

WHY I LEFT THE MISSOURI SYNOD

[Series of articles from *Lutheran News*; September 9, 1963-June 29, 1964]

by Siegbert W. Becker

[Article 1 follows; September 9, 1963]

It is extremely difficult to write a series of articles such as this. The Missouri Synod, which I felt compelled to leaving after having been one of its members for 48 years, meant, and still means, a great deal to me. In that church I learned to know my Savior, but when I survey the present state of the Missouri Synod, and recall the glory that once was hers as a faithful witness to the truth of God's Word and the grace of Jesus Christ, the words which Isaiah spoke of Jerusalem come forcefully to mind, "How is the faithful city become an harlot!"

One hesitates also to write such a series of articles as this because it involves a struggle between two duties which seem sometimes to be in conflict. On the one hand, there is the command of Scripture which tells us to cover up the sins of the neighbor. On the other hand there is the clear command of the Bible, "Them that sin rebuke before all." (1 Tim. 5:20). On the one hand there is the desire not to damage the reputation of anyone. On the other hand there is the clear call of God to cry aloud and spare not to show the children of God their transgressions.

Feelings Will Be Hurt

If we tell the truth, the feelings of some men will be hurt, but if, we do not tell the truth, many souls will be harmed. Dr. Martin Luther once said that if a pastor were guilty of adultery he would remain silent about it, for he was only harming his own soul; but if we were teaching false doctrine, he would not hesitate to make it public, for by his false teaching he was endangering the souls of all his hearers.

It is not my wish to hurt the reputation of any man by this series of articles. However, if we are not to become dumb dogs that cannot bark (Isa. 56:10), and if we are not to come under the condemnation which God pronounces on all those watchmen on the walls of Zion who do not blow the trumpet when they see the enemy appear (Ezek. 33:6), it becomes necessary to speak out against evil, at least to those who have ears to hear and who wish to stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein (Jer. 6:16).

Nor is it my desire to become involved in controversy. It is not pleasant to be in dispute with those whom one has for years regarded and loved as brethren. But here again the word of the Savior is clear, for He says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth" (Matt. 10:-33). In these last days of indifference and unionism and ecumania, it is almost impossible to remain aloof from controversy and at the same time to be faithful to the Lord. The curse which Deborah and Barak pronounced on Meroz "because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the might" (Judg. 5:23), must still be taken seriously by us today. There may be men who are irritated and angered by what is said here, but I hope and pray that the faithful remnant in Missouri, who love the Lord Jesus and His Word in deed and in truth, and not only in pretense, will read these words in the same spirit in which they are written, and that they will be an earnest call to repentance to those who are leading the Missouri Synod down the road to open heresy.

Someone may ask, "Why do you publish these things in *Lutheran News*? Why do you not use the Synodical channels?"

Tried for Years

The writer of these lines tried for years to use the Synodical machinery, but to no avail, as we hope to show in later articles. This is not meant to imply that the officials of Synod are not well-meaning men. We will

judge no one's heart. The doctrinal chaos which has engulfed Missouri is by now so wide-spread that it is humanly impossible to deal with it adequately. Moreover, the reorganization of Synod's educational system that began in 1947 has placed so much power into the hands of the presidents of our colleges and seminaries that the best-intentioned Synodical officials are helpless in dealing with the men who control our Synodical institutions. The writer of these articles is therefore convinced that there is no course left open but to "let the people judge."

The charge is often made that *Lutheran News* does not tell the full story. May we first of all remind those who make such charges that the eighth commandment is still in the decalog, and those who say this but do not give substantiating evidence are guilty of slander. I would invite all those who have additional light to shed on the matters to be discussed in this series of articles, to share their information with me, for I would be happy to be shown that the estimate which I have formed concerning the present doctrinal chaos in the Missouri Synod is too pessimistic. I am sure that the editor of *Lutheran News* joins me in this invitation.

The road which led to the final break with the Missouri Synod was a long one and time and space will not permit me to recount all the events which convinced me that the time had come to sever the bonds of fellowship with the Synod in which I was baptized and which I had served as a pastor for 25 years.

My Resignation

In this first article I shall begin at the end with the account of my resignation from the Missouri Synod. In May of this year I received a call to teach at Milwaukee Lutheran Teachers College, an institution of the Wisconsin Synod. For years I had protested publicly, at Synodical conventions and at pastoral conferences, and privately, to the administration of Synod and of Concordia Teachers College, against the doctrinal aberrations which were more and more creeping into the Missouri Synod, and I intended to continue my testimony to the bitter end. I felt that this work was not quite finished, and therefore, when I learned that my name was on the call list for the Wisconsin Synod school, I prayed earnestly that the call might not come. But from the time the call came I could not shake the conviction that it was the Lord's will that I should go.

Moreover, when I met with the president of Concordia Teachers College and told him that I felt that I should accept the call because of the need in the Wisconsin Synod and also because of the doctrinal situation in our own Synod, he agreed that I should go, but for a different reason. He said,—and the board of control later used exactly the same language,—that I should accept the call in order to maintain my personal integrity. I replied that I could not accept this as a reason,—that I felt that I could continue in the Missouri Synod for a few more years with a good conscience to fight the battle for orthodox Lutheranism until Missouri would either discipline me or those whose doctrine I considered false and soul-destroying. He said in answer to this that I was "using the Missouri Synod," and when I told him that I felt that there were thousands upon thousands of pastors and laymen in the Missouri Synod who wanted me to continue the struggle for the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Bible, and who were happy to pay my salary, he said that he did not agree with me. It became very evident that he was anxious to have me leave the faculty.

A few days later, the chairman of the board of control, who has since been elected to the presidency of the Northern Illinois District, requested that I come to his office, saying that the president of the college, who was in Europe, had asked him to speak to me about the call. At this meeting he told me that the board expected me to accept the call, adding that if I were to return it, the board would require that I sign a document governing my future activities at the college. He said that the board objected to my attacks on Martin Scharlemann, especially on the floor of the Cleveland convention.

Useless Struggle

Because of this I was convinced that it was useless to attempt to carry on the struggle for purity of doctrine at Concordia Teachers College at River Forest. For the past ten years the voice of orthodoxy in the religion division of the college has been growing steadily weaker and the most blatant questioning of the

historical accuracy of the Scriptures has been tolerated. Students have become more and more confused, for truth and error have been in many cases accorded equal rights in the classroom. In future articles I intend to point out some concrete examples of this trend.

But for the present, I hope that these few details will convince friends in the Missouri Synod, who wrote urging me to “stay and fight” and not be “a rat deserting a sinking ship,” that it was virtually impossible to continue at Concordia Teachers College and continue the struggle there. From the standpoint of temporal ease and comfort it was difficult to leave, but the only alternative would have been to agree to give up the fight against the heretics in the Missouri Synod. Under those new rules laid down by the administration of Concordia Teachers College, it would have been a violation of “personal integrity” to continue on that faculty.

[Article 2 follows; October 21, 1963]

First of all, let me say that I hope that all those who read this series of articles will bear in mind what I said in my first article in the September 9 issue of *Lutheran News*.

One of my chief reasons for leaving the Missouri Synod was the handling of the Scharlemann case by the Synodical officials. The president of the Missouri Synod repeatedly reported in the *Lutheran Witness* and elsewhere that the men who opposed Dr. Scharlemann and accused him of false doctrine made no effort to deal with him according to Matthew 18 and that they even refused to meet with Dr. Scharlemann to discuss the matter. To “let the people judge” whether this report accords with the facts, I shall in the next few articles reveal my attempts to deal with Dr. Scharlemann.

Early in April of 1959, Dr. Scharlemann read a paper to the pastoral conference of the Northern Illinois District in which he attacked the inerrancy of the Scriptures and stated that there were many factual mistakes in the Bible. Several of us protested on the floor of the conference against this teaching, and admonished Dr. Scharlemann then and there.

On April 22, 1959, I wrote to Dr. J.W. Behnken and asked what course should be pursued in dealing with this false teacher at our seminary. Dr. Behnken answered on May 6 and said that the matter should be taken up with Dr. Scharlemann. That Dr. Behnken knew that Dr. Scharlemann was not willing to listen to admonition becomes evident from his reply in which he wrote,

“My advice to you would be that you write to Dr. Scharlemann personally and in an evangelical but also very firm way take issue with him on the statements which he made. Should he deal with you as seemingly he dealt with Pastor AT Kretzmann and refuse to answer, you should take up the matter directly with Dr. A. O. Fuerbringer. I would then be pleased if you would mail a copy of the letter to me.”

Refuses to Send Paper

On May 12, 1959, I then wrote to Dr. Scharlemann and asked him whether he accepted the doctrine of inspiration as it was taught in the Brief Statement and by Drs. Engelder and Pieper. In this same letter I requested a copy of his paper which he had read to the conference.

On May 14, Dr. Scharlemann replied that he could not answer the question about the Brief Statement and Engelder and Pieper and he refused to send a copy of the paper. Therefore I wrote to him again on May 18 as follows: “Before I ask a second person to join me in admonition to you, I would most respectfully ask you once more for a copy of your paper. It seems to me that the members of the conference should not be placed into the embarrassing and difficult position of having to deal with a brother on the basis of their own recollection of what was read. I am still of the opinion that the paper denied the doctrinal position of our church and that it presented a false view of Scripture. Would you, therefore, be so kind as to send me a copy of your paper?”

To this request Dr. Scharlemann replied on May 22. In this reply, he refused again to furnish a copy of his paper. Moreover, he refused to be dealt with according to Matt. 18. He wrote,

When you indicate that you are asking a second person to join in admonishing me, you are completely out of order. You have neither occasion nor authority for that kind of activity. I want that very clearly understood at this point. I will not be present at any such occasion. In fact, I think it rather presumptuous on your part even to make such a suggestion. I am charitably assuming that this request of yours is not to be taken too seriously...If you really have any justification for misgivings, the proper channels are through your District President to our Board of Directors.

Behnken Kept Informed

On July 14, of that same year, I wrote to Dr. Behnken to acquaint him with the situation as it stood at that time. I sent him a copy of my letter of May 18 and asked what else could be done. Dr. Behnken therefore knew of my efforts to meet with Dr. Scharlemann, and yet in a letter to the pastors of the Missouri Synod, he spoke of those who attacked Dr. Scharlemann but made no effort to deal with him personally, but he said not one word about the fact that Dr. Scharlemann had refused to be dealt with according to Matt. 18. And yet now he and others accuse *Lutheran News* of not telling the full story.

