

The Rev. Dr. James R. Crumley Jr.

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY IN ECUMENISM

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James R. Crumley

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I met then-Bishop James R. Crumley Jr. in August 1986 at Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport, a day after the '86 LCA convention held at Milwaukee's MECCA. He is a short, friendly man with soft-spoken demeanor, yet he spoke with confidence and was surrounded by many of the LCA hierarchy. He appeared approachable and indeed was. I had seen him three days earlier giving communion to the Archbishop of Canterbury at LCA's open Eucharist and heard him preach to the large convention crowd. His sermon did not say a whole lot, but his message was loud and clear: UNITE! Ecumenism at all costs! James R. Crumley Jr. had a mission, to open dialogue with all denominations and bring into fellowship all who call themselves Christian. He was at the cutting edge of Lutheran ecumenism, both internal and external. He has, for the most part, succeeded and is still blazing a path toward union. This paper goes "to the source" in that most of the material will cover Crumley's personal perspective on the role he has played as an ecumenical leader. The title, ONE MAN'S JOURNEY IN ECUMENISM, is borrowed from Crumley's own tour of presentations dealing with Christian unity. His personal perspectives are taken from The Oral History Collection of the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism of the Lutheran Council in the USA, found at the new ELCA archives building, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL. The Oral History Collection is a series of interviews of history-making Lutherans including Carl J. Lawrenz and Oscar J. Naumann of the WELS. These interviews are then typed out in manuscript form. Crumley's interviews are from December 17, 1980; December 20, 1985; and June 23, 1987 at the former LCA headquarters, 231 Madison Ave. New York, New York. The interviewer is leading LCA historian Dr. William G. Rusch. An Appendix will deal with my "interview" of Bishop Crumley in 1986.

This paper will not use endnotes, but parenthetical information following a quote or thought. (1980), (1985) or (1987) will be used to indicate which Oral History work is quoted or paraphrased.

THE CURRENT CRUMLEY

The following information is taken from The Virginian-Pilot and The Ledger-Star newspaper, an article entitled "Crumley brings message of Christian unity to area" from Saturday, April 29, 1989.

"The Rev. Dr. James R. Crumley, a catalyst in the merger of three Lutheran churches in America, has taken his message of Christian unity to Rome, where he met with the pope, and to England, where he talked with the archbishop of Canterbury. On Sunday, Crumley brings his ecumenical vision to Virginia Beach, where he will be the main speaker at the annual Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic (LARC) conference for Hampton Roads.

" 'His international contacts are so many it was difficult to pin him down for a date. He is very much in demand.'

"The one-night conference will begin with worship, and end with prayer and fellowship. It's sponsored by Hampton Roads parishes of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, ELCA, the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic church.

"Crumley's theme will be 'One man's journey in ecumenism.'

"Speaking from his office at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Columbia, S.C., Crumley said the goal of his journey is not to see one worldwide denomination but to foster mutual respect. 'We want to recognize each others' ministries as valid. Then we can open our altars to one another. This is really the goal we're seeking' Crumley said. 'It's not to build one super church. It is to recognize one another as members of the family of God and relate

to one another, therefore, as brothers and sisters in Christ.'

"Crumley, 64, said disunity hurts him. He sees it in the pain-filled marriages of people from different religious backgrounds. He sees it in the refusal of some churches to give communion to believers in Christ from other churches. He sees it in the animosity that prevents churches from banding together to work in their communities. 'In Jesus' high priestly prayer, he prays for the oneness of the church so people could believe. We believe that the divisions among the churches do often cause people to judge or reject the message the church is attempting to proclaim. Therefore, for the proclamation of the gospel, the unity of the church is critical,' Crumley said.

"Crumley even saw disunity within the church Martin Luther founded in the 16th century. He decided to do something about it. When he was bishop of the 2.8 million member LCA, Crumley was instrumental in initiating talks between his denomination and two other Lutheran groups. Last January, the three churches merged forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the largest of what is now 12 separate Lutheran denominations in the United States. A year before the merger, Crumley chose to let new leaders take over.

"He still has been busy though. In addition to teaching at the Seminary, Crumley is on the executive committee of the Lutheran World Federation, on the central committee of the World Council of Churches, on the board of the Institute for Ecumenical Research and the Lutheran chairman of the International Commission for Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue.

