

PROFESSOR EDMUND REIM--
A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

*(A brief summary of events surrounding
the resignation of Professor Reim)*

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by
Martin Wildauer

Professor E. Fredrich
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The Seminary seems to have broken a 30-year jinx. As we enter another decade, President Panning is still in office while the Wisconsin Synod enjoys generally peaceful times. It was not always so. Sixty years ago in 1929, the Director of the school, Prof. J. P. Koehler, was dismissed at the peak of the Protestant controversy. Almost thirty years later in 1957, President Reim resigned amidst another controversy as the Synod debated when was the proper time to break fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). Both Koehler's suspension and Reim's resignation were accompanied by the formation of another synod, the Protestant and the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), respectively. After leaving their offices, the two ex-presidents continued living on campus for a while. President Reim's son, on sabbatical from his Nigerian mission at the time, even stored his possessions in the very same dormitory rooms which Koehler had once lived in.¹

There is one striking difference between the two situations. Prof. Koehler was asked to leave against his wishes. Prof. Reim was asked to stay but felt compelled to leave. This paper will in part try to answer the question as to why a 65 year old man, president of the Seminary and respected leader of his synod, arguably at the zenith of his career, would give it all up and pick up the battle flag of a fledgeling splinter group. Without a doubt, Professor Edmund Reim was a man of principle.

I. HIS EARLY YEARS

Throughout his life, Professor Edmund Reim was dedicated to the Wisconsin Synod. His father, Rev. Adolph Reim, had volunteered his services to the young and struggling Dr. Martin Luther College. He was called as a full-time professor in 1885² and served until 1917³. Edmund was born on February 12, 1892. His studies led him to Northwestern College in Watertown and the Lutheran Seminary in Wauwatosa. On August 16, 1914, he was ordained as an associate at Friedens congregation in Kenosha, WI. Here he taught in the church's school and did mission work in the southwest part of the city, eventually establishing another congregation, St. Luke's. In 1919, his mission work on the southeast side of the city led to the establishment of Bethany Lutheran Church. From 1922-1930, he served St. John's congregation of Fox Lake, WI. While there he organized and taught in the Christian day school. For five years he was pastor of St. Paul's and St. John's of Calvary, WI. In 1935, he accepted the call to Trinity of Neenah, WI during which time he served on the Synod's board of trustees. In September of 1940 he was installed, along with his brother-in-law A. Schaller, as professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at the time when our Synod was entering some of its most trying years. In addition to teaching, he served as the school's bursar, dean and finally president.^{4, 5}

Already at the time Prof. Reim accepted the call to Thiensville, trouble was brewing between us and the LCMS. Back in the 1930's, Missouri had begun some serious theological discussions

with the American Lutheran Church (ALC) hoping to establish fellowship with them. Our Synod gave a warning at its 1939 convention. Throughout the 1940's, Missouri's position plummeted. They began joint mission work with the ALC and abandoned their proper position on Scouting. In 1950 they adopted the Common Confession. Our requests to them proved fruitless. By 1953 we had declared ourselves to be in a state of protest with them.⁶

Prof. Reim was no stranger to these happenings. In fact he became quite involved with them. At the 1935 Synod Convention, he delivered a paper entitled, "Church Fellowship and Its Implication."⁷ This paper was assigned in response to an invitation from the United Lutheran Church, which our Synod declined. In June of 1940 he delivered another essay, this time to the Northern-Wisconsin District (which was also published in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, 1940; pp. 240-274). Under the title, "The Strength of Christian Unity" he discussed in detail the present situation between the LCMS and us. He admits that there were some serious problems that needed discussing. Nevertheless, he explained that we didn't have to break with them yet, "But let us note that we can stay well within the terms of the apostle's words and still find good ground for taking a firm stand, not in the least lacking in conviction."⁸ He even discussed the probability of there being an impasse in our discussions. Just when would we have to break our union with them?

If we will but learn to bow absolutely before the Word of God, if we will but let the decisions which we eventually must make in this union matter be governed entirely by that same authority, if we will learn to eliminate all other considerations from our argumenta-

tion and thinking,--then we shall be safely guided.⁹

From the very beginning of this problem, Prof. Reim had his feet firmly planted on God's Word. He knew what it said and he knew what he would have to say if the problem wasn't solved.

