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Roman Catholic Reflections on Melanchthon's *De Potestate et Primatu Papae*

George H. Tavard

I.

The first point that I find remarkable about Melanchthon's tractate, when seen in the light of contemporary theology, is the shift of problematic between his time and ours. This is striking in the very first lines of his treatise, where he formulates his main objections to the papacy in three points. These have to do with supremacy *divino jure*; with the claim to wield "the two swords," still *divino jure*; and with the idea that belief in these doctrines is necessary to salvation. As it appears from these basic objections, the doctrine of primacy that Melanchthon has in mind is that of the eleventh session of the fifth Lateran Council (1516), which had generally approved the bull *Unam Sanctam* of Boniface VIII (1302) and explicitly endorsed its conclusion.[1] Yet Melanchthon hardens the doctrine to a significant degree. In the first place, the constitution *Pastor Aeternus* of Lateran V was a predominantly political act: with the agreement of Francis I it nullified the "pragmatic sanction" of Bourges (adopted by Charles VII in 1438) which had restricted papal authority in the kingdom of France; moreover, the approval of *Unam Sanctam* was qualified by endorsement of the declaration *Meruit* of Pope Clement V, which had itself toned down the claims of Boniface VIII. In the second place, *Unam Sanctam* in fact makes no direct reference to *jus divinum*, though it argues from biblical texts (which I take to be the substance of an appeal to *jus divinum*). Nor does it affirm that the pope wields the two swords of the temporal and the spiritual powers; it says rather that the spiritual sword is above the temporal one. It does assert, however, that "it is altogether necessary to salvation for all creatures to be subject to the Roman Pontiff" (D.-S., n. 875).

Contemporary assessment of the authority of the bishop of Rome is, however, quite at odds with that of 1302 or 1516. Three remarks will suffice. In regard to papal authority deriving *ex jure divino*, the section of the new Code of Canon Law (1983) concerning the Roman Pontiff does not use the expression. Instead, it says, *statuente Domino*,[2] thus expressing the view that the authority of the bishop of Rome is grounded in the New Testament. The contemporary theological understanding of *jus divinum* and *ex jure divino*, as these formulae were used in the past (e.g., in the Code of 1921, canon 219, regarding the

moment when the bishop of Rome receives "the full power of supreme jurisdiction," or at Vatican I), is well formulated in the *Final Report* of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commision. Negatively, "*Jus divinum* in this text need not be taken to imply that the universal primacy as a permanent institution was directly founded by Jesus during his life on earth" (Authority II, n. 11). Positively, the phrase conveys the belief "that a universal primacy expresses the will of God" (n. 12) or, in the consensus of the Anglicans and Catholics responsible for this document, "the primacy of the bishop of Rome can be affirmed as part of God's design for the universal *koinonia*" (n. 15).[3]

In regard to the medieval doctrine of "the two swords," the distance that has been travelled since the sixteenth century can be measured in the light of Pope Pius XII's judgment on the doctrine of Boniface VIII. This judgment was expressed on September 7, 1955, in an address to the Tenth International Congress of Historical Sciences. After pointing out that Boniface's doctrine was "the strongest formulation of the medieval idea concerning relations between the spiritual and the temporal powers," Pius XII noted that, according to Boniface himself, "this concerned normally only the transmission of authority, not the selection of its holder," and added: "This medieval conception was conditioned by its time. Those who are acquainted with its sources will probably admit that it would be still more surprising had it never seen the day."[4] As this implies, the subordination of temporal power to the church's or the pope's authority is itself a surprising conception, understandable in the circumstances of the fourteenth century, but not valid in the absolute. There is no allusion to such a subordination in Vatican I or Vatican II. In fact, the teaching of Thomas Aquinas on the autonomy of the temporal order is universally held in Catholic theology today.

Concerning the question whether belief in the primacy of the bishop of Rome is necessary to salvation, Vatican I made no such statement. Vatican II simply taught the very rich doctrine that the church was founded by Christ as "the sacrament of salvation" (*Ad gentes*, n. 5) and, accordingly, that all human beings, even those who "have not yet received the gospel, are oriented in diverse ways to the People of God" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 16).[5] In other words, the notion of "necessity of salvation" is no longer operative in Catholic theology; what is necessary to salvation is known to God alone.

II.

