1967, the seminary was being methodically stocked with professors that endorsed and promoted such radical departures from orthodoxy.

The climate of the seminary classroom had changed as well. Pastor John Struve, then a student at Concordia-St. Louis, recalls his class in Biblical interpretation well. One of his professors, Ed Schroeder (who was, coincidentally Scharlemann's brother-in-law), used the textbook *Naming the Whirlwind*. This textbook unabashedly endorsed and taught the seminary student to use the historical-critical method. Not only did Schroeder use this textbook, anyone who refused to follow the method taught in this book, he failed.⁴⁹

Pastor Mark Mueller concurs. While he never failed a course due to his refusal to use the method, Mueller remembers being greatly discouraged and marked down for his refusal to use the method. Mueller recalls this exchange that he had in class with Evertt Kalin,

After discussing for weeks the JEDP source theory, I and others asked professor Kalin point blank, "Are we ever

⁴⁸ BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 7. Most notably of theses was Dr. Norman Habel. In Habel's paper "The form and meaning of the fall narrative" he denies the historicity of Adam and Eve and turns the fall into a pedagogical myth. Scharlemann, while supporting the climate to discuss such an interpretation, would never support such an interpretation.

⁴⁹ John Struve, interviewed by Paul Meitner, 19 February 2002.

going to get around to discussing Mosaic authorship of the Pentetuch?" Kalin slowly removed his glasses and said, "There is no reputable scholar that believes that Moses wrote any of the Pentetuch."⁵⁰

The most stunning story of the climate of biblical exegesis and hermeneutics comes from Dr. Walter A. Maier, noted conservative theologian and professor at Concordia-Ft. Wayne. He vividly recalls a course in biblical exegesis that was team taught by Drs. von Rohr Sauer and Habel.⁵¹ The first thing that he had to do for the course was buy a box of crayons to color the portions of his Bible that came fro J, E, D, and P. Maier also recalls being heavily docked for "having the nerve" to use Romans to help illuminate portions of Genesis.⁵²

What is remarkable is that all three men, who attended the seminary from 1967 to 1976 (Maier, 67-69; Struve, 69-74; Mueller, 72-76), without hesitation, say that Scharlemann no longer endorsed the historical-critical method. More than that, Scharlemann encouraged all of these men individually to keep on using the historical-grammatical approach. A definite shift in theology had happened. What was even more striking was how fast the shift had taken place.

Maier, who had Scharlemann as an advisor while completing his Th.D program, has this interesting insight,

When I got to my Th.D, I was assigned to Martin Scharlemann. I had a very good relationship with him. By that time ('68-'69) he had changed. We were on the same

⁵⁰ Mark Mueller, interviewed by Paul Meitner, 26 February 2002

⁵¹ Dr. Walter A. Maier II, interviewed by Paul Meitner, 11 February 2002. Pastor Struve comments that Von Rohr Sauerer was a Theinsville Graduate. Humorously he remarked most of the worst professors at Concordia during those years came from Theinsville. "There was no middle ground for these guys. They went from one extreme to another."

⁵² (Dr. Walter A. Maier 2002.)

theological frequency, I believe...I took one course from him on the theology of Stephen. He was quite good, quite a good exegete. He gave very constructive suggestions. Never once was I compelled to accept anything liberal or to deviate and take a liberal slant on things because he had completely changed at that point...He was glad to have me as one of his protégés...

Q: You never felt pressured in anyway to adopt some of the methods that he had previously advocated?

No, because he did not hold them at that time. He had turned. He had turned so completely that by the time the walkout occurred there were only five professors left at the seminary and to run the place, he was appointed president.⁵³

This comment brings us to the reason that most of the Seminex professors give as the reason for Scharlemann's change of heart. Most of these professors hold on to the belief that it was a lust for the office of the president that caused Scharlemann to switch sides. Many WELS theologians and pastors have also held to this view of the facts. Liberal theologians and historians have held this view with a vicious tenacity. Tietjen recounts his final dealings with Martin Scharlemann on the day he vacated his office at Concordia,

When I learned late Monday that Martin Scharlemann was expecting to function as acting president from within my office, I spent most of the day cleaning out my files, carefully distinguishing between personal materials and those of the office. When the job was done early Wednesday, January 23, I asked Scharlemann to come to my office. I invited him in and shut the door. I told him I had just two things to say before leaving the office to him. "The first thing is this: Congratulations, Martin! You finally made it!" When he started to object, I said, "And

⁵³ Ibid.

the second thing is this: You have your reward!" As he fumed and sputtered, I strode out the door.⁵⁴

This premise is weak for many reasons. First, Scharlemann's return to orthodoxy began well before the appointment of Dr. Tietjen, as Maier and others have testified. Also, Scharlemann's protest against the problems at Concordia began not with the appointment of Tietjen, but rather Scharlemann's removal from the position of director of graduate studies. He was replaced by Ed Schroeder, a man more congenial to the radical historical criticism being propounded by the faculty.⁵⁵

Demotion was not the only reason for Scharlemann's change. He also had a deep pastoral concern for those who were studying to be parish pastors. Former students of Scharlemann during the late 60s and early 70s consistently comment that the exegesis done in his classroom was never solely an academic exercise for theologians. "Scharlemann always brought the discussion back to the question, 'now what does this mean for your member sitting in the pew?'" Struve recalls.⁵⁶

Thirdly, he was elected president not as a payment for services rendered, but out of necessity. Mueller points out that out of the five that remained, only Scharlemann had the ability and experience to act as president. Lorenz Wunderlich was too old. Robert Preus, while a fine theologian, was extremely lacking in administrative gifts. Ralph Bohlmann was still on sabbatical at Yale. Klann was not up for the task. Scharlemann,

⁵⁴ Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 196.

⁵⁵ (Klann 1974, 202.) Ed Schroeder is attributed with articulating the now infamous "Gospel Reductionism" that plagued Concordia-St. Louis.

