

**CLC-ELS-WELS Discussions: 1987-1990**

Church History 331

Peter Schmidt

3 May 2000

In 1984 the Synodical Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession “encouraged informal area meetings to discuss the biblical principles of church fellowship with representatives of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod.”<sup>1</sup> Prior to this CLC and WELS pastors from the Pacific Coast area had been wanting to meet to discuss doctrine. This gathering took place in Ellensburg, Washington. Through essays and meetings, a 1985 free conference put together an agreement called “The Separation Principle of Church Fellowship.”<sup>2</sup> In September of 1986, the *Lutheran Spokesman* (a periodical of the CLC) reported that even though this study “did not cover the historical development of the differences between the CLC and the WELS,” yet this document would “be submitted to the [CLC] Board of Doctrine.”<sup>3</sup> The door for talks between these two synods had been opened.

### **Previous CLC-WELS Contact**

This was not the first time that the two synods had had discussions. The CLC was formally established on 12 August 1960. Former members from both the Evangelical Lutheran Synod as well as the WELS had come together to found this synod. These people had withdrawn from the ELS and the WELS because of the problems which were occurring within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. The year after the CLC’s founding, The WELS severed its ties with the LC-MS.

It is admirable that the CLC was immediately willing to begin talks with the WELS following the break with Missouri. When the CLC observed this break, any bad feelings between the two synods seemed to be put aside. In their 3rd Synodical Conference, the CLC stated:

When the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in August of 1961 resolved to suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17-18 we felt that a big step toward reestablishment of fraternal relations with our former brethren had been taken; we spoke of the suspension resolution as one “which gives rise to the hope that the membership of that Synod may be seeking to rectify a situation that has caused much grief and concern”; we said, “Over this possibility we sincerely rejoice”; and

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<sup>1</sup>Rollin Reim, “CLC Convention Report,” *Lutheran Spokesman*, Vol. 29 No. 3 (September 1986): 6-7. (Hereafter cited as RolReim, *LS* (Sept. 1986))

<sup>2</sup>“Report of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations,” *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials* (1993): 232. (Hereafter cited as CI-CR *WELS BORAM* (1993))

<sup>3</sup>RolReim, *LS* (Sept. 1986): 7.

expressed the hope, “that by the grace of God eventual agreement might be effected”.<sup>4</sup>

A series of correspondence began between the two synodical presidents at the time, Paul Albrecht of the CLC and Oscar J. Naumann of the WELS. Later Robert Reim would replace Albrecht as CLC president. Regardless of who the president was at the time, these letters can be described as being very cordial. Kind greetings and closings were exchanged in these correspondences.

Unfortunately, after years of talks, agreement could not be reached between the two synods. The main point of debate was whether or not there was a difference in doctrine between the two synods. The CLC maintained that there was indeed a difference in doctrine. The WELS was not ready to say this. They did say, however, “that we express regret over the failure at that meeting to reach agreement on the doctrine under discussion.”<sup>5</sup> This statement would later come back to hamper CLC-WELS relations.

### **Contact Re-established**

Until the 1980’s, things remained rather quiet between the two church bodies. In 1982, the CLC Convention encouraged their president to be on the lookout for the possibility to discuss their differences with the WELS and the ELS. This Convention suggested “the use of free conferences [as long as] the purpose of such free conferences [was] to discuss the differences that lie between those who attend.”<sup>6</sup> Before the 1986 convention of the CLC, some pastors of the CLC and the WELS had drawn up the aforementioned agreement “The Separation Principle of Church Fellowship.”<sup>7</sup> While this was an important step in that it showed the willingness of both sides to address the issues that had separated them for over 20 years, more needed to be done. “The doctrine committees of both the WELS and the CLC did not feel that the document, although acceptable as far as it goes, enter[ed] sufficiently into the areas of disagreement so as to

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<sup>4</sup>Paul Albrecht, “President’s Report” *3rd CLC Convention Proceedings* (1962): 11.

<sup>5</sup>“Administration - Doctrinal Matters,” *Proceedings of the 42nd Convention of WELS* (1973): 93.

<sup>6</sup>David Lau “CLC Convention Action” *Lutheran Spokesman* Vol. 25 No. 3 (September 1982): 5.