I should now venture a fourth remark. For I am convinced that one should question the accuracy of Melanchthon's description of the Ro-

man doctrine and practice of the primacy, even as these were upheld in his time by the adversaries of the Lutheran movement. The title used by Melanchthon to summarize the position of the Roman Pontiff in Roman theology has, in fact, no standing in the tradition. Melanchthon objects that the partisans of the Roman Pontiff see him as a "universal bishop" (*intelligunt esse episcopum universalem*, n.5).[6] Now, even though this may, at first sight, seem appropriate to delimit the scope of authority of one who has immediate jurisdiction in the whole church, the notion of "universal bishop" has never been in use in Roman Catholic theology and canon law. It has even been carefully eschewed. I would be curious to know what Melanchthon quotes when he mentions the Greek-sounding title *oecumenicus episcopus* (in the German text). In recent times the notion of the pope as universal bishop was rejected in the collective letter of the German bishops of February 1875. In this letter the bishops of Germany, put on the defensive by the *Kulturkampf*, defended an interpretation of papal authority which, on the one hand, summed up the previous tradition and, on the other, was approved by Pius IX himself in the apostolic letter, *Mirabilis illa Constantia*, of March 4, 1875.[7] The bishops' letter explained that the Roman Pontiff is the bishop of the diocese of Rome and of no other diocese and, therefore, that the principle and the exercise of his authority in the universal church must respect the authority of the bishop of each diocese. In other words, the pope is not a universal bishop. Yet the letter also remarked that it is as bishop of the Roman see that the Roman Pontiff has authority in the universal church; he is *Hirt und Oberhaupt der ganze Kirche*. He is not a universal bishop, yet his authority is, in the words of Vatican I, "truly episcopal." The qualification is important. It corresponds to the belief that whoever is bishop of Rome has by that very fact primacy in the universal church. It is not the bishop who is somehow universal; it is his universal-primatial authority which is episcopal. The adjective conveys at least two essential points of Catholic doctrine. First, the primacy is attached to the fact of being in one particular see, which the patristic tradition connects particularly with the preaching and martyrdom of the two apostles Peter and Paul. Secondly, the primate can do outside of his own see of Rome what a bishop does; but he can do it only in such a way as to respect and promote the episcopal authority of the bishop of each diocese. Today we would add a third point, which, however, was not explicitly made at the time of Melanchthon: it is as the first in the college of bishops that the bishop of Rome exercises his primatial leadership. The adjective "episcopal" implies the collegiality of the primacy and of its exercise.

Admittedly, Melanchthon give a special tone to the expression

"universal bishop." As he explains it, this reflects the Roman claim that "all bishops and pastors all over the world must ask [the bishop of Rome] for ordination and confirmation"; he alone can "elect, ordain, confirm, depose all the bishops" (n. 5). This, however, needs to be looked at carefully. For Melanchthon has considerably oversimplified the situation. On the one hand, he has not referred to the infinitely more nuanced relationships that exist between the bishop of Rome and the bishops of Eastern churches in communion with him. The medieval canon law with which Melanchthon was acquainted dealt, like the contemporary code of 1983, only with the Latin Church, relations with other churches being regulated by bilateral agreements between these churches and the papacy.[8] One should remember that the Council of Florence had united to Rome an Armenian Church (November 22, 1439), a Coptic Church (February 4, 1442), a Syriac, a Chaldaean, and a Maronite Church of Cyprus (September 30, 1444, and August 7, 1445). Union with the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical patriarch, declared on July 6, 1439, did not last; but the other unions, albeit partial, have lasted to this day. The main body of the Maronites had been in communion with Rome since 1181. The relations of the bishop of Rome with these Oriental Churches is quite different from his relations with the Latin dioceses. Only with these is there any primatial right to elect and confirm the bishops, this right belonging in each of the Eastern Churches to the highest authority in that church. On the other hand, even in the case of the Latin dioceses, the thing is not so simple as Melanchthon put it. Authority is ascribed to the bishop of Rome "to make laws in matters of rituals" and even "in doctrine," but not to "change the sacraments." Moreover, the "articles, decrees, laws" of the pope are not considered "equal to divine laws." Canon lawyers, in fact, have always carefully distinguished between the different kinds and degrees of assent which law (*jus*) and equity (*equitas*) require, depending in part on the exact nature of the law (*lex*) in question. A doctrinal definition is not on a par with a *motu proprio*, an apostolic letter, an encyclical, a disciplinary decision, or a liturgical rubric. Perhaps polemical exaggeration was unavoidable in the circumstances of the sixteenth century. But there is no excuse today to keep the same distorted image of the papacy and its exercise of authority.