⁵⁶ (John Struve 2002.)

with his military and administrative experience, was, literally, the only one left for the job.⁵⁷

Finally, Scharlemann's first love and calling was as a teacher and a scholar. All associates and students agree on this point. One pastor tells of the joy that Scharlemann had in making it to class the last two years of his life after being diagnosed with cancer.⁵⁸

The mood of the campus had become theological chaos instead of a theologically creative and constructive atmosphere he had envisioned ten years earlier. Scharlemann had recognized the great faults of his earlier and his colleagues current viewpoints. Now Scharlemann went about the task of correcting his mistakes and trying to save his church body and seminary.

Scharlemann corrects his course

Scharlemann had recognized the errors of neo-orthodoxy and the higher-critical method were flawed instruments that must be discarded. While he had done this privately for at least two years with students and colleagues, he did not go public with his criticisms until the election of Dr. Tietjen.

Scharlemann viewed the election of John Tietjen with foreboding.⁵⁹ Many in the church looked with trouble on this election for two reasons. First, Tietjen was elected over candidates who had received far greater endorsements (most notably Ralph Bohlmann). Secondly, Tietjen was a highly controversial figure. He had published the

⁵⁷ (Mark Mueller 2002.)

⁵⁸ LCMS Pastor, interviewed by Paul Meitner, 6 March 2002. This pastor, due to his close relationship with Scharlemann and very candid statements made during the interview, asked to remain anonymous.

book *Which Way to Lutheran Unity?* which advocated a course of action that would have destroyed confessional Lutheranism in the United States.⁶⁰ Tietjen also served as the secretary for the Lutheran Council USA, a pan-Lutheran organization.

Scharlemann reacted first to Tietjen's liberal theological bend. Tietjen had written a treatise entitled, "The Gospel and the theological task." Scharlemann had responded with a paper entitled *Some Animadversions*.⁶¹ In this paper, Scharlemann writes that Tietjen's article "nowhere refers to the unique and very specific responsibility of Lutheran theologians to understand and apply the distinctions between Law and Gospel" and concluded that the Tietjen article does not "flow from the central principle of Lutheran theology."⁶²

Scharlemann grew more bold over the next few months. He began to state openly that there were a great number of problems that he felt were eroding the theology of the LCMS at Concordia. Scharlemann especially took exception to Ralph Klein and Evertt Kalin, both of whom were in the exegetical department. After meeting with these men individually⁶³, and with the mediation of President Tietjen, Scharlemann felt that he had hit a brick wall. Not only were his pleas disregarded, he was being personally shrugged off as a bitter colleague who was only causing trouble out of envy.

The situation finally got so bad, out of conscience, Scharlemann petitioned the newly elected President Preus directly in April of 1970. In the letter he cites specific instances of doctrinal deterioration as well as his efforts to try to remedy them over the

⁵⁹ (LCMS Pastor 2002.)

⁶⁰ Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 27.

⁶¹ BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 19.

⁶² *Ibid*, 19.

⁶³ Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 27.

past two years. In the letter, he asks Preus to have an inquiry into the goings on at Concordia. In other words, Scharlemann, a senior faculty member at Concordia, blew the whistle on his own faculty and gave Preus the grounds he needed to conduct an inquiry. Scharlemann, with his one letter, confirmed the deep fears of LCMS conservatives and given impetus for investigation.

Scharlemann's letter caused a firestorm among the faculty. Dr. Tietjen, whom also received a copy of the letter, called Scharlemann into his office and talked to him "in a fashion that bordered on obscene."⁶⁴ In that meeting, Scharlemann recalls that Tietjen "threatened to expose me and to destroy my reputation with faculty colleagues."

Tietjen took swift action against Scharlemann. There was a special faculty meeting called in order to discuss his letter to Preus. The meeting's agenda, however, was kept secret. Scharlemann, who had a previous engagement, excused himself from the meeting, since he was not aware that his letter would be discussed. Scharlemann writes,

The following Tuesday a regular faculty meeting was held. One of my colleagues asked what the agenda for the special meeting that had been called for Thursday afternoon of that week. Dr. Repp's reply was that it was "the President's agenda," and that no further information would be given...

So I was off campus at the time of the special meeting of the faculty, since no indication had been given as to what the meeting was about. That must have been some faculty meeting! It was, in fact, a kangaroo court. The courtesy copy of my letter to President Preus was read -mind you, without my having been asked or Dr. Preus! My cover letter was also conveniently excluded. So well prepared was all this, that a long sheet of abusive statements was distributed to each member of the faculty...

⁶⁴ Martin Scharlemann, "An Open Letter: Part II" *Affirm* 2 (April 1973), 3. Tietjen makes no mention of this in his book.

*...From that day forward members of the faculty were no longer free to act with integrity. They had voted away their freedom of action, having been thoroughly compromised.*⁶⁵

Scharlemann however, remained undaunted in bringing about change at Concordia. He put himself into correcting his earlier errors with the same vigor as he had promoting them ten years earlier. Scharlemann debated with Tietjen, Smith and Bertram over the next few years in public forums.⁶⁶ He wrote numerous articles for *Affirm*, one in particular that he compared and contrasted the historical-critical method and the historical-grammatical method.⁶⁷ Scharlemann concluded the article by saying, “This is precisely the way in which Biblical authority is eroded by the historical-critical method.”

Scharlemann would take much grief for his action over the next few years as he, along with other conservatives, tried to undo the mistakes of the past. His brother Robert, a vociferous higher critic, spoke to him rarely after this incident. Relations between brothers-in-law Robert Hoyer and Ed Schroeder were strained for the rest of his life. The grief that he received was so great that he eventually had to step down from his duties due to “nervous exhaustion.”⁶⁸ Later investigation uncovered that Scharlemann was having anxiety attacks and deep depression brought on by harassment from former colleagues and students.⁶⁹

It is also important to take note of Scharlemann’s role in the LCMS after the walkout. After he recovered from his illness, he threw himself back into his work. He

⁶⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁶⁶ (Struve 2002.)

