

Karl Rahner, "Pluralism in Theology and the Oneness of the Church's Profession of Faith"

p 105 "In the old^y days, a person could operate on the assumption that he knew the position of the other side. He understood the other's position and he could explain why he did not accept it. When agreement could not be reached within this context of real (or presumed) mutual understanding, people shrugged their shoulders and accepted this simply as fact. If any explanation was offered for the failure to reach an agreement, it alluded to the difficulty of the material in question or (usually) to the stupidity of other theologians and the malevolence of the heretic."

Foregoing just part of a page.

p 109 After long list of causes

"We are encountering basic positions held by alien theologians, which do not spring from a shared horizon of fundamental understanding and which do not directly contradict our own theology. The disparity is not clear-cut, so that we cannot tackle it directly. In such cases we cannot adopt a clear yes or no toward the other side."

p. 111^v "The theologian often finds that he is faced with an entirely different complex of theological viewpoints, involving fundamental structures and perspectives that are quite different from the ones he is used to."

"Here too (from ^{the} layman) we confront an alien theology, and we soon realize that we have neither the time nor the ability to reconcile his theology with our own. His alien theology is influenced even more than ours, by personal experiences in life, by psychological factors, and by his intellectual and social milieu. These conditioning elements are quite different in the life of the professional theologian, and the resultant theological differences are^v not going to be resolved with a little dialogue or instruction."

".. we must ask ourselves some hard questions when we confront alien theologies. Does the cast of our theology display the same contingent elements that we found in the theology of the Catholic intellectual (cf above)? Does it contain gaps and loopholes that others find shocking? Are we unaware of them because we spend too much time talking to ourselves with a common terminology and within a common horizon of understanding?"

p 112 "The present state of theological pluralism signifies that man's burning quest for knowledge has come into its own. The individual Christian and the theologian want to know more, and the Church's theological awareness has suddenly come of age. Knowing this, the theologian should realize that he cannot simply accept or try to erase the present pluralism in theology. He should realize that it is part of the reality of the human condition, of man's historical and provisional nature. It cannot be overcome once for all time. It is something to be conquered ~~an~~ anew every day."

p 113 "Theological pluralism does not permit us to tolerate everything and everything."

"In rejecting a heterodox position, the Church does not rule ~~out~~ out a person's good faith or his chances for salvation; ~~nor~~ does it mean that these heterodox views cannot contribute in a positive way to the further development of the Church's understanding of the faith.

"Granting all that, we must still say that the way in which the Church exercises this right and this duty will have to take on a wholly new cast in the light of the new pluralism. This is the real question we are dealing with here. If the Church does take conscious note of the new pluralism, and if she realizes that it cannot be overcome in an instant, how can she reshape her way of preserving the oneness of her profession? It is a new question because pluralism itself is new and has a bearing on the way in which the Church and her magisterium will preserve the oneness of profession. My comments provide only a fragmentary approach to the answer."

p 115 "The grammar and vocabulary of ~~the~~ magisterial pronouncements hold primarily for the Church's creedal ~~profession~~ profession; they do not hold in the same pristine and obligatory way ~~as~~ for theologies as such. To be sure, the theologies have a continuing relationship to the doctrine of the magisterium, and hence to the ~~grammar and a~~ vocabulary and grammar employed by the magisterium. But today we must realize more clearly than before that it is the grammar of the Church's creedal profession more so than the ~~grammar~~ grammar of theology.

p 115 "In former days, people realized that this grammar had a history that pointed back toward the past, and that it came into being at some point in history. Today we must also take cognizance of the fact that this grammar also has a history that points toward the future-- at least so far as theology is concerned. (Attempts to present such theological concepts and their grammar as irreplaceable in the future -- such as we seem to find in Humani generis and Mysterium fidei -- are neither proper nor convincing)..

"Even if some such procedure were proper where our creedal /116/ profession was concerned (and we shall come back to this), it ~~is~~ does not hold true for theology and theologians. It is the fundamental right of theology as such to express the substance of its teachings, in so far as they are primarily theological, ~~it~~ in terms that are different from the formulations of the Church's magisterium. This, of course, does not mean that theology can pass over these official formulations and their grammar in complete silence, ~~or~~ that it is not bound to the real obligatory teaching~~s~~ contained in these formulations.

