

Wolves with Less and Less Sheep's Clothing ...  
A Lengthy Introduction to Pastor M. Grieger's "*Little Red Riding Hood*."<sup>1</sup>

Pastor Grieger's brilliant little parable makes its point so clearly and effectively, that it deserves wide circulation. In order to avoid misunderstandings, however, certain things should be said at the outset: In distributing this witty and penetrating piece of writing, no disrespect for our God-given leaders and officials is intended. It should be clear that among sensible and grown-up people one should be able to discuss matters honestly without constant fear of treading on this little toe or injuring that little feeling! (It is precisely this sort of oppressive, emotional, pietistic hot-house atmosphere which chokes and stifles honest, responsible discussion in the Missouri Synod!) Our leaders occupy very difficult positions, and need sincere intercession, encouragement, and support, much more than petty carping and fault-finding. On the other hand, in such vital and far-reaching matters as our present overseas relations, in which our Synod's whole future is at stake, ministers of the Church must be free to speak and act, according to such light as God gives them, in defence of those Scriptural, Confessional principles which they have sworn to uphold. This freedom, frankness, directness, and independence of judgment is one of the most refreshing and healthy aspects of our Australian church life.

The purpose of the item, self-evidently, is not to debate the past, but to safeguard the future. Perhaps it was inevitable that our first approach to Missouri should have been that of a gentle Little Red Riding Hood. The Cleveland Convention of the Missouri Synod, however, and other developments, have proved beyond doubt that the situation is far more serious than most of us had imagined, and that what is required *now* is something far stronger than gentle, "tactful" nudgings."

It might be said that "Little Red Riding Hood" is hostile to the Missouri Synod. Not at all. The true friends of Missouri have spoken even more sharply. The true friends of the Missouri Synod are expected to be bitter enemies of that Liberalism which is destroying her! "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and they father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." 1 Kings 18:17-18. Who *really* loved Israel, Ahab or Elijah? Enough said.

That "Little Red Riding Hood" indeed paints an absolutely true and realistic picture – which to ignore spells disaster – is evident not only from the Scharlemann Case, which received another coat of whitewashing (dreadfully impermanent stuff – keeps peeling off!) but also from Missouri's OWN OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION of its Cleveland Convention:

"Turning Point," an *editorial* (?) in the "*Lutheran Witness*," the official organ of the Missouri Synod, openly gloats over the victory of the new, liberal, anti-Confessional trends at Cleveland. The editorial, in the name of "love," an "evangelical spirit," etc.

1. defends to the hilt the poor, misunderstood, mistreated liberals, who must be protected from a vicious persecution of "slander" "smear," etc.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

2. cheerfully proceeds to slander, smear, and defame the Confessional men!

In other words, attacks on liberals are hateful, slanderous, legalistic, etc., while attacks on Confessional men are loving, truthful and evangelical! This is how the Communists use political vocabulary. And one need not assume hypocrisy. One need remember only that liberal-pietistic “thinking” is so foggy as to be incapable of consistency. It isn’t, in fact, thinking at all. It is an automatic emotional reaction, a conditional reflex. It responds (with a generous flow of the “proper” verbiage) to the sight of that ogre, Confessionalism, about as spontaneously as a trained animal salivates in anticipation, when the accustomed signal is given!

The editorial “Turning Point” rejoices thus:

In place of the controversial 1959 Resolution 9, which stated that pastors, teachers, and professors ‘are held to teach and act in harmony with’ synodically adopted doctrinal statements, it was resolved: ‘That the Synod beseech all its members by the mercies of God to honour and uphold the doctrinal content of these synodically adopted statements.’ This resolution filled valleys, brought low mountains and hills, and made rough ways smooth for a new evangelical spirit.

To understand exactly what happened her[e], it is necessary to have some knowledge of the events which led up to the present anti-climax.

