

## **Chapter 19**

### **Luther Splits Christendom**

The concept of Christendom - a theocracy in which the popes crowned the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire - became a reality on Christmas day in the year 800 when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne King of the Roman Empire. This event symbolized that the Church and State had succeeded in welding together the pieces of the old Roman Empire by a process of conversion and conquest.

Christendom had its ups and downs. The mantle of “divinely appointed power” transferred back and forth between popes, who considered themselves “vicars of Christ”, and emperors, who claimed the “divine right of kings”, but for nearly four hundred years Christendom provided the spiritual and political matrix for western European civilization.

By the 15th century, Christendom had run its course. The dramatic decline in the power and prestige of the papacy and the rise of nation states became evident in the 14th century and set the stage for the possibility of the religious and political transformation which we call the Reformation. As noted in earlier chapters, this dramatic weakening of papal power and prestige began in the 14th century with the Avignon Papacy (1309-77), followed by the Great Schism (1378-1417) and finally the corruption of the Renaissance popes (1447-1513). The challenge to the political unity of Christendom came from the rise of the nation states of France, Germany, Spain and England in the following centuries.

During the 14th and 15th centuries several attempts at the much needed reform of the Church had been attempted. The conciliar movement that resulted in the Council of Constance (1414-18) and Basel (1431-39) was an attempt by the emperor, the cardinals and bishops to bypass the papacy in order to initiate needed reforms, but it ended in failure. With some local exceptions, the Church had failed to reform itself. Without the leadership of the papacy or a powerful political ruler, any attempt at major church reform would likely come from an unexpected source and have unexpected results - thus onto the stage of history came Martin Luther.

#### **Early History and Education**

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483 and raised in a family of modest means. His father was a miner and later part owner of a small mining company. Luther received a traditional local education, which included the study of Latin, and then entered the University of Erfurt in 1501. There he studied the scholastic brand of Aristotelian philosophy. He was influenced by the Christian humanism of the time and shared its critique of scholasticism. He also accepted much of the criticism being leveled at the Church by the humanists and others. He finished his studies and in 1505 received his master of arts in philosophy.

Following his parents' wishes, he then began the study of law. Suddenly he left school

for a vacation. While on the road approaching the village of Sotternheim, he was caught in a storm and knocked to the ground by a bolt of lightning. In a moment of panic he called out the patroness of miners: “St. Anne save me! And I’ll become a monk”. Much to his family’s dismay, he kept his promise and entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt.

### **Luther’s Experience of Monastic Life**

The monastery which Luther selected was very strict. Perhaps governed by his sense of guilt and his tendency to introspection and melancholy, Luther chose a very strict monastic regimen. He sometimes fasted for three days and slept without a blanket in the freezing winter. He once said: “I kept the rule so strictly, that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his sheer monkery, it was I. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, readings and other work”.

His dedication to monastic life was noted by his superiors and after only nineteen months he was ordained a priest in 1507. During his monastic experience, Luther had developed a profound sense of his own sinfulness and of the utter majesty of God. Later he recalled that while celebrating his first Mass “I was utterly stupefied and terror-stricken. I thought to myself ‘Who am I that I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine majesty? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin, and I am speaking to the living, eternal and true God.’”.

After his ordination Luther was chosen by his superiors to continue his theological studies. During this time moods of depression and self doubt continued to plague him. He was trained in a defective nominalist theology that led him to believe that he could merit his salvation by doing good works. However, he felt that all his “good works” were tainted by egoism. In other words, he felt that he only performed good works, not because they were good in themselves or in imitation of Jesus, but because they would merit him salvation. Thus, nothing and no one could convince him that he was other than a doomed sinner. He could not accept that any actions on his part might be of spiritual benefit to him. Once, when his confessor admonished him to love God, Luther cried out that he did not love God, but that he hated God.

### **Luther Begins to Develop His Distinctive Theology**

Luther’s professional theological career now began to mold his own personal theology. He was appointed to lecture on Aristotle at the newly founded university of Wittenberg. Next, in 1509, he lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard at Erfurt. We noted earlier in Chapter 15 the definition of a “sentence”:

A “sentence” (*sententia*) is a conclusion reached at the end of a process of reasoning that proceeds as follows: One first poses a problem (*quaestio*); then argues through the problem, making cases for and against various propositions (*disputatio*); and finally one reaches a conclusion (*sententia*). This conclusion can then serve as a new *quaestio* and the process goes on.

