

SEMINAR ON NINETEENTH CENTURY THEOLOGY

PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

At the conclusion of the 1981 seminar, one of the topics proposed for discussion at the 1982 convention was the volume, *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church* (Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VI). Acting on this suggestion, the convenors of the seminar were fortunate in being able to enlist the services of two participants in the Lutheran/Roman Catholic bilateral as seminar-leaders: Dr. Joseph Burgess of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America and Dr. Carl Peter of the Catholic University of America.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Burgess noted that during the course of the bilateral's five-year discussion of the topic, infallibility had started as an "explosive question," but ended with a consensus that might appear to be a "tame result." Characterizing the bilateral as a process of "conversion," Dr. Burgess highlighted some of the pivotal steps in attaining consensus: a realization that in Roman Catholic teaching, infallibility is always subordinate to the primacy of the Gospel; a recognition that the Tridentine teaching on *jus divinum* has greater openness than is initially apparent; agreement that the Church led by the Spirit will always remain in the truth of the Gospel; an understanding that "papal infallibility" does not make the pope independent of the Church. Nonetheless, a number of issues remain: how can a decision pronounced with infallibility really be effective since such decisions are immediately subject to an interpretive process? In a future united Church, would subscription to the Marian doctrines be required? In a way analogous to the rescinding of the anathemas against the Orthodox, is the Roman Catholic Church willing to remove the anathemas against Luther? In light of the existing consensus, is limited eucharistic sharing between Lutherans and Roman Catholics now possible?

Dr. Peter prefaced his remarks with the comment that the schism between the two communions has lasted too long; indeed, historical investigation shows that the consensus that has recently been achieved had counterparts in proposals that were originally suggested in the sixteenth century. Dr. Peter also directed attention to the "Roman Catholic Reflections" which state that "whether the anathemas are lifted or not, the differences between Catholics and Lutherans regarding these dogmas do not of themselves exclude all Eucharistic sharing between the churches" (p.56); in other words, since acceptance of the dogmas of infallibility, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption was not a prior condition for eucharistic sharing with the Orthodox, Lutherans should not be required to subscribe to these dogmas as an antecedent condition for eucharistic sharing.

The ensuing discussion focused on a number of issues: the appropriate context for discussing the Marian dogmas; the existence and definability of propositional truths in the New Testament; the importance of the conditions under which infallibility can be exercised; the relationship between the national and international ecumenical dialogues; differences between theologians of the same communion vis-à-vis interconfessional differences.

At the end of the seminar, suggestions for next year's meeting were re-

quested; topics proposed included: the Gallican antecedents to Vatican I (especially the interpretation of *ex sese non autem ex consensu ecclesiae*); the political influences on Vatican I; the "reception" of the conciliar teaching on infallibility.

SESSION ON NINETEENTH CENTURY THEOLOGY

The topic selected for this year's seminar was the recently published study on *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism* (Notre Dame, 1982) by Thomas O'Meara, who also agreed to initiate the discussion with some preliminary comments on his book.

At least in the English-speaking world, nineteenth century theology has conventionally been considered as a predominately Protestant enterprise and Schleiermacher has customarily been regarded as the most typical example of a Christian religious thinker; until recently, histories of German theology in the nineteenth century focused almost exclusively on Protestant theologians and tended to ignore both the existence of a parallel Roman Catholic theological effort and the fact of Protestant-Catholic cross-fertilization. Since Vatican II, there has been a resurgence of interest in nineteenth century German Catholic theology, but to date, little of this material has appeared in English.

After summarizing the personal factors that aroused his interest in Schelling's influence on nineteenth century Catholic thought, Dr. O'Meara highlighted three phases in Schelling's career: in the first (1798-1806), Schelling, already famous at the age of nineteen, was conscious of standing at the edge of a new world and preparing for the next epoch; his romantic philosophy, however, was decidedly opposed by Catholic proponents of the Enlightenment; during his second phase (1806-21), Schelling entered into dialogue with the Roman Catholic intelligentsia of Munich, particularly with Franz von Baader; in his third phase (1826-41), Schelling made the last great attempt of the nineteenth century to create *the* total philosophical system.

The subsequent discussion noted that nineteenth century Roman Catholic theology displayed a greater variety of theological orientations than is usually recognized; moreover, many of these different theological movements had relatively short life-spans before yielding to a rival or successor. Also, it was noted that there are a number of similarities, as well as differences, in the theological viewpoints of Newman and Schelling.

At the end of the session, proposals and procedures for next year's seminars were discussed. Those present agreed that the choice of one "ecclesiastical topic" (as in the seminar on papal infallibility) and one "speculative issue" (as in the seminar on nineteenth century theology) is a good balance. Caution was voiced against allowing topics too narrow, on historical trivia or philosophical exotica; discussion of the overall picture and the larger issues should be the goal. Care should be exercised that the advance readings are announced and available beforehand. The type of topic most favored for next year's seminars is one dealing with the "appropriation" of the nineteenth century by the twentieth; other more specific topics were also suggested: Drey and the Tübingen school, the bicentennial of Lamennais. Approval was also voiced for a rotating committee of convenors who would be responsible for planning future programs;

after further consultation, specific proposals will be submitted to the CTSA Board of Directors.

JOHN T. FORD

*The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC*