Protestants, Catholics and Inculturation

Similarities-in-Difference, Differences-in-Similarity

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DO CATHOLICS and Protestants approach the issue of inculturation differently? Are there particular advantages or constraints in Protestantism or Catholicism that can help or hinder Christians who respond to the incarnational imperative of the Gospel? Can Catholics and Protestants learn from one another as they engage in developing churches that are authentically rooted in local reality? These are the questions that this article will attempt to answer.

In a first section, Protestantism and Catholicism will be described as two very different "spirits," which approach the question of the human and the cultural in two very different ways.

In a second section, however, it will be argued that in the work of Catholic and Protestant theologians such a distinct "Catholic" or "Protestant" perspective is not necessarily operative; rather, each of these perspectives is implicit in and complements the other.

In a third section, finally, it will be suggested that there can be distinguished several basic theological orientations which cut across ecclesial boundaries. Both Catholic and Protestant theologians work more out of these basic orientations than they do out of the distinct "spirits" of their traditions. Some of these basic orientations engage issues of inculturation to a great degree; others do not.

"A SPIRIT ALIEN TO OURS"

Paragraphs 23 and 24 of Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith* argue for an irreducible difference between Protestant and Catholic theologizing. The real "antithesis," says Schleiermacher, is not that between the Eastern church and the Western church, but between the two Western churches, Roman Catholic and Protestant. In some cases it might seem like Protestants and Catholics are saying the same thing, but "even when the doctrines sound the same, there are still hidden differences" (Schleiermacher 1976, 103 [¶23]). No truly Protestant doctrinal formulation ever approximates a Catholic one, and what is most successfully Catholic is inevitably anti-Protestant. Even if "the Catholic Church leant towards our definitions in all doctrines that have become controversial, this would not cause a reunion of the two Churches; and this can only be explained by the existence of a spirit alien to ours, which repels us" (104).

The reason for this antithesis is that the Christianity discovered by the Reformers was not an attempt merely to purify a church gone corrupt; it was rather "the origination of a distinctive form of the Christian communion" (103 [¶24]), the development of a new "spirit," a "peculiarity of character" (104). Given the fact that Christianity involves the relationship of a person both to Christ and to the church communion, this "spirit" or "peculiarity" works itself out as

one relation is subordinated to the other in opposite ways. The spirit of Catholicism, therefore, emerges from the fact that it conceives of the person's relationship to Christ as mediated through his or her relationship to the church; the spirit of Protestantism emerges from the fact that it conceives of the person's relationship to the church as determined by his or her relationship to Christ (103). In a time of the discovery of individuality and the importance individual experience of God (see Davidson 1987, 4–8), the Reformers discovered and articulated a new way of being Christian, a way that emphasized God's grace and human individual identity and downplayed the importance of human activity and the mediating role of human community. Protestantism can err, Schleiermacher cautions, by denigrating the human and the communal—"the greatest care must be taken not to carry the antithesis too far, lest we should fall into un-Christian positions" (Schleiermacher 1976, 107). After all, "Christian piety never arises independently and of itself in an individual" (106). But it would also be an error to see no antithesis; Protestants and Catholics will ever differ because of their starting points. Christ's grace always has priority over human experience: "the same fact which we regard as the institution of the Church, to serve the work or influence of Christ, is regarded by them as a transference to the Church of the work of Christ" (106–7).

Toward the end of paragraph 24 Schleiermacher applies this antithesis toward other human aspects in Christianity's past, but in a way that might reflect how the antithesis would function in today's efforts to articulate and live Christian faith in the context of human culture, human religiosity and social change. It would seem natural, he says, that Catholicism would take over "matter from the earlier religious communions," and so what is more Jewish or Hellenistic (Schleiermacher's word is "Heathen") "is more in keeping with the Roman Church." What is more in opposition to these traditions, however, "even in earlier times, contained something akin to Protestantism" (107). Catholicism, one might interpolate, is naturally more welcoming of and able to assimilate insights from other cultures and other religions; Christianity, the genius of Catholicism implies, is from start to finish a kind of "syncretism" (see Starkloff 1994) as human and divine work in and through each other. Protestantism, however, if one follows the line of Schleiermacher's logic, is chary of culture and other religious ways, and so witnesses to God's unique and transforming presence in Christ.