<sup>7</sup>Elton Hallauer, “We recommit ourselves to remembering our past,” *Journal of Theology* (December 1994): 13.

provide the basis for a settlement of them.”<sup>8</sup> The presidents of the two synods, Carl Mischke (WELS) and Daniel Fleischer (CLC), began corresponding as Naumann, Albrecht, and Reim had done a little over a decade earlier.

These letters back and forth produced a meeting between the CLC Board of Doctrine and the WELS Commission on Inter-church Relations. In January 1988, exegetical essays on II Thessalonians 3:6,14,15 and Romans 16:17-18 were heard and studied on the campus of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.<sup>9</sup> Armin Panning of the WELS and Clifford Kuehne of the CLC each did an exegesis on the Romans passages, while John Brug of the WELS and Paul Schaller of the CLC presented papers on the passages from II Thessalonians. The CLC moderator was Rollin Reim, and his WELS counterpart was Wilbert Gawrisch.<sup>10</sup>

After these papers were presented and discussed, the two committees decided that there be essays written on “The Role of Admonition in Connection with Romans 16:17-18.” This topic would be discussed in future meetings between the boards of the two synods. It was at this time that the WELS members suggested the inclusion of ELS representatives in the future meetings between the CLC and the WELS. President Fleischer of the CLC was in favor of this. He said that “no agreement with the WELS...would be complete until the same is arrived at with the ELS, since the ELS is in fellowship with the WELS.”<sup>11</sup> However, President Fleischer was quick to point out that these meetings did not “suggest that we [the CLC and WELS] are moving, or have moved, closer to agreement.”<sup>12</sup>

In the 1988 ELS Synod Convention, the ELS acted on this invitation from the WELS by agreeing to have their Doctrine Committee consider it.<sup>13</sup> The Doctrine Committee accepted this

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<sup>8</sup>John Lau, “Report on the free conference of WELS and CLC pastors in Washington in April 1985,” *Journal of Theology* Vol. 28 No. 1 (March 1988): 2. (Hereafter cited as JLau, *JoT* (March 1988))

<sup>9</sup>Robert Reim, “Report of the Board of Doctrine,” *Prospectus of the 19th CLC Convention* (June 1990): 1.

<sup>10</sup>JLau, *JoT* (March 1988): 2.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. 2-3.

<sup>13</sup>Gaylin Schmeling and Juul Madson, “Report of the Doctrine Committee of the ELS to the 1988 Convention,” *71st Annual Convention of the ELS* (1988): 67.

invitation, and the next intersynodical meeting, now between members of all three synods, occurred in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in early February 1989.<sup>14</sup>

At this February 1989 meeting, two essays on the previously-agreed-upon topic, “The Role of Admonition in the area of termination of Church Fellowship between Church Bodies,” were presented. Prof. Panning presented the WELS/ELS paper, while Prof. Gordon P. Radtke submitted his essay for the CLC.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, agreement was not reached during the discussion of these papers at this February 1989 meeting. CLC President Fliescher reported a few days after this meeting:

No agreement was reached on the controverted point under discussion. . . . What was agreed upon by all is that the subject must be discussed in the light of thetical and antithetical statements. The WELS/ELS and the CLC each will be drawing up such propositions. It is agreed that we should meet again without delay. A fall meeting is envisioned.<sup>16</sup>

The fall meeting was delayed by a few months. However, on 31 January and 1 February 1990 representatives of the three synods met again. On the agenda was the “discussion of the two sets of theses and antitheses on the role of admonition in the area of termination of church fellowship between church bodies.”<sup>17</sup> The Chairman of the CLC Board of Doctrine, Robert Reim, reported to his church body that “the study and discussion of the prepared papers was searching and the responses that were given were frank and to the point.”<sup>18</sup> The WELS men also appreciated the fact that “the discussion was thorough, frank, and cordial.”<sup>19</sup> President Fleischer remarked that these talks were “very intense and left all in a state of weariness by the end of the first day.”<sup>20</sup> Though taxing, this meeting was beneficial in that it paved the way for a different

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<sup>14</sup>John Lau, “Report on WELS/ELS/CLC meeting on Feb. 1-2, 1989,” *Journal of Theology* Vol. 29 No. 1 (March 1989): 28.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. 28.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Reim, “Report on WELS/ELS and CLC meeting in Milwaukee, Jan. 31 - Feb. 1.” *Lutheran Spokesman* Vol. 32 No. 10 (April 1990): 5.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. 5.

