

## SEMINAR ON NINETEENTH CENTURY THEOLOGY

The past practice of the nineteenth-century theology seminar has been to discuss two distinct topics and thereby to take into account not only the diverse interests of its membership, but the diverse aspects of the nineteenth century. The previous pattern has divided the seminar into one session on the more philosophical, speculative, and systematic currents of the century and the other session on the more explicitly ecclesiological topics. This year, however, a considerable intersection between the two sessions became evident. Whereas the first session dealt with the problem of authority within George Tyrrell's life and work, the second session concentrated on the interpretation of Vatican I, its authority and reception, both then and now.

### TYRRELL'S UNDERSTANDING OF AUTHORITY

The Tyrrell session was particularly fortunate because the authors of two recent and outstanding monographs on George Tyrrell undertook to discuss their books. David G. Schultenover's *George Tyrrell. In Search of Catholicism* (Shepherdstown, West Virginia: 1981) and Ellen Leonard's *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982) provided the basis and the background reading for the seminar discussions.

Schultenover emphasized in his presentation how much Tyrrell's understanding of authority should be viewed within the context of his philosophy of religion, especially as developed in the works, *Religion as a Factor of Life* (1902) and *Lex Orandi: or Prayer and Creed* (1903). Schultenover advanced the thesis that the principle, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, sums up in a formula all of George Tyrrell's theology and points out the direction of his thought.

In explaining the relation between Tyrrell's philosophy of religion and his conception of the authority of religious doctrine, Schultenover pointed to the interrelationship of several key ideas: the relation between the idea of God and the self; the significance of the will within his religious system; the relation between the prophetic and the official; the notion of doctrinal development; and the concepts of religion, revelation, and doctrine.

In his religious psychology Tyrrell develops how feeling or sense gives rise to an idea or an explanation and how that in turn produces a feeling about the fitness of the explanation. If the feeling is good, one is inclined to accept the explanation and to judge it as true until a better explanation comes along. If the feeling is bad, then the reverse process takes place. The sense of the absolute claim of truth generates a feeling of reverence and worship that in turn moves understanding to form the idea of theism. To the degree this idea corresponds to reality an enrichment of the original feeling takes place. The original sense is thereby not only enriched but channelled in a positive direction. Religion, therefore, through sentiment

moves the human mind to fashion symbols of the realities whose action gives birth to sentiment, a new relation, a further symbolism and so on.

The conceptual symbols of our relation to God are inadequate. They are analogous and since they are inadequate they are in constant need of revisions. They possess a practical truth and they guide conduct in the right direction. Both the necessity of external symbolization and the inadequacy of all religious symbols are essential to Tyrrell's position. Speculative concepts do not reach God in God's abstract self, but have a religious value. Creedal statements likewise have a historical and religious value. The church is interested in the historical for the sake of the religious value. It is important to keep both aspects in mind when analyzing Tyrrell's understanding of doctrine, its development, and the relation between the prophetic and the official.

Ellen Leonard's presentation briefly sketched some of Tyrrell's ideas in authority on the church, especially his emphasis upon the whole church as the locus of ecclesial authority. Consequently Tyrrell viewed papal authority within the broader context of the authority of the whole church so that the separation and isolation of the pope from the whole church was regarded as an aberration. Underscoring the significance of Tyrrell's notion of the mind of the church, she pointed out that it did not refer simply to the opinions of the faithful, but rather to a guided consensus that had slowly emerged within the church and includes laity, bishops, and pope. Authority is therefore not primarily external authority, but an authority residing primarily in the whole collective *consensus fidelium*. The pope and bishops as the official guardians of the tradition have as their task to interpret and to proclaim the *consensus fidelium*. Tyrrell criticizes interpretations of authority as absolutistic in which no room is left for personal conscience. In this context, the distinction between the two orders of truth, the scientific and the prophetic were elaborated and expanded, especially in relation to the notions of revelation, dogma, and theology.