It is particularly ironic that Karl Barth, given his lifelong ambivalence and even opposition to Schleiermacher (see Barth 1982), would agree with the "Father of Liberal Theology" on this point—and not only agree but also take the "antithesis" further. For Barth, the central fallacy of Catholicism is the *analogia entis*, the doctrine that maintains that human existence and human experience—and so human culture—has a capacity to be transparent to God's presence and revealing action. "In the Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis*," wrote Catholic theologian Eric Przywara, "creation in its totality is the vision, mounting from likeness to likeness, of the God who is beyond every likeness" (quoted in Barth 1960, 144). On the contrary, says Barth in the Forward to Volume I of his *Church Dogmatics*:

> I regard the *analogia entis* as the intention of Antichrist, and I think that because of it one cannot become Catholic. Whereupon I at the same time allow myself to regard all other possible reasons for not becoming Catholic, as shortsighted and lacking in seriousness. (Barth 1936, x).

If one would accept this most fundamental of all Catholic positions, the most objectionable doctrines in Catholicism—those

concerning Mary and the papacy—would follow logically, for they are nothing more than the doctrinal consequences of the validity of human cooperation with God's grace, given in the fabric of human life and human history. Between Protestantism and Catholicism there exists a "philosophical crevasse" (O'Meara 1985, 293) which can never be bridged. The human can be transformed and purified; it can be a context in which the Gospel can be proclaimed, but it will never be the bearer of grace per se.

Barth may have softened his position somewhat towards the end of his life (see Barth 1960; Busch 1976), and even wrote an engaging letter to Asian Christians regarding the possibility of Asian theology (see Veitch 1976). Indeed, Barth's is from start to finish a highly contextual theology; but his statement about the centrality of *analogia entis* for Catholicism, and his own aversion towards it, stands as a classic statement of Protestantism and its "No" to grace within nature and to any kind of "points of contact" within it (see Yates 1994, 112).

In recent years Richard P. McBrien, as well as several other Catholic theologians (see, for example Bevans 1991, O'Meara 1986, Haughton 1979) have written about the particularly distinct *Catholic* vision of reality. Catholicism, says McBrien, as the name itself indicates, "is characterized by a *radical openness to all truth and to every value*" (McBrien 1981, 1173). A vision of reality grounded in "Christian realism," Catholicism—in contrast to classical Protestantism, it is implied—approaches life with a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" mentality:

> It is not nature *or* grace, but graced nature; not reason *or* faith, but reason illumined by faith; not law *or* Gospel, but law inspired by the Gospel; not Scripture *or* tradition, but normative tradition within Scripture; not faith *or* works, but faith issuing in works and works as expressions of faith; not authority *or* freedom, but authority in the service of freedom; not the past *versus* the present, but the present in continuity with the past; not stability *or* change, but change in fidelity to stable principle, and principle fashioned and refined in response to change; not unity *or* diversity, but unity in diversity, and diversity which prevents uniformity, the antithesis of unity (1174).

Theologically, this mentality translates into three basic principles, over against which "differences between Catholic and non-Catholic (especially Protestant) approaches" are distinguished more clearly (McBrien 1987, 437).

The first and most central principle, says McBrien, is that of *sacramentality*, by which "the visible, the tangible, the finite, the historical" are regarded as "actual or potential carriers of the divine presence" (McBrien 1981, 1180). Holiness, and ultimately salvation, is in some way "worldly," and thus the possibility of a world that lives in truth and justice, and the importance of working to bring it about.

The second principle, which is a corollary to the first, is that of *mediation*. Sacramentality is that quality of the human and the cosmic that reflects or is transparent to the presence of God; mediation refers to the fact that the divine presence is effective in and through these realities.