When our Synod sought out men to serve on a committee to deal with the approaching theological battles, Edmund Reim was a natural choice. By 1941 he was already serving as the secretary of the Union Committee.¹⁰ By 1950 the situation was already getting complicated and difficult to keep straight. Prof. Reim prepared a report for the Union Committee, "A Brief Survey of the Intersynodical Situation"¹¹ which was an attempt to clear the muddying waters. In the same year he edited and in part authored a booklet, Where Do We Stand? An Outline of the Wisconsin Position. The situation had become bad enough so that in the foreword he could write, "The publication of this booklet is called for by the fact that the problems with which it deals are becoming more and more pressing, in fact, seem to be coming to a head, so that the year 1950 may well become a year of decision."¹²

In his position as a Seminary professor and as secretary of the Church Union Committee, the buck often stopped on his desk. For instance, one frustrated pastor wrote to him asking advice. A boy in the pastor's confirmation class was a member of the Boy Scouts. He refused to give up his membership and the parents said that if the pastor pressed the issue, they would leave and go to the LCMS church across town where a friendlier pastor would confirm their son.¹³

At another time Prof. Reim had to make a hard decision regarding one of our vicars who was to serve at Trinity of Freistadt, an LCMS congregation. The student assistant was told not to help out there any more. The church's pastor was upset and complained to Prof. Reim, arguing that such a decision could only increase the already bruised relations between the two synods. Prof. Reim responded that such unpleasant decisions were the result of our being in a state of protest with Missouri. As always, he stood firm.

II. THE 1955 SAGINAW CONVENTION

By the time Synod met at the Saginaw 1955 convention, it was time to decide just when we should break with Missouri. In order to fully understand Reim's actions at this convention, we must picture the situation he was in shortly before the convention. He had been serving as secretary of the committee on church union matters for 14 years. He was in the front line of battle and could see the enemy more clearly than others. He was convinced that breaking with Missouri was the only proper course of action. Not only was he set in his own thinking, but just prior to the convention he received many letters from pastors, church councils and lay members who had also seen the spreading leaven and begged him to lead the charge to break.¹⁴

President Naumann opened the convention. In his preamble, he expressed his personal conviction that the LCMS was in the wrong and that we should break fellowship with them. He went on to explain that the Synod would now have to struggle with the

decision of exactly when to break. Did we have an unpaid debt of brotherly love which we owed, or should we break now? His report was given unanimous approval.¹⁵

Just before the convention, Missouri showed what might have seemed to be a tiny ray of hope. They reported to the Union Committee that at their 1956 convention, they would be willing to discuss some of the differences between us.¹⁶ Also, Missouri had not held a convention since we voiced our disapproval at our 1953 convention and really didn't have a chance to respond to us yet. This was to be a factor in the Synod's decision.

The Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union reported to the synod and resolved that the Wisconsin and other states, "declare the fellowship which we have had with said synod to be terminated."¹⁷ To their report was added a supplementary report which detailed the points of difference between our synod, including a history of the problem. Floor Committee No. 2 (which was to become incredibly popular during the next few conventions) however, did not rubber-stamp the Standing Committee's proposal. It did indeed resolve that we "terminate our fellowship with the LCMS."¹⁸ In addition though, it recommended that this course of action be deferred until the Synod met in special convention during the summer of 1956. The reasons given, were;

1. This resolution has far reaching spiritual consequences.
2. This continues to heed the Scriptural exhortation to patience and forbearance in love by giving the LCMS opportunity to express itself in its 1956 convention.¹⁹

In the meantime, the committee on Church Union was to continue

its evaluation of the LCMS and report to the nine Districts before they held their conventions in the summer of '56. Each District was to express itself on the matter and all would convene shortly afterwards for a full synod vote.

Along with this resolution to the '55 convention, a minority of the floor committee also filed a report stating that the reasons listed for delay did not warrant such a postponement.²⁰ (One of the signers of this minority report was Prof. A. Schuetze.) The vote was called. The resolution to postpone the vote on termination of fellowship was adopted by a vote of 94-47.²¹

No less than 24 voting delegates and 19 advisory delegates asked to have their names recorded as protesting the synod's decision. Prof. Reim's name is recorded here also.²² But he took his protest a step further. He submitted his resignation as president and professor at the Seminary, and as secretary of the Committee on Church Union. He said that the Synod's vote,

compels me to declare that I can continue in fellowship with my Synod only under clear and public protest. . . I therefore hereby resign this office [Secretary of the Union Committee] with all its functions. . . I herewith put my resignation as president of our Seminary, and as professor at the same, at the disposal of the Synod and its Board, to act on as it sees fit.²³

In his eyes, the Synod was clearly failing to follow the directive of God's Word.

