

“Little Red Riding Hood”¹

It is no secret that there have been rather serious doctrinal drifts and trends within Missouri Synod for the last ten or fifteen years. One expects doctrinal aberrations and heresies to arise in the church. St. Paul told the elders at Ephesus, “I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20: 29-30)

In past history Missouri Synod has been a bulwark of confessional, Biblical theology, and has always boldly confessed the doctrines of the Scriptures in their truth and purity in the face of modernism and liberal theology. The solid foundations of Scriptural theology were laid by men like Dr. Walther, and many great theologians built on this foundation with gold and silver and precious stones (1 Cor. 3:12). Now, however, one sees the evidence of much building with hay and stubble (1 Cor. 3:12). Now men within Missouri Synod can publicly advocate in books, essays, and periodicals, views which contradict the clear statements of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. There is a cancerous growth and [sic] of anti-confessional, and unionistic tendencies within Missouri Synod. We, of course, expect dissensions to arise in an organisation of 2,500,000 members. But the alarming thing is just this that the officials of Missouri Synod who are charged with the duty of doctrinal supervision of their synod have failed completely to check the growth of this cancer. Indeed men in high positions have laid themselves open to the suspicion that they themselves are infected with this cancer, and need to be removed from the body rather than to be charged with the duty of healing the infection.

Aware of this grave situation, and greatly perturbed by it, our Australian church, assembled in convention in March of this year at Melbourne, addressed a letter of fraternal admonition to Missouri Synod which was shortly to assemble in convention at Cleveland[, Ohio]. We also sent two representatives, in the persons of Pastor Koehne and Dr. Hamann who attended this crisis convention at Cleveland.

At our recent pastoral conference at Laidley, Dr. Hoopman read to us the reports of Pastor Koehne and Dr. Hamann. He told us that our letter of brotherly admonition was not even read out to the Convention at Cleveland, nor have we any evidence that President Behnken of Missouri Synod even announced to the Convention that he had received our letter. Hence the net results of our efforts at Melbourne to admonish our Missouri brethren is virtually nill [sic]. This, of course, is precisely what some of us expected.

What is this whole episode but a solemn re-enactment of the fable of Little Red Riding Hood? Our young, and innocent Australian church – Little Red Riding Hood – in convention at Melbourne, prepared a basket of eats for its grandmother, Missouri Synod. This basket of eats was prepared for the palate of a grandmother, and not for a wolf. Much care was taken to select food which would be thoroughly agreeable to the taste of our grandmother. All the mustard and pepper of the original draft of our letter of brotherly admonition was carefully removed lest our dear grandmother should be induced to wince or cough. If you compare

¹ Transcribed faithfully from the original document, using the same spelling and grammatical conventions. The only stylistic change is the replacement with italics of underlining, traditionally used in typewritten documents to indicate emphasis.

the original draft of our letter of brotherly admonition (c.p. Agenda & Reports 29) with the final copy (Melb. Convention Report, p. 37) you will see that this is correct. The reference to Dr. Scharlemann's "tentative" and "explanatory" essays as being "*heretical*" was carefully extracted. The statement concerning destructive Biblical criticism as "proceeding from *rationalistic unbelief*" was carefully removed. Paragraph (f) of the original draft of our letter, referring to our objections to the continued inclusion in official lists of the ministry of Missouri Synod men whose writings show utterly un-Lutheran and anti-Lutheran views, was abandoned altogether. And so in other respects, too, the teeth of our letter were carefully drawn so as not to cause any unpleasantness to our dear grandmother. What was finally sent to our grandmother was a neatly wrapped package of butter.

In spite of all this our basket of smooth food never reached our real grandmother at all, for, as Dr. Hoopman's report showed, our letter was not even read at the Cleveland Convention to our brethren for whom it was intended.

[p. 2] One would not say that the wolf of Neo-orthodoxy and liberal theology has completely and utterly swallowed the whole of our grandmother. But that this is true in part, and that this wolf lies disguised in the bed of our grandmother and wears the grandmothers night clothes and cap is sufficiently seen from this that our basket of eats taken into our grandmother's room could not reach our real grandmother because it had to go via the wolf.

We, in Australia, when we see the essays, articles, and books that flow from the pens of Missouri Synod men today may well wear a look of surprise on our faces and say, "But Grandmothers! what big ears you have! Grandmother, what big eyes you have!" For these writings show thoroughly un-grandmother-like, un-Missourian, characteristics.

Let us not be deceived by the statements of these men that their new approach to theology, their new conception of the Word of God is really in the interests of the church which has become stagnant in orthodoxy and needs a new progressive theology to become meaningful to the people of modern times. This is nothing but words of the wolf, "All the better to hear you with." "All the better to see you with." It is not our real grandmother who has suddenly grown the big ears and the large eyes out of a fond desire to hear her little grandchild more accurately, and to see her more clearly. This is an imposter. These are wolf-like features, and it is a wolf-like mind that looks for an appealing reason for his very un-grandmother-like appearance.

Nor are we particularly comforted by the fact that Dr. Scharlemann has withdrawn four of his disputed essays. He has done so, not because he admits that they contain false doctrine, but because people have misunderstood them and so caused views which he expressed in them, but now no one dare attack him on the basis of those essays for they are "withdrawn."

We are told not to judge Dr. Scharlemann harshly because he clearly says that he really believes in the "verbal inspiration of the Scriptures" and its "inerrancy." But what does Dr. Martin Scharlemann mean by this? He tells us in his own words. He had previously found the term "inerrant" used of the Scriptures as very misleading and dangerous (c.p. his essay *Revelation and Inspiration*). But then he says, "In my visits with pastors throughout synod I have found that the 'inerrancy' really means to them the holy awe and respect that they

have for the Scriptures and I can go along with that. If that is what 'inerrancy' means to the clergy of Synod, then let's keep the word." (*State of the Church* 1961, p. 35).

Let Little Red Riding Hood hear the words of Scripture, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

The role of Little Red Riding Hood will not save our grandmother. This requires the huntsman. May God speedily send the huntsman to save both her and us.

(The above is an article written by Pastor M. Grieger, Greenwood, in his parish paper 10/62.)