Commentaries on the *Sentences* were a common practice in medieval universities and were a prime example of the scholastic method which applied Aristotle's thought to Christian doctrine. However, it was at Erfurt that Luther turned his focus from scholasticism and began to read Augustine and the Scriptures, which were to be major influences on his developing theological outlook. Augustine convinced him of the power of sin that held mankind captive and scripture would reveal how this power of sin was overcome in Jesus.

In 1511, Luther left Erfurt and returned to Wittenberg. In the process, he took a trip to Rome and encountered first hand the corruption of Rome under the Renaissance popes. Later writers were to say that Luther "lost his soul" in Rome, but at the time it seemed to have little impact on his thinking.

At Wittenberg he completed his Doctor of Theology in 1512 and in 1513 assumed the chair of biblical theology. Here before his students he delivered his remarkable lectures on Romans, Galatians, Hebrews and the Psalms. It was in his study of scripture, especially St. Paul, that Luther finally found his answer to the question: How can I a sinner, be certain that I am saved? Simply put, the answer was this: No one can save themselves, good works, prayers, fasting, etc. are to no avail. Only Christ's sacrifice on the cross can save us and only faith, faith alone, in the saving power of Christ's merits can give us the certainty of our salvation - justification comes by faith alone.

It was in 1515 that Luther came to this "revelation" while reading Paul's letter to the Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'the righteous shall live by faith'".

It was in his reading of this passage that Luther found the spiritual certainty that he had been looking for. Salvation did not depend on the good works of Christians, but on the salvific work of Jesus who saves us in *spite of our sins*. Human beings are totally corrupt and Luther even taught that the human will is not free, but totally under the power of sin. Only faith in the saving work of Jesus would make one righteous. However, we remain saved sinners.

This teaching flew in the face of common practices based on belief that humans did have free will and by the exercise of this free will in worship and good works humans could be sanctified. By the grace of God humans are not totally corrupted by sin, true, they cannot save themselves, but here and now they can share in the life of God through the gift (grace) of God's presence in Jesus and through the sacraments of the Church.

Did Luther believe that good works have no value? The short answer is no. However, he did stress that while the life of faith was a process and that faith will naturally be expressed in good works, these works have no power in themselves, but only in relation to Christ - faith in Jesus saves and the good works that increase the life of faith simply

follow. On the other hand, evil works are to be avoided. Salvation through faith provides no license for doing evil.

In the final analysis it was not the public scandals of the Church - simony, immorality of the clergy - that made a revolutionary out of Luther. Rather, it was his perception that the prevailing notion that salvation could be purchased by good works was a direct challenge to the Gospel and must be resisted.

### **Luther and the Indulgence Controversy**

While Luther's theology was disputed among his colleagues at the university it did not come to the attention of Church authorities until the indulgence controversy. While the problem of indulgences was not central to Luther's thought, it provided the door for him to enter the public arena and challenge the authorities of the Church and be challenged by them in return.

The sale of indulgences had begun in the Crusades and had come to play an important role in the Church of the 16th century. They provided money for Rome, civil rulers and local bishops, plus spiritual comfort for the laity. Indulgences were big business, so much so that Lortz claims that: "In 1500 it was seriously proposed to cover the imperial budget by income from indulgences" (p, 120).

The standard explanation of "how they worked" was provided by Pope Clement VI in 1343. He espoused the view, still current today, that Jesus and the saints had built up a "treasury of merits" that could be dispensed by the Church to remit temporal punishment for sins, i.e, the vestiges of sin remaining after sins had been forgiven. This could even be applied to the souls in Purgatory. Thus, in return for good works - like a donation to Rome - the Church could grant an indulgence to remit a certain amount of temporal punishment due to sin. Technically, the effectiveness of indulgences depended on God "hearing the prayers of the Church", but in practice it became viewed as a virtually automatic, semi-magical means of salvation often obtainable by a donation of money.