"Crumley co-authored a letter with pope John Paul II. the title: Christian ecumenism. To have the pope even acknowledge another denomination would have been unthinkable 30 years ago, Crumley said. But this is a different era. The differences have not disappeared, but at least common ground has been sought.

" 'When I'm in ecumenical discussions, I don't quit being a Lutheran,'
Crumley said. 'It's very important that I be as Lutheran as I can. But what
we find is that behind the divisions and the stereotypes we've made of each other,
there is often times a consensus in faith and theology.' " (End of article).

Crumley's disregard for any type of doctrinal purity or Scriptural agreement
is so very obvious. He has reduced Christianity to the lowest common denominator,
an outward appearance of agreeing to disagree in doctrinal matters. One wonders
whether he has ever read First, Second or Third John, although it wouldn't matter
a whole lot, as ELCA regards God's Word as nothing more than a religious handbook
which has evolved through the years. Nice reading, but not to be taken too serious-
ly. When a church body and its leader emasculate the Holy Bible and the Lutheran
Confessions, its no wonder there is no reason not to be "ecumenical". I put the
word in quotation marks because true ecumenism is true unity based on the Word
of the Living God, a unity which actually cares and loves so much that it stands
up to error and fights for the Truth, a union which has as its primary concerns
the spiritual life of one's neighbor and the fear of a Holy God who says "Hold
on to the good, avoid all kinds of evil" (1Thess 5:21).

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

James R. Crumley Jr. was born in Georgia in 1925 and was ordained by the
Virginia synod of the LCA in 1951. His first parish was the Greene County Lutheran
Parish near Greeneville, Tennessee. In 1953 he went to Oak Ridge, Tennessee and
pastored some of the scientists who helped on the Manhattan Project during WWII.
After moving on to Savannah, Georgia in 1966, Crumley was elected secretary of
the LCA in '74 and president in 1978. He claims that his most formative training
occured at Roanoke College, where he majored in philosophy. (1980).

ECUMENISM

Bishop Crumley became the visible leader of Lutheran ecumenism, both internal and external. As president of the LCA he moved swiftly toward union with the ALC and AELC, as well as with the Episcopal Church, Rome and Canterbury. He recalls the zenith of LCA's commitment to ecumenism: "The '82 convention was when the pursuit of unity, visible unity, was lifted to a very high level in the LCA through the adoption of the statement, 'Ecumenism: A Lutheran Commitment.' I was particularly glad for that statement, and we must point out also that it was adopted overwhelmingly and with a great deal of enthusiasm as the two resolutions having to do with the relationships with other churches had been adopted. In that statement the LCA committed itself to a variety of things. We said that the church would respond to any theological dialogue in the future of which we were a part and came to a conclusion. We pointed out that we would attempt to establish relationships at various levels...(1985, p5)

"Now, because of that statement on ecumenism, with our Department for Ecumenism and its director, Dr. Wm Rusch, I began a series of visits with other churches; particularly were we concerned to establish relationships with the Vatican and with various patriarchates, so that that round of visits from '80 to '82... were to the Vatican, to the Patriarchate in Istanbul, the patriarchates in Damascus, the Patriarchate in Moscow, the Patriarchate in Jerusalem. At that time it did not seem possible to visit Alexandria or to visit Pope Shenouda in Egypt, because he was under house arrest in a monastery. However, it was simply the situation there that made us postpone those visits, and now we are hoping to do those in the near future."(ibid)

RUSCH: It seems to me, as we look back on those trips, what they have become is a rather effective way of promoting the ecumenical cause. As you look back to that first one in January '81, which was a brief visit to Rome, what kind of expectations did you have then? Did you ever think it would evolve in the way it has?

CRUMLEY: "No. (chuckles) In fact, I had very little expectation of that trip. The meeting of the pope was not exactly perfunctory, as I was looking at it ahead of time, as I was trying to develop certain expectations about **it**, but it was largely to be a formal matter, one of the things that church body presidents/bishops do from time to time. Well, even that first visit turned out to be something more than that, because, well, I was wondering how I would be received at the Vatican, for instance. Would John Paul II be very patronizing in receiving a lowly Lutheran bishop? I was even wondering just what the protocol ought to be as I was ushered into his presence. However, he allayed all of those fears very, very quickly, expressed his appreciation to me for coming to see him, and in the course of our conversation, we shared some pastoral experiences, and I found that he was about as excited about his years as a pastor as I had been about mine, and what pastoral care and pastoral ministry really meant. We did very little discussion at that time about our churches, and certainly we had no ecumenical agenda to discuss at that time. [That visit] meant that there was enough of a background, enough of a personal relationship and understanding, that we could go to the Vatican and actually discuss with the pope and with other members there of the different secretariats just what our concern was, what we were hoping to do, and how we could work together as ecumenical partners in achieving those goals.

