

CHURCH AND ANTICHURCH
BETWEEN
CAPITOL DRIVE ONE AND CAPITOL DRIVE TWO

SENIOR CHURCH HISTORY

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FOREWORD

In the writing of this paper it was necessary to refer to various cases in the Southeastern Wisconsin District during the past year and a half. I tried to avoid referring to general knowledge subjects. I did include extra background material since I did not know how much of this material is available to anyone that might read this paper. Also, since I had to "beg, borrow and so forth" to get some of the letters, I thought I should use them. At any rate, I limited myself to those areas which deal specifically with Mr. Reed. Since some of these materials are not available to the general public, and may not be in the near future (since the case is over) I tried to give as much "color" of the letters as possible.

Since the topical arrangement of the paper occasionally plays havoc with the chronology, it may be well to refer to the bibliography which I have arranged in chronological order instead of alphabetical order for this purpose.

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In September of 1974, a new, independent Lutheran congregation was formed. For the members of the new church, this ended a long struggle for the supremacy of the King James Version of the Bible and for their principles for the separation of church and state. As such, the formation of this new church is intimately linked with the recent controversies within the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod (WELS). The developments and outcomes of these controversies are well-known. Yet, as one studies the developments behind the foundation of this new church, one can detect an underlying spirit which would constantly breed discontentment among those people that would finally leave the Wisconsin Synod. This spirit is an aversion to synodical authority on all levels, and consequently, the establishment of their own authority. Obviously, this was not their original intention. But none the less, this spirit added to the extreme difficulty of dealing with the problem. It is our intention to trace this spirit through the course of events leading to the establishment of the new church which meets at Wisconsin Memorial Park on Capitol Drive in Milwaukee. We also wish to demonstrate how this spirit entered the new church and became an integral part of its life. This can be accomplished most profitably by following the life of Mr. George Reed while he was a member of the Wisconsin Synod since he emerged as the leader and spokesman for this group.

GEORGE REED--A MEMBER OF WELS

Mr. Reed joined the WELS from the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

(LC-MS) during the intersynodical struggles of the early nineteen sixties. Although he was born in Racine in 1930, his family soon moved to Milwaukee where they joined Bethlehem Lutheran Church. His wife, Virginia, was baptized in the LC-MS at Pentecost Lutheran Church. By the time of her confirmation, she was a member of the WELS. She was confirmed at Divinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Milwaukee. After their marriage, they were members of Capitol Drive Lutheran Church. Since this is the last Missouri Synod church they were members of, it accounts for the Capitol Drive One of the title. After they moved to New Berlin, they joined St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Muskego, a member of the WELS. Meanwhile the Lord had blessed their marriage with three children, Brenda, Glen and Judy.

Their solid Lutheran background showed itself in their church life. They faithfully attended church every Sunday, always sitting on the middle, right side next to the aisle. Mr. and Mrs. Reed both served very ably on the Sunday School staff of St. Paul's, where Glen and Judy were enrolled. Brenda was one of the faithfuls of the Junior Bible class.

It is quite evident that Mr. Reed was not a reactionary from the very start. To be fair, we would probably have to say that he never was a reactionary at all, at least an intended one. Rather, he was a concerned layman who got into the wrong company while doing his best for the cause. He had joined a new synod where he had found his new church home. He was an active member of that synod. Hopefully, this will suffice to give a picture of this otherwise little known family in the WELS.

CHURCH AND STATE I

As many former members of the LC-MS, Mr. Reed was accepted into the WELS on a confession of faith. Already at these first meetings with Pastor Robert Zink, it was learned that Mr. Reed had strong, conservative political convictions. He is a member of the extreme right wing American Party. He is not, as often contended, a member of the John Birch Society. These early meetings also showed that he had a very clear conception of the separation of the church and state. He himself stated that conservative Lutheranism doesn't necessarily mean conservative politics. He was also a strong supporter of the view that each person could have his own political views as long as they were in keeping with the US Constitution. Thus the record of Mr. Reed's first years in the WELS demonstrates that he had a clear conception of authority in the church and authority in the government.