<sup>19</sup>CI-CR *WELS BORAM* (1993): 233.

<sup>20</sup>Daniel Fleischer, “Another update on WELS/ELS and CLC meeting on Jan. 31 - Feb. 1 in Milwaukee,” *Journal of Theology* Vol. 30 No. 1 (March 1990): 26.

type of gathering between the three synods. As the ELS reported, “the Doctrine Committee rejoices that these discussions resulted in sufficient consensus to lead the participating groups to resolve to assign to a joint subcommittee of nine people (three from each synod) the task of producing a common document.”<sup>21</sup>

This joint subcommittee met a few months later in Eau Claire. Present at this 5-6 April 1990 meeting were Robert Reim, Clifford Kuehne, and President Fleischer, all from the CLC; Synod President George Orvick, Juul Madson, and Gaylin Schmeling of the ELS; and the three WELS representatives were President Mischke, Wilbert Gawrisch, and Armin Panning. The goal was to hammer out a document on the *principles* regarding the termination of church fellowship (if agreement was reached here, then later discussions would focus on *application*). The two days of hard work between the men of the three synods yielded the “Joint Statement - Regarding the Termination of Fellowship Between Church Bodies.” The next step was to present this “for study by the Board of Doctrine of the CLC, the Doctrine Committee of the ELS, and the Committee on Inter-church Relations of the WELS.”<sup>22</sup>

The Joint Statement itself was accepted by the full boards of each of the three synods. The 1991 WELS BORAM reports:

At its April 26-27, 1990 meetings the CICR discussed this Joint Statement and approved it. It also instructed its chairman to send copies of the Statement to the Twelve Districts, if possible before the district conventions, provided the other two committees approved it. The ELS Doctrine Committee approved it in its May 3-4, 1990 meeting. The CLC Board of Doctrine, however, passed these two resolutions on May 22, 1990: 1) the Board finds the substance of the Joint Statement doctrinally correct, and 2) we regard it as necessary that a preamble similar to that offered by the representatives of the CLC at the April 5-6, 1990 meeting be added to the Joint Statement before we could accept it as a positive step toward the settling of past differences.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Gaylin Schmeling and Juul Madson, “Report of the Doctrine Committee,” *73rd Annual Convention of the ELS* (1990): 70.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. 70.

<sup>23</sup>“Report of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations,” *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials* (1991): 208.

### Discussions Begin to Fall Apart

While the boards of the WELS and the ELS were ready to accept the Joint Statement as written, and while the CLC Board of Doctrine did find it doctrinally correct, this insistence on the preamble would severely hinder further discussions.

The WELS was not opposed to having a preamble attached to the Joint Statement.<sup>24</sup> However, the one offered by the CLC was rejected. Why was the CLC's proposed preamble so objectionable to the ELS and WELS? A look at the proposed preamble will shed light on this. The CLC representatives wanted the preamble to say, "in 1972 representatives of the WELS and the CLC recognized the existence of a doctrinal difference between the two synods . . . the following statement . . . is presented as a scriptural resolution of the aforementioned doctrinal difference."<sup>25</sup>

This is where the 1973 WELS Proceedings came back to destroy any ground that had been gained. As quoted before, the WELS resolved that there was a failure to reach agreement on doctrine with the CLC. The CLC has always taken this to mean that there is a doctrinal difference between the two synods. The WELS has taken this to be a difference in application. Some in the CLC believe that the WELS teaches that before orthodox church breaks fellowship with a heterodox one, "it is necessary to enter into a process of admonition until our human judgment tells us it isn't doing any good."<sup>26</sup> Some of the CLC publications maintain that the whole issue of admonition to a heterodox church "has been reduced to human judgment."<sup>27</sup>

To be sure, the 1959 WELS Convention could have spoken more clearly when they wrote that, "termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that the erring brother or church body demands recognition for this error."<sup>28</sup> However, the WELS takes the "of no avail" to mean that the erring body is not

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<sup>24</sup>CI-CR *WELS BORAM* (1993): 238

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 237-238.

