

WHY WE NO LONGER WALK TOGETHER -
AN ANALYSIS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN

WELS AND CLC

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Submitted to Prof. Fredrich

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A definitive history of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), of its formation and continuance to the present day, would be an admirable undertaking, but perhaps a bit too presumptuous on the part of one who was not directly involved. The dearth of primary sources is the basis for the term "presumptuous". Some events in church history were adequately recorded by those involved and are easy prey for the historian's pen. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the CLC. Most of the information is to be found in official as well as private correspondence between the representatives of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and the CLC. As a result, the sequence of events is not always clear. There are, to be sure, numerous articles dealing with the theological issues in the official organs of the CLC (The Lutheran Spokesman and The Journal of Theology) but very little treatment in the official outlets of WELS (The Northwestern Lutheran and The Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly). The reason usually advanced for so little treatment of the matter by WELS is a desire to avoid any unnecessary obstacles to a re-establishment of fellowship should the two bodies ever iron out the theological differences between them. Whether an evangelical presentation in WELS periodicals actually would have established such obstacles is a moot point. Perhaps a lengthy treatment of who did what and when is not as crucial as the examination of the theological issues which occasioned the events.

So much has been said and written on both sides concerning the major issue of fellowship that a bit of sifting and sorting is in place. The relevance of returning to the conflict is best summarized in the question: What differences still separate the CLC and WELS? To answer that question is the purpose of this paper.

On a Sunday morning in August of 1960 an article appeared in The Milwaukee Journal under the heading: "Lutheran Unit Forms New Church."¹ Some selected excerpts summarize the event:

Watertown, S.D. - Right wing Lutherans who broke with the Lutheran synodical conference in a doctrinal dispute have organized a new church body to be called the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

The action was taken at a meeting here of clergy and laymen from 12 states. Leaders said the group represented about 3,500 Lutherans and their families who had withdrawn since 1957 from the synodical conference, comprised of the Lutheran church - Missouri synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran synod, the Evangelical Lutheran synod and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran churches...

The Wisconsin synod and the Evangelical Lutheran synod have accused the Lutheran church - Missouri synod of unscriptural practice in praying and working with other Lutherans with whom they do not have doctrinal agreement.

When the accusing groups hesitated to sever relations, a militant minority, representing an ultraconservative view, broke off and formed the Lutheran interim conference. Sixty pastors, 17 teachers and six seminary students have joined the conference, Pastor Schaller reported. Forty-five pastors, three teachers and three students attended the convention here, along with 22 lay delegates...

The new church body is expected to be legally constituted at a meeting to be called by the officers next January, probably in Sleepy Eye, Minn...²

Terms such as "militant minority" and "ultraconservative view" are typical of "objective" reporters. An examination of the issues will lend at least a little more dignity to the men of the CLC than such trite labels and pigeonholes.

¹Journal Special Correspondence, "Lutheran Unit Forms New Church," The Milwaukee Journal, Part I, Sunday, August 21, 1960.

²Ibid.

The thunderheads of theological dissension appeared on the horizon of the Synodical Conference already in the late 1930's. In 1938, Missouri joined its Brief Statement with the ALC's Doctrinal Declaration as a joint settlement of past differences. The Sandusky Resolutions of the ALC viewed the Brief Statement in the light of their own Doctrinal Declaration, very much in the same way the Reformed groups of yesteryear viewed the Augsburg Confession in the light of their own theology. In 1939, the Wisconsin Synod responded:

Not two statements should be issued as a basis for agreement; a single joint statement, covering the contested doctrines thetically and antithetically and accepted by both parties of the controversy, is imperative; and, furthermore, such doctrinal statement must be made in clear and unequivocal terms which do not require laborious additional explanations... Under existing conditions further negotiations for establishing church fellowship would involve a denial of the truth and would cause confusion and disturbance in the Church and ought therefore be suspended for the time being.³

In 1941, Missouri's Ft. Wayne convention instructed its Committee on Doctrinal Unity to prepare a single document of agreement with the ALC. At this same convention, they began joint work with the ALC in relief of missions and establishment of service centers. Wisconsin replied that same year by unanimously adopting the following resolution concerning the military chaplaincy:

The commissioning of Army and Navy chaplains by our Synod would conflict with Scriptural

³Proceedings of the Twenty-fifth Convention. The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1939. pp. 60-61.

principles and established Lutheran practice.⁴

In 1943, Wisconsin memorialized the Missouri Synod to halt its negotiations with the ALC because of the false basis underlying such negotiations. Unfortunately, the following year saw Missouri and ALC rallying under a single document, the Doctrinal Affirmation. Missouri abandoned its former position on scouting. By 1947, ALC was making overtures to renew negotiations contending for "an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God." Wisconsin in turn adopted its theses on Scouting.⁵ By 1949, it became evident to Wisconsin that not all was right with the Synodical Conference. The 1949 Proceedings state: "With deep concern we note that the ties which have united us particularly with the Synod of Missouri are being loosened."⁶

1950 established itself as a landmark when Missouri and ALC adopted the Common Confession, a confession which Wisconsin saw as incomplete, inadequate and untruthful. Missouri was being evasive and Wisconsin was having a difficult time dealing through committees from convention to convention. Frustrated by the inroads of error, Wisconsin declared itself in statu confessionis (in a state of confession or vigorously protesting fellowship) in 1952. When nothing was accomplished by Missouri at Houston in 1953, the Wisconsin Synod adopted the following resolutions which the CLC would later use in opposition to Wisconsin and which paved the

⁴Proceedings of the Twenty-sixth Convention. The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1941, p. 77.

