

## McSorley's claim

# Luther defended Catholic teaching

By MORAG FULLILOVE

Thresher Reporter

"Had Martin Luther remained in the Church, he would have been the greatest Catholic reformer since St. Francis of Assisi," arrested the Rev. Harry McSorley, Professor of Ecumenical Theology and Ecclesiology at St. Paul's College Washington, D. C.

"The Church must constantly be reformed" the Catholic scholar remarked, referring to the current ecumenical movement. One recent change has a revised view of Martin Luther.

Speaking before a largely Catholic audience, McSorley claimed Luther was defending

the traditional Catholic teaching on the doctrine of grace versus free will. Both St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas taught man could attain salvation only through faith.

### Drift to Unorthodoxy

This doctrine was confirmed by an early church council but during the Middle Ages the records of this meeting were never transcribed. As a result, McSorley suggested, northern Europe began to drift from official doctrine.

One school, the Occamists or Nominalists, taught that if man did all he could to save himself, he would be saved by necessity. Luther was originally trained in this theory and taught it until 1513.

In 1515 while preparing his lectures on Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Luther realized the Bible denied salvation except by faith.

This was the major point of Luther's attack, according to McSorley. From this point he was forced even further by the Church, but in his original desire for reform he remained with in the teachings of the Church.

McSorley, who studied at the

University of Munich, was greatly influenced in his interpretation by Franz Lortz whose "History of the Reformation in Germany" proclaiming Luther as a truly deligious reformer, marked the beginning of the Catholic reappraisal of Luther.

### By Grace Alone

Lortz stressed the idea that Luther was trained in an unorthodox doctrine although he felt the Pope also advocated salvation by good works.

McSorley said only this Northern school preached salvation by good works, whereas the rest of the Church officially taught heaven was to be attained only by grace.

The Church objected to the wording, not the content of the 36th thesis, "Free will after sin is an empty word."

This view of the Reformation, tolerated but not accepted by members of the Catholic church, is in keeping with the ecumenical movement and the constant need for reform. No longer is Luther a dishonest man, but a once potential church reformer.