

SEMINAR ON HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

The first session of this year's seminar dealt with revelation in the theology of Johannes Evangelist Kuhn (1806–1887). Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, began his presentation with a sketch of the context in which Kuhn worked. Hayes then organized his comments into three divisions, corresponding to three stages in the development of Kuhn's thought.

The first stage is constituted by Kuhn's attempt to give a critical account of faith that avoided the extremes of a total apriorism and of empiricism. Following Jacobi and Schleiermacher, Kuhn argued that the beginning of all knowledge is faith. But, unlike them, Kuhn refused to allow faith to remain at the level of feeling. He argued that initial faith has a drive to show itself to be reasonable. In short, there is both an immediate moment of awareness and a mediate moment of reflection in human knowing. These philosophical reflections provided the framework within which Kuhn handled the theological themes of the relation between faith and knowledge, theology and philosophy, grace and nature.

The second stage Hayes outlined was Kuhn's debate with D. F. Strauss. Unlike others who focused on an exegetical critique of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Kuhn identified a false philosophy of history as the real problem in Strauss's work. Hayes emphasized that whereas Strauss posited no intrinsic relation between historical facts and ideas about the Absolute, Kuhn maintained a tighter relation. The factual really embodies the ideal; true revelation of God is grounded in history. In his discussion with Strauss and Schelling, the lines for Kuhn's final reflection on the question of revelation were established.

The final stage of Kuhn's thought on revelation is to be found in the two editions of his *Katholische Dogmatik*. From this work Hayes drew out the primary elements in Kuhn's theology of revelation. The first element is the historical dimension, which for Kuhn is the foundational element of Christianity. The second element is the relation between natural and supernatural revelation. Kuhn developed a median position between supernaturalism and rationalism by arguing that there is a positive point of contact between natural and supernatural revelation, but that the former is incomplete without the latter. According to Hayes, the significance of supernatural revelation for Kuhn is that it makes known the salvific intent of God. Hayes also highlighted the christological dimension of Kuhn's theology of revelation. Kuhn understood the purpose of both natural and supernatural revelation to be a preparation for the Incarnation of Christ. In Christ the highest act of divine world-governance and the most noble human moral development coincide. On this point and several others, Hayes suggested that Kuhn provides a stunning anticipation of the work of Karl Rahner.

The discussion that followed pursued a number of points, including: Kuhn's relation to other members of the Catholic Tübingen School; the reasons for Kuhn's

silence in his later years; Vatican I's assessment of Kuhn's notion of *Uroffenbarung*; and the continuity between Kuhn and Walter Kasper.

The second session dealt with the French minority bishops of Vatican I. Margaret O'Gara of the University of St. Michael's College was the presenter; John T. Ford of the Catholic University of America made a response.

After identifying the inadequacies of previous interpretations of the French minority bishops, O'Gara gave a synopsis of key elements of her book *Triumph in Defeat*, which is an extended study of the French minority bishops. O'Gara first pointed out that the French minority is important because they comprised the largest group from any country who opposed the initial schema of *Pastor aeternus* and because they worked as a group, thus developing a kind of coherent perspective. She emphasized that they were motivated by a common fear that Vatican I would teach the separate and absolute infallibility of the pope. O'Gara commended study of these bishops also as a way of contributing to contemporary discussions concerning authority and the value of dissent.

According to O'Gara, the French minority made three arguments against the original schema. First, the definition of infallibility was untimely. Its definition was neither necessary nor supported unanimously. Second, infallibility cannot be defined as proposed by the original schema. This is so because the proposed definition represents only the opinion of one school and because the schema inappropriately speaks of the pope before speaking of the church. Third, infallibility as proposed by the original schema should not be defined because it is not true. The separate, absolute, and personal infallibility of the pope is not taught by scripture and tradition. Such a definition undermines the importance of other bishops, thereby destroying the constitution of the church intended by Christ.

In her concluding comments, O'Gara identified the reasons for the minority's acceptance of the final document and highlighted the lasting value of the French minority. Most accepted *Pastor aeternus* under the rubric of obedience, while some sought material reasons for accepting it. The lasting value of the minority's arguments resides in the fact that they provide a helpful lens for interpreting *Pastor aeternus* today. They help us to see that the church is the true subject of infallibility. Moreover, in prophetic fashion, the French minority offers an ecclesiology of communion over a pyramidal ecclesiology.

Ford began his response by commenting that O'Gara's book contributes significantly to overcoming the misunderstanding of Vatican I. He praised O'Gara's work generally for bringing together theological sensitivity and historiography; more specifically, for suggesting that the minority's timeliness argument came in four varieties and for pointing out that there was more to the minority's opposition than simply the issue of timeliness. Ford then offered his own evaluation of the French minority's effect, which he identified as a contribution to a better ecclesiology and a textually improved definition of infallibility. Ford noted, however, that questions still remain. For example, how can infallibility be verified; what role does reception play; and why did previous theologians miss O'Gara's point about the minority's eventual acceptance of *Pastor aeternus* if O'Gara's interpretation is correct?

In addition to these questions, the group discussion pursued additional questions and issues. They included consideration of the difference between indefec-

tibility and infallibility; the meaning of "irreformable" in the council's definition; and the similarity yet difference between the French minority's arguments and Döllinger's historical argument against infallibility.

Before concluding the sessions, the seminar participants considered a proposal for reorganization of the seminar with alternating sessions between the patristic/medieval period and the Reformation/modern period.

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