At about this same time, the president of the Northern Illinois District wrote to all the pastors of the District and asked them not to deal with Dr. Scharlemann as individuals, and that a special pastoral conference would be called to deal with the matter. This conference was held on Nov. 20, 1959. At this meeting Dr. Scharlemann vigorously defended his position that there are many mistakes of fact in the Bible. He stated that there were even more errors in the original copies written by the inspired penmen themselves, but that many of these mistakes were corrected by the scribes. When one of the vice-presidents of the Northern Illinois District pointed out to him that the constitution of the Missouri Synod says that the Bible is inerrant, Dr. Scharlemann agreed that he would be willing once more to use that word, but while he now said that there are no errors in the Bible, he continued to insist that there were many factual mistakes in it. An error, he said, is an intentional misstatement of fact, made to deceive, but a mistake is unintentional. Such mistakes the writers of the Bible made not because they wanted to deceive, but because they just did not know any better. He also said that the Bible is true but that when we say this we do not mean that it is factually correct. Nothing was settled at this meeting.

Writes to Fuerbringer

On the next day, November 21, 1959, I wrote the following letter to the president of the seminary.

Dear Doctor Fuerbringer,

Yesterday the Northern Illinois District pastoral conference met to deliberate with Dr. Scharlemann on the paper which he delivered to that conference last spring. I am convinced that this is a cancer that must be cut out and that right early if our church is to survive as a truly Lutheran Church. His views are a queer refinement of both the enthusiasm of the Reformed and the old allegorizing of the medieval scholastic theologians. This man, for all his denials, is bringing all the evils of neo-orthodoxy into our church and the history of doctrine in these last forty years has amply demonstrated that these views of Holy Scripture are inevitably associated with attacks on the person of our Lord Himself. I do not see how we can possibly tolerate such a man on a Synodical faculty, who covers his disagreement with the very constitution of our church with such a thin and transparent veil that only those who are deliberately and culpably

blind cannot fail to see it. If we let him continue his attacks on Scripture today, we will have no Christ tomorrow.

It is imperative that something be done very quickly. I hope that it will be done by those who have been charged with the supervision of doctrine at our seminary, so that it will not be necessary for some Samaritan to pour antiseptic wine into the wounds of the man who has been passed by in his need by both priest and Levite.

A copy of this letter was sent to the president of Synod and to the board of control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. To the board I also wrote at the same time as follows:

Honorable Brethren,

Since I am totally ignorant of what proper ecclesiastical procedure will be in this particular case, I am calling the attention of the board to the enclosed letter which I have addressed to Dr. Fuerbringer. Dr. Scharlemann has in no uncertain terms denied the doctrine of plenary, verbal inspiration as that doctrine has been taught by our church. The doctrine which he teaches and which he calls plenary, verbal inspiration has little in common with our doctrine except the name. I believe this case to be so urgent and so pressing that we cannot afford to waste time deciding to whom this particular letter should have been sent. If it is the board's province, would you please consider it addressed to the board? If it is, at this point, only the concern of Dr. Fuerbringer, will you please ignore it?

Synodical Machinery Hopeless

Although I received an answer to these letters from Dr. Fuerbringer and an acknowledgement from the secretary of the board that the letter had been received, I never received an answer from the board. At the Cleveland convention in 1962, one of the members of the board, told me that if I had any charges to bring against Martin Scharlemann I should have written to the board. When I showed him these two letters, he insisted that neither one had ever been brought to the attention of the board. When I spoke at the same convention to Dr. Repp, the academic dean of the seminary, and asked him why he and others were continually reporting to the membership of Synod that no one had ever brought a charge of false doctrine against Martin Scharlemann, and asked why my letters were never read to the board, he answered, "We did not consider your letter a charge of false doctrine."

These were a few of the early experiences that convinced me that it seemed hopeless to use the Synodical machinery for the correction of error. During all this time, I did not break into public print but tried to settle this in an orderly way. But now I am convinced that for the good of the souls of many people in the Missouri Synod, who are being misled by false propaganda, I must share this information with them so that we may "let the people judge."

[Article 3 follows; November 18, 1963]

The last installment of this series carried the story of my attempts to deal with Martin Scharlemann and his false doctrine up to the 21st of November, 1959, when I sent letters to the president and the board of control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, charging the St. Louis professor with denial of the doctrine of inspiration which had up to that time been taught by our church.

My letters were never read to the board of control, according to a member of the board (see last installment), and yet on Nov. 30 1959, the president of the Seminary wrote that the board of control "has the case in hand."

In reply to my letter of Nov. 21, 1959, the secretary of the board of control wrote to me on Jan. 31, 1960, apologizing for not having written sooner and saying that steps were being taken to “clean up all misunderstandings.” To this letter I replied on Feb. 2, 1960, as follows:

Thank you for your letter of January 31. I deeply appreciate your kindness in writing and I assure you that your failure to write previously was not taken amiss, since I did have an acknowledgement from Pres. Fuerbringer.

But your present letter troubles me somewhat. I want to assure you that we did not misunderstand Dr. Scharlemann. He definitely and deliberately denied the inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures, not once but many times, not in one way, but in many ways. For several years, I have been troubled by a new type of doctrine which was making itself heard on our campus at River Forest. Students came to me weeping and saying that they did not know what to believe any more. They told me of girls lying on their beds sobbing for hours and so disturbed that they wanted to quit school and the church because they were being robbed of their assurance of salvation. Through all these complaints there ran a common thread. When I heard Dr. Scharlemann, I recognized the exact doctrinal line which has shaken the faith of some of our students for years, at least, for the last four years.

Brother, I do not know if the board realizes the gravity of this situation. I have no objections to dealing with Dr. Scharlemann, whom I do not consider a brother in the faith, for a long time. But I am convinced that the only Christian and the only honorable thing for the board to do in this case is to see to it that this doctrine is not taught at the seminary, by suspending Dr. S. from his position until he unequivocally and unmistakably renounces his error and promises that he will teach the position of our church as it is set forth in the *Brief Statement*. Nothing less than this will satisfy me. The error of Dr. Scharlemann is so clear and so openly at variance with the position of our church that nothing less than an open and public recantation can possibly assure troubled consciences that it is right for us to support the program of Synod as long as Synod gives at least tacit support and financial aid to such an evident false teacher.

Yours in our common Savior, with the wish that the Lord may give you wisdom, courage, and strength in this battle for the truth of His Word, for it is nothing less than this.
Siegbert W. Becker.

On February 11, 1960, the president of the Seminary in St. Louis sent a letter to all the pastors of Synod in which he implied that the reports that were circulating in Synod regarding Martin Scharlemann were not correct and that he was not in serious disagreement with the doctrine of our church. I wrote to the secretary of the board of control once more, protesting this sort of activity on the part of the president of the Seminary. I wrote to the president of Synod protesting against the tack taken by the president of the Seminary. To the president of the Seminary himself I wrote on Feb. 14:

Your letter of Feb. 11, in regard to Dr. Scharlemann's false doctrine is before me. I must say that in some ways it distresses me more than anything that Dr. Scharlemann has said and done, since it now becomes evident that the officials of the seminary no longer recognize the blasphemous assertions of Dr. Scharlemann for what they are, and the administration of the seminary is making efforts to defend him in his activities. Moreover, the letter seems to assume that every pastor of Synod fell on his head as a baby.

I heard Dr. Scharlemann twice, and both times, I know, he did deny the verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible as it is confessed by our church. He has his own peculiar definition of inspiration, and on the basis of his definition he says that he does not deny the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. He has denied our church's doctrine, not once, but many times, not

only in one way, but in many ways. Almost every false prophet in the history of the church has claimed to hold the position of the church to which he desires to belong. Even Arius said that he believed that Jesus was God. And therefore I assert, without fear of contradiction by honest men, that Dr. Scharlemann does deny verbal, plenary inspiration as it has been taught by our church, whether he clings to that term or not. The words, after all, mean little, if the substance is removed. If you do not believe this, then ask Dr. Scharlemann to send out a letter to all the pastors of Synod, declaring that he accepts the *Brief Statement* on the Holy Scriptures. You know and I know that he will not do this, unless he has changed his position radically. And so long as you know that this is Dr. Scharlemann's position, I do not think that it is quite honest for you to add your weight to his assertion that he does not deny the doctrine of our church. He has also denied the inerrancy of Scripture. Not only has he cast doubt on the word "inerrancy," but he has, in the hearing of many witnesses, spoken of the errors in the Bible. Here again, it is true, he does not want to use the word "errors," but he prefers to use the word "mistakes." This is a patent trick, which every honest theologian ought to recognize for what it is. He does this very thing in the statement appended to your letter. While this may not be clear to those who have not heard or read his paper, yet anyone who has heard his paper knows that when he speaks of "factual precision" in the Bible, or rather, the lack of "factual precision" in the Bible, he means that the factual statements of the Bible are not necessarily true. You have heard his paper. And you know that what I am saying is right. But this does not appear to be the case in the letter which you have sent to all the pastors of Synod. I am amazed that a responsible official of Synod should write as you did...

Dr. Scharlemann's position at our conference was only "tentative" in words. He took a most belligerent and often insulting attitude against every one who dared to disagree with him. Not only that, but when I wrote, after an exchange of letters on the subject, that I wanted to meet with him in the presence of one or two witnesses, he wrote that he would not be present at any such meeting.

The report in the *Confessional Lutheran*, contrary to the impression that you left in your letter, was factually correct. Of course, one cannot expect those who say that the "truth is not factual precision," to agree with what the *Confessional Lutheran* has said, although it is difficult to see how such people can criticize the truth of any report. If God's Word can contain mistakes, then even the *Confessional Lutheran* ought to be given a little leeway. I am not associated with the *Confessional Lutheran*, nor am I a member of the Confessional Lutheran Publicity Board, or Bureau, but I am deeply grieved over your unfair and unjustified implied slander of the brother who wrote the articles in the December issue, whoever he may be. If anything, those articles dealt much too leniently with this man who is overturning the foundation of our church. To let the editors know that I am not in agreement with your unfair attack on them, I am sending them a copy of this letter, asking them however, not to use it in their publication until I have heard from you in answer to this letter, which I expect will be before many issues go to the press. I will also send a copy of this letter to Dr. J.W. Behnken, since I am surprised that he would consent to the publication of your letter, unsatisfactory as it is. The very worst features of Dr. Scharlemann's paper are boldly asserted in his statement at the end of your letter.