CONFESSIONAL APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN LAYMEN

The formation of Confessional Apostolic Lutheran Laymen (CALL) is probably the most significant development in the story of how synodical authority was undermined and ultimately rejected. It is possibly also the most difficult development to analyze. The date of formation is hard to detect, but all evidence points to about 1967. The only "Letter of Formation" for CALL for which I found a record is the one that was sent to President George Boldt. Since in January of 1974 Pastor Boldt asked the organization to identify itself, there is the possibility that his copy of the Letter of Formation was lost in a file, either square or circular.

Confessional Apostolic Lutheran Laymen is a non-profit, non-stock corporation. Its purpose is stated in its Articles (Letter) of Formation. Its purpose is to:

"Proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ in the framework of the Lutheran Confessions, to witness and work for the advancement of the glad tidings of the Savior and to awaken a desire among our fellow-redeemed to aid the struggle for the restoration of orthodox Lutheranism in those areas where it is lost."¹

There is a problem on how these words are to be interpreted in the context of CALL. When Mr. Reed was confronted with the question on how this purpose was to be carried out, he answered that the group had one purpose in mind. CALL was formed to print and spread orthodox Lutheran literature through which they would spread the good news of Jesus and through which they would also give courage to Lutherans struggling for purity of doctrine. They had tried to get various articles and tracts published through Northwestern Publishing House, but it was soon thought by them that the world would stop turning before the presses of Northwestern would start turning. Since they were still convinced that people who had the Word of God in its truth and purity should be doing all within their power to spread this message through the printed word as well as the spoken word, after their efforts through Northwestern Publishing House failed, they decided to incorporate and print the materials themselves. They also argued that other groups in Synod were now publishing materials by themselves, apparently for the same reason. Examples would be the Evangelism Book Store or the various pastors that print their own catechism courses.

But one gets the feeling that there were other motives behind their organization. One gets this feeling because of the first two

¹Quoted in: George Reed, Letter to George Boldt, January 17, 1974.

tracts that were printed, numbers 101 and 102. Both were sermons by Pastor Robert Zink; both had served as an inspiration and rallying point for the new organization. Incidentally, Pastor Zink prints his sermons every week for the shut-ins, servicemen and so forth in the congregation. So when Mrs. Kerner called for permission to "copy" the two sermons, permission was readily given. Unfortunately, there was no implication that they were to be printed for the general public. Needless to say, he was rather surprised when he learned what had happened.

The first sermon was based on Galatians 1:8,9 with the theme "No Other Gospel--But Christ." To give a little color of this "inspirational" sermon, I would like to quote one of the final applications.

"Those of us who know the Lord of love must be ready to defend His Gospel against all those who would seek to destroy it. And believe me, there number is legion. If the day should come, and God prevent it, when your church should preach unbelief and a false Gospel to you, you must testify against this error. You must battle against it, and if your efforts are of no avail, cancel your membership. 'Come out, and be ye separate,' says our Lord."²

The other sermon had I Corinthians 6:1-4 as a text with the theme, "Ye Shall Judge." This sermon would obviously contain many statements that would be given a extra punch by taking them out of context.

These two sermons are always mentioned in connection with the Articles of Formulation, so much so that we get the impression that they are part of its organizational platform. The big question, which will probably never be answered at this date, is whether these two sermons are to be considered a part of the organizational articles or whether they are to be considered samples of the type of literature the new group

²Robert Zink. "No Other Gospel-But Christ"(Sermon), (New Berlin: CALL, undated), p. 9.

would be printing. At any rate, the final outcome shows that these sermons served in both capacities.

The nature of the group and its membership is also interesting.

Mr. Reed states:

"We are not a Synod. We hold no worship services. We are not as a CORPORATION in fellowship with ANY church body or synod, nor is it our intention to establish any such relationship with any synod or church...As individuals, we hold membership in various WELS churches."³

Here is a potential bombshell. By definition, they are a church because they carry out the commission of the church to proclaim the saving Gospel. One suspects that if we would mention this, they would reply with the old adage, "Show me--I'm from Missouri." The reason that they do not consider themselves as a church is because they do not hold worship services. They only wanted to be considered a corporation.