While Luther had criticized the theology of indulgences in his sermons, his criticism became public in response to the Dominican John Tetzel who traveled throughout Germany preaching an indulgence which he said was to finance the building of St. Peter's in Rome. In reality, the money was not only sent to Rome, but was also split between the Fugger bankers, the Curia and the twenty-four year old archbishop of Mainz who needed money to pay the Curia for his dispensation to be bishop not only of Mainz, but also of Madgebury and Halberstadt. Tetzel boasted that this indulgence would apply even to the souls in purgatory, which strictly speaking was not contrary to Church teaching. He was reported to use this jingle: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs" or another version "As soon as your money clinks in the bowl, out of purgatory jumps the soul."

When Luther heard about Tetzel's preaching of the indulgence, he felt he had to respond. While scholars debate whether or not Luther actually posted his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, (which would not have been unusual for scholars to do) it is certain

that in October of 1517 he sent his 95 theses (propositions) to his bishop and Tetzel's bishop. The theses were written in Latin and thus were meant for scholarly debate. If he has wished to address them to the general public, he would have written them in German.

Among other things, these theses argued that indulgences cannot remove guilt, they do not apply to purgatory and are harmful because they induce a false sense of security in the donor. Only when these bishops failed to respond did Luther make his theses public. Looking back, we can say this one act of scholarly protest was the spark that ignited the Reformation. However, neither Rome nor Luther had any idea what was to follow.

### **Luther and the Church Confront Each Other as Luther's Theology Continues to Develop.**

Receiving no response from the bishops (later the bishop of Mainz expressed concern to the pope for the possible loss of revenues), Luther went public in order to challenge his university colleagues to a debate. Luther reminded them that indulgences were initially a remission of Church imposed public penances placed on penitents after public confession of serious sins.

Luther denied that indulgences had any effect for those in purgatory or that the Pope had any control over the surplus merits of Christ and the saints. He also denounced the sale of indulgences and the manner in which they were preached. The whole idea of indulgences also represented a theology of the efficaciousness of "good works" which Luther did not accept. Having said that, Luther did not totally reject the idea of indulgences, but said he could not recommend them (1518 sermon on *Indulgences and Grace*).

While Luther did not see his reactions to Tetzel as a call for revolution or a sign of his disloyalty to the Church, the sharp wording of some of his theses did set a polemic tone. For example, Theses 50 reads: "Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter's were burned to ashes rather than built up with the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep." Also Thesis 82 read: "Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church?"

Unfortunately, Luther's call for a debate on indulgences based on theological and scriptural grounds was ignored. However, his theses were quickly published and circulated. Many humanists greeted his theses with approval, while other academics and church leaders greeted them with strong disapproval. In April of 1518, Luther did have a debate with his fellow Augustinians and won most of them over to his point of view, but no one else, including Tetzel, was willing to listen or enter into a scholarly debate. Tetzel was a Dominican and finally the Dominican Order responded by denouncing Luther to Rome as teaching dangerous doctrines. Rome in turn responded by arguing that anyone who criticized indulgences was guilty of heresy.

In May of 1518, Luther appealed to Pope Leo X, but his appeal was met with a summons to appear in Rome within 60 days to answer charges of heresy. The pope's theologian, Prearias, sent a scathing letter to Luther, but when Frederick of Saxony voiced his support for Luther, Rome adopted a more conciliatory posture. In October of 1518, Cardinal Cajetan was sent to meet with Luther at Augsburg to ask him to recant. The meeting was a failure and Luther questioned the authority of the pope. A few months later Luther called for a General Council. This request was ignored.

The next step was an 18-day debate at Leipzig in 1519 between Luther and the great theologian John Eck. Eck understood that at the heart of Luther's objection to indulgences was an attack on the structure of the Church, especially the primacy of the pope. It was here at Leipzig that Luther made his decisive statement about the authority of Scripture when he said: "A Council may sometime err. Neither the Church or the pope can establish articles of faith. These must come from Scripture".

Thus Luther had moved from his first distinctive conviction that salvation came by *faith alone* to his second distinctive conviction that *Scripture alone* is the standard for Christian faith and behavior. He had called into question both the authority of the pope and the authority of the Councils. Luther was now on a path of separation from Rome.