Early in May of 1960, I spoke to Dr. Fuerbringer about these matters in the Synodical office building in St. Louis. At that time he told me that Martin Scharlemann now accepted the inerrancy of Scripture. But when I asked him whether Dr. Scharlemann accepts our traditional definition of inerrancy, he admitted that Dr. Scharlemann has a different definition from the one current in our church.

And yet, in the months that followed, it was reported again and again that no charge of false doctrine had ever been brought against Martin Scharlemann to the proper authorities. The facts as they are set forth here

demonstrate beyond question that this was done. Who were the proper authorities called to deal with this matter if they were not the president of Synod, the president and the board of control of the Seminary? If they had complained that the charges were brought so frequently that they were kept too busy answering letters to deal with Dr. Scharlemann, this at least would have been understandable. And yet these are the men who now say that *Lutheran News* does not tell the “whole story.” Well, only God knows the “whole story” but at least we can make an honest attempt to tell the church what we know so that we may “let the people judge.”

(What Dr. Becker wrote in his first installment in this series of articles should be kept in mind for a proper perspective of the entire series. We understand that some officials have taken issue with this series. We have invited officials to present their objections and have assured them that they will be published. So far our invitation has not been accepted. Ed.)

[Article 4 follows; December 16, 1963]

Before continuing the story of my dealings in the Scharlemann case, I should like to call the attention of the readers of *Lutheran News* to an error in my article of Oct. 21, 1963. On page 3 of that issue, column 2, line 20, the text should read, “the next year, on Aug. 22,” rather than “the next month, on Aug. 22.” This error, for which the editor of *Lutheran News* is in no way responsible, is deeply regretted by me since it tends to make Dr. Behnken’s letter of Aug. 22, 1960, even a greater violation of Christian charity than it actually was. I would like to believe that Dr. Behnken had by the late summer of 1960 forgotten about the correspondence he had with me the previous year, for it is only on that assumption that I can accept the letter of August 22 as an effort at an honest report to Synod.

This letter of August 22, 1960, sent by Dr. Behnken to all the pastors and teachers of Synod, I should like to discuss in this article.

During the last months of 1959 and the early months of 1960, the disturbance in Synod caused by the false doctrine of Dr. Scharlemann had become so widespread that the officials of Synod and of the seminary in St. Louis were compelled to take public notice of the offence which had been given. The letter of the president of the seminary, spoken of in our last installment, did not settle the issue, and on Aug. 22, 1960, the president of the Missouri Synod wrote to all the pastors and teachers of Synod, reporting that the truth of God “has prevailed” and that he hoped that the information contained in his letter would “put an end to the disturbance.”

Behnken’s Half Truth

In this letter Dr. Behnken stated that Martin Scharlemann had told the officials of Synod repeatedly that his essays were only “exploratory” and that they were not intended to be his “last word on the subject.” Dr. Behnken also wrote, “in discussion the disturbance which had been caused by the essays, ‘unfortunately, some resorted to all manner of attacks both orally and in print, as well as in so-called ‘open letters,’ without getting in touch with the essayist.’” (Our emphasis.)

The previously published articles in this series surely have demonstrated that when Dr. Behnken sent this letter to the pastors and teachers of Synod, he had been informed that some of us had made strenuous efforts to “get in touch” with Dr. Scharlemann and that the St. Louis professor had refused to discuss the matter in a fraternal way. Dr. Behnken’s words, therefore, are at best a half truth. In saying this, I do not want to be understood to say that he was deliberately distorting the picture. Unfortunately, many pastors and teachers, who did not know of our efforts to deal with Martin Scharlemann, felt that now at last they had the “whole story.”

This August 22 letter was a masterpiece of ecclesiastical strategy. In saying this, we do not want to imply that it was consciously designed as such by Dr. Behnken. In the first place, the letter implied that it is perfectly all right for men like Dr. Scharlemann to say anything at all provided they do not insist that everything they say is Gospel truth. Dr. Scharlemann had attacked the factual correctness of the Biblical record, but this attack was excused, at least in part, with the argument that the attack was only exploratory. What Dr.

Scharlemann was exploring was not defined. Was he perhaps exploring how far a man could go in attacking the position of our church without being unfrocked? What would we say if a man were to attack the vicarious atonement and then seek to ward off all criticism by saying that his attack was only “exploratory.”

Behnken Deceived

Secondly, the letter implied that Dr. Scharlemann had had a real change of heart and that he no longer held the position which he espoused in Melrose Park. That this was not true was amply demonstrated by later developments, and we assume that Dr. Behnken was genuinely deceived by the words of the St. Louis Professor, although his words should not have been deceptive to one who is acquainted with modern ecclesiastical terminology.

But the most effective stroke of all was the attack made by Dr. Behnken on those who had publicly expressed their disagreement with the heresy taught by Dr. Scharlemann. The charge that the men who attacked Dr. Scharlemann had done so without getting in touch with him served to draw the fire of many men in Synod away from Dr. Scharlemann and concentrated it on those who were vigorously defending the truth of God’s holy Word. There were many men in Synod who vehemently disagreed with Martin Scharlemann but who understandably wanted no part of any legalistic and loveless attack on the St. Louis professor. That the men who disagreed with Martin Scharlemann were guilty of such attacks was suggested by the wording of Dr. Behnken’s letter, and to those who could read behind the lines it became evident that from now on those who continued to criticize Dr. Scharlemann would be in disfavor with the Synodical administration, which meant that the fight against this heresy would from now on be an uphill struggle. It was at this time that I began to wonder whether the time had not come to give up the fight and leave the Missouri Synod. I therefore wrote to Dr. Behnken on Sept. 11, 1960, as follows:

Only Exploratory

It is with a heavy heart that I write these lines. For weeks I have been telling myself that the letter of August 22 could not possibly be the last word from you on the Scharlemann matter and that it must be rather a progress report, but the last paragraph in your letter does not permit me to hold such a view with a good conscience.

There are many things in that letter on which I should like to comment, but I will say only a few of the things that could be said, just to inform you that I do not want to bear any of the corporate guilt that rests upon our synod as long as your letter of August 22 stands as a solution of the Scharlemann case.

Your second paragraph leaves the impression that it is perfectly in order for a man to utter the most blasphemous attacks against the holy Word of our God so long as he is careful to preface his remarks with the proviso that this is not his last word on the subject, or that the blasphemy is of an exploratory nature. Do you really believe that it is permitted to blaspheme the holy name of God under such conditions? Do you think that it would be permitted to me to say that Jesus Christ was very likely not born of a virgin, if I would say that this is an exploratory matter, to see what I can get away with? Do you think that it would be permitted to me to say that Jesus Christ is not true God, if I would be quick to say that this is not my last word on the subject? Since when does such a plea make it possible for a man to attack the Bible with impunity? Do you not see that the impression which your second paragraph leaves is one which will open the way for any and every denial of the most important doctrines of our holy faith? It reminds me of Ibsen’s words in *Peer Gynt*, “A man may venture without fear, and keep his courage, if he’s very careful not to get definitely caught in any of life’s cunning pitfalls—if he looks forward, and beyond the

present moment and its chances, and always preserves a bridge behind him to retire on,” and “in any case, too, I can always withdraw from my present position.”

Scharlemann’s Blasphemy

But aside from Dr. Scharlemann’s blasphemy, just this is one of his sins, that he has publicly promulgated doctrines about which he confessed uncertainty. This is exactly the position which is taken by the theologians of neo-orthodoxy, that there is never any settled truth, and that every assertion this is made is of an exploratory nature. This is in harmony with the present theological moods, which holds that there is no such thing as fixed truth, that absolute truth is forever beyond us. While this seems to be a position of great humility, it is, in fact, the grossest form of pride, which assumes that what man cannot arrive at by his own effort cannot even be given to him by God. It was Emil Brunner who said, “To be dead certain is deadly.”

But since it will very likely do little good to analyse the letter in its entirety, I will not burden you with many more words. I just want you to know that before God I do not want to be held accountable, as a member of the Missouri Synod, for a single sentence in that letter. When the doctor clearly retracts his blasphemy, I will be willing to listen.

My files contain no letter in answer, and to the best of my knowledge I never received an answer from Dr. Behnken. But it certainly seems to me that when two men in the employ of a church which claims to be orthodox disagree so vehemently that one of them is willing to call the other a blasphemer and a heretic, one of them at least ought to be disciplined. But the situation in the Missouri Synod has evidently reached such a stage that all there is left to do is to share what we know with the rank and file membership of the church and “let the people judge.”

[Article 5 follows; January 13, 1964]

When Dr. Behnken, in his letter to all the pastors and teachers of the Missouri Synod, dated August 22, 1960, spoke of those who had attacked Dr. Scharlemann “without getting in touch with” him, but said not one word of Dr. Scharlemann’s refusal to meet with those who sought to discuss his heresy with him, this distorted picture of the situation did untold damage to the image of conservative members of the Missouri Synod.

When the editor of the *Confessional Lutheran*, therefore, asked me for a copy of Dr. Scharlemann’s letter in which he refused to meet with me, I sent it to him. This letter was quoted in part in the October, 1960, issue of the *Confessional Lutheran*.

Dr. Scharlemann Objects

On October 26, 1960, Dr. Scharlemann wrote to me, asking for an explanation of how the letter had come into the possession of the *Confessional Lutheran*, and stated, “Unless you can provide such a satisfactory explanation within the next few days (my emphasis), I have no choice except to take up this matter with the administration and the Board of Control of your institution.” And yet at the same time, without waiting for the explanation demanded, he sent a copy of this letter to the president of Concordia Teachers College, of whose faculty I was a member at that time.

On Oct. 31, I answered this letter, telling Dr. Scharlemann that I assumed full responsibility for the release of the letter and expressed the hope that we could resume our correspondence which had been interrupted by him, so that we might discuss our differences in a fraternal way.