<sup>26</sup>CLC Board of Education, *This is Your Church*, CLC Book House, Eau Claire, WI (1985): 12.

<sup>27</sup>Paul F. Nolting, "*Mark . . . Avoid*" *Origin of the CLC*, Office of the Secretary, West Columbia, SC (1970): 17-18.

<sup>28</sup>David Lau, "Commentary on CLC convention resolutions re meetings with WELS/ELS." *Journal of Theology*

listening to the orthodox one anymore. As cited in the previous paragraph, the CLC thought that the WELS was holding to a false doctrine in the area of fellowship. The WELS teaches that the separation between the CLC and WELS occurred because of a “difference of opinion about whether the Missouri Synod had heard and rejected our admonition.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the impasse was reached. While the WELS and ELS were willing to include a preamble that would “supersede any and every previous statement that might be or might appear to be in conflict with [The Joint Statement],”<sup>30</sup> the CLC insisted on a specific reference to a doctrinal difference.<sup>31</sup> President Mischke was unwilling to judge the words of the men who were involved in the 1950’s - 1970’s, instead he was more interested in whether or not there was doctrinal unity now (in the 1990’s). Mischke wrote to Fleischer:

We did not want to sit in judgment on those who preceded us. Those were difficult days and what was said and written on both sides of the issue was done in good conscience, in many cases by people who are no longer here to speak for themselves. We believe the paramount question to be, “Are we agreed on the scriptural doctrine of fellowship today?”<sup>32</sup>

The door that had opened in the early 1980’s closed again. After this impasse the CLC reported, “it is the conclusion of our President and Board of Doctrine that the doctrinal difference which exists cannot be resolved in a God-pleasing way as long as the WELS/ELS insist that there never was a difference at all. Therefore, there are no plans for further discussion.”<sup>33</sup>

The door does not have to stay closed. The ELS remains willing to participate in a CLC-WELS-ELS meeting if it is requested to.<sup>34</sup> Likewise the WELS holds out the hope that

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Vol. 32 No. 3 (September 1992): 23.

<sup>29</sup>WELS Questions and Answers -- Religion - Other Lutheran Church bodies:

<http://www.wels.net/sab/qa/rel-o-luth.html>

<sup>30</sup>CI-CR WELS BORAM (1993): 240.

<sup>31</sup>Keith Olmanson, “CLC Convention Report,” *Lutheran Spokesman* Vol. 35 No. 2 (August 1992): 9.

<sup>32</sup>CI-CR WELS BORAM (1993): 239.

<sup>33</sup>Bruce Naumann and John Reim, “CLC Convention Report,” *Lutheran Spokesman* Vol. 37 No. 2 (August 1994): 10.

<sup>34</sup>Gaylin Schmeling and Juul Madson, “Report of the Doctrine Committee to the 1992 Convention of the ELS,” *75th Annual Convention of the ELS* (1992): 73.



unity can be reached “with the CLC in this doctrine and its application.”<sup>35</sup> Even President Fleischer prayed “that one day a unity of confession and practice established upon the Word of God may exist between us.”<sup>36</sup>

### **One Decade Later . . . The 1987-1990 CLC/ELS/WELS Meetings Revisited**

It has been a full decade since boards of the three synods have met together in an effort to resolve some of the differences that has separated them. Humanly speaking, these meetings failed in that they did not bring about doctrinal unity between the CLC and ELS/WELS. However, God had his own purposes which were accomplished by this contact between the three synods. Some of these gains were realized by the men who worked together in these free conferences. A few of them were kind enough to share their personal feelings about the positives of these meetings. Rollin Reim had this to say:

I believe that the library of study material on the termination of fellowship was much enhanced. In fact, I would like to see the papers bound together and made available to further study, along with the very important summary statement.

The great gain for me was the discovery that the current theological leadership of all the three church bodies of that time was ready to disavow the idea that there must be a continuation of admonition within the framework of fellowship with a body after they have been marked as errorists. “Until one has reached the conclusion that further admonition is of no avail” was the troublesome phrase in the past.

At the same time, the CLC reps were pressed in a wholesome way to lay to rest a long standing concern. Namely, that our synod does not believe in patient admonition of weak brethren.