⁶⁷ Martin Scharlemann, “Friends of the Bridegroom: An Historico-Grammatical Consideration / Sons of the Bride-Chamber: An Historical-Critical Investigation” *Affirm* 3 (October 1973), 4-5.

⁶⁸ News and comments, *Lutheran Witness Reporter* 93 (April 1974), 164.

⁶⁹ (LCMS Pastor 2002.)

helped found *Concordia Journal*. He offered excellent, Lutheran advice in dealing with the inroads of the Charismatic movement into the LCMS during the 70s.⁷⁰ He did a great deal to defend the doctrine of objective justification that had been called into question by some in the LCMS in the late 70s and early 80s.⁷¹

In conclusion, Scharlemann did change his position and took a great deal of grief for it. In the late 60s, troubled by the radical departures from orthodoxy by fellow professors, he began to see the errors of his ways and correct them. He not only came to criticize the positions of the liberal leadership of the seminary, but it was he that gave the impetus for the investigation. Later work showed that this change was no mere political maneuver. In print and by action, he showed that he had made a significant change to a conservative, confessional position.

Part II. A Catalyst For Change: Scharlemann's Social and Political Conservatism

Communism, Woman Suffrage and Concordia-St. Louis

To be sure, Scharlemann had recognized the errors of such radical positions of his fellow faculty members. He had also recognized that these errors were causing a great problem among the students as well. But was there a catalyst for Scharlemann's radical change?

The 60s were a turbulent time for everyone. With the escalation of the Vietnam conflict, loyalties became extremely divided in the country, even in the LCMS. Clashes

⁷⁰ Larry Rockemann, "Bohlmann Expresses Thoughts on the Charismatic Movement" *Spectrum* 8 (December 1975), 15.

⁷¹ Richard Lieske, "Scharlemann Stresses Justification as Accomplished Fact Outside Man," *Spectrum* 13 (February 1981), 1.

between socialists and capitalist, “hawks” and “doves,” liberal and conservative were common. Not only were these forces at battle in the United States, but also within denominations. The World Council of Churches began to fund communist uprisings in third world countries. Liberation theology began to enter the theological scene as well.

Anti-war protests were common on LCMS college campuses around the country.⁷² The feeling of anti-authority and anti-war was also on the campus of Concordia-St. Louis. The Board of Control at Concordia St. Louis also recognized the existence of the political foment among the students at the seminary. After the incidents at Kent State and Jackson State, some students decided to hold a memorial service in the memory of those students who had been killed. The Board of Control for Concordia St. Louis describes the scene of this service,

The service dealt with the problem of the Vietnam War and the peace movement, racism, ect. A definite political stance is evident. Is the use of the format of a divine service a proper and Lutheran vehicle for making propoganda and placing extremely judgmental statements in the mouths of the congregation?

One may also ask if the use of the words and phrases such as “bastards,” “goddam,” “God, I’m dying for a smoke,” is appropriate in an alleged divine service.⁷³

While still the vast majority of the students were conservative politically, there was a trend to go against the system by a growing minority of the students.⁷⁴

⁷² (Struve 2002.)

⁷³ BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 36.

⁷⁴ (Struve 2002.)

This trend was never so evident as it was in *The Seminarian* during the late 60s and early 70s. There were a number of articles that blasted the seminary and synod for conservative social positions and endorsed the use of the historical-criticism.⁷⁵ These students were also encouraged by certain faculty members to continue in these activities. Two faculty members in particular that voiced dissent over the war in Vietnam and strongly advocated for historical critical exegesis were Ralph Klein and Everett Kalin.⁷⁶

The social movements of the 60s spilled over into the LCMS in other ways as well, particularly the issue of women suffrage. There was a great push by liberal theologians during these years to get women's suffrage and, ultimately, women's ordination.⁷⁷ This was clearly seen on the campus of Concordia-St. Louis during the late 60s and early 70s.

The faculty had started to allow women to attend at Concordia-St. Louis for a "theological education." Their education, however, was being subsidized by the synod. Many were afraid that the presence of women at Concordia was the first step toward as the greater goal of women's ordination.⁷⁸ As the Seminex professors showed later with the ordaining of women in the AELC, the conservatives fears were founded. John Struve recalls this event from a debate that he had with John Tietjen at Messiah Lutheran Church in St. Louis,

...There was a question from the audience asking him [Tietjen] if he was in favor of women ordination. And he said categorically, "No I am not! I am a Missouri Synod

⁷⁵ William Erat, "Confessional Subscription and Historical Criticism," *The Seminarian* 24 (May 1969), 16-19.

⁷⁶ Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 28.

⁷⁷ Todd, *Authority Vested*, 192.

⁷⁸ (Mueller 2002.)

Lutheran and I believe the doctrines of our church.” Then I rebutted by saying “Then why are there women studying on our campus right now, and their education subsidized by the synod, much more than even most of the male students who were on campus. If there not ever going to be ordained, why are we subsidizing their education costs and letting them go to all the M.Div courses that all the other guys are at.” He looked at me with big eyes and said, “John, you know that I would never be in favor of women’s ordination. They have a right to study and get a degree like anyone else. But they would never be ordained. That would never be my wish for them.” And it sort of died there. I let it die...

Now the first day after he was dismissed from Concordia, he walked with the rest of them to a news conference at St. Louis University, where Seminex was already pretty much ensconced. The newsman asks, “Are you going to ordain women?” He says, “Well of course we’re going to ordain women.” My phone rang that whole afternoon in my office at the seminary and at my house that evening.⁷⁹

This foment, both in the church at large and at the seminary, affected Scharlemann’s view tremendously. Scharlemann was a military man. From his college days he had been active in the reserves.⁸⁰ When the LCMS opened up the church to participate in the military chaplaincy program, he was among the first to participate. Scharlemann also bears the distinction of rising to the rank of brigadier general in the Air Force. Even after he stepped down from active duty, he remained active in the reserves.

This involvement affected Scharlemann’s outlook for the rest of his life. He was described by students and colleagues as an extremely disciplined man who ran his classroom like a military unit.⁸¹ This patriotism and discipline earned him the moniker

⁷⁹ (Struve 2002.)

