

## SEMINAR ON HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Both sessions of this year's seminar related to the convention theme of theology's sources. The first session, with Mark D. Jordan of Notre Dame University as presenter and Walter Principe, C. S. B., of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies as respondent, dealt with Thomas Aquinas' use of sources. The second session, with Bradford Hinze of Marquette University as presenter, examined Johann Sebastian Drey's use of sources in light of post-modern criticism.

Mark Jordan organized his presentation around three points: 1) the identification of Thomas' sources; 2) Thomas' organization of those sources; and 3) some of the principles that govern Thomas' use of sources. With regard to the first point, Jordan argued that it is important to identify the specific sources Thomas used in his writing since the essence of Thomas' theological procedure is a disputative exegesis of textual authorities. The task of identifying Thomas' incomplete or partial explicit citations has, for the most part, been completed. The more difficult task, which still confronts modern interpreters of Thomas, is the identification of his implicit sources. Many questions, such as whom Thomas means when he writes that "some say . . . , " still await definitive answers.

Jordan then suggested that Thomas' *Catena aurea* and the *II-II Pars* of his *Summa Theologiae* made significant contributions to the organization of theological sources. Jordan observed that the *Catena* can be regarded as a revision of the *Glossa ordinaria* written according to the critical standards of thirteenth-century scholarship; its significance lies in its continuous clarification of patristic exegesis. The *II-II Pars*, on the other hand, offers, according to Jordan, a schema for organizing material from diverse sources, e.g., casuistry, pastoral manuals, and devotional material. Specifically, Thomas uses the virtues, rather than the seven deadly sins or some other topic, as the organizational tool for providing rational access to these diverse sources.

The final point Jordan addressed was the principles Thomas used for interpreting the patristic sources he used. The most instructive text on this issue is the *Contra errores Graecorum*, which is Thomas' analysis of a certain book, given him by Pope Urban IV for evaluation, in which patristic texts had been collected in order to prove that the early Greek Fathers had indeed held the doctrines of Roman primacy, the *filioque*, and other aspects of Western Christianity disputed by the Eastern Church. Jordan highlighted the two general principles enunciated in *Contra errores*. First, proper interpretation of patristic sources requires attention to the development of ideas in the Christian church; specifically, the recognition that some of the ancient teachers in the church may have spoken with less care about certain theological issues than their successors. Doubt could arise about some early patristic texts, therefore, because heresy had not yet arisen to compel Christians to express the church's faith with greater precision. Second, proper inter-

pretation of patristic texts requires sensitivity to the differences of language and mentality, specifically the differences between Greek and Latin expressions of the faith. Since Greek and Latin Christians profess the same faith in different words—words that could be misunderstood if translated literally—Thomas proposed to find a mode of expression that preserved the meaning, but not necessarily the very words of his sources. In short, Thomas used his sources with attention to their historical context and linguistic differences.

Walter Principe, the respondent, expressed general approval of Jordan's presentation. He concurred with Jordan's emphasis upon the need for identifying precisely the texts or sources upon which Thomas comments in his theology. In addition, Principe enumerated three further problems in assessing Thomas' use of sources. First, Thomas sometimes quotes his sources, including the Bible, from memory. Second, Thomas, like other medieval theologians, does not always mean the *Glossa ordinaria* when he refers to the *Glossa*; he sometimes means Peter Lombard's *Glossa*. Third, Thomas regards Scripture as a unified whole, rather than as a collection of books with diverse theologies. Consequently, he sometimes erects his theological position, e.g., his christology, upon a scriptural interpretation that today would be held to be false. Principe demurred somewhat concerning Jordan's claims about the *II-II Pars* of the *Summa*.

The discussion that followed was lively, pursuing questions not only about Thomas' use of sources and his understanding of the literal sense of Scripture, but also about contemporary hermeneutics. One participant asked whether we can speak at all about one meaning of faith or Scripture since meaning is conditioned by language, concepts, and culture. Another asked what we might mean by a "correct" reading of a biblical text. The seminar participants reflected upon the approach of Hans Frei. And they discussed how Aquinas might respond to Hans-Georg Gadamer's claim (that the intention of the author does not determine a text's meaning) and how we might react to Thomas' response.

The second session of the seminar examined how the sources of history and experience function in the theology of J. S. Drey, the nineteenth-century founder of the Catholic faculty at the University of Tübingen. Bradford Hinze divided his presentation into two parts. In the first part, he set out Drey's method and the significant sources in his theology; in the second, he considered whether the post-modern criticism of foundationalism applied to Drey.

