ARCIC 100

Part 1

Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue

Papal Primacy/ Converging Viewpoints

Not long ago the papacy was considered the greatest obstacle to Christian unity. Now divided Christians are even finding ways to approach this problem. Since late 1970, the national level Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue group in the United States has been exploring the topic of papal primacy. On March 4 the group released a major statement revealing their accomplishments—and asking their respective churches at large just how ready they now are to push for "reconciliation." The Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians had earlier achieved considerable agreement on the topic of ministry. Their statement on papal primacy seems to be influenced by that earlier agreement. Papal primacy is examined as a form of ministry which has church unity as a goal. The theologians have not reached total agreement on the topic of papacy. For example, they have not yet dealt with the question of infallibility, nor have they "adequately explored to what extent the existing forms of the papal office are open to change in the future." But they have agreed that a special responsibility for promoting the church's unity "may be entrusted to one individual minister" and "such a responsibility for the universal church cannot be ruled out on the basis of the biblical evidence." There is growing awareness among Lutherans of the necessity of a specific ministry serving the church's unity and universal mission, and Catholics increasingly see the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of the papacy within the universal church, the theologians state. "Lutherans and Catholics can now begin to envision possibilities of concord and to hope for solutions to problems that have previously seemed insoluble." On the following pages, "Origins" presents complete documentation on the new Lutheran-Catholic statement. Part I, beginning here, is the joint declaration.

In the discussions conducted in the United States between Roman Catholic and Lutheran theologians, we have found broad areas of agreement on the Nicene Creed and the christological center of the faith as well as on baptism, the eucharist, and the ministry of word and sacrament.[1] In the most recent sessions of our dialogue, we have moved to the problems of how that ministry might best nurture and express the unity of the universal church for the sake of its mission in the world. It is within this context that we have considered papal primacy.

Visible unity in the church has from earliest times been served by several forms of the ministry. Some of these forms, such as that exercised in the ecumenical councils,[2] have not

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MARCH 14, 1974
VOL. 3: NO. 38

origins
NC documentary service

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been the subject of major disputes between Catholics and Lutherans. By contrast the role of the papacy has been the subject of intense controversy, which has generated theological disagreements, organizational differences, and psychological antagonisms.

In discussing the papacy as a form of ministry within the universal church we have limited ourselves to the question of papal primacy. No attempt has been made to enter into the problem of papal infallibility. While this issue must be faced in the discussions between our churches, we believe that this limitation of the scope of our present discussion is justified, since papal primacy was a doctrinal issue long before papal infallibility became a major problem.

In these sessions, we have once again found common ground. There is a growing awareness among Lutherans of the necessity of a specific ministry to serve the church's unity and universal mission, while Catholics increasingly see the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of the papacy within the universal church. Lutherans and Catholics can now begin to envision possibilities of concord, and to hope for solutions to problems that have previously seemed insoluble. We believe that God is calling our churches to draw closer together, and it is our prayer that this joint statement on papal primacy may make some contribution to that end.

I. The Setting of the Problem

(1) The church as reconciled and reconciling community cannot serve God's purpose in the world as it should when its own life is torn by divisions and disagreements. The members of the church, wherever they are found, are part of a single people, the one body of Christ, whose mission is to be an anticipatory and efficacious sign of the final unification of all things when God will be all in all. In order to bear credible witness to this coming kingdom, the various Christian bodies must mutually assist and correct each other and must collaborate in all matters which concern the mission and welfare of the church universal. Even within the same Christian communion, local churches or units must be related to the church universal, so that pluralism and pluriformity do not undermine oneness, and unity and uniformity do not destroy a desirable diversity.

(2) As we Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians turned in our discussions to the need for visible unity in the church universal, we were assisted by the fundamental accord stated in an earlier report on the doctrine of ministry. We there agreed that, by the will of God 1) the general ministry of proclaiming the gospel devolves upon the whole people of God, and 2) "the ministry of word and sacrament" serves to unify and order the church for its mission in and to the world.[3]

Our previous discussions had centered on the service rendered to the local communities by the ministry. Now we focus on the unifying and ordering function of this ministry in relation to the universal church—on how a particular form of this ministry, i.e., the papacy, has served the unity of the universal church in the past and how it may serve it in the future.

(3) Catholics and Lutherans have in part recognized and employed similar means for fostering the unity of the universal church. Christians of the various communities have been bound together by one baptism and by their acceptance of the inspired scriptures. Liturgies, creeds, and confessions have also been unifying factors. For both traditions the councils of the church have had a significant unifying role. The Reformers affirmed the value of councils; and this has been implicitly acknowledged in a different form by most contemporary Lutheran churches through their formation of the Lutheran World Federation and, on a wider scale, by participation in the World Council of Churches. On the Catholic side, the importance of the conciliar principle has been reasserted by Vatican II in its exercise of conciliar functions, as well as in its emphasis on the collegial structure of the church.

(4) Precisely because large areas of agreement exist on such means of unifying the church, we have focused our attention in this discussion on another unifying factor on which there has been disagreement, namely, the role of particular persons, offices, or officeholders in exercising responsibility for the unity of the universal church. In describing this specific ministry and its exercise by a person we were naturally drawn, in the light of centuries of development, to the image of Peter.[4]

Among the companions of Jesus, he is given the greatest prominence in the New Testament accounts of the origins of the church. He is spoken of in the gospels in terms relating him to the founding of the church, to strengthening his brethren, to feeding the sheep of Christ. He is a prominent figure in some of the Pauline letters, in Acts, and for two of the Catholic epistles—a fact which suggests that he was associated with a wide-ranging ministry.

Subsequent church history made him the image of a pastor caring for the universal church. And so, although we are aware of the danger of attributing to the church in New Testament times a modern style or model of universality, we have found it appropriate to speak of a "Petrine function," using this term to describe *a particular form of ministry exercised by a person, office-holder, or local church with reference to the church as a whole.* This Petrine function of the ministry serves to promote or preserve the oneness of the church by symbolizing unity, and by facilitating communication, mutual assistance or

QUOTE FROM A RECENT TEXT OF CURRENT INTEREST:

"...The commission's aim has been to see whether it is possible to 'find a way of advancing together beyond the doctrinal disagreements of the past' to a point where these doctrines' will no longer constitute an obstacle to the unity we seek.' Its method has been to re-examine these questions in the light both of 'biblical teaching and the tradition of our common inheritance' and of 'the development of the thinking in our two communions' about them. Within such a study, the members of the commission have also asked themselves and each other, What is our faith on this point? What is our understanding of this doctrine? By asking and answering such questions it has proved possible for the commission to discover 'a convergence of testimonies,' and to express in its agreed statements a true consensus 'on essential matters where it considers that doctrine admits no divergence.'"

(This quote discussing how another dialogue group sought to make progress on a difficult ecumenical point is taken from a commentary on the Canterbury Statement by Colin Davey, Secretary of the Anglican delegation to the international Anglican-Catholic Commission. The Canterbury Statement, published last December is that Commission's agreed statement on ministry. See Colin Davy's Commentary in "Origins," current volume, on pp. 405ff.)

The following statement on the significance of the Lutheran-Catholic work on the topic of the papacy was released March 5 by Father John Hotchkin director of the U.S. bishops' ecumenical secretariat:

"The Lutheran-Catholic Consultation was the first Catholic-Protestant dialogue initiated at a national level, and now is the first ecumenical group to issue a statement on the ministry of the pope in the church.

"This is a landmark report in the ecumenical movement. The scholarly research which underlies this statement puts a new foundation under future dialogue between Catholics and others on the papacy.

"What is most striking is the marked change of attitude the statement conveys. Far from holding back, the Lutheran participants reveal a real Christian concern for the emergence of a renewed papacy, and Catholics show an equal concern that in the future the papacy may come to be a source of support or service to the Lutheran churches without infringing on their heritage and proper self-direction."

correction, and collaboration in the church's mission.

(5) Such a Petrine function has been exercised in some degree by various office-holders, for example by bishops, patriarchs, and church presidents. However, the single most notable representative of this ministry toward the church universal, both in duration and geographical scope, has been the bishop of Rome.

The Reformers did not totally reject all aspects of the papal expression of the Petrine function, but rather what they regarded as its abuses. They hoped for a reform of the papacy precisely in order to preserve the unity of the church. Melanchthon held that "for the sake of peace and general unity among Christians" a superiority over other bishops could be conceded to the pope.[5] For many years Lutherans hoped for an ecumenical council that would reform the papacy. They continued to concede to the pope all the legitimate spiritual powers of a bishop in his diocese, in this case, Rome. They even granted the propriety of his exercising a larger jurisdiction by human right over communities that had by their own will placed themselves under him.[6]

II. The Issues

(6) Nevertheless, the pope's claims to primacy and his exercise of it have occasioned violent disagreements. Lutherans and others have even gone so far as to call the papacy "antichrist."

The disputes have centered, first, on the question whether the papacy is biblically warranted. Roman Catholics have read the New Testament as indicating that Jesus conferred on Peter a unique role of leadership in the whole church for all times and in this sense provided for successors in the Petrine function, the bishops of Rome. In this view, the papacy has remained substantially the same through succeeding centuries, all changes being accidental.

Lutherans, in contrast, have minimized Peter's role in the early church and denied that this role continued in the church in later periods or that the Roman bishops could be considered his successors in any theologically significant sense.

(7) Closely linked to this historical question regarding the institution of the papacy by Christ is the theological issue whether the papacy is a matter of divine law (*ius divinum*).[7] Roman Catholics have affirmed that it is and consequently have viewed it as an essential part of the permanent structure of the church. Lutherans have held, in opposition to this, that the papacy was established by human law, the will of men, and that its claims to divine right are nothing short of blasphemous.

