

# One WELS Pastor's Evaluation of the New Lutheran Church

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[A paper read at the Metro-South Pastoral Conference at Apostles of Christ Lutheran, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin on January 21, 1985 and at the Metro-North Pastoral Conference at Bethlehem Lutheran, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin on May 20, 1985 and also for Woodlawn Ev. Lutheran, West Allis, Wisconsin.]

Expectation and tension both ran high on the afternoon of September 8, 1982, as the time approached for announcement of votes by delegates in separate-but-simultaneous conventions of the American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in America, and Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Delegates knew that the proposed resolution, if approved, would trigger steps toward union of the three church bodies...

At 5 p. m. (Eastern Daylight Time), the voice of church historian Martin E. Marty came over an audio system connecting the LCA convention in Louisville, Kentucky, the AELC convention in Cleveland, and the ALC convention in San Diego. Bishop James Crumley announced the LCA vote: 669 yes; 11 no. Bishop William Kohn reported the AELC vote: 136 yes, none against. Presiding Bishop David Preus gave the ALC vote: 897 yes, 87 no.

Jubilation! Delegates stood and applauded. The rejoicing at each convention drowned out the telephone hookup for a while; then 'The Church's One Foundation' turned the emotion into praise.<sup>1</sup>

How should Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) people feel about the event described above by H. George Anderson? Should we react with jubilation and also praise the Lord when we learn that by 1988 most likely there will be a huge new super Lutheran church body with more than 5 million members. According to the latest (1983) statistics the merging church bodies have the following number of ministers, congregations and baptized members:

	Ministers	Congregations	Baptized Members
LCA	8,324	5,794	2,925,008
ALC	7,310	4,901	2,342,692
AELC	665	272	110,934
Totals	16,299	10,967	5,378,634

For comparison we provide the following pertinent 1983 statistics:

	Ministers	Congregations	Baptized Members
LC-MS	7,682	5,794	2,630,947
WELS	1,194	1,193	414,199
ELS	106	111	20,556
All U.S. Lutheran Bodies	25,758	18,590	8,511,190 <sup>2</sup>

What impact will this mammoth new Lutheran church, still unnamed, have on the WELS, presently in fourth place, a distant fourth numerically, among U.S. Lutheran church bodies? Is it possible that the formation of this new Lutheran colossus somehow may draw us closer to the LC-MS, currently the second largest

<sup>1</sup> H. George Anderson., "Supremely Important," *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 2, p. 14, (20 January 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Statistics as of 12/31/83. Compiled by Alice M. Kendrick, Director, and Miriam L. Woolbert, Staff Assistant, Records and Information Center, Lutheran Council in the USA. First printed in *Lutheran Forum*; reprinted in *Christian News*, 26 November 1984 issue, p. 14

Lutheran body, which, like the WELS, has refused for doctrinal reasons to participate in the merger? Will this multi-million member new church make it easier or more difficult for us in WELS to hold fast to our God-given staunchly conservative and Scripturally faithful confessional Lutheran heritage? Indeed, should we applaud or deplore this major development in the history of American Lutheranism? Undoubtedly, it would be easier to offer confident answers to the above questions in A.D. 2000 after the merged church may have been in operation for more than a decade rather than in 1985, almost three years before the three church bodies officially become one. Obviously, many things could happen in the years ahead which could ruin the best laid plans of men., also of church men and church women with merger on their minds, not the least of which could be our Lord's return on the Last Day to finally call a halt to the grandiose schemes and impressive projects which various false prophets, Lutherans among them, devise and perpetrate, allegedly in His name and according to His will. While recognizing the difficulties, especially from the perspective of time, of trying to describe a church which does not yet officially exist, this WELS pastor is herewith offering some information, some observations and even a few tentative predictions concerning this new Lutheran church, the formation of which was mandated in 1982 by an overwhelming 1702 of 1800 AELC, ALC, and LCA delegates.

Within three weeks of the three conventions mentioned above, from 27-29 September 1982, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC), whose 70 members had been elected at the respective conventions, met at Madison, Wisconsin, "to begin the process of envisioning a new church rather than merging three existing ones."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Arnold Mickelson and Dr. William A. Kinnison, both laymen, were chosen to serve as Commission Coordinator and Commission Chair, respectively. Task forces on theology, society, purpose and new church designs were formed by the CNLC. In this evaluation of the new Lutheran church I will focus our attention first on questions of structure, organization and authority. The second part of the paper will take up what is for us in the WELS, the most important issue, questions of doctrine and practice.

## **I. Questions of Structure, Organization and Authority**

### **A. Expressions - 3 or 4?**

Should the proposed new Lutheran church of 11,000 congregations be divided into 60 regions with a national structure? Or should those congregations be separated into 105 small regions that would be grouped into nine larger regions, with comparatively little assigned to a national structure?

These two options are being offered by the Commission for a New Lutheran Church for response from this spring's district and synod conventions and for comment by individuals and groups throughout the American Lutheran Church, Lutheran in America, and Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

In both options, membership in the new church is defined as the baptized members of congregations.

Under the first option, each of the 60 regions would involve 50 to 250 congregations, depending on their geographical spread and other factors.

Each of the 105 regions in the second option would include 90 to 115 congregations.

The first option envisions what the commission calls three "expressions" of church structure. (The word "levels" is not used to avoid any connotation of a hierarchical organization.) These three are congregation, region, and national.

Four expressions are suggested in the second option - congregation, small region, large region, and national.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> from CNLC Progress Report #1, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> Lowell G. Almen, Newsfront - "Unity Ship Stays Afloat," *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 6, p. 24 (16 March 1984).

Dr. Lyle Schaller, parish consultant on the staff of Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Indiana and noted analyst of contemporary trends in churches, offered the following analysis of the pros and cons of making the new church either a three or a four expression denomination:

...the new Lutheran church will be a huge denomination. With 11,000 congregations and about five-million baptized and four-million confirmed members, it will be the third largest Protestant denomination on this continent.

The two largest Protestant church bodies in the United States have strongly institutionalized, four-tier organizational structures. The Southern Baptists have powerful state conventions in addition to well-staffed smaller units called associations, plus several unusually powerful national agencies. Likewise, the United Methodist Church follows a firmly institutionalized, four-tier structure with professional staff at both the district and conference levels.

By contrast, most of the denominations with one- or two million confirmed members have leaned, with varying degrees of effectiveness, in the direction of a three-tier system. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, for example, is basically a three-tier system. Pastoral circuits form a fourth tier, but these have limited authority and no full-time staff.

Will the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) propose a church that closely resembles the ALC and LCA with a three-tier (or, in the commission's language, a "three-expression") structure? Or will the new church of four-million confirmed members be considered too large for that system? If so, what finally may be developed is a pattern of organization comparable to the two giants, the Southern Baptists and United Methodists.

The second question that bears on this organizational issue is, what kind of tomorrow do we want to create? This question has many facets, but two merit exploration here.

Will the new denomination be expected to grow to become a larger church with perhaps 15,000 or 20,000 congregations and six- to eight-million confirmed members by 1999? Or is it assumed that, since most post-1950 mergers have produced shrinking denominations, the new Lutheran church will shrink to perhaps 8500 congregations, and three-million confirmed members by 1999? Which organizational structure will be most likely to create a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Another facet of creating a new tomorrow can be summarized simply: Who will run the new church? If the decision is made to create a three-expression organizational structure with approximately 60 regions, this probably will mean: a) Relatively few program staff members will be available in many of these judicatories. b) When these 60 bishops meet, it will be easy for some to be absent and not be missed. c) A growing demand will be placed on the national agencies for program and mission staff. d) The presiding bishop of the new church, the executive committee, and the chief administrators of the national agencies likely will become very influential in determining direction, policy, and priorities for the new denomination.

If four expressions of the church are developed with 105 or more small regions within perhaps nine large regions, this probably will mean: a) The 5 bishops of the smaller units will be concerned largely with pastoral care and ministerial placement. b) Program and mission staff will be concentrated in those nine large regions, not in the national agencies. c) The chief administrators of these nine large regions will meet together regularly, and since each is a full-time executive, they will become far more influential in determining the direction, policy, and priorities of the denomination than the part-time members of the proposed delegate assembly or national church council.

In other words, the three-expression approach likely will create a denomination similar to the ALC, with strong and highly influential national leadership. The four-expression structure is more likely to create a denomination that is, in fact, a federation of large regions similar to the

United Methodist Church or the Southern Baptist Convention, both of which have regional units that include between a half million and two million members and are equivalent to powerful “mini denominations.”<sup>5</sup>

Schaller concluded his very perceptive article with the following points which would favor first, the three-expression system, and second, the four-expression structure:

Which is the better system? A three-expression structure? Or a four-expression system? No simple response can be given to that question. Your answer will depend on the values and goals you seek to maintain and reinforce.

Who will support the three-expression system? Possibilities include those who want to make the position of presiding bishop of the denomination a powerful office for influential leadership, perhaps on the Franklin Clark Fry model. Other potential proponents of the three-expression system might include:

- Lutherans from Indiana, Kansas, South Carolina, and Florida who prefer a system that allows their state to be a simple regional judicatory;
- those who favor a denomination-wide system for the financial support of theological seminaries;
- the people who want to maintain strong, competent, and well-staffed national agencies;
- leaders who favor keeping the basic initiative for new church development in national offices;
- those ecumenically-minded Lutherans who are convinced ecumenism can be advanced most effectively by those denominations with strong national leadership; and
- the laity who see a four-expression system as run largely by the clergy but believe there will be more places open for influential lay persons to be heard in the regional councils of those 60 episcopal areas.

Perhaps most significant of all in support of a three-expression structure will be those who are apprehensive that mergers weaken denominational identity and allegiance and are convinced the new church needs a strong sense of national identity to offset that national tendency. The three-expression system also may gain the support of those who place a high value on maintaining an ideological and theological conformity and are apprehensive about the potential excesses of pluralism.

The four-expression structure is more likely to attract support from those who:

- want decision-making to be as close as possible to the grassroots;
- favor decentralization over centralization;
- prefer to limit the responsibilities of the national presiding bishop largely to ceremonial functions;
- are convinced that Southern Baptists, with their highly decentralized system, offer the best model for starting 150 or more new churches a year;
- want to maintain the geographical integrity of Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin as regional judicatories;

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<sup>5</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, “Creating a New Tomorrow,” *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 12, pp. 4-6 (13 July 1984).

- are convinced that a four-expression system is necessary if the new church is to become a denomination of six or seven million members by the turn of the century;
- favor keeping the basic control over direction, policies, and priorities in the new church in the hands of regionally elected bishops rather than in the national civil service;
- are persuaded that ecumenism happens best at the grassroots;
- strongly support the idea of increasing the number of different points at which laity can be involved in denominational policy-making;
- are convinced that the day of the successful large-scale national fund-raising efforts is in the past and believe it will be easier to raise money on a regional level;
- prefer a structure that encourages pluralism;
- want to have a regional, rather than a national, base for the support of the theological seminaries; and
- want a bishop who is more likely to be able “to call me by name.”

The complexity of this issue is illustrated by the fact that as you consider these factors, you probably find points in each one that you support and others that you oppose.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of this writing (early January 1985) the 3 expression vs. 4 expression question has not been resolved. At their most recent convention, held at Moorhead, Minn., 17-23 October 1984, ALC delegates agreeing with the AELC, expressed solid support for a four-expression (or level) church structure, rather than three-expression by an overwhelming 836-88 vote. Since the LCA favored a three-expression structure in a “sense motion” at its convention, considerable compromise by both sides can be expected before the final structure is agreed upon.<sup>7</sup>

On 5 December 1984 I met with the Reverend William Kohn, former head of the AELC and a member of the CNLC. I am very grateful to Rev. Kohn for his cordial hospitality and the time he generously gave me from his busy schedule. Rev. Kohn expressed the opinion that the commission seemed to favor the so-called three expression church structure, featuring ten regional resource centers to make the national body as responsive as possible to the local congregations.

## B. Quotas

In “Preliminary Designs for the New Church” the Commission for a New Lutheran Church expressed its commitment “to representative democracy in an inclusive church in the midst of a sometimes divided society.”<sup>8</sup> To achieve the desired inclusiveness the CNLC proposed that all legislative assemblies, boards and committees of the new church reflect a commitment to intentional balance between men and women, and meaningful involvement of persons of color and persons with a primary language other than English. Accordingly, the Commission suggested that 50% of the lay delegates to legislative assemblies shall be women and 50% shall be men (either 2/3 or 3/4 of the delegates would be laypersons and either 1/3 or 1/4 would be from the so-called “Specific Ministry” roster. It was also suggested. that a minimum 20% of the delegates to legislative assemblies shall be persons of color and/or persons with a primary language other than English.<sup>9</sup> The above quotas rekindle the decades-old debate in this country about affirmative action vs. reverse discrimination. Since minorities as

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>7</sup> Information from “Week of Hope,” by Lowell Almen and Donn McLellan *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 19, pp. 6-7, (16 November 1984).

<sup>8</sup> from CNLC “Preliminary Designs for the New Church” adopted on 22 February 1984, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

described above make up only 1-2% of the ALC and LCA memberships, the desire for inclusiveness seems to be at odds with genuine representative democracy. In recent months, as a result of the reactions from church conventions, the 20% minority representation figure has been lowered. The ALC seemed hesitant to set any quotas, but did call for “intentional balance between men and women,” while the LCA favored the CNLC’s revised formula,” but wanted to increase the 10% (for persons of color or with a primary language other than English) to 15% in 10 years.”<sup>10</sup>

### C. Public Ministries

After considerable debate about who should be considered ministers in the new church, the following compromise was reached as described in the 21 November 1984 *The Lutheran*, p. 21:

An “agreement to disagree” characterized the Commission for a New Lutheran Church’s action on the touchy issue of ministry. The issue is heightened by the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches’ insistence that its parochial school teachers are part of the office of ministry which the Lutheran Church in America and American Lutheran Church reserve for the ordained ministry.

As a result, the CNLC recommends that “initially” the new church recognize four public ministries: “Ordained pastors, including bishops; commissioned day school teachers, consecrated deaconesses/deacons, and certified and commissioned lay professionals.”

“We are saying that we cannot resolve the ministry issue,” Dr. Franklin Fry, Summit, N.J., said. “We bequeath to the new church what the uniting churches now have and urge the new church to study the issue.”

The distinctions do not help solve a remaining dilemma for the CNLC—whether to give commissioned, consecrated and certified persons voting privileges as “ministers” or as lay persons.

The CNLC affirmed that the “office of ministry was instituted by God...for the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” The church establishes other forms, such as teaching and diaconal ministries, to assist the church in its mission.

The CNLC noted that acknowledgement of the four forms of public ministry did not commit the church to differing with ecumenical documents which speak of the three-fold ministry of bishops, pastors and deacons.<sup>11</sup>

### D. Ecumenical Relationships

The following item, also from the 21 November 1984 *The Lutheran*, describes how a potentially troublesome issue was neatly resolved in favor of broader and more inclusive relationships:

In a span of less than 15 minutes, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church agreed that the new church would continue current relationships with the Lutheran World Federation, the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches.

The issue at one time threatened the union process because the American Lutheran Church wanted to withhold membership in the NCC while affirming existing ties with the WCC and the LWF. The Lutheran Church in America wanted ecumenical principles to be drawn up for the new church and then applied to membership in any interchurch agency.

The compromise status that the new church would “begin with membership in the WCC at the present level of participation and financial support by the ALC and the LCA.” At the same

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> from *The Lutheran*, vol. 22, number 20, p. 21 (21 November 1984).

time the constituting convention of the new church would call for a study of issues involved in WCC membership and finally settle the matter of WCC membership at the first convention of the new church.

A similar proposal was approved to continue NCC membership at the level of the LCA's present involvement, with a final vote at the first convention. The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches belongs to neither council.. The ALC does not belong to the NCC.

LWF membership would begin with the constituting convention,

“This is an excellent solution to a knotty problem,” ALC Presiding Bishop David W. Preus told the CNLC.<sup>12</sup>

At its October 1984 convention the ALC authorized that the results of recent Lutheran-Reformed—such as the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (USA)—dialogs be studied widely 35 in ALC congregations. Then, recommendations will be made for action in 1986 on possible new relationships, including altar and pulpit fellowship. Two years ago, the ALC, LCA, AELC and Episcopal Church authorized joint celebration of Holy Communion by Lutherans and Episcopalians in particular situations. The above ecumenical actions undoubtedly pleased the ALC's Presiding Bishop David Preus who called for much more merger maneuvering and visible unity when he urged the ALC to “consider whether we now might mutually recognize ministries (of non-Lutheran traditions) and enter alter and pulpit fellowship with confessional Christian groups with which we share very great, but not total, doctrinal agreement.” That is, indeed a very new and radical understanding of the meaning of unity.<sup>13</sup>

## E. Name and Headquarters

The formation of the present ALC in 1960 was preceded by about 10 years of talks by several Lutheran bodies of various ethnic backgrounds. H. George Anderson, in the 16 March 1984 *Lutheran Standard*, described how these several Lutheran bodies decided what name they would choose and where their church headquarters would be:

Take the matter of a name. You might expect that when the Danes, Norwegians, Germans, and Swedes started their merger talks in 1950, they would want to look for a new name. The Danes had their United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELK); the Norwegians were in two groups, the Lutheran Free Church (LFC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC); the German tradition was represented by the American Lutheran Church (ALC): and the Swedish tradition came in the Augustana Lutheran Church. There were almost enough letters between them to spell *affluence*. But, to the confusion of subsequent historians, the name they chose was The American Lutheran Church - identical to one of the predecessor bodies except in the capitalization of “The.” For a time it was known as the TALC merger, but gradually the first initial disappeared.

Why did the others accept the ALC name? It may have been related to the other classic merger problem, namely, where should the new headquarters be located? The first ALC had been formed by the Buffalo, Ohio, and Iowa synods in 1930, and its headquarters were in Columbus, Ohio. The ELC and the LFC had headquarters in Minneapolis, and the Danes were centered in Blair, Nebraska. For a while it seemed the new location might be Chicago, but a change of two votes in the ALC delegation swung the decision to Minneapolis. So the ALC kept its name, and the ELC kept its headquarters.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 20

<sup>13</sup> Information from “Week of Hope,” pp. 8-9; cf. footnote #7 above.

<sup>14</sup> H. George Anderson, “Grace and Patience Needed,” *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 6, p. 18 (16 March 1984).

So far I haven't come up with any clue to the name that may be given to this new church. Although it is unlikely to happen, to say the least, I'd consider it a triumph for honesty and candor if the word Lutheran were not included in the new church's name. As my comments further on in this paper will emphasize, I am convinced that this new church is directly on a path that will first lead to it being swallowed up with Protestantism and subsequently it will rejoice that it will be reunited, after five sad centuries of separation, with the church body ruled by the universally respected and greatly admired bishop of Rome. Wouldn't it be ironic if this remarriage of Protestants (Lutherans included) with Roman Catholicism were made official on 31 October A.D. 2017?

Twelve cities remain under consideration for the site of the national head-quarters: Atlanta; Chicago; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas; Denver; Indianapolis (representatives from this city have aggressively lobbied the CNLC to choose their community); Kansas City; Minneapolis; New York; Philadelphia; St. Louis; and Washington, D. C. Milwaukee, along with Dayton, Ohio; Memphis, Tenn; Merrillville, Ind.; and Omaha, was removed as a contender in recent months. The CNLC has recommended that Cleveland, Ohio, serve as the site for the new church's constituting convention in May, 1987. Cleveland apparently got the nod because it's near the center of the Philadelphia - Minneapolis corridor, where the new church will have its heaviest population concentration.<sup>15</sup> That fact may provide a clue to the final choice of the headquarters site.