"For example, an updated theology of the Trinity might well explicate and elucidate the obligatory elements in the Church's teaching ~~teaching~~ without having "Three persons" and "one nature" as the central elements. The doctrine of original sin could be expressed in an orthodox and acceptable way~~s~~, without ever using the term "original sin." The latter after all fails to bring out the purely analogous relationship between personal and ^hinherited habitual sin."

p 117 "Our general predicament is this. On the one hand, our creedal profession must be formulated in some specific theological language; even the formulations of the magisterium use theology, a specific theology, to some extent. On the other hand, the commensurability of various theologies -- ie their convergence toward a unified creedal profession -- cannot be verified by the ~~xxx~~ individual."

".. the Church and her magisterium must give much more room to the individual theologies. She must give them the responsibility of making sure that they remain in accord with the Church's creedal profession, and that their interpretations preserve the profession rather than ~~xxxxx~~ destroy it."

".. the Church's magisterium too is faced with the consequences flowing from a pluralistic theological situation. On the one hand,

p 117 the magisterium may be guided by representatives of a specific theology. On the other hand, it may accord equal weight to the views of widely differing theologies; in this case, the insurmountable pluralistic situation in the Church will be mirrored in the magisterium itself. In either case, the Church must give much more responsibility to the theologies themselves than she has in the past. These theologies must see to it that they preserve our common credal profession.

"But we certainly cannot set down a priori norms that would tell us automatically when a theology is using its new-found responsibility correctly and when the magisterium has to step in and challenge ~~with~~ heterodoxy."

"Even in the latter case (heterodoxy), we can assume that it often will involve a matter of grammar and vocabulary rather than a /118/ matter of doctrine itself. The magisterium will be defining limits on an epistemological and sociological plane, even though its pronouncements may take the form of a declaration on doctrine itself. In other words, the magisterium will ~~not~~ really be saying this: 'You cannot talk like this in the Church without endangering your own faith or the faith of others and doing injustice to the doctrine involved.' After admonishing the theology in question ~~with~~ to respect the grammatical boundaries laid down, the Church will again leave it up to the theology to interpret our credal profession."

p 118 "... we may well have to assume that in the future the magisterium will not be able to formulate new emphatic doctrinal pronouncements. Why? Because the unity of theology, which is a presupposition for such pronouncements, is no longer present. In the future we may expect the magisterium to set limits from time to time, to protect and encourage the various theologies that are trying to give contemporary expression to our /119/ credal profession to view with favor the pluralistic situation, and to expand its traditional function by providing directives that will guide the Church, in a prophetic and evangelical way, through a new, concrete historical situation."

p 119 "The cessation of such dogmatic development need not represent an impoverishment of the Church's life of faith or a paralysis of her sensus fidei. It only means that the Church would concentrate more fully on the most central issues of the Christian faith, and the present spiritual situation of the world offers much induce-

ment for such concentration. Moreover, these central issues are being examined, interpreted, and made real by widely differing theologies."

p 119 "It is also clear that the existing dogmatic statements of the Church will serve a different function that they used to. They will no longer serve as a terminus a quo for the development of new dogmas within the framework of a unique theology. Instead they will serve as the given expression of a common credal profession, to which the many and varied theologies will relate."

p 121 "Common concrete activity (in the broadest sense) is not only the result of a shared conviction; it is also the way in which we fashion this common conviction and come to take cognizance of it. The maintenance and verification of credal oneness amid theological pluralism depends in no small measure but not entirely on the fact that this oneness is made real and operative in deeds. In deeds we will find a oneness that can never be provided by concepts alone."

"Verification of credal oneness will always remain a human process. It will never be fully achieved once for all time; it will always involve an element of longing and hope. If we wish to achieve credal oneness and to verify it, then we must utter the profession together, concretely celebrate the death of the Lord together, execute the sacraments together, and engage in joint activity in the world. Through these activities, the oneness and sameness of our credal profession will become real, whatever pluralism may exist in theology."

p 121 "In the light of what has been said, we might well ask this question: Is it possible that, unnoticed by us, the theologies of the separated churches have largely converged into the theological pluralism that should really be found within the one united church? The reason is not simply that these theologies have undergone further development since the reformation -- a fact alluded to by all. On a deeper level, it is because they now occupy a different place of importance in the credal outlook of their individual Churches. In other words, they now are ~~put~~ put at a greater distance from credal profession in every Church, and are viewed in a larger context which leaves room for the legitimate coexistence of many theologies.

In this new context, the theologies of the various Churches may no longer be incompatible to any great extent. Perhaps we may