On Nov. 3, Dr. Scharlemann replied that he had no intention of resuming our correspondence on his doctrinal views, that he had hoped that the *Confessional Lutheran* had gotten the letter from me

“surreptitiously,” but that since I had admitted releasing the letter, he was taking up the matter with the board of control of Concordia Teachers College. I might add that I had already informed the board of the matter. Two days later, he wrote to the board and called their attention to what he called this “reprehensible” action on my part.

The board met on November 8 and wrote identical letters to Dr. Scharlemann and me, asking the two of us to meet and discuss our differences as brethren, offering to pay travel expenses involved.

Becker offers to Meet and Scharlemann Refuses

On Nov. 10, I wrote to Dr. Scharlemann, with a carbon copy to the board offering to meet with him in Chicago or in St. Louis, or halfway between the two cities, and I suggested several dates in December for this meeting. To this letter I received no reply, but only a copy of a letter dated Nov. 20, 1960, addressed to the board, in which he refused to meet with me.

On Nov. 22, I wrote and offered once more to meet either with him alone or in the presence of the board. Two days later, I wrote again and offered to express my regrets publicly for having released his letter if he would meet “with me together with one or two witnesses” so that we might “discuss his doctrinal position.” To these two letters, also, I received no reply.

On December 20, the board again took up this matter and demanded that Dr. Scharlemann and I should meet with each other. Since I had already offered three times to meet and had received no reply, I felt it unnecessary to write to Dr. Scharlemann again.

Finally, on Dec. 26, Dr. Scharlemann wrote a letter to me in which he completely ignored my request for a meeting to discuss his false doctrine and all the difficulties that had arisen between us. In this letter he included an apology which was in reality a new accusation. It read, “Herewith I send my apologies for any and every unkind act toward you, including the incident at the pastoral conference of the Northern Illinois District. None of these were (sic) actually intended to be unkind. But they seemed to you to be of that nature; and that is enough.” The apology seems to assume that the purpose of fraternal admonition is the same as a challenge to a duel, namely to extort an apology from a man rather than to bring him to a recognition of his sin.

That there was no sense of guilt involved was made abundantly clear by a letter which he wrote the next day to the board of control, and of which he sent me a copy, in which he stated that the board had criticized him for his actions because it “did not have all the facts.” Because the apology was so manifestly unsatisfactory and since Dr. Scharlemann had not answered three of my previous letters, I felt that it was useless to deal with this man and again ceased to correspond with him.

Irreparable Damage

And yet after all this, the *Lutheran Witness*, with the approval of the president of the seminary and of the president of Synod, in April of 1961, again reported on the Scharlemann case and clearly implied that those of us who attacked Dr. Scharlemann had not made an effort to get in touch with him or to admonish him privately. Dr. Behnken and Dr. Fuerbringer had both been told by me that Dr. Scharlemann had refused to meet with me. Irreparable damage has been done to the Christian good name of many men by the letter of Aug. 22, 1960, and by the *Lutheran Witness* report of April, 1961. This damage cannot be undone by what we write here, but I want these men to know that for myself I forgive them for the harm that they have done to me, but I have no right to forgive them for the harm which these reports, which have shielded a false teacher in our midst, have done to the souls of countless members of the Missouri Synod. And I write these articles not to defend my name nor to attack these men, whom I still consider good friends and whom I still love as men who have also been redeemed by the blood of Christ, but in an effort to undo some of this damage which they have done. I only hope that they will repent and ask God’s forgiveness.

[Article 6 follows; January 7, 1964]

In the previous article in this series, I referred to the report on the Scharlemann case which was published in the *Lutheran Witness* in April of 1961. The record clearly shows that I had made many efforts to meet with Martin Scharlemann and that he persistently refused to deal with me in a fraternal way. Officials of Synod had been notified of this refusal on his part. And yet the report in the *Witness* which went into hundreds of thousands of homes cast doubt upon the integrity of those who had criticized Martin Scharlemann by implying that they had made little or no effort to get in touch with him personally, and that his sin should have been treated as a private matter.

This was the second time that this information, which was at best a half truth, had been given to the church. I therefore wrote again to Dr. Behnken and sent copies of the same letter to the vice-presidents of Synod, to Dr. Theodore Nickel, who was at that time president of the Northern Illinois District, and to the president of the seminary. In this letter dated April 13, I wrote, among other things: "The *Witness* implies that those of us who attacked Dr. S. did not make an effort to get in touch with him or to admonish him personally. I have made repeated efforts to meet Dr. S. He has persistently refused. He refused to do this even when he was asked by our board of control to meet with me. I offered to meet him in St. Louis, in Chicago, or half-way between the two cities. He had refused, in fact, he ignores all suggestions on my part and no longer even responds to the request. I now feel perfectly free to attack his position anywhere since I believe he represents a threat to the whole Church."

Wrote to Harms

As a result of this letter I exchanged a series of letters with Dr. Harms, who was at that time the first vice-president of Synod. In the course of this correspondence he asked whether I would "still be willing to meet with Dr. Scharlemann and discuss with him the matters that have been of concern in the Church due to the papers which he presented to conferences." On May 17, 1961, I answered,

You ask me whether I would be willing to meet with S. I would be glad to do this, if it would help the church. S. I no longer consider a brother in the faith. If I could help you see his error, I would be glad to go anywhere. The time has long since passed, however, that an appeal to Matthew 18 is in order. You may be interested in the last letter which I wrote to him. I have a copy which I would like to have returned to me, if that would be convenient for you. He did not even deign to take note of my request for a meeting, although he did apologize for any wrong that I thought he had committed against me, indicating that he was conscious of no sin. I hope that after reading that letter, you will not permit our aged president ever again to report to the church in any way that those who attack S. made no effort to get in touch with him.

Even though I had expressed my willingness to meet with Dr. Scharlemann, the matter was never again mentioned in any of the subsequent letters I had from Dr. Harms, but instead, Dr. Behnken, who had never replied to my letter of April 13, wrote to all the pastors of Synod on May 29 and again criticized those who were "making serious criticism of many individuals without prior investigation and consultation." There was not one line to indicate that men had made efforts to consult with Dr. Scharlemann and that it was Dr. Scharlemann who had refused to meet for such consultation.

Guilty of Serious Criticism

The constant reiteration of this false charge was doing irreparable harm to the conservative cause, and on June 3 I therefore wrote to Dr. Behnken.

I am again disturbed by the blanket accusation that the free conference was guilty of “serious criticism of many individuals and incidents without proper prior investigation and consultation.” I wonder whether you have made the proper prior investigation and consultation before making that charge. Would you like to see the correspondence which I have had with Dr. Scharlemann? Must I tell you again that he has categorically refused to meet with me to discuss our doctrinal differences?

To this objection on my part, Dr. Behnken answered on June 9, saying,

When you say that you are disturbed about the blanket accusation that the free conference was guilty of “serious criticism of many individuals and incidents and so forth” let me say that I would like for you to note the word many. I did not say all individuals. I am aware of the fact that you have had correspondence with Dr. Martin Scharlemann. I am aware also of the fact that in the past, he has declined to meet with you. I believe that I also read or heard that he returns your letters unopened. Brother Becker, let me say that we’re not through with that matter.

Many Still Misled

It seemed hopeless to call Dr. Behnken’s attention to the fact that the word “many”, which he had used in his letter of May 29 and which he had emphasized in his letter of June 9 did not refer in context to those who were doing the criticizing but to those who were being criticized. Moreover, the admission that he made in the private letter to me that he knew that Dr. Scharlemann had refused to meet with me was never made known to those to whom the false information had been given. Hundreds of thousands of people in the Missouri Synod to this day believe that we who accused Dr. Scharlemann of error did so without seeking to deal with him personally. They believe this because this is the impression which has been left by the official releases on this matter. The information that has spread about us in the official publication of Synod by the officials of the Missouri Synod is not true and it is not kind. This we could forgive, for the pressure under which these men have labored in the last years has been tremendous. But what causes us the greatest grief is the fact that the doctrinal position which we were defending has suffered irreparable harm by the actions of men who themselves ought to have been standing in the forefront defending these doctrines. And yet today some of these same men speak of the charges which we are making in the pages of *Lutheran News* as irresponsible.

The Unkindest Cut

But the “unkindest cut of all” came on Nov. 29, 1961, when the praesidium of Synod, the clergy members of the board of control of the St. Louis seminary, the administrative officers of the seminary and Dr. Scharlemann issued a statement in which it was said, unbelievable as this may sound, that men who had attacked the doctrinal position held by Dr. Martin Scharlemann even declined to meet with him when they were invited to do so. If this was really true in some cases, an honest report to the church surely ought also to have mentioned that Martin Scharlemann had refused to meet with men who had offered to come to St. Louis to meet with him and who had repeatedly asked for such a meeting. Instead the report said that Martin Scharlemann has “proceeded in accordance with recommended Synodical practice.”

In the light of the information which has been released in this series of articles to date, it may seem unbelievable that such things could have happened, but if anyone would like to read the correspondence in its completeness, my files are open to him. I will also be glad to furnish copies to anyone who is willing to pay for having photostatic copies of the correspondence or any part of it made.

Scharlemann Answers Becker

[The following appeared in *Lutheran News* on March 9, 1964]

(The following statement appeared in the *Seminary Newsletter*, February, 1964. This newsletter is published in the interest at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Ed.)

We think that Martin Scharlemann ('34) should be given a bit of space here. While it obviously isn't necessary or desirable to spend time and effort to answer every accusation that is made nowadays, from time to time it's probably in order to respond to one or the other in order to demonstrate that charges should not be taken at their face value. Here are Martin's comments:

Within recent weeks copies of *Lutheran News* have been distributed on campus. These contain a series of articles by Dr. Siegbert Becker, in which he sets forth his reasons for leaving our synod. Permit me to take this opportunity to supply three items that are not mentioned in his columns, which may prove helpful in evaluating them:

- a. He and I did have a meeting in the presence of the presidium, members of our board of control, and two persons who chose to accompany Dr. Becker. He was given ample time at this meeting to present his grievances by means of a paper he read. (February 1962)
- b. The essay to which the objections were directed was a paper read at the Northern Illinois District pastoral conference. This conference spent a whole day in special session to hear Dr. Becker's objections. At the conclusion the conference resolved that no action be taken. (October 1959)
- c. Since Dr. Becker was at that time a member of that pastoral conference, he was bound by that resolution. I did not refuse to meet with him. What I did refuse to do was to meet with him and two others on the basis of Matthew 18, which seemed out of order in view of the resolution of the pastoral conference.