But this view placed the synod officials in a difficult position to deal with the situation. CALL is a gathering of people to proclaim the Gospel. WELS is a gathering of people to proclaim the Gospel. CALL's membership is in fellowship with WELS. CALL is not in fellowship with WELS. Out of this unfortunate situation, a situation of church and antichurch was to arise in the question of authority, a question of particular importance when CALL and WELS would disagree.

CONFESSIOAL LUTHERAN PARENTS

It is through Confessioal Lutheran Parents (CLP) that the loopholes in the intended purpose of CALL are used to the greatest possible

³George Reed, Letter to George Boldt, January 17, 1974.

benefit of its membership. Confessional Lutheran Parents is a "subsidiary ad hoc committee" of CALL. The "hoc" is of course the acceptance of ESEA Title II aid by Wisconsin Lutheran High School (WLHS).

The substance of the charge against the WLHS is contained in the letter "The WELS and Government Aid" written on Reformation, 1973, written by Mrs. Wm. Kerner, the executive secretary of CLP. Concerning that letter, Mr. Reed writes, "As senior executive of Confessional Lutheran Parents, I wish to have you know that I have fully and personally subscribed to every word of the letter which Mrs. Kerner wrote in our behalf."⁴

The outcome of the controversy is well-known. But through various letters from early 1974 we can see Mr. Reed shifting his loyalty from WELS to CALL and CLP. In describing CALL, I left out one important section of a quote that deals with this case. The whole paragraph reads:

"We are not a Synod. We hold no worship services. We are not, as a corporation, in fellowship with ANY church body or synod, nor is it our intention to establish any such relationship with any synod or church. Your suggestion that we follow a course of action within the synodical or district institution could be considered inappropriate, as we are not a part of the Wisconsin Synod. As individuals, we hold membership in various WELS churches."⁴

With such an attitude toward synodical procedure from the very start, we can see the full potential of the articles of formulation and the two sermons of CALL. One can also see why the responsible leaders of synod were beating their heads against a wall trying to deal with these people. We will take a closer look at what synod was doing later. What we see developing here is a cancer not unlike the Protestant Conference or even the ELIM of the LC-MS. For Mr. Reed, the question of authority was to become a hot one during the next

⁴. George Reed, Letter to George Boldt, January 17, 1974.

few months.

At this time there was a type of showdown led by Mr. Reed. After Mrs. Kerner had been suspended at Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, it was not long before the other members tested synod on these matters. Mr. Reed therefore copied Mrs. Kerner's letter, added a few more comments, signed it and gave it to Pastor Zink. Following the leader, Mrs. Jorgensen signed the letter in the presence of her pastor, Pastor Hartwig of Zion, South Milwaukee. This was followed by Mr. and Mrs. James Lienber of St. James signing the letter in the presence of Pastor Pless. Time and time again letters were written to Pastor Boldt to ask him why Mrs. Kerner was suspended and they were not. It is at this time that one began to hear more cries of "inconsistency" and "hypocrisy."

Then, in a second letter to President Boldt on behalf of CLP, Mr. Reed further explains what was becoming the real issue for him. He writes:

"Pastor Boldt, it is no secret that some church men act as if in the church, laymen are not to do much more than to Pay, Pray and Obey. For too many clergy like to keep the laymen uninformed about some important trends in the church, in this case a trend toward political involvement."⁵

This is the beginning of the recurring theme: Pay, Pray and Obey. This accusation is to become all the more prevalent in the writings of Mr. Reed and less prevalent in the writings of CLP.

In the same letter, a defense is made of the tactics of CLP. There are three such defenses. The first is that Mrs. Kerner had written her Reformation letter of 1973 "in the frame work of Christian love to correct an impending error in WELS and WLHS."⁶ (emphasis mine.) Secondly, they argued that the affair had already been made public

⁵George Reed, Letter to George Boldt, February 3, 1975.

