

# Lutherans Urge New Attitude toward Papacy

**New York [RNS]** — Lutheran theologians participating in a dialogue with Roman Catholic scholars on the primacy of the Pope urged their churches to consider seriously a "new attitude" toward the papacy and a possible role for a renewed papacy as "symbol and center" of Christian unity.

In a lengthy commentary on a Common Statement issued March 4 by the national Lutheran-Catholic dialogue group, for Lutheran scholars said "we believe it is important for Lutherans to work for the renewal of the papacy, not only for the sake of their Roman Catholic brothers, but also for their own."

(In the Common Statement, the dialogue participants affirmed that papal primacy "need not be a barrier to reconciliation," said they had reached a "convergence in theological understanding of the papacy" and urged the respective Churches to "take specific action toward reconciliation.")

Suggesting that a new approach to the papacy is needed for "peace and concord in the church" and "even more for the

sake of a united witness to Christ," the Lutheran scholars observed.

"Our Lutheran teaching about the church and the Ministry constrains us to believe that recognition of papal primacy is possible to the degree that a renewed papacy would in fact foster faithfulness to the Gospel and truly exercise a Petrine function within the Church."

Stating that they were not prepared to say what Lutheran willingness to recognize the primacy of a renewed and restructured papacy would mean to Lutheran-Catholic relations, the Lutheran theologians nonetheless urged "the church bodies that have appointed us to accord high priority to the discussion of this question."

Reacting to the 5,000-word Common Statement by the entire 26-member dialogue group in a 4,000-word "reflections" of their own, the 13 Lutheran scholars pointed out that Lutheranism's traditional antipathy to the papacy is no longer a valid position.

"When we think of the question of the church's unity in relation

to its mission," they added, "we cannot responsibly dismiss the possibility that some form of papacy, renewed and restructured under the Gospel, may be an appropriate visible expression of the Ministry that serves the unity and ordering of the church."

The Lutheran theologians position, described as a "convergence on papal primacy" with Catholic theologians, was directed to the attention of U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. The national committee is co-sponsor of the doctrinal talks begun in 1965 with the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Lutherans involved in the dialogue represent the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America, the American members of the LWF, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, an invited participant. The three bodies constitute about 95 per cent of Lutherans in the U.S.

The scholars noted a long list of areas where they and their

Catholic counterparts found "common ground" — i.e., the ministry, baptism, the eucharist. But they also pointed out that the thorny question of papal infallibility has yet to be explored.

With regard to the historic Lutheran position on the papacy, they stressed that "the early Reformers did not reject what we have called the 'Petrine function,' but rather the concrete historical papacy as it confronted them."

They added that the earliest Lutherans "hoped for a reform of the papacy precisely for the sake of seeing the unity of the church preserved."

"Despite their often violent anti-papal polemics, Lutherans continued to concede to the Pope all the legitimate spiritual powers of a bishop in his diocese, in this case, Rome," the Lutheran scholars said. "They even granted the propriety of his exercising a larger jurisdiction by human right over communities that had placed themselves under him."

The Lutheran theologians declared that the willingness of Lutherans to engage in dialogue

with Rome for almost two centuries "suggests they believed that ultimately the Holy Spirit might point both sides to a solution even of the knotty problem of the papacy."

Noting that the traditional distinction between "human right" and "divine right" regarding papal prerogatives is no longer useful for discussion, the Lutheran theologians said new questions have been raised based on Gospel requirements.

They said Lutherans rejected the medieval papacy because they felt it obstructed the Gospel, but on the other hand, "gospel Lutherans today are free to examine with open mind the opportunities for the exercise of the 'Petrine' function which a renewed and restructured papal office might provide."

Stressing that "we Lutherans must maintain our hope that the papacy will be renewed," the theologians said "we owe it to our Roman Catholic brothers to make this optimism evident" as "they need to know about our hopes and prayers for a truly evangelical universal ministry in the Church just as we need to know what they are hoping and praying for."

## Catholics Would Welcome Reunification

**New York [RNS]** — Roman Catholic theologians taking part with Lutheran scholars in an extensive study of the question of papal primacy, suggested that a "distinct canonical status" may be worked out so Lutherans could be in "official communion with the Church of Rome."

They said that such a "restoration of communion" would be of great benefit to Roman Catholics, and to Lutherans, enabling them both to share in a broader Christian heritage.

The Catholic scholars expressed their views in a document of "reflections" on a 5,000-word Common Statement issued March 4 by the 26 participants in a Lutheran-Catholic doctrinal dialogue.