III.

I wish now to draw attention to two ideas which Melanchthon suggests, which I consider to be highly positive and which may be of value not only to assess and understand the primacy of the bishop

of Rome, but also to re-organize it in a more ecumencial direction. One could, of course, discuss the biblical and historical argumentation adduced by Melanchthon. The texts and events that he mentions have acted as two-edged swords, being taken by some as a basis to accept a doctrine of the papacy, by others as a ground to reject such a doctrine. My concern at this time is not directly with the exegetical or historical aspects of the problem. However, I cannot avoid touching on what Melanchthon writes of the famous controverted text, "Tu es Petrus" (Matt. 16: 18), and the campanion text of John 21:15, "Pasce oves meas." Far be it from me to believe that one can draw a straight line from these texts to the papacy. I generally agree with the assessment of the Petrine texts that is contained in the collective volume, *Peter in the New Testament* (Minneapolis, 1973), and I was instrumental in including a moderate assessment of them in the *Final Report* of the ARCIC. But to admit that such references do not necessarily imply a primacy, still less a papacy, is one thing; to hold that one cannot learn anything from them concerning the primacy which has historically and, I believe, providentially developed is quite another thing. Precisely Melanchthon provides two broad hints as to what one may learn about the primacy from the biblical texts.

The first hint is found in his understanding of the *ad hoc* verses of Matthew and John. Melanchthon writes: "In omnibus illis dictis Petrus sustinet personam communem totius coetus apostolorum" (n. 23) ("In all these sayings Peter stands for the common person of the whole group of the apostles"). In Matthew Jesus's question, "Who do you say that I am?" is addressed to all the apostles; Peter alone answers, but in the name of his companions. In response, Jesus addresses Peter ("I will give you the keys. . .whatever you will bind. . ."), telling him something that he tells all the apostles elsewhere. In John 21 the words to Peter, "Feed my sheep," are followed by words to all the apostles, ". . .sins you will remit. . ." Melanchthon concludes that the keys have been given not to one man, but to the entire church: "Tribuit principaliter claves ecclesiae et immediate"(n.24) ("He gave the keys principally and immediately to the church"). As to Peter, Melanchthon also concludes: "Therefore in these sayings Peter necessarily stands for the person of the whole group of apostles."

In this explanation Melanchthon broaches the topic of the "corporate personality" of Peter. Melanchthon's expression, "stands for the person," which is reinforced in one place by the adjective, "common" ("stands for the common person of the whole group of apostles") leaves no doubt as to what is meant. Peter represents all the apostles. But he does not simply represent them from a distance, as an ambassador may represent his country abroad. He represents them

by having in himself, as the one who has spoken for the apostles the words of faith in Jesus the Messiah, a personality which is common to all. One might argue that perhaps Melanchthon simply means that the name "Peter" functions as a collective designation for the group without Peter as a human person sharing in the corporate dimension of his name. Yet this would make no sense in the context of the gospels, in which it is Peter as a person who speaks and who is addressed by Jesus. The name is the name of this man and no other, of the man who was Simon and was renamed by Jesus. The text conveys the conviction of the gospel writers, echoed by Melanchthon, that Cephas, at those two moments at least, had, as his own personality, that of the whole group of apostles. As the first of these two moments belongs to the active ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and the second to His appearance as the Risen One, we gather the idea that the "common" personality recognized in Peter by Jesus of Nazareth has been, as it were, made permanent by the Risen Lord: that which derives from the Risen One shares in His now permanent and glorious status.

The notion of corporate personality is not unknown to the Old Testament. It corresponds to one aspect of the Semitic conception of humanity and, more to the point, of the self-understanding of the Hebrew and Jewish people as the people of God. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, some of the prophets, and, above all, the prophetic image of the *Ebed Adonai* in deutero-Isaiah and the apocalyptic image of the *Bar Enash* in Daniel stand for the whole people of God at some moment of its history or in some aspect of its destiny. Jesus Himself, as the Lamb of God bearing the sins of the world, stands for the common person of the new Israel. What happens in the exchanges between Jesus and Peter in Matthew and John is that Jesus highlights a dimension of the renaming of Cephas which was not obvious in the renaming itself. This amounts to saying that Peter, the Rock, is all the apostles (he is their common personality) and that *vice versa* the apostles are Peter, the Rock.