⁸⁰ (Klann 1982, 202.)

⁸¹ (LCMS 2002.)

“General” from faculty members and students. One could then imagine how this man bristled at the thought of communist/Marxist elements entering into his beloved Missouri Synod.

Scharlemann detested communism and Marxist elements for both political and theological reasons. Communism had been devastating to Christianity in the 20th century. One sees his fear of Marxist thought in the church already in his 1954 Synodical Conference essay supporting scouting and chaplaincy.⁸² Scharlemann argues,

The leaders of the Boy Scouts are aware of the destructive force of atheism. They know from the history of Europe and from the effects of Communism that a lack of belief in God is not just a negative quality. It is an aggressive power for the destruction of everything contained in the expression “civil righteousness.”

Statements like these show that Scharlemann was a bit of an odd duck. While endorsing liberal methods of interpretation in the 1950s and early 60s, he was a staunchly conservative man politically. He was a man that craved discipline and order. It was this friction between conservative politics and liberal theology, a friction between the order that he desired and the chaos that he saw, that served as a catalyst for Scharlemann’s theological swing to the right later in the 60s.

Scharlemann begins to attack “Marxist tendencies” in the LCMS and at Concordia

Scharlemann began moving to the right when, in the spring of 1968, he was placed on a subcommittee of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations

⁸² Martin Scharlemann, 1954 Synodical Conference Proceedings, 83.

(CTCR) that was to deal with the issue of women suffrage.⁸³ Scharlemann was assigned the task of giving the final report a scriptural exegesis. This task, as well as his final report, marks a major shift in Scharlemann's theology from liberal to conservative. David Leege, who chaired that subcommittee, recalls,

Martin in effect took over the document at that point. Scharlemann was driven by a need for order. It was in his nature to look for something to order. Martin had introduced principles of literary criticism to theological study at the seminary and he had seen the response that people gave to that and he was a little unsteady about that himself...Just everything that was going on in American society in the 1960s cried out for some principles of order again...Martin evolved in part as a person interacting with a society where he thought maybe he's gone a little bit too far in breaking up an old order.⁸⁴

Scharlemann's retrospection and solid biblical exegesis showed in his report to the Missouri Synod. He saw that God had established a definite order in creation and that order (man as head, woman as his helper, both equal in God's eyes) would be violated by woman suffrage (and, consequently, woman's ordination). Although the committee would ultimately pass women's suffrage at the 1969 Denver convention, Leege gives Scharlemann full credit for stemming the push for women's ordination in the 1960s.

This episode was a shadow of things to come. Scharlemann was on a mission to end the political and social chaos of the 60s that had erupted and spilled over into the LCMS. His publications during this time dealt specifically with social issues and the effects that radical movements were having on the church. In these books, periodicals and essays one begins to see the conservative Martin Scharlemann emerge from the chaos

⁸³ Todd, *Authority Vested*, 193.

of the 60's radicalism. In very clear and concise language, Scharlemann begins to dismantle the notions of liberal scholarship. Scharlemann began his journey back to orthodox Biblical interpretation in the applications, not the appropriations, of the historical-critical method.

This is clearly seen in his books. Three publications in particular show the progression of Scharlemann's theology back to orthodoxy: *Healing and Redemption* (1965), *The Church's Social Responsibility* (1971), and *The Ethics of Revolution* (1971). The first book, *Healing and Redemption*, was written to promote a theology of human wholeness for doctors, nurses, missionaries, and pastors.⁸⁵ In this book, Scharlemann sets forth what he sees as the task of the church in response to social, medical and counseling needs. The book is an excellent example of Scharlemann dealing with social issues in a conservative manner.

While Scharlemann continues to insist that it is the "biblical theology of our day"⁸⁶ that has clarified much of the issues, it is apparent that Scharlemann looks more to the history of the church in developing his theology of human wholeness. The deep study of history while researching and commenting on social issues had a profound effect on Martin Scharlemann.

The second and third books, *The Church's Social Responsibility* and *Ethics of Revolution*, show a changed man. The preface of the former gives not only a sound theological application of Scripture on social issues, but it marks a change in his view of Scripture. In his preface for this book he writes,

⁸⁴ Todd, *Authority Vested*, 194.

⁸⁵ Martin Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption: Toward a theology of human wholeness for doctors, nurses, missionaries, and pastors* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 5.

Accordingly the new heavens and the new earth of which the Scriptures speak will be brought about by another mighty act of God and not as the result of man's achievement. The only sure signs we have of that ultimate and radical restoration of all things is Word and Sacrament, where the issues of mercy, grace, and forgiveness are dealt with.⁸⁷

Scharlemann views Scripture as the ultimate guide in dealing with social issues. In the book he makes clear distinctions between the two kingdoms and the role of each in society. Such views are distinct marks of conservative Lutheran theology. Conservative positions like were being eroded by liberal Lutheran professors at Concordia-St. Louis.⁸⁸

One force that Scharlemann attributes to the problems in theology and confusion over social issues is Marxist thought. In *The Church's Social Responsibility*, Scharlemann writes,

Not a few theologians are busy propounding a theology of revolution. They have taken over some of the principles of Marxism, subsuming them under the vocabulary of Christian doctrine with a view to radicalizing the church's

⁸⁶ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁷ Martin Scharlemann, *The Church's Social Responsibilities* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 15.

⁸⁸ BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 151-152. In his letter to Preus, Scharlemann notes the following trends at the seminary that are beginning to disturb him,

Let me just mention a few of the matters that seem to beset us most here at the Seminary:

2. Reluctance to use the distinction between Law and Gospel as a factor in the interpretation of reality in the light of the Biblical revelation...

4. The kind of commitment to social action which has not reflected sufficiently on the distinctions made by our Lutheran confessions between the kingdom of Christ and political structures...

5. An elastic use of the word "ministry" which results in an apparent denigration of the pastoral office...including involvement in radical social action.