(8) A third area of controversy centers on the practical consequences drawn from these prior disagreements. Roman Catholics have tended to think of most major aspects of papal structure and function as divinely authorized. The need or possibility of significant change, renewal, or reform has generally been ignored. Most important, it has been argued that all ministry concerned with fostering unity among the churches is subject—at least in crisis situations—to the supervision of the bishop of Rome. His jurisdiction over the universal church is in the words of Vatican I, "supreme," "full," "ordinary," and "immediate."[8] This authority is not subject to any higher human jurisdiction, and no pope is absolutely bound by disciplinary decisions of his predecessors.[9] This view of the exercise of papal power has been vehemently repudiated by Lutherans and viewed by them as leading to intolerable ecclesiastical tyranny.

In the course of our discussions, however, we have been able to gain helpful and clarifying insights regarding these points of controversy.

III. Focus on the New Testament Question

(9) Any biblical and historical scholar today would consider anachronistic the question whether Jesus constituted Peter the first pope, since this question derives from a later model of the papacy which it projects back into the New Testament.[10] Such a reading helps neither papal opponents nor papal supporters. Therefore terms such as "primacy" and "jurisdiction" are best avoided when one describes the role of Peter in the New Testament. Even without these terms, however, a wide variety of images is applied to Peter in the New Testament which signalizes his importance in the early church.[11]

"The question whether Jesus appointed Peter the first pope has shifted in modern scholarship to the question of the extent to which the subsequent use of the images of Peter in reference to the papacy is consistent with the thrust of the New Testament."

(10) It is well to approach the question of Peter's role in the church by recognizing that the New Testament writings describe various forms of ministry directed toward the church as a whole. These writings show a primary concern for local communities of believers (the

churches). There is also ample evidence of concern for groups of churches, for relationships between churches of different areas or backgrounds, and also for *the* church as the one body of Christ.

Paul sometimes holds up one local church as an example to another; he seeks to retain fellowship between the Gentile and the Jewish churches; he collects from the churches he has founded for the support of the church in Jerusalem. Both the letter to the Galatians and the book of Acts describe a meeting in Jerusalem among church leaders to settle a major problem facing various communities, namely, the circumcision of the Gentiles. The first epistle of Peter, the pastoral letters, and the Revelation (the Apocalypse), show concern for groups of churches. Colossians and Ephesians speak of the church as the body of Christ, and Ephesians in particular stresses the unity of the body. In the description of the Pentecost scene in Acts, there is a global vision of the Spirit-filled community reaching men of every land and tongue. In the fourth gospel, Jesus speaks of the day when there will be one flock and one shepherd.

(11) What role does Peter play in this ministry directed to the church at large? There is no single or uniform New Testament outlook on such a question. The New Testament books, written by men of different generations and varying outlooks, living in widely scattered churches, see Peter in a diversity of ways.[12]

There are certain features common to or underlying these different pictures of Peter. He is listed first among the twelve; he is frequently their spokesman; he is the first apostolic witness of the risen Jesus; he is prominent in the Jerusalem community; he is well known to many churches.

Yet it is not always easy to tell to what extent he exercises a function in relation to the church as a whole and to what extent his influence remains regional. For instance, Galatians 2, 7 attributes to Peter a special role in relation to the gospel addressed to the Jews, while Paul has a similar role in relation to the gospel addressed to the Gentiles. Moreover, the relative silence of the New Testament about the career of Peter after the Jerusalem meeting (*ca.* A.D. 49) makes it difficult to find a biblical basis for affirmations about his continuing role in the church in his later years.

There is increasing agreement that Peter went to Rome and was martyred there, but we have no trustworthy evidence that Peter ever served as the supervisor or bishop of the local church in Rome. From the New Testament, we know nothing of a succession to Peter in Rome. We cannot exclude the possibility that other figures, such as Paul or James, also had a unifying role in relation to the whole church, although the available documents connect them primarily with individual churches or groups of churches.

(12) Although the New Testament gives us limited information about the historical career of Simon Peter, individual writings associate him with different aspects or images of ministry which have relevance to the church as a whole. It is Peter among the twelve who confesses Jesus as the Christ (Mark 8, Matthew 16, Luke 9) and as the holy one of God (John 6); he is listed as the first apostolic witness to the risen Lord (I Corinthians 15; Luke 24); he is the rock on which the church is to be founded and he is to be entrusted with the power of the keys (Matthew 16); he is the one who is to strengthen his brethren in faith (Luke 22); he is the one who, after confessing his love, is told to feed Jesus' sheep (John 21); he takes the initiative in filling the vacancy among the twelve (Acts 1) and receives the first Gentile converts (Acts 10). He is also the one who denies Jesus in an especially dramatic way (all four gospels); who sinks in the waves because of his lack of faith (Matthew 14); he is sharply rebuked by Jesus (Mark 8, Matthew 16), and later on by Paul (Galatians 2). The fact that these failures were so vividly remembered is perhaps also evidence of his prominence.

(13) How this view of Peter in the New Testament as developed by modern scholarship relates to the papacy might be summarized thus. Peter was very important as a companion of Jesus during Jesus' public ministry; he was one of the first of the disciples to be called and seems to have been the most prominent among the regular companions. This importance carried over into the early Palestinian church, as indicated in the record of an appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter (probably the first appearance to an apostle). Clearly he was the most prominent of the twelve and took an active part in the Christian missionary movement.

Peter had a key role in decisions that affected the course of the church. Thus one may speak of a prominence that can be traced back to Peter's relationship to Jesus in his public ministry and as the risen Lord. Of even greater importance, however, is the thrust of the images associated with Peter in the later New Testament books, many of them written after his death. While some of these images recall his failures (e.g., Peter the weak and sinful man) Peter is portrayed as the fisherman (Luke 5, John 21), as the shepherd of the sheep of Christ (John 21), as a presbyter who addresses other presbyters (I Peter 5, 1); as proclaimer of faith in Jesus the Son of God (Matthew 16, 16-17); as a receiver of special revelation (Acts 10, 9-16); as one who can correct those who misunderstand the thought of a brother apostle, Paul (II Peter 3, 15-16); and as the rock on which the church was to be built (Matthew 16, 18).

When a "trajectory" of these images is traced, we find indications of a development from earlier to later images. This development of images does not constitute papacy in its later technical sense, but one can see the possiblity of

In an interview with "Origins," Dr. Paul Empie--chairman of the Lutheran delegation in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue--discussed the importance of the statement (Mar. 4) on the papacy. "I think that the statement, while it does not offer any easy, quick solutions, opens avenues over which progress toward this goal may be reached for the first time in history," Dr. Empie said.

The question asked in the dialogue, he explained, was: "What purpose is papal primacy designed to serve?" The Lutherans then realized that the Catholic delegates saw the papacy in the service of the church's unity. Lutherans share this concern for the unity of the church, said Dr. Empie.

In the beginning some people wondered what could possibly be achieved from a dialogue between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on papacy, he noted. They wondered if it would lead to compromise or selling out. However, discussing the papacy not as an end in itself, but as a means, made it possible for the dialogue group to begin asking whether or not there might really be some way of finding a common ground.

an orientation in that direction, when shaped by favoring factors in the subsequent church. The question whether Jesus appointed Peter the first pope has shifted in modern scholarship to the question of the extent to which the subsequent use of the images of Peter in reference to the papacy is consistent with the thrust of the New Testament.

IV. Historical and Theological Questions

(14) Historical studies have opened new perspectives not only on the New Testament writings but also on other problems. It is now clear that the question of papal primacy cannot adequately be treated in terms of proof passages from scripture or as a matter of church law, but must be seen in the light of many factors—biblical, social, political, theological—which have contributed to the development of the theology, structure, and function of the modern papacy.

(15) In the period following the New Testament era, two parallel lines of development tended to enhance the role of the bishop of Rome among the churches of the time. One was the continuing development of the several images of Peter emerging from the apostolic communities, the other resulted from the importance of Rome as a political, cultural, and religious center.

The trajectory of the biblical images of Peter continued in the life of the early church, enriched by the addition of other images; missionary preacher, great visionary, destroyer of heretics, receiver of the new law, gatekeeper of heaven, helmsman of the ship of the church, co-teacher with Paul, co-martyr with Paul in Rome.[13] These images had a theological significance even before they were associated with the bishop of Rome.

(16) A parallel line of development occurred through the early church's accommodation to the culture of the Graeco-Roman world, when it adopted patterns of organization and administration prevailing in the area of its missionary work. Churches identified themselves according to the localities, dioceses, and provinces of the empire. The prestige and centrality of Rome as the capital city, combined with the wealth and generosity of Roman Christians, quite naturally led to a special prominence of the Roman church. Moreover this church enjoyed the distinction of having been founded, according to tradition, by Peter and Paul, and of being the site where these martyrs were buried.

(17) In the controversy with the gnostics, episcopal sees of apostolic foundation served as a gauge or standard of orthodoxy, and the Roman church, associated with Peter and Paul, was especially emphasized in this respect by Western writers. During the first five centuries, the church of Rome gradually assumed a certain pre-eminence among the churches: it intervened in the life of distant churches, took sides in distant theological controversies, was consulted by other bishops on a wide variety of doctrinal and moral questions, and sent legates to faraway councils. In the course of time Rome came to be regarded in many quarters as the supreme court of appeal and as a focus of unity for the worldwide communion of churches.

(18) With Leo I the correlation between the bishop of the Roman church and the image of Peter, which had already been suggested by some of his predecessors, became fully explicit. According to Leo, Peter continues his task in the bishop of Rome, and the predominance of Rome over other churches derives from Peter's presence in his successors, the bishops of the Roman see. The Petrine function of the bishop of Rome is nothing less than the care for all the churches. It imposes upon other bishops the duty to obey his authority and apply his decisions. Thus Western theological affirmations of papal primacy found an early expression in the teaching of Leo I.