## F. Social Activism and Power Politics

It is a safe and educated prediction to state that the new church, more than 5 million members strong, will not hesitate to throw its considerable weight around in the political arenas of our land and in response to all sorts of social issues. Consider the following incidents: The 6 June 1984 Milwaukee Journal reports that LUTHERANS OPPOSE ELF. After that eye-catching (at least it caught my eye, since I'm a Lutheran and I am *not* opposed to ELF) headline, the subsequent article went on to explain how 540 delegates representing 262 congregations of the Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Synod of the LCA passed a resolution at their 1984 convention opposing Project ELF as a "clear and present danger to the human family." ELF is a worldwide system, based in northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan for communicating with US submarines at sea. The resolution passed by a show of hands after a close voice vote.<sup>16</sup>

The 11 November 1984 Milwaukee Journal described a conference at Telemark Lodge in Cable, Wisconsin, sponsored by the Northern Wisconsin District of the ALC. The conference, attended by about 90 clergy and laypeople wrestled with the hot issue of Indian fishing and hunting rights. The Journal reported that "the scriptural context for the session was set by Bishop William Wantland (an appropriate name if there ever was one) of the Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire, who repeated the words of St. John: 'He who loves God should love his brother also.' The bishop, a native of Oklahoma, who is partly Seminole Indian, said he had lived in Indian and non-Indian cultures and represented the Christian viewpoint rooted in two backgrounds."<sup>17</sup>

A current example of liberal Lutherans' determination to dabble in politics and social activism is the sad spectacle that has generated so much national publicity in recent months out of Clairton, Pennsylvania. Since 13 November 1984 the Rev. D. Douglas Roth, an LCA minister with an early background in the Missouri Synod as a Seminex graduate, has languished in prison. Roth, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Clairton, was jailed because he defied a civil court injunction intended to keep him away from the church. His church was split wide open by Roth's membership in and controversial activity with the Denominational Mission Strategy (DMS), a group of clergy and labor leaders who attacked US Steel, the Mellon Bank and other companies in that economically-depressed area for not doing more for the unemployed. To drive home their contempt for the above corporations, members of the DMS reportedly put dead fish in Mellon safety deposit boxes, sprayed skunk oil in offices and disrupted church services where business and uncooperative church officials worship.

<sup>15</sup> Information from the CNLC report in *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 20, p. 31, (14 December 1984).

<sup>16</sup> the item appeared in the 2 June 1984 Milwaukee Journal

<sup>17</sup> Article by Sandy Cota in the 11 November 1984 Milwaukee Journal



On national television I heard an Episcopalian priest connected with Roth's DMS use "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29) to explain their despicable tactics.

It's hard to feel much sympathy for the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod of the LCA which has had to deal with the crusading Clairton clergyman, D. Douglas Roth. For LCA head Bishop James R. Crumley Jr. acknowledged that the controversy at Clairton was "over strategy, not over goals." 5 years ago the DMS received LCA support and only in 1983, when the DMS began employing questionable, deliberately confrontational and often hostile tactics, was that support withdrawn. In other words LCA leaders are not opposed to political pressure ploys and social activism as long as their clergy don't get too zealous, as Roth did in their judgment. Indeed, Rev. Roth would seem to have plenty of support for his actions in the new Lutheran church's Statement of Purpose which states:

This church shall o) Study social issues and trends in the light of the Gospel for the purpose of advocacy, ministry and institutional changes; p) Work to discover the root causes of oppression and injustice, and in faithfulness to God and neighbor develop programs of advocacy to address those persons, structures of society and systems of power that contribute to such oppression and injustice.

It's obvious that Rev. Roth and his DMS comrades sincerely and fervently believe that US Steel and the Mellon Bank are systems of power guilty of gross, oppression and injustice that desperately needed to be addressed and changed. What better way to get their attention and huge media coverage as well than by using dead fish and skunk oil. Years ago liberal Lutherans in the LCA, as well as in the ALC and AELC, pried open the lid of the Pandora's box of playing power politics on the part of the church and the advocacy of radical social activism. It's not surprising now to see clergy like Roth crawling out of that box self-righteously maintaining that their solutions to unemployment, etc. are the only God-pleasing way to go while the aforementioned corporations are all in league with Satan. Roth is a Frankenstein monster liberal Lutherans have been constructing for decades and we can expect more of them to come along if the new Lutheran church remains true to its proposed Statement of Purpose.

## II. Questions of Doctrine and Practice

### A. The Bible

For almost twenty years I have been quoting from a review article by the late Pastor John O. Lang in my pre-membership meetings to point out a key difference between our Wisconsin Synod and liberal Lutherans on the issue of the Bible as the Word of God. In the 11 January 1965 *Lutheran News*, Pastor Lang exposed the heretical teachings of various members of the Religion Department of the ALC's Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. The example that I have found most revealing—and still shocking—is the teaching of a Prof. Wilford F. Bunge concerning the "I am" statements of Jesus recorded in St. John's Gospel. According to Prof. Bunge, the striking words of Jesus recorded by John: "I am the bread of life," "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the light of the world" etc. "are the words of the risen Lord speaking through the confessions of the church and not the words of the Jesus of history." Lurking just beneath the surface of that diabolical doubletalk is the teaching that Jesus, while He lived and walked on this earth as the so-called "Jesus of history," probably never made those dramatic statements John attributed to Him, but in later centuries well-meaning members of the early Christian church put those words in the mouth of the "risen Lord" as part of a kind of Madison Avenue job on Jesus, attempting to make Him more heroic and eloquent than He really was.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For the full review article by John O. Lang cf. *Lutheran News*, (11 January 1965 ). The book reviewed was *Theological Perspectives, A Discussion of Contemporary Issues in Lutheran Theology*, by members of the Religion Dept. of Luther College, Decorate, Iowa. The six chapters of the book were originally delivered as public lectures in the fall of 1962.

The above is just one striking example of the kind of corrupt theology—looking at it from our conservative, confessional Lutheran position—that by now has become commonplace in liberal Lutheran circles, especially in the colleges and seminaries. It is not an exaggeration to claim that many influential liberal Lutheran leaders and professors hold to a view of the Bible which sees the Holy Scriptures as men’s efforts to describe and understand God, rather than as almighty God’s inerrant and infallible revelation to fallen mankind. Oh, oh, there I did it! I used those nasty words “infallible” and “inerrant,” words that the new Lutheran church organizers have made it clear will not be used by them to describe the Bible.

In the new church’s Preliminary Statement of Faith, as revised October 31, 1984, the following affirmation appears:

The Word of God is the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Inspired by God’s Spirit speaking through their authors, they are the record and witness of God’s revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God’s Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world. They are the authoritative source and norm of the Church’s proclamation, faith and life.<sup>19</sup>

The above has been described as a strong statement on Scripture. But the adjectives “inerrant” and “infallible” are conspicuously absent and therefore liberal Lutherans are still free to describe the Bible as containing discrepancies and contradictions as Dr. Ralph Quere, Professor at the ALC’s Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, did as reported in the 2 November 1984 *Lutheran Standard*.

Consider the following statements about the Bible by Richard Simon Hanson in his 17 February 1984 *Lutheran Standard* article, “Scripture and the New Lutheran Church”. This Luther College (Decorah, Iowa) professor of religion states:

We need to acknowledge...that the biblical books are historical records of the life of faith from the past. What we Christians call the Old Testament is the true story of the tribes of Israel as told in the traditions of those tribes...These Scriptures (the Old and New Testaments) cease at a point in time. Yet God continues to send inspired messages through speakers, including persons such as St. Augustine, Moses Maimonides, St. Francis of Assisi; Birgitta of Sweden, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and Martin Luther King Jr., to name but a few. The process of revealing truth to and through people still continues.

I’m certain that Martin Luther would reject Hanson’s definition of the Old Testament and would deeply resent the implication that his writings and those of the others mentioned above can be placed in the same category as the inerrant, infallible and truly unique Holy Scriptures. Hanson’s use of the word “truth” in the above statements can be better understood when we read the following statements from the same article:

...the basic premise about God-talk is that God transcends all images and words...Images—whether in metal or stone, or in human language—can never adequately represent God. The best that language can do is point toward what is true...In the four Gospel accounts of the resurrection we find discrepancies in details, including who was at the tomb and whether there was one angel or two...Genesis 2 puts creation into an order that contradicts that of Genesis 1...the Bible is in dialog with itself. We can quote one Bible verse against another. For this reason we should beware of such words as ‘inerrant’ or ‘infallible.’ ‘True’ is a far better word, for it allows the Bible to be true in many different ways, even between the poles of a dialog. It allows for the

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<sup>19</sup> from the CNLC Progress Report #4 “A Narrative Description for a New Lutheran Church” in *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 20, p. 40, (14 December 1984).

truth of poetry and parable as well as the truth of simple facts. And it recognizes that truth is always greater than facts.<sup>20</sup>

A few decades ago there was a Missouri Synod professor who proclaimed: “The book of God’s truth (the Bible) contains errors.” That view of truth seems to be what Hanson has in mind and it’s obvious, to me at least, that this elastic and mystic view of truth will hold sway in the new Lutheran superchurch.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Prof. David Kuske offers the following opinion of the kind of doctrine of the Word we can expect to be promoted in the new church:

There are those, like the Uniting Lutherans, who limit the use of rationalistic criticism to the human portions of Scripture (those that are beautifully and marvelously ‘true,’ even as they are not factual and are filled with contradictions and discrepancies, my comment, R.J.S.) while insisting that the divine portions be interpreted only according to traditional Lutheran principles of interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

A small, sad sample of such rationalistic criticism of the Bible appeared recently in the *Milwaukee Lutheran*, the voice of the Lutherans of Wisconsin, Inc. organization. In the Spring, 1984 issue one Julie Stine Maroti penned the following seemingly profound and thoroughly ridiculous and blasphemous words:

“Those we call saints rebelled against an outmoded and inadequate form of God on the basis of their new insights into divinity. The teachings that led to their deaths raised the ethical and spiritual levels of their societies. They rebelled against Yahveh, the primitive tribal god of the Hebrews who gloried in the deaths of thousands of Philistines. In place of him came the new visions of Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah of the God of love and justice. Their rebellion was motivated by new insights into the meaning of godliness.”<sup>22</sup>

It is sickening to see such unscriptural silliness featured in a publication bearing the name of Luther. Yet such far-fetched theological theorizing and daydreaming will surely increase in the new Lutheran church.