These discussions provided a forum in which these matters could be given their due. I believe all benefited from the studies.<sup>37</sup>

Gaylin Schmeling of the ELS offered these observations:

Over the years many misconceptions developed concerning the position of the CLC in our circles and misconceptions developed concerning our position in the CLC. At these meetings the actual position of both the CLC and ELS/WELS was clearly seen. These meetings did much to clear the air. We discovered that our positions were much closer than we assumed.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>“Parish Services - Report of Floor Committee No. 2,” *Proceedings of the 52nd Convention of WELS* (1993): 97.

<sup>36</sup>Gaylin Schmeling and Juul Madson, “Doctrine Committee Report to the 1993 ELS Convention,” *76th Annual Convention of the ELS* (1993): 116.

<sup>37</sup>Email from Pastor Rollin Reim, CLC (20 April 2000): Appendix #1 (Hereafter cited as Reim Email (April 2000))

Armin Panning from the WELS saw these gains:

I was personally heartened to see how totally committed the CLC has remained to the central task of the church, namely, to preach Law and Gospel. Additionally, our committee received considerable information about their work program. We got information about their home missions and their overseas mission program. Particularly at the meetings at Eau Claire we were updated regularly regarding their worker training program and facility.

I don't think that the meetings were a waste of time. Two church bodies that have a tremendous amount of shared history gained by sitting down with one another and talking in brotherly terms. Something of a follow-up to the previous meetings was the CI-CR's decision to request permission to send a visitor to their 1998 convention. I was pleased to serve as the CI-CR's representative. The reception I received was very cordial. I'm sure the previous contacts had something to do with that.<sup>39</sup>

All three men had similar recollections about the atmosphere in which these meetings were conducted. Panning remembered that:

The meetings were very congenial. My experience with the CLC men is that they are not only Christian gentlemen but even more importantly, they have "exegetical integrity." By that I mean they deal honestly and seriously with the Word. They're good students of the Scripture. Their exegetical methodology is sound and they are totally committed to the results that yields. They accept what the Word says.<sup>40</sup>

Schmeling said that, "the overall tone of these meetings was very cordial. Obviously these meetings were conducted outside the realm of fellowship, but everyone was very courteous and there was a general spirit of goodwill."<sup>41</sup> When asked how he would describe the tone of these meetings, Rollin Reim described them as "graced with mutual respect and careful attention to the essays presented."<sup>42</sup>

With men in each of the three synods having such comparable opinions about these meetings, one wonders whether or not official intersynodical contact will occur sometime in the

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<sup>38</sup>Email from Pastor Gaylin Schmeling, ELS (19 April 2000): Appendix #2 (Hereafter cited as Schmeling Email (April 2000))

<sup>39</sup>Email from Professor Armin Panning, WELS (20 April 2000): Appendix #3 (Hereafter cited as Panning Email (April 2000))

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. Appendix #3

<sup>41</sup>Schmeling Email (April 2000): Appendix #2

<sup>42</sup>Reim Email (April 2000): Appendix #1

future. When asked what would need to happen for talk between the CLC-ELS-WELS to reopen, Schmeling had this to say:

I believe the ELS would be more than willing to renew fellowship discussions with the CLC whenever the leaders of the CLC express an interest. These meetings would begin with a discussion of church fellowship as was the case in the discussions during the early 1990s. This was the doctrine that caused the CLC people to leave the ELS and the WELS in the late 50s and early 60s. Therefore it would be only logical that discussions would begin here. <sup>43</sup>

Panning added, "The meetings in the 90's were a second unsuccessful attempt to resolve past difficulties. Maybe some time has to elapse before suggesting another series of discussions."<sup>44</sup>

Rollin Reim offered this observation:

Usually, in the past, overtures for meetings were made when a convention requested it. This last series, however, took place because of some local dialogue in the Pacific Northwest. I think the obstacles to future dialogue are mainly organizational. No institution likes to pass negative judgments on its past, or appears to be doing so. But the Spirit can "pull down strongholds." Walls, too. May His kingdom come!<sup>45</sup>

At this point, only our Lord knows what will happen between these three synods in the future. Two series of talks have left the matter unresolved. Besides the doctrine of fellowship, other subjects would also need addressing before the possibility of fellowship is in view. However, all does not look lost. The CLC, ELS, and WELS remain focused on the Word. The 1987-1990 talks affirmed this to those who participated in the discussions. God has used this contact, as he uses everything, to his glory and for the building up of his Church.