(19) The later development of these claims can now be seen by both Lutherans and Catholics to have had both positive and negative features. On the one hand, this development was furthered by the historical situation of the Middle Ages, when Rome no longer found itself in competition with the other major metropolitan sees in the long struggle against secular, and especially imperial, power.

On the other hand, the theoretical interpretation of primacy in the categories of canon law made rapid progress. Among others, Gregory VII and Innocent III, relying on such documents as the False Decretals, depicted the church as a papal monarchy in accordance with secular models available in their day. Documents such as Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam* (1302) embodied the claim that the pope had not only spiritual but also temporal dominion over the whole earth.[14] At the same time, some medieval theologians continued to see Rome as the center of unity in a worldwide communion of churches. Some accented the religious and charismatic, rather than the juridical and administrative, aspects of papal primacy.

In the high Middle Ages the mendicant orders and some of their prominent theologians, such as Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas, tended to exalt the powers of the Roman see. Moreover, the growth of scholastic theology reinforced a pyramidal view of authority in the church. The powers diffused in the body of the faithful were seen to be concentrated in the order of bishops and still further in the one person of the bishop of Rome.

Some theologians, for example the conciliarists, interpreted the powers as ascending from the body into the head, while others, for example the papal canonists, saw them as descending from the head into the body. The latter view reemerged with added emphasis after the Council of Basel (1431-37). The Council of Florence in its Decree of Union for the Greek and Latin church (1439)[15] set forth the doctrine of papal primacy in terms that approximate those of Vatican I.

Within post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism, the polemics of the sixteenth century and the Counter-Reformation strengthened this trend. Several centuries of struggle against nationalistic movements, an upsurge of ultramontane centralism, and the desire to oppose 19th century liberalism created the climate for Vatican I. This council taught that the pope as successor of Peter has a primacy of jurisdiction over all individuals and churches. It

declared that this jurisdiction is "full," "supreme," "ordinary" (that is, not derived by delegation from another), and "immediate" (that is, direct), and linked this primacy of jurisdiction with papal infallibility.[16]

(20) The theology of Vatican II developed the teaching of Vatican I, giving a more balanced account of the relations of the pope to the bishops and of the bishops to the people of God. The bishop of Rome is head of the college of bishops, who share his reponsibility for the universal church. His authority is pastoral in its purpose even when juridical in form. It should always be understood in its collegial context.

(21) We thus see from the above that the contemporary understanding of the New Testament and our knowledge of the processes at work in the history of the church make possible a fresh approach to the structure and operations of the papacy. There is increasing agreement that the centralization of the Petrine function in a single person or office results from a long process of development. Reflecting the many pressures of the centuries and the complexities of a worldwide church, the papal office can be seen both as a response to the guidance of the Spirit in the Christian community, and also as an institution which in its human dimensions, is tarnished by frailty and even unfaithfulness.

The Catholic members of this consultation see the institution of the papacy as developing from New Testament roots under the guidance of the Spirit. Without denying that God could have ordered the church differently, they believe that the papal form of the unifying ministry is, in fact, God's gracious gift to his people.

Lutheran theologians, although in the past chiefly critical of the structure and functioning of the papacy, can now recognize many of its positive contributions to the life of the church. Both groups can acknowledge that as the forms of the papacy have been adapted to changing historical settings in the past, it is possible that they will be modified the better to meet the needs of the church in the future.

V. Looking Forward to the Renewal of the Structures of the Papacy

(22) In considering how the papacy may better serve the church as a whole, our reflections will bear on basic principles of renewal, and on questions facing Roman Catholics and Lutherans in view of the possibilities of rapprochement.

A. Norms for Renewal

(23) **The Principle of Legitimate Diversity**

The ultimate source of authority is God revealed in Christ. The church is guided by the Spirit and is judged by the word of God. All its members share in this guidance and are subject to this judgment. They should recognize that the Spirit's guidance may give rise to diverse forms in piety, liturgy, theology, custom, or law. Yet a variety of ecclesial types should never foster divisiveness. With humility and in self-criticism, ministers in the church should therefore "test the spirit," and listen to the judgment which may be implied in "the signs of the times."[18] Even the exercise of the Petrine function should evolve with the changing times, in keeping with a legitimate diversity of ecclesial types within the church.

(24) **The Principle of Collegiality**

Collegial responsibility for the unity of the church, as emphasized by Vatican II, is of utmost importance in protecting those values which excessive centralization of authority would tend to stifle. No one person or administrative staff, however dedicated, learned, and experienced, can grasp all the subtleties and complexities of situations in a worldwide church, whose many communities live and bear witness in the variegated contexts of several continents and many nations. It is only through the contributions of many persons and groups that the problems which need urgent attention can be identified, and the talents necessary to deal with them be mustered. The collegial principle calls all levels of the church to share in the concern and responsibilities of leadership for the total life of the church.

(25) **The Principle of Subsidiarity**

The principle of subsidiarity is no less important. Every section of the church, each mindful of its special heritage, should nurture the gifts it has received from the Spirit by exercising its legitimate freedom. What can properly be decided and done in smaller units of ecclesial life ought not to be referred to church leaders who have wider responsibilities. Decisions should be made and activities carried out with as broad as possible a participation from the people of God. Initiatives should be encouraged in order to promote a wholesome diversity in theology, worship, witness, and service. All should be concerned that, as the community is built up and its unity strengthened, the rights of minorities and minority viewpoints are protected within the unity of faith.

B. Roman Catholic Perspectives

(26) The church's teaching office "is not above God's Word; it rather serves the Word."[19] Indeed this is true of all ecclesiastical authority. The gospel may require that church offices be exercised in very different ways to meet the needs of various regions and periods. New means of exercising authority may have to be discovered to fit the cultural patterns arising out of the changing forms of education, communications, and social organization. The signs of the times point to the need for greater participation of pastors, scholars, and all believers in the direction of the universal church.[20]

(27) Further, it is an important political principle that authority in any society should use only the amount of power necessary to reach its assigned goal. This applies also to the papal office. A canonical distinction between the highest authority and the limited exercise of the corresponding power cannot be ruled out and needs to be emphasized. Such a limitation need not prejudice the universal jurisdiction attributed to the pope by Roman Catholic doctrine. Thus one may foresee that voluntary limitations by the pope of the exercise of his jurisdiction will accompany the growing vitality of the organs of collegial government, so that checks and balances in the supreme power may be effectively recognized.

C. Lutheran Perspectives

(28) If perspectives such as the foregoing prevail, papal primacy will no longer be open to many traditional Lutheran objections. As we have noted (see 3 above), Lutherans increasingly recognize the need for a ministry serving the unity of the church universal. They acknowledge that, for the exercise of this ministry, institutions which are rooted in history should be seriously considered. The church should use the signs of unity it has received, for new ones cannot be invented at will. Thus the Reformers wished to continue the historic structures of the church[21] and only reluctantly parted with them. Such structures are among the signs of the church's unity in space and time, helping to link the Christian present with its apostolic past.

Lutherans can also grant the beneficial role of the papacy at various periods of history. Believing in God's sovereign freedom, they cannot deny that God may show again in the future that the papacy is his gracious gift to his people. Perhaps this might involve a primacy in which the pope's service to unity in relation to the Lutheran churches would be more pastoral than juridical. The one thing necessary, from the Lutheran point of view, is that papal primacy be so structured and interpreted that it clearly serve the gospel and the unity of the church of Christ, and that its exercise of power not subvert Christian freedom.

VI. Conclusions

(29) Our discussions in this dialogue have brought to light a number of agreements, among the most significant of which are:

— Christ wills for his church a unity which is not only spiritual but must be manifest in the world.

— promotion of this unity is incumbent on all believers, especially those who are engaged in the ministry of word and sacrament;

— the greater the responsibility of a ministerial office, the greater the responsibility to seek the unity of all Christians;

— a special responsibility for this may be entrusted to one individual minister, under the gospel.

— such a responsibility for the universal church cannot be ruled out on the basis of the biblical evidence;

— the bishop of Rome, whom Roman Catholics regard as entrusted by the will of Christ with this responsibility, and who has exercised his ministry in forms that have changed significantly over the centuries, can in the future function in ways which are better adapted to meet both the universal and regional needs of the church in the complex environment of modern times.

"The one thing necessary, from the Lutheran point of view, is that papal primacy be so structured and interpreted that it clearly serve the gospel and the unity of the church of Christ, and that its exercise of power not subvert Christian freedom."

(30) We do not wish to understate our remaining disagreements. While we have concluded that traditional sharp distinctions between divine and human institution are no longer useful, Catholics continue to emphasize that papal primacy is an institution in accordance with God's will. For Lutherans this is a secondary question. The one thing necessary, they insist, is that papal primacy serve the gospel and that its exercise of power not subvert Christian freedom (see section 28).

There are also differences which we have not yet discussed. We have not adequately explored to what extent the existing forms of the papal office are open to change in the future, nor have we yet touched on the sensitive point of papal infallibility, taught by Vatican Councils I and II.

(31) Even given these disagreements and points yet to be examined, it is now proper to ask, in the light of the agreement we have been able to reach, that our respective churches take specific actions toward reconciliation.

(32) Therefore we ask the Lutheran churches:

— if they are prepared to affirm with us that papal primacy, renewed in the light of the gospel, need not be a barrier to reconciliation;

— if they are able to acknowledge not only the legitimacy of the papal ministry in the service of the Roman Catholic communion[22] but even the possibility and the desirability of the papal ministry, renewed under the gospel and committed to Christian freedom, in a larger communion which would include the Lutheran churches;

— if they are willing to open discussion regarding the concrete implications of such a primacy to them.