⁵Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth Convention. The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1947, p. 106ff.

⁶Proceedings of the Thirtieth Convention. The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1949, p. 117.

way for the even more controversial Preamble of the Thirty-Third Convention in 1955:

(Resolutions of '53):

1. That we declare that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
 - a. by reaffirming its acceptance of the Common Confession as a "settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled" (Proceedings 1951, page 146), and
 - b. by its persistent (italics mine) adherence to its unionistic practices (the Common Confession, joint prayer, scouting, chaplaincy, communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, cooperation with unorthodox church bodies in matters clearly not in the field of externals: negotiating with lodges and Boy Scouts of America with the plea that this gives opportunity to bear witness, under the same plea taking part in unionistic religious programs and in the activities of unionistic church federations; negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters of doctrine and which contends for an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teaching of the Word of God), has brought about the present break in relations (italics mine) that is now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation (italics mine) with the sister Synod.
2. That we herewith approve the Protest agreed upon by our representatives immediately following the St. Paul convention of the Synodical Conference, 1952.
3. That we prevail upon the President of the Synodical Conference to arrange a program for the convention in 1954 that would devote all its sessions to a thorough consideration of our declaration in Point 1 and of the doctrinal issues involved.⁷

In reference to point 3 above, in 1954, testimony was distributed by both Wisconsin and Missouri and doctrinal discussions were held at Detroit and Chicago.

⁷Proceedings of the Thirty-Second Convention. The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. 1953. pp. 104-105.

In later years, the CLC would point back to resolutions of this nature to demonstrate that Wisconsin was already fully aware of persistent error on Missouri's part for many years previous to the Missouri-Wisconsin split. In reference to the italicized word from the 1953 resolutions, it ought to be said that the term persistent is somewhat ambiguous in light of Wisconsin's own interpretation of Rom. 16:17. It is obvious from the other italicized phrases that Wisconsin did not intend to break with Missouri in a final way in 1953. In statu confessionis seems to be in the background. It would seem that before the Wisconsin Synod could apply Rom. 16:17 to Missouri, it had first to establish for the understanding of both synods that persistent error in practice called for separation just as did persistent propagation of false doctrine. The Preamble of 1955 would handle that issue. There was give and take on Missouri's part over the years which made the whole matter difficult to nail down. In a private interview with Prof. Lawrenz, the writer found it of some interest when the Professor made the observation that he had entered the ministry around the time of the Protestant Controversy, the nub of which was never nailed down in black and white and that is why he preferred to see the whole matter of Missouri brought to a conclusion and documented in 1961, rather than to separate with nothing on paper to point to as the actual cause of separation. "Those were turbulent times," he remarked.⁸ That fact alone may at least lead any observer to sympathize with some of the ambiguity.

It might be noted here also that CLC would in later years score Wisconsin for even using the term "persistent errorist," a fact which demonstrates some theologizing on the part of CLC

⁸ Interview with Prof. Carl Lawrenz. March 17, 1979.

which developed a different view of fellowship than most of them held at the very start. That the basis for the separation changed somewhat is evident from their own admission:

The WELS points to the obvious fact that there was no agreement in the CLC as to the WHEN--some having pleaded for a break in 1953, more in 1955, while many agreed to go along with the "admonitory process" in 1956, some leaving after 1957, and the rest after 1959. The members of the CLC freely confess that they too were misled by the false emphasis on the WHEN. Historically speaking, the break should have been made much sooner.⁹

It wasn't so much the interpretation of Rom. 16:17 as it was the sheer element of time involved in admonishing Missouri. Many, including Professor Reim, President of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at the time, were wearying of Wisconsin's seemingly biteless bark. With men such as Professor Reim, it was not so much a question of whether to admonish before avoiding as it was a judgment that the admonition had gone far enough. As a matter of fact, Professor Reim offered his resignation from the Synod's Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union and from the Seminary presidency and professorship. By unanimous vote, the convention decided not to accept Reim's resignation. What specifically moved Reim to offer his resignation in the first place? The decision of the 1955 convention to continue fellowship with Missouri pending a vote for termination of fellowship at a recessed convention in 1956, seems to be the major target of Reim's own letter:

The decision of the Synod to continue its fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod pending a vote to follow the convention

⁹P.F. Nolting. "Mark...Avoid" (Lest the hearts of the simple be deceived) Romans 16:17-18 - Origin of the CLC, p. 17.

of that body in 1956 (even while recognizing that there is full reason for a separation now) compels me to declare that I can continue in fellowship with my Synod only under clear and public protest.¹⁰

Two things are worthy of special note in the citation from Reim's letter. First, in the latter part of the citation it is obvious that Reim saw a proper place for the concept of in statu confessionis. "He decides to stay with the synod but only "under clear and public protest." Such a position is possible only if one holds to the traditional interpretation of Rom. 16:17 which we will shortly present. Secondly, Reim's protest is due to the postponement of action upon the resolution to terminate fellowship. Reim felt that there was already "full reason for a separation" in 1955 and according to his letter attributes that same cognizance to the convention of 1955. Others who wished for an immediate termination of fellowship were confused by the Report of the Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union. The confusion can be demonstrated by some selected citations from the report with comments following.