Now this analysis, which I take to be somewhat more than implicit in Melanchthon's tractate, does correspond in part to the traditional idea that the Rock in question is not just Simon Peter as a man who followed the Lord, but Simon Peter as spokesman for the apostles and, more exactly, as spokesman for the faith of the apostles. The classical discussion of whether the Rock is Peter himself or the faith of Peter, which illustrates the two main lines of interpretation of the "Tu es Petrus" in the patristic tradition, does not produce mutually exclusive meanings. Clearly Peter the person could not be the Rock in any real sense without the faith of Peter. And to maintain that it

is the faith alone which is the Rock without the person who holds that faith would disembody or idealize the nature of salvation in a way that would contradict the entire orientation of the Scriptures toward a real Savior of flesh and blood who came to save those of flesh and blood through their faith in Him.

The two lines of interpretation are found side by side in Augustine's *Retractationes* (I, ch. 21).[9] Augustine remembers that in one place he took Peter to be the Rock on which the church is built; later, however, he identified the Rock (*petra*) as the Christ confessed by Peter (*Petrus*). Augustine continues: ". . . as though *Petrus*, named by this *petra*, represented (*figuraret*) the person of the church." This is again the corporate personality of Peter. "May the reader choose" between the two interpretations. By adding this admonition, Augustine suggests that the difference between them is not too important. What is important is, precisely, the corporate personality of Peter. This corporate personality is presupposed in the two views, for the church could not be built on Peter unless Peter had a corporate personality.

Admittedly, the notion of Peter's corporate personality raises the question of its own limits. If Peter "stands for the person" of the apostles (Melanchthon) or of the church (Augustine), does not every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, also stand for the apostles or the church? This was Origen's insight in his commentary on Matthew's Gospel (tract. 1): "If therefore we, the Father (as we have said) revealing it to us, confess Christ the Son of the Living God, we shall have been Peter, as to us also is said by God the Word: *Thou art Peter. . . , etc.*, for the rock (*petra*) is everyone who imitates Christ."[10]

Beginning in patristic times, a long tradition emphasized the Christian notion of the corporate personality of the church and its members. It had reached a high point in the monastic spirituality and theology of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In most cases, however, the image of Mary rather than that of Peter effected the passage between the collectivity of the church and each believing soul. The figure of Mary as corporate person of the church was more at home in the meditations of the spirituals, as in the text of Isaac Stella (c. 1110-c. 1169): "The heritage of the Lord, in a universal sense, is the church; in a special sense, Mary; in a particular sense, each faithful soul. In the tabernacle of Mary's womb Christ remained nine months; in the tabernacle of the church's faith, He remains until the consummation of the world; in the knowledge and love of each faithful soul, He will remain forever and ever" (Sermon 61).[11] When it came to the structure of the church, the figure of Peter was the dominant one, as suggested in this text of Hincmar of Rheims (845-882): "Although

apparently given by the Lord to Peter alone, the power to loose and to bind must be acknowledged, without any doubt, as given also to the other apostles. . . For as all were addressed in general, the one Peter answered for all; likewise, what the Lord answered Peter He answered all in Peter. Similarly today, the same function is given the whole church in the bishops and priests" (Schedule for the Synod of Douzy, 860).[12] Thus, we all share the corporate personality of Mary or Peter. But this did not mean in the medieval tradition that the bishop of Rome had no special relationship to that corporate personality.

In these interpretations of corporate personality, Peter or Mary do not represent only their contemporaries or immediate followers; they stand for the whole church and its faithful members throughout all subsequent times. The corporate person extends not only in space but also in time. Admittedly, the strictly Roman tradition—and by this I mean the tradition of which Pope Siricius (384-399) is, in the present state of the evidence, the first witness—took the meaning of Peter in a restricted sense. As eloquently elaborated by Pope Leo the Great (440-461), Peter's corporate personality extends in a unique way to the bishops of Rome: in their decrees and decisions of Peter still presides over and guides the church.[13] Peter is mystically present in the bishop of Rome. Yet this strictly Roman interpretation has always been in tension, within the Catholic tradition, with the broader view of Peter's corporate personality.

