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Theological Observer

MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN

Dr. Martin H. Scharlemann, professor emeritus of New Testament at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, died on 23 August 1982. His church and his nation joined together as he was laid to rest with military honors in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis.

Our church has lost an uncommon man. It would be easy to list his high achievements: professor of New Testament exegesis at St. Louis since 1952; author of numerous articles, pamphlets, and the instructive book, *Stephen: A Singular Saint*; decorated chaplain in the Air Force (since 1966 holding the rank of Brigadier General); and many more.

Scharlemann's achievements, and the honors bestowed upon him, were many, and all of them testify to the excellence of the man as a thinker and as a leader. Perhaps like no one else in recent history Scharlemann represented the Missouri Synod before the scholarly and civic public; and in both arenas he — and our church through him — was respected. However, I wish to accent three themes which loom large in my memory of Professor Scharlemann and which, in my opinion, especially mark the character of the man.

(1) Scharlemann was foremost a Christian *thinker*. He understood Christian theology as mission to the minds of men. This accounts for his constant exhortation to “know what’s going on” and his intensive confrontation with major currents of thought in our day. For him theology was not dedicated only to the preservation of tradition and confession, but it was dedicated to carrying that confession to the world of intellectual doubt and error and fighting in the arena of the mind for the gospel’s sake. For this reason Scharlemann was a tough teacher; he tolerated no nonsense in the classroom and was rigorous in his grading. But like the good military man he was, he knew the classroom to be a “boot camp” for the task in the pastoral trenches. For many years Scharlemann was in the front lines fighting for the gospel on uncertain and novel soil. There the issue of the fight is not always clear, and I suspect this is what occasioned much of the criticism which also marked Scharlemann’s career.

(2) Perhaps precisely because he saw theology as mission Scharlemann could not divorce his function as exegete from his function as preacher. The Biblical text is the very form of the prophetic and apostolic proclamation, and therefore to uncover the meaning of the text is to lay bare the proclamation; indeed, it is to proclaim. This Scharlemann understood, and therefore for him the end of all Biblical exegesis was the sermon. He remains the only exegetical professor I ever had who demanded a sermon outline as part of our assigned exegetical papers. His book, *Preaching the Parables*, especially exemplifies this wedding of mind (exegesis) and act (preaching). Scharlemann was himself one of the best preachers I ever heard — no doubt because he had really interpreted the text. The person of this exegete-preacher was prophetic in condemning the facile separation between the “theoretical” and the “practical,” still all too often made. He liked to paraphrase 1 Peter 1:13: “Roll up the sleeves of your minds; get ready for work!” But that work was always God’s work, addressing Law and Gospel, proclaiming repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Scharlemann was a great seminary professor because he could with a cogent harmony unite the concerns of the scholar with the concerns of the pastor.

(3) Finally, Scharlemann was a thinker for the *church*. In the rarified atmosphere of academia and professional theology the temptation to succumb

to scholarly trends or to absolutize one's own favorite themes is constant. But all of that was far from Scharlemann's concern. He was too engrossed in the story of God's redemptive history to be deceived by counterfeits. He knew himself to be a beneficiary of that history, and so all of his energies were dedicated to the service of that history. He was aware that he stood with the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and saints. His service was one with theirs. This is to say, Martin Scharlemann was a *churchman*, a *vir ecclesiasticus*. He knew himself to be a member of the Body of Christ, and he measured all that he did by the standard of the church's edification. Some may point to the famous Scharlemann apology at the Cleveland Convention (1962). But the real story is not that he apologized but that in doing so he subordinated himself to the church he served. A man who does that is worthy of honor and respect. And in a real sense Scharlemann sacrificed his last years for the church's welfare. His loyalty to the Missouri Synod during and after the tumultuous events of 1974 was not without its personal and professional cost for him. But I never heard him express a word of doubt that all had happened that the church might be made secure and strong. If he ever had doubts, they were apparently lost in his prayers that God direct his thoughts and acts. But however that may have been, without question the church is safer for his having been a member of it and a soldier in its service.

The church is sometimes slow in recognizing its own heroes. While it may have been too slow in coming, it was nevertheless out of great appreciation for his service that last May Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, voted Martin Scharlemann the degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*. We need to recognize those who have been the church's teachers. But especially do we give glory to the King of Heaven for having preserved Martin in the way and bringing him to the end. We are all more blessed for it having been so.