Martin H. Scharlemann

[Article 7 follows; February 24, 1964]

In the previous article in this series, we referred to the statement on the Scharlemann case which was sent to the pastors of Synod on Nov. 29, 1961. This statement, signed by the president and the vice-president of the Missouri Synod, the clergy members of the board of control and the administrative officers of the St. Louis seminary, and Dr. Scharlemann was published in the *Lutheran Witness* of December 26, 1961.

In this statement the pastors and laymen of Synod were told, "When sharp criticism was directed against Dr. Scharlemann's essay, the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, asked these critics to present clear evidence of doctrinal error on the part of Dr. Scharlemann. Critics were also invited to come before the Board of Control with such evidence and to discuss the matter in the presence of Dr. Scharlemann. These invitations were declined."

On the one hand, it should not have been necessary for the board to make such a request, for they had access to all of Dr. Scharlemann's papers which contained all the evidence needed. On the other hand, the statement was not true, or at best it was a half-truth, for when the present writer, who was at that time a member of the religion division of Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, sent a charge of false doctrine against Martin Scharlemann to the Board of Control of the seminary and also to President Fuerbringer, the receipt of the letter to the board was acknowledged by the secretary of the board, but no answer of any kind ever came from the board itself. During all the months from May of 1959 to December of 1961, a period of more than two and one half years, the present writer had directed sharp criticism against Dr. Scharlemann himself, to the president of the seminary, to the president of the Missouri Synod, to two presidents of the Northern Illinois District, to all the vice-presidents of Synod, and never once in all those months was he asked by the Board of

Control or by anyone else “to present clear evidence of doctrinal error on the part of Dr. Scharlemann.” Nor was he ever once invited to come before the Board of Control with such evidence and to discuss the matter in the presence of Dr. Scharlemann. Yet the report was given to the rank and file of Synod in the pages of Synod’s official organ that such invitations had not only been given to those who had sharply criticized Martin Scharlemann but it was even said that these invitations had been declined.

Untrue Reports

It came as no surprise to me therefore when one of my colleagues on the faculty at River Forest reported to me in February of 1962 that he had been told in the Synodical office building in St. Louis that I had been invited to appear and had refused to come. One of the members of the faculty at our senior college in Ft. Wayne wrote a few weeks later that someone had reported to him “with glee” that when Dr. Becker was asked to appear before the Board of Control he was not present on the day appointed. The men who spread these untrue reports can scarcely be blamed when the official paper of Synod over the names of the highest officials of Synod published similar slanders.

The report in the *Witness* also said that the president and the vice-presidents of Synod made similar though unsuccessful efforts to arrange a meeting between Dr. Scharlemann and his critics. Up to December 26, 1961, when the report was published, I had been asked just once by one of the vice-presidents of Synod whether I would “still be willing” to meet with Dr. Scharlemann (See the sixth article in this series). When I expressed my willingness to meet, the matter was never mentioned again.

At least seven of the twelve men who signed the report in the *Witness* of December 26, 1961, knew that I had made repeated efforts to meet with Dr. Scharlemann and that Dr. Scharlemann had refused to meet with me. And yet they signed this report which said, “When sharp criticism was directed against Dr. Scharlemann’s essay, the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, asked these critics to present clear evidence of doctrinal error on the part of Dr. Scharlemann. Critics were also invited to come before the Board of Control with such evidence and to discuss the matter in the presence of Dr. Scharlemann. These invitations were declined. The President and the Vice-presidents made similar efforts. “These men knew that Dr. Scharlemann had repeatedly refused to meet to discuss this matter with me even though I had asked him at least four times for such a meeting and even though the Board of Control of Concordia Teachers College in River Forest had asked him twice to meet with me. And yet they reported to Synod that Dr. Scharlemann “has proceeded in accordance with recommended Synodical practice.” How they could possibly do these things is beyond my comprehension. The good name of Scharlemann’s critics has been damaged beyond repairing the minds of hundreds of thousands of readers of the *Lutheran Witness*, whom we cannot reach through the pages of *Lutheran News*,. We can only bring these facts to the attention of a few thousand of the members of Synod so that they at least will be enabled to “judge righteous judgment.” The kind and the true and the honest and the necessary thing for the officials of Synod to do would be to notify the readers of the *Lutheran Witness* that they regret the slander.

[Article 8 follows; March 23, 1964]

In previous articles of this series, I have reviewed the many attempts which I made to deal with Martin Scharlemann personally. During those two years, from May of 1959 to December of 1961, I had also made many efforts to use the regularly appointed Synodical channels in dealing with the Scharlemann heresy. The Synodical officials knew that Martin Scharlemann had refused to meet with me to discuss our differences. Yet in the *Lutheran Witness* of December 26, 1961, the highest officials of the Synod and of the Seminary in St. Louis reported to the church that Martin Scharlemann’s critics had been invited to appear before the Board of Control to present charges against Martin Scharlemann and had declined the invitation.

Before this report was issued to the church, it was read to the college of presidents in November. Present at this meeting was the president of the Northern Illinois District, the Rev. Dr. Theo. Nickel, who is now the second vice-president of the Missouri Synod. When the Board of Control of Concordia Teachers College, of which Dr. Nickel was chairman, had asked Martin Scharlemann in the fall of 1960 to meet with me to discuss our differences, Dr. Scharlemann refused to meet even though I offered to come to St. Louis for such a meeting. Dr. Nickel knew these things, and when I met him one day on the campus in River Forest, he said to me, "I must say that you have in this matter acted in a much more Christian way than Martin Scharlemann." Yet, to my knowledge, he made no effort at the meeting of the college of presidents to defend us against the false charges in the report, and in fact approved the report, which criticized those who found fault with Martin Scharlemann's teachings and stated of Dr. Scharlemann that he had acted "in accordance with recommended Synodical practice."

The President of CTC

The president of Concordia Teachers College, whose express duty it is to defend the members of his faculty against false charges, and who also knew of my dealings with Martin Scharlemann and had, in fact, been personally involved in them, made no effort to correct the record, so far as I know. Instead the whole church was told that Martin Scharlemann has "proceeded in accordance with recommended Synodical practice," and that his critics had refused to act properly. Privately, I had been told that I had acted in a much more Christian manner than Scharlemann by at least one of the men who approved this report to the church.

When the highest officials of the Synod and of the Seminary, in addition, declared in the December report that Martin Scharlemann was "in full agreement with the teaching of Scripture and of the Lutheran Confessions," I felt that the time for dealing with this matter privately had come to an end.

I therefore wrote to Dr. Behnken on Jan. 3, 1962, that I could not agree that the report in the *Witness* was a satisfactory solution to the problem and that I now intended to make my disagreement with the praesidium public in any channels open to me. At the same time I wrote,

But before I do this, I would like to know whether you are willing to reopen the case; and if so, whether you would be willing to invite both me and Dr. Scharlemann to a meeting at which I will try to make clear to you and to Dr. Scharlemann why I cannot accept this solution. I realize full well the implication of the course I intend to follow. I do not intend to leave the Missouri Synod voluntarily. I also know that I cannot, humanly speaking, prevail if it comes to an open break between me and you, since, as Luther says in the Large Catechism, it is almost impossible to win a case against the mighty. I know also that this must eventually lead to my expulsion from Synod, but I will not be a party to any attempt to use "good words and their speeches" to "deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting."

If He Thinks He Has a Problem

To this letter I received no reply from Dr. Behnken, but evidently he asked Martin Scharlemann to meet with me for, on January 13, I received from Dr. Scharlemann a carbon copy of a letter which he had sent to Dr. Behnken in which he expressed some surprise over the fact that I would want to meet with him, but he said, "Dr. Becker has been free to come here at any time, if he thinks he has a problem."

I interpreted this sentence as an expression of willingness to meet with me and with Dr. Behnken, and I therefore wrote to Dr. Scharlemann on January 13, "Since you indicate that you are now willing to meet with me, can we get together sometime during the Easter holidays? If it would be more convenient for you, would it be possible for us to meet on Feb. 26 or 27 somewhere between here and St. Louis? The board of our school did

not dispose of this matter a year ago, as you state in your letter (to Dr. Behnken). Their last word to us was that we should meet and discuss our differences.” To this letter I received no reply.

Dr. Behnken had also interpreted Dr. Scharlemann’s letter of Jan. 12 as an expression of willingness to meet with me. On Jan. 16, he wrote a letter to both Dr. Scharlemann and me asking us to meet alone or in the company of others. On January 18, Dr. Scharlemann wrote to Dr. Behnken and sent me a carbon copy of this letter, in which he said that this matter was not in Dr. Behnken’s province. He made his position crystal clear by saying, “My previous letter must not have been written very clearly. It was not intended to say that there would be any meeting between Dr. Becker and myself...Now, if Dr. Becker wants to come down and call, like anyone else, I’ll see him. My office is closed to no one; but I will NOT (his emphasis), in view of the present situation, arrange for any meeting.”

The Witness Report

But then, on January 23, for some reason at which I can only guess, Dr. Scharlemann called by long distance and expressed willingness to get together. I told him that I would write as soon as possible with suggestions for the meeting, and on January 31 I wrote to both Dr. Behnken and Dr. Scharlemann to say that I wanted to meet with both of them since my disagreement was now no longer with Dr. Scharlemann alone but also with the report in the *Witness*. Nevertheless I expressed my willingness to meet with each of them alone if they so desired.

On Feb. 1, Dr. Scharlemann replied, “The kind of meeting you describe is, of course, quite different from what Dr. Behnken suggested...Any further word, therefore on this matter can come not from me, but either from the Board or the Praesidium.”

On February 6, Dr. Behnken, evidently in reply to my letter of January 31 to Dr. Scharlemann’s letter of February 1, sent a letter to me with a carbon copy to Dr. Scharlemann, in which he suggested that the three of us get together. He proposed three dates in February and wrote, “Kindly let me know which of these dates would be agreeable. Since I am sending a carbon copy of this letter to Dr. Martin Scharlemann, I’m asking him also to be so kind as to let me know which of these dates is agreeable.”