(33) Likewise, we ask the Roman Catholic church:

— if in the light of our findings, it should not give high priority in its ecumenical concerns to the problem of reconciliation with the Lutheran churches;

— if it is willing to open discussions on possible structures for reconciliation which would protect the legitimate traditions of the Lutheran communities and respect their spiritual heritage;[23]

— if it is prepared to envisage the possibility of a reconciliation which would recognize the self-government of Lutheran churches within a communion;

— if, in the expectation of a foreseeable reconciliation, it is ready to acknowledge the Lutheran churches represented in our dialogue as sister-churches which are already entitled to some measure of ecclesiastical communion.

(34) We believe that our joint statement reflects a convergence in the theological understanding of the papacy which makes possible a fruitful approach to these questions. Our churches should not miss this occasion to respond to the will of Christ for the unity of his disciples. Neither church should continue to tolerate a situation in which members of one communion look upon the other as alien. Trust in the Lord who makes us one body in Christ will help us to risk ourselves on the yet undisclosed paths toward which his Spirit is guiding his church.

Footnotes

Chapter One

1. It should be noted that we shall in this report follow the practice established in

Volume IV of employing the term "ministry" to refer to the task or service which devolves on the whole church in distinction from the (or a) ministry (or minister) which performs a particular form of service—specific order, function or gift (charism) within and for the sake of Christ's church and its mission in the world. "This ministry has the twofold task of proclaiming the gospel to the world—evangelizing, witnessing, serving—and of building up in Christ those who already believe—teaching, exhorting, reproving, and sanctifying by word and sacrament. For this twofold work, the Spirit endows the ministry with varieties of gifts, and thus helps the church to meet new situations in its pilgrimage. Through proclamation of the word and administration of the sacraments, this ministry serves to unify and order the church in a special way for its ministry," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry*, p. 11; see also p. 9.

2. Martin Luther, "On Councils and the Church," Luther's Works, vol. 41, pp. 9-178. For a commentary, see Jaroslav Pelikan, "Luther's Attitude Towards Church Councils," *The Papal Council and the Gospel* (ed. K. E. Skydsgaard ed.) Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961, pp. 37-60, and for a fuller treatment, cf. Tecklenburg-Johns, *Luthers Konzilsidee in ihrer historischen Bedingtheit und ihrem reformatorischen Neuansatz*. Berlin: Topelmann, 1966.

3. See above, footnote 1.

4. Cf. *Peter in the New Testament*, Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, John Reumann, ed. New York and Minneapolis, Paulist Press, and Augsburg Publishing House, 1973, pp. 162ff.

5. Thus, Melanchthon noted in signing the Smalcald articles with their anti-papal polemics that if the Pope "would allow the gospel, we, too, may concede to him that superiority over the bishops which he possesses by human right, making this concession for the sake of peace and general unity among the Christians who are now under him and may be in the future." T. G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959) pp. 316-317.

6. T. G. Tappert, ed. *The Book of Concord*, pp. 298.

7. Carl Peter, "Dimensions of *Jus Divinum* in Roman Catholic Theology," George A. Lindbeck, "Papacy and *Ius Divinum*, A Lutheran View," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy*. (To be published.)

8. Maurice C. Duchaine, "Vatican I on Primacy and Infallibility," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy*.

9. The theological commission of Vatican Council II rejected a proposed amendment to the effect that the pope, calling the bishops to collegial action, is "bound to the Lord alone" (*uni Domino devinctus*). In support of this reflection, the commission wrote that such a formula was "oversimplified: for the Roman Pontiff is also bound to adhere to the revelation itself, to the fundamental structure of the church, to the sacraments, to the definitions of former councils, etc." (*Schema Constitutionis De Ecclesia*, MCMLXIV, p. 93).

10. *Peter in the New Testament*, pp. 8f.

11. Ibid., pp. 158-68 with detailed discussion in previous chapters of the book. See also Appended Note.

12. Ibid., p. 166. Cf. Oscar Cullman, *Peter-Disciple, Apostle Martyr*. Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 2nd ed., 1962.

13. See Appended Note.

14. James McCue, George H. Tavard, "The Papacy in the Middle Ages," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy*.

15. Denzinger-Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 33rd ed. (hereafter cited as DS) (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), 1307 and 3059.

16. DS 3059-3065.

17. *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter III.

18. *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

19. *Dei Verbum*, 10.

20. *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

21. *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, T.G. Tappert (ed.), Article 14, pp. 214ff.

22. *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry*, pp. 19, 20. See also footnote 5 above.

23. The expressions, "legitimate traditions" and "spiritual heritage," are meant to include the broad span of all the elements that Lutherans have experienced as being the ways in which they and their ancestors have lived the gospel. These ways pertain to different though related levels that may be called customs and faith, discipline and doctrine, canon law and teaching, etc. The intention of the text is to suggest that structures of reconciliation should extend further than the central patrimony of faith, in order to include also the *adiaphora* that usage has legitimized.

Part 2
Papacy As Possibility

The Lutheran Participants

The discussion of papal primacy between our two churches has entered a new phase, state the Lutheran participants in the U.S. national-level Lutheran-Catholic dialogue. Problems remain. But, they explain, "we cannot responsibly dismiss the possibility that some form of the 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 reflections of the Lutheran participants, issued March 4, as part of the statement of the U.S. Lutheran-Catholic dialogue group, follow.

(35) Many Lutherans as well as Roman Catholics will be startled by the convergence on papal primacy recorded in the preceding joint statement. This issue is both more sensitive and more difficult than any of those previously dealt with in our national dialogue.[1] It is doubly necessary, therefore, that the Lutheran participants explain their views to their fellow Lutherans more fully than was appropriate in the common statement (just as the Roman Catholic participants will address their fellow Roman Catholics in the third chapter of this report). We need to explain (1) why we have dealt with this issue (2) what seems to us the position of the Lutheran tradition on this matter (3) why we believe the time has now come for our churches to consider seriously the possibility of a role for the papacy such as is sketched in the preceding chapter.

Purpose of the Dialogue

(36) It would have been impossible to avoid the question of papal primacy in our discussions even if we had wished to do so. The purpose of the dialogue is:

First, to define as clearly as possible the extent and the limits of the common ground between Roman Catholics and Lutherans at this particular time in our respective histories.

Second, and more important, we are called as Christians to give a credible witness to our unity in Christ for the sake of our mission in the world (John 17, 21; Ephesians 4, 3-6). This unity is not an exclusively spiritual unity. It is true that we have a unity that our one baptism and our one faith in Christ bring about. At the same time Lutheran theologians have insisted that the church is not a Platonic republic that exists only in an ideal realm (Apology 7:20),[2] but that it is an empirical assembly of Christians among whom the gospel is proclaimed and heard and the sacraments are administered.

Third, we must deal not only with problems on which agreement is already visibly developing (such as the eucharist and eucharistic ministry),[3] but also with such apparently intractable issues as the papacy.

In our previous discussions on the ministry, we had already encountered the issue of the papacy. In those discussions we repeated the traditional Lutheran affirmation that "as long as the ordained ministry is retained, any form of polity which serves the proclamation of the gospel is acceptable."[4] We also observed that the Lutheran confessional writings "do not exclude the possibility that the papacy might have a symbolical or functional value in a wider area as long as its primacy is seen as being of human right."[5] In addition, we joined with our Roman Catholic colleagues in declaring that "the ordained ministry, through the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments, serves to unify and order the church in a special way for its ministry."[6] We were thus challenged to develop more fully a Lutheran view of the papacy's possible role as a symbol and center of unity in the exercise of a ministry on behalf of the church universal.

We have not, as our joint report repeatedly mentions, discussed papal infallibility. Our common statement is

therefore by no means a complete treatment of the papacy. It addresses itself particularly to the issues of papal primacy. While this fact may be disappointing to some people, it is our conviction that it is by such a step-by-step procedure that we can most responsibly clarify our agreement and differences.

The Pope as "Antichrist"

(37) In considering the historic Lutheran position on the papacy, we have become very much aware that the early Reformers did not reject what we have called the "Petrine function," but rather the concrete historical papacy as it confronted them in their day. In calling the pope the "antichrist," the early Lutherans stood in a tradition that reached back into the 11th century.[7] Not only dissidents and heretics but even saints had called the bishop of Rome the "antichrist" when they wished to castigate his abuse of power.

What Lutherans understood as a papal claim to unlimited authority over everything and everyone reminded them of the apocalyptic imagery of Daniel 11, a passage that even prior to the Reformation had been applied to the pope as the antichrist of the last days. The pope's willingness to derive advantage from doctrines and practices that seemed to them to contradict the gospel compelled them to resist such doctrines and practices as antichristian.[8]

The claim that probably rankled most was Boniface VIII's sweeping assertion in the bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302) that it is necessary for all human beings for their salvation to be subject to the bishop of Rome.[9] This declaration would probably not have played the role that it did in the 16th century if Leo X had not reaffirmed it at the Fifth Lateran Council (1516).[10] Against this teaching Lutherans consistently denied that the bishop of Rome is the visible head of Christendom by divine right, that is, on the basis of the word of God.[11]

Further, the direct involvement of the late medieval papacy in the politics of Europe, the popes' frequent resort to war and to the sometimes devious devices of medieval statecraft made the bishop of Rome in Lutheran eyes only one more secular prince who was ready to use his spiritual authority to achieve political ends.[12] As such he could be resisted in the name of patriotism in the same way any other foreign potentate might be resisted, a principle which was also admitted by Catholic theologians of the period.

Because of these factors, from the 1520s on, Lutherans regarded themselves as in fact outside the pope's spiritual jurisdiction. They saw themselves as being on a par with those parts of the church, especially in the East, which did not recognize the jurisdictional primacy of the bishop of Rome. The Lutheran refusal to submit to the authority of the bishop of Rome was reinforced in succeeding centuries by some of the political strategies employed by the Counter-Reformation, by what seemed the defensiveness of the Roman Catholic reaction to intellectual and political liberalism, and by the increasing trend toward centralization of power in the Roman see and the Roman Curia. The setting forth of the teachings of universal papal jurisdiction and of papal infallibility in 1870 seemed in Lutheran eyes to make the gulf between the Roman Catholic Church and the heirs of the Reformation virtually unbridgeable.