[p. 2] For some years there have been men in the Missouri Synod, who have attacked that Synod’s doctrinal position, and have, in deference to modernistic “scholarship,” fought for points of view such as these:

- That Scripture is not the verbally inspired revelation of God, but merely a human *record* of revelation.
- That “truth” means not correct doctrine (which nobody may therefore claim to have), but some sort of personal “faithfulness,” so that Scripture, though “true,” is not necessarily inerrant, but may contain FACTUAL MISTAKES! Dr. Scharlemann wrote: “In this paper I propose to defend the paradox that the book of God’s truth contains errors.” (This, and other heretical statements, have been “withdrawn” by Dr. Scharlemann, *but not retracted as false!* In the latest melodramatic manoeuvre, at Cleveland, Dr. Scharlemann “withdrew” – without retracting – four of his offensive essays, but not a fifth one, “God’s Acts as Revelation,” which appeared in the April 1961 *Concordia Theological Monthly*, and contained exactly the same position only more cautiously worded! *After* the Cleveland Convention, which supposedly settled the oft-patched Scharlemann Case once more, Dr. Scharlemann wrote: “... the question of false doctrine was not involved in my action.” He added: “That is why the word ‘retract’ does not occur in my document.” How long will the Church permit this man to mock and defy her?
- That Christian theologians have the right to teach that the human body might have *evolved* from the animals, and that Genesis 1-2, which contradicts the theory of evolution, may be treated as “mytho-poetic” (a religious fairy-tale, in plain language!).

- That there is no such a thing as an immortal soul in man, and that between death and “the Resurrection” (whatever that expression may mean among liberals), no part of man survives.

That heretical opinions of this sort have been defended at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, both by students and by faculty members, the undersigned knows from years of personal experience there.

When concerned members of the Missouri Synod, both at the Seminary and elsewhere, began to call attention to the *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position* of the Missouri Synod, which clearly and specifically rejects and condemns practically all the heretical opinions now creeping in, the offending parties get [sic] into the habit of arguing: “But we are not bound by the Brief Statement, because the Ordination vow mentions only the Scriptures and the Confessions; and the Brief Statement is not one of the Confessions. We are therefore free to disagree with the doctrinal content of the Brief Statement.”

Since the Brief Statement was, after all, the Synod’s official declaration of its doctrinal position, a group of students at St. Louis appealed to the faculty to make clear that this document was binding, and that people who rejected its doctrinal content could not enter the Ministry. The faculty, in a document called *Mutual Responsibility* (1957), replied pointedly: “The one requirement imposed on a candidate for the Holy Ministry in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at the time of his Ordination is that he unreservedly declare his allegiance to the Holy Scriptures ... and the Lutheran symbols ...” (our underlining). This stated as clearly as the faculty dared, that it had no intentions of enforcing the Brief Statement either upon itself or upon the student body.

Students who pressed further for a clear resolution of the doctrinal conflicts at the Seminary were finally threatened with expulsion unless they agreed to keep quiet and make no further difficulties!

To combat the growing liberal rebellion and anarchy, concerned members of Synod took the matter to the 1959 Convention at San Francisco, which was attended by Dr. Cl. Hoopman and Pastor F. W. Noack. After a long and heated debate (the St. Louis Seminary administration and Dr. Scharlemann spearheaded the opposition), the Convention declared, by an overwhelming majority, that public teachers in Synod were “held to teach and act in harmony with” Synod’s official doctrinal pronouncements. This was regarded throughout the world as a victory for Confessionalism. Actually, the Convention merely stated the obvious truth that if a Synod says that it believed something, then it actually meant what it says. What would be the point of adopting official doctrinal statements if nobody is bound to observe them? That would be meaningless, in fact, unionistic and indifferentistic!

The Liberal forces, naturally, refused to concede defeat. A campaign of treason was launched immediately, while a weak and confused synodical administration looked on helplessly. Pastoral Conferences and Districts were propagandised to go on record as being opposed to the hated Resolution 9 of San Francisco. Of course the liberals knew that Synod was deeply [p. 3] disturbed at the “grass roots” level, over the increasing evidence of disloyalty, and that a direct *doctrinal* attack on the *Brief Statement* would prove disastrous. And so the attack was camouflaged by some sophistry which pretended to be an argument from the Missouri Synod’s constitution. It went like this: The doctrinal paragraph of the

Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The Brief Statement is not one of the Confessions. Therefore Resolution 9 is unconstitutional, because it is, in effect, an amendment of the constitution; but proper amendments require a totally different procedure, quite apart from the fact that the Confessional paragraph may not be amended! This fraudulent rubbish the Cleveland Convention was persuaded to make official, and the liberals are not free to teach exactly as they please.

