

# 'Different Terrain' for Lutherans, Catholics; Unity Hopes High

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This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Una Sancta movement founded in Germany to promote theological discussions between Protestants and Roman Catholics in the interest of Christian unity. One of its most notable annual meetings was in 1960, when a Benedictine abbot evoked thunderous applause by describing Protestants as "brothers decorated with Christ's name."

Historically the land of the Reformation, Germany remains today a stronghold of the Lutheran communion, the world's largest Protestant grouping — with nearly 74,500,000 baptized members.

And it is this worldwide body which has given outstandingly firm support to the quest for Christian unity which is one of the basic aspirations of the ecumenical movement.

This is especially true in the United States, where an impressive Lutheran-Catholic dialogue was formally inaugurated in July, 1965, when an official consultation took place between theologians of the two faiths under the sponsorship of the American Catholic Hierarchy's Commission for Ecumenical Affairs and the National Lutheran Council (NLC) — the Council acting as the U.S. national committee of the Lutheran World Federation.

So, far, two other consultations — one last February and another in Washington, D.C., in late September — have taken place and the fourth is scheduled for New York next April.

Subjects already discussed have been: "Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church," "One Baptism for the Remission of Sin," and "The Extent to which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is also a Sacrifice" — a question which has divided Lutherans and Catholics since the 16th Century.

These theological get-togethers are an implicit response to a complaint in 1964 by the Rev. Virgil R. Westlund, secretary of Theological Cooperation. He said that while Lutherans and Catholics in the U.S. were engaged in dialogue to an extent never before realized, not all opportunities for inter-confessional conversation were being exploited.

A similar complaint was made two years earlier by Mr. Westlund's predecessor in the NLC post, Dr. David Granskou, who said Protestants and Catholics should break the "conspiracy of silence" which had kept them "at arm's length" for more than four centuries.

This "silence" has been broken, also on the international plane, thanks in large measure to the impact of the Second Vatican Council to which the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, sent five of its top theologians as delegates-observers, among them Dr. Kristin E. Skjoldsgaard, professor of systematic theology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, who is probably the foremost Lutheran student of Catholicism.

It was under Dr. Skjoldsgaard's direction that the LWF six years ago launched a history-making research program, at the University of Copenhagen's Ecumenical Institute, into the theology of Roman Catholicism and other confessions.

The Lutheran scholar made a statement on the Danish Radio in which he explained that since neither Catholicism nor Lutheranism was the same as at the time of the Reformation split, there needed to be a fresh examination of what they have in common and what separates them today.

Later, Dr. Skjoldsgaard made this challenging comment: "Both Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism stand within history, and they must not be satisfied either with the triumphs of former periods, or with the brilliance of today. On both sides, the power of destructive forces is at work, but on both

sides we live out of grace and through the power of God."

In July, 1965, the ecumenical world was thrilled by the announcement of plans by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the LWF for a joint working group to explore possible future collaboration "in study and action."

A similar body had been set up between the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, but the new body was the first concerned with relations between Rome and an individual Protestant denomination. The group has already met twice at Strasbourg, France — in August, 1965 and April this year.

Purpose of the meeting — an official statement said, was "to determine in what manner the relations which have already begun between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church can be continued and intensified."

Seven of those attending represented the LWF and an equal number were Vatican delegates, among them Bishop Jan Willembrands, secretary of the Vatican's Christian unity secretariat.

The joint body's two meetings came after the close of the Second Vatican Council, which Dr. Skjoldsgaard praised as having shown the "nearly unbelievable spiritual and intellectual potential" of the Catholic Church which had "proved itself in these five or six years in a truly magnificent fashion."

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The Catholic "new look" in regard to Luther has been evidenced by such developments as a priest lecturing on the Re-

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Among those commenting on his article was Prof. Warren Quabbeck of Luther Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, who said that any reunion of Protestantism and Catholicism "cannot be simply a resumption of the broken relationship of 1521 or 1530, but must be studied as a contemporary problem in individual relationships."

An optimistic note was sounded by one of Prof. Braaten's defenders, Dr. Robert McAfee Brown, United Presbyterian theologian and professor of religion at Stanford University, who wrote:

"Protestants and Roman Catholics live in a new era in which we are both discovering that the terrain that separates us is now entirely different from what we had imagined, and that rather than containing land mines with which we intend to destroy one another, it is now, for the first time, rich with promise and with the hope of a redeeming harvest."

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## Convergence, Not Syncretic

Washington—(RNS)—A leading Roman Catholic ecumenist saw grounds for a "theological convergence" between Catholics and Lutherans on the difficult question of the Eucharist at the conclusion of a third theological conversation involving representatives of the two Churches.

At the same time, Msgr. William W. Baum, executive secretary of the U.S. Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs, stressed that his idea of a "convergence of thought" does not at all imply "syncretism, or a fabrication of mutually acceptable beliefs."

"It goes far beyond that," he said, "and I feel this is part of the beauty of the meetings we held . . . We are searching together the data to see what they say—searching together, as theologians and Christians, the Scriptures, the fathers, the doctors of the church . . ."

He said there was basic agreement, as in the past, on the Eucharist being a sacrificial meal and in commemoration of Christ's Last Supper, as well as attesting to the death and Resurrection of Christ. Most of the time was spent on the variant views of sacrificial implications.

During the conversations, the Lutheran and Catholic theologians participated in a common prayer service using the matins and the litany from the Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal. Lutherans also attended a Mass concelebrated by Catholic participants in the discussions.

This "silence" has been broken, also on the international plane, thanks in large measure to the impact of the Second Vatican Council to which the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, sent five of its top theologians as delegates-observers, among them Dr. Kristin E. Skjoldsgaard, professor of systematic theology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, who is probably the foremost Lutheran student of Catholicism.

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## Ukrainian Cathedral To Open This Month

Philadelphia—(NC)—The largest Byzantine rite Catholic cathedral in the world, and the first to be built in the U.S. in 50 years, will be opened here Oct. 16.

Archbishop Ambrose Sanyshyn, O.S.B.M., Metropolitan of the Byzantine rite Ukrainian archeparchy of Philadelphia, told a press conference the new cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is larger than the famous Holy Wisdom Cathedral in Kiev, Ukraine. The cathedral is the work of architect Julian K. Jastremsky, authority on Byzantine architecture.

"The Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church has been, and is being severely persecuted in Ukraine, Poland, Belo-Ruth