During the same period Lutheranism had difficulties of its own. It suffered from subservience to state power. Its own ecclesiastical authorities have not always fostered Christian liberty and faithfulness to the gospel. It too reacted defensively to intellectual and cultural movements. Worst of all, in many places it came close to losing the vision of the unity of God's people. In view of this record, Lutherans have no ground for self-righteousness.

(38) Today, after over four centuries of mutual suspicion and condemnation, it is generally supposed that Lutherans have had no place for papal primacy in their thinking about the church. This is not true. We need to remember that the earliest Lutherans hoped for a reform of the papacy precisely for the sake of seeing the unity of the church preserved. Melanchthon held that "for the sake of peace and general unity among the Christians" a superiority over the other bishops could be conceded to the pope.[13]

> ". . .The early reformers did not reject what we have called the 'Petrine function,' but rather the concrete historical papacy as it confronted them in their day."

Many Lutherans kept hoping for an ecumenical council to reform the papacy. Despite their often violent antipapal polemics, Lutherans continued to concede to the pope all the legitimate spiritual powers of a bishop in his diocese, in this case, Rome. They even granted the propriety of his exercising a larger jurisdiction by *human* right over communities that had by their own will placed themselves under him.[14] They were ready to grant that the rock on which Christ promised to build his community was Peter in his capacity as a minister of Christ.[15]

Even theologians of the era of classic Lutheran orthodoxy conceded that in the New Testament Peter possessed a preeminence among the twelve as a leader (*coryphaeus*), spokesman (*os*), chief (*princeps*) and the one "who proposed what was to be done."[16] In rejecting the monarchical authority of the bishop of Rome in the church, they were careful not to exclude a primacy of Peter among the apostles based on honor, age, calling, zeal, or order, nor did they deny that in a broad sense Peter could be called a "bishop" of Rome, and that the leadership of the Roman see devolved upon episcopal successors as happened in other apostolic sees.[17]

Since they felt bound by the gospel to seek the unity of the church, many of our Lutheran forefathers over a period of nearly two centuries negotiated with representatives of the Roman Catholic church, in spite of deep reservations.[18] Lutherans sent delegations to the second phase of the Council of Trent,[19] and even after the peace of Augsburg (1555) responsible Lutheran leaders were ready to enter into discussion with their Roman Catholic counterparts.[20] Irenic attempts continued into the late 17th century.[21]

The vision of "one church of the future" was in the minds of a number of prominent Lutherans throughout the 19th century.[22] The willingness of Lutherans to engage in serious dialogue suggests that they believed that ultimately the Holy Spirit might point both sides to a solution even of the knotty problem of the papacy.

The Growing Concern for Unity

(39) Ours is an era of change in social structures, in technology, in science, in human knowledge. In some ways these changes have brought all Christians closer together. Furthermore, the return to the sources, particularly the Bible and the church fathers, has helped prepare the way for a greater common understanding of the heritage shared by all Christians.

From our Roman Catholic partners in dialogue we have received a vivid impression of dramatic changes within their church, changes which are throwing new light on the role of the papacy in Roman Catholic thought and life. For instance, Pope John XXIII, by his gesture of "opening the windows," has become for many Christians a new symbol of what the papacy might be.

Our partners are careful to point out that for them the pope is neither a dictator, nor an absolute monarch. He does not replace Christ; he represents Christ. His role is primarily that of one who serves. He cannot act arbitrarily but is limited by the same gospel that provides the norms for the life of the total Christian community. The documents of Vatican II, they emphasize, understand the papacy from the point of view of the church, not the church from the point of view of the papacy. These documents also stress the collegial aspect of church leadership.

To be sure, in the texts from Vatican II, as well as in more recent documents,[23] there are also claims for exclusive papal power. During the council, Pope Paul VI reserved certain

questions[24] for himself and he has continued to act independently to a degree that at times seems to compromise the principle of collegiality.

We Lutherans have to ask ourselves if the same factors that have contributed to the new situation in Roman Catholicism are not in fact also changing our own perspective on the papacy. In this day of intensified global communication and international cooperation, the concern for the unity of the entire empirical church is being keenly felt.

Lutherans in the past have used documents such as those contained in the *Book of Concord* as a device for achieving a common identity within their confessional family. In recent decades the Lutheran World Federation has been increasingly used for this purpose. Lutheran participation in the World Council of Churches, which includes major churches of the East, is also evidence of the Lutheran concern for unity of faith and action among all Christians.

We Lutherans see the need for symbols and centers of unity as urgent. We believe that we must try more energetically than we have in the past to give concrete expression to our concern for the unity of the whole empirical church. When we think of the question of the church's unity in relation to its mission we cannot responsibly dismiss the possibility that some form of the 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.

(40) The results of biblical research and historical scholarship have placed in a new perspective many of the once intensely debated issues surrounding the papacy. The national dialogue group has recognized the importance of these findings for a fresh approach to the question by commissioning two independant studies, one on "Peter in the New Testament"[25] and another on "Roman primacy in the patristic era."[26]

The Role of Peter

The report of the biblical panel makes it clear that "no matter what one may think about the justification offered by the New Testament for the emergence of the papacy, this papacy in its developed form cannot be read back into the New Testament; and it will help neither papal opponents nor papal supporters to have the model of the later papacy before their eyes when discussing the role of Peter."[27] This report quite properly warns against an anachronistic interpretation of the New Testament. Instead, it points out the diversity of the images of Peter in the various strata of the New Testament materials and directs attention to the "trajectories"[28] of these images of Peter, and to their continuation and use in the early church. The view of Peter as the confessor, missionary, repentant sinner, and martyr is as much a part of this tradition as the view of Peter as the shepherd, pastor, teacher, and spokesman.

On the other hand, Lutherans too will find many of their cherished polemical readings of the texts challenged. Exegetically it is hard to deny that Peter enjoyed a preeminence among the apostles during Jesus' ministry as well as in the post-Easter church. He exercised in his time a function on behalf of the unity of the entire apostolic church. This we have chosen to designate the "Petrine function," even though its exercise was not restricted to Peter alone. This "Petrine function" is significantly connected with the images of Peter not only in the book of Acts and the two Petrine epistles but also, less directly, in the Pauline letters. Paul had his own understanding of his special role in and for the universal church, but at the same time room is left for a Petrine function for the sake of unity.[29]

Again, the report of the patristics panel indicates that there is no conclusive documentary evidence from the first century or the early decades of the second for the exercise of, or even the claim to, a primacy of the Roman bishop or to a connection with Peter, although documents from this period accord the church at Rome some kind of preeminence.[30]

Both primatial claims and the Petrine trajectories went through a long history in which—as the common statement points out—not only religious-theological but also political, social, and cultural factors played a considerable role before these two trends finally merged in the third century. While we are aware of the variety of factors which contributed to this development, we as Lutherans are impressed by the fact that the bishops of Rome were nevertheless able to exercise a ministry of unifying and ordering the church in the West. Sometimes, as in the contribution of Leo the Great to the resolution of the christological controversies at Chalcedon in 451, this ministry was extended to the East as well.

Critical as we Lutherans have been in our evaluation of papal history, we can recognize that the existence of the papacy has in many ways been beneficial. While the civilization of the West was emerging, bishops of Rome did in fact express and nurture the visible unity of the church in a world threatened by non-christian forces and divisive tendencies. Thus the Petrine function was fulfilled in a specific way. As other concrete examples over the centuries we might cite the leadership of Gregory the Great in the promotion and protection of the Christian mission in northern Europe; the medieval popes who successfully asserted the independence of the Western church against attempts to subjugate it to the will of emperors, kings and princes; and the serious humanitarian concern exhibited by modern popes in the face of war and social injustice.

(41) To be sure, there is for Lutherans no single or uniquely legitimate form of the exercise of the Petrine function. At every stage, the Petrine function developed according to the possibilities available at that time. Councils, individual leaders, specific local churches, credal statements[31] and the papacy have all in various ways ministered to the unity of the church. Further, the papal form of the universal ministry has not always involved the centralized, juridical apparatus which now exists, nor need we assume that it will always continue to do so. Even if it should be desirable that the Petrine function be exercised by a single individual, the question of his powers would still be open.

(42) This brings us to a thorny problem between Lutherans and Roman Catholics which the group has had to discuss. Whatever primacy the Lutheran reformers accorded to the bishop of Rome was seen as a matter of historical development, and therefore of human right *(de iure humano)*, rather than something rooted in the teaching of the scriptures. Over against this position the Roman Catholic view of the papal primacy claimed divine sanction *(de iure divino)* for certain papal prerogatives. Lutherans and Roman Catholics alike have often doubted that a reconciliation of the two standpoints would be possible. We have found in our discussion however, through a series of careful historical investigations, that the traditional distinction between *de iure humano* and *de iure divino* fails to provide usable categories for contemporary discussion of the papacy.[32]

On the one hand, Lutherans do not want to treat the exercise of the universal ministry as though it were merely optional. It is God's will that the church have the institutional means needed for the promotion of unity in the gospel. On the other hand, Roman Catholics, in the wake of Vatican II are aware that there are ways of exercising papal primacy. Some are willing to consider other models for the exercise of the Petrine function. They recognize the dangers of ecclesiastical centralism, and realize the limitations of a juridical description of the Petrine function.[33]

Rather than using the traditional terminology of divine and human right, therefore, both Lutherans and Roman Catholics have been compelled by their historical studies to raise a different set of questions: In what way or ways has our Lord in fact led his church to use particular forms of the exercise of the Petrine function? What structural elements in the church does the gospel require for the ministry which serves the unity of the empirical church?