It is shocking that the paralysis of Missouri's reasoning powers is so far advanced that the utter fraudulence of the "constitutional" argument was not immediately detected and exposed by responsible officials and committees. Certainly Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the founder and first president of the Missouri Synod knew and understood its constitution. He must have known what was constitution and what not. Now, in 1881, under Dr. Walther's leadership, the Missouri Synod adopted the so-called *Thirteen Theses on Election*, WHICH WERE REGARDED AS BINDING SO THAT ALL WHO DISAGREED WITH THEM WERE SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINE BY THEIR DISTRICT PRESIDENTS! According to the 1962 "logic," all this was dreadfully "unconstitutional"! Dr. Walther knew, of course, that in order to defend Scripture and Confession, you have to take a stand against those who twist and misinterpret Scripture and Confession. You may even have to adopt further statements which make clear exactly what Scripture and Confession teach on a given point of doctrine. And this is exactly what the Brief Statement did: Because modernists denied that Scripture is the inerrant Word of God, because Romanising Lutherans taught falsely concerning the Church and the Ministry, and because other "Lutherans" taught falsely about Election and Predestination, the Missouri Synod had to state publicly what the true teaching of Scripture and Confession in these matters was and is. This was done in the Brief Statement.

To attack the Brief Statement on *constitutional* grounds is rank hypocrisy. Anyone who is *really* interested in the observance of the constitution will fight for anything which expresses that Scriptural, Confessional doctrine which is confessed in the constitution. The Brief Statement does that. Those who now pose as the noble defenders of the Missouri Synod's constitution, by fighting against the binding nature of documents like the Brief Statement, are precisely the worst enemies and violators of that constitution, and of its most sacred parts!

The Missouri synod has never regarded the Confessions as some sort of magic word-patterns without definable content, or as some sort of mere "doctrinal basis," which anyone may "interpret," that is, twist, to suit himself (this is the Lutheran World Federation's theory of the Confessions). What the Confessions teach is not some vague fog, but is something definite and concrete, which can be defined and stated, for instance in such documents as the Brief Statement, whose unpopularity is precisely the mark of its excellence, because it is the proof of its effectiveness as a bulwark against heresy and falsehood!

The absurd notion that only what is stated in so many words in the Confession is binding, has always been rejected by the Missouri Synod:

all doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture are to be accepted and believed for the very reason that they are propounded in Holy Scripture, no matter whether 'decided' in the Symbolical Books and agreed upon by the theologians or not. To declare doctrines revealed in the Bible to be 'open' or 'free' for the reason that they are not yet 'symbolically fixed' in the Confession of the orthodox Church ... would, in fact, be the

same as to put the Church, her Confessions and theologians in the place of Holy Scripture, and to ascribe to the church and her theologians the authority of establishing articles of faith." (Francis Pieper, on behalf of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conf. of Nth. American, in *The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, Philadelphia, Luth. Pub. Society, 1902, pp. 139-140)

The real meaning of the Cleveland action is perfectly described in a *St. Louis Lutheran* article (July 7, 1962), which reports, with evident approval: "DECLARATION OF THE RESOLUTION AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL DID NOT ALTER THE MISSOURI SYNOD DOCTRINAL STAND BUT REMOVED ITS BINDING FORCE." That is exactly what happened, even if the inadvertant admission by subsequently "regretted" and "corrected."

[p. 4] Now, what sort of unionistic madness is it, to have a "doctrinal stand" without "binding force"?! What does a Synod mean, and how seriously does it expect itself to be taken, when it says, in effect: "This Synod believes such and such to be divine truth, but of course nobody in our Synod is bound to agree if he doesn't want to"? This is the kind of mockery which Liberalism and Ecumenism accord the historical Christian Creeds. It is play-religion. The formula is: "Say whatever sounds good, and then do whatever you like!"