⁶Ibid.

since it had been mentioned in the Milwaukee Journal of August 12, 1973 (They supplied the information for this article) and since it is on record at Public Records, Department of Public Education, Madison, Wisconsin. And finally, since WELS had entered the "political arena" by accepting the grant, it becomes the duty of every Lutheran Christian and U.S. citizen to offer critical comment. Note that at this time, while others were referring to this aid as sin, Mr. Reed was calling it a "trend" and an "impending error."

Before closing the section on CLP, it is necessary to point out a slight difference between CALL and CLP. The difference can be demonstrated by looking at the names. CLP has left out the "A." This fits the picture quite well. With the omission of "apostolic" the emphasis is placed on the "confessional" or even the dogmatical. CLP is a committee that stressed rules and regulations for the church based on their own principles rather than based 100 per cent on the Bible. Throughout their dealing with the High School, one can hear a faint chorus of "St. Louis Blues" being hummed in the distant background.

LEAVING THE NEST

At this time it is necessary to jump ahead a bit to give a complete picture of this important development in Mr. Reed's thinking. Up to this time, all correspondence had been written by Mr. Reed as the senior executive of Confessional Lutheran Parents. During this time there was no special contact between Mr. Reed and his home church. But after a month and half of silence, Mr. Reed left the nest of CLP and took his maiden flight on April 17, 1974. On this date, he sent an open letter

to St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church of Muskego. The striking fact about this letter is that it does not mention the Brookfield case once and only mentions the separation of church and state in an indirect way. What was the letter about? "There are a number of massive changes being proposed in the WELS which have, in the main, been kept secret from the average laymen."⁷ But to be sure, this was not the causal factor. The real problem is expressed at the beginning of the letter where he says:

As most Christians know, there is a continuing controversy in the denominations and churches of our day. This stems from a lack of confidence on the part of the organizational leadership with respect to the ability of the local parishioner to understand the concepts of Lutheran theology and from a lack of concern on the part of the local parishioner regarding the "Inside Knowledge" of that theology."⁸

As a general statement we would have to agree. In many churches there is indeed a lack of confidence toward the laymen on the part of the pastors, and a lack of concern on the part of the parishioner. But the implications with which he concludes this letter are a direct attack against the Wisconsin Synod and its leadership.

My family and I will not accept any self-ordained aristocracy in either church or state. We would rather see hundreds of free and independent Christian Churches of the Confessional Lutheran faith, in the historic position and spirit of the Reformation, than one, unified and "lukewarm" Synodical Body."⁹

The obvious impression that one would take from that statement is that Mr. Reed considered the leadership of the WELS a "self-ordained aristocracy" which has made us a "luke warm" synod. This charge is typical of those from Mr. Geo. Reed and CLE. There are no specific charges and there are no Bible passages cited for himself or against WELS.

⁷George Reed, Open Letter to St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, April 17, 1974.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

It was finally on April 30, 1974 that Mr. Reed himself, for the first time, accused Synod (or its responsible leaders) of sin when they applied for and accepted ESEA Title II grants in aid at WLHS. But this was not a valid reason to leave the synod as far as Mr. Reed was concerned. I'm sure that he had the same feeling as the "Brookfield 9" who wished to stay in Synod to fight for the cause unless Synod itself asked them to leave. There was still hope for the Synod in the matter of the separation of church and state. This is shown by a slightly different position on Church and State.

CHURCH AND STATE II

The statement of April 17, "My family and I will not accept any self-ordained aristocracy in either church or state" is applied to this specific case later in the month. He explains:

"I am terribly disappointed with the expulsion of a number of my friends in Christ from Christ the Lord Church in Brookfield. I was not aware that disagreeing with the pastor on POLITICAL MATTERS (or any other matter) is an offense worthy of excommunication. I can see where severe doctrinal differences exists between an individual and the church, that an attitude of separation might become necessary. Certainly this was not the case with respect to the 'Brookfield 9'"¹⁰

At this time, Mr. Reed would not have left the synod because of ESEA Title II. It was a political matter and not a doctrinal matter. While Mr. Reed had a misunderstanding concerning the suspensions, this shows that by this time Mr. Reed stood for a total separation of church and state, a policy which he was now trying in vain to impose on the synod. Already in December of 1974, he had condemned synod's policies concerning student transportation, school lunches and tax exemption.¹¹

¹⁰ George Reed, Letter to Pastor Zink and St. Paul's Council, April 30, 1974.