Without entering upon the question of whether the present charges of our Synod against the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod do not already constitute the accusation of false doctrine, we believe that it should be reiterated in no uncertain terms that a specific charge of false doctrine is not a Biblical prerequisite for separation from a church body. A church body which creates divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture also becomes subject to the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies, and practices created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference.

¹⁰Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Convention, The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1955, p. 87.

Such divisions and offenses are of long standing. (Cf. Proceedings 1939 - p. 159; 1941 - p. 43f; 74ff; 1947 - p. 104ff; 114f; 1949 - p. 114ff; 1951 - p. 110ff; 1953 - p. 95ff.)¹¹

This portion of the report is found in the Preamble and at first glance appears to give the Rom. 16:17 ax. to Missouri. (The use of Rom. 16:17 would certainly indicate persistent error calling for termination of fellowship). Many thought that we had indicted Missouri under Rom. 16:17 because of the action taken by the convention. The Preamble was voted on separately and the result was that "the Preamble of the Report of Floor Committee No. 2 was adopted by unanimous vote of the Convention."¹² The following sentence regarding the action of the convention reads: "The Resolution calling for a recessed session of the Convention in 1956 to take final action on the resolution to terminate fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was adopted by a standing vote of 94 to 47."¹³

To this day, the CLC points to the 1955 Saginaw Convention as an example of WELS's disobedience. If the Preamble which uses Rom. 16:17 was passed unanimously, they argue, then not to terminate fellowship was to say that although WELS recognized that Missouri's errors were persistent (to be honest, this is the way the CLC people then understood Rom. 16:17 also) they could nevertheless postpone the termination of fellowship and this was disobedience - a course of inaction against better knowledge.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 85.

¹² Ibid., p. 87.

¹³ Ibid.

But did Wisconsin actually place Missouri under the indictment of Rom. 16:17-18 at the Saginaw Convention of 1955? It is true that the Preamble was unanimously adopted, but it must be remembered that a preamble is just that, a preamble. It does not go into effect until the resolution itself is passed. The resolution was this:

Out of love for the truth of Scripture we feel constrained to present the following resolution to this convention for final action in a recessed session in 1956: (Italics mine) RESOLVED, that whereas the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has created divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture, we, in obedience to the command of our Lord in Romans 16:17-18, terminate our fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. We recommend this course of action for the following reasons: 1. This resolution has far reaching spiritual consequences. 2. This continues to heed the Scriptural exhortations to patience and forbearance in love by giving the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod opportunity to express itself in its 1956 convention.¹⁴

Why then was the Preamble voted on as a separate entity?

The answer would seem to lie in the issue we mentioned in connection with the 1953 convention, namely in the principle that persistent error in practice as well as persistent error in public teaching falls under the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. This had yet to be thoroughly discussed and made clear to the brethren. To establish this principle was the purpose of the Preamble. It is obvious that this is how the delegates to the convention of 1955 understood the Preamble since they unanimously agreed to it but were divided as to whether or not to postpone the application of the principle. It was because of a misunderstanding of what was

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

actually done by the Saginaw Convention that many who later formed the CLC felt that WELS had already formally recognized the persistence of the Missouri Synod in her error and failed to act on it. Others left simply because their consciences could take no more.

By 1956, Missouri had set aside the Common Confession for purposes of renewing discussions with Wisconsin. When committee meetings got nowhere and it finally became evident that even the larger conventions of Missouri could not abandon their unionistic practices, the Wisconsin Synod suspended fellowship with Missouri in August of 1961. (Cf. Appendix A at end of paper).

Those, of course, who had left the Wisconsin Synod prior to 1961 had, for the most part, joined the CLC. The officials of the Wisconsin Synod thought that perhaps the battle was over. They hoped for unity once again with those who had joined the CLC. Such hopes were bound for frustration. The Standing Committee of the CLC responded:

We concur with the report of the Board of Doctrine "On Wisconsin Synod Action Regarding Missouri" and adopt it in full with this addition that we mention the issues that lie between Wisconsin and ourselves, namely: deviations from the Scriptural doctrine of Church fellowship and the doctrine of the Clarity and Authority of the Scriptures, as well as instances of violation of the sanctity of the call.¹⁵

The three issues mentioned have remained constant up until the present day. The second issue is actually part and parcel of the first. The third issue is the one which most Wisconsin Synod sympathizers have trouble swallowing. That there were violations of the sanctity of the call during those turbulent years, no one