Thirdly, reminiscent of Schleiermacher, the principle of *communion* affirms that "our way to God and God's way to us is not only a mediated way but a communal way" (1181). Catholicism is radically social and ecclesial; individual relationship to God is possible but secondary and subsequent; the Bible is read within the context of the church, and even mystical experience "relies on the language, ideas, concepts, presuppositions" of the church community (1181). Protestantism, on the other hand, would regard Catholic sacramentality as teetering on the verge of idolatry; it would

see Catholic mediation as dangerously close to magic, and would shun the principle of communion as fostering a collectivism that could deny individual freedom and an authoritarianism that could deny freedom of thought (McBrien 1987, 437). If Catholicism is the church of sacrament, showing forth the goodness of creation, Protestantism is the church of the word, spoken to creation in loving judgment.

McBrien does not reflect explicitly on the question of inculturation, but it is clear that his picture of Catholicism would embrace the notion quite readily. If the world is sacramental, then nothing in it—human culture, human religious experience, natural beauty and cosmic order—is unholy or purely secular. The world is sinful and often unjust, but it is *capable* of becoming good and just. Every created reality can mediate effectively God's loving, saving presence; every tradition and people has within it the seeds of God's word. Just as God became incarnate in Jewish culture, just as Christological and ecclesiological doctrine was developed in dialogue with Hellenistic and Byzantine culture, just as the church's liturgical life was nourished by Roman sobriety and German realism, so every culture and religious sensibility can offer something that can transform or be transformed by the reality of Christian faith. Protestantism, on the other hand, might be less ready to embrace the goodness of culture, the importance of human liberation and justice, and the "seeds of the word" present in other religious ways.

But is this distinctive nature of Catholicism and Protestantism actually operative in Catholic and Protestant theological efforts? And does it truly affect the way Catholics and Protestants approach the question of inculturation? Our next section will reflect on these questions.

"FOR EVERY NO...SOME RESOUNDING YES"

In his 1981 work, *The Analogical Imagination,* Catholic theologian David Tracy suggests that two elemental religious orientations—manifestation and proclamation—give way to two classical types of theological language: analogical and dialectic. Classic Catholic thought approaches theologizing with what Tracy calls an "analogical imagination" (Tracy 1977); classic Protestant thought, we might say, theologizes with a "dialectical imagination."

Those thinkers oriented to "manifestation," begin their theological reflection with the wonder they experience in created realities. The grace-full nature of human existence might be manifested—as in Schleiermacher, Whitehead, Hartshorne, Rahner or Lonergan—in the "eros of the mind," that passion born of the conviction that creation is whole and thoroughly reasonable; it might be manifested as well—as in Tillich, Teilhard, Simone Weil or Martin Buber—in the fabric of "common experience," be it the boundary experiences of alienation and death, or ecstatic experiences of the ordinary. "Once really lived, embraced and loved," this ordinary life "manifests itself as the extraordinary revelation of our primordial belonging-to, our radical participation in this body, this family, this people, the community, this church, this tradition, this history, this planet, this cosmos" (Tracy 1981, 380).

Still others—like Mircea Eliade—look to the extraordinary events of life and sacred places to mediate the sacred. However it is followed, those oriented to manifestation "recognize some pervasive yes at the heart of the universe, some radical mystery sensed as power, as an abiding love that undoes all our more usual senses of the futility and absurdity of existence" (386). When Christian theology approaches people of another culture and another religion, it needs—in the famous words of M. A. C.

Warren—to take off its shoes, for the ground it is approaching is holy (Warren 1963, 10).

The experience of other Christians, however, "especially the great Reformers and the major neoorthodox Protestant theologians in the contemporary period," has been expressed in quite another way. "No depth experience, no quest for the ultimate, no mysticism, they urged, can save us in this situation. Only if God comes as eschatological event, as unexpected and decisive Word addressing each and all; only if God comes to disclose our true Godforsakenness and our possible liberation can we be healed" (Tracy 1981, 386). Theologians such as Luther, and then in our century Barth, Brunner, Gogarten, Reinhold Niebuhr and in their own way even Bultmann and Tillich are the witnesses against the attempt to construct a mere cultural Christianity that dilutes the message and the power of the Gospel and ignores the real presence and destructiveness of evil in human life. The yes of God's grace needs always be prefaced by the no of God's judgment of human attempts to be God. If the orientation of proclamation resists inculturation to a certain degree, it certainly takes culture and human experience seriously: it is what God's grace is able to heal and transform and perfect.