10. Prevalence of the notion that God's presence can be found in the turmoil of the streets, and that, perhaps, the world is a more appropriate place to worship than the sanctuary.

*teaching...For these prophets the greatest sin is to preserve the status quo.*⁸⁹

One can see that Scharlemann is fighting two battles: one is to stem the tide of radical Marxist thought; the other is to preserve a sense of normalcy and balance in the church. Scharlemann, in the late 60s at Concordia, had quite a battle ahead of him. Many of the professors at Concordia fit Scharlemann's description above. Under the guise of "academic freedom" there had been a systematic attempt to undermine the historic theological position of the LCMS.

As we have already seen, there was a radical change in the structure of the faculty. The old guard, men like Franzmann, Roehrs, and Kretzmann were being retired and replaced by men more favorable to the positions of the "moderates" of Missouri. Even Scharlemann was demoted from his position as director of graduate studies for one more favorable to the "new" Missouri position.⁹⁰ This type of high handedness Scharlemann began to attribute to the influence of Marxist thought.

This type of radicalism was evident among many of the students as well. There were open protests against the American involvement in Vietnam. The student reviews of Scharlemann's articles that dealt with social issues were resoundingly negative.⁹¹ One article in *The Seminarian* actually endorsed universalism.⁹² This type of behavior was not only allowed, it was endorsed by members of the faculty.⁹³

⁸⁹ Scharlemann, *The Church's Social Responsibility*, 14.

⁹⁰ (Klann 1982, 202.)

⁹¹ David Carter, "Book Reviews," *The Seminarian* 24 (May 1966), 46.

⁹² Robert Rusch, "Universalism: A look at some factors." *The Seminarian* 58 (December 1966), 20-24.

⁹³ Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile*, 28.

This Marxist thought came into the synod, in Scharlemann's estimation, through the radical use of the historical-critical method. Scharlemann writes this in the preface to *The Ethics of Revolution*,

The people of God ...need to be particularly alert to the trick of using the language of the Christian religion and making it mean something which was never intended by the church. A great deal of deception is going on in our day under the guise of a new theology, which does not hesitate to call violence redemptive. It has been called "ecumenical theology" and rests on the proposition that men have come of age: they can do their own creating!

Scharlemann began to take notice of this disturbing trend as early as 1968.⁹⁴ His petitions through the proper channels were blocked. His laments fell on deaf ears. Ultimately, the "General" now felt that it was time to stem the tide of Marxist thought that was pervading Concordia.

Much like any major battle, it is the results of individual skirmishes that lead to the greater victory. The Scharlemann skirmish against the "Marxist foes" was key in the battle for the Bible in the LCMS. It was he who led the charge of the faculty minority. It was he who would lead the seminary until health forced him to resign. It was he who continued to shore up Concordia-St. Louis after the battle was over.

Scharlemann viewed the battle at Concordia his own personal Vietnam. In books, in letters, and in articles, Scharlemann sought to root out the radical element from the seminary. The high ground for his battle was loyalty to the Scriptures. In his view, the faculty minority (Wunderlich, Bohlmann, Scharlemann, Preus, and Klann) were holding

⁹⁴ BOC, *Exodus from Concordia*, 151.

the high ground and defending it from those who would subvert Scripture. In the first issue of *Concordia Journal*, Scharlemann wrote,

*The Concordia Journal need never have come into being; yet here is the first issue. It was born of the anguish and travail of the soul which were induced by the theological disorientation which began to overtake its predecessor, the Concordia Theological Monthly, soon after the middle of the last decade... There was a need for a kind of magazine which would more faithfully reflect the doctrine and practice of a church body which, from its inception, chose loyalty to the Scriptures as its chief hallmark.*⁹⁵

In subsequent articles in *Concordia Journal*, Scharlemann continued to characterize the battle at Concordia in terms of Christian against Marxist. He refers to the actions of the faculty majority as tricks from the Marxist handbooks.⁹⁶ Scharlemann describes the theology of Seminex as based on “large doses of scientific humanism and the ideological claims of Marxism.”⁹⁷

Out of this battle against Marxism comes a theologian that is firmly committed to Scripture and decidedly against the use of the historical-critical method. This is clearly seen in the sermon he preached for the installation of the new professors at Concordia in 1974. In his sermon, “The theology that transfigures,” Scharlemann clearly demonstrates how his battles against the tide of liberal approaches to Scripture and their applications have changed him,

Even more threatening is the issue of Marxism in its most sophisticated form...that is to say, wherever socialism of the Marxist kind is established, there you have the

⁹⁵ Martin Scharlemann, “Born in Anguish and Travail” *Concordia Journal* 1 (January 1975), 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

⁹⁷ Martin Scharlemann, “Remnant: Complex or Model?” *Concordia Journal* 1 (February 1975),

fulfillment of what the ancient seers and the prophets in Israel anticipated when they wrote of the nations coming to Mount Zion...

[However] The business of the theology that transfigures is to come to grips with these false notions of the kingdom by underlining and capitalizing the words of our Lord, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation." The right kind of theology transfigures hearts by the use of Word and Sacrament. For where the church is proclaiming God's judgment and His grace, there you will find the fulfillment of those ancient prophecies regarding the nations moving toward Mount Zion.⁹⁸

Passages like this provide ample evidence of a changed theologian. They also give us a peek into one of the catalysts that caused him to change. It was Scharlemann's political and social conservatism that caused him to reevaluate his theological position. This fueled an intense study of Scripture and church history. Scharlemann evaluated the social foment of the 60s, both in the synod and at the seminary, causing him to wage a personal war against what he saw as Marxist theology beginning to dominate students and faculty at Concordia-St. Louis.

Part III: Another Catalyst for Change: The Work of Conservative Theologians

While Scharlemann's political and social conservatism served as a catalyst for his journey back to orthodoxy in biblical hermeneutics, it was not the only cause for his change. A second catalyst for change was the work of conservative theologians in the LCMS. It is necessary at this point to define what is meant by a conservative theologian.