Such a vote may also have stung him personally. The synod had entrusted him with the duty of analyzing the situation. This he had done faithfully and reported his honest opinion.

The Synod seems to have said to him, "Thank you for your advice, but we'd rather do our own thing." The impression was given that they no longer had confidence in the man. The only upright thing for him to do would be to resign. It is important to note here that it is the express opinion of Professor Schuetze that Prof. Reim was not a radical. His motive for resigning was not to create dissension within the synod ranks. He was not trying to rally people around himself. He was acting out of a deep seated conviction.²⁴

Trying to recreate the situation from a personal letter to Prof. Reim from Prof. Sievert of DMLC, Reim had carefully thought out his options before the convention. He knew exactly what he was going to do if the Standing Committee's resolution was defeated. When Synod voted to hold the vote on termination of fellowship in abeyance, Reim submitted his resignation as planned. Nevertheless, Prof. Reim indicated to Prof. Sievert that his resignation was "at the disposal of the Synod." Prof. Sievert reacted quickly in the closing minutes of the convention and moved that the Synod refuse to accept his resignation.²⁵

The Proceedings read,

By unanimous vote the Convention reiterated the confidence of the Synod in Professor E. Reim as Secretary of the Standing Committee on Church Union and asked him to continue to serve in that position. In the same vote the Convention asked the Board of Control of the Theological Seminary not to accept the resignation of Professor E. Reim as professor at and as president of the Theological Seminary.²⁶

At least that's what the official minutes read. Prof. Reim understood that he had submitted two separate resignations, the

one as Secretary of the Standing Committee, the other as Professor and President of the Seminary. His understanding was that the only resignation "at the disposal of the synod" was his resignation from the Seminary. He had no intention of continuing to be the spokesman for a committee whose advise was not taken. In the confusing last minutes of the convention, some thought that the synod's vote meant that Prof. Reim would keep his position not only at the Seminary, but also on the Church Union Committee. This matter was bounced around for quite a while. The end result was that Prof. Reim ceased to be the Secretary of the Union Committee, but remained as a member of the committee, as he requested, so he could continue to promote his conviction. He did not change his mind about clearly and publicly protesting the Synod's action. His position at the Seminary remained unchanged.

Shortly after the convention adjourned, Prof. Reim received many letters in support of his determined stand. These served to strengthen his conviction all the more. In response to these letters, he never seems to harbor any serious bad feelings, although he does speak of the vote to delay termination of fellowship as something that "has been imposed upon us against our will."²⁷ For the most part though, he thanked the people for their support and told them to wait patiently, reminding them that the Lord is in control of his church and all would turn out well. He was certain that the desire to break with Missouri would win the day, in fact would succeed if the vote were called again shortly after the convention. In response to the ambigui-

ty the Synod seemed to express, (unanimously accepting Pres. Naumann's opening address which said that Missouri was wrong, yet holding in abeyance its decision to break) he admitted, "My efforts during the coming year will be directed at doing what I can to counteract such confusion."²⁸ He also confessed, "I am continuing my work at the Seminary with the clear understanding that I am not changing my position or my teaching."²⁹ He still didn't agree with the Synod's decision, but because he was asked, and for the sake of Christian love, he agreed to put up with the situation for the time being. He then set himself to his teaching duties for the year.

III. THE 1956 WATERTOWN CONVENTION

As always, Prof. Reim diligently set himself to fulfilling the task assigned him. During the next school year his work load increased as he covered for Professor Blume who was granted a medical leave of absence.³⁰ Consider also that in 1955 he had assumed the added responsibility of Seminary president. He continued the arduous task of serving on the Church Union Committee. He even helped plan a special anniversary service in commemoration of Professor Lawrenz's 25th year in the ministry.³¹ He certainly didn't seem to hold any grudges for what took place during the Saginaw convention.

The Union Committee set itself to its important task. Its report of Missouri's condition could sway the synod. In January of '56, Profs. Reim and Lawrenz and Pastor Pless were assigned to draw up a "statement of our position."³² At its May meeting,

the committee dealt with protests from those who disagreed with the Synod's decisions in 1953 and 1955.³³ By all indications, it seems as if Reim not only stayed in the Synod, but even defended it against protestors, even though he himself was not pleased with its decision.

