

SEMINAR ON HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

In the first session of the Historical Theology Seminar, which met on June 12, 1992, Prof. Paul Misner (Marquette University) summarized the main points of his recent *The Origins of Social Catholicism* as a basis for our discussion. His presentation was divided into three areas, namely the historical phases of social Catholicism in Europe, its reception, and the experiences out of which it emerged. In his response, Prof. Gregory Baum (McGill University) indicated his very great appreciation for Prof. Misner's work and raised five areas for further reflection: the distinctions of the Catholic mindset in modernity; the importance of bringing social and political science perspectives to the topic of Catholic social thought; the difficulty of applying North American liberal/conservative dichotomies to the nineteenth-century European context; the significance of Catholicism as an alternative to both capitalism and socialism; and finally, the inability of ecclesiology to cope with the sins of the Church.

Subsequent discussion explored these issues in more detail.

The second session on June 13 was entitled "Reconsidering Patristic Exegesis." Three papers were given. Prof. Charles Kannengiesser (University of Notre Dame) spoke on "Patristic Exegesis Today." His concern was for the creative spirit of the early Christian writers and the bond between exegesis, theology and faith community.

The second paper by Prof. Mary Rose D'Angelo (Villanova University) was entitled "Early Christian Uses of the Scriptures and Resources for Contemporary Biblical Interpretation." The presentation singled out four areas of significance. First, a more comprehensive study of early Christian literature provides knowledge above the textual history and variants of the biblical texts. Second, the fact that the writers of the early Christian centuries shared the language used by the writers of the Christian scriptures sheds light on linguistic problems. Third, early Christian interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures is in continuity with the method and spirit of the interpretations of the Hebrew scriptures to be found in the New Testament itself. Fourth, the writers of the early centuries shared much of the same religious world as the authors of the New Testament.

The final presentation by Prof. Bradford E. Hinze treated "Early Christian Exegesis and Contemporary Hermeneutics." Hinze placed his appeal for a more thorough examination of critical methods in the context of the strongly polarized views of the "new theology" movement of the 1940s and 1950s with its attempt to retrieve something of the tradition of spiritual interpretation and the rather cool attitude toward precritical exegesis found in representatives of critical exegesis. A more critical approach to early Christian exegesis would be concerned at one level with issues of authorship sources, genre, etc. At another level, it would

study the relation between early Christian techniques and those of Jewish exegesis as well as relations between Christian literature and Greco-Roman literature.

This approach, it is hoped, would enable scholars to move beyond the dead-end of the earlier polarization. It would also shed fuller light on the literal and historical meaning of the biblical texts in the early Christian exegesis. Finally, it is hoped that such an approach would lead to a deeper appreciation of the literary imagination and rhetorical style involved in the development of early Christian interpretation.

JEAN PORTER

*University of Notre Dame
South Bend, Indiana*

ZACHARY HAYES

*Catholic Theological Union
Chicago*