"I think it is most important as one church begins to develop an agenda, that the, each of those points be talked over very carefully with the other partner churches. I think it is important that I was able to discuss both our ecumenical commitment and the Lutheran-Episcopal agreement with Canterbury and with the Vatican and with the Orthodox and the various patriarchates" (1985 p29).

"[My overall impression of these ecumenical visits] was that I was not aware

"of just how various persons in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church or of the Orthodox churches, or of the Anglican church might actually see themselves in their positions. I have been amazed in each instance as to how easy it has been to open conversations, to discuss with each other some very important issues, and to find a certain rapport that we have between us.

"Now, not only in these visits to patriarchates has that been obvious; it's been interesting to me in many of my trips and my touching base with other people in other parts of the world. In many instances that hasn't been a hierarchical system at all, but say the visits in Africa, the visits in India, the visits in Asia, where the church is totally different. But how quickly it is possible to sense the being members of one family, that we really are brothers and sisters in Christ. And, you know, with the patriarchs that I have visited, with the pope, with other members of the hierarchies, I have felt that also, almost from the beginning that their concerns for their churches are the same concerns I have for the LCA, that the faith to them is just as important as the faith is to me. That the commitment to Jesus Christ is just as real on their parts as I hope mine is. Now if there is that kind of commonality, you ought to be able to discuss anything between churches" (1985 p30).

As to the future of ecumenism, Crumley points out that he doesn't want "to see the Lutheran church departing from its confessional position or watering down its theology" (1985 p35). These words ring very hollow coming from the anything-goes Lutheran church, and especially from Crumley, who is working extremely hard to remove confessional boundaries. "The future's not going to be a time for the churches to be fighting each other. One of the sentences in the pope's letter to me is that our separations obscure the face of Christ in the world, and I think that's true so that ecumenism has got to continue to be a very high point of the agenda; in that mix I think Lutherans have a unique position. The fact that we have emphasized in our theology the gospel in the way in which we have,

"the way in which we insist that Christology is central. A certain view of the church as the Body of Christ, that we hold all of that makes it possible for us to relate both to Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and also to relate in the other direction to Presbyterians, Methodists, and, I hope, to other churches in the future society" Crumley states. Notice how Crumley confuses the Holy Christian Church - that is the communion of saints - with the visible church. He fails to realize that the Body of Christ is NOT DIVIDED, it is one, right now and forever. It doesn't need Crumley or his ELCA to unite it, God has already done so!

CRUMLEY IN THE LWF, LWM, AND LCUSA

Crumley was on the board of Lutheran Word Federation in 1976 when the AELC applied for membership. Here are his comments on the AELC and the LCMS. Crumley was president of Lutheran World Ministries until 1978.

"I remember very well President Wm Kohn (AELC) at Dar es Salaam was very much interested in what was going on and I think was one of the happiest people I've seen when that vote was taken to accept AELC as full members of the LWF. You see, I think that represented something that for many of those people had been a longing for a long time, that when they were members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod they were very anxious to have more open relationships with other Lutherans, to be a part of the LWF, and of course that wasn't possible as part of the Missouri Synod, so that from the beginning I had the strong sense that this new ability to belong to the wider fellowship, to be part of the wider task, to be accepting of other Lutherans without in every instance putting them under the theological microscope -- all of this kind of thing was very important to Pres. Kohn and to many others. And, well of course I think they added something to the LWF. I think that every church that belongs to the Federation contributes

"something, adds something. With them it wasn't a matter of large numbers or of major contributions, but there was no question about the commitment and the interest that was there. That also made it possible for us then through Lutheran World Ministries to do some things in the United States, I mean between us as churches, that had not been possible before. It was not only the matter that we were the national committee of the LWF, but that the cooperation among us as Lutherans in the US was greatly enhanced.