The Ministry of Unity

(43) Structures invested with powerful symbolic meaning cannot be created at will. Therefore we do not anticipate that

a concrete ministry of unity to serve the church of the future will be something completely new. It will have to emerge from the renewal and the restructuring of those historical forms which best nurture and express this unity. We recognize that among the existing signs or structures for the ministry of unity in the whole church, the papacy has a long history marked by impressive achievements in spite of all the things we have regarded as faulty in it.

(44) Lutherans are convinced that the church lives by the gospel. Our Lutheran forefathers rejected the late medieval papacy precisely because in their judgment it was obstructing the gospel. With them we believe that it is the task of the church at all times to proclaim the gospel in its fullness and to affirm the freedom of the children of God for which Christ has set us free. This very freedom, however, means that for the sake of the gospel Lutherans today are free to examine with an open mind the opportunities for the exercise of the Petrine function which a renewed and restructured papal office might provide.

(45) Lutherans can see in the papacy both values and what appear to be defects. On the positive side Lutherans can appreciate the papacy's assertion of the church's right to be independent of state control, the serious social concern exhibited by modern popes,[34] the liberating insight into the way in which the Bible should be studied, as set forth in encyclicals such as *Divino Afflante Spiritu*,[35] and the efforts which modern popes from Benedict XV on have devoted to the cause of peace among the nations.

Nevertheless, for Lutherans as well as for many Roman Catholics, the present mode of operation of the papacy and the Roman Curia leaves much to be desired. It is evident, moreover, that the close tie at the present time between primacy and infallibility has consequences in Roman Catholicism which will need thorough investigation in our future discussions. Again, any form of papal primacy that does not fully safeguard the freedom of the gospel is unacceptable to Lutherans. Many Roman Catholics manifest similar concerns when they insist, for example, that the primacy of the Roman bishop should not compromise the principle of collegiality.

(46) Everything that we have said underlines the fact that the discussion of papal primacy between our two churches has entered a new phase. It is true that the best model for the exercise of the Petrine function through a papacy is an issue that remains to be determined. At the same time, many of the changes decided upon at Vatican II and since are at least in the process of implementation. As examples we could point to the new rules for the Roman curia, the abolition of the index of prohibited books, the creation of an international synod of bishops meeting at regular intervals, and the appointment of an international commission of theologians. In spite of the delay implementing other reforms that have been under discussion among Roman Catholics, we Lutherans must maintain our hope that the papacy will continue to be renewed.

We owe it to our Roman Catholic brothers to make this optimism evident. We acknowledge our profound indebtedness to them for the insights into their own church that they have mediated to us. They need to know in turn, 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 us. Only thus will we be able to help and encourage each other in our common search for fuller manifestation of the unity that we have in Christ.

(47) We are not prepared in this report to spell out what the Lutheran willingness to recognize the primacy of a renewed and restructured papacy might mean in practice for Lutheran-Roman Catholic relationships. We are keenly aware that we have been speaking of possibilities whose actualization remains in the future. In the meantime, however, we believe that 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.

(48) We ask our churches earnestly to consider if the time has not come to affirm a new attitude toward the papacy "for the sake of peace and concord in the church"[36] and even more for the sake of a united witness to Christ in the world. 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. If this is indeed what Lutherans hold, ought they not to be willing to say so clearly and publicly? We urge the church bodies that have appointed us to accord high priority to the discussion of this question.

Footnotes
Chapter Two

1. *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry*, 1970, p. 11.
2. *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 7:20. Theodore G. Tappert ed. *The Book of Concord*, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959, p. 171.
3. *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III: The Eucharist as Sacrifice*, 1967; *IV: Eucharist and Ministry*, 1970.
4. *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry*, p. 19.
5. Ibid. p. 20.
6. Ibid., p. 11.
7. Schaff-Herzog. *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. New York and London; Funk and Wagnall, 1908. Vol. II pp. 76, 260-262; Vol. XII p. 2.
8. Tappert, *op. cit.* pp. 298, 299.
9. It was this statement that provoked the assertion of the *Smalcald Articles* that the pope is the real antichrist: Part Two, 4, 10, 11. Tappert, op. cit. p. 300.
10. For a modern Roman Catholic interpretation and critique of this document, see G. Tavard, "The Papacy in the Middle Ages," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy*.
11. *Smalcald Articles* Part Two, 4, 1; "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope," 1-4. Tappert, *op. cit.*, pp. 298, 320.
12. Tappert, *op. cit.* pp. 325, 326.
13. See his note in signing the *Smalcald Articles*, Tappert, *op. cit.* pp. 316, 317.
14. *Smalcald Articles* Part Two, 4, 1. Tappert, *op. cit.* p. 298.
15. "Treatise 25," Tappert, *op. cit.* p. 324.
16. So, for example, Balthasa Meisnerus. *Disputatio decima de distinctis gradibus ministrorum et usu templorum*, thesis XIII, in his *Collegium adiaphoristicum* editio altera (Wittenburg: Haeredes D. Tobiae Mevii et Elerdus Schumacherus Johannes Borckardus, 1653), p. 198.
17. For one of the fullest discussions of the question of papal primacy by a 17th century Lutheran author, see Johannes Gerhardus: *Confessio Catholica*, liber II, articulus III, "De pontifice Romano," (Frankfurt und Liepzig: Christianus Genschius Johannes Andreae, 1679), pp. 523-675, especially chapters 1 through 5, pp. 523-581.
18. Such contacts recurred, e.g., at Augsburg during the diet of 1530, at the Leipzig Colloquies of 1534 and 1539, at the Colloquy of Hagenau of 1540, at the Colloquy of Worms in 1540-1541, and at the Colloquies of Regensburg of 1541 and 1546.
19. Hans Preuss: Die Vorstellungen vom Antichrist im spoterem Mittelater, bei Luther und in der konfessionalen Polemik Leipsig, 1906. Bishop Arnulf of Orleans protested (ca 991) against the misuse of the papal office in his time, denouncing the cruelty, concupiscence, and violence of a succession of popes, and asking, "Are any bold enough to maintain that the priests of the Lord all over the world are to take their law from monsters of guilt like these—men branded with ignominy, illiterate men, and ignorant alike of things human and divine? If, holy fathers, we are bound to weigh in the balance the lives, the morals, and the attainments of the humblest candidate for the priestly office, how much more ought we to look to the fitness of him who aspires to be the lord and master of all priests! Yet how would it fate with us, if it should happen that the man the most deficient in all these virtues, unworthy of the lowest place in the priesthood, should be chosen to fill the highest place of all? What would you say of such a one, when you see him sitting upon the throne glittering in purple and gold? Must he not be the 'Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself as God'?" Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, New York: Scribner and Sons, 1899. Vol. IV

> ". . .The traditional distinction between 'de jure humano' and 'de jure divino' fails to provide usable categories for contemporary discussion of the papacy."

pp. 290-292.

20. We may mention the abortive Colloquy of Regensburg in 1557, the Colloquies of Zabern in Alsace in 1562, of Baden (1589), Emmendingen (1590), Regensburg (1601), and at Torum in Poland (1645).

21. The course that the discussions took in one series of exchanges is instructive. In 1691 the Lutheran Abbot Gerard I of Loccum (Gerard Walter Molanus) in his *Cogitationes privatae de methodo reunionis ecclesiae protestantium cum ecclesia romano-catholica* stated that the Lutherans are willing to concede that by positive ecclesiastical law the bishop of Rome is the first patriarch, the first bishop of the church, and as such entitled to obedience in spiritual matters. If the bishop of Rome wants recognition of his status as of divine right he must be ready to prove it to a general council from sacred scripture. In a later exposition, Gerard sees the primacy of the pope by divine right as one of the nineteen issues that make up the "irreconcilable" controversies. In his detailed discussion he quotes the Roman Catholic theologians of the Sorbonne against the primacy of the pope by divine right, against infallibility, and against the pope's authority to adjudicate controversies inside or outside of a general council. If these views should find acceptance in the rest of the Roman Catholic community, Molanus holds that the entire business would be resolved. These views, however, did not find much acceptance; indeed, the documents that Molanus quotes were placed on the index of forbidden books.

22. See the recent book by Manfred P. Fleischer, *Katholische und Lutherische Ireniker unter besonderer Berucksichtigung des 19. Jahrhunderts*, (Gottingen: Musterschmidt Verlag), 1968.

23. Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 18, 22, 24, 25; the *Addenda* of November 16, 1964; *Christus Dominus* 2, 4, 8. "Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine of the Church against Certain Errors of the Present Day," 3. (1973)

24. For example, the reservation of the question of birth control during Vatican II, and, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* which ignored the advice of a majority of the special advisory commission.

25. Published in 1973 by Paulist Press and Augsburg Publishing House, cited above Chapter I, Note 4.

26. See *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy.*

27. See *Peter in the New Testament*, p. 8.

28. The terminology here takes up a suggestion made by J. M. Robinson and H. Koester in their book, *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press), 1971.

29. *Peter in the New Testament*, pp. 23-28, esp. 29f., and passim.

30. *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy.*

31. See the common statement, Chapter I, paragraph 3.

32. See Carl Peter, "Dimensions of *Ius Divinum* in Roman Catholic Theology," A. C. Piepkorn, "*Ius Divinum* and *Adiophoron* in Relation to Structural Problems in the Church: the position of the Lutheran Symbolical Books," *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy.*

33. Carl Peter, *op. cit.*

34. E.g. The encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII notably *Rerum Novarum*, as well as those of Pope Pius XI (*Quadragesimo Anno*) and Pope John XXIII (*Mater et Magistra, Pacem in Terris*).