## **B. FELLP**

There are some, indeed, there are thousands, of laypeople and clergy in the ALC and LCA, who recognize that serious doctrinal problems are present in their various churches and they have banded together to try to prevent various errors and heresies from being perpetuated, either by promotion or by permission, in their new church. The largest and most influential group of such concerned Lutherans held their first national convention in Minneapolis last fall with more than 1,000 in attendance. The group calls itself the Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Laity and Pastors (FELLP). They have made a solid statement about Scripture in their Affirmation of Faith as follows: “We affirm all of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all their parts are the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God and we submit to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.”

Unfortunately, that orthodox-sounding affirmation concerning the Bible loses some of its force when we look at other tenets of FELLP’s creed, such as:

We affirm—that we are totally committed to working with the Lutheran Church to bring about a Christ-centered new Lutheran church in unity, harmony and in obedience to the Word of

<sup>20</sup> from Richard Simon Hanson, “Scripture and the New Church,” *The Lutheran Standard*, pp. 8-10, (17 February 1984).

<sup>21</sup> David P. Kuske, “An Analysis of Three Approaches of the Historical-Critical Method of Interpretation,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 81, number 2, p. 83 (Spring 1984).

<sup>22</sup> Julie Stine Maroti, “Dare to Dream,” *The Milwaukee Lutheran*, Vol. 36, number 8, pp. 1 and 4 (Spring, 1984).

God...our willingness to unite with those whose Christian lifestyle and attitudes reflect a living faith in obedience to the teachings of the Word of God...our willingness to unite with those who confess with us the ancient formulas regarding the Christian faith and the authority of the infallible Word of God.<sup>23</sup>

While we appreciate the commendable and understandable concern that FELLP has expressed about the woefully weak positions that the LCA and the ALC have taken on Scripture in the past, as well as on other vital issues, such as universalism (the teaching that somehow all people will finally end up in paradise), ethical relativism (no clear standards of right and wrong), the condoning and even promoting of homosexuality and the use of sexually explicit films by some liberal Lutheran counseling agencies, we are very skeptical about their being able to achieve the laudable results they desire. Although their above statement on Scripture employs the words “inerrant” and “infallible,” they commended and thanked God for the much less specific statement which the CNLC adopted recently. FELLP also suffers from a very flawed view of fellowship. At least some of their members have been active in the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal movement which for years has promoted prayer and worship with all kinds of charismatic non-Lutherans. When FELLP boldly calls for disciplining the authors of false doctrine and church leaders who condone and promote homosexual behavior,<sup>24</sup> we have to wonder what kind of “discipline” they’re recommending. Forty lashes with a wet noodle, perhaps? Or a severe scolding? Christian discipline reaches its climax in loving excommunication. However, the charismatics in FELLP have been fellowshipping with other non-Lutheran charismatics for years. We believe that FELLP, lacking the backbone of a Bible-based belief in God-pleasing fellowship principles, will have little or no influence on the CNLC and the direction the new Lutheran church will go.

## C. Fellowship Principles and Practices

### 1. COCU

In the new Lutheran church’s Statement of Purpose (as revised by the CNLC on 2 November 1984) the following appears: “...this church shall... t) Enter into relations with other Lutheran church bodies and with other Christian churches for the advancement of the mission of the Church in unity, service and witness.” When I read the foregoing statement, I realized that it’s probably just a matter of time before this new Lutheran church joins the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) and is swallowed up in the multi-million member Church of Christ Uniting (also COCU) which ecumenical visionaries hope comes unto existence sometime in the 21st century. Churches like the ALC, LCA, and AELC, which have been bitten so badly by the union-at-all-costs bug will surely not be content to remain apart from fellowship, and eventually also organic union, with other Protestant bodies. Churches which ignore or try to explain away key fellowship passages like Romans 16:17 - “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.” will not permit residual reverence for the phrase Lutheran to keep them apart from mergers with other Protestants, and, as I already have predicted, even with Roman Catholicism eventually. That is surely the dream of liberal Lutheran leaders.

What is the COCU? A recent article provided the following historical background:

The idea of COCU dates back to December 4, 1960, when the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, a Presbyterian of note, preached a historic sermon at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco, calling for a United church that would be ‘truly catholic, truly evangelical and. truly reformed.’ He had in mind a merger of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and the United Church of Christ.

<sup>23</sup> from the fellowship of Lutheran Laity and Pastors’ *Newsletter*, January 1985 Convention Issue, Prepared and paid for by FELLP, 1200 69th Avenue North, Brooklyn Center, MC 55430

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

The Blake sermon, preached to a standing-room-only crowd during a National Council of Churches assembly, rated a full page in *Time* magazine and generated a burst of excitement. The cathedral was used at the invitation of the late and controversial Bishop James K. Pike, who had seen the sermon beforehand and, perhaps even collaborated in the writing. So the idea was promptly dubbed the ‘Blake-Pike proposal.’ By 1962, the consultation was underway with six founding denominations. By the end of the ’60’s, nine or 10 denominations were involved. The decision of three black denominations to join the effort enhanced its credibility.”<sup>25</sup>

The following denominations with about 23 million members presently belong to COCU: the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal, Episcopal, National Council of Community Churches, Presbyterian Church in the USA, United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist.

After almost a decade of relative inaction and absence from the public eye, a 5-day COCU meeting in Baltimore last November rekindled interest in the prospects for the founding of a super Protestant church. It is not surprising, but significant nevertheless, that Roman Catholic and LCA representatives were present at the Baltimore meeting, where “the most definitive action...in 22 years”<sup>26</sup> was taken by COCU toward eventual merger. The steps taken last November “offer hope that a 24 year-old idea for ending some divisions of American Protestantism could become a reality by the end of the century.”<sup>27</sup> I am hardly being a daring prophet when I predict that the leaders of the new Lutheran church will make a jump on the COCU ecumenical bandwagon one of their first pieces of business in 1988 or 1989. That action would be totally consistent with their past track record and the declaration from their Statement of Purpose quoted above.

## 2. Romance with Rome

Which will come first—the new Lutheran church merging with other liberal Protestants in COCU or liberal Lutheran union with Roman Catholicism? I believe that Lutheran union with the COCU movement will precede a return to Rome, but it could be a close call, even a photo finish. Consider the following Milwaukee Journal news item:

Lutherans and Catholics are optimistic that they will be able to move closer ecumenically in coming years. That was the feeling expressed at the semi-annual meeting of the Commission for Lutheran-Roman Catholic Relationships in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan (the commission includes all five Wisconsin Catholic dioceses, two districts of the ALC, two districts of the LCA, and one district of the AELC. Two districts of the LC-MS were represented as observers. Catholic Bishop Raphael Fliss, co-chairman of the commission said: ‘There is a hunger out there to do things together.’ He said Wisconsin was in a unique position for ecumenism because of the many Lutherans and Roman Catholics in the state.”<sup>28</sup>

The call for Lutheran-Roman Catholic union, of course, is not new. The 4 February 1980 *Christian News* quoted from a 24 January 1980 *Cleveland Plain Dealer* article reporting a sermon preached by the prominent liberal Lutheran minister, Richard John Neuhaus, at Cleveland’s St. John’s Roman Catholic cathedral. The Cleveland paper reported Neuhaus saying:

<sup>25</sup> Jean Caffey Lyles, Associate Editor of the Religious News Service, in the article, “COCU Resurrected: Lions and Lambs Take Giant Step in Trust” in *The Christian News*, p. 23, (17 December 1984).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> from the 28 November 1984 *Milwaukee Journal*, dateline: Wausau, Wisconsin, article headlined - “Lutherans, Catholics Expect Unity.”

There are no longer any reasons to keep Lutherans and Roman Catholics from reuniting into one church...the bitter theological arguments that caused the church to split in the 16th century have been resolved...With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Roman Catholic Church and Lutherans (not we in the WELS, dear merciful Lord God of Truth!) could be reunited in 20 years. It would be an appropriate way to begin a new millenium.