¹¹ George Reed, Letter to the Forum Column, undated. (Christian News, December 24, 1973).

WELS DEALS WITH THE PROBLEM

Meanwhile, Synod officials and the pastors, with their councils, were trying to deal with the problem. Pastor Mark Liesner hit the nail on the head, even though he may have hit it too hard, at this early date. In addressing CLP he writes:

"I find your letter to be an unchristian letter. If you have questions regarding the practices of our WLHS, or if you feel such practices are in error, your obligation is to seek recourse within the synod. In keeping with the instruction of Scripture, 'Let all things be done decently and in order,' I Corinthians 14:40, our Synod has established an orderly procedure for those who wish to seek recourse. Your letter in Christian News is not in keeping with this procedure. I find it hard to believe that Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, who love their Savior, would address a letter to Christian News regarding this matter. What possible help do you think those outside of our Synod can be in correcting a suspected wrong in our Synod? Or, how can you say that such a letter is in agreement with I Corinthians 14:40?"¹²

After Mr. Reed wrote his "Letter to the Forum Column" which was printed December 24, 1973, he was also requested by his pastor to cease writing to Christian News. But Christian News continued to be the sounding board for the ESEA Title II question. This was obviously hindering any progress hoped for by the Synod. After a typical mix-up, publication of letters was suspended upon request. Pastor Schaefer writes:

"I would just like to recall several things about our conversation which apparently either you or I misunderstood. I did not call you to ask you to contact Mrs. Kerner 'about our position on government aid! I called you (I must not have made it very clear) to ask whether the letters related to the entire matter could not be suspended. I said that the matter was being handled by the appropriate officials of the Synod and the possibility of 'reconciliation' and 'understanding' was being impeded by the continued publication. It was a fraternal request, not a demand. As I recall it, you volunteered to write to Mrs. Kerner."¹³

¹²Pastor Mark Liesner, Letter to CLP, November 20, 1973.

¹³Pastor James Schaefer, Letter to Herman Otten, February 1, 1974.

Too bad the other WELS men weren't quite as successful in their endeavors as Pastor Schaefer.

On January 11, Pastor Boldt re-iterated the concerns of Pastor Liesner. He expressed concern over the tactics that were being used. At this time the praesidium offered to meet with the GLP, suggesting January 31 and February 14 as possible dates. The answer received by Pres. Boldt was, "Since you do not 'generally offer your services unless they are requested' and should Mrs. Kerner find it necessary to appeal to the praesidium, we think it is inadvisable for the praesidium to enter the situation at this time."¹⁴

Again on January 25, Pres, Boldt pleaded that GLP meet with him and the writers of "This We Believe." He also offered to explain to them all the ways that they could procede within the Synodical structure. Concluding, he said,

"I believe that you would be most interested in having such a meeting conducted, so that you might have any misconceptions cleared up. I strongly urge your group to reconsider your decision not to receive the information which could be most helpful in showing you what the synodical position is. Thank you for your kind consideration."¹⁵

February 14 was again suggested as a date but they were also offered to choose their own date. The reply received by Pastor Boldt amounted to an emphatic statement that they could do what they wanted since they understood synod's position and since the entire affair was already public.

Finally, as a response to the open letter sent by Mr. Reed to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Muskego, the church council offered Mr. Reed a chance to meet with them to explain his position on all six "charges" against the synod (they will be further explained in the next section.)

¹⁴George Reed, Letter to Pastor Boldt, January 17, 1974.

¹⁵George Boldt, Letter to George Reed, January 25, 1974.

If that meeting was not suitable to him, they offered to call an open meeting of the congregation. No answer was ever received.