Experiences of the manifesting nature of reality, Tracy says, are expressed most appropriately in analogical language, a language that discerns divine patterns in the existential confusion of life, some kind of order in creation's seeming chaos, some kind of similarity in the midst of difference. The traditions of theology based on neo-Platonism, Aristotle and modern idealism—many of which, but not all, were produced by Catholics—have produced powerful visions of the interconnectedness of reality and the presence of grace in the midst of it all. It is mainly from this tradition of the analogical imagination that theologians have been inspired to see the possibilities of theology done with African religious resources, Asian methods and themes, Latin American aesthetic sensibility and North American instincts of personal freedom. Tracy cautions, however, that a truly *analogical* imagination will always be aware of the *dialectical* possibilities of human and cosmic reality, and will not easily pass over into cultural romanticism or lazy pluralism. "Where analogical theologies lose that sense for the negative, that dialectical sense within analogy itself, they produce not a believable harmony among various likenesses in all reality but the theological equivalent of 'cheap grace': boredom, sterility and an atheological vision of a deadening univocity" (415). This analogical imagination, then, while so natural to the Catholic vision of manifestation, needs the dialectical imagination of proclamation that finds best expression in Protestantism.

But the dialectical imagination needs the analogical imagination as well. Without some sense of the whole, without some sense of continuity between God's creation and God's grace, dialectical language used alone "eventually explodes its energies into rage, or dissipates them in despair" (421). Hendrik Kraemer, who addressed the question of God's presence in the world's religions in Barthian terms of "the Christian message in a non-Christian world," finally left room for God's presence in human experience, if not in peoples' religions (Yates 1994, 104–24). And even in Barth, Tracy says, while a no lurks behind every yes, "for every no, there will soon follow some resounding yes" (1981, 417).

What we can learn from Tracy's work, I believe, is that the basic theological differences between Catholics and Protestants articulated so clearly by people like Schleiermacher, Barth and McBrien, while eminently useful to see a certain spirit or drift in doing theology, are really abstract categories rather than actual facts. Schleiermacher, for all his Protestant sensibilities, is

eminently Catholic in his evaluation of human experience as the starting point for theological reflection; Rahner, for all his openness to human culture and world religions, still sees missionary proclamation as a perpetual duty of the Church, revealing its very nature. One can detect "Catholic" traces in evangelicals like E. Stanley Jones, and one can sense a healthy dialectical suspicion in the writings of Pope John Paul II. Contemporary theologians of liberation all breathe a "Catholic" spirit, but Tracy shows how their power comes from the language of the dialectical imagination (1981, 416). At one level, a contextual theologian like Kosuke Koyama seems quite open to Thai or Japanese culture and religion; at another there is always a core of proclamation in his writings. The Asian Catholic bishops develop an approach to inculturation that is steeped in the "universality of grace" (Putranta 1986, 255), but their most recent plenary statement is laced with a strong suspicion of contemporary globalization movements (FABC 1995). As Paul Tillich insisted, theology needs both the "Protestant principle" that is suspicious of the human, and the "Catholic substance" that embraces it (1967, 245; see O'Meara 1985). There are examples of theologians who exhibit Protestant or Catholic orientations in a fairly pure state—Protestants Byang Kato and Bong Rin Ro and Catholics Leonardo Mercado and Raimon Panikkar come first to mind—but such examples, I believe, are relatively rare. Perhaps another way of talking about approaches to inculturation would be more helpful.

"SOMETHING LIKE 'ZONES'"

In his article on Protestantism in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Lutheran theologian Martin E. Marty cautions against seeking "rigid categories" to classify the various Protestant churches; "the concept of something like 'zones' is more fruitful" (1987, 25). Rather than a picture of Presbyterians, Baptists and Lutherans all strictly following some official line of their own Churches, the reality is that liberal Baptists are closer to liberal Presbyterians and Lutherans than to other Baptists, and that conservative Presbyterians may well be closer to conservative Baptists and Presbyterians than they are to fellow Presbyterians. In the same way, it seems, we need to speak about "zones" when talking about Protestant and Catholic approaches to theology in general and to inculturation in particular. In some instances, some "mainline" Catholic positions dovetail with evangelical ones; in others liberal Catholics and liberal Protestants are almost indistinguishable.