**SDG**

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<sup>43</sup>Schmeling Email (April 2000): Appendix #2

<sup>44</sup>Panning Email (April 2000): Appendix #3

<sup>45</sup>Reim Email (April 2000): Appendix #1

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Schmeling, Gaylin. *Email to Peter Schmidt* (19 April 2000): Appendix #2.

*WELS Questions and Answers -- Religion - Other Lutheran Church bodies:*  
<http://www.wels.net/sab/qa/rel-o-luth.html>; Internet.

Appendix #1

Excerpts from an email by Pastor Rollin Reim to Peter Schmidt

19 April 2000

(Pastor Reim's comments in *italics*)

**THE 1987-1990 CLC-ELS-WELS DISCUSSIONS**

*I should hasten to say that I am not a spokesperson for the CLC. Views that I express below may or may not be shared by the body as a whole. There was no official review of the meetings (as to content) or action taken by the CLC in convention. In our polity, the president speaks for the body during interim. It was his correspondence with then President Mischke that seemed to come to the conclusion that no further dialogue would be fruitful. WELS has distinguished itself, I believe, in its constructive efforts to foster unity among confessional Lutheran bodies. Years ago they sponsored "free conferences" to allow for dialogue. I participated in the Rockford, IL, meetings. Did an essay, in fact. In the recent three-way meetings on fellowship the presentations were quite objective in nature. Designed to get at the truth of the matter, especially in Romans 16:17-18. What it might have led to was not a stated concern. If agreement was discovered or reached, the restoration of a functioning fellowship would have been a natural consequence, unless organizational considerations would have become an impediment. I remember a session in which Prof. Gawrisch cautioned the group with the observation that even if agreement is reached in the matter at hand, there would be other issues such as AAL/LB that would need to be addressed. The direction of his leadership was evident, and I respect him very highly for it. Now, to your specific questions.*

1. How would you describe the overall tone of the meetings?

*Graced with mutual respect and careful attention to the essays presented.*

2. What was gained by these meetings?

*I believe that the library of study material on the termination of fellowship was much enhanced. In fact, I would like to see the papers bound together and made available to further study, along with the very important summary statement. The great gain for me was the discovery that the current theological leadership of all the three bodies of that time was ready to disavow the idea that there must be a continuation of admonition within the framework of fellowship with a body after they have been marked as errorists. "Until one has reached the conclusion that further admonition is of no avail" was the troublesome phrase in the past. At the same time, the CLC reps were pressed in a wholesome way to lay to rest a long standing concern. Namely, that our synod does not believe in patient admonition of weak brethren. These discussions provided a forum in which these matters could be given their due. I believe all benefited from the studies.*

3. What was not addressed at these meetings that needed to be, and in your opinion, why weren't they addressed?

## Appendix #1

*The hang-up, as you know, came after the meetings. To some on all sides it seemed that the prologue of the summation did not settle the question of whether or not there was a doctrinal issue in the past, especially 1959-1961. If that had been on the agenda of the meetings, the question might have been laid to rest. It was avoided, I believe, because objective study would quickly have been lost if judgment were to be passed on synodical actions 40 years back. It was Schmeling, I believe, who expressed the idea very well that it was not our call to do this. I agree.*

4. Humanly speaking, these meetings were not a success since they did not to this point help bring the three church bodies into fellowship. What are your personal feelings about the outcome?

*I personally think that the meetings were very successful in achieving their purpose. How exciting it is to find Christians of the same "heart and mind" in a matter of doctrine and practice where serious division had previously obtained.*

5. What would need to happen for talks between the CLC-ELS-WELS to re-open?

*Usually, in the past, overtures for meetings were made when a convention requested it. This last series, however, took place because of some local dialogue in the Pacific Northwest. I think the obstacles to future dialogue are mainly organizational. No institution likes to pass negative judgments on its past, or appears to be doing so. But the Spirit can "pull down strongholds." Walls, too. May His kingdom come!*

*Yours with appreciation for your serious approach to the subject.  
Rollin A. Reim*

## Appendix #2

Excerpts from an email by Pastor Gaylin Schmeling to Peter Schmidt

19 April 2000

(Pastor Schmeling's comments in *italics*)