¹⁵E. Reim. Letter to President O.J. Naumann, 9/6/61.

will deny. But what is the point of rehashing all of those instances. Fast-flaring tempers are not unusual during the heat of theological debate and only an unevangelical spirit desirous of a Calvinistic "pound of flesh" repentance would demand that every case be brought to trial. The position of WELS, on the other hand, has been: Let's get the principle of fellowship straight and then we will analyze our past actions, particularly in reference to the events of 1955-1961. A running debate occurs concerning reference to historical problems in a group of letters between President Naumann and President Robert Reim beginning in 1970. We will not cite the back and forth responses here. Suffice it to say that we are still at somewhat of an impasse. The CLC contends that their use of the historical events in the discussions is "not born out of a spirit of contention" but is "in the interest of truth and clarity."¹⁶ WELS contends: "We believe in putting first things first. What is our confessional position today?... After these matters have been considered and agreement is established, then we may wish to review the past to establish whether we succeeded in living that truth in every case."¹⁷

All of this leaves one bone of contention to discuss, the doctrine of fellowship itself. This seems to be the real nub of the problem which still separates WELS and CLC. It hinges upon the understanding of Romans 16:17 as well as those passages which apply to the same. In reference to the Romans passage, N.R. Carlson writes in the June, 1958 issue of The Lutheran Spokesman:

¹⁶R. Reim. Letter to President O.J. Naumann, 2/9/70, p. 2.

¹⁷C.J. Naumann. Letter to President Robert Reim, 6/1/70, p. 2.

When a person or group teaches false doctrine causing divisions and offences, Christians are to mark them (take note of them) and to avoid them -- simultaneously. This is full obedience to the Word of God.¹⁸

Twenty years later, in the June, 1978 issue of The Lutheran Spokesman, D. Lau reiterates the same basic position:

The Scriptural criterion (Rom. 16:16-18) for termination of church fellowship is this, that divisions and offenses are being caused contrary to Scriptural doctrine. When such divisions and offenses are being caused, we must avoid those who are causing them, regardless of whether we think admonition will be of further avail or not.¹⁹

The above citation is especially directed against the in statu confessionis principle implemented by the Wisconsin Synod in its admonition of Missouri. The above citation does not actually state what WELS intends by its use of in statu confessionis or "persistent errorists." The point is not whether we think admonition will be of further avail or not (that could come about 100 years later for all that matter) but whether it has become evident that a church body is persistent and for the present unwilling to amend its error. A judgment call? Yes. And it is all the more difficult when dealing with a large church body where one or the other opinion may for a brief time appear to be in control. A disobedience of Romans 16:17? Let's take a look at the passage.

Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, σκεπεῖν τοὺς τῶν
σεχουσιασῶν καὶ τὰ σκάνδαλα παρὰ τὴν διδασχὴν ἣν
ὑμεῖς ἐμίθετε ποιοῦντας, καὶ ἐκκλίνετε εἰς τὸ εὐεργετοῦν.

¹⁸N.R. Carlson. "Disobedient to God's Word?" The Lutheran Spokesman, (June, 1958), p. 15.

¹⁹D. Lau. "Are the WELS and the CLC Schismatic?" The Lutheran Spokesman, Vol 20, No. 1 (June, 1978), p. 9.

The following translation will adequately reveal how the Wisconsin Synod notes the tenses of the imperatives and the participles: "I beseech you, brothers, keep on the look out for those who continually cause divisions and death-traps contrary to the teaching you learned and keep inclining away from them." There is some textual argument in regard to the last imperative - whether it is present or aorist. Either way, the point of the passage is clear. There is a continual watching and guarding on the part of the Christian (which may include admonition - but even this is not the main point of the passage) against those who continually or persistently (present participle is "timeless and durative"²⁰) cause divisions and death-traps (offenses, stumbling-blocks, etc.) In other words, we have here a principle laid down by the apostle. How do we carry it out? We do so by looking at those passages which speak more specifically about errorists and how to deal with them. (i.e. Titus 3:10 - "A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition reject...")

When the writer asked Prof. Lawrenz to sum up exactly what was keeping the CLC and WELS apart today, he replied: "You'll have to ask them."²¹ Indeed, after all the overtures Wisconsin has made to the CLC, it appears only they can still tell us what the problem is. Nolting's book sums it up:

The disagreement revolves about the problem of identifying people as errorists when they arise among brethren. The WELS seems to contend that the disagreement is a matter of

²⁰ A.T. Robertson. A Grammar or the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research. p. 891.

²¹ Interview with Prof. Carl Lawrenz. March 17, 1979.

human judgment as to WHEN the conviction or judgment is reached that those who have introduced error come under the indictment of Rom. 16:17-18--that is, become such who are "causing divisions and offenses" in the church and so must be "avoided." The CLC contends that the disagreement is not a matter of human judgment as to the WHEN but rather a matter of disagreement as to HOW a person or persons are to be identified as such who are "causing divisions and offenses," and hence must be "avoided." Doctrine is involved, not just human judgment. 22

Even this statement of the CLC leaves us somewhat in the dark as to where the difference lies. CLC here contends that WELS and CLC disagree as to what they disagree about! It is part of WELS doctrine that there is an area of judgment as to when an entire body or even an individual may be marked as continually or persistently causing divisions. The CLC labels our doctrine "disobedience."