There *are* particular theological orientations which affect an approach to inculturation, but I believe that they are not so much based on "Protestant" and "Catholic" lines, but on convictions which cut across all Christian Churches. What I would like to do in the rest of this article, therefore, is to propose four basic theological orientations which will affect the inculturation process. Depending on how one appreciates culture (in its ethnographic, religious and sociological dimensions) and takes it seriously in the theological process as a true theological source (*locus theologicus*), one can be said to have an "orthodox" orientation, a "liberal" orientation, a "neoorthodox" orientation, or a "revisionist" orientation to the question of inculturation. One might say that the "orthodox" and "neoorthodox" orientations tend toward an expression of classical Protestant attitudes toward theology, and that the "liberal," "neoliberal" and "revisionist" attitudes display a tendency toward classical Catholic expressions. Much more accurate, however, is to speak of these orientations in the way Marty suggests as "zones" in which both Catholics and Protestants—mainline and Evangeli-

cals—engage in the work of inculturating the Gospel in today's world.

A word should be said about the sources of these orientations. I have synthesized them from what Evangelical theologians David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen call "The Contextualization Continuum" in their book *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods and Models* (1989), and from Catholic theologian David Tracy's "Five Basic Models in Contemporary Theology" in his 1975 book *Blessed Rage for Order*, but I have put my own interpretations on them as well. Hesselgrave and Rommen speak about four "matrices of contextualization": orthodoxy, liberalism, neoorthdoxy and neoliberalism; Tracy speaks about five models of contemporary theological reflection: orthodox theology, liberal theology, neoorthodox theology, radical theology and revisionist theology. Tracy's explicit concern is not with inculturation as such but with the question of how theology responds to the culture of modernity and the pluralism that it has spawned. Broadly speaking, however, this *is* the concern of inculturation, and it takes little reflection to realize that what Tracy might say about modernity would be valid in general with respect to all cultures in every part of the world. My synthesis merges neoorthodoxy and neoliberalism (as Hesselgrave and Rommen ultimately do) and excludes Tracy's model of radical theology since it has not only gone out of fashion but has little to say to efforts of inculturation. On this continuum, I believe, we can locate most efforts of inculturation today.

The Orthodox Zone

What is of utmost importance in the orthodox understanding of theology is the preservation and communication of God's revelation that is "provided for man in sin as an authentic disclosure of the nature and will of God" (Carl F. Henry, quoted in Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989, 145). As such, orthodoxy accepts as true and non-negotiable such doctrines as the virginal conception of Jesus, the bodily resurrection of Christ, blood atonement, human "lostness" (especially for Protestants), and papal infallibility (especially for Catholics). In this orientation, God's revelation is supracultural. This does not mean that it is acultural, but that "the sovereign God ordered the cultural circumstances, the prophetic and apostolic authors, and the linguistic forms in such a way that in both the revelation and the inscripturation his message was transmitted" (1989, 149). The biblical message and (particularly for Catholics) the later doctrinal expression of the faith is unique.

As Tracy suggests, the claims of culture, other religious ways and the social and information-related transformations of today's world are understood to have little or no inner-theological relevance (Tracy 1975, 24). Theology's task, rather, is to understand this unchanging, supracultural set of doctrines within the context of one's Church tradition, and to communicate it effectively to others. Communicating effectively is the task, then, of inculturation. The emphasis is "on taking the apostolic faith 'once for all entrusted to the saints' (Jude 3) and contextualizing (translating, interpreting, adapting, applying) that faith (body of truth) to the people of a respondent culture in such a way as to preserve as much of its original meaning as possible" (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989, 149; see also Bevans 1992, 30–46). Tracy points out how the First Vatican Council provides a "classical and sophisticated model" of the orthodox understanding of the theological task. One does not attempt to prove the mysteries of faith; they are simply given. But theology can understand these mysteries by holding up to them analogies from nature (or presumably various cultures or religious traditions and current movements in society), by showing how the mysteries are interconnected among themselves, and by trying to show

how they reflect the "final end" of humanity—that is by showing how a doctrine matches the deepest human needs and dreams (Tracy 1976, 24).