On February 9, I replied that all three dates he suggested were very inconvenient for me but that if these were the only dates available I would clear my schedule and come to St. Louis on any of the dates mentioned, but that I would prefer a meeting on Feb. 27, if Dr. Scharlemann and he would find this agreeable. I sent a carbon copy of this letter to Dr. Scharlemann.

Let the People Judge

Dr. Scharlemann in the meantime sent me a copy of a letter which he had written to Dr. Behnken in which he made it clear that he was not willing to meet with Dr. Behnken and me, and he suggested instead that I should meet with all the twelve men who had signed the report of December 26.

Dr. Behnken and the official publications of Synod reported several times to the membership of Synod that Dr. Scharlemann’s critics made no effort to deal with him personally and declined to meet with him when they were invited to do so. Yet when Dr. Behnken asked Dr. Scharlemann and me to meet with him, it was Dr. Scharlemann who refused to meet and even went so far as to tell Dr. Behnken, in a letter dated Jan. 18, that this matter “is not in your province.” This part of the story has never been told in print until now; but it should make crystal clear to all fair-minded men who was really responsible for Scharlemann’s critics failure to meet him. “Let the people judge.”

[Article 9 follows; April 6, 1964]

It will be recalled that early in January 1962, I notified Dr. Behnken that I intended to write a series of articles criticizing the report on the Scharlemann case issued on Nov. 29, 1961, and published in the *Lutheran*

Witness. a month later. However, in an effort to settle this matter without a public dispute, I offered to meet with Dr. Behnken and Martin Scharlemann before publishing these articles.

When Dr. Behnken tried several times to arrange such a meeting and Dr. Scharlemann consistently refused to attend, I sent the first article in the proposed series to the *Confessional Lutheran* on Feb. 12, 1962, asking the editor to withhold publication for the present. At the same time I sent a copy of this article to Dr. Behnken and Dr. Harms with the request that if they felt that I was in any way unfair or inaccurate, they should notify me and I would make the necessary changes or withhold publication. The article dealt with the charge made in the report that Scharlemann's critics had refused to meet with him. When neither Dr. Behnken nor Dr. Harms raised any objections to the article by March 4, I gave permission to the *Confessional Lutheran* to publish the account of my dealings with Scharlemann. On April 4, Dr. Behnken called by long distance and asked me not to publish the article but by this time it was already in print.

In the course of the negotiations of the previous months, Dr. Scharlemann had suggested that if I wanted to discuss the report of Nov. 29, I should meet with the twelve men who had signed the report, namely the president and the vice-president of Synod, the administrative officers of the seminary, the clergy members of the seminary board of control and Dr. Scharlemann himself. I could well understand why Dr. Scharlemann would prefer to meet with me in the presence of eleven men who had declared him to be in perfect harmony with the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions, but I was somewhat surprised when Dr. Behnken early in March invited me to attend such a meeting. I felt that a large meeting of this type would involve too much expense for Synod, that it would be unproductive, and that it was unfair to ask me to discuss my differences with Martin Scharlemann in the presence of eleven men who agreed with him. I therefore suggested a compromise, offering to meet with the praesidium and Dr. Scharlemann. When this offer was ignored, I offered to meet with Dr. Scharlemann and the eleven men who agreed with him if I would be permitted to bring with me eleven men who agreed with the old doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. This offer, too, was rejected, and Dr. Behnken again asked me to meet with the twelve men suggested by Scharlemann, but he agreed to permit me to bring two witnesses. Since I was unwilling to become involved in a long debated about procedure, I finally agreed to come to St. Louis under the conditions laid down by Martin Scharlemann and Dr. Behnken, even though I protested that the whole procedure was grossly unfair to me and to the whole conservative cause.

A Real Difference in Doctrine

This meeting was held on May 24 and 25, 1962. The Rev. Martin Frick of Chicago and the Rev. Vernon Harley of Corpus Christi, Texas, consented to serve as witnesses. On May 24, I read a paper dealing with Dr. Scharlemann's denial of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration as it is set forth in the *Brief Statement*. This paper was then discussed by the group. In the course of the discussion Dr. Behnken repeatedly said that he believed that there was no real difference in doctrine between Dr. Scharlemann and me. He said that we did not understand each other and that we were both saying the same thing in different words. I insisted just as often that there was a real difference between Dr. Scharlemann and myself. Finally, when Dr. Behnken saw that he could not convince me that it was just a quarrel about words, he turned to Dr. Scharlemann and asked whether he did not agree that there was no real difference between us. To this Dr. Scharlemann replied, "Absolutely not. It is a matter of two entirely different views of Scripture." He went on to say, however, that he could not see why both points of view could not live in the same church. This has always been the plea of unionists and it helps us to understand why the Missouri Synod leaders today are perfectly willing to join in church work with unLutheran bodies as the Lutheran Church in America.

In my paper I had criticized Dr. Scharlemann's neo-orthodox view that the truth can never be adequately stated in propositional form, and that a man can, in fact, believe all the words of the Bible and still not be a Christian. I held that if a man really in his heart believes everything in the Bible, he also believes that he is a sinner and that Jesus is his Savior, for this is what the Bible says. Luther, for example, says in the Small Catechism that he who believes the words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," is truly a child

of God. Dr. Scharlemann, however, argued at the meeting that the Jews believed everything in the Old Testament and yet did not believe in Christ. I then quoted the words of Jesus, “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me,” and I said that the Lord Jesus Himself here says that the Jews did not believe the Old Testament. Dr. Scharlemann answered, “I’ll prove it to you out of the Talmud.”

Fuerbringer Defends Scharlemann

Dr. Fuerbringer then came to Dr. Scharlemann’s defense and quoted the words of James, “The devils also believe,” and he said that this passage proves that the devils believe all that is in the Bible and they are not Christians. I pointed out that the passage in James 2 does not say that the devils believe all that is in the Bible, but only that the devils believe that there is one God. Moreover, I said, if the devils believe all that is in the Bible, they believe that they are eternally damned, for this is what the Bible says of devils. But if a man believes all that is in the Bible, then he believes that the Lord Jesus died for Him and that He is saved for this is what the Bible says of men.

Dr. Repp, the academic dean of the seminary, then asked me whether I believed that the serpent spoke in the garden of Eden. I answered that I most assuredly believed this for the Bible says it. To this he replied that he thought that this was one of the most ridiculous things he had ever heard. “Serpents don’t talk,” he said. In such a vein the meeting of the first day came to an end.

A Concentration of Power

The experience of this first day convinced me that it was almost useless to try to correct the doctrinal situation at the seminary. This was not the Missouri Synod from which I had learned to trust the promises of God in the Scripture. Especially the officials of the seminary were vehement in their defense of a false teacher on the seminary staff, and under such conditions there seemed to be no hope of correction. The reorganization of the education system of the Missouri Synod which took place in 1947 concentrated so much power in the hands of the presidents of the various colleges and seminaries that it becomes almost impossible for the officials of the Synod to exercise any control over the doctrinal stand of faculty members if the president of a Synodical school takes it upon himself to defend false teachers on his staff. Nevertheless, I was willing to make one more effort to admonish Dr. Scharlemann and those who agreed with him by meeting again on the next day. The events of this second meeting will be treated in the next article of this series.

Because no official written record was kept of these meetings and the praesidium would not even consider the use of a tape recorder, I have asked both Pastor Martin Frick and Pastor Vernon Harley, who were present at the meeting, to read this article prior to publication and they agree that it is a correct report. Pastor Frick, in a phone conversation, authorized me to say that it is not only the truth, but it is also factual. Those who know the teachings of Martin Scharlemann will catch the significance of that statement. “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.” Now “let the people judge.”

[Article 10 follows; April 20, 1964]

In the preceding article, I began the report of my meeting, on May 24 and 25, 1962, with Dr. Scharlemann and various Synodical officials. On the second day of the meeting, I read a second paper in which I tried to show that Dr. Scharlemann did not accept the inerrancy of the Scriptures. This paper, in its entirety, has been published in the January, 1964, issue of the *Confessional Lutheran*. (Copies may be ordered by writing to the circulation office of the *Confessional Lutheran*, 5440 West Gladys Ave., Chicago 44, Illinois.)

In this paper my contention was that if the principle of Bible interpretation adopted by Martin Scharlemann is correct, namely, that the Bible is “true” and “reliable” even though many of its statements are factually incorrect, then it is possible to deny any statement of the Bible and still claim to be loyal to the

Scriptures. I cited a long list of such denials that I had heard from Missouri Synod professors, pastors, and teachers. One of the least important of these was the denial of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

At this point Dr. Scharlemann interrupted and said, "I never taught this." I replied, "I did not say that you taught this. I said that if your principle of Bible interpretation is correct, then it is possible for a man to teach that Paul did not write Ephesians and still claim to be loyal to the Bible." Dr. Behnken, who missed the whole point of the argument, then asked Dr. Scharlemann whether he held that Paul wrote Ephesians, and the St. Louis professor replied that he always insisted on this in his classes. Dr. Behnken then turned to me and said that this should persuade me that Dr. Scharlemann and I were not as far apart as I seemed to think. I answered that it proved nothing of the sort, for I held that if the Bible says, as it does, that Paul wrote Ephesians, then a true Lutheran teacher must also teach that Paul wrote Ephesians, but that Dr. Scharlemann's position would permit a man to deny this plain statement of the Bible. I said to Dr. Behnken, "Let me just demonstrate the difference. You notice that Dr. Scharlemann said that he always insists on this in classes." I then turned to Dr. Scharlemann and asked, "Would you say that it is perfectly permissible for another teacher, in his classes at the seminary, to deny the Pauline authorship of Ephesians even though the Bible says twice that Paul wrote it?" and he answered that this was certainly permissible since there was plenty of scholarly evidence on the other side too.

Factual Mistakes

During the course of the meeting Dr. Scharlemann made it abundantly clear that he still believed that there are factual mistakes in the Bible. He again asserted, for example, that Matthew says that Jesus ascended into heaven from Galilee and that Luke says that He ascended from Bethany, and that they therefore cannot both be factually correct, but that Matthew had a theological purpose for moving the ascension into Galilee and that his account is therefore true and reliable, even though it may be historically and factually incorrect. Two years before, in Northern Illinois, I had pointed out to Dr. Scharlemann that Matthew does not even mention the ascension, and I repeated this now, but Dr. Scharlemann replied that he could not imagine that Matthew would write a Gospel and not mention the ascension. We leave it to our readers to determine from a study of Matthew 28 whether Martin Scharlemann is even close to the truth here.