During the year 1520, Luther published three great treatises addressed to the German nation:

1) *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. He called for princes and nobles to reform the Church in their territories by abolishing payments to Rome and banning clerical celibacy, masses for the dead, and pilgrimages. Bishops and abbots were to be stripped of their wealth and power and their religious orders abolished. The pope should be severely limited, his temporal power abolished and his function reduced to a kind of spiritual overseer of Christendom. In effect, he called for a national German Church

2) *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Here Luther abandoned traditional Catholicism. He rejected the Catholic idea of apostolic succession and proposed the common priesthood of all believers in lieu of their baptism. There were no differences between clergy and laity, ordination only provided order for the assembly. All useful vocations are equally sacred in God's eyes.

He recognized only two sacraments - baptism and Eucharist - because a sacrament had to be instituted by Christ and the other five could not be found in Scripture. Also, sacraments had no efficacy apart from the faith of the recipient. He argued that the "captivity" of the Church consisted in such things as the denial of communion under both kinds (bread and wine) to the laity and in imposing the doctrine of transubstantiation. He attacked the papacy for depriving the individual Christian from approaching God directly by faith, without the mediation of priests.

3) *On the Freedom of a Christian Man*. Luther argued that salvation depended on faith and grace and that the ordinary person was, therefore, completely free of any need to do

good works. He did not discourage good works, but argued that the inner spiritual freedom that comes from the certainty of faith leads to the performance of good works. He said: “Good works do not make a man good, but a good man does good works.”

### **Rome and the Empire React**

Thus, by 1520 Rome realized that there was a crisis and after commissioning a study of Luther’s writings, Pope Leo X issued a bull entitled *Exsurge Domine* on June 15, 1520 which condemned 41 of Luther’s theses as “heretical”. These included his positions on free will, original sin, the sacraments, faith, grace sin, penance, confession, good works, purgatory, communion under both kinds, papal primacy, the authority of the general councils and the power of excommunication.

While stopping short of excommunication, the bull called on Luther to repent and repudiate his errors or face dreadful consequences. The opening lines of the bull read: “Arise O Lord and judge Thy cause. A wild boar has invaded Thy vineyard” -- the boar was Luther.

Luther was given sixty days to respond. On December 10, 1520, Luther and a crowd of students from Wittenburg burned copies of Canon Law, some theological works and a copy of the bull, *Exsurge Domine*. The populace rose up in support of Luther. Luther began to mount an attack on the pope, calling him an anti-Christ. He exploited the printing press and his message went throughout Germany.

In January of 1521, Pope Leo X declared Luther a heretic and excommunicated him from the “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church”. The problem now fell into the lap of the emperor Charles V who was under oath to defend the Church and remove heresy from the empire. Thus, Charles V summoned Luther to an imperial Diet (assembly) at Worms on April 18, 1521 to explain his writings and recant his errors.

In the presence of the emperor and the dignitaries of Germany, Luther refused to recant and stated that only the evidence of Scripture would change his teachings. He stated: “My conscience is captive to the Word of God, I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither honest nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

Charles was unimpressed. He labeled Luther an outlaw and made this pronouncement: “This devil in the habit of a monk has brought together ancient errors into one stinking puddle, and has invented new ones.” Before a sentence was passed, Luther was granted 21 days of safe passage to Saxony. The sentence never came. Luther was saved from arrest and possible burning at the stake by his Duke, Frederick the Wise, who gave him sanctuary at Wartburg Castle. Here, disguised as a nobleman, (Junker George) Luther lived for nearly a year. During that time he made his famous translation of the Bible into German, a work that greatly influenced his reputation in Germany.

Luther continued to be a prolific writer and produced his Greater and Lesser Catechisms,

writings on the human will, numerous theological treatises and biblical commentaries and a wealth of hymns, some of which are sung today in Catholic churches, e.g., *A Mighty Fortress is our God*.

### **The Reformation Becomes a Reality (1521-26)**

Luther's ideas spread rapidly and they effected radical changes among the clergy and the common people. In 1522, Luther returned to Wittenberg and established a spiritual reform that would be a model for much of Germany. He abolished the office of bishop. Most of the priests in Saxony abandoned celibacy - monks and nuns married. In 1525, Luther took a wife, Katherine von Bora, a former nun.

Luther translated the Latin liturgy into German. He also allowed the laity to take both bread and wine. The focus of worship changed from a sacrificial celebration, to the teaching and preaching of the Scripture. In many towns priests removed statues from churches and quit celebrating Mass.

