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REpublic 7-4724

NEWS RELEASE

For Release

July 4, 1965

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LUTHERAN-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE LAUNCHED

BALTIMORE--Fourteen leading American Catholic and Lutheran scholars will meet here July 6-7 for an official discussion of the basic beliefs of the two churches. Plans for the meeting were jointly announced by Msgr. William W. Baum of Washington, executive director of the American Catholic Bishops' ecumenical commission, and the Rev. Paul C. Empie of New York, executive director of the National Lutheran Council.

The two-day discussions will center around Catholic and Lutheran interpretations of the Nicene Creed. These will be the first in a projected series of in-depth theological consultations between the two groups.

There will be seven experts representing both churches, six clerics and one layman in each group. Chairman of the Catholic group is Auxiliary Bishop T. Austin Murphy of Baltimore, chairman of the Catholic bishops' subcommission for dialogue with Lutherans. The seven Lutheran theologians were appointed by the Rev. George F. Harkins of New York, president of the National Lutheran Council. The latter includes two representatives of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.

The position papers for both churches were prepared by renowned theological and ecumenical experts from both churches. The Catholic paper is the joint work of Jesuit Fathers John Courtney Murray, S.J. and Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., both of Woodstock College. The Lutheran paper was prepared jointly by Dr. George Lindbeck, associate professor of the history of theology at Yale University Divinity School and Rev. Dr. Warren A. Quanbeck, professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Catholic participants in the talks in addition to Fathers Murray and Burghardt will be Msgr. Joseph W. Baker, vice chairman of the St. Louis archdiocesan ecumenism commission; Rev. Raymond Brown, S.S., Scripture scholar on the faculty of St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore; Rev. Godfrey Diekman, O.S.B., liturgical expert of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.' Dr. James F. McCue, the layman and historian who will soon join the faculty of the school of religion of the State University of Iowa; and Rev. George Tavard, A.A., French-born ecumenist who is chairman of the theology department at Mt. Mercy College, Pittsburgh.

The Lutheran scholars named to take part in the formal talks, in addition to Drs. Lindbeck and Quanbeck, are: the Rev. Kent S. Knutson, professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary, St. Paul; the Rev. Fred Kramer, professor of dogmatics at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill.; the Rev. Arthur C. Piepkorn, professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; the Rev. Joseph A. Sittler, former president of the American Theological Society who is now a member of the faculty of the divinity school of the University of Chicago; and the Rev. John H. P. Reumann, professor of New Testament studies at the Mount Airy Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Dr. Reumann will be substituting at this first meeting for the Rev. Krister Stendahl, Swedish-born theologian who has been teaching at the Harvard University Divinity School for the past 11 years and is now Frothingham professor of Biblical Studies there.

Bishop Murphy and Msgr. Baum are also to attend the meeting, with the bishop presiding at the opening session--which falls on the 550th anniversary of the death of the Bohemian reformer and forerunner of Martin Luther, John Hus, who was ordered burned at the stake by the Ecumenical Council of Constance in 1415.