"It was helpful that the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod did not belong to the LWF. Well, I suppose the place in which I would draw the strongest contrast there would be in the dialogues. To me one of the reasons at which it was possible for us to enter into dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and for that to be such a positive thing in the life of our churches in the United States was that the Missouri Synod was not a full member. In the Lutheran Council, as we entered into dialogue with other churches, of course the Missouri Synod was a part of that dialogue, and in many instances made it very difficult for the dialogue to truly be positive because it was difficult for the members of the dialogue to be positive toward each other. Sometimes it would get so hung up on what many of us would see as unimportant theological questions - certainly not a crucial or central theological question - that it was impossible or at least very difficult to really arrive at a consensus or agreements that then would really speak to the churches. And the Lutheran-RCC dialogue, those volumes that are the outcome, had been taken very seriously by the churches, and certainly in 1980 we saw a marvelous relationship between the churches. It's interesting that it would center around the celebration of the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. I don't think that would have been possible without the dialogues before, and I must say frankly for the record, I don't think those dialogues would have been the same in the Missouri Synod had been a full member" (1980 p12).

Prior to Crumley's election as president of the LCA in 1978 he had much involvement in the Lutheran Council in the USA. He comments on the work and usefulness of the LCUSA:

"Especially in those years I found the LCUSA extremely frustrating. I think most of us did from the LCA. After all, now remember my time there began in 1974, remember that those were some years during which the Missouri Synod was going through such a terrific struggle, and one of the places that had a direct impact was on the Lutheran Council. The commissioners from Missouri who were a part of the council - I remember that that would be Dr. Preus, Dr. Mueller as secretary, and then the other commissioners that were chosen, one of them was staff to the Board of Directors, John Schuelke, who was and is a right-hand man to Dr. Preus. In other words, there was a whole idea, a whole attitude, a whole frame of reference that began to have a tremendous impact on the life of the Council and that made it very difficult to work in a genuine, cooperative spirit there. During most of those years I was a part of the planning committee, which was a rather important committee, reviewing the various projects of the Council. I had a feeling that every time that we came to a project, the representatives from LCMS felt that it was their role to play to be very negative and very critical about the project. Now in the course of time that we had a management consultant come in and review the work of the council. The representatives from Missouri had a great deal of influence in shaping the report, and I think it came out in such a way that we were able to begin to work together again, but in the meantime Missouri had pulled out of so many projects that you were always in a quandry as to whether this was a project in which two churches were involved or in which three churches were involved.

"And then membership of the AELC came into the picture... But I think that the most frustrating part of trying to work through all of that was the fact that the Missouri Synod was approaching the council out of a purchase-of-service

"mentality, which meant that you cooperated only in those areas that specifically served your own purposes and goals as a church. The other churches were there as full members, and that meant that they supported all of the programs of the council, that they picked up the administrative costs and so forth, and really those administrative costs never got sorted out completely fairly... And that was quite frustrating to all of us. I think we were determined not to pull out of the council, or not to dissolve the council, because it was the only contact we had with the Missouri Synod.

"Toward the last two years there had been a different change. I think Dr. Preus himself has taken a different attitude toward the council" (1980 p15f).

Crumley points out the difficulties in working with the Missouri Synod in the LCUSA's Division on Theological Studies: "[When] they (LCMS) came as a panel to the [DTS] it was interesting to note how different their points of view were and it was quite obvious that it was going to be impossible to reach a consensus so that a study could actually come out of the DTS. Now you see if that had been different it might have been that as participants in those studies we could have saved ourselves some time and trouble and studies in the LCA. But you see, it really has been impossible -- well, I know the the study that was done on the ordination of women, now there's some ways in which that was a helpful study, but it could not take the place of the study in the LCA or in the ALC by which we finally made the decision to ordain women. [I do not foresee] a change coming in the Missouri Synod. Now of course with Dr. Preus' announcement that he will not accept re-election next year some people are becoming quite hopeful. I personally am not because I do not think what has been represented there has only been Dr. Preus, that there's a very strong element in the Missouri Synod that I'm wondering if it may not become more conservative next year, at least it will not be less so. Maybe

"the word 'conservative' isn't the one to use, but it is that mind set out of which they insist that their point of view must prevail. It is impossible to negotiate an agreement between us or to arrive at a consensus because they simply are not willing to move from a point of view as they articulate it at any given moment, as I see it" (1980 p20).

CRUMLEY AND THE FORMING OF ELCA

"Now, very early (in his LCA presidency) the project of the hope for a new Lutheran church in the United States emerged. We had been working quite diligently in the Committee for Lutheran Unity when I was secretary of the church from 1974 to 1978. In that group we had been discussing with the ALC the relationships between our churches, the similarities and the differences. In the similarities we concentrated particularly on what we thought were the theological issues, and had pretty much reached the conclusion that there were no theological issues that ought to divide us.