IV.

At this point it seems appropriate to make several remarks:

(1.) Melanchthon's appeal to the "common person" of Peter and the apostles was in line with the patristic and medieval understanding of the scriptural image and role of Peter, who did not stand alone before Christ but spoke for all the apostles and was addressed by Jesus as their spokesman.

(2.)Melanchthon remained in the broad tradition when he extended Peter's common personality to the church, as in his conclusion: "it is necessary to hold that the keys do not belong to the person of one specific man, but to the church" (n. 24).

(3.) Yet Melanchthon also narrowed the tradition in a hitherto unusual way when he drew the consequence that, since Peter stood for "the whole group of the apostles," he therefore held "no prerogative, superiority, or domination" (n. 24). He seems to have taken the representativeness of Peter to be purely nominal, just a practical way of speaking at that moment with no implications for Peter himself and for his function in the future. As he was close to late medieval

nominalism both in time and by his interest in the Renaissance, reading the name as no more than a convenient label may have come naturally to him. By and large, the Catholic tradition has been more realistic in its understanding of words and situations: what Peter was said to be, he was.

(4.) Melanchthon further narrowed the tradition by holding that whatever Peter was or meant in relation to the apostles entailed no special status for the bishop of Rome. He did not perceive that the "common person" of Peter in the Gospels of Matthew and John created, if it was real, an unbreakable bond not only between Peter and the apostles, but also between Peter and the whole church. A common personality belongs to the whole group for which it stands; it need not vanish with the death of its central model, focus, or symbol. It was precisely the "common person" recognized in Peter that allowed later times to speak of a "successor of Peter." The medieval identification between the church, Mary, and the believing soul, or between the church, Peter, and the bishops and priests, came closer to the heart of what common personality entails. This made possible the development of the papacy as the embodiment of a universal primacy in the church. For the group which had a focus in Peter could well preserve this focus in a new central figure which would fulfill the function of Peter as "common person" for the whole. Melanchthon, of course, rejected the universal primacy, but he did so on grounds—Peter's common personality—which could logically justify what he was rejecting.

(5.) Turning our attention to the contemporary scene, we should note that the appeal to Peter's common personality took a new turn at Vatican Council II. This common or corporate personality gives substance to the position of the council on episcopal collegiality. The key statement is the following: "Just as, by the Lord's decree, St. Peter and the other apostles constitute one apostolic College, likewise the Roman Pontiff, successor of Peter, and the bishops, successors of the apostles, are closely tied together" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 22).[14] This tying together is what the council also calls the episcopal college or episcopal collegiality. The conciliar statement assumes of course three points: first, Peter and the apostles formed one college; second, the bishops have succeeded the apostles in general, and the bishop of Rome Peter in particular; third, there is a structural similarity between the two colleges. The bishops are not apostles, any more than the Roman Pontiff is Peter; but their places in the community of the church are similar in some sense. The sense which is suggested by the text is that each college is characterised by "common personality." The words, admittedly, are not in the letter of Vatican II.

Yet this is the most logical way to understand the council. By their common personality Peter and the apostles were mutually co-responsible, Peter being the representative and spokesman of the group (n. 19); on the same pattern, the bishop of Rome and the bishops in general "communicate in the bond of unity, charity and peace" (n. 22), the bishop of Rome being the special representative and spokesman of the college, but all being also involved in the concerns of the whole. The personality of a college or a group in general is, of course, of the moral order, though it may have legal and juridical aspects, and it may well be embodied in one or several particular offices. In the theological context of the Christian community, it also pertains to the sacramental order, that is, it stands as an effective symbol of divine grace as the church is guided by the Holy Spirit in its life, teaching, and preaching of the Gospel.

This line of thought of Vatican II is embodied in canon 336 of the new code of canon law. As is to be expected from a code of law, the language is not personalistic but juridical. Yet it puts in legal terms the insight that the bishops and the bishop of Rome constitute one college, one common moral and sacramental person: "The College of bishops, whose head is the Supreme Pontiff and whose members are the bishops by virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchic communion with the head and members of the College, and in which the apostolic body perdures without break, is, together with its head and never without it, the subject of supreme and full authority in the universal Church."[15] The tone is notably more ultramontane than that of Melanchthon. Yet it derives from the same fundamental insight into the "common person" of Peter and the apostles, drawing from this insight realistic conclusions that are opposite to those of Melanchthon.

