

Pastor Comments On Martin Luther

By ELIZABETH WISSMAN

About the most provocative subject to introduce into a conversation with a Lutheran minister is the personality of Martin Luther.

The Rev. Carl E. Mehl, pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church near Kendallwood Shopping Center, is no exception to the rule.

What a reincarnated Luther would have to say about present-day churchdom is an "in" topic for speculation.

Pastor Mehl comments: "I WOULD SAY that he would be quite disturbed about the 'bureaucratism' of present day churches because this was one of the things that nettled him in the first place. His main effort was to bring the church back to the people. Lutherans today favor a congregational policy. We believe the place of the church is with the people.

"Today there is a strong tendency toward centralization of administration and authority. I see danger in this.

"We're living in an age of efficiency—the age of the computer—the huge business empire cannot operate efficiently without this centralization. This attitude is bound to spill over into the church."

The pastor continues, "The danger in this is that there is an awful lot of white towers (central authority) thinking that it is attempting to direct the local church. They sit in their white towers and have lost all contact with the local church."

"LUTHER was primarily a doctrinal reformer. And he was concerned with problems outside the church."

"In history, Luther emerges as a reformer of his times in almost all areas. From his doctrinal standpoint, I would say there is a need for return to this same source. In all the talk about ecumenism, I feel we should go back to the inspired word of God. Here a reformer may be necessary. We should be asking what does God say?"

"If we all sat down and listened we could hope for the right kind of ecumenical movement."

THE MINISTER, who made these statements could be called something of a converted missionary.

Most of the pastor's ministry has been mission development.

He says, "This was primarily my own choosing because I believe the call to a church is divine. I obeyed Christ's order."

Before coming to Prince of Peace when it was a mission church, Pastor Mehl served six mission congregations from Wisconsin to Georgia.

Of his acceptance of the permanent pastorate at Prince of Peace, he says, "After you get to be 50 years old, mission work is hard to do. You are your own secretary writing all the church correspondence, letters and bulletins; you move furniture; you are your own janitor and everything else."

The local minister is the son of a Lutheran clergyman, the Rev. Theodore Mehl, and because he was born in a parsonage in Farmerville, Ill., all of this could have been no surprise to him.

He has a strong background in communications media and has done public relations work during his entire ministry.

He paid his way through Concordia Seminary in St. Louis by working as a jack-of-all-trades on radio station and worked for two years on station KOA in Denver.

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