"Then the AELC came along, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and they issued a call to merger. The LCA responded in a positive way, but then, as we worked with the ALC the conclusion was that the AELC ought to be invited to be part of the Committee on Lutheran Unity. Then, as that committee finished its work in 1982, the proposal was made to the Louisville convention that the churches commit themselves to the formation of a new Lutheran church. That passed overwhelmingly in the Lutheran Church in America. I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, that there were only six negative votes, and it was a time of considerable rejoicing during that convention.

"Now we have to remember that that was not suddenly a new agenda for the LCA. It had been a part of our life ever since the beginning of the LCA, so much so that it was made quite clear, even in the constitution, that we were ready to work for unification of all Lutherans within our territory at

Many time.

"Also, at that convention, the Commission for a New Lutheran Church was established, made up of 70 people; 32 from the LCA, 32 from the ALC, and 8 from the AELC. The commission was elected by the conventions, but according to a pattern whereby there would be equal representation from lay and clergy, from men and women, and there would be significant representation from minority groups.

"The commission has been hard at work ever since it was established in 1982. We are now close to the end of its work, I believe. We are still looking forward to the formation of a new Lutheran church on January 1, 1988, and it appears at this moment as if we will keep that schedule.

"So, in the matter of church unity, lifted up as a priority, that was one of the signal events in those years" (1985 p2,3).

RUSCH: "[The dream and wish of Lutheran unity] has been so fleeting in the course of American church history. May I ask you, what kind of weight would you put on the call from the AELC to merge?"

CRUMLEY: "Not a great deal. I know that there are many who feel that that initiative from the AELC was the thing that actually brought the move toward a new Lutheran church about that time. I don't think so. Because, in the discussions in the Committee on Lutheran Unity it was so obvious that the ALC and LCA were already at the place that union was the logical next step. If anything, AELC's coming into the committee at that point may have made it just a little bit more difficult to come to that conclusion. So I...

RUSCH: "Would you be willing to expand on that a little bit?"

CRUMLEY: "Well, it was obvious that, out of their experience in coming out of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, that they had very definite goals

"they wanted to reach. We could all understand that. But simply their experience and the experience with the Missouri Synod, so that there was a lot of hostile feeling at that point, and their lack of experience in being a church themselves, because they had existed for only a short time, and they were trying to make interim arrangements, which we encouraged and assisted in every way that we could as the LCA. But it did mean that when they were trying to reach certain conclusions about ministry, about church structures, about church constitutions, et cetera, they were [chuckles] they were in a far different position from the rest of us.

"And the very fact that it was difficult for us, for them at times, to articulate specifically a position of the AELC, made it difficult for the other churches to react to that. You really could not come to an understanding as to whether, theologically, for example in ministry, the AELC, LCA and ALC were at the same place, or close enough to the same place that we would say we ought to go ahead on that basis. In fact, the AELC point of view on ministry really did not come out clearly until we had been in the Commission for a New Lutheran Church 2 or 3 years" (1985tp13). ALC and LCA

While working with the ALC in the CNLC, Crumley discovered certain theological divisions between the two churches. "We are now toward the end of the process (of uniting in the ELCA) and I will say two things particularly. One is that my hope for Lutherans being together in the United States is even stronger than it was before we entered this process. I feel that the 21st century, for example, is going to require Lutherans to be together, if we really make the significant impact on society and have a strong emphasis in theology and mission that I think Lutherans can have.

"Now in the short term, it is very difficult. I was apprehensive about a group of 70 people attempting to do it. I was even more apprehensive when,

"after a couple of meetings, it began to be apparent that some of those people who had been elected in order that a certain type of person in the LCA would be represented, when those people began to see their function as being representative of their group in a kind of power struggle with other groups. In other words, the CNLC really began to divide along certain lines - not church body lines, but along certain lines, depending on the issue that was before it. That meant that the process became extremely difficult.

"I had hoped that the primary motivation of all that we did in working toward a new Lutheran church would be a theological motivation, and that we would decide certain basic matters theologically. Very early I began to see that that was not going to happen. As I look back on it now, I have to say that I do not think it has happened" (1985 p13-15).