But, argues the editorial "Turning Point," The abandonment of the 1959 Res. 9, does not at all spell doctrinal chaos, because the Cleveland Convention resolved, instead: "That the Synod beseech all its members by the mercies of God to honour and uphold the doctrinal content of these synodically adopted statements." Really!

That hardened, determined, cynical Missouri liberals, of the stripe of Marty, Pelikan, and the Valparaiso coterie, would be even slightly affected by such "beseeching," only the most blear[i]ly-eyed and hopeless among the pietists could have believed. It is the sort of mentality which believes that if Kennedy will be a good boy, throw away his bombs, and say sweetly, "Please, please let us be friends," Krushchev will weep bitter tears of repentance and "make up"! The liberals (like the Communists), of course, sneeze contemptuously at all this frantic "beseeching." Marty, for instance, writing in the American Lutheran Church's *Lutheran Standard*, reports on the Cleveland Convention under the title "Missouri's New Direction, 1962." He says: "Missouri is changing, and knows it." He also admits that "Wisconsin was perhaps correct" in some of its assertions about Missouri. Then, regarding the "scrapping" of Res. 9, which had made clear that Synod expects its public teachers to teach in accordance with official doctrinal pronouncements, Marty remarks: "Some of the documents in question would have been insurmountable barriers to future inter-Lutheran theological unity because they belonged to the private experience of Missouri, were coloured by the scholastic bent and expression of its greatest dogmaticia, and would prove uncongenial to many non-Missourians (as they are to some Missourians) were they to be imposed as confessions." Aha, so it was after all the *content* of the "documents in question" that mattered! The "scholastic bent, etc." undoubtedly refers to Dr. Pieper and his Brief Statement. The real interests and motives, hidden behind the smoke-screen of "constitutional" cavilling, are clear: distaste for strict doctrinal stands ("scholastic bent"), and craving for "inter-Lutheran theological unity" – clearly at the expense of Missouri's previous position.

This, by the way, is the same Marty who attacked the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scriptures in the Nov. 27, 1957 number of the *Christian Century* (p. 1412), and who, in the Jan. 11, 1961, number of that same ultra-liberal, anti-Christian journal, advocated “subversion, encirclement and infiltration” of their respective denominations by the false “prophets” of the liberal “Ecumenical Movement.” What could a little “beseeching” possibly mean to a man of such desperate ethics? Indeed, it is a dangerous delusion to think that nowadays we can get along without the “old-fashioned” kind of polemics (theological warfare)! There comes a point when politeness and suave diplomacy must give way to more decisive measures. A good indication of when that point has been reached is the appearance in official circles of the ostrich-like head-in-the-sand attitude, which pretends that evil disappears if it is ignored. One is reminded of the Christian Scientist in hell, who, so the story goes, was asked how and why he got there, and replied: “I’m not here!”

Anyone who maintains that the Cleveland Convention has taken matters in hand, curbed liberalism, and thus removed the cause for concern, is either deceived or deceiving. Pray God for the lost virtue of courage in the right places, dear brethren!

(K. Marquart, Report to the Parish, Toowoomba, Qld. 2nd Sund. Advent, 1962)

P.S.:

Our UELCA friends will of course be tempted to argue, as some already have: “Why does the ELCA make such a fuss about doctrinal defects in the UELCA and the LWF, when it tolerates worse things in the Missouri Synod? Is not this hypocrisy?” No! The LWF is unionistic in principle from the outset. Its very foundation requires reformation if it is to become Scripturally, Confessionally acceptable. The Missouri Synod, on the other hand, is a church-body founded on orthodox, Scriptural-Confessional principles. For nearly a century Missouri has been a champion of pure doctrine. Of late its leadership has experienced a weakening of Confessional determination and consequently several errors and errorists have been permitted to exist. Naturally this cannot be tolerated indefinitely. If it becomes clear that the forces of liberalism have in fact captured the Missouri Synod, so that no reasonable hope of a return to sound doctrine and discipline may be entertained, Confessional Lutherans throughout the world, both inside and outside the Missouri Synod, shall have to sever fellowship with what would then be made to help the Confessional men rid their house of the Liberal pestilence. It may not be too late yet – but it soon will be ! Lord, have mercy!