The LCMS met in convention on June 20-30, 1956 at St. Paul, MN. Prof. Reim and 17 other members of the Union Committee attended.³⁴ It was here that Reim noticed a "Ray of Hope."³⁵ Missouri passed three encouraging resolutions. They refused an invitation to become a member of the Lutheran World Federation. They resolved not to continue using the Common Confession as a basic document in their discussions with other synods. And they resolved to join together with all the members of the Synodical Conference to study doctrinal points of difference.³⁶ Profs. Reim, Lawrenz and Vice-President Krauss were then appointed to present a tentative report concerning Missouri's convention.³⁷

It must be remembered here that the Union Committee and especially the sub-committee of three, were working under tremendous pressure. The whole synod was in essence holding its breath, waiting for these men to report. In the balance hung almost 90 years of close fellowship. Time was short. Each district would soon be holding its own convention and awaited the the Committee's report. There was no time to discuss in detail exactly what Missouri had meant to say. The resolution had to be taken at face value and a decision had to be made. While still acknowledging important differences which would have to be discussed, they reported in the Northwestern Lutheran; "It is

also our conviction that while we prayerfully await the outcome of these added efforts at attaining unity on these issues, we hold the judgment of our Saginaw resolutions in abeyance."³⁸ At the actual Synod convention they reported,

As a whole the Committee was convinced at St. Paul that the Lord by His Holy Spirit had brought about a changed spirit and attitude in the sister synod and that at least in some of the matters which affect our fellowship in the Synodical Conference, the fruit of our testimony and the answer to our prayers was evident.³⁹

In other words, there was warrant for not breaking with the LCMS at this time. There was a "Ray of Hope." The committee made it very clear that this was in no way to be the final say on the matter. They were really recommending that the vote proposed in Saginaw be delayed for just a bit longer. Especially with regards to Missouri's resolution concerning the Common Confession, some very important questions had to be answered.

As the Union Committee formulated this resolution at its August meeting, Reim tipped his hand to an upcoming problem. He thought that if we were going to hold off in breaking fellowship, then we should also announce that the '55 resolution accusing Missouri of being a persistent errorist be withdrawn. Even though his present estimation of Missouri was that they seemed to be heading in the orthodox direction but still needed watching, he thought it was improper for us to say that Romans 16:17 applied to Missouri and not actually break with them. In an open letter to the Protest Committee in 1958, he says it was his clear understanding that as soon as we recognized a church to be in error, we were to break with them. There was to be no

delay.⁴⁰

It seems as if the president of the Seminary was working with a slightly different interpretation of Rom. 16:17 than the others on the Union Committee. The Synod's interpretation held that once we realized that the passage was applicable, we would have to decide on the basis of brotherly love and admonition just how long we should wait before breaking fellowship. In essence, we were to treat the erring synod as a weak brother. As long as it seemed that they were still willing to listen to our admonition, we could remain in fellowship. These differences were hardly noticeable at the time, for the committee discussed Reim's proposal, but nothing was decided. Nor did he pursue the matter.

At the same August meeting, District President Sitz questioned the committee's evaluation regarding Missouri's resolution on the Common Confession; "The resolution. . .in essence supplies the action which our Synod specifically requested in its objections to the Missouri Synod's 1950 resolutions on the Common Confession."⁴¹ Specifically he asked what was meant or implied by "in essence." An honest answer could not be supplied.⁴²

Synod finally met to decide the issue on August 21-23, 1956 in Watertown, WI. Here the Union Committee's suggestion was subjected to much questioning. The debate continued until midnight. The motion was finally called. By a vote of 108 - 19, with 38 either absent or abstaining, the Synod decided not to break with the LCMS. . .yet.⁴³ The synod had once again asked

Prof. Reim for his advice. He again gave it. But this time they listened to him. It was another vote of confidence.

IV. BUILD UP TO THE 1957 NEW ULM CONVENTION

The October meeting of the Union Committee dealt with people who opposed the outcome of the '56 convention. Also, Prof. Reim was appointed to serve on the committee for joint confession of faith with other synods.⁴⁴ A man who was already on the front line of battle, took another step closer. He would be serving on a committee with Missouri representatives.