More on the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC):

"I have been firmly convinced for a long time that anything we can do toward Lutheran union in the United States is something that we ought to pursue... that Lutheran union had to be a very high objective and goal for the church. This was not just my opinion; it was actually written into the documents of the Lutheran Church in America, and we have proceeded on the basis of that constitution for these 25 years. I am still convinced that for the long run the move toward the ELCA is an essential. When I think of Lutheranism as I hope it will impact the religious life and the secular life of the US and of the whole world, so much of that depends on that church's strength, not just in terms of members, but strength in unity..." (1987 p43)

On the credibility of the CNLC: "Take this question about the point of view of Scripture. Now what prevailed in the [ELCA] constitution is quite acceptable to the LCA. It was quite acceptable to the AELC, and it was quite

"acceptable to a large group of the ALC, but unacceptable to a rather significant minority in the ALC. But I don't think that there is any way in which the CNLC could have stated that that it would have been totally acceptable to all. The same thing is true of, oh, any decision... take the decision about where the headquarters ought to be..." (1987 p51).

(Can you imagine equating the point of view of Scripture with any decision, like where to put the Headquarters?! And then agree that there cannot be agreement? How can those people sleep at night? This is worse:)

"We [on the CNLC] did some things that just should not have been. I look back on the morning, for example, when it seemed as if, rather than Father, Son and Holy Spirit going to get into the constitution for the Holy Trinity, it was going to be Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Well, I didn't even get excited about that as it was proposed because I was so sure that, why, that would be voted down overwhelmingly. But it was voted down only by what, two, three votes or something?" (1987 p52).

CRUMLEY AND BISHOP DAVID PREUS OF THE ALC

"When in 1981 and 1982 we were looking forward to the conventions of the church and whether or not we should approve Lutheran union and the task of the commission in working toward it. And, Dave and I were on opposite sides of the fence in very articulate, vocal ways. He was propounding all of the reasons as to why he felt it was not the time to move toward Lutheran union, and I was doing exactly the opposite. We work in very different ways. I usually want to start from a certain principle or a certain confessional base, et cetera, and I do not want to discount Dave's concern about those things, but I have felt that he was far more concerned about what would float

"popularly in the constituency than the particular principles on which a position was based.

"That difference of opinion was very strongly there in '81 and '82. It has been quite prominent, I am sure many people will say, in the years since. We were on opposite sides of many questions in the Transition Team especially, also back in the CNLC. And there have not been many places at which we had a strong common ground between us to work on. With all of that, with the differences of opinion and different styles we have, I certainly would want to say that I do have an admiration for Dave. We are friends. I think we are so different it would always be difficult for us to be really close friends. But there is much about Dave Preus that I do admire" (1987 p66).

CRUMLEY AND ROME

While the ALC seemed to be leaning toward union with the Reformed, Crumley and his LCA had leaned heavily toward Rome, and he speaks highly of his visits with Pope John Paul II.

"I expressed to Pope John Paul II a concern about the relationship between our churches in the United States, feeling that in the 25 years since the second Vatican Council, in the years in which we had been in dialogue in the United States, more than 20 years, a very rapid progress had been made in relationships between us. I was anxious that that progress continue.

"A number of people were saying that the pope really did not have ecumenical commitments, which I did not believe, and they were basing that judgment on some conservative words that he does give to his own church in various parts of the world, so that, in a visit to the Vatican, I raised the question as to whether it would be possible for us to make some kind of joint state-

"ment, whereby our churches could be encouraged to continue in the hard work of making the ecumenical journey. He agreed, and it was out of that agreement between us that the exchange of letters came about in 1985." (1985 p6)

"I suppose I would say that I have given a certain priority to Roman Catholic relationships because the pain of the division from the 16th century, I think, is something that ought to have bothered us Lutherans, and it certainly has bothered me" (1985 p31).

"From the beginning I was not received at the Vatican in a patronizing way. I don't know why, but I suspect that most of us Protestants assume that if we go to the center of power in Rome that we rather expect to be treated in that way. It wasn't true at all with John Paul II. In fact, from the very beginning he received me very warmly and hospitably, and that is something that I have deeply appreciated.

"I admire him in many ways. Of course, when one thinks of his theological capacity, his human rights concerns -- in fact, the breadth of his concern for all that seems to affect human life in all parts of the world -- surely one has to admire him. I have also appreciated the fact that he has an open ecumenical stance. Some people question this, particularly in recent years, but he has assured me over and over that he is concerned about the relationship with other churches, and working for the visible unity of the church.