In July of 1972, the CLC and WELS met for the final time to date. The outcome of the meetings was an impasse. Copies of minutes from both sides as obtained from the files of Prof. Lawrenz are included in Appendix B. at the end of the paper.

What differences still separate WELS and CLC? The answer up to this point has certainly not been definitive. Even those who argued the issues over the years are uncertain. Ambiguity is only one of the problems. A legalistic approach to one passage to the exclusion of others may also come into the picture.

In all fairness to the CLC, their men are not mental midgets. They are consecrated Christians who have come to a conscientious parting of the ways with WELS. Whether such a parting of the ways is actually necessary has yet to be answered. It does not seem that this theologizing of the CLC was actually a part of the

²² P.F. Nolting. op. cit. p. 12.

original reason for the departure of men from WELS in the 50's. The reason for a departure in 1955, for instance, seems to have been the very thing the CLC is denigrating, the judgment-call of certain men who felt that they had witnessed enough to conclude that Missouri had become persistent. Not all of them came to the same conclusion at the same time.

If the men involved cannot even decide as to where the actual disagreement lies, perhaps it is best to refrain from offering simplistic answers to a complex problem. But every one is entitled to a pet theory, I suppose, and without trying to play amateur psychiatrist, it seems to the writer that the CLC position is one of expedient vigilance. In short, they want to make sure it never happens again and the best way to guarantee that it doesn't is to apply Romans 16:17 in the most rigid way without regard for the principle that Scriptura ex scriptura explicanda est. Such a legalistic approach we cannot agree with. We can nevertheless understand the approach and the writer hopes that he hasn't insulted the men of the CLC, who have labored long and hard in defense of their teaching, by simply tossing out a theory which seems to simplify the matter to the point of personal injury. Much as we may disagree with them, the CLC, as Prof. Gerlach remarked to the writer, may have the purpose of saying nasty things to us to keep us in line. We need that too. May God bless both synods and bring us together again in true unity!

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The writer expresses his thanks and indebtedness to Professor Gerlach for an interview which revealed the spirit of the times and to Professor Lawrenz who supplied both written and oral information which cast a great deal of light upon the otherwise easily misunderstood motions of another time.

The Resolutions² on Church Union Matters
Adopted by
The Thirty-Sixth Biennial Convention
of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod
Assembled at Wisconsin Lutheran High School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
August 8-17, 1961

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Men and Brethren:

In fear and love toward God, with a deep sense of the awesome responsibility resting upon us, with concern for the souls bought with the blood of God's own Son and already given or yet to be given into our care, with a like concern for the spiritual health and welfare of our sister synod, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, in the attitude of men who each Sunday publicly implore their God and Savior "Increase...in us true obedience to Thy Word," with hearts from which we have sought to banish the legalism which delights in sitting in judgment on others--in this spirit we have worked to furnish our report and now present it to you.

All our committee members but one have agreed to present this as our report to the Synod in convention. Pastor Hugo H. Moenecke formally dissents from the majority opinion expressed in the report.

Yet truthfulness requires this to be said: The agreement mentioned above does not mean that all members of Committee No. 2 are in full accord with everything said in this report. Several expressed reservations, but did not wish to enter a formal dissent. Others did not express themselves. No pressure was exerted in the committee to secure such an expression. But all but one agreed that this is the report that ought to be presented to the Convention.

(Presented as a part of the entire report by unanimous decision of Committee Number 2.)

REPORT OF THE FLOOR COMMITTEE NO. 2 ON DOCTRINAL MATTERS
RESOLUTION NO. 1

SUBJECT: The Report of the Commission on Doctrinal Matters.

- WHEREAS, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has lodged many admonitions and protests with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod during the past twenty years to win her from the path that leads to liberalism in doctrine and practice (Cf. Proceedings 1939.. page 159; 1941.. page 43f; 74ff; 1947.. page 104ff; 114f; 1949.. page 114ff; 1951.. page 110ff; 1953.. page 95ff.); and
- WHEREAS, Our admonitions have largely gone unheeded, and the issues have remained unresolved; and
- WHEREAS, Many of the policies and practices which called forth our admonitions were in the field of fellowship; and
- WHEREAS, The 1959 Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod therefore gave its Commission on Doctrinal Matters the directive "to continue and accelerate the discussions in the Joint Union Committees to bring about complete unity of doctrine and practice in the Synodical Conference.. to give primary consideration in their discussions to the area of fellowship... to continue its efforts in the Joint Union Committees until agreement on doctrine and practice has been reached, or until an impasse is reached and no such agreement can be brought about." (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1959, p. 195); and
- WHEREAS, The Commission has faithfully carried out this directive but now regretfully reports that differences with respect to the Scriptural principles of church fellowship -- differences which it holds to be divisive -- have brought us to an impasse; and
- WHEREAS, Our Commission's Theses on Church Fellowship are not to be considered a formal confessional document. (Otherwise it would be advisable to expand them considerably, for instance, to preface them with the Doctrine of the Church, the Marks of the Church, etc. They were set up and used simply as a working document in the discussions of the Joint Doctrinal Committees. As such they were to express the Scriptural and historical principles of the teaching and practice of church fellowship held by the Synodical Conference.); and
- WHEREAS, The substance of these Theses is an expression of the Scriptural principles on which the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod has stood and which have guided it in its practice for many years (Cf. FELLOWSHIP THEN AND NOW); and
- WHEREAS, In the Statement of the Overseas Committee, FELLOWSHIP IN ITS NECESSARY CONTEXT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, we have found nothing to warrant any modification of our position on church fellowship; and