In an effort to prove to me that there are factual mistakes in the Bible, Dr. Scharlemann asked me whether I believed that the Bible was correct when it said that the heart of a good man is on his right side and the heart of a bad man is on his left side. I replied that I believed what the Bible said, but that I also believed that the Bible used figurative language, and that we still speak of people who have their heart in the right place. At this point Dr. Repp, the academic dean of the seminary, interrupted to say that this is the kind of fundamentalism which must be gotten out of the Missouri Synod.

Behnken Ignores Evidence

The discussion continued in this vein all morning and demonstrated beyond question to anyone who understands the English language that Dr. Scharlemann still held that the Bible is filled with factual mistakes. Prior to that time, Dr. Behnken, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, had repeatedly stated that Martin Scharlemann had retracted his former position. As late as April 6, 1962, he had sent a letter to a number of pastors in which he said, "The College of Presidents, the Theological Faculties, and the Praesidium—so far as we could determine—definitely believed that Dr. Scharlemann had retracted statements which he held formerly." It might be said in passing that less than two weeks before Dr. Behnken wrote this letter, I had shown him written evidence that there were members of the Springfield faculty who did not agree that Dr. Scharlemann had retracted his error. This he chose to ignore.

No Excuse for Officials

In the preceding months Dr. Behnken had often implied in his public statements that he would have taken firm action against Martin Scharlemann if the St. Louis professor had not retracted. Because of my great admiration for Dr. Behnken, I often felt that Dr. Scharlemann must be telling him something else than he was telling others. But this meeting of May 24 and 25, 1962, convinced me that Martin Scharlemann was openly defending his false views and that there was absolutely no excuse for what the officials of Synod were doing. Anyone with an IQ of 100 could easily see that he had retracted nothing. It was made clear also that in his denial of the factual correctness of the Bible he was defended by the president and the academic dean of the seminary.

It was clear also that the praesidium knew what Dr. Scharlemann's position was. Vice president Nitz entered the discussion at one point and while he did not defend the position espoused by Scharlemann, Fuerbringer, and Repp, yet he said that they could hardly find Dr. Scharlemann guilty of false doctrine since there was no article in the Lutheran confessions on the subject of inerrancy, and that therefore the praesidium could not say that he had violated his confessional oath in teaching these things. I asked the other members of the praesidium whether Dr. Nitz's view was also their position, but the subject was quickly changed and I was unable to get an answer to this question. Prior to the publication of this article I wrote to Dr. Nitz, whom I consider a good friend, to correct me if I am quoting him incorrectly here, and he replied that the statement was not necessarily his complete and considered opinion and that it does not fully reflect his conviction now. He asked that I delete the above paragraph (in which I have made some changes), because he felt that it would do no good to quote it.

But I think it helps to explain the inaction of the praesidium. Moreover, prior to the meeting on May 24 and 25, I wrote to all members of the praesidium that "it is understood...that if I consider it necessary, I will be free to report anything and everything that transpires so long as it is in keeping with the truth and what I consider to be the welfare of the church."

Further Meetings Were Useless

Toward the close of the meeting, Dr. Behnken asked what further steps could now be taken. I said that because my admonition had been fruitless, I intended now to publish the papers that I had read, as well as others. Dr. Behnken asked me not to do this, but to meet once more with Martin Scharlemann. I replied that further meetings were useless and that Martin Scharlemann and I were farther apart now than we had been at the beginning of the meeting. However, when Dr. Behnken, in his usual winning and persuasive way, repeated his request, I agreed to think about it for a few days and then give him my final answer. On that note the meeting ended.

Lest anyone conclude from this report that the meetings were conducted in an atmosphere of bitterness and hatred, I might mention that on May 31, Dr. Roland Wiederaenders, the second vice-president of Synod, wrote to me, "With all my heart I wish to commend you for the manner in which you presented your charges and the truly Christian way you conducted yourself during the St. Louis meeting." Five days later, on June 5, Dr. Behnken wrote, "I just read Dr. R. Wiederaenders' reply to your letter. He expressed also my sentiments."

Since no official written record of the meeting was kept and since the praesidium refused even to consider my request for a tape recording, I have again asked Pastor Martin Frick and Pastor Vernon Harley, who were present as witnesses, to read this account prior to publication and they agree that it is factually correct. In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.

(Dr. Becker was formerly a professor at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Illinois. Ed.)
Address communications concerning the series to Dr. Siegbert Becker, 2401 N. Grant.

[Article 11 follows; June 1, 1964]

The meetings on which I reported in the last two issues of *Lutheran News*, which, after three years of persistent effort, I was able to obtain with Martin Scharlemann on May 24 and 25, 1962, convinced me that little or no correction of the sad and disastrous situation at the St. Louis seminary could be expected either from the Synodical praesidium or from the seminary officials.

Nickel Does Not Keep Promise

However, the Synod as such had not yet had an opportunity to speak, and I was hopeful that the Synodical convention in June of 1962 would be able to clarify the issues. In April of 1962, Dr. Behnken announced that two days of open hearings would be held prior to the convention to discuss the Scharlemann case. It has been said that everyone had full opportunity to state his objections on those two days. This again is not true. On the first day, I asked for the floor at least three or four times, but each time before it was my turn to speak, the chairman announced that the time for the discussion of the subject had expired and a new list of applicants for the floor was prepared. I spoke to Dr. Nickel, the chairman, and asked whether I would be given an opportunity later to speak on these subjects, and he promised that this would be done on the next day, but this promise was not kept. On the second day I spoke several times on other subjects of lesser importance.

No Charges of False Doctrine

During the course of the convention, it was repeatedly stated that the seminary officials had assured the committee that no charge of false doctrine had ever been brought against Martin Scharlemann in the proper channels. After I gave the committee evidence that in November of 1959 I had submitted a charge of false doctrine to the president of the seminary and the board of control, the convention was told instead that no charge of false doctrine had ever been sustained. This implies that the charges were heard, when in fact the president of the seminary had buried the charge in his files and the secretary of the board did not even submit my letter to the board of control although it was addressed to them. Under the circumstances, the false report given to the delegates made it impossible for them to judge righteous judgment.

A Broken Word

I was an official but non-voting delegate to the convention, and when the case came up for discussion, I spoke against the Scharlemann heresy several times. When the matter was not finished in the afternoon session, Dr. Behnken announced from the chair that the matter would not be taken up until the next day. But when we returned for the evening session, the discussion of the Scharlemann case was resumed. It was another case of a broken word, and those who opposed the solution had no opportunity to consider the matter overnight as Dr. Behnken's words had promised. When I asked Dr. Nickel why the change was made he said that they did not want to give the "liberals" a chance to prepare an attack on the committee report overnight. The "middle-of-the-road" position of the officials of Synod was evidently designed to give neither the "conservatives" nor the "liberals" a fair hearing.

When Martin Scharlemann read his apology and asked to be forgiven for "the disturbance he had caused in Synod", I objected to this solution because it did not deal with the issues, nor was it honest. I stated that I would be willing to forgive him for whatever sin he confessed, but that he had not confessed his error. His apology was analogous to that of a man who murders his wife and then apologizes for getting blood on the living room rug.

Issues Not Settled

What Dr. Scharlemann was apologizing for was in fact no sin at all if he is not a false teacher. He apologized for causing a disturbance in Synod. Now either his doctrine is right or it is wrong. If it is right, then he had not only the right but also the duty to correct our previous doctrinal position, no matter how much disturbance he caused. But if he is wrong in his doctrine, then he ought to apologize first for the false doctrine and then all the disturbance would come to an end. Even the liberal spokesmen of Synod, e.g., men like Martin Marty, agreed that none of the issues had been settled.

Incidentally, it might be remarked that the story that circulated far and wide in Synod that Dr. Becker had voted against forgiving Martin Scharlemann when he apologized is manifestly untrue. I had no vote. Moreover, after the vote was taken I pleaded from the floor that the men who had voted not to forgive him might change their vote and a number of them did so.

Krieger's Solemn Promise

After the vote was taken, I spoke to the secretary of the committee on doctrine, President Krieger of the Michigan District, and told him that the committee report had not settled the issues, and that Scharlemann's "withdrawal" of his papers did not mean that he had retracted his errors. He disagreed and insisted that the words spoken by Scharlemann were a retraction. I said that in a few weeks Scharlemann would probably write another letter in which he would make clear that he had retracted no false doctrine. President Krieger then said that if Martin Scharlemann would just once more write to anyone that he had retracted nothing, then "he would be out of his position at the seminary the next day." He gave me his solemn promise that he personally would call for Scharlemann's resignation if he would ever again say that he had retracted nothing.

A few weeks after the convention Martin Scharlemann did exactly what I had predicted and he wrote to Pastor Carl Rusch of Chicago and stated that his apology to the convention had said nothing about a retraction of false doctrine because there was no false doctrine to retract. Yet, in spite of Pres. Krieger's solemn assurance, Martin Scharlemann is still teaching at the seminary.

A Parliamentary Mistake

I believe that the Synodical officials and their committee were not fair either to Martin Scharlemann nor to delegates to the convention. When Dr. Behnken, prior to the vote, pleaded that we must forgive Dr. Scharlemann, there was really no room left for a negative note, for who would like to vote "no" to a plea for forgiveness? The opponents of the Scharlemann heresy made a parliamentary mistake when they did not call for a division of the question, which might have separated the vote to forgive from the vote to accept the committee report.

The delegates were also given no opportunity to establish whether Dr. Scharlemann's apology was a retraction of his error. No one was allowed to ask Dr. Scharlemann what his words meant, for he was whisked away and sent to St. Louis immediately after his apology.

Moreover, the treatment accorded to Martin Scharlemann was shameful. He was pressured into making an apology which seemed to imply that he had retracted his error. If he really believed that his position was correct, as later developments showed that he did, then he should not have apologized nor should he have been compelled to apologize for anything. Why should a man be so publicly humiliated, if there is nothing wrong with his theological position? How could the president of the seminary tolerate such treatment of one of the members of his faculty? It was just another example of the shameful and unjust treatment that Martin Scharlemann has received from the officials of the seminary and of the Synod. He is a human being, who deserves our love and respect, even if we disagree with him.