One of the theological issues which Neuhaus contends has been resolved is the key doctrine of justification. Are we saved and declared not guilty by God's free grace through God-given faith in Jesus Christ, without the deeds of the Law, as orthodox Lutherans going back to the Great Reformer himself have taught; or is a person justified by a combination of faith in Christ and human works as Roman Catholicism surely seems to teach to this day? Liberal Lutherans are loudly and joyously announcing that the traditional Lutheran and Roman teachings on justification can now be understood as complementary rather than contradictory ways of expressing one and the same event of salvation in Jesus Christ. I fervently hope and pray that conservative Lutherans in the WELS and ELS or wherever they may be, will not swallow that blatantly untrue ecumenical propaganda. Ephesians 2:8,9 - "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from ourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." has always been a touchstone passage for me emphasizing how my belief as a Lutheran on issues like justification, salvation, grace and faith differs from the Roman Catholic teaching. As a Lutheran I believe that :my salvation is 100% God's doing and is a gift to me and that my faith in Jesus is also God's free gift to me. Obviously, that is not what Roman Catholics are supposed to believe. In a 1975 book by Father John A. Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism*, the following statements about the above subjects appear: "Man's hope of salvation...depends on man's free cooperation with the invitation of God."<sup>29</sup> Faith is described as "a form of obedience"<sup>30</sup> and "an act of responsive obedience to God's revelation."<sup>31</sup> The Jesuit Hardon also declared in his Catholic catechism: "...the act of faith is a work that pertains to salvation...a voluntary response on our part...it is faith because the liberty of cooperation comes from us."<sup>32</sup> "...on our part, faith in Christ's Resurrection is a condition for benefiting from the Redemption."<sup>33</sup> Hardon also favorably quoted Thomas Aquinas as follows: "The Holy Spirit leads us to eternal life, which is the final achievement of all we do, the escaping from all ills and dangers."<sup>34</sup>

Such completely unscriptural and therefore un-Lutheran statements ought to make it clear that the widely-publicized Lutheran-Roman Catholic agreement on justification came to pass only because the liberal Lutherans involved in the dialogue, caved in and compromised away the true Lutheran teachings. In their zeal to achieve reunion with Rome and the Supreme Pontiff they apparently read into Roman Catholicism's statements on justification what they desperately wanted to see and ignored day-to-day Roman teaching like Hardon's quoted above.

In the September 1984 *Eternity* magazine, W. Robert Godfrey, professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, and a teaching elder in the Christian Reformed Church, offered the following critique of the so-called agreement on justification reached in 1983 by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Group:

The report yields too much to the Roman Catholics on this (justification) doctrine...the report must be judged a failure in its most logical objective. It fails to provide a statement on justification that can unite Protestants and Roman Catholics, and it compromises too much that is essential to the gospel. The great doctrine of justification by faith alone still rightly divides the

<sup>29</sup> from John A. Hardon, S. J. , *The Catholic Catechism*, (1975) Doubleday and Co., Inc. , Garden City., New York, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 33

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 35

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 36

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 208

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 204

church. We, as Protestants, must still say with Luther, “Let us have peace if possible, but truth in any case.”<sup>35</sup>

To which I can only add “AMEN.”

Last November 29, 1984, the LCA leader, Bishop James R. Crumley Jr., after a 20 minute private audience with Pope John Paul II, said he was “thrilled by the pope’s own deep commitment to ecumenism and his appreciation for the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the U.S.” The liberal Lutheran bishop also stated: “His Holiness (he’s referring to the Pope, whom Luther’s Smalcald Articles describe as the Antichrist) articulated in a fervent and definitive way his own personal commitment as well as that of the Roman Catholic Church to search for the visible unity of the churches.” According to Crumley “we (Crumley and the Pope) agreed that we Lutherans and Catholics are united in more ways than we are divided.”<sup>36</sup>

Statements and attitudes like those expressed above have become commonplace and indicate that there will be visible unity for Lutherans and Catholics before very long. However, you can be sure that a “His Holiness” headquartered in Rome will run such a church. The average person in the pew in LCA, ALC and AELC churches really should be told that reunion with Rome will be a high priority bit of business for the new Lutheran church.

#### **D. A Telling Tiff over the Trinity**

A 27 February 1984 news release from the ALC’s Office of Communication described the following revealing discussion that took place within the CNLC concerning the new church’s statement of faith:

The document’s introductory sentence, which concludes with the words ‘...we confess our faith in the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,’ provoked prolonged debate. Ewald (Elwyn Ewald, AELC representative from St. Louis), voicing a concern for inclusive language, proposed ending the sentence with ‘...one Triune God,’ dropping references to ‘Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’ Dr. H. George Anderson of Decorah, Iowa, opposed the change, stating that the church’s language is in a time of transition and that the terminology is taken directly from the Scriptures, creeds and Lutheran confessions. Similarly Dr. Fred Meuser of Columbus, Ohio, said it ‘would be fatal’ to drop the words. He pleaded for more careful study of inclusive language issues. Others, like Nilssen (June Nilssen, a campus clergy person at the UW-Milwaukee) and Lois Quam, currently a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, England, said the male characterization of God is found to be exclusive by many people. Ewald’s amendment eventually lost, 30-33.

When I asked Rev. Kohn about this issue and said I found it hard to understand how the CNLC would be arguing about the persons of the Trinity, he jocularly responded that it would be even more difficult for him to explain the situation to me. Then he did say that it was sympathy for feminist concerns that moved 30 members of the CNLC to vote for “excluding” the Father and the Son from their confession about God. The laypeople who will be members of the new church surely should be grateful to the 33 who kept alive that tough and controversial teaching, that the true God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was a close call for the future of confessional Lutheranism, yes, even Christianity itself, but the “we shall not be moved” 33 came through when the pressure was on and carried the day. I realize my comments sound snide and sarcastic, but snide sarcasm somehow seems fitting in the light of the following paragraph from the report on the 1984 AELC convention that appeared in the *Forum Letter*:

<sup>35</sup> cf. the whole article by W. Robert Godfrey, “Reversing the Reformation,” in *Eternity*, vol. 35, number 9, (September 1984) pp. 26-28.

<sup>36</sup> Quotations from a 4 December 1984 Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA) news release from Rome reported in the (10 December 1984) *Christian News*, Vol. 22, number 46.

Much of the organizing of the convention was formally turned over to the small feminist caucus and you can hardly blame them for making the most of it. Typical was the preacher at the convention service who delivered herself of a delicious excoriation of all things sexist, racist and generally disapproved. She pointed out, for example, that in planning for the new Church some people are more worried about Trinitarian language than about the suffering people of Namibia. A lay delegate from New Jersey was heard to remark to his pastor that he did not realize we had to make a choice between theological orthodoxy and compassion. Which goes to show how much consciousness raising still has to be done with our laypeople.<sup>37</sup>

We hope and pray that many lay people in the new church, who gradually become more and more conscious of how little theological orthodox remains in liberal Lutheranism will be led by the Holy Spirit to a church body like ours where, our gracious God be praised, a 33-30 vote favoring the Trinity would be totally unthinkable, whatever the reason.

### **E. The Role of Women**

I think most WELS pastors would readily agree that the role of women is one of the toughest issues, if not the toughest issue, facing WELS as the 20th century winds down. Here the lines are clearly drawn between WELS and the liberal Lutherans forming the new church. We have no women pastors, they have hundreds of them and many more on the way to judge from the many women enrolled in their seminaries. At the 1984 ALC convention the Rev. Barbara Jurgensen exclaimed: "What a waste...to the church to not make use of this full 50% (women constitute more than half of the church's membership) of its resources. What a loss to the church...to not make use of the gifts (the good gifts that women bring) that our Lord has given."<sup>38</sup> I agree wholeheartedly with the foregoing sentiments of Ms. Jurgensen. We in WELS should be making better use of the innumerable gifts God has given us by way of WELS women. However, we cannot make God-pleasing use of those gifts if we ignore or try to evade the clear teaching of pertinent Scripture sections like those in I Corinthians, Ephesians and I Timothy which tell us through God's Apostle Paul the proper role of Christian women in the family and in the church. May God give us in WELS the courage, called for by our Bible-based convictions, to stand up to a culture in which radical feminism is becoming more and more influential and our conscientious refusal to ordain women is increasingly dismissed as a quaint medieval relic jealously guarded by paternalistic male chauvinists.

### **F. Abortion**

Describing the work and a key decision of the CNLC, Dr. H. George Anderson has said:

Sometimes we were able to find detours around the mountains. The CNLC has decided not to decide some issues. Social issues such as abortion, for example, need a more complex process of study than the busy CNLC can provide. Its goal is to suggest a structure for dealing with such questions in a new church. The actual study and decision process would occur after the new church is formed. The CNLC has simplified its task immensely by, limiting its actions to creating the machinery for a new church rather than trying to act like a church.<sup>39</sup>

On the basis of the past practice of the uniting Lutheran church bodies, it seems fair to predict that the new church will take a very permissive position toward abortion on demand, the slaughter of infants which in just over a decade has brought about the death of more precious souls than the number of people who served in the

<sup>37</sup> from the (26 October 1984) *Forum Letter*, vol. 13, number 10.

<sup>38</sup> cf. footnote #7 above, p. 11

<sup>39</sup> H. George Anderson, "Fresh Life in New Church," *The Lutheran Standard*, vol. 24, number 20, (14 December 1984) p. 24.



US Armed Forces in WW II. The proclamations of liberal Lutheran clergy have contributed to the continuing disgraceful tragedy of abortion in our country. I see no hint of change in their long-standing permissive stance.

### G. Scouting/Lodges

I doubt whether the CNLC will spend even one minute discussing this issue. When I suggested to Pastor William Kohn that the Scouting-lodge membership question was probably a “dead issue” for the CNLC, he mildly disagreed and suggested instead that it was not a high priority for the uniting Lutherans. I see in this issue still another “great gulf fixed” (Luke 16:26 KJV: chasm in NIV) between WELS and liberal Lutherans. It’s obvious that many WELS lay people do not clearly understand why we condemn membership in these popular and still very powerful organizations (just a few blocks from Wisconsin Lutheran High School, a huge Scouting headquarters building is under construction). WELS clergy must continue to expose the grievous errors promoted by these organizations: work righteousness and Christ-denying idolatry. I respectfully call upon my WELS brother pastors to make our stand against these organizations as clear as possible in prospective member meetings (with those who transfer from sister churches as well, to review the pertinent principles). I suggest that a copy of Pastor Paul Kelm’s *Northwestern Lutheran* article concerning the Scouts (*The Northwestern Lutheran* 15 February, 1984) and a copy of a *Christian News* report of a blatantly idolatrous worship service in a Baltimore cathedral sponsored by Girl Scout leaders (*Christian News*, 2 April 1984) be made available to prospective members to demonstrate and document their unscriptural teachings and activities.