35. The encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII, 1943, gave papal sanction to the use of historical-critical methods in the study of scriptures. This approval is made more explicit in the instruction Holy Mother Church (prepared by the Pontifical Commission for the Promotion of Bible Studies, 1964) and by the dogmatic constitution of Vatican II *Dei Verbum.*

36. Tappert, *op. cit.* pp. 316-317.

Part 3
Working Out A Type of Unity

The Catholic Participants

"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? In the light of our experience in this dialogue we believe that the Roman Catholic Church should take definite steps to face this question." So state the Roman Catholic participants in the national-level Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. In their reflections released March 4 along with the other materials in this issue of "Origins," the Catholic participants state their acceptance of the papacy, examine some problems they feel are associated with the papacy, and urge that "a distinct canonical status" be worked out by which Lutherans could be in official communion with the church of Rome.

(49) In our view as Roman Catholic members of the consultation, the common statement, while falling short of total agreement, represents a major advance in the ecumenical discussion of one of the most sensitive issues that have historically divided the Lutheran and Catholic churches.

The common statement has positive significance for us as Roman Catholics. Together with the reflections of the Lutheran participants it embodies a clear recognition on the part of our Lutheran colleagues that the church needs unifying ministry concerned with the worldwide apostolate, and that this ministry may he effectively exercised by a renewed papacy, at least as a humanly constituted organ.

The common statement, however, does not fully reflect everything that we believe concerning the papacy. The acceptance of the papal office is for us imperative because we believe that it is willed by God for his church. 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. Therefore we affirm the traditional Roman Catholic position that the papacy is, in a true sense, "divinely instituted."

(50) In the course of our discussion in this consultation, we have been able to refine and nuance our own thinking on many points. One important point has been precisely the meaning of the traditional term "divine right" (*ius divinum*). In earlier centuries it was rather commonly thought that this term involved, first, institution by a formal act of Jesus himself, and second, a clear attestation of that act by the New Testament or by some tradition believed to go back to apostolic times. Since "divine right" has become burdened with those implications, the term itself does not adequately communicate what we believe concerning the divine institution of the papacy.

(51) In the New Testament we have found many indications positively pointing in the direction of the papacy, especially the Petrine texts and the various images of Peter alluded to in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the common statement. We have not, however, found a clear and direct affirmation of the papacy itself. This fact does not surprise or disconcert us. We believe that the New Testament is given to us not as a finished body of doctrine but as an expression of the developing faith and institutionalization of the church in the first century.

(52) In many respects the New Testament and the doctrines it contains are complemented by subsequent developments in the faith and life of the church. For example, the statements of faith in the early creeds, though they are in conformity with scripture, go beyond the words and thought-patterns of scripture. The church itself, moreover, had to take responsibility for the selection of the canonical books, no list of which appears in the scriptures themselves. Similarly, the church had to specify its sacramental life and to structure its ministry to meet the requirements and opportunities of the post-apostolic period.

(53) As Roman Catholics we are convinced that the papal and episcopal form of ministry, as it concretely evolved, is a divinely-willed sequel to the functions exercised respectively by Peter and the other apostles according to various New Testament traditions. In seeking to carry out its mission throughout the Roman Empire the episcopate frequently appealed to the theological judgment and unifying influence of the chair of Peter (*cathedra Petri*) at Rome, where Peter and Paul were believed to have been martyred. Thus the Petrine function, already attested in New Testament times, was increasingly taken up by the bishop of Rome.

The Teaching of Vatican I

(54) In the section of the common statement sketching the subsequent historical developments of the papacy, we have singled out the dogmatic teaching of Vatican Council I as especially important. The teaching of this council should be understood according to the context of the times in which it was formulated and the intention of the council fathers. To this end we may now call attention to some principles recently articulated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with regard to the historical conditioning of dogmatic formulations. In a declaration dated June 24, 1973, the following four factors are set forth:

". . .(Vatican) Council (I) tended to accent the juridical aspects of the papacy more than church needs would require in the broader context of our times."

a) The meaning of the pronouncements of faith depends partly upon the expressive power of the language used at a certain point in time and in particular circumstances.

b) Sometimes a dogmatic truth is first expressed incompletely, but not falsely, and later more fully and perfectly in a broader context of faith and human knowledge.

c) When the church makes new pronouncements, it not only confirms what is in some way contained in scripture or previous expressions of tradition, usually it also has the intention of solving specific questions or removing specific errors.

d) Sometimes the truths the church intends to teach through its dogmatic formulations may be enunciated in terms that bear traces of the changeable conceptions of a given epoch.[1]

(55) In confronting the specific problems and errors of its time, Vatican Council I sensed that a concentration on the papacy was crucially important, in order to safeguard the church's evangelical freedom from political pressures and its universality in an age of divisive national particularism. Yet the council tended to accent the juridical aspects of the papacy more than church needs would require in the broader context of our times. It has become apparent that the papal ministry, as a spiritual and evangelical task, can and needs to find a "fuller and more perfect expression"[2] than was possible at Vatican Council I. Vatican Council II has already begun this process.

(56) Since we have been cautioned by the Holy See to recognize the conditioning imposed on church pronouncements by "the language used at a certain point of time and in particular circumstances," we must carefully interpret adjectives such as "full," "supreme," "ordinary," and "immediate," used by Vatican Council I to describe the pope's power of jurisdiction. Similar care must be exercised in detecting the historical conditioning of the affirmation of Vatican Council I with respect to the conferral of a primacy of "true and proper jurisdiction"[3] upon Peter by Christ. This affirmation must be understood in a way that allows for the complex process of gospel development explained in *Dei Verbum*, 19.

(57) A general directive was given by Christ to his disciples: "Earthly kings lord it over their people...yet it cannot be that way with you" (Luke 22, 25-26). In keeping with this directive, the doctrine concerning the papacy must be understood in ways that recognize the church's total subordination to Christ and the gospel and its obligation to respect the rights of all individuals, groups, and offices both within the church and beyond its limits. Monarchical absolutism in the church would violate the command of Christ.

Generally speaking, Christians today are strongly conscious that the Holy Spirit works through all the ranks of the faithful and that a measure of interdependence exists among all who exercise ministry on different levels in the church. By setting the primacy of the pope within the broader context of a people-of-God ecclesiology, and by promoting a collegial understanding of authority in the church, Vatican Council II has called for modifications in the Roman Catholic understanding of papal leadership.

(58) We share the concern of our Lutheran partners in dialogue that safeguards should be provided against violations of Christian rights and freedoms on the part of all ecclesiastical authority, papal included. Simultaneously, we are conscious of the need to proceed with caution. In particular, the effective exercise of the papal ministry requires a large measure of power—and power, by its very nature, is capable of being abused.

It is not yet clear what restrictions are compatible with the very nature of the Petrine function to be exercised by the pope—that is, his special unifying and ordering ministry with reference to the church as a whole (see chapter I, par. 4). What limitations would leave room for the relative independence that the papacy must have in order to discharge its high mission? To impose juridical limits on papal power would presumably involve a transfer of some of that same power to other organs, which would likewise be capable of arbitrary and unchristian conduct.

(59) Our Lutheran partners in dialogue acknowledge that their independence from the papacy has not freed them from all abuse of ecclesiastical authority. They acknowledge that officers and assemblies on various levels in any church body are themselves capable of violating the rights and freedoms of the faithful and of resisting God's will for his church.

(60) As Catholics we consider that, notwithstanding some human failings, the papacy has been a signal help in protecting the gospel and the church against particularistic distortions. It has served the faith and life of the church in ways too numerous to mention. 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.

(61) To our Lutheran brothers we wish to express our thanks for the wisdom and concern they have shared with us as we have in dialogue with them tried to formulate responsible views concerning the papacy. We have learned that they, as Lutherans, consider the faithful proclamation of the gospel in the Roman Catholic communion to be their concern as well as ours. We ask them to continue to support us by their understanding, counsel, and prayer.

(62) In exploring the possible future relationships between the Lutheran churches and the papacy, as we have done in this consultation, we have been addressing central ecclesial issues raised by the Reformation. These issues have not been solved by the polemical approaches of the past four centuries, but we are bold enough to hope that the kind of collaboration we have experienced in this dialogue may be a prelude to a new relationship between our traditions.

". . .We cannot foresee any set of circumstances that would make it desirable, even if it were possible, to abolish the papal office."

In terms of the Petrine function we believe that both Lutherans and Roman 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? In the light of our experience in this dialogue we

believe that the Roman Catholic church should take definite steps to face this question.

(63) In view of their own particular spiritual patrimony and, not least, their own firm convictions concerning the papacy itself, Lutherans 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 we suggest in our common statement (para. 33), that a distinct canonical status may be worked out by which Lutherans could be in official communion with the church of Rome. Such a restoration of communion, we believe, would be of great benefit to Roman Catholics, and to Lutherans, enabling them both to share in a broader Christian heritage. In such 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.

Footnotes

Chapter Three

1. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 65 (1973), 402-403.
2. Ibid., p. 403.
3. DS 3054-3055.

Part 4
The Development Of The Papacy

Appendix / Historical Criticism

Members of the national-level Lutheran-Catholic dialogue "have judged that historical criticism, though by no means the supreme arbiter, must be used as a gift from God in the contemporary discussions among Christians," states a note appended to the statement released March 4 by the group. The appended note explains the use of historical criticism—especially patristic and New Testament research—in discussions of the development of the papacy.

In previous discussions and published volumes of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue concerning creed, baptism, eucharist, and ministry, we have paid attention to, and have been strongly influenced by, both the scriptures and church history. But in the discussions on the papacy, the amount of biblical and historical data to be reviewed and analyzed was so enormous that it seemed impossible to have the data examined with scholarly precision by experts in each discipline at the bi-annual meetings of the dialogue or to print full treatment of the data in the current volume. Therefore a decision was taken in the dialogue meetings at Miami (February, 1971) and at Greenwich, Connecticut (September, 1971) to commission smaller task forces to study the background of the papacy during two particularly sensitive periods, namely New Testament and patristic times, and to digest the results of these studies for use in the dialogue.