Since the presentations of Schultenover and Leonard dealt with Tyrrell's position on the authority of dogmatic statements, the discussion focused on this problem. To what extent was Tyrrell's understanding of dogmatic statements and his criteria for their evaluation purely pragmatic and lacking cognitive content? How does the distinction between scientific theology and prophetic office play an important role in Tyrrell's understanding of the cognitive content of dogmatic statements? Obviously, the question was raised: where do we stand today in relation to Tyrrell's opinions? Many criticize Tyrrell's understanding of dogma, but does Rahner's notion of *reductio in mysterium* and does Schillebeeckx's distinction between surface, structural, and conjunctural go much further than Tyrrell's own constructive suggestions for understanding the nature of doctrinal statements, their import, meaning, and development?

#### INFALLIBILITY

The second session was begun with two highly informative and well argued position papers: Margaret O'Gara's analysis of "Infallibility and

Reception," and John T. Ford's "Vatican I: Two Modes of Discourse?" O'Gara's paper centered on the disagreements in regard to the notion of reception within the contemporary theological and ecumenical scene, especially the disagreement between the "Anglican/Roman Catholic Report: Authority in the Church II," of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and the Vatican Doctrinal Commission's observations about the report. The final report advances the notion of reception as a middle ground between two extremes. The Vatican Doctrinal Congregation suggests that the understanding of reception in the elucidations of the report does not appear to be in accord with Roman Catholic teaching, especially, Vatican I's *Pastor aeternus*, which attributes validity to doctrinal definitions independently of their reception.

O'Gara disagrees with this reservation and offers an interpretation of both the report and of Catholic teaching to show that the fears and reservations are unfounded. The references in the report to reception refer to reception as a final or ultimate indication. They point to reception as a necessary sign and final manifestation of infallibility. They express the acknowledgement by the people of God of the apostolic authority. The report does not simply make the validity of doctrinal definitions dependent upon reception.

Moreover, there has been within Catholic theology a growing awareness of the historical and systematic importance of reception. Yves Congar's "La réception comme réalité ecclésiologique," (*Rev. Sc. ph. th.* 56 [1972], 369-403) has become a classic study of the problem. A contrast exists between a pyramidal and a communal ecclesiology. In the former, obedience, in the later, reception is important. Reception involves a process of discernment. The distinct roles of magisterium and the faithful point to the importance of reception.

John Ford analyzed the reaction at Vatican I to a speech by Cardinal Filippo Maria Guidi in order to get a handle on the problem of the interpretation and reception of Vatican I. Guidi was castigated by those whom he sought to support, he was applauded by those whom he sought to oppose—the Gallicans. Why? His speech had argued that infallibility should be understood not as a permanent endowment nor as a personal property of the pope, but rather as a transient auxiliary actual grace; not so much a habit as an act; not a new revelation, but a preservation and explication. His speech used Thomist thought to oppose the Gallicans, but they loved it.

John Ford did not go into a detailed analysis of the speech and the person of Guidi. (See Ulrich Horst, "Kardinalerzbischof Filippo Maria Guidi und das I. Vatikanische Konzil," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 49 [1979], 429-511.) Instead he offered a reason for the unexpected contrasting reactions. The problem lies with the terminology. It was the case that the terms had two different meanings: one canonical, the other theological. The problem not only with Guidi's speech, but also with the interpretation of Vatican I in general, lies in the confusion and apparent contradictions that stem from the intermingling of the theological and the

canonical. Therefore, Ford concluded with three theses. 1) Theological statements have been read as canonical statements, e.g., the statement that the pope has the same infallibility that the church has. 2) Canonical statements have been taken as theological axioms, e.g. "irreformable definitions," a canonical term expressing that the matter is not subject to further appeal has been converted into "infallible propositions"—a philosophical and theological concept. 3) Some Vatican I statements can be interpreted either canonically or theologically.

The discussion revolved around the meaning of reception, the response of the Vatican Congregation to the final report, and the distinction between theological and canonical statements.

A business session held at the end of the first session discussed a possible topic for next year. A consensus emerged (along with volunteers) for a session on the Tübingen School and the problem of history, development, and theological method. Suggestions gathered from the second session of the seminar tended to focus on French Catholicism, Vatican I, and ecumenical relations. They will be analyzed by a steering committee.

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