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WHEREAS, In the new forum suggested by the Overseas Committee and adopted by the Synodical Conference we see no avenue leading to the removal of the difference in regard to church fellowship principles which now exists between the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod and our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod; and

WHEREAS, The doctrine of the Church has not been slighted in the intersynodical discussions in the past (Cf. Synodical Conference Reports 1946, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1954); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod has not retreated from the unscriptural position long held by it and also expressed in THE THEOLOGY OF FELLOWSHIP, Part II, but continues to defend that position and carries on fellowship practices which conform to that position (e. g. the two meetings with the National Lutheran Council on co-operative activities, July 7-9, 1960 and November 18 and 19, 1960, with a third meeting to be held October 30-November 1, 1961; the National Lutheran Education Conference, Jan. 8-10, 1961; the Conference of Lutheran Professors of Theology, June 5-7, 1961 -- all of these including conference devotions); and

WHEREAS, We recognize our sacred trust and the obligation to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," and also to give vigorous testimony on Church Fellowship before the church and the world; be it

RESOLVED: a) That we now suspend * fellowship with the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16: 17-18 **with the hope and prayer to God that the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself; and be it further

RESOLVED: b) That under conditions which do not imply a denial of our previous testimony we stand ready to resume discussions with the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod with the aim of reestablishing unity of doctrine and practice and of restoring fellowship relations, these discussions to be conducted outside the framework of fellowship; and be it further

RESOLVED c) That we are not passing judgment on the personal faith of any individual member of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, but that we are addressing the stern admonition required by love to the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod as a corporate body; and be it further

Footnotes * The word "suspend" as used in the resolution has all the finality of termination during the duration of the suspension, but contains the hope that conditions might some day warrant the reestablishment of fellowship. ** "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

REPORT -- FLOOR COMMITTEE NO. 2
DOCTRINAL MATTERS

Page 3

- RESOLVED: d) That we are ready to continue our support of the joint projects carried on by the Synodical Conference and by groups within the Synodical Conference until we can adjust to the new conditions brought about by the suspension of fellowship with the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod; and be it further
- RESOLVED: e) That we call upon all our members to manifest the understanding, consideration, and patience of love during this period of change and adjustment. (We also direct attention to the fact that this Convention has already taken note of the problems that will arise and has approved a study committee that would supply helpful counsel and guidance. See the Report of Committee No. 4, Resolution 2.); and be it further
- RESOLVED: f) That the action taken in our resolution of suspension does not apply to our fellowship relations with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche), the Evangelical Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church (Evangelisch-Lutherische [altlutherische] Kirche), and the Igreja Evangelica Luterana do Brasil, as well as any other church bodies outside the Synodical Conference with whom we have been in fellowship; and be it further
- RESOLVED: g) That we declare our desire to discuss the principles of church fellowship further with the church bodies that were represented by the members of the Overseas Committee, and that we initiate such steps as might be necessary to carry out such further discussions; and be it further
- RESOLVED: h) That we encourage all who are of a like mind with us in this matter to identify themselves with us in supporting the Scriptural, historical position of the Synodical Conference; and be it further
- RESOLVED: i) That the president of our Synod transmit copies of this report to the president of the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod, to the presidents of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and to the president of the Synodical Conference; and be it finally
- RESOLVED: j) That the resolutions adopted by this Convention constitute our answer to the letters and memorials which we have received on this matter.

W. Franzmann, Chairman
V. Weyland, Secretary

THE RESOLUTION AS ADOPTED.

Oscar J. Maunann
President

MEETING OF THE DOCTRINAL COMMITTEES OF THE CLC AND THE WELS
HELD AT THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING,
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, JULY 18 AND 19, 1972

Following representatives were in attendance from the CLC:

R. Reim, P. G. Albrecht, E. Albrecht, C. M. Gullerud,
G. Barthais, G. Sydow, G. Radtke.

From WELS:

O. J. Naumann, O. Siegler, G. Hoenecke, C. Lawrenz,
W. Franzmann, H. Vogel, P. Nitz, H. Wicke, E. Scharf,
E. Sitz, M. Janke.