Notice that the possibilities of inculturation here are relatively minimal: doctrines can be translated into various human experiences and needs, but those experiences and needs have little or no effect on the shape of those doctrines or the development of further doctrinal clarity. In his 1991 encyclical on Mission, Pope John Paul II quotes with approval a definition of inculturation formulated several years previously: inculturation "means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (see John Paul II 1993, 52).

Hesselgrave and Rommen mention the late African theologian Byang H. Kato, Peruvian Samuel Escobar and North Americans Bruce J. Nichols and Tim Metheny among others—all Protestant Evangelicals—as theologians who do theology out of a basically orthodox orientation. I believe that the present pope, John Paul II, works out of the orthodox view as well, and most official documents on inculturation coming from Rome reflect the pope's view.

While all these sources acknowledge the importance of culture, and while for the most part they would acknowledge that at least some aspects of culture, cultural change and other religious ways are not only of utmost importance for *communicating* the Gospel but also good in themselves, they would shy away from seeing culture itself as holy, or as being capable of holding out new possibilities for doctrinal development. Orthodoxy, in sum, sees culture at best as a worthy vessel within which to pour the precious balm of the Gospel.

The Liberal Zone

Liberal theology is generally acknowledged to have begun with Schleiermacher at the end of the eighteenth century. The starting point of theology, Schleiermacher insisted, is not scriptural affirmations or dogmatic statements, but religious experience, and everything needs to be formulated in that light: theology is the "daughter of religion" (1981, 41). As theologians go about constructing their theology, Schleiermacher and his followers insisted, every possible human form of knowledge—philosophy, culture, history, science—is used to do it. Commitment "to that secular faith constitutive of the critical drive present in all modern science is at the heart of the liberal enterprise" (Tracy 1975, 26). There is at the heart of liberalism, therefore, a deep faith in the goodness of the human and in its capacity to lead to the truth. It "tends to accept all sincere strivings after, and expressions of truth of, truth as having validity" (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989, 146).

Despite Hesselgrave and Rommen's misgivings (1989, 146), liberal theologians are deeply committed to the claims and values of Christianity. "Their genius," says Tracy, "was precisely their frank and full admission" of the challenge of modern scientific and historical consciousness "and their willingness to reformulate the very task of Christian theology in accordance with it" (1975, 26). Their conviction is that, since Christianity is true in its basic vision, nothing truly human will betray that vision; on the contrary, contemporary historical methods, insights from particular cultures, riches from other religious perspectives can only deepen Christians' understanding of themselves and root them more firmly in their particular contexts. Like Vincent Donovan, liberal theologians would say that we do not really know what "the final and fundamental substance of the Christian message" (Donovan 1981, 26) is. This is

something that is to be discovered as Christians search their cultural milieus and as all cultures become evangelized. "Christian doctrine," therefore, "is constantly being reshaped according to contemporary human understandings and cultural preferences" (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989, 146). Theologians who share this liberal orientation see themselves as having much more freedom in the project of inculturation than those who share a more orthodox vision of Christianity.

Classical liberal theology found its expression in theologians like Ritschl, Harnack and Wieman, and it continues today in theologians who espouse what I have called the "anthropological model" of contextual theology (see Bevans 1992, 47–62). Hesselgrave and Rommen mention the work of the Indian Protestants M. M. Thomas, Stanley J. Samartha, Wesley Ariarajah, and of African Catholic theologian John S. Mbiti.

Others might be mentioned as well: Filipino Catholic theologians Leonardo Mercado and Dionisio Miranda, African American Protestant theologian Robert E. Hood, and the theologians involved in the Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia. Statements like those of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences breathe a liberal spirit when they speak of the threefold dialogue—with Asian religions, with Asian cultures and with the Asian poor—that must undergird any Asian theological reflection (see Rosales and Arévalo 1992). Hesselgrave and Rommen disapprovingly dub the inculturation developed by such liberal theologies as "syncretistic contextualization," but a number of other theologians have called for a reevaluation of syncretism not as "an aberration" but as "a natural occurrence" that "has become a point of departure both in the quest for interreligious dialogue and for what Christians now call 'inculturation'" (Starkloff 1994, 75; see also Schineller 1992 and Schreiter 1993).