Melanchthon, for himself and for the Lutheran movement in general, inferred from the same biblical starting-point that "Peter" and, by implication, the bishop of Rome, whether he is or is not successor of Peter, has no "prerogative, superiority or domination" (n. 24). The code, however, in keeping with Vatican I and II, also formulates canon 331: "The bishop of the Church of Rome, in whom there perdures a responsibility given by the Lord singularly to Peter, the first of the apostles, and destined to be transmitted to his successors, is the head of the College of bishops, the vicar of Christ, and on this earth the Pastor of the universal Church, who, by virtue of his responsibility, enjoys an ordinary, supreme, full immediate and universal authority in the Church, which he must be able always to exercise freely." Thus we have, as between Melanchthon and the contemporary understanding of the papacy in Catholicism, contradictory conclusions, but one fundamental principle.

V.

Another point is made by Melanchthon which seems to me relevant to the way in which the primacy, once it is admitted in principle, should be exercised. Still interpreting, "Tu es Petrus. . .," Melanchthon writes: "...certainly the church has not been built on the authority of one man, but on the ministry of the confession made by Peter, in which he proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Thus He addresses him as a minister: 'On this rock,' that is, on this ministry" (n. 25). Melanchthon continues by explaining that this ministry is not tied to places and persons as in the Old Testament, but is "dispersed throughout the world," wherever God sends his "gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, doctors: and the ministry has value, not by the authority of any person, but by the word transmitted by Christ" (n. 26). Peter was ordered to "lead the flock, that is, to teach the word or to rule the church with the word, which was common to Peter and the other apostles" (n. 30).

I fully sympathize with Melanchthon when, in the following pages, he shows that such a ministry has not been operative in Rome, that the popes have behaved like secular princes, that whereas the authority of the apostles was "purely spiritual" (n. 31), the popes have used the sword, have slighted kings and emperors, have abused whatever authority they had. Indeed, the history of the papacy has abounded in abuses of authority, in shady deals, and in unsavory financial transactions. The designation of specific popes as antichrist had become part of the medieval rhetoric. And it was the common teaching of the scholastics that a heretical pope is not a true pope and must not be obeyed.

The positive point in Melanchthon's antipapal argumentation at this second section of the tractate lies in his notion of ministry. On the ministry of Peter and the apostles the church is built; and this ministry is the ministry of the word, preached, distributed to the people, explained for their edification, coming alive in their faith. Undoubtedly, Melanchthon's treatment of the episcopate, at the end of his tractate, differs greatly from that of Vatican II. The chief source of difference is that, of the two main patristic and medieval understandings of the origin and nature of the episcopate, Melanchthon followed the line of St. Jerome, who saw the episcopate as emanating from the presbyterate, whereas Vatican II followed the more oriental line, for which the presbyterate emanates from the episcopate. On this matter, Thomas Aquinas was closer to Melanchthon than to Vatican II. And I am not aware that the decision of the council about the sacramentality of the episcopate necessarily does away with the legitimacy of the Hieronimian-Thomist theology. This is the direc-

tion which I have myself followed in my book, *A Theology for Ministry*.[16]

Whoever is right on this point, Catholics have tended to give more importance and pay more attention to the effective ministry that has, in fact, been carried out in the church alongside of even blatant abuses of authority. The church has never been left without saints and prophets, even in the darkest periods of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But this is not the main point I wish to make. Rather, I find it indicative of a new mode of relations between Lutheran and Catholics that Melanchthon's central point about ministry is made, emphatically and repeatedly, by the Second Vatican Council. The Council did not take "super hanc petram" to mean, in the context of Matthew 16, "on this ministry." Whether one takes the expression as equivalent to "on this faith" or "on this ministry of the word" or "on this rock that you are," one cannot escape the fact that the faith, the ministry, and the rock are *of the apostle Peter*. Vatican II, however, focussed its understanding of the episcopate, and therefore of the papacy, on the notion of *ministerium*: "The bishops have received the ministry of the community. . ." (*Lumen Gentium* n. 20); "The pastors are. . . ministers of Christ. . ." (n. 21); ". . . through their eminent service [Jesus Christ] preaches the word of God to all nations and continually administers the sacraments of faith to the believers. . ." (n. 21); "The bishops. . . have received from the Lord. . . the mission of teaching all nations, and of preaching the gospel to every creature. . ." (n. 24); "This task, which the Lord has entrusted to the pastors of his people, is a true service, which is significantly called *diaconia* or ministry in the sacred Letters" (n. 24); "In the exercise of their task as fathers and pastors, the bishops must be like servants in the midst of their own. . ." (*Christus Dominus*, n. 16).