### **THE 1987-1990 CLC-ELS-WELS DISCUSSIONS**

1. How would you describe the overall tone of the meetings?

*The overall tone of these meetings was very cordial. Obviously these meetings were conducted outside the realm of fellowship, but everyone was very courteous and there was a general spirit of goodwill.*

2. What was gained by these meetings?

*Over the years many misconceptions developed concerning the position of the CLC in our circles and misconceptions developed concerning our position in the CLC. At these meetings the actual position of both the CLC and ELS/WELS was clearly seen. These meetings did much to clear the air. We discovered that our positions were much closer than we assumed.*

3. What was not addressed at these meetings that needed to be, and in your opinion, why weren't they addressed?

*The main issue that was not addressed was the application of fellowship principles to the former fraternal organizations such as AAL and Lutheran Brotherhood. It appeared that even if we would have agreed on the principles of fellowship, there would have been disagreement in the application of these principles as they apply to these organizations. This issue was not addressed because it was decided that we should discuss the principles of fellowship first and if agreement was reached we then would continue with the application of these principles. The discussion of the application of these principles never occurred.*

4. Humanly speaking, these meetings were not a success since they did not to this point help bring the three church bodies into fellowship. What are your personal feelings about the outcome?

*I was greatly saddened that we came so close to agreement on the principles of fellowship and then the discussions broke down. This was the negative aspect of the meetings. The positive aspect was that the participants came to better understand each other's positions and this may have laid the foundation for fellowship discussions with the CLC if not in the near future at least in the far future.*

5. What would need to happen for talks between the CLC-ELS-WELS to re-open?

*I believe the ELS would be more than willing to renew fellowship discussions with the CLC whenever the leaders of the CLC express an interest. These meetings would begin with a discussion of church fellowship as was the case in the discussions during the early 1990s. This*



## Appendix #2

*was the doctrine that caused the CLC people to leave the ELS and the WELS in the late 50s and early 60s. Therefore it would be only logical that discussions would begin here.*

6. Any other comments about these meetings?

*While these meetings did not end in doctrinal agreement I believe they were very important and beneficial. The result of these meetings was that both parties understood each other's position better and we came to know the leadership of the CLC personally. I believe these meetings will be a foundation for future discussions with the CLC.*

*Pres. Gaylin Schmeling*

Appendix #3

Excerpts from an email by Professor Armin Panning to Peter Schmidt

20 April 2000

(Professor Panning's comments in *italics*)

**THE 1987-1990 CLC-ELS-WELS DISCUSSIONS**

1. How would you describe the overall tone of the meetings?

*The meetings were very congenial. My experience with the CLC men is that they are not only Christian gentlemen but even more importantly, they have "exegetical integrity." By that I mean they deal honestly and seriously with the Word. They're good students of the Scripture. Their exegetical methodology is sound and they are totally committed to the results that yields. They accept what the Word says.*

2. What was gained by these meetings?

*I was personally heartened to see how totally committed the CLC has remained to the central task of the church, namely, to preach Law and Gospel. Additionally, our committee received considerable information about their work program. We got information about their home missions and their overseas mission program. Particularly at the meetings at Eau Claire we were updated regarding their worker training program and facility.*

3. What was not addressed at these meetings that needed to be, and in your opinion, why weren't they addressed?

*Items not addressed: The fellowship issue which the CLC sees regarding AAL, LB, and such fraternal organizations was not addressed. Very unofficially there were also some reservations expressed about our position on church and ministry.*

4. Humanly speaking, these meetings were not a success since they did not to this point help bring the three church bodies into fellowship. What are your personal feelings about the outcome?

*I don't think the meetings were a waste of time. Two church bodies that have a tremendous amount of shared history gained by sitting down with one another and talking in brotherly terms. Something of a follow-up to the previous meetings was the CI-CR's decision to request permission to send a visitor to their 1998 convention. I was pleased to serve as the CI-CR's representative. The reception I received was very cordial. I'm sure the previous contacts had something to do with that.*

5. What would need to happen for talks between the CLC-ELS-WELS to re-open?

*The meetings in the 90's were a second unsuccessful attempt to resolve past difficulties. Maybe some time has to elapse before suggesting another series of discussions.*

*Cordially, AJP*