"There are many points on which any Protestant or Lutheran leader would have to be in a different theological position from the Pope. At the same time, I think we have to allow him the room to be true to the tradition which he represents, and one in which he obviously believes very strongly. I have found it quite easy to talk with him. He has very strong pastoral concerns for his people and for what either the church or culture might do in the lives

"of people. I have found him as one who approaches me and treats me as an equal; one with whom the conversation is indeed easy, and one who shares many of the concerns I share. I have especially appreciated the opportunity to know him and to speak with him in the private audiences that I have had" (1987 p70, 71).

I as a WELS Lutheran am not bothered by the 16th century division from Rome as Crumley is bothered, nor will I exalt the pope except to point out that he is the embodiment of Antichrist.

CRUMLEY AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

"You know, its interesting that as I have visited Constantinople, my impressions are more about the Patriarchate than they are about the Patriarch himself. Now a part of that is the language problem. It is always more difficult when one has to work through an interpreter than when one can talk face-to-face and person-to-person as is true with John Paul II. ... I think Demetrios I plans it this way, in that he receives a visitor very cordially and very hospitably. But he obviously depends very strongly on the people around him to interpret, to articulate not only the concerns of the Patriarchate, but to elicit from or to bring out from a visitor the concerns with which they have come.

"Now there again I think that what Demetrios represents, and what the people around him represent is something important in the total ecclesiological and ecumenical dimension. I have become more and more aware that we have to be not only aware of but understanding of and sensitive toward that whole Orthodox tradition. And, of course, Demetrios represents that very well. He is steeped in it and is faithful and loyal to it" (1987 p72).

CRUMLEY AND THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

At the LCA convention in 1986 I witnessed LCA-Episcopal altar and pulpit fellowship at MECCA's Bruce Hall in Milwaukee when Crumley and Bishop Allin served each other in an ecumenical eucharist. They also marched in together at the processional, Allen with his troupe and then Crumley and the LCA bishopric, composed of 70% women.

CRUMLEY: "Now at the convention in Louisville another part of that priority of attempting to express visibly the unity of the church came about in the adoption of the resolution of interim sharing of the Eucharist between Lutherans and Episcopalians. I have oftentimes said in many circles that the service that was held at the National Cathedral in Washington shortly after our convention, in which the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, John Allin, stood with David Preus and William Kohn and myself at the altar for the joint service, that initiated joint services in many places throughout the LCA.

"While the interim sharing of the Eucharist was entered into, an additional round of the dialogue was authorized, realizing that there were some differences yet to be worked out before we could be at a point of establishing full Communion between the churches. It was also the first time that Lutherans had moved into an external relationship with another church without having full agreement in theology. Rather, there was the understanding that there was sufficient agreement for us to enter into this step of the interim sharing of the Eucharist." (1985 p4)

"Let me say that as far as I'm concerned, the goal that we have in any of the interchurch dialogues is full communion. That's what we try to keep moving for in a responsible way. There was no question among the theologians as to whether each church could be appropriately characterized as a true church,

"a church with the gospel, as we Lutherans like to put it, in which the Word is preached and in which the Sacraments are administered according to the Word, so that the gospel is apparent in both Word and Sacrament.

"We also had to recognize that, particularly in the East, perhaps in the LCA more than in the other Lutheran churches, there had been a long history of Lutheran-Episcopal cooperation. If you go back even to the colonial period, there were ways in which ministers went back and forth between Lutheran and Episcopal congregations. Of course, that was a colonial period where there was a great shortage of ministers for both, and in a few instances this was a way in which congregations solved their problem. In a few other instances it was that solution that caused problems. But at least there's that kind of history there.

"Bishop John Allin and I became acquainted with one another [and] found that we shared many common points of view, that there were cordial relationships and understandings between us, so that we could say to one another at various times, 'Isn't there any way in which we can bring our churches to full communion?' He felt as strongly about that as a goal as I did" (1985 p23, 24).

"There were any number of meetings and consultations, but then finally the possibility of drafting a statement that would establish a new relationship between us became real. Now, it's a place at which we Lutherans had to examine where we were in a different light. What did we really mean by the satisf of the Augsburg Confession? What is sufficient agreement in the Gospel? Because we knew that we did not have full agreement in theology.

"The Episcopalians also had to be worried, especially about the viewpoint of ministry, which we recognized as being different between us. That is the reason we could come to an agreement of interim sharing of the Eucharist.