One could multiply the quotations. Their cumulative effect would be to show that the tone and the doctrine of Vatican II were aimed especially at promoting the ministerial aspect of the episcopal and papal functions. With this purpose in mind Pope John called it a pastoral council. Melanchthon spoke in a context where he had seen a contradiction between the theory of episcopal and papal service or ministry and the practice of authority. When this seems to happen or really happens (for it is not impossible to have bad bishops and bad popes), the Catholic instinct is to allow for the benefit of the doubt, to grant leeway, to give oneself time, to wait in silence, if necessary, before making a final negative judgment. What seems an abuse to one may well be service in the mind of another. The church, being a body of sinners, should leave sinners time to repent, even when sinners are in positions of authority. Patience is necessary in any human congregation.

However this may be, Lutherans and Catholics today can make ministry, the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, the central point of their converging concerns about the church of the future. In this country the dialogue between Lutherans and Roman Catholics has reached a great deal of consensus on ministry (1970) and also on papal primacy as a ministry to the universal church (1974). The international dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics has also reached a high degree of consensus,and some of the formulations of the ARCIC statements would not be rejected by Melanchthon: "The Church's teaching authority is a service. . .; but the assurance of the truthfulness of its teaching rests ultimately rather upon its fidelity to the gospel than upon the character or office of the person by whom it is expressed" (*Authority in the Church II*, n. 27).[17]. Thus *magisterium* is valid only as *ministerium*; the teacher is first of all a student; that which is higher must make itself lower. Ultimately, the Lutheran movement and the Catholic Church can be reconciled in a theology of the cross.

ENDNOTES

1. *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (Basel: Herder, 1962), pp. 614-621.
2. *Codex Juris Canonici* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice, 1983), canon 330. The expression comes directly from Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 22). For the following reference to Vatican Council I, see Denzinger-Schonmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, n. 3158.
3. Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report* (London: CTS-SPCK, 1982) pp. 85, 88.
4. Pius XII, "Address to the Tenth Congress of Historical Sciences," September 7, 1955 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXXVII; series II, 13), p. 678.
5. Austin Flannery, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Pillar Books, 1975), pp. 817, 367. I have modified the translations.
6. I have worked directly with Melanchthon's Latin text and its official German translation. Readers may refer to Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press), 1959.
7. D.-Sch., n. 3117. For the following citations from the bishops' letter see D.-Sch., n. 3113 and 3060.
8. This was truer than it is today, when these relations, codified in an "Oriental Canon Law," are supervised by the Roman Congregation for the Oriental Church. On the Council of Florence and the Oriental Churches, see *C. Oec. D.*, pp. 510-535 (for the Armenians), 543-559 (for the Copts), 562-567 (for the Syrians and the Maronites). For the agreement with the Greeks see pp. 499-504.

9. Augustine, *Retractationes*, I, 20, n. 1; cf. Mary Inez Bogan, ed., *Saint Augustine: The Retractations (Fathers of the Church*, 60; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1968), pp. 90-91.
10. See text in GSEL, *Origenes*, 10 (Leipzig, 1935), p. 85.
11. Isaac Stella, Sermon 51 (P. L., 194, 1865C).
12. Hincmar de Rheims, *Schedula seu Libellus Expostulationis*, ch. XXVI (P. L., 126, 609CD).
13. See Sermon III, ch. III (P. L., 54, 146C).
14. Flannery, p. 374.
15. Canon 336.
16. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 21. *A Theology for Ministry* (Wilmington,: Michael Glazier, 1984). For the following texts of Vatican II, see Flannery pp. 372, 373, 378, 572.
17. *The Final Report*, p. 94.

Dr. George Tavard has provided in this essay a Roman Catholic view of the Tractatus.