In the January, 1957 meeting of the Union Committee, Prof. Reim was appointed to draw up a set of questions for discussion with the Synodical Conference.⁴⁵ As often happens in battle, the person closest to the front is viewed as the leader. Prof. Reim was certainly in the heat of the battle and was perceived to be the general.

By March, the Union Committee began to see that Missouri had not changed its spots. They still hadn't responded to our direct request concerning the real meaning of their '56 resolution. It even seemed that they weren't completely pure on their doctrine of Scripture. Prof. Reim drafted a set of antithetical statements concerning the need for complete agreement in doctrine for fellowship to take place. It was sadly acknowledged that Missouri did not seem to be following through with their nicely worded intentions of 1956.⁴⁶

During the April meetings, the Union Committee was forced to admit that they had judged Missouri wrong in '56. The LCMS

went on record saying that the Common Confession was theologically correct. Their only change had been to stop using it as the basis for their discussions with the ALC. Now there was no doubt that we should break with Missouri.⁴⁷

As the 1957 convention approached, Prof. Reim became more convinced of his opinion. At the May meeting of the Union Committee, after analyzing still more evidence, he again reported that Missouri had indeed been bad all along. It was their careful wording of the '56 resolutions which tripped up our men. He was unable to sway the full committee though. Profs. Reim, Lawrenz and Meyer, and District Presidents Witt, Albrecht and Siegler signed a minority report calling for the cessation of fellowship.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, only the report of the majority was presented to the convention. This report admitted that the situation between Missouri and us had gotten worse, but that we should still continue working with them, at least for another two years. "We shall of necessity have to revise our own evaluation of the Missouri Synod's action on the Common Confession and report accordingly to the next convention of our Synod."⁴⁹

V. THE 1957 NEW ULM CONVENTION

By the time Synod convened in New Ulm, MN on August 7-15, 1957 the volcano was rumbling and ready to explode. Both of the convention papers, "The Tie That Binds," and "Motivation," focused in on the issue. While there were many other topics on the agenda, everyone knew that there was really only one topic that mattered. The Union Committee presented quite a detailed

report, reviewing its discussions with the LCMS since the last meeting of the synod in August of 1956. After the report, the Proceedings list no less than six memorials from a district of the synod, individual pastors, a conference and an individual congregation, all calling for the cessation of fellowship with the LCMS. There was one memorial from the Board of Trustees of Racine Lutheran High School asking that we would not sever relations.⁵⁰ The report of the now famous Floor Committee No. 2 openly admitted that there was not unanimity on the Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union.

Your Floor Committee can merely report on the joint findings of our Standing Committee. Some members of our Standing Committee have stated their reason for believing that the expressed attitude of the representatives of the Missouri Synod "still gives us some reason to hope for the eventual settlement of the differences." . . . Other members of our Standing Committee on Matters of Union state, "that the major basis upon which we resolved to enter into further discussions with the Missouri Synod has been removed."⁵¹

It was acknowledged that these were issues "which divide us."⁵² The situation is certainly grave when three Seminary professors and three district presidents disagree with the others on such a seriously divisive issue. Finally the report of the floor committee was read. "Resolved, that we now suspend church fellowship with The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17,18."⁵³

The matter was open for discussion. You can almost imagine the stream of people to the microphones as the lava of the overflowing volcano. Discussion began on Tuesday morning. It was resumed on Wednesday morning and was the only topic for the day.

It didn't take long before a five minute limit was placed on each speaker. As the debate dragged on, that limit was lowered to two minutes. President Naumann announced to the convention, "I may not see your hand the third or fourth time it is raised."⁵⁴ Yet Prof. Reim was given "a special extension of time in order to enable him to complete his remarks to the convention."⁵⁵ In fact he addressed the convention four different times. Certainly, he made an earnest appeal for the cessation of fellowship. He was wholly committed to his cause. Finally at 10:00 in the evening, "The convention had talked itself out."⁵⁶ Because of the importance of the issue, a standing vote was taken. The resolution lost, 61-77.

