

education in sophisticated ecumenical method and seriousness of purpose regarding the renewal of Christianity after modernity.

With frequent references to an increasingly secularized world, the threat of which motivated the problematic decree of Vatican I, the Lutheran theologians appearing in these pages manifestly now sense such danger to their own existence and witness in post-Christendom as well. Catholic theologian Wicks thus helpfully clarifies: “The problem the Petrine ministry claims to help resolve is not knowing the apostolic gospel from the New Testament, but rather how to discern what in a contemporary formulation is a proper expression of that gospel in this later age” (356). Lutheran contributors agree formally with Wicks’ statement: contemporary confession, i.e., the power of the church “to judge doctrine” (*potestas clavium*, AC 28) is what is at issue. Nørgaard-Højten accordingly lays out how the Lutheran *status confessionis* corresponds to papal teaching *ex cathedra*: “an extraordinary (in terms of category and complexity) and previously not-experienced situation that calls for an exceptional decision and claims a new version of at least some of the traditional confessional statements, lest the credibility—or even the very existence—of the church as a community of faith and obedience should be endangered” (205).

To this common contemporary need, especially noteworthy advances in understanding may be claimed for Birmelé’s application of the methodology of the Joint Declaration on Justification to the matter of papal primacy in search of a “differentiated consensus,” Lagrand’s deconstruction of contemporary papal revanchism and Brosseder’s systematic subordination of infallibility to indefectibility. The historical contributions by Catholic scholars on the origin and development of the papacy (Meier, Minnerath, Pottmeyer) move the contemporary debate definitively beyond the 16th century binary *de jure divino/humano*. In turn, historical reflections by Lutheran scholars on the forms of magisterium that have de facto existed in Lutheran confessionalism (especially the still-Lutheran Root, Meyer and Nørgaard-Højten) compliment serious attempts here by Catholic authors to rethink papacy.

The task of such mutual re-thinking would be moot if a Roman Catholic rejection of the “maximalist,” Ultramontane interpretation of Vatican I were not a compelling Catholic theological possibility

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Tölles assertions, et christianismum tulisti. (“Take away assertions, and you have taken away Christianity.”) When Luther’s *De servo arbitrio* can be cited positively by a Roman Catholic ecumenical partner (8), a new ecumenical situation has emerged. Indeed the common need to formulate binding definitions of evangelical truth in face of contemporary challenges within and without the churches is what inspires the improbable project of this book. This collection of contributions to the (chiefly) Lutheran–Roman Catholic “Farfa” discussion group (sponsored by the International Bridgettine Centre in Farfa Sabina, Italy in the past decade) provides a “snap shot” of deliberations on the issue that all parties agree is “the” most difficult obstacle to further progress: the Roman claim to Peter’s ministry for the papacy. Reading it is an

(as Pottmeyer, Kasper, Lüning, Legrand, and Wicks variously argue as does editor Puglisi in the Introduction). Neither would it be possible if consideration in some form of the "Petrine function" were not a real possibility for Lutheran theology (as especially Birmelé, Gassmann and Meyer urge, under the condition, a tall order to be sure, that Lutheran theology would no longer be obsessed by "antipapal phobia" (Gassmann)).

Is that possible? Catholics have seen three great advantages in the papacy: the link of historical continuity with Jesus and the apostles; the specific ministry to the unity of the churches highlighting the universal (i.e., the aforementioned Jesus as proclaimed by the apostles) in the particular or local; and the defense of this universal church's autonomy in every local situation against the claims of the state or of the ethnic group.

Today the first claim has been relativized by historical criticism to such an extent that apostolic succession in history, whether in episcopal or primatial orders, can only be honestly received as a "sign, not a guarantee" of the continuity claimed, with the recognition that other forms of apostolic succession exist in Orthodoxy and Protestantism. The second claim is and remains controversial, although the Catholics essayists regard the maximalist interpretation of papal power as undermining the Petrine function. The third claim, by contrast, finds an interesting echo of Lutheran assent, as Lutherans look critically at their history of obsequiousness to temporal power and temptation to ethnic-nationalistic idolatries. Likewise Catholic contributors, struggling against their own history of mimicking temporal power in the monarchical papacy, sharply qualify Ratzinger's arguments that the universal church has ontological priority over the local churches and that the papacy represents this principle of universality. More than once we see contemporary Catholic theologians taking up Melancthon's statement as their own: *non est transferendum ad pontifices quod dicitur de ecclesia!* ("What is said of the church is not to be transferred to the papacy!") To the extent that Catholics themselves are saying this, one must agree with Harding Meyer that a corresponding new reception of Petrine ministry is indeed now a "possibility for Lutheran theology" (226).

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