By this time it was evident that any authority that the Synod ever had was of no use in the problem with Mr. Reed. He simply did not accept them as an authority qualified to deal with the situation. Therefore all offers of help were rejected. Why? During these months Mr. Reed (and CLP) was looking for new friends. Correspondence was carried on with Mt. Olive Ev. Lutheran Church, Colorado Springs. But they were not really looking for any new friends. But Pastor Wayne Popp was. It is generally felt by the pastors of the involved congregations that Pastor Popp had deceived Mr. Reed into thinking that the Synod was "out to get him." Consequently every meeting that was offered was considered an invitation to a heresy trial. This was alluded to in the April 30th letter.

"Certainly if the leadership of WELS can excommunicate a man of God like Richard Shekner for what amounts to 'over zealous' preaching of the Holy Word, the laymen can expect sudden action regarding the Pastor of Christ the Lord."¹⁶

To be sure this "sudden action" was suspected at all synodical levels. Mr. Reed simply thought that WELS no longer had any authority to deal with him. If Mr. Reed was to remain in the Wisconsin Synod, his confidence in synodical leadership would have to be restored. By his April 30 letter, any chances for this looked quite dim as we shall presently see. First it is necessary to point out that at this time the Brookfield 9 were willing to make their appeals through Synod. Putting the best construction on their situation, they still recognized WELS as competent to deal with them. But Mr. Reed was on his own now.

¹⁶George Reed, Letter to St. Paul's Church Council, April 30, 1974.

SYNOD CONDEMNED

The discussion of the whole question concerning the real authority of Synod reached its high point in the same April 30th letter. This statements shows why there was little hope to renew Mr. Reed's confidence in Synod at this time.

"The First Commandment says, 'THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.' The Synod is not our God! Further, Synod is not our master, but our servant. Exploration and guidance from our Synod in matters of the Lord in the context of Lutheran doctrine are permissible, but in no way should we permit the use of our gifts to the service of the Savior on the souls of our parishioners to be corrupted by the attacks of Satan. "With these thoughts in mind, I ask our congregation to suspend all further contributions to our Synod, to Wisconsin Lutheran High School and to Wisconsin Lutheran College until this matter is fully resolved in the favor of the Lord. "If this request seems harsh, please note that it is far to late to be otherwise."¹⁷

The letter covered a multitude of sins (Not the way the passage means it though.) The six chief matters were 1) the 'excommunication' of the Brookfield 9; 2) the 'excommunication' of Richard Shekner; 3) modernization of Catechism, Liturgy and Bible translation; 4) that synod is our God; 5) that ESEA Title II acceptance was sin and 6) the fact that he wished St. Paul's to cease contributions without offering any Scriptural basis for doing so.

In both the April 17 and April 30 letter he had mentioned the various changes in language that were being proposed. He complained about the "partial modernization of the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and the Apostle's Creed." He expresses concern in the manner in which liturgical and hymnal departures were being carried out. He mentions the usage of modern Bible translations. He concludes with the interesting statement: "Such statements should be discussed both openly

¹⁷Goerge Reed, Letter to St. Paul's Church Council, April 30, 1974.

and at length in every congregation, yet it appears that very few of WELS parishioners even understand that these changes are imminent."¹⁸

For a man that established his own printing corporation because Northwestern Publishing House and the WELS was too slow, he should have realized that these changes were not as imminent as he thought. His real feeling here was that he thought that synod would demand all its members to use the new materials on the day that they were completed. The church council pointed out to him that that had not been the case in the past. A case in point is how the congregation had switched by the Missouri Synod catechism to the catechism of WELS whenever they felt like it. But this did not persuade Mr. Reed.