Unjust Treatment of Scharlemann

Another example of such unjust treatment took place earlier. In the late winter of 1962, the praesidium of Synod urged Dr. Scharlemann to resign his position at the seminary. Dr. Behnken wrote concerning him on April 6, 1962, "We decided to 'suggest' to him to resign."

Such action was surely most unkind and unfair. If Dr. Scharlemann was not guilty of false doctrine, then the praesidium should have taken firm action against those members of Synod who were calling him a heretic. I was one of these. If he was not a heretic, then the officials of Synod should have dealt with us to protect Scharlemann's good name.

Nickel's Two Faced Approach

On the other hand, if Martin Scharlemann was a false teacher, then all the efforts of the praesidium showed the grossest lack of love and concern for Dr. Scharlemann and the whole church when they asked him to resign without first trying and condemning him. When I heard that the praesidium was dealing in this way with the St. Louis professor, I felt that such treatment was unjust, and I wrote to Dr. Behnken, "Much as I oppose the doctrine taught by Scharlemann, I would myself be inclined to protest against such a high-handed move as a request to resign without due cause. To ask a man to resign for the good of Synod is just as ridiculous as to ask the courts to convict a man because he has 'violated the law of the land.'" The fair and honest things to do would have been to discipline either Dr. Scharlemann or his critics. Instead, Dr. Nickel, now one of the vice-presidents of Synod joined in defending Dr. Scharlemann publicly while he privately called me on the phone to suggest criticism that I might make of Scharlemann's position. What hope is there for a God-pleasing solution to any problem when one must deal with men like this? Let the people judge!

[Article 12 follows; June 29, 1964]

In April of 1959, I had written to Dr. Behnken about the paper which Martin Scharlemann had read to the pastoral conference in Melrose Park, Illinois, and in which he had clearly denied the inerrancy of Scripture. On May 6, 1959, Dr. Behnken asked me to deal directly with Martin Scharlemann and indicated that such false doctrine was not to be tolerated. Dr. Scharlemann, in the *St. Louis Seminary Newsletter*, now insists that I had no right to deal with him according to Matthew 18, but it was at Dr. Behnken's urging that I had done so.

In his letter of May 6, Dr. Behnken wrote, "I am rather disturbed about the reports which a person hears. Furthermore, I know that our Board of Control at the Seminary is disturbed. These men stand ready to take action. We must not permit teaching of false doctrine at the Seminary. We must do everything possible to correct it where it has happened. If we do not correct it, the evil seed which is sown will soon show itself in the pulpits of our church."

For a long time I had been as disturbed as Dr. Behnken about the false doctrine being taught in our Synodical schools, including Concordia Teachers College in River Forest, where I was serving as a member of the faculty. It is often difficult to deal with false teachers because often they are neither courageous enough nor honest enough to stand openly by their false teaching if it involves being disciplined. One of them, for example, has openly written that there are many men in Synod who are unwilling or afraid to publish their doctrinal opinions because of the atmosphere which prevails in Synod. But with the Scharlemann essay, this false doctrine had come out into the open so that it had become a manifest sin, and I hoped that now at last the Synodical officials would take action to correct the situation as Dr. Behnken promised.

But the meeting on May 24 and 25, 1962, between Martin Scharlemann and eleven of his supporters and myself with two witnesses convinced me that the Synodical officials were not perfectly aware that Martin Scharlemann was denying the inerrancy of Scripture and that he had in no essential point receded from his position which he had espoused at the pastoral conference in Melrose Park. It was clear to me that Dr. Behnken and the vice-presidents were reconciled to permitting this false doctrine to continue at the seminary.

It will be recalled from the previous articles that at the close of the meeting with Martin Scharlemann on May 25th, I had stated that I now intended to make my objections to the Scharlemann heresy public. Dr. Behnken asked me in his winsome way not to do this, but to meet with Martin Scharlemann again. After some hesitation, I promised to consider his suggestion.

‘Differences Do Exist’

Because of the press of other duties, I was unable to give Dr. Behnken a final answer to his request in the next few days, but on June 8th, Dr. Behnken, without waiting for an answer, wrote that he had met with the president and the academic dean of the Seminary, two members of the Seminary Board of Control, and two of the vice-presidents of Synod to plan further meetings between Dr. Scharlemann and me. Today Synodical officials, who were present at the meeting on May 24 and 25, are reporting that Dr. Scharlemann and I were talking past each other at this meeting, but in this letter Dr. Behnken said that all the men present “realized that differences do exist.” He suggested that we should meet in July or August to discuss our differences.

I felt that further meetings were useless, but I wanted to do everything in my power to prevent a final break between the Missouri Synod and myself because of the love and the concern that I had and still have for that church. Therefore, on June 11, I replied, “I am willing to meet with Dr. Scharlemann, simply because I desire to be cooperative and to comply with your suggestions.”

Dr. Behnken was not reelected at the Synodical convention in June, but on July 17, 1962, almost a month after the Synodical convention, Dr. Harms, the new president wrote to me to thank me for my willingness to meet again with Martin Scharlemann and to tell me that as soon as possible he intended to set a date for the meeting. I replied that I would be ready to meet anytime after August 20.

On August 16, 1962, I received a letter from a pastor in Nebraska, telling me that at the district pastoral conference the pastors were told that Dr. Scharlemann and I were scheduled to meet to settle our differences. I had heard nothing of such a meeting actually being scheduled, and I therefore wrote to Dr. Harms on September 24, and asked when the meeting to which I had reluctantly agreed would be held. He replied, “After the Cleveland Convention I wrote both you and Doctor Scharlemann that a meeting between the two of you and others would not be held until after the appointment of the Commission on Theology.”

‘Harms Went All Wrong’

On September 30, I wrote to Dr. Harms again and said that I had received no such letter from him and that I could see no reason why we should wait until the Commission on Theology met. I had called Dr. Nickel, the chairman of the commission, and he said that “Harms was all wrong” and that the commission had nothing to do with the Scharlemann case as such. However, I expressed my willingness to wait for awhile longer.

In the letter referred to above, Dr. Harms had suggested some date after Oct. 24 as the time to meet. When I heard nothing after Oct. 24, I wrote again on Nov. 13, 1962, “I am still anxiously waiting for some information regarding my meeting with Martin Scharlemann.” I also asked concerning the publication of my analysis of the Scharlemann heresy since Dr. Behnken had asked me not to publish these essays but to meet again with Scharlemann instead. Dr. Harms replied, “You will remember that Scharlemann did agree to meet with you, that he agreed to the arrangements made.” But he said nothing about any possible future date for such a meeting, and he asked that I refrain from making my criticism of Scharlemann public. On Nov. 24, I therefore wrote, “Because I know that these must be very difficult months for you, I want to assure you that I am willing to wait for a few more months for that meeting.”

I waited to hear from Dr. Harms for two months, until the middle of January, and then wrote that it was now more than seven months since I had agreed to withhold publication of my disagreement with Martin Scharlemann with the understanding that I was to meet with him again. I felt that I had been more than patient

and I told Dr. Harms that if the meeting were not held soon I intended to publish my articles dealing with the Scharlemann heresy.

This Ought to Settle the Matter

On January 29, Dr. Harms wrote that he hoped that I would not disseminate my objections. He stated, "I know that this would greatly disturb the Church and undo much of what Synod hoped to do." But then, after leading me for seven months to believe that the praesidium of Synod was anxious to have me meet with Dr. Scharlemann, and after persuading me to withhold publication of my objections to the teachings of Martin Scharlemann pending such a meeting, Dr. Harms went on to say, in this letter of Jan. 29, 1963,

It seems to me that the Synod placed somewhat of a restriction on our activity in regard to the Scharlemann matter when it accepted Doctor Scharlemann's apology and when it accepted the interpretation that, as things stand now, this ought to settle the matter. Nonetheless, Doctor Scharlemann did promise to meet with you again, and you promised to meet with him again. I am perfectly willing to try to arrange for the meeting under the circumstances agreed upon. I have a feeling that we will be in a very awkward position to talk about something which has been withdrawn and concerning which the author will say nothing more until his colleagues or the Synod as such will collaborate with him in a further study of these issues.

I met Dr. Harms personally a few weeks later and told him that I was not the one who had asked for this meeting, that I felt that it was hopeless, humanly speaking, to deal with Martin Scharlemann, and that I had been persuaded to withhold publication of my disagreement with him and the officials of Synod by Dr. Behnken's plea that I do so with the understanding that I would meet once more with Martin Scharlemann. If Dr. Harms felt that such a meeting was out of place after the Cleveland convention, the fair and honest thing would have been to tell me this in July instead of leading me to believe for seven months that such a meeting would be held.

A few months later I received a call to serve in the Wisconsin Synod at its new teacher college in Milwaukee. I wrote to Dr. Harms to determine whether the praesidium intended to take action to correct the false doctrine at St. Louis, because I did not want to leave the Missouri Synod so long as there was hope that the elected officials of Synod might yet act in a God-pleasing way and correct the prevalent false doctrine which was being tolerated far and wide in the Missouri Synod. He answered in his usual kind way, but it became clear to me that nothing would be done to make a bad situation better.

For four years I had been seeking in an orderly way and in the proper channels to correct just one false teacher among many, and nothing at all had been accomplished. In the meantime other false teachers were becoming openly active, evidently encouraged by the knowledge that the Synodical officials would protect them as they undermined the foundations of the faith. Dr. Theodore Graebner used to say that the only reason why Knubel was elected President of the ULC was that every one knew that he would never do anything about the doctrinal chaos in the ULC. It was evident to me that the Missouri Synod had reached the state at which the ULC was 25 years ago. I was convinced that Dr. Harms honestly wanted to correct the situation, but the support which Dr. Scharlemann has for his position is so great and the doctrinal corruption in the Missouri Synod is too deep and so widespread that even officials with the best intentions are no longer able to contain the heretical tendencies. Such a Synod I could no longer with a good conscience support. It was with a heavy heart that I therefore felt compelled to leave the Church in which I had learned to know my Savior and where I had so many hundreds of personal friends, and where I had experienced much kindness and brotherly love.