As far as the lodges are concerned we might reproduce a newspaper obituary notice or two like the excerpt which follows to show how especially the Masons see their organization as an alternative or more commonly as a supplementary religion, which under the scrutiny of Scripture must also be judged idolatrous and reeking of work righteousness: “Complete (sic) funeral 7:30 p.m. Fri. at Philip J. Weirs Inc. (address) The Rev. Robert Young of Fox Point Ev. Lutheran Church officiating, followed by Masonic services under the auspices of Milwaukee-Harmony Lodge No. 261, F. & A. M. ...Memorials to Dousman Masonic Home...”

For additional documentation regarding the Scouts/lodges’ aberrations you might consult my 1982 Northwestern Publishing House book, *Idols—Dead or Alive?*, pp. 108-128. Since I receive no royalties, I will even be so bold as to urge you to buy the book for your members. At many points it touches on the subject before us in this paper.

Woe to us in WELS if we let down our guard toward the lodges and Scouting! I have an uneasy feeling that our resolve to take a strict, yet simultaneously evangelical, stand toward these Christless organizations is not as solid and united as it once was. In our zeal to gain and retain new members we dare not gloss over the errors of these groups or look the other way when we know of people in our churches and/or their children who are members of such groups.

### H. Chaplains

Another point of departure separating us in WELS from the organizing bodies of the new Lutheran church is the sponsorship and support of chaplains—both military and legislative. At the 1984 ALC convention, Chaplain (Brig. Gen.) Paul O. Forsberg, an ALC clergyman who is deputy chief of army chaplains in Washington, D.C., warned of what he sees as “a widening gulf between the American Lutheran Church and the military.” He bemoaned the “haze of suspicion and distrust” brought about by peace activists and nuclear weapons protesters. He said that “current attitudes toward the military and toward chaplains by some Lutherans make us feel less than certain that the church values or appreciates our calling.”<sup>40</sup>

While we in WELS most certainly do value and appreciate the military which serves as the “sword” (Romans 13) of God’s representative, the government, the same cannot be said of the chaplaincy which promotes unscriptural fellowship principles and practices and dangerously mixes church and state to the

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<sup>40</sup> cf. footnote # 7 above, p. 6

detriment of both. The fact that Forsberg received a standing ovation from the convention delegates after his address indicates, I believe, that the new Lutheran church will continue liberal Lutheran participation in our country's misguided and unionistic military chaplaincy program. For more details relating to WELS objections to the chaplaincy, please check out pp. 172-180 of my *Idols—Dead or Alive?* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1982).

## **I. Lutheran Charismatic Renewal**

This group of Lutherans, with representation from nearly every Lutheran body is into faith healing, tongues speaking and direct divine prophecy to individuals without the benefit of the Bible. The new Lutheran church certainly will be big enough—and broad and vague enough in its doctrinal stance—to accommodate Lutheran charismatics. In fact, their long-standing practice of prayer avid worship fellowship with all sorts of non-Lutherans, as long as they're fellow charismatics, is most compatible with the new church's statements of faith and purpose.

## **J. Holy Communion**

Last week, to my dismay, I received in the mail a Holy Communion registration card from a Milwaukee area liberal (LCA) Lutheran congregation informing me that one of our Woodlawn members had received the Lord's Supper there on Christmas Day. The reception of that card makes two points, in my opinion. First, there is an ongoing need to give guidance, instruction, and—where necessary—evangelical admonition with regard to inter-Lutheran relationships. The Woodlawn member is a Christian day school and Wisconsin Lutheran High School graduate and came from a solid, life-long Lutheran family. We cannot blithely assume that our members understand why they should not commune in liberal Lutheran or non-Lutheran churches. Second, it is obvious that the new Lutheran church will practice wide open Communion, warmly welcoming all comers like Our Savior's (ALC) of Sun Prairie does on its card: "We believe that Christ is REALLY PRESENT in the Lord's Supper giving us his Body and Blood along with the bread and wine. If you agree, we invite you to join us at the Lord's Table." That's a classic case of a good confession of faith concerning Holy Communion combined with flabby practice.. Although I have not yet done it myself, I recommend that all of us WELS pastors make the new NPH tract concerning our close communion practice available to all our members.

To my knowledge, WELS congregations distribute Holy Communion for the first time to children who are 12-14 years old, who have completed a 2-3 year course of thorough instruction in God's Word on the basis of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism and have been confirmed in the Lutheran Christian faith. We do this because we believe that a good measure of God-given maturity should be present in a person before he/she receives the Sacrament of the Altar. We take very seriously Paul's instructions concerning Communion in I Corinthians 11:27-29, where he warns about taking Communion in an unworthy manner, thereby sinning against the body and blood of the Lord and he calls for a man to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. I have never felt that this or that child, like a kind of spiritual protege, should have received Communion much sooner than the early teens.

In the new Lutheran church it appears likely that WELS-like practice concerning an early-teen first Communion will be phased out in favor of more first communions for pre-teens. The December 1984 *Lutheran*, an LCA publication, reports that more than 63% of children receiving Holy Communion for the first time were in grade 5 or even lower. In 1980 the percentage was 54 and in 1978 it was 48.7%. As might be expected the percentage of children receiving Communion for the first time in grade 8 or higher declined from 33% in 1978 to just under 22% in 1983, when the figures were last compiled. In a booklet, "What Every Lutheran Should Know about the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" published by the Charming L. Bete Co., Inc. of South Deerfield, MA under the question: "Who may receive Holy Communion?" it is stated that:

Communicants may include: --all confirmed members of the Lutheran church who meet the guidelines for admission to communion. --baptized children who understand the meaning of the sacrament (normally around age 10)... --other baptized Christians who believe that the crucified Lord is present in this sacrament, giving himself to his people (Some Lutheran churches (like WELS!) have other standards for admission to communion).

It's very safe to predict that the new Lutheran church's Communion admission standards will be very different from ours in WELS. Chalk up another victory for doctrinal and practical laxity and spiritual irresponsibility! It is not a sign of progress for the Lutheran church to give out communion to immature youngsters and to non-Lutherans whose understanding of Christ being really present in Communion is minimal at best and grossly distorted or absent at worst.

## **K. Marriage**

A recent article concerning wedding ceremonies in the *West Allis Star* spotlights some of the differences between most WELS weddings and those in more liberal Lutheran churches. To me it's become a matter of principle to call upon the wife to "obey" her husband. Of course, in pre-marital counseling and often in wedding addresses I also stress the huge responsibility of the husband to be a Christ to his wife. I also believe that Communion at a wedding is an inappropriate imitation of Roman Catholic practice. The following comments by an LCA pastor reveal some key points of difference:

The Rev. John Schumell of King of Kings Lutheran Church, 95th and Good Hope Rd., said most of the couples he marries do choose a church wedding, but then things rapidly become individualized.

For instance, the old-fashioned way of the bride and her party processing down the aisle while the groom "sneaks in the sacristy" isn't done too much any more. Virtually all people enter by couples and the bride and groom enter together, he said.

Or the groom precedes the bride with his parents, and the bride and both her parents come down the aisle together to symbolize the uniting of both families.

"The Lutheran Church in America has a new service book which moves the wedding rite away from the traditional understanding," he said. "I no longer pronounce people man and wife, and I don't use the word 'obey' unless it pertains to both the bride and groom."

Other changes in the traditional liturgy, Schumell said, are that the congregation is a witness to the marriage and more non-clergy people participate.

He also offers a couple the chance to write their own wedding vows. If they choose not to do that, he offers them four different sets to choose from or combine to make their own ceremony unique.

We're a liturgy team, and their marriage is their own, not number 395 that I've cranked out this year," Schumell said.

He also noted that Communion at weddings is becoming increasingly popular.<sup>41</sup>

## **L. Whither Missouri?**

Surely it is gratifying that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod recognizes the many liberal aberrations in the ALC, LCA and its own delinquent step child, the AELC, and therefore declined the invitation to join in organizing the new Lutheran church. It is to be hoped that the liberal Lutherans—and there seem to be many of

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<sup>41</sup> Kathy Warnes, "Modern Couples Marry Their Own Way," p. 9, *West Allis Star* (27 December 1984).

them—who still belong to the LC-MS will find their way into the new Lutheran church and thus make it easier for concerned and conscientious conservatives in the LC-MS to carry on with the still incomplete task of restoring their Synod to its historic orthodox Lutheran position. How we long for the day when a copy of the *Christian News* will not report still another example of unionistic worship by LC-MS clergy! We pray that the LC-MS, by the grace and guidance of almighty God, will clean up its practice of prayer and worship fellowship in conformity with God’s Word. It is disappointing, to say the least, to attend a football game at Concordia College-Wisconsin and there to be urged at halftime to patronize a refreshment stand sponsored by the pan-evangelical Protestant Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Almost as disappointing, my alma mater lost to Concordia!

### Closing Thoughts

In this paper I have tried to sound a warning, to the members of the congregation I serve and to my brother pastors of the Metro-South Pastoral Conference who have a responsibility to pass along the warning to the members of the churches they serve. The new Lutheran church, like the 3 bodies organizing it, promises to be thoroughly heterodox, teaching and preaching a confusing mish-mash of sweet Gospel truth and pernicious errors. In Catechism instruction parlance, it will surely be a false visible Christian church body, the kind of church Scripture calls upon us to avoid. Surely some people will learn the way of salvation in this church as they would not learn it in a Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Kingdom Hall, a Jewish synagogue, or a Moslem mosque, but some will also be taught that prayer and worship with non-Christians like Jews and Moslems is pleasing to the true God. It is the nature of heterodoxy to send out mixed messages, confusing signals and only almighty God is able to identify the souls saved by coming to faith in Jesus even in a heterodox denomination and souls whose salvation will be forfeited due to the false doctrines they heard and tragically believed.