⁹⁸ Martin Scharlemann, "A Theology that Transfigures: Sermon on Mark 9:7" *Concordia Journal* (January 1975), 11-12.

These were voices of confessional Lutheran theologians that arose in scholarly circles. During the late 60s and early 70s, these voices began condemning liberal theological positions and exposing the false and dangerous results of historical-critical methods of biblical interpretations.

There were, to be sure, other confessional voices. These, however, were at a grass roots level. Independent journals like the *Confessional Lutheran* and *Christian News* had for years sounded warnings of dangerous trends in the LCMS. These journals did not have the same respectability, however, that came with a Ph.D. Most rank and file members of the LCMS either did not believe or could not believe that the educated men of their synod were leading them astray.⁹⁹

The description of the laity of the LCMS could also aptly describe most conservative pastors and theologians in the LCMS. Walter A. Maier II admits,

*I began to hear little things here and there in the middle to late 50's. Then in the 60's the **Lutheran News** began to ballyhoo about these things (the historical-critical method. As I told you earlier, I was incredulous at first.¹⁰⁰*

To a great extent, these conservative theologians were even more incredulous to accusations of liberal theology at Concordia. These men, for years, labored under the presumption that what their seminary professors taught could not be false. They would eventually see their worse fears confirmed. Maier relates,

When it came time to do graduate work, I began to go in summers [to Concordia-St. Louis]. I wanted to go back to the source to see for myself. I got into some of those

⁹⁹ (Braun 2000, 98)

¹⁰⁰ (Walter A. Maier II 2002.)

courses and I realized that some of the men there had thoroughly changed their teaching.¹⁰¹

Conservative theologians, therefore, learned about the historical-critical method from the inside-out. They came to realize that this method was not neutral as had been claimed. In short, conservative theologians realized that use of the higher-critical method undermined the Lutheran cornerstone of *Sola Scriptura*.

During the 60s, these voices loudly began to protest the use of the historical-critical method and the liberal theology that was now prevalent at Concordia. Who were these men? Kurt Marquart lists these men as a sample,

*The unsung heroes of those years of liberal takeover were the rank-and-file pastors and people who kept the faith despite the official vacillations and shenanigans...A few representative examples will...suffice. There were of course active conservatives on both the Springfield and St. Louis faculties. Raymond Surburg had been analyzing, with great learning and acumen, the historical-critical and hermeneutical issues since the early fifties, before he joined the Springfield faculty. Younger conservatives, like...David Scaer, had to endure years of administrative chicaneries and "economic sanctions" for their forthright stand. Three Springfield conservatives who figured prominently...were Harry Huth, noted authority on the Lutheran Confessions; the exegete Walter A. Maier, whose **Crossroads** news letter mobilized the confessional forces at New Orleans; and the Lutheran-scholar Eugene Klug, who was the main author of the crucial resolution 3-09. A leading conservative thinker was St. Louis systematician with a Yale doctorate, Professor Ralph Bohlmann...The major figure among Missouri's valiant defenders of the faith was undoubtedly Robert Preus, whose 1955 vindication of **The Inspiration of Scripture** had done much to rally demoralized conservatives. The sudden appearance of the brilliant John W. Montgomery on the Synodical scene, with his penetrating **Crisis in Lutheran Theology** (1967), had a galvanizing effect which cannot be overestimated.¹⁰²*

¹⁰² Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 117.

The last of these men, J.W. Montgomery, served a vital role, perhaps the most vital role in the battle waged by conservative theologians. Marquart comments,

Montgomery was able to turn the tables on the liberals in the manner of St. Augustine's demolition of his former Manichean heresy. Whereas Montgomery's opponents were adrift on liberal currents by way of reaction to their own orthodox background, he traveled in precisely the opposite direction and had arrived in the harbor of orthodoxy after having already explored and experienced the hopelessness of the secular superstitions which seemed so alluring to the formerly orthodox! Now, like St. Augustine, he could explode the fallacies from within, as it were.¹⁰³

Montgomery's work was a watershed in confessional theology. It took on all the presuppositions of the historical-critical method head-on and demolished them one-by-one. Not only did his writing in volume one of *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* personally accomplish this, but he brought together other staunchly conservative theologians and presented a united front against liberal theology with volume two of his work.

Montgomery and Scharlemann

While Montgomery's work had galvanized conservative theologians in the LCMS, it also served to mark and label those who were advocating liberal positions. By far, the vast majority of those that Montgomery criticizes were faculty members at Concordia-St. Louis. Habel, Fuerbringer, Elliot, Damm are all quoted negatively to show their liberal positions.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 117.

What is interesting to note is that Montgomery treats Scharlemann as one who is solidly in a liberal camp. No less than three times does Montgomery point to Scharlemann as one who has contributed to the theological deterioration at Concordia and the LCMS. In his first essay, Montgomery not only groups Scharlemann with the liberal camp, but blasts him for his great errors in logic and theology,

It should, moreover, be a sobering thought to those who have accepted the above described dualistic approach in principle to be reminded that, carried to its logical conclusion, such dualism will eventually necessitate the denial of infallibility even to the "theological" content of Scripture. Why? Because the "theological," just like the "historical-critical," element of the Bible was conveyed to human agents (the biblical writers) and therefore ...must also have been touched by human fallibility. Martin Scharlemann overlooks this point completely...¹⁰⁴

In addition to Scharlemann's essays, Montgomery also indicts Scharlemann for supporting other faculty members' historical-critical views in his column, "Gnomon" in the *Lutheran Scholar*. This must have indeed been a blow to Scharlemann personally and professionally.

Scharlemann had always been a major advocate for Lutheran scholarship. To be ridiculed and criticized by *Christian News* is one thing. To be ridiculed by a man with Montgomery's academic reputation and acumen is quite something else. Scharlemann must have taken note.

Even more humiliating for Scharlemann than being grouped with radical theologians, were Montgomery's essays themselves. The two volumes of *Crisis in*

¹⁰⁴ John W. Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology Volume I* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1967), 35.