The Church Council responded with a letter on June 21, 1974. In the seven week interim since they received their last correspondence from Mr. Reed they had been trying to arrange a meeting. These meetings were always refused. So they sent a letter. Concerning the charge against the Synod they wrote:

"In your letters you also state that "Synod is not our God! Further Synod is not our master, but our servant." We all agree with this statement 100 %. But why the insinuation that Synod is our God or master? When has Synod ever acted as our God? Our Synod has never tried to master it over our congregation. IN NO WAY HAS OUR SYNOD EVER FORCED ANYTHING ON OUR CONGREGATION! Our Synod has only advised and counselled us, and we thank God for this advice and counsel. For without this advice and counsel of our Synod, the history of our congregation shows that it well could have become a Reform congregation instead of a Lutheran congregation based on God's true Word."¹⁹

While the pastor had written the letter, it was studied in depth at the council meeting and then signed by all the members of the council. In the same letter it was pointed out that it may have been poor judgment to accept ESEA Title II and that the congregation had a right to express

¹⁸George Reed, Letter to St. Paul's Church Council, April 30, 1974.

¹⁹St. Paul's Church Council, Letter to George Reed, June 21, 1974.

itself on that judgment. But they could not say that it was sin. They explained that they had no authority to establish their viewpoint as binding the rest of the church.

DEPARTURE

The final word which was received from Mr. Reed was an undated letter to the Church council of St. Paul's. It was received after September 1. If I remember correctly, it was written and sent to the council but not to pastor Zink. In this letter, he quickly passes over most of the problem areas by saying:

"After reviewing the letter sent to the attention of my wife and I and noting your signature at the end, I must assume that you understand the contents of my letter sufficiently to disagree almost entirely. My better judgment tells me however that you unhesitatingly followed the Pastor's lead rather than individually investigating the matter with respect to God's Holy Word, the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord."²⁰

Then Mr. Reed continues with a twenty page epistle defending the King James Bible. Needless to say the letter caused no little stir since the council members had not received too much information on variant readings. Apparently Pastor Popp had been pumping Mr. Reed between his April 30 letter and the present letter, This is the first time that he made such an elaborate defense of the KJV. He had expressed concern to President Nauman as early as 1970 but had never went to these extremes.

It is in this connection that he shows how far he had been led away. Here he makes mistakes of the caliber which he never made before. Note how he changes the words of the Formula of Concord to serve his own purposes (he claims to have studied this.):

"Our own book of Concord tells us not to accept this new teaching

²⁰George Reed, Letter to St. Paul's Church Council, undated.

(he means the Arian teaching perpetrated by Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) lest they first be tested against the accepted manuscripts, regardless of the name they bear or the age of the find."²¹

And if one would argue that this statement could be understood correctly, he adds this a page later:

"None of the versions have been tested or sanctioned in Christendom as required in the Book of Concord and hence all pastors and teachers who use these Bible versions violate the very Constitutions of the Churches to which they belong."²²

One gets the impression that the story of Mr. Reed's relation to the WELS can be summed up serially, "Snap, crackle, POPP!"

At this point Mr. Reed has no use whatsoever for the Wisconsin Synod. Had it not been for the Bible translation question, he may still be in the WELS. It was here that any respect that Mr. Reed had for the Wisconsin Synod now disappeared. He specifically mentioned that he had lost all confidence in Nauman, Boldt, Wicke and Becker. Therefore he concludes:

"Until this matter is resolved in the favor of God's Holy Word and the Spirit of the Lutheran Reformation my family and I wish to have our membership rescinded in St. Paul's Lutheran Church. It is not easy to start new but God has commanded that we 'come out from amongst them' and 'Cast not your Pearls _____.' If this be harsh, so be it! It has not been in anger. We can no longer trust our souls to the heresy in the churches of the Wisconsin Synod."²³
"May God bless your every undertaking in his truth and restore your faith in his uncompromising Holy Word in the tested version of the Bible."²³

So concludes the chapter.

A NEW CHURCH

It is easy to see how synodical authority was slowly rejected and finally condemned through these events of early 1974 in the life of Mr. Reed.

²¹George Reed, Letter to St. Paul's Church Council, undated.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

Thoughts of a new, independant church have been alluded to at various times in the controversy. How deeply the question of authority affected Mr. Reed is graphically portrayed in the policies of the new church.