The next afternoon, August 15, 1957 Prof. Reim, District Presidents Albrecht and Witt and Pastor Schaller presented their resignations to the synod. Prof. Reim quoted extensively from his 1955 resignation. He gave the same reasons for this resignation. This time however, it was more than a clear and public protest. Nothing was left to the discretion of the Synod. Instead, he simply discontinued his membership in the synod. He didn't even mention his position as a member of the Church Union Committee and as President of the Seminary. "I have tried to make this protest clear and strong to this convention. Since it has been disregarded nevertheless, I find myself compelled to discontinue my fellowship with the Synod." A friend of the synod to the end, he closed his letter, "I trust that you will realize that I take this step, not in anger, but in deepest sorrow, and because I am constrained by the Word of God."⁵⁷

This time the synod accepted his resignation. Certainly his close friends sitting nearby must have urged him to reconsider. But no action was taken. Some suppose that Reim had championed his cause to such an extent that he had to resign, in essence, to save face. He was after all, looked upon as the leader in the fight. He had once again sounded the charge but the Synod did not follow. The unanimous vote of confidence in Saginaw had disappeared. A scorned leader will eventually quit the fight.

It does seem strange that the man who had advised the synod only 12 months earlier not to break with Missouri because he saw a "Ray of Hope", would react so harshly when he couldn't convince the Synod to change its thinking as quickly as he had. One would expect a greater degree of patience with the constituency. Or had the many years of battle made him impatient with others who couldn't see the enemy as clearly? It is probably more accurate to view Prof. Reim as a man who had been caught up in the conflict so long and to such an intense degree that his conscience wouldn't allow him to remain in fellowship with Missouri any longer. A man of principle will follow his conscience even if it means leaving a beloved synod while at the peak of very respectable career. He had to leave us. The many unanswered questions and seeming incongruencies can best be answered by a phrase from Prof. Sievert's letter to Prof. Reim, "That is the sad thing. One becomes so confused that one does not know anymore which way to turn."⁵⁸

VI. IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES

President Reim's resignation had far reaching effects. Not only was a leader in the fight with Missouri removed from the battle, but the leader of the Seminary was gone too. Five days later, Pastor Behm, the chairman of the Seminary Board, called an emergency meeting for August 26.⁵⁹ The wording of Reim's resignation put the Board in a difficult spot. He had not formally resigned his call to the Seminary.

How could he think of teaching at a school of a synod with which he disagreed so much that he felt compelled to leave? The Journal of Theology (the official theological publication of the CLC) reported in Reim's obituary,

[His withdrawal from the Wisconsin Synod] brought to an end his tenure as theological professor at the Thiensville Seminary and as its president although he had not resigned from these offices, which he held by virtue of a divine call. The validity of such a call is not contingent simply upon synodical membership.⁶⁰

They drew a sharp distinction between holding membership in the Synod and having a call from the Synod. Indeed, the two are separate but it would seem that if he were to resign from the Synod, he would also wish to resign from serving the Synod.

Prof. Schuetze remembers Prof. Lawrenz having trouble understanding Reim's reasoning on this point.⁶¹ Possibly, Prof. Reim knew his position held some weight within the Synod, yes, even on the Seminary Board, and held onto a hidden hope that he would be allowed to continue teaching and promoting his view. But we shouldn't be too hasty to be harsh. Everyone was tense at the time and decision making was most difficult.

Before the Board's meeting, Pastor Behm had met with Prof. Reim hoping to get him to reconsider his action. Reim stood firm. The meeting began with the reading Prof. Reim's letter of resignation to the Synod, and then a special letter written directly to the Board. Prof. Reim reported,

Briefly, my action may be summed up in the following two statements;

1. I have resigned my membership in the Synod.
2. I have not resigned my office as teacher at our Seminary, nor as its president.

He explained,

I fully realize that my withdrawal from Synod automatically implies the termination of my call. I have taken this into account, and accept it as the inevitable result. . . I have proceeded on the assumption that this will also be the conclusion of the Board.⁶²

He knew the consequences of his action and was prepared to endure them, but he left the Board with the onus of finishing the dirty work he began.

No immediate decision was made. It was suggested that he be given a leave of absence, but no action was taken on it. The Secretary, Pastor Buenger, listed three options.