Hinze argued that Drey's understanding of theology is distinguished from previous Catholic theologies by the prominent place it gives to history as a source of theological reflection. Drey not only contends that historical propaedeutic provides the empirical source of the theological enterprise, but also emphasizes that by history he does not mean atomistic or mechanical chronicle. Specifically, Drey recommends an organic understanding of history within theology, according to which individual parts must be interpreted in relation to the whole (in keeping with Romantic tenets) and facts must be construed in relation to governing ideas (in keeping with German Idealism). According to Hinze, Drey exhibits both similarities and differences with his contemporary, Schleiermacher, in his treatment of the two divisions of historical propaedeutic, biblical exegesis and historical theology. Historical theology is as important to Drey as biblical exegesis since he

conceives of the ecclesial community as a living tradition and he maintains that the church is the true basis of all theological knowledge.

Hinze then observed that Drey's theology is marked not only by his understanding of history, but also by his German Idealist formulation of the scientific nature of fundamental and dogmatic theology. Specifically, scientific theology seeks to show how the various Christian claims of revelation are necessarily related to the idea of the kingdom of God and have an inner correspondence with the human subject. Hinze pointed out that in Drey's approach to both fundamental and dogmatic theology, the subject matter is treated from the ideal side in terms of concepts which are related to the idea of the kingdom of God and from the real side in terms of how this idea is realized in the Catholic Church. In his three volume *Apologetik*, Drey seeks to provide a speculative construction of the basic characteristics of revelation, Christian revelation, and the Catholic Church in order to demonstrate the divine positivity of Catholic Christianity without relying any longer on the formerly sufficient "proofs" from miracles and prophecies.

Toward the end of the first part of his presentation, Hinze considered whether experience is a theological source for Drey. Hinze concluded that, although experience for Drey is not explicitly a source for substantive theological change, Drey is sensitive to changing historical experiences and the need for the church to constitute itself differently in each age according to the spirit of the times. Hinze emphasized that Drey is keenly aware that doctrines possess both fixed and mobile elements. If one affirms only their mobile character, heresy results; if only their fixed character, hyperorthodoxy and theological inertia result. Nonetheless Hinze expressed the opinion that experience is at best a limited source for Drey; it can raise questions about the form in which doctrines are presented, but it cannot be a source of criticism or new insight concerning the content of doctrinal formulations.

In the second part of his presentation, Hinze addressed the question whether Drey is under the spell of a foundationalist epistemology that obliges him to ground every claim to knowledge either in a non-inferential empirical claim or in the transcendental subject. After briefly reviewing the criticisms of foundationalism by Ronald Thiemann, Francis Fiorenza, and others, Hinze concluded that Drey is vulnerable to the foundationalist charge on two counts. First, Drey, unlike Schleiermacher, still makes limited use of external proofs from miracles and prophecies. This attempt to establish the divine positivity of Christianity through reference to empirical fact smacks of empirical foundationalism. Second, Drey understands scientific theology in terms of an idealist method of deduction that promises a kind of certainty which many post-modern theologians think is no longer possible. Drey's attempt to show that Christian doctrines are intelligible and credible, by demonstrating through a deduction from the idea of the kingdom of God that they are necessary and that they correlate with the human subject, suggests a type of rational foundationalism.

Despite these weaknesses in Drey's theological conception, Hinze highlighted aspects of Drey's theology that are worthy of praise and of preservation. Hinze spoke approvingly of Drey's conception of the theologian as a person who is faithful to the traditions of the church, while being a reform-minded and critical thinker.

He also commended Drey for placing considerable weight upon the primary language of faith, e.g., Bible and liturgy, and for acknowledging the narrative character of Christian faith. Hinze, moreover, applauded Drey's appreciation of the sources of history and communal experience within an interdependent conception of historical, scientific, and practical theology.

The discussion that followed focused upon Hinze's critical evaluation of Drey and upon the question of doctrinal development. One participant suggested that Drey, seen within the context of his day, was a courageous theologian for attempting to establish a strong transcendental foundationalism, which pulled him away from the supernaturalism of past traditional, apologetic proofs of Christianity's divinity. Another participant pursued possible parallels between Drey and J. H. Newman. A stimulating interchange was initiated when the seminar participants considered the extent to which doctrines really did change according to Drey. Some of the questions pursued include the following: Insofar as Drey maintains that the idea behind the doctrine is changeless while the manifestation of the idea is changeable, can we call this real change? To what extent is Drey's position true of the entire Catholic Tübingen School? What exactly is the relationship between Christian consciousness and the objectivity of the church and its faith?

The participants in both sessions generally agreed that the presentations and ensuing discussions were stimulating.

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