The national dialogue, now nine years old, is sponsored by the U.S. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Catholic participants statement said that in terms of the "Petrine function" Lutherans and Catholics may no longer avoid the question: "Could not the Pope in our time become in some real way pastor and teacher of all the faithful, even those who cannot accept all the claims connected with his office?"

The statement added, "In the light of our experience in this dialogue we believe that the Roman Catholic Church should

take definite steps to face this question."

Calling the Common Statement a "major advance" in the ecumenical discussion of a most sensitive issue that has historically divided the Lutheran and Catholic Churches, the Catholic participants said it shows that "the church needs a unifying ministry concerned with the world-wide apostolate, and that this ministry may be effectively exercised in a renewed papacy."

Lutherans, it was acknowledged by the Catholics, "will presumably not be in a position to adopt the same relationship to the See of Rome that is currently held by Roman Catholics."

But, they noted, in a "wider communion of churches" the papacy would be able to serve as a sign and instrument of unity, not simply for Roman Catholics, but for others who have never ceased to pray and labor for the manifest unity of the whole Church of Christ.

Observing that the Common Statement "does not fully reflect everything we believe concerning the papacy," the Catholic theologians affirmed "the traditional Catholic position that the papacy is 'in a true sense, divinely instituted.'"

"The acceptance of the papal office is for us imperative because we believe that it is willed by God for His church,"

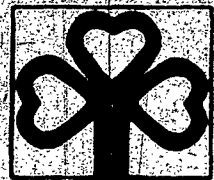
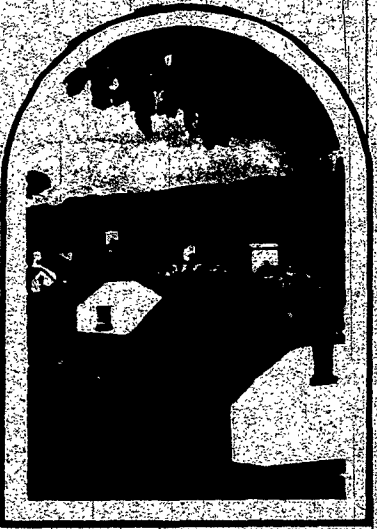
they said. "The mission entrusted to the church by Christ is served by the papacy. In it God has given us a sign of unity and an instrument for Christian life and mission."

The Catholic theologians emphasized that "while we look forward to changes in the style of papal leadership corresponding to the needs and opportunities of our times, we cannot foresee any set of circumstances that would make it desirable, even if it were possible, to abolish the papal office."

They pointed to modifications in Catholic understanding of papal leadership, as brought out by Vatican II, especially in the areas of collegiality and "people-of-God ecclesiology."

COURIER-JOURNAL

IRISH AIRLINES

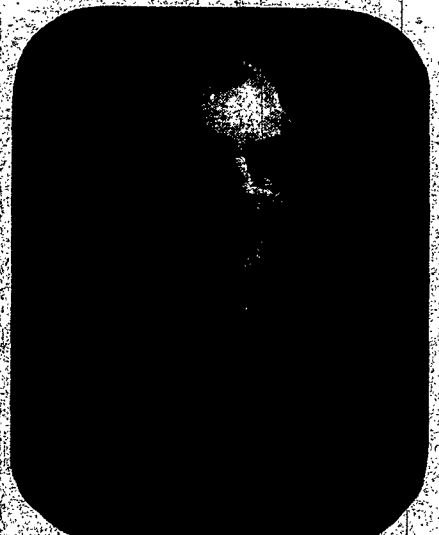


## Spring Tour to Ireland

Again this year we are going to Ireland. Come with us to receive the "Cead Mile Failte" or a Hundred Thousand Welcomes that this fair land extends to all her visitors.

Our 1974 Tour takes us to many scenic and interesting places — Sligo, County Donegal and Bundoran — Galway and the rugged Connemara countryside — Dublin Fair City and Limerick. For entertainment we are providing a cabaret night, a Medieval Banquet at Bunratty and the Irish balladeers.

This tour is an all inclusive one and has been especially prepared for the Courier Journal readers — you will have a private motor coach, choice hotel accommodations with all meals and a friendly, knowledgeable Irish guide who will be with you all the time. Your Spiritual Director is the Reverend Paul Cuddy, the Courier's popular escort, who took our group last year to Ireland. We know his friendly and helpful leadership will add immeasurably to this fine trip.



Father Paul Cuddy  
Tour Director

APRIL 28<sup>th</sup>  
to MAY 6<sup>th</sup>

\$585 <sup>per</sup> person  
All Inclusive

Send for Your Brochure  
TODAY

COURIER-JOURNAL TOURS  
67 Chestnut Street  
Rochester, N.Y. 14604

Please send brochure for the Tour of Ireland:

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

TELEPHONE