1. Try to have Prof. Reim reconsider his action
2. Recognize Prof. Reim's withdrawal from Synod
3. The Board declare itself not in agreement with Synod's action at New Ulm in the union matter, either by a protest or by asking the Synod to reconsider the matter.⁶³

By choosing the third option, it was pointed out, Prof. Reim would have to make the final decision in the matter and, the Seminary Board could serve as a rallying point for others in the Synod who knew it was time to break.⁶⁴

Prof. Reim was then asked to meet with the Board and was

asked to reconsider his action. He would not change his mind. How could he? The Rubicon was crossed. He did, however, say that he was not applying the Rom. 16 passage to the Wisconsin Synod.⁶⁵ The Board went into executive session and debated a more fundamental question. Was the Board to act as an agent of Synod or were the individual consciences involved? In other words; Was the Board a rubber-stamp of the Synod or did it makes its own decisions? The Chairman thought the former, the Secretary the latter. Finally it was moved that the Board declare a vacancy at the Seminary. Discussion followed and Prof. Reim was again asked to reconsider. Finally the vote was called, and by a margin of 4-2, Prof. Reim was relieved of his duties at the Seminary.⁶⁶

The last two hours of the day-long meeting dealt with necessary details. It was decided to continue Prof. Reim's salary at least until the next Board meeting. Prof. Lawrenz was to serve as temporary president of the Seminary. And, the class schedule was revamped to accommodate the absence of one professor.⁶⁷ Eventually Prof. Lawrenz accepted the call as President of the Seminary and Prof. Schuetze was called to fill the vacancy.

Prof. Reim stayed living in his professorage and his son's possessions stayed stored in the dormitory while on sabbatical from his Nigerian mission. Prof. Reim even helped in the transfer of administration in the Seminary office. By the time he stopped helping, at the end of September, he politely refused the offered pay.⁶⁸ Sometime before April of 1958 he left cam-

pus, for the Board minutes comment that it would now be a good time to do minor repairs on the house since no one was living in it.⁶⁹

VII. HIS LATER YEARS

The long time professor became a pastor again. He accepted a call to serve as pastor in Rhineland, WI. During his short tenure there he addressed an open letter to the members of our synod's Protest Committee. The Protest Committee had been formed at the recessed Synod convention of 1956 to deal with the increasing number of pastors and congregations leaving the Synod. After the 1957 convention, the Committee sent a letter to everyone who had left for the sake of their conscience. They tried to explain that our Synod was still orthodox even though we hadn't formally broken with Missouri yet, and pleaded that for the sake of unity, they return to the Synod.

In reply, Prof. Reim bared his soul. He admitted that "nothing would please me more"⁷⁰ than to be reconciled to his former brothers. He then reviewed the situations which he considered to have made such a reconciliation impossible. He quoted from Pres. Naumann's opening address at the 1955 Saginaw convention, "We have reached the conviction that. . .we must now obey the Lord's Word in Romans 16:17." Prof. Reim said our Synod was guilty of speaking out of both sides of its mouth. To be fair to Pres. Naumann, he did not quote a later section of the same speech where he said,

We implore the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us as

we try to decide in the face of all the reports whether the Lord would now have us apply His definite command "Avoid them!" or whether we still have an unpaid debt of love to those whose fellowship we cherished so many years.

Prof. Reim continued to quote from the Proceedings, trying to prove that already in 1955 our Synod had made its decision to break but was not able to follow that up with its vote.

Prof. Reim did admit though, that there was some warrant for holding the judgment of the 1955 Saginaw resolution in abeyance. He then defended his role in advising the 1956 convention to hold off in breaking with the LCMS.⁷⁰ Finally he repeated what the Union Committee had reported to Synod at the 1957 convention, namely, that it was obvious that Missouri was in the wrong and therefore it was time to break. To wait was just as wrong.⁷¹

Is it possible that Prof. Reim spent too much time dealing with Missouri as the enemy which had to be analyzed and watched carefully and lost his perspective of them as erring brothers in need of help? Again, these were trying times for everyone involved. In any controversy such as this, some good people are going to lose no matter how they play their cards. The only certain cause is the sin-infected world which caused this controversy in the first place.

In 1959, the CLC started its own college in Mankato, MN called "Immanuel." It was only natural that Prof. Reim receive the call to teach there. After one year, the college moved to Eau'Claire. It was here that Prof. Reim served for the rest of his life. In 1961 the CLC began its own theological publica-

tion, the Journal of Theology, and he served as its editor.

A once beloved leader of our synod began to write against us. He followed our course of action carefully. When we finally broke with Missouri in 1961 he spoke as a father patting his son on the back.