The founding of this new Lutheran church surely is a good thing when one thinks of the lessening of confusion for the WELS laity, who should find it easier to understand why they should not join, regularly worship or commune in congregations affiliated with one large, liberal Lutheran church rather than to keep track of fine distinctions between the present three Lutheran church bodies. That lessening of confusion may, however, be offset by the confusion, especially in the minds of non-Lutherans, that will come when a multi-million member Lutheran body, flexing its media-grabbing muscles, will presume to publicize the “Lutheran” position on various social and political issues. To some extent we do it already, but in the future we will have to expend even more effort to tell the world that that pseudo-Lutheran church, numerically powerful though it may be, does not speak for us.

Some might say I’ve wasted a lot of time, ink and paper in preparing this evaluation of the new Lutheran church because of what has been called the “Americanization” or “democratization” of religion in our land. Martin Marty has pinpointed this phenomenon: “Much religion in modern America is purely private, a matter of consumer preference. People pick a spiritual trajectory. To the degree that a denomination supports that course, they will welcome the denomination. Where it does not, they will not.”<sup>42</sup> In the past year our congregation reluctantly removed from membership two young couples, lifelong WELS Lutherans all four of them, who told me, in all kind and serious sincerity, that Woodlawn and WELS were just not meeting their spiritual needs, not satisfying their hunger for in-depth Bible study and meaningful fellowship relationships in a real church family. Accordingly, those consumers have gone shopping elsewhere and loyalty to WELS and the Biblical positions we espouse has been sacrificed, with little apparent regret or looking back. That sad experience prompts me to agree with Marty above and with J. Randall Peterson who has observed that “People don’t choose denominations. They choose churches (local congregations)...denominational loyalty has suffered...It’s only a matter of time...before the majority of people in a given denomination don’t really belong to the denomination (in their minds, that is), just to churches within that denomination.”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> quoted by J. Randall Peterson in “Denomination Blues,” vol. 11, number 22, p. 4, *Evangelical Newsletter* (23 November 1984)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Statement by J. Randall Peterson.

There will be no mass exodus by conservatives from the LCA, ALC, or AELC when the new church opens for business in 1988. Most U.S. Lutherans have learned to live with doctrinal diversity within their denominations; the amazing uniformity of faith and confession with which God has graciously blessed us in the WELS is foreign to them and apparently is not a high priority for them—as long as their local church and minister do not go too far off the deep end—in doctrine, social activism or dabbling in politics.

Over the years I've become, by the grace and guidance of God, more and more sensitive to the need to say with the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14—"God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" especially when I preach sermons, teach classes, or write papers like this one in which much criticism of other people's beliefs and teachings is required. I recognize within me, surely it's within all of us, especially we who have been so richly blessed from birth with membership in a solid orthodox evangelical Lutheran church body, the temptation planted by Satan to proclaim with the Pharisee: "God, I thank you that I am not like all other men."

The devil would be delighted if he could bring about our downfall in the WELS, if not with obvious doctrinal deterioration, then with our succumbing to a spirit of self-righteousness, holier-than-thouness, and smug spiritual pride. Many pitfalls lie ahead of us in the WELS. We will be wrestling with many tough questions about the role of women in the home and church for decades to come. Public opinion will be applying increasing pressure on us to ordain women pastors. Our government may well accuse us of discrimination and be prepared to penalize or punish us accordingly. The practice of God-pleasing Scriptural fellowship principles will never be popular or easy in a land which so admires union and healing all conflicts with compromise. If it works in politics, why not settle religious differences with dialogue and compromise? How difficult it is to be warm, friendly and humble when you must refuse to pray, worship and commune outside our fellowship. Satan will continue to tempt us to develop a siege mentality, to insulate ourselves and become a self-righteous and provincial sect, to wallow in self-pity and to say as did Elijah of old: "I'm the only true believer left."

The answer to the errors and dangers detailed in this paper is not complicated or difficult. We know that God's Word is our great heritage. Thorough indoctrination of our WELS people, young and old, and especially of prospective members, must be the order of this day and the decades ahead. To spread the light of God's truth, Law and Gospel, must continue to be the chief endeavor of the WELS. This evaluation of the proposed new Lutheran church, I hope, should make all of us more determined than ever to revere the name of the one true God and to keep His teachings in Scripture, with which we've been entrusted, pure and unsullied by the fancies of false prophets throughout all generations.

Reuel J. Schulz, Pastor  
Epiphany 1985

### **Thanks!!**

--to the Rev. William Kohn for the time he gave me to supply his insider's view of the CNLC.

--especially to Prof. Martin Westerhaus, his staff and student library assistants at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI. They did much of the research for my paper. I am most grateful.

## **Additions, Corrections, Suggestions**

After this paper first was delivered to the Metro-South Pastoral Conference on 21 January 1985, I was asked to present it also to the Metro-North Conference on 20 May 1985. Since the CNLC held its seventh of ten meetings in February 1985 in Atlanta and other developments have occurred which pertain to this subject, I offer the following additions, corrections and suggestions that have come to my mind and attention over the past five months.

### **Questions of Structure, Organization and Authority**

My paper described the two kinds of church structure, 3-expression or 4-expression, considered by the CNLC. That issue seems to be resolved. In the 3/15/85 issue of the *Lutheran Standard*, p. 22, it is reported that:

The latest organizational design for the new church contains elements of CNLC's Design 3—the three-expression model—and Design 4—the four-expression pattern—...

The new proposal, called Design 5, lies somewhere between Designs 3 and 4. So it has been called by some Design 3.3 or three and a third. The plan maintains the regional grouping of synods—suggested in Design 4—but makes them nonlegislative, directed by representatives of the synods and national structure.

These seven to 10 regional centers for mission, according to the CNLC's current proposal, are to serve as a point of interrelationship between synods and national units.

The number of congregations per synod may range from as few as 30 to as many as 275, with most synods likely having 150 to 200 congregations. If there were an average of 200 congregations per synod the new church would have 55 synods.

It appears that the LCA's Slovak Zion Synod will be permitted to remain as a non-geographic synod, drawing its membership from Lutherans of Czech and Yugoslav ancestry.

Apparently the ALC's concerns about, a three-expression church being too hierarchical and unduly multiplying boards and offices have been satisfied with the inclusion of the regional centers for mission, where the CNLC expects church planting and evangelism to be planned and vigorously promoted. The regional centers are viewed as partnership units linking groups of synods to the national church.

### **Offices, Divisions, Commissions, and Councils**

The 4/5/85 issue of the *Lutheran Standard* contains the twenty-page Progress Report #5 of the CNLC. I offer a much abbreviated overview of that report. The proposed church will have four offices, for Ecumenical Affairs—its first place position surely is significant—, for Finance, for Personnel and for Research, Planning and Evaluation. The bishop of the church has responsibility for all of the above offices, except for, Finance which is in the office of the treasurer. There will be six divisions: for Congregational Life, for Education, for Global Mission, for Ministry, for Outreach-USA and for Social Ministry Organizations. Three commissions shall be established: for church in Society, for Communications Services and for Financial Support. In addition to the above there will be a unit for Ethnic/Racial Ministries, possibly a unit for women's ministries in addition to a women's organization, a Church Publishing House, the Church Pension and Other Benefits Plans, a Council of Bishops with national church officers as ex officio members, a Cabinet of Executives, and an Advisory Committee for the Church Periodical.

### **Leadership**

The churchwide delegate (about 1,000-1,200 in number) assembly, which is scheduled for biennial meetings, shall elect the national bishop to a four year term in his/her salaried, full-time position. The vice-president shall be a layperson who shall serve a four-year term without salary and shall chair the church council. The treasurer and secretary may be either laypersons or persons on the roster of ministers. Both will serve as salaried, full-time officers for four-year terms, but the treasurer, unlike the other officers, shall be elected by the church council. The bishop shall supervise the work of the other officers; all four may be reelected. Each synod shall have the same four key officers as the national expression with the similar responsibilities and terms in office, but only the synodical bishop will be salaried. The 7-10 regional centers for mission shall be governed by a coordinating council who shall select a full-time coordinator, salaried jointly by the participating synods. Other staff may be hired by the coordinating council.

### **60%-40%, 50%-50%, and 10%**

The above %'s keep cropping up in CNLC documents. At all significant meetings of the new church, 60% of the delegates will be laypersons, while 40% will be people on the roster of ministers. At their meetings participation will be 50% men and 50% women and there will be a quota minimum (goal or significant participation) of 10% for persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English.

### **1987 Constituting Convention Site**

Poor Cleveland! I reported that the CNLC had invited itself to Cleveland for the May '87 constituting convention. For reasons I found nowhere specifically stated, the CNLC shifted from Cleveland to Columbus, Ohio and set the convention dates tentatively for April 28 - May 3. That's less than two years away. There was some speculation that the Columbus site was chosen and poor Cleveland, which gets no respect as it is, rejected because of Columbus' large Lutheran population and significant number of Lutheran institutions there.

### **Bishopry Speculation and Cattau-Style Confessionalism**

At Columbus in less than two years, a national (arch ?) bishop will be chosen to lead the new church. In a 2/8/85 article, special to *Religious News Service*, and reprinted in the 2/18/85 *Christian News*, Daniel Cattau, director of the News Bureau of the Lutheran Council in the USA, offers some early morning line favorites and odds:

- (5-2) The Rev. Dr. H. George Anderson, an LCA pastor who is president of the ALC's Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.
- (4-1) The 59 year old Bishop of the LCA since 1978, James R. Crumley, Jr.
- (6-1) The 62 year old Presiding Bishop of the ALC, David W. Preus.
- (10-1) LCA secretary Reuben Swanson (62); Lloyd Svendsbye, president of Luther-Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul and an ALC vice-president. Svendsbye also was part of a Lutheran delegation to Rome which in recent weeks had a papal audience; AELC Bishop Will Herzfeld, first black to lead a national Lutheran church body.
- (20-1) John Tietjen, AELC vice-president and president of Christ Seminary-Seminex, Chicago; LCA Minnesota Synod Bishop Herbert Chilstrom; LCA Nebraska Synod Bishop Dennis Anderson; ALC Iowa District Bishop L. David Brown and William Lazareth, former World Council of Churches official and currently a New York City parish pastor.