The Neoorthodox Zone

While neoorthodox theology levels a strong critique against liberalism, it has more in common with the liberal vision of theology than it does with that of orthodoxy, and in a real way continues the liberal tradition. It was not a lack of regard for culture that impelled Barth to challenge the theology of his teachers; it was rather the power of culture to seduce theology away from the Gospel. A major point of agreement, therefore, between liberal and neoorthodox theologians is that the starting point for both is not Scripture or even tradition, but "the contemporary historical context in which we theologize" (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989, 154). Hesselgrave and Rommen make a distinction between neoorthodoxy (which seems to have a more Protestant spirit to it) and neoliberalism (which seems to be more Catholic in spirit), but the two are basically the same in method and in ultimate intent. This is why I prefer to speak, like Tracy, of neoorthodoxy alone. In any case, for this particular orientation to theology, "the biblical revelation of yesterday is a kind of compass, as it were, but we must chart our specific course on the basis of contemporary history" (1989, 154).

The neoorthodox critique of liberalism, says Tracy, is twofold. First, neoorthodox theologians point out that the liberal trust in the goodness of nature and of human possibilities does not take enough account of the radical negativity that runs through human existence, particularly that of human sinfulness. Culture may be basically good (some neoorthodox theologians would accept this, especially Catholics); it is simply romanticism, however, to ignore elements in it that not only do not promote life, but positively hinder it. Religious ways other than Christianity can give light to the human spiritual journey, but they remain only partial ways to understand God's fullness, and often distort it. Progress in society

is important, but one must always be suspicious of progress's beneficiaries. Secondly, neoorthodox theologians argue that liberal optimism ends only in a vacuous religiosity and a lazy pluralism. It betrays in a fundamental way the Christian conviction that God's grace and not human goodness is what is salvific in human life (Tracy 1975, 28). A neoorthodox orientation to theology, therefore, entails a "prophetic" approach to contextualization or inculturation. "Contextualization entails entering a cultural context, discerning what God is doing and saying in that context, and speaking and working for needed change" (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989, 150). In this way it is close to the mission of the Old Testament prophets, and to the mission of Jesus himself.

While theologians like Kosuke Koyama and Karl Rahner might be included in this zone, the neoorthox orientation is perhaps best expressed in two other rather different ways. A first way is that of liberation theology of all kinds: Latin American, Asian, African, African American, feminist, etc. (Tracy 1975, 30). While the liberation theologians recognize the importance of culture and of social change within that culture, their focus is on the negative, life-denying and enslaving elements within a particular context, be it economic dependency, racism, colonialism or kyriarchy. Protestants and Catholics are both well represented here. Gustavo Gutierrez, José Miguez Bonino, James Cone, Alois Pieris, Jean-Marc Elà, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rebecca Chop are just a few names of theologians from both traditions who have revolutionized theology in the last quarter century with a method that starts from experience and action and moves to new ways of expressing the Christian vision. Theology becomes inculturated in a particular situation since it emerges as a critical reflection on *praxis* (see Bevans 1992, 63–80).

A second group of theologians speak of the need to do theology as critical reflection in the context of Western, secularized culture. They too see the importance of culture for theology, but perhaps even more than the liberation theologians, are suspicious of it as a human reality. One of the most well-known of these theologians is the ethicist Stanley Hauerwas, who, together with his colleague William Willimon, speaks powerfully and eloquently of how the Church must recognize itself as a community of "resident aliens," a "colony of heaven" in a world that is hostile to the Gospel: "the very idea that Christians can be at home, indeed can create a home in this world, is a mistake" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1991, 421). Another major figure among these theologians is the British theologian Lesslie Newbigin. Newbigin has inspired theologians in both Britain and North America to begin regarding contemporary Western culture as one that needs to be challenged with the Gospel, which is always a counter-cultural message but particularly so in today's Western context. George Hunsberger and Craig van Gelder are the leaders of "The Gospel and Our Culture Network," which has taken up Newbigin's vision with particular vigor (see Hunsberger and van Gelder 1996). While the majority of these theologians are Protestant, and indeed, have come under some criticism from Catholics (see Coleman 1990), Catholics like Avery Dulles and William R. Burrows find themselves—often if not always—as kindred spirits.