The nobles and their cities also adopted the reforms of Luther. Part of their enthusiasm was fed by the opportunity to take the lands formerly controlled by the Church and to be free from the control that the Church had exercised in the temporal affairs of their territories and the large sums of money which were extracted from their economies from the sale of indulgences.

### **The Peasants' Revolt (1524-26)**

During 1524 Luther witnessed some unexpected results of his teachings. Encouraged by Luther's concept of the freedom of a Christian man, which they applied to economic and social spheres, the peasants revolted against their lords - some of the same lords who had supported Luther. Among the demands of the peasants was the abolition of serfdom.

At first Luther sympathized with their cause, but when they turned to violence, Luther turned against the peasants. In his inflammatory pamphlet, *Against the Thievish and Murderous Hordes of Peasants*, Luther called on the princes to "knock down, strangle, and stab...and think nothing so venomous, pernicious or Satanic as an insurgent." The princes and nobles responded by crushing the revolt at the loss of some 100,000 lives. The peasants called Luther a false prophet and most, especially, in the south returned to Catholicism. To this day southern Germany is predominately Catholic.

For Luther the equality of all men before God held in the spiritual realm, not the secular order. Thus, Luther retained the support of the princes because they saw that his conservative political and economic views would allow them to control the church and its properties in their territories, thereby strengthening their power and wealth

### **The Spread of Luther's Movement**

By 1525, Luther's personal involvement in the "Protestant Revolt" was becoming less

visible. He spent the rest of his life preaching and writing until his death in 1546. The driving force of the movement he started now depended chiefly on political factors over which Luther has little control. Protestant consolidation was able to succeed largely because for nearly nine years, 1521-30, Charles V, who remained a dedicated champion of the Roman Church, was heavily involved in military and political affairs outside Germany.

Many of the German princes were hostile to Rome and in 1526 at the Diet of Speyer they decided that they would respond to Charles' condemnation of Luther in the Edict of Worms, each according to his own conscience. Each ruler could choose whether his subjects would be Protestant or Catholic, thus the famous phrase: *cuius regio eius religio* (whose region, his the religion). This did not create an atmosphere of toleration, but simply allowed citizens to either choose the religion of the ruler or move to a region where the ruler had adopted their religion of choice.

In 1529 a second Diet of Speyer was called and voted to prohibit the spread of Lutheranism. Several German princes, including the Elector of Saxony, and fourteen cities voiced their protest over this prohibition and were given the label "Protestant". The prohibition of Speyer was not enforced, because Charles was now occupied with the advance of the Turks who were threatening Vienna.

At the local level Luther's movement was going forward. Liturgies was being changed, statues were taken out of churches, priests were marrying and hostility towards Rome was increasing. Local rulers were also taking advantage of the confusion to consolidate their power over the Church.

### **Attempts at Reconciliation**

In 1530, when Charles returned to Germany, the theological differences between Luther and Rome did not seem insurmountable to many scholars, especially Luther's close friend Melancthon, who still considered himself a Catholic. For many scholars the main issue was still reform and the theological differences, while seen as serious matters discussion, were not seen as impossible to reconcile.

Thus in 1530 Charles called another diet in Augsburg to seek some reconciliation. In a major attempt to address the issues, Melancthon composed his famous *Augsburg Confession* which outlined only accidental differences between Luther's views and traditional Catholicism. This comprehensive document, which was signed by Lutheran princes and theologians, is still considered a primary confession of Lutheranism. It was composed of twenty-one articles which included:

God, original sin, the Son of God, justification by faith alone, ministry, new obedience, the Church, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, confession, repentance, use of sacraments, ecclesiastical order, humanly instituted rules, civil affairs, Christ's return in judgment, free will, the cause of sin,

faith and good works and the veneration of saints.

The second part listed seven reforms of abuses:

Communion of the laity with both bread and wine, the marriage of priests, the Mass, confession, human traditions, monastic vows and the authority of bishops.

A group of theologians headed by John Eck responded with a confutation, *Confutatio Pontifica*, that approved of nine of the articles, six with qualifications and condemned thirteen. Melancthon responded for the Lutherans with his *Apology*.

Charles favored the calling of a General Council to evaluate the arguments put forth by both sides. However, Eck and others convinced him that Luther's followers would not accept a council's decisions. Thus, Charles offered the use of force to suppress the Lutherans if the pope and the Italian States would support him. They refused.