Lutheran Theology were published in 1967. Earlier that year, Scharlemann had published two articles entitled “Biblical Interpretation Today” in which he still advocated historical-critical principles. Montgomery’s work destroyed every presupposition and argument that Scharlemann put forth in those articles. For instance, in “Biblical Interpretation Today,” Scharlemann writes

We can truthfully say that it is form-criticism and tradition criticism which have helped students of the Scriptures to break away from the attitude toward the Biblical text as being more than a storehouse of religious ideas.¹⁰⁵

Montgomery responds,

The contemporary hermeneutic is, as we have seen, a repristination of the very approach to the Bible Luther opposed throughout his career. Luther constantly strove to maintain the objective purity of the biblical message over against all adulterations of God’s Word with human opinions. Existential-dialectic approaches to Scripture [form-criticism and tradition criticism] invariably produce such alterations, for by interlocking text and interpreter into a “word event” relationship uncontrolled by the subject-object distinction, they permit – if they do not actually encourage – the absorption of the scriptural teaching into the existential-cultural situation of the interpreter. Instead of God’s Word re-creating man in God’s image, man re-creates God’s Word in his own image.¹⁰⁶

Volume two of *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* shows that Montgomery is not alone in debunking historical-critical concepts. This tome gathers other conservative theologians – Surburg, Sasse, Preus, etc. – who agree with Montgomery’s conclusions.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Scharlemann, “Biblical Interpretation Today: Part II,” *The Lutheran Scholar* 24 (April 1967), 41.

¹⁰⁶ John W. Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology Volume I*, 70-71.

Most important, the second volume forced all pastors, professors and laymen to come down on one side or the other of this question: Do we wish to remain Lutheran? Robert Preus makes the question of sound hermeneutics even more burning,

*We must face with judgment and knowledge all attacks against Scripture and its proper interpretation and refute them. Our life as a Lutheran Church depends upon this... We can only remain Lutheran by holding fast the **sola Scriptura** principle, by approaching Scripture with complete confidence, by reading and applying Scripture properly to God's children.¹⁰⁷*

Scharlemann Reacts

Scharlemann was by no means oblivious to these discussions. Klann refers to the discussions he had with Scharlemann on these issues,

*We spent many hours together discussing the origins and the development of the principles of the historical-critical method, from Spinoza's **Tractate** to the eighteenth century rationalists, from Schleiermacher to Bultmann and his **epigoni**, and the prevailing critical methods of interpretation in contemporary seminaries. The turning point came toward the end of the decade: it was no longer enough to study the issues; one must begin to take a stand regarding them. Since Lutheran principles of interpretation are neither biblicistic nor historical-critical but confessional and pneumatic...it is necessary to oppose both.¹⁰⁸*

Scharlemann took heed of the questions posed by Montgomery and others as well as their criticisms of him and his methods. Scharlemann changed his theological stance quite quickly. Scharlemann had a dual problem: first, he now saw there were major

¹⁰⁷ Robert Preus, "Biblical Hermeneutics and the Lutheran Church Today," *Crisis in Lutheran Theology Volume II* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1967), 82.

problems in the theological climate of Concordia, part of which he had caused; second, in order to bring about any change, he needed to improve his reputation among orthodox Lutheran theologians.

Scharlemann moved quickly into the conservative theological camp. In 1969, he petitioned Preus for an official inquiry into the theology at Concordia. In 1972, he began to write for *Affirm*, a notable conservative journal started to respond to liberal high handedness at the synodical level. On the floor of the 1973 New Orleans Convention, he petitioned to take discipline action against specific Concordia faculty members.¹⁰⁹ In 1970, he was published in *The Springfielder*, a notable conservative journal produced by Concordia-Springfield.¹¹⁰

The largest bellwether of the influence of conservative theologians on Scharlemann can be found in *Christian News*. This periodical, above all, shows how much Scharlemann had changed and how the perception of him had changed in conservative LCMS. As previously noted, Scharlemann was the topic of scathing reviews in *Christian News*. Now, during the “battle for the Bible,” Herman Otten and the *Christian News* gave rousing support to Scharlemann.

In one article, “Once Again – The World’s Finest Seminary,” Otten writes this,

Dr. Martin Scharlemann emphasized that Concordia would be rebuilt. He expressed wholehearted support for “A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles” which was adopted by the synod’s 1973 convention. According to Dr. Scharlemann, the statement deals with the problems that are currently disturbing Christendom. The seminary president told the audience that the LCMS doctrine doesn’t have to be displaced by “theological mish-

¹⁰⁸ Klann 1982, 204.

¹⁰⁹ Danker, *No Room in the Brotherhood*, 140.

¹¹⁰ Martin Scharlemann, “The Moral Aspects of War” *The Springfielder* 34 (June 1970), 41-50.

mash from the outside.” “Not, in any sense,” he said, “will I agree to compromise...the Christian faith of those persons with whom I grew up and was confirmed with...We have no right to belittle, or try to uproot the faith of the people.”¹¹¹

This article also has quite a few interesting pictures. One picture has Scharlemann seated between Jack and Robert Preus and another has Scharlemann standing next to Walter A. Maier, E.J. Otto, Jack and Robert Preus.

At the time of Scharlemann’s death in 1982, *Christian News* gave this glowing eulogy of him,

Dr. Scharlemann will indeed be sorely missed. As a chaplain he was a great American patriot and as a seminary professor he was one of Lutheranism’s finest theologians.¹¹²

To seal Scharlemann’s move to confessional theology, one needs to turn to his essays on hermeneutics in 1979’s *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*. One sees a man who has accomplished both of his goals. This man, who was placed in the liberal camp by conservative theologians ten years earlier, now stands shoulder-to-shoulder with those same men. There was never more telling a quotation of a man changed by the work of conservative theologian than,

It is also one of the cardinal presuppositions of form and redaction criticism that any variation may be due to the treatment given to the parable of Jesus during the time of oral tradition or when a given pericope was written down. Behind this view lurks the assumption that Jesus told a parable only once and that the changes occurred in the

¹¹¹ Herman Otten, “Once Again –The World’s Finest Seminary,” *Christian News Encyclopedia Volume I* (Washington: Missouri Publishing Company), 681.

