

U.S. Lutheran — Roman Catholic Dialogue

Justification By Faith

The U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue group released a 24,000-word document Sept. 30 stating they had reached a "fundamental consensus on the gospel." Involved in this agreement is the shared affirmation that "Our entire hope of justification and salvation rests on Christ Jesus and on the gospel whereby the good news of God's merciful action in Christ is made known." The commission found that "differences in thought structure play a considerable role in causing tension between Catholic and Lutheran views of justification." Yet they believe that in light of convergences which exist, "Lutherans and Catholics can acknowledge the legitimacy of concerns that come to expression in different ways," and that theological disagreements about structures of thought, "though serious, need not be church-dividing." The statement is the product of five years' work. It concerns a major doctrinal dispute of the time of the Reformation, the roles of faith and good works in justification. The statement follows. It is Copyright (c) 1983 by Lutheran World Ministries and Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, NCCB-USCC.

PREFACE

The present volume contains the results of the seventh round of theological discussions between scholars appointed respectively by the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and Lutheran World Ministries, which is the USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. Earlier rounds of this dialogue, begun in July 1965, have

discussed "The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church," "One Baptism for the Remission of Sins," "The Eucharist as Sacrifice," "Eucharist and Ministry," "Papal Primacy and the Universal Church" and "Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church."

Although the topic of "Justification by Faith" has been touched upon or alluded to in previous sessions of the dialogue, it was not fully addressed until the present round. Its prominence in the development of the Reformation makes it a key factor for the climate of relationships between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. The time spent on investigating this topic, therefore, has been warranted.

During the nearly six years of discussion on this topic, the dialogue lost two of its experienced members to death. Dr. Paul Empie was the founding Lutheran co-chairman of the dialogue and, as a layman, provided a continual voice for clarity in expressing theological views. Dr. Warren Quanbeck, a systematic theologian, contributed a skill in formulation that speeded the dialogue's work. We are grateful for their gifts and for the time they were able to share in this common endeavor.

(continued on page 279)

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE:

*Justification by Faith, by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Group in the United States, p. 277;

*On File, p. 278;

*Datebook, p. 278.

OCTOBER 6, 1983
VOL. 13: NO. 17

origins
NE documentary service