It was agreed to ask Pastor Norman Berg to serve as moderator in order to give all official representatives an equal opportunity to take part in the discussions.

The agenda for the meeting had been accepted by previous agreement as dealing with the following three points:

1. That we enter upon a discussion of the distinction between "weak brother" and "false teachers," in contrast to the distinction between "weak brother" and "persistent errorist," in the area of admonition and church fellowship.
2. That each side is to be free to make such references to official resolutions and official reports as may be deemed necessary.
3. That Pastor Sydow's article "Unwarranted Dilemma" likewise be a subject of discussion, and that in preparation for such a discussion we submit in writing before a joint meeting our Commission's observations on this article .

The discussion of point 1 on the agenda was carried out particularly on the basis of a written presentation distributed by the CLC representatives. Special attention was given, first of all, to the manner in which one deals with an individual who becomes involved in false doctrine or practice. Although the CLC position was one which operated with the concept of "false teacher," while the WELS position employed the terminology of "those who in spite of patient admonition persistently adhere to an error," there seemed to be substantial agreement as to the basic Scriptural principles which govern such situations.

The discussion thereupon turned to the matter of dealing between church bodies when error or false doctrine has arisen. In this connection references were made to official resolutions, particularly of the WELS, on the basis of a document distributed by the CLC representatives. No Scriptural warrant was granted by the CLC representatives for a state of confession in dealing with the situations in which error in doctrine or practice has infected a larger group of confessional brethren (e.g., congregation or sister synod). The WELS representatives held, however, that such a state of confession is frequently called for before terminating fellowship with a group that has been infected by error.

1. In order to offer opportunity for determining what the confessional position of the group for which it must be held responsible really is (this may become necessary because of mutually exclusive statements, pronouncements, resolutions made in such a group; because of

conflicting positions contending for mastery in this group, one or the other of which may for good reasons be considered to be only temporarily in control);

2. To offer opportunity to bring Scriptural testimony against the error infecting the group to those brethren who are not themselves advocating and propagandizing the errors -- before treating such brethren as responsible partakers of the error or false practice infecting their group.

The WELS representatives held that such procedure is called for to satisfy the many Scriptural injunctions quoted in their Church Fellowship Statement bidding us to exercise and make earnest effort to preserve the bond of confessional fellowship, to help the weak and the confused.

The discussion of these latter points thereupon raised the question among the WELS representatives whether the CLC concept of "false teacher" and the WELS concept of "persistent errorist" actually have the same scope and would lead to uniform fellowship practice whether dealing with an individual or with groups.

The joint discussion of the agenda was concluded when the CLC representatives expressed the conviction that they had given their testimony and that continued discussion at this meeting would lead to repetition and serve no purpose. The WELS representatives saw no reason to dissent from this evaluation of the discussions.

O. J. Siegler, Secretary

The plenary meeting of the W.E.L.S. Commission on Doctrinal Matters and the C.L.C. Board of Doctrine assembled in a conference room of the W.E.L.S. Administration Building in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 18-19, 1972.

Present were: W.E.L.S. - O. J. Naumann, O. Siegler, G. Hoenecke, C. Lawrenz,
W. Franzmann, H. Vogel, P. Nitz, H. Wicke, E. Scharf,
E. Sitz, M. Janke

C.L.C. - R. Reim, P. G. Albrecht, E. Albrecht, C. M. Gullerud,
G. Barthels, G. Sydow, G. Radtke

TUESDAY A.M. - 10:30 - 11:30

By common consent Pastor N. Berg was asked to moderate the meetings, and he consented to do so.

By mutual agreement the C.L.C. presentation pages 1-2 were distributed, and taken under consideration in order to get to the issue of point one (see copy), The W.E.L.S. historical use of the expression "persistent errorist." W.E.L.S. offered the definition: "When an errorist demands recognition for his error."

TUESDAY AFTERNOON - 1:00 - 5:00

The question was asked: Have we the same principles of fellowship and separation when applied on an individual basis? The meeting addressed itself to this question.

The discussions included the clarification of a number of expressions as well as various concerns on the part of both the C.L.C. and W.E.L.S. A specific point of discussion centered upon the W.E.L.S. term: "patient admonition." The W.E.L.S. reply was that "patient admonition" in most cases must clarify the situation. Errors are not usually clearly defined in the beginning. It is self evident when error is clearly defined you do not tolerate its propagation. If a man wants to make propoganda for error, then it is clear that there is no more occasion for admonition. *within the framework of the meeting.*

Further explanation of the term stressed the concern W.E.L.S. feels for the MAN... to be brought back to the Truth, to be separated from his error, (therefore "patient admonition") as well as the concern for the flock.

The C.L.C. ^{again} stressed the concern for the FLOCK as Scripture urges...the flock as well as the man and one's self.

W.E.L.S. added the thought: Nowhere do we say that we would let an errorist propagate his error while we keep on admonishing him. No, here admonition in the framework of fellowship is excluded. I cannot imagine how one could amonish such a one while he tolerates his error.