One is moved to thank God that at least so much has been done. For it is not easy to move against the stream of public opinion, even as it is hard to silence the thousand objections raised by the flesh when any such matter is in prospect. This is real cause for joy, not indeed over the wrecking of the Synodical Conference, but over the new course which Wisconsin has thereby set for itself.⁷²

He also wrote a word of warning to his new brothers in the CLC as if speaking to a different son;

Certainly, if there should be but a momentary flicker of smug or gleeful satisfaction over this painful spectacle, if we should but attempt a pose of superiority, we must recognize this for the diabolical temptation that it is and banish it accordingly.⁷³

He explained that before anything happened between the CLC and the Wisconsin Synod, the younger smaller synod would have to wait and see if we carried through in practice what we had decided in convention.

It would seem natural that if people left our synod because we didn't break with Missouri soon enough, they would rejoin once we finally did break, especially when it became evident that we were putting into practice what we had decided in convention. You might even expect that a long time supporter of the Wisconsin Synod would lead the way. Yet to this point Prof. Reim wrote, "[We] affirm that there are (original emphasis) issues that lie between our old Synod and ourselves."⁷⁴ In fol-

lowing editions of the Journal of Theology, Prof. Reim continued backing up his position with more evidence and greater arguments. He specifically accused us of three continuing errors, Fellowship, the Clarity of Scripture and the Call. He explained, "They [the members of the Wisconsin Synod] should also consider that these three points represent the serious judgment of earnest men--former brethren--who stand ready to back up their statements."⁷⁵ He still wrote a warning to the members of the CLC.

Just what is (original emphasis) our purpose in drawing attention again and again to these unresolved issues and insisting that they be removed? Are we really concerned purely for the welfare of an erring neighbor, for the truth of the Word, for the glory of God? Or are we just trying to prove how right we were in the first place? Surely, if there is even a shadow of vindictiveness leading us to cry for "satisfaction," if we have in any way let past differences breed an enduring hostility, then we are unfitting ourselves for whatever service we might otherwise be able to render.⁷⁶

While not becoming haughty, Prof. Reim certainly applied Rom. 16 to the Wisconsin Synod now.

To his credit Prof. Reim did not let the Journal of Theology become a forum for criticism of the Wisconsin Synod. It still remains a respectable theological publication. Still he was never able to overlook our past sin, if our delay in breaking fellowship could be called a sin. The CLC called for a review of our synod's decisions from 1955-1961. This was supposed to be a necessary opportunity to "clear the air." Our synod refused this request. Prof. Reim used this to build the existing wall between the synods even higher.⁷⁷

One especially large stone was added to this wall. The Northwestern Lutheran published a story in which the CLC was said to have "blasphemed the Gospel." This statement was soon corrected in a following issue, but the sting remained. Prof. Reim and the rest of the CLC refused our apology. The situation was used by Prof. Reim as further evidence that Wisconsin's decisions of 1955-1961 be reviewed.⁷⁸ The wall between us grew so large that it has yet to be scaled.

Why would a man who wouldn't apply Romans 16:17 to us when he left our synod because we didn't break with Missouri, apply the passage to us only a few years later when we finally did break? Earlier I mentioned that there seemed to be a difference of interpretation concerning Rom. 16:17. Pastor Paul Nolting of the CLC prepared a booklet entitled, "Mark. . . Avoid". On behalf of the small synod, he stated his belief that once error had been detected, there must be a separation. No delay is permitted.⁷⁹ Was this Prof. Reim's view all along, or was this an opinion he espoused when he joined the CLC? His actions before he left in 1957 don't seem to match up with what he wrote after he left. Really though, this point is just one small aspect of the whole picture. It is not the picture. It is rather a hidden shadow and it would not be wise to make too much of it.

But then why would Prof. Reim write so strongly against the Wisconsin Synod when only a few years earlier he had defended our actions? It would be uncharacteristic for him to have lied. We must take him at his word. Apparently he did not apply Romans 16 to us when he first left. He left because he was con-

science bound. He couldn't stand being united to a church body which was united with the LCMS. But as the Wisconsin Synod continued discussions with Missouri for another four years, not even voting on the issue in our 1959 convention, he must have come to the conviction that we really weren't sincere about our claim to be following God's will in the matter. We really were just as bad as Missouri. Meanwhile, he spent four years allying himself with another group, a group which believed and acted as he did. His views may very well have changed because of the circumstances surrounding him. One thing that didn't change though, was his conviction to always pursue a proper God-pleasing course.

Edmund Reim served as professor and editor until cancer took his life on August 22, 1969. To no one's surprise, he labored indefatigably. To the very end of his life, he gave of himself to help others. He served with a clear conscience. He remained a man of principle.

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