William C. Weinrich

THE PATRISTIC AND BYZANTINE REVIEW

The American Institute for Patristic and Byzantine Studies has announced the inauguration of a triannual review "devoted to patristic theology and eastern church history," under the editorship of Constantine N. Tsirpanlis. The same organization sponsored a symposium on October 7 under the theme of "God and the World in the Cappadocians." The first issue contains articles on Gregory the Great, Christian love, the structure of the church in the liturgical tradition of the early centuries, and a bibliography for eastern orthodox theology between the years 1970 and 1980. Lutherans, who do much of their theology *vis a vis* the Roman Catholic Church, can benefit by the eastern church's concern with the preservation of the early church's theologians, a virtually unvisited area for most. In announcing the appearance of a new theological journal, it is difficult to avoid calling attention to the editor's endorsement of universalism in a book review (pp. 73-75). Individual copies are five dollars. Correspondence can be addressed to The Patristic and Byzantine Review, R.R. 1, Box 353-A, Minuet Lane, Kingston, New York 12401. The review is a welcome scholarly contribution to an often neglected area of church studies.

David P. Scaer

THE CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN SEMINARIES (ACLS)
CAMBRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 6-9, 1982

The ACLS was founded in Oberursel, Germany, in August 1980 at the conclusion of a theological conference called by the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany on the campus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary. In early September 1982 representatives from confessional Lutheran seminaries met in Cambridge for the first officially called conference of the ACLS. Seminaries from all continents, with the exception of Australia, were represented to discuss the general theme of theological education. The ACLS developed from a growing desire to bring seminaries of the churches committed to the Lutheran Confessions into a closer relationship with one another. Other denominations have had similar associations to help their theological institutions throughout the world, but contact among confessional Lutheran seminaries has been only on a one-to-one basis. The general theme of the first conference was theological education. Conference essays included: "The Gospel of Matthew as Theological Training Document," Dr. David P. Scaer, Fort Wayne; "Martin Luther's Academic Training," Dr. Wilbur Kreiss, Paris; "Theological Education before and after the Time of Martin Luther," Dr. Manfred Roensch, Oberursel, Germany; "Principles and Reflections on Theological Education," Dr. Detlaff Lehmann, Oberursel; "Training of a Confessional Lutheran Pastor in Asia," Dr. J. Gamaliel, Nagercoil, India; "Theological Training of the Pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil," Dr. Rudi Zimmer; "Theological Training of the Pastor in the Confessional Lutheran Seminary in the U.S.A. and Canada," Dr. Karl Barth, St. Louis; "Theological Training of the Pastor in the Lutheran Church in South Africa," Dr. E. Weber; "Theological Education of the Pastors in the Confessional Lutheran Churches in the German Democratic Republic," Dr. Gottfried Wachler; and "The Role of Religious Publications in Theology," Dr. H.L. Poetsch, Hannover, Germany.

The conference also adopted "A Statement of Purpose for the Association of Confessional Lutheran Seminaries" which is to be circulated among the member churches and their supporting churches for advice and comment. The statement reads as follows:

The ACLS shall center on issues of common interest to the seminaries as the centres of theological education for their respective churches. Since the 1950's and the 1960's, Lutheran churches who have shared a common confessional heritage and interest have used various avenues to share their concerns in working for the common goal of loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions. We believe that also the seminaries of the ACLS have an obligation to each other under their mutual subservience to the Holy Scriptures as God's word and their allegiance to the Lutheran Confessions. These seminaries, joined by confessional subscription, have a commitment to express and foster their confessional commitment and loyalty. The seminaries are entrusted by their respective churches with the preparation of the church's clergy and are thus responsible to a large degree for the theological directions of their churches. The Association recognizes the responsibility given to others by the respective church bodies, e.g., in the area of church relations. Since the confessional Lutheran faith is one faith and not many, it behooves the seminaries to maintain this unity among themselves. Our seminaries are not united by ecclesiastical organization but

by the common confessional commitment. They are also united by the goal of assisting each other in the divinely given task of preparing men for ministry.

To attain these purposes the seminaries (1) shall share information among themselves and keep others aware of developments at their respective institutions; (2) shall exchange professors and students in accordance with provisions of their church bodies; (3) shall conduct meetings to discuss theological issues of common concern to their institutions and their church bodies; (4) shall assist in arranging for research projects of concerns of certain of its member seminaries; (5) shall exchange faculty theological journals and lectures; (6) inform each other about curriculum; (7) shall inform each other about teaching methods according to the particular disciplines and the textbooks used; and (8) shall inform each other in regard to moral, ethical, educational and confessional requirements for admission and graduation.