"We had difficulty coming up with a title for it, because we did not want to call it full communion, but we definitely wanted to embody in the lives of the churches the going to the altar together, the accepting of the invitation of the Lord Christ to come to his supper, to recognize that there were still problems before us, but that sharing of the Eucharist could actually be a help, an assistance in solving the other problems, because we were saying we are not going to wait for full theological agreement until we act like brothers and sisters in Christ and go to the Lord's table together; we're going to start acting like those brothers and sisters, and even within the one family then we will continue to work at those theological problems that are still issues between us" (1985 p25).

CRUMLEY AND THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

"There were some serious discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury after that (the Episcopal agreement) transpired. We were also working through the Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican communion in dialogues there, also to come to a suggestion as to how we could work toward full communion. I was part of a group that worked out a statement on that meeting in England in 1984. And again, Archbishop Runcie and I have been able to talk together, to find that we do come from quite common positions, and that the goals toward which we want to work between our churches are common goals, so that we've been able to have some very candid conversations. I have invited him to be our ecumenical guest at our convention in Milwaukee in 1986, and he's accepted. I think that in itself is quite significant" (1985 p26, 27).

CRUMLEY AND THE REFORMED

"We do not yet know just what our response to [Presbyterian] dialogue

"will be in 1986. In some instances we have wanted to do things that we have not had the openings to do. I have felt that it's been important to talk with the, well, the group known as the new evangelicals in the United States. But its very hard to do theological conversation with them. There really isn't a church to which you can relate a confessional position to which you can relate in the same way as we relate to some other churches. So that you can have personal conversations, those are very important. But you really can't work out a church-to-church relationship, or what we are inclined to call an external relationship, ~~with~~ an official relationship with that group." (1985 p32).

CONCLUSION

We have seen Bishop James R. Crumley Jr.'s personal viewpoints on his ecumenical journeys. Certainly this has been the main emphasis of his ministry, and he has been somewhat succesful. His LCA is no more, now a part of the 5 million-plus ELCA, and this church body has open altar and pulpit fellowship with most of the aforementioned denominations officially, and with all of ~~them~~ ~~unofficially~~. It can be clearly seen that these "Lutherans" show little or no regard for the Scriptural principles of fellowship, and their continued ecumenical efforts can only mean the further watering down of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the hastening destruction of people's souls.

APPENDIX

I met Bishop James R. Crumley Jr. on August 31, 1986 at Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport. We were booked on the same flight to New York City, where Crumley lived. I introduced myself to him and we shook hands. I was very excited to meet him and recognized him immediately. Imagine my surprise when I realized that the LCA Bishop was checking his luggage right next to me. It was a Sunday morning, early (around 7:30am).

I said that I had seen him at MECCA and said I too was a Lutheran, but not part of the new Lutheran church movement. When I said I was WELS, he stated he had met with our president. He asked where our seminary was and if WELS was based here in Milwaukee. I explained that the Wisconsin Synod had been here since 1850.

After ^{he} returned from the restroom, I approached Crumley again. I was pleasantly surprised to see that he remembered my first name as we continued our discussion. I questioned him on Anglican fellowship and Catholic altar fellowship, and suggested that out of love our Synod had no fellowship with these bodies, and I mentioned Romans 16:17. He said he interpreted that passage much differently.

I rather frankly stated that once their desired union with Rome became a reality, the papacy would claim sovereignty over his church body. He said that no, "We wouldn't allow that". "Good Luck!" I thought to myself. He went on to explain how the Roman church has changed alot since Vatican II and that it was not the same church as Luther dealt with. I said that Rome still holds to its doctrines and teachings as it always has, even in Luther's day. He said they were only in their first phase of fellowship communion.

I noted that many LCA churches already have pulpit and altar fellowship with Rome. He denied this and said it was not official LCA practice.

I asked him what he felt about the Bible, his point of view on Scripture. He said that as far as other Lutherans are concerned, "I believe that not all doctrines are as important as others nor carry the same weight. As long as they believe in Christ, we seek fellowship." I responded, "But Jesus said 'Teaching them to observe ALL things I have commanded you,' not just a gospel message. Crumley responded rather sharply: "Well, he (Jesus) didn't mean the Book of Concord!" He then left for the plane.

I thanked him for the opportunity to talk. He said "Yes, goodbye."

Respectfully submitted.
To the Glory of God.
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May 20, 1989

Mequon, Wisconsin