A few things seem surprising in connection with the formation of the new church. The first is how fast it was founded. Secondly it was surprising to see that thirty families were involved (95 people). Thirdly, it was surprising that the Brookfield 9 were not members of it. Who were all the people? About all one can say is that they were the group of people with whom Pastor Popp had been conducting "Bible classes" in the Milwaukee area. Although Pastor Popp had most likely been trying to organize, Mr. Reed and others were not about to let a pastor tell them what to do.

The most unusual thing about the new church is its doctrine of the church and ministry. They reject all denominational affiliation. They aren't even a Lutheran church. They don't even want a name associated with their church. This is because they "believe that all super-structures are corrupt and won't provide us with anything except extract money from us."²⁴ This is even a step lower than the old "Pay, Pray and Obey."

The most peculiar sounding policy they have is that they wish all their pastors (if they get one) to be self-employed. The reason for this is:

"Under such an arrangement, the minister would not be financially dependant on the congregation and the congregation could not dictate what would be preached."²⁵

²⁴George Reed quoted by Religious News Service, Mil., 9/24/74. Found in Christian New, 10/7/74, page 16.

²⁵Ibid.

This sounds like the very opposite of what Mr. Reed had been fighting against in the Wisconsin Synod. He had been stressing that the laymen should be doing more studying and getting more involved in the policy-making of synod. He stressed a position that was closer to the LC-MS position of the church than the WELS position. He thought that the parishioners should have all the authority.

I think that Religious News Service doesn't attempt to offer a full explanation of this statement. The problem is that this only involves one congregation. If we could substitute "synod" for "Congregation" we would be closer to what Mr. Johnson means here. Mr. Johnson does not mean to say the communion of saints should not be telling the pastor what to preach. He does mean that the church as an administrative body should not be able to tell the pastor what to teach and preach. In a one congregation situation this is hard to distinguish but that is what they are doing.

Under the present arrangement, Pastor Popp is preaching in Milwaukee once a week. However it appears now that he may be moving to Milwaukee in the near future unless certain problems are cleared up at Saukville.

CLOSING REMARKS

The formation of this new church at Wisconsin Memorial Park took place quite unknown to most of the Lutheran world. Those who did hear about it probably thought of it as ^{of} little consequence. Yet it is part of the life of the Wisconsin Synod. The course of events takes on special significance when we remember that all members involved had been

members of other Lutheran church bodies. As such they were not acquainted with the unique spirit of the Wisconsin Synod. In the years ahead we can expect to welcome more members from the 95% of American Lutheranism which constitutes the more liberal element of Lutheranism. From this episode, many members of WELS learned that a confession of faith may not be sufficient for membership in the future. Areas as Bible translation and separation of church and state may also have to be placed on the list. Greater stress may have to be placed on the doctrine of the church so that these people realize that our synod is a church in the fullest sense of the term and not a 'god' who directs every motion that we make.

Our members also learned what may be in store for us in the future. This is the first time that many of our members had to defend themselves against someone more right-winged than themselves. By defending what they stand for, they are much better prepared for the future.

The whole situation gave us a feeling for what the LC-MS is going through in their present struggles. How do you deal with people that do not recognize or respect your authority? It is indeed a difficult situation. We are lucky; Mr. Reed left when he realized that he no longer agreed with us.

We can also mention the service that the press gave us. While we are upset that it held out our 'dirty laundry,' we have to admit that it did show some valuable insight into our synod to the general public. It showed that WELS is not the stick-in-the-mud, extreme right-wing conservatism that many people thought it is. We are a church that

wants nothing more and nothing less than complete freedom in the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I know of one instance where the news had a positive affect on the person. If even a few other people learned that insight into the Wisconsin Synod, the reports in the press may have been well worth it.

As far as the new church is concerned, it showed that there are still people who are concerned about purity of doctrine. Although Mr. Reed was wrong in his judgments, his spirit certainly says something to the church in a ecumenical age.

Whether students of church history will be studying the developments of this church fifty years from now is doubtful to say at this time. This present writer will never forget the valuable lessons learned in this controversy. The study itself is worth mentioning because it was an important chapter in the life of our Wisconsin Synod, and it is an important chapter that might well be repeated in the future.

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