To reach these purposes certain concrete action must be taken: (1) Information may be shared through newsletters or through a cooperative publication. (2) Material assistance (e.g., books) shall be provided sister seminaries where possible. (3) Meetings shall be announced as early as possible, perhaps several years in advance, to make them as accessible to as many as possible.

A chairman and secretary shall be chosen and shall serve between meetings as the executive committee. The former shall be responsible as the convener of the next meeting, and the latter shall share information through newsletters and other publications.

Copies of this resolution shall be shared with the faculties of the seminaries, their supporting boards, and their church leaders for study and response.

In other action the seminary representatives accepted the offer of Dr. Poetsch to use the international Lutheran periodical *Gospel-Evangelium*, printed in Germany, to publish the essays from the conference and to share information from the member seminaries on a regular basis. One of the pressing needs among confessional Lutheran seminaries is the dissemination of theological work, assisting each other by sharing library resources. The smaller seminaries in East Germany and the Third World do not have the funds to obtain all the textbooks necessary for a Lutheran theological education. To provide a sense of worldwide confessional Lutheran unity, the exchange of professors and seminarians is encouraged.

The next ACLS conference has been tentatively scheduled for September 2-5, 1985, at a place to be announced after determination by the chairman. The three-year notice is intended to provide professors of the seminaries in Asia and Africa opportunity to adjust any planned leaves to make attendance possible at the next ACLS conference. The host of this year's conference was the Reverend Ronald Feuerhahn of Westfield House, the theological training center of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England. That church's chairman, Dr. George Pearce, also welcomed the group and discussed relations with the International Lutheran Conference. Continuing as ACLS chairman is Dr. Manfred Roensch and as secretary the undersigned. Correspondence concerning the ACLS and its statement of purpose may be directed to the secretary.

David P. Scaer

EVANGELICALS AND WINE — SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

Scattered reports indicate that some congregations are giving serious consideration to substituting grape juice for the traditional wine in their communion services. Among the reasons for opposing this change, one is separating ourselves from Protestant fundamentalists, who have raised refraining from wine to a positive Christian virtue. Apart from exegetical, historical, and doctrinal considerations, wine should be used as a testimony of Christian freedom. This would be the Luther-like thing to do.

Addressing this issue from a scholarly perspective is Norman L. Geisler in his essay "A Christian Perspective on Wine-Drinking" (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March 1982, pp. 46-56). Geisler, a respected evangelical scholar, comes out against wine-drinking in the concluding paragraph, curiously entitled "Why Christians Need Not Drink Wine." The reasons offered here are hardly Biblical, but revive old-time memories of the essentially non-theological arguments offered by the right wing of American religion. To argue restraint from drinking wine on the grounds that America is an alcoholic culture might also mean abstinence from food, especially if it could be shown that America was more gluttonous than alcoholic. Total abstinence from wine is offered as a more consistent policy. Does Dr. Geisler mean to suggest that consistency would also on the other side require only alcoholic beverages? His other argument, that we have "plenty of wholesome, nonaddictive beverages" which the ancients did not have, might suggest that we also ban coffee, cola, and tea.

Aside from Dr. Geisler's personal Protestant preferences, however, his essay is especially valuable for those who are toying around with the idea of placing grape juice in communion chalices. After examining Geisler's exegetical evidence, they might have second thoughts. A teetotaling Baptist, Geisler sees nothing else but wine being used in the early church communion services. The Corinthian drunkenness was caused, at least partially, by the communion wine. Even if new wine was used, it "was just as fermented as old wine." This point is supported by Hosea 4:11, where both old and new wines are able to bring about drunkenness. Nor does Geisler dispute that Jesus turned the water into actual wine at Cana. Perhaps unknown to some is the fact that the wine of the ancient world was mixed with water — for example, one part wine to twenty parts water (Homer) or three parts water (Ion). Thus, the wines of early church communion services may have been considerably less alcoholic than many modern sacramental wines that boast a twelve percent alcoholic content. It is not surprising that Geisler, a Baptist, does not direct his attention to the practice of communion, since his denomination cannot be considered sacramental in its theology. Lutherans thinking of putting grape juice in the communion chalice are not going to find any evidence that Jesus or the early church used grape juice in the sacrament. Even a wine-abstaining Baptist confirms this point.

David P. Scaer