The Revisionist Zone

David Tracy proposes a "revisionist" orientation to theology as the best way to understand the theological task in our postliberal, postmodern world. Theology, says Tracy, does not begin with scriptural texts or doctrinal formulations, as orthodoxy would propose, and attempt to make these relevant by translating them into categories of a particular culture or religious tradition. Nor, unlike liberal theology, does theology priv-

ilege experience (personal or cultural) and reinterpret the tradition of Christianity in its light. On the other hand, the human and the cosmic are to be valued in theological tradition; they are indeed sacramental, and true *loci theologici*. The two principle sources, therefore, for a theology that is both "appropriate" and "adequate" (Tracy 1975, 64–87) are "Christian texts" (by which he means all the "major expressions and texts of the Christian tradition") and "common human experience and language" (by which he means both personal and social experience [e.g., culture]).

Theology happens when these two sources are "correlated" in a "mutually critical" fashion. Paul Tillich proposed that theology is done as a correlation of "situation" and "message," but in a way that an analysis of the situation revealed the human questions to which the message was the answer. Tracy goes beyond Tillich's approach (which is basically a kind of "translation model") by saying that the correlation needs to be "mutually critical." In other words, the reflection on "Christian texts" may very well illumine or level critique at a particular cultural situation, religious tradition or social configuration. On the other hand, a particular human situation may open up new vistas in Christian understanding that were not possible before this particular encounter; or a particular cultural movement or religious tradition might find reason to critique common understandings as not really Christian at all. While in one particular situation—for example, that of contemporary secularization—the Christian tradition might witness to transcendent values and remind people of the deeply anti-individualist mentality of the Bible, Christian ecclesial practice might learn much by allowing itself to be critiqued by contemporary Western values of democracy and participation. It will be in this constant movement of mutual critique and appreciation, this revisionist orientation would argue, that the Gospel can truly become inculturated in particular contexts today.

In his explanation of the revisionist understanding of theology, Tracy mentions Protestant theologians like Langdon Gilkey and Van Harvey; he himself would subscribe to this revisionist view, as would, I believe, Filipino Catholic theologian José M. de Mesa and U.S. theologians Robert J. Schreiter, a Catholic, and Sallie McFague, a Protestant. A particularly fine statement about the nature of inculturation has been given by members of the Theological Advisory Commission (TAC) of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, the membership of which includes Japanese theologian Francis A. Kenrō Kumaki, Indonesian theologian Robert Hardawiryana and Indian theologian Felix Wilfred. As the TAC defines it, "Inculturation consists not only in the expression of the Gospel and the Christian faith through the cultural medium, but includes, as well, experiencing, understanding and appropriating them through the cultural resources of a people" (TAC, 50).

CONCLUSION

Catholics and Protestants do have different theological spirits, and those different spirits should affect their respective approaches to inculturation. However, to chart their actual theological practice, we need to speak about "something like 'zones'" (Marty 1987, 25). Certainly, Protestants and Catholics understand theological authority differently: Protestants tend to regard the Bible as the one authority for theology, whereas Catholics tend to regard biblical authority together with the authority of tradition. But some Protestants and Catholics would also consider human experience and human culture nearly equally—if not equally—valid theological sources, and others from both traditions would deny such an

idea as unthinkable for any kind of fidelity to Gospel or tradition. Some Catholics tend to be more bound to statements of the hierarchical Magisterium; others insist on interpreting them more freely. Some Protestants hold statements like those of the World Council of Churches or the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in high regard; others do not consider themselves bound by these in any way. Between some Catholics and some Protestants there is more similarity than difference, and sometimes that similarity across Churches is greater than within Churches. What I have proposed in this article is that, rather than look toward classical differences between Catholics and Protestants, even though these are still valid in some sense, we need to attend to the similarities-in-difference between them, and the differences-in-similarity in the midst of them.

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