I'm not sure how qualified Cattau is as a bishop-election prophet, but I do have serious questions about his reliability and credibility, when in the same article mentioned above he described the CNLC's statement of

faith as “clearly a strong Lutheran document in confession and tone.” To be sure, there are some fine declarations in that statement of faith, but the document wiggles and waffles when it comes to our Lutheran Confessions. Only of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is it said that “we confess as our own the faith confessed in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.” Of the other Lutheran confessional writings in the Book of Concord the statement of faith says: “*We affirm...the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as valid expressions of the faith confessed in the Augsburg Confession and its central teaching of justification by grace through faith alone.*” Surely, the above words cannot be honestly described as part of “a strong Lutheran document in confession and tone.” The new church’s statement of faith is found wanting when it makes five of our basic Lutheran belief statements patently second-class confessions, to which members are asked to subscribe in lukewarm (Rev. 3:16) language with weasel words.

### **The Crucial Issue of Ministry**

In the 3/20/85 issue of the LCA’s *The Lutheran*, Editor Edgar R. Trexler writes: “The CNLC has discovered that different opinions about church structure are surmountable. The ministry question may not be church-dividing, but it is so crucial that the new church may not come into being without its resolution.” What is this crucial ministry question that as yet has not, been resolved? On p. 5 of this paper I reported that the CNLC recommended an “agree to disagree” posture on the issue of whether AELC day school teachers and deaconesses should enjoy ministry status, also in the eyes of the IRS and at synod and national conventions, on a par with ordained pastors of Word and Sacrament,. The issue was to be settled by the new church, but a study committee has been instructed to tackle the task and bring a position to the CNLC’s September 23-27 meeting in Kansas City. About 250 Christian day-school teachers in the AELC will be very interested in the results from that KC meeting.

This WELS pastor can’t help but think of Matthew 7:3-5 when I read so much about this “crucial” ministry issue. The three uniting churches years ago swallowed the “beam” or “plank” of ordaining women pastors, so now it is difficult to generate much excitement as they struggle and strain away at what is comparatively the “mote” or tiny “speck” of which men and women in full-time church service will be recognized by the IRS as “ministers of religion,” thus enjoying the same tax advantages(?) of ordained clergy. Something is cockeyed there somewhere as to what is the really “crucial” ministry issue.

### **The Latest on Renegade Roth**

When last we left the Rev. D. Douglas Roth, Seminex graduate and LCA social activist minister from Clairton, PA, he was serving a jail sentence for defying a civil court injunction. Even in jail Roth generated plenty of publicity and media attention. CBS’s “Sixty Minutes” had a segment on Roth on 2/24/85. The program did not paint a very flattering picture of the crusading clergyman, but implied that he was a rather dense dupe and naive dummy whose strings were being pulled by the much more intelligent and politically shrewd (he’s never been to jail) Charles Honeywell, who was the real brains behind Roth’s social activist sermonizing, as the principal tactician of Pittsburgh’s DMS program for the unemployed.

The February 1985 issue of the *Milwaukee Lutheran* offered a list of “the most influential Lutherans in 1984, compiled by *Lutheran Perspective*, a publication of the AELC-related Evangelical Lutherans in Mission, Inc. First on the list was William Kinnison, chairman of the CNLC. In 10th place was D. Douglas Roth and 15th was the aforementioned Machiavellian puppet master, Charles Honeywell. The only WELS member on the list of 20 was Wisconsin Lutheran College’s Gary Greenfield who was unlucky enough to be placed between Honeywell and Roth in 13th place.

Not long after serving 112 days in jail Roth was defrocked by a 15 member LCA disciplinary panel. In June of ’85 some 600 delegates to the convention of the LCA’s Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod will vote on the panel’s recommendation to remove Roth from the ministry. Until then, Roth remains suspended



without pay. Roth has vowed to continue his “prophetic ministry” and maintains: “I will take this fight across the country...to the Supreme Court if necessary. You do not defrock pastors in America who fight for the unemployed.” (from article in the *Milwaukee Journal* on 3/13/85). On Sunday, March 17, 1985 Roth was arrested outside Faith Lutheran Church in Upper St. Clair, a wealthy Pittsburgh suburb. He and six other supporters were released after being charged with “defying trespass notices, disorderly conduct, failure to disperse, obstructing a highway and disrupting a meeting” (*TMJ* 3/18/85).

Why do we dwell on this sordid case of the wayward, well-intentioned and almost comically misguided Don Quixote with a backward collar? Isn't he just a sad aberration, a bad apple, among the LCA clergy, who now has been, properly put in his place by the LCA powers that be? No, I believe Roth is more victim than culprit, an idealistic young man who has been punished for putting into practice the principles he learned in a liberal Lutheran seminary and church body. Bishop May of the LCA, for example, declared that Roth was not being disciplined for his participation in DMS, but rather for his alleged inability to conduct the affairs of the congregation.

I find the following statement of Bishop May very revealing: “We have *many* (my italics) clergy who speak their minds, get in peace marches or arrested...But that is not the problem. We're willing to permit him to do social activism, but not when it destroys the parish...” (*TMJ* 3/13/85). May sees the problem as one of degree, not of kind, and surely that's where we in WELS part company with Roth as well as with Bishop May and the whole LCA. That activist philosophy and practice will prevail in the new church.

### **Still More on Scouting**

Earlier in this paper I touched briefly on the Scouting movement and the fact that the new Lutheran church obviously has no reservations about its young people being Scouts. I also mentioned my impression that WELS awareness of the false teachings of Scouting regarding God and good deeds seems to be waning. Many WELS laypeople profess ignorance about our reasons for opposing Scout membership for our youth. I have talked with WELS pastors who have gained the erroneous impression that Scouting is in decline among America's youth and who contend that making very much of our anti-Scout stance is not only unnecessary but also is damaging to our evangelism efforts and mission expansion. Naturally I am not recommending that an initial evangelism visit to a fresh prospect feature a full scale verbal assault on Scouting, but I cannot conceive of a WELS pastor recommending people for membership in his congregation who have not heard from him in some sort of pre-membership visit or meeting, the Scripture's solid case against this semi-religious, idolatrous, work righteousness-promoting group.

The February 17, 1985, Sunday *Milwaukee Journal* featured an extensive article by Dennis Getto, “Boy Scouts: After 75 years, the Spirit Lives on,” which documented the solid dramatic resurgence of the organization in recent years after a decade or so of decline. Nearly every day I drive past the new \$1 million Service Center on 84th St., just north of the East-West Freeway. If the Scouts are dying out, as I've heard some WELS people argue, they're doing an impressive job of disguising their demise. Getto reports that there are about 3,651,000 young people in the BSA program, plus about 1,100,000 adult leaders and helpers. In our community, as well as most others, I'm sure, the BSA has easy and ready access to the public schools for meetings and recruitment drives. In Wisconsin, approximately 19% of boys ages 7 through 13 and of boys 14 to 16 are in Boy Scouting. None of the above figures include the young people in Girl Scouting. In his article, Getto quoted a Prof. Frederick Schapsmeier, a UW-Oshkosh historian who says one of the key factors contributing to Scouting growth since 1910 was “the increased belief in the Darwinian principle of survival of the fittest.” Getto also quoted influential Milwaukeeans like Milwaukee County executive William O'Donnell, sheriff Richard Artison and Milwaukee police chief Robert Ziarnik who had nothing but good things to say about the organization. WELS' determination to keep our people free from the false teachings of Scouting must not be permitted to diminish, especially since it's no real issue among the uniting Lutherans.

## Suggestions

More than 30 years ago the Conference of Presidents of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States published a series of booklets under the title, "Continuing in His Word." In the booklets key subjects such as the Antichrist, Prayer Fellowship and Scouting were explained in non-technical language to inform laypeople about some of the doctrinal and practical differences which stood between our Synod and the more liberal Lutheran church bodies. I believe that with the new Lutheran church looming large and ominous on the horizon there is a crying need for a similar series of booklets, on the order of the recently released COP's publication on the role of man and woman.

In addition, I believe that a similar series of articles should appear, beginning as soon as possible, in the *Northwestern Lutheran*. Perhaps members of our WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations could be asked to write articles which could be printed first in the *NWL* and then made available in individual booklets or one booklet, such as was done recently with Pastor Victor Prange's series of *NWL* articles on other denominations. I believe that many WELS pastors like myself would make good use of such articles and/or booklets to alert and inform our WELS laity about the steadily deteriorating doctrinal decadence that threatens to victimize millions of gullible and trusting Lutherans for generations to come in this new church. We need to make it crystal clear to our people why they should not join or engage in church fellowship with this new church.

Isn't it about time for us in WELS to come up with a new name for our church body? I've felt this way for some time, but my conviction concerning our name has been strengthened by the new church's plan to have 50-100 districts, which as the LCA does already, will be called synods. Every now and then I've had people tell me they belong to our Wisconsin Synod when in reality they were members of a congregation affiliated with the LCA's Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Synod (district). I'm certain that our home missionaries outside of Wisconsin would be pleased if we set aside this lingering piece of provincialism. It seems that such a name change, to reflect the 50 state nature of what our gracious God has made a truly national church, is inevitable. Why not make it sooner rather than later?

R. J. S.