¹¹² Herman Otten, “Dr. Martin Scharlemann: A Great General and Theologian – Sorely Missed,” *Christian News Encyclopedia Volume I* (Washington: Missouri Publishing Company), 651.

*process of transmission. Such an approach is bound to be inherently false...*¹¹³

Scharlemann also showed his move to conservative theology in the public press. In reaction to a *Newsweek* article that endorsed historical-critical methods of biblical interpretation and supported Seminex, Scharlemann wrote,

*The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has its own very carefully worded statement on inerrancy, which avoids the oversimplifications of Criswell and company. This information, too, is readily available to anyone who is in search for the truth.*¹¹⁴

In short, Scharlemann entire method was exposed and refuted by the work of conservative theologians. After weighing the issues and examining the arguments, Scharlemann became convinced *their* way was the *right* way. From 1968, Scharlemann shows he has switched to a conservative theological position. By the late 70s and early 80s, he was counted with the same men who criticized him ten years earlier.

Conclusions

Scharlemann was a man who recognized his error and corrected it. His change was catalyzed by both his conservative stance on social issues and the work of conservative theologians. Why, then, do so many view Scharlemann with a wary eye?

¹¹³ Martin Scharlemann, "The Parables of the Leaven and of the Mustard Seed: A Suggested Methodological Model." *Studies In Lutheran Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1977), 345.

¹¹⁴ Martin Scharlemann. Letter. Newsweek 22 December 1979.

There are a number of reasons. First, while Scharlemann renounced historical-critical views, he never personally apologized for his errors. True, he did apologize for the unrest that they caused in the synod, but never for the errors themselves.

While an apology might have been a good thing to do, it probably did not occur to be the proper thing to do from Scharlemann's point of view. First, it was not until five years after the Cleveland Convention that Scharlemann became convinced of his error. Those accusations of false doctrine were past history to Scharlemann. To bring it up would have only clouded the issues at hand and made the discussion about him and not about the issues. Struve comments,

Q: Did Scharlemann ever express regret to you about his earlier work, when he really endorsed this method?

A: No. We did talk about this. He just simply felt that by retracting what he had said, by taking it [his earlier work] off the table, any more discussion would be counter productive. There I think you saw the military strategist come out in him. I think that he was very pragmatic about it. He knew that anything that he would say about [his earlier work] would simply add to the controversy. So you just shut up about it and move on.

On the other hand, do I believe that he was sincere about his final rejection of the method? Absolutely.¹¹⁵

A second reason for no apology was probably that Scharlemann never felt the need to give one. He felt that his apology at the Cleveland Convention was more than adequate. Scharlemann says as much in this quote from *Affirm*,

¹¹⁵ (Struve 2002.)

My own position was set forth in detail back in 1960 in response to the request of the President of the Synod. You will find my statements in the December 16th issue of the Lutheran Witness.¹¹⁶

A third reason for no apology was that Scharlemann probably did not feel that there was anything to apologize for. Scharlemann felt that his early work was nothing more than an exploration into current methods of biblical interpretations. In all likelihood, Scharlemann felt that he had never endorsed the use of these methods. Struve comments,

There was always the feeling in the back of some people's minds, "Why does he not denounce what he did?" ...I think he [Scharlemann] gave the impression that he was only presenting this method as one of the ways that people interpret the Scriptures. This was not, necessarily, the way that one should interpret the Scriptures, but if you are going to understand what is going on in the theological world around you, you need to know the stuff that was going on. Scharlemann felt that he would be doing his students a disservice if he did not present this stuff to them. Others would say, "You taught this to us!" I don't think that he would ever own up to that.¹¹⁷

Something else that causes people to look askance at Martin Scharlemann is the high emotional intensity of those controversies. Can one really blame Sigbert Becker, Edward Fredrich and Armin Schuetze on the right and John Tietjen and Fred Danker on the left for their equally negative views of Scharlemann? They were all on the receiving end of unfavorable outcomes from direct contact with Martin Scharlemann. One can then

¹¹⁶ Martin Scharlemann, "An Open Letter: Part I" *Affirm* 2 (April 1972), 3.

¹¹⁷ (Stuve 2002.)

understand why any of them would be reluctant to embrace a wider view of this man and his theology.

A final reason that WELS theologians have never fully accepted Scharlemann's change of heart was his stance on military chaplaincy. This issue was especially decisive. Scharlemann continued to support military chaplaincy well after the dissolution of the Synodical Conference and even after 1974 walkout. WELS theologians wondered: if he did not change his position on chaplaincy, did he really change his position on Scripture? Obviously Scharlemann was not consistent in his theological positions. Before we judge too harshly, however, we must remember the same criticism applies to men like Preus, Franzmann and Bohlmann, who all defended biblical inerrancy but waxed and waned on military chaplaincy, scouting and fellowship.

In the end, Martin Scharlemann must be embraced by history for both the problems that he caused as well as the contributions that he made to orthodoxy. Only then can one appreciate his monumental change from liberal to conservative and his pivotal role in bringing Concordia-St. Louis back to a more orthodox position.

A final anecdote in the story of Martin Scharlemann will serve as a fitting conclusion. Jim Cummins, who sat in Scharlemann's class in 1964, as you will recall, had been troubled by Scharlemann's comments concerning the inerrancy of Scripture. Ten years later, at a pastor's conference, Martin Scharlemann was asked the same question by Pastor Cummins that was asked ten years earlier, "Is the Bible true?" Cummins recalls the following,

I asked Scharlemann again, "Is the Bible true?"

Scharlemann answered, "I believe Jesus is true and the only way that we learn of Christ is through the holy, inerrant word of God. Therefore, yes, I believe the Bible is true."

After this answer, I leaned over to a fellow pastor and said, "This is nothing short of a miracle."¹¹⁸

Indeed it was.

¹¹⁸ (Cummins 2002)

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