The group was satisfied that no apparent difference was voiced re. the principle applied to the individual. However, W.E.L.S. questioned (in a later session) whether the terms false teacher and persistent errorist actually are identical and interchangeable.

The moderator then moved the meeting toward the discussion of the application of the principles involved in dealing with the individual to their application in dealing with a group (church body). At this point the C.L.C. page three (Historical References) was distributed, read, and questions for information were satisfied.

-2-

TUESDAY EVENING - 7:00 - 9:00 and WEDNESDAY A.M. - 9:00 - 11:30

The discussions centered upon the four paragraphs of the C.L.C. page 3 and the addition of the historical significance of the '56 W.E.L.S. convention.

The discussions penetrated into the historical references, with ample opportunity for both bodies to express their convictions as well as any doubts or concerns with reference to the principles in application to a church body.

The sum of the debate centered in the following apparent differences:

The W.E.L.S. found it necessary to employ IN STATU CONFESSIOINIS when applying the principles of fellowship and separation to the LC-MS. "Is it not in keeping with fellowship principles to declare one's self IN STATU (CONFESSIOINIS) disavow the error, and try to extricate brethren from error in the meanwhile?"

C.L.C. applies the principles which apply to the individual situation directly to the instance of the church body, "In all the years referred to, LC-MS was propagating error. Scripture calls for no more fellowship, but to avoid such, lest the flock suffer deception and be damaged. What program dare one substitute for the Lord's "avoid"?"

W.E.L.S. hold to the Scriptural warrant of the use of IN STATU (CONFESSIOINIS).

C.L.C. believes that continued admonition ^(within the parameters of the church) while the admonished errorist is teaching the error is disobedience to the word of God, Rom. 16:17.18.

W.E.L.S. points out they do not wish to concentrate ^{PO} on one Scripture (avoid) and neglect the other Scriptures... "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

C.L.C. asks: After establishing the fact that a church body is causing Divisions and Offenses... must not our dealing with the church body be the same as with the individual?

W.E.L.S. made clear that the application of Rom. 16:17.18 to the LC-MS was not passed as a judgment until 1961.

C.L.C. points out that the application of Romans 16:17.18 when our Lord calls for it, does not eliminate the opportunity for admonition. In itself the act of avoid is admonition, and there may be opportunity for admonition outside the fellowship also.

The meeting recognized the fact that the discussions were becoming cyclical and repetitious. C.L.C. voiced the opinion that the discussions have demonstrated that W.E.L.S. and C.L.C. are not agreed on the principles of fellowship and separation in dealing with a church body. The C.L.C. representatives were satisfied to have left their thoughts and witness with the W.E.L.S. representatives for consideration.

The C.L.C. is ready also, as agreed, to present answers to the questions asked by W.E.L.S. re. the Sydow Spokesman article, unless W.E.L.S. is satisfied that the discussions have already given answer to them.

A final question was addressed to the C.L.C.: "What is the objection to IN STATU CONFESSIOINIS? Is the objection something in essence? C.L.C. responded: "Yes, in essence. One may not practice the privilege of continued fellowship when our Lord says 'avoid'."

The meeting adjourned 11:30 A.M. The group would reconvene to consider the reports of the secretaries.

Respectfully submitted,

RECEIVED

JUL 24 1972

C.L.C. MINUTES

(1)

WELS

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

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E. Sitz, M. Janke.

C.L.C. - R. Reim, P.G. Albrecht, E. Albrecht, C.M. Gullerud,
G. Barthels, G. Sydow, G. Radtke.

TUESDAY MORNING - 10:30-11:30

By common consent Pastor H. Berg was asked to moderate the meetings, and he consented to do so.

By mutual agreement the C.L.C. presentation pages 1-2 were distributed and taken under consideration in order to get to the issue of point one (see copy): The W.E.L.S. historical use of the expression "persistent errorist". Questions for clarification included a need to define "persistent errorist". W.E.L.S. offered the definition: "When an errorist demands recognition for his error".

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Further explanation of the term stressed the concern that W.E.L.S. feels for the MAN... to be brought back to the Truth, to be separated from his error, (therefore "patient admonition"), as well as the concern for the flock.

The C.L.C. again stressed the concern for the FLOCK as Scripture urges... the flock as well as the man and one's self.

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C.L.C. MINUTES CONTINUED

(2)

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C.L.C. MINUTES CONTINUED

(3)

The C.L.C. is also ready, as agreed, to present answers to the questions asked by W.E.L.S. concerning the Syden Spokesman article. Both C.L.C. and W.E.L.S. agreed not to distribute the same, since neither questions nor answers could be elucidated by discussion, because of a lack of time.

A final question was addressed to the C.L.C.: "What is the objection to IN STATU? Is the objection something in essence?" C.L.C. responded: "Yes, in essence. One may not practice the privilege of continued fellowship when our Lord says 'avoid'".

The meeting adjourned 11:30 a.m. The group will meet again in the afternoon to consider the reports of the secretaries. The minutes of both C.L.C. and W.E.L.S. were received with corrections and amendments made by mutual consent.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Radtke, Secretary