In each instance two members from the national dialogue, one Lutheran and one Roman Catholic, were appointed to chair these task forces in order to keep the national dialogue abreast of the results. The New Testament co-chairman were Raymond E. Brown and John Reumann; the patristics co-chairmen were James F. McCue and Arthur Carl Piepkorn.

The New Testament task force met some fifteen times between October, 1971 and March, 1973. Since it was felt that a study of Peter's role in the New Testament as background for the papacy might serve many purposes, including the needs of other ecumenical dialogues, the membership of this task force was broadened to include Episcopal and Reformed scholars. The results of their inquiry were published in September, 1973 under the title, *Peter in the New Testament*, by a Lutheran (Augsburg) and a Roman Catholic (Paulist/Newman) publishing house.

The patristics task force originally envisaged a joint document analogous to *Peter in the New Testament*. After canvassing for suggestions it met in December, 1971. Arthur Piepkorn and James McCue then prepared drafts covering the pre- and post-Nicene periods respectively. These were discussed at a two-day meeting in December, 1972.

After revision the two reports were presented to the dialogue group at San Antonio in February, 1973. Further revisions were then made. Because of the vastness and complexity of the material, it was out of the question for the entire task force to examine the primary and secondary documentation with the kind of detail possible for the New Testament. It was therefore decided that the papers would appear in this volume[1] under the names of their principle co-authors rather than as joint reports.

Since the studies produced by the two task forces have their own integrity, readers of this volume are urged to examine them firsthand. However, the portions of our common statement on "Ministry and the Church Universal" which deal with the New Testament (par. 9-13) and with the patristic era (par. 15-18) have been written in light of the conclusions of the respective task forces. We present here a brief analysis of the thrust of these two task force studies.

Our discussions on the roles of Peter in the New Testament and on the relation of Peter's roles to the status of the bishops of Rome in the first five centuries must not be considered simply as informative background for this volume. Roman Catholicism has presented its claims for the papacy precisely in terms of a relationship of the bishop of Rome to Peter.

It was the view of Vatican Council I that Christ constituted Peter chief of all the apostles and visible head of the whole church on earth, and that by Christ's institution Peter would always have successors in that office who are the bishops of Rome. Such a formulation expressed a point of Roman Catholic faith in historical language, and therefore raises at least two questions for contemporary scholars.

First, how is the role of the bishop of Rome historically related to the roles of Peter as described in the New Testament? Second, to what degree are the pictures of Peter in the New Testament genuinely historical? To answer the first question requires information from both the patristic and New Testament fields; to answer the second question is a matter of New Testament research.

Since there is a strong element of history in the Roman Catholic claim, it was important that both task forces employ the methods in common use today for scientific historical study. At the same time it must not be assumed that historical criticism can answer with certainty the two questions asked. But such study sometimes changes the perspective of the discussion.

> ". . .The Roman Catholic who is conscious of historical criticism will not expect to find Peter in the first century acting in the same manner as the pope in the fifth century."

In answering the first question, for instance, the Roman Catholic who is conscious of historical criticism will not expect to find Peter in the first century acting in the same manner as the pope in the fifth century. The Lutheran who is conscious of historical criticism will admit that if Peter did not act in the manner of a later pope, the relationship of the papacy to Peter is not necessarily disproved. Both of them must come to terms with the fact of historical development.

Awareness of this historical development on the part of the New

Testament task force is illustrated in *Peter in the New Testament*:

"...papacy in its developed form cannot be read back into the New Testament; and it will help neither papal opponents nor papal supporters to have the model of later papacy before their eyes when discussing the role of Peter. For that very reason we have tended to avoid "loaded" terminology in reference to Peter, e.g. primacy, jurisdiction. Too often in the past, arguments about whether or not Peter has a "universal primacy" have blinded scholars to a more practical agreement about such things as the widely accepted importance of Peter in the New Testament and his diversified image."[2]

Similarly, the reports on the patristic period note that, as institutions are affected by the challenges and needs of the times, the papacy can be no exception. As a clearly identifiable institution the Roman primacy emerged gradually. Some of the elements that would later be combined to constitute the Roman primacy were already in existence before Nicaea. Yet it was in the post-Nicene period that a claim was clearly made by a number of Roman bishops that they succeeded Peter in his responsibility for all the churches. In neither the East nor the West were the responses to this claim without fluctuation and ambiguity.

These biblical and patristic studies have examined the roles of Peter and of the Roman pontiffs in the context of the first five centuries. As a result, they do not directly answer the later questions which the national dialogue has faced. For instance, Paragraph 13 of the common statement portrays Peter as having various roles in New Testament times; attention is drawn in particular to his roles as the great fisherman (missionary), the shepherd (pastor) of the sheep, the martyr, the receiver of special revelation, the confessor of the true faith, the guardian of faith against false teaching.

The line of development of such images is obviously reconcilable with, and indeed favorable to, the claims of the Roman Catholic Church for the papacy. The same may be said of some images of Peter which appeared in early patristic times. Yet important questions remain:[3] To what extent is the trajectory of these images, as traced by recent scholars, influenced by the events of later history? How do images not so favorable to papal claims, e.g., that of Peter as a weak and sinful man, affect the general picture? One may also ask the further theological question: How should these developments be interpreted in the light of God's providence?

Thus, the studies of the two task forces clear aside some of the obstacles faced in the past. They do not, however, relieve us of the difficult task of evaluating the historical developments of the Petrine image and of the papacy. But a discernment of the hand of God in history is not a matter of historical criticism; it is rather a question for theological reflection. In its work, therefore, the national dialogue has had to go beyond the results of historical study as presented by the two task forces.

We are aware of the fact that the biblical and patristic reports do not reflect total agreement among scholars. Even within one church, researchers may disagree over the meaning of a text or document. No attempt has been made to gloss over the instances where no unanimous results could be arrived at.

Diversity of scholarly opinion, especially in relation to the New Testament, may be misunderstood by those who believe that the interpretation of the Bible should not be subject to the vagaries of human scholarship and should reach divine certainty. Such a simplistic view has sometimes been fostered among Protestants by the assertion that the Bible, being the sole rule of faith, should be immediately clear to all Christian readers. Among Roman Catholics, this simplistic view has sometimes found support in the contention that since church authority is the infallible interpreter of scripture, its meaning has been decided once for all.

> "The Lutheran who is conscious of historical criticism will admit that if Peter did not act in the manner of a later pope, the relationship of the papacy to Peter is not necessarily disproved."

However, while the members of this national dialogue clearly accept their respective traditions on the interpretation of scripture, they recognize that scholarly analysis of the documents often blunts the edge of some affirmations found in these traditions. For instance, such a technical question as the exact historical description of Peter's role during his lifetime cannot be answered simply by citing scriptural texts or authoritative teachings of the magisterium.

The recognition of difficulties and the presentation of a tolerable diversity of opinions about the meaning of the sources studied constitute a challenge to the churches to re-examine some past assumptions. Do the positions that seemed clear in the Reformation and the 19th century remain equally clear today? Might not new possibilities of agreement be opened by a reconsideration of the relation of the papacy to Peter in the light of modern historical method?

The only alternatives to the type of historical criticism that allow for diversity of interpretation are the opposing theses which either affirm or deny that the papacy is found in the New Testament or the patristic documentation. Such theses entail the corollary that those who do not find the clear doctrine, whatever it might be, must be either uninformed or in bad faith. This inference has, over the last four centuries, produced little progress in bringing Christians together. By contrast, the members of the national dialogue have judged that historical criticism, though by no means the supreme arbiter, must be used as a gift from God in the contemporary discussions among Christians.□

Footnotes

Appended Note

1. *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy* (To be published).
2. *Peter in the New Testament*, p. 8-9.
3. Ibid., p. 168.

The following is a list of those who participated in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue in the United States on papal primacy:

Lutherans:

Dr. Paul C. Empie, co-chairman of the dialogue; *Dr. Joseph A. Burgess*, pastor-theologian, Regent, N.D.; *Dr. Karlfried Froehlich*, Princeton, (N.J.) Theological Seminary; *Dr. Eric Gritsch*, Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pa.; *Dr. Fred Kramer*, Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Ill.; *Dr. George A. Lindbeck*, Yale University's Divinity School in New Haven, Conn.; *Dr. Carl H. Mau, Jr.*, U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, New York; *Dr. Paul D. Opsahl*, Division of Theological Studies of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. in New York City; *Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn*, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, who died in December; *Dr. Warren A. Quanbeck*, Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; *Dr. John H.P. Reumann*, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; *Dr. William Rusch*, the Lutheran Council's Division of Theological Studies; *Dr. Virgil Westlund*, USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, New York City; *Dr. Gerhard O. Forde*, Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; *Dr. Ralph Bohlmann*, Division of Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church. Missouri-Synod.

Catholics

Baltimore *Auxiliary Bishop T. Austin Murphy*, co-chairman of the dialogue; *Msgr. Joseph W. Baker*, Office for Ecumenical Affairs, St. Louis; *Sulpician Father Raymond E. Brown*, Union Theological Seminary and Woodstock College New York City; *Father Walter Burghardt*, S.J., Woodstock College; *Father Godfrey Diekmann, O.S.B.*, St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn.; *Sulpician Father Maurice C. Duchaine*, St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, Calif.; *Father Avery Dulles, S.J.*,Woodstock College; *Father John F. Hotchkin*, director of the secretariat for the U.S. bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs; *Prof. James F. McCue*, University of Iowa, Iowa City; *Father Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B.*, St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn.; *Father Carl J. Peter*, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.; *Msgr. Jerome D. Quinn*, St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; *Assumptionist Father George A. Tavard*, Methodist Theological School, Delaware, Ohio; *Father Joseph Fitzmeyer, S.J.*, Fordham University, New York City.