Charles did not give up hope of restoring unity and at times it all seemed possible. For example, in 1541 Charles called meeting in Regensburg. To reach an agreement for reconciliation, Protestants wanted four main concessions: married clergy, communion under both species, freedom to teach the Real Presence in other terms than transubstantiation and freedom from papal jurisdiction, while respecting papal primacy. Rome would not agree. Abuses could be eliminated, but Rome could not accept changes in doctrine or giving up jurisdictional power.

In 1548 Charles attempted to impose a doctrinal formula on Protestant territories known as the *Augsburg Interim*. It was rejected by Protestants because of its Catholic dogma and rejected by Catholics because it allowed communion under both species and also allowed Protestant clergy to retain their wives.

### **Luther's Movement Succeeds**

In response to the threat of force by Charles, in 1531, the Protestant princes formed a military alliance known as the Schmalkald League and thus military and political factors began to take center stage. In 1535 the League welcomed all who subscribed to the Augsburg Confession. In 1538 the Catholic princes formed the League of Nuremberg and thus a religious balance of power was set up among the German states of the empire. Between 1546 and 1555 sporadic civil war raged in Germany, but the Schmalkald League was now strong enough to defend itself against the emperor and the Catholic forces..

Finally, the princes of Germany reached a compromise known as The Peace of Augsburg. Here they formally accepted the *cuius regio eius religio* principle from the 1526 Diet of Spires that allowed each prince to decide the religion of his subjects. This agreement also forbade all non-Lutheran sects and ordered all Catholic bishops to give up their property if they converted to Lutheranism.

The lasting teachings of Luther included his concept of the Church as a community of believers in which all are priests before God. The Christian life could be led in any useful vocation whether clerical or lay. His core insights are often describes as the three “alones”:

1) Faith alone (*sola fide*). Salvation is by faith alone, a free, mysterious and unmerited (thus, unearned) gift of God. Humanists like Erasmus taught that humans could exercise their free will and could choose to believe. Luther believed that humans were too corrupted by sin to make this choice. Therefore, the presence of faith is attributable to God alone and humans cannot take credit for it.

2) Grace alone (*sola gratia*). Salvation depends entirely on the grace of God that makes humans just in the eyes of God. It is a free gift wholly independent of human actions. Grace is available through the merits of Jesus.

3) Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*). The Bible alone teaches what many need to know and is the single source of authority in matters of religion. Popes, councils, traditions are sinful human inventions.

Luther’s teachings eventually took hold in most of northern Germany and spread directly to Scandinavia and indirectly to England through some of the key reformers there. It then spread to North America with the German immigrants.

The Protestant Revolution did not end with Luther. Even greater changes were in the wings with the reformers who followed him, especially John Calvin.

**Note:** This account is about history not theology, but theology was at the root of the Reformation. After centuries of polemics between Catholics and Lutherans, in 1965, following the Second Vatican Council, theological conversations at the International level were initiated between representatives of the Catholic and Lutheran churches. They agreed to treat such topics as “The Gospel and the Church” (1972); “The Eucharist” (1987); “Ways to Community” (1980); “All Under One Christ: Statement on the Augsburg Confession (1980); and “The Ministry in the Church” (1981).

In the United States dialogues also began in 1965 between theologians appointed by the U. S. Bishops Conference and the Lutheran World Federation. Much progress has been made and agreed statements have been issued on: “Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church” (1965); “One Baptism for the Remission of Sins (1966); “Eucharist as Sacrifice” (1967); “Eucharist as Ministry” (1970); “Papal Primacy and the Universal Church” (1974); “Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church” (1978); “Justification by Faith” (1985); and “The One Mediator, the Saints and Mary” (1992). Dialogue on Scripture and Tradition began in 1992.

The United States Lutheran--Roman Catholic Dialogue also appointed a task force of scripture scholars in 1974 when they were preparing to study “Papal Primacy and the Universal Church”. This task force produced two well received studies on “Peter in the

New Testament” and “Mary in the New Testament”.

All of these have been tremendous works of scholarship and have resulted on much agreement about formerly disputed issues. However, efforts have not yet resulted in any official action by the Catholic Church or the Lutheran community of churches.