

Embrace of An Old Catholic Theological Perspective

Hermeneutic, not fundamentalist: Thus, the Old Catholic theology is orthodox. But why, then, does it look so liberal? Precisely because it approaches the orthodox faith in a hermeneutic way. Hermeneutics is the art of translating. Not accommodating and adapting, but translating, re-telling. Classical doctrines are not adapted to modern times, but the classical doctrines are proclaimed in and for this time. The opposite of a hermeneutical approach is a fundamentalist one. Fundamentalism is a 'modern' invention.

Fundamentalism treats the classical doctrines in the manner of rationalism. That is why it puts creationism and the theory of evolution over against each other. Or that is why it puts so-called literary biblical passages over against a contemporary way of living a homosexual life. Fundamentalism is modern rationalism disguised as quasi-biblical and quasi-traditional words and ideas. This way of 'literal' Bible reading is not orthodox and has never (and certainly not exclusively) been applied in the Christian tradition before the modern era. Old Catholic theology is not liberal but orthodox and at the same time not fundamentalist but hermeneutic. It is important to be hermeneutic in such a way, that hermeneutics is not the back door through which we at last still end up in liberal theology. As an example: Theologizing about the ordination of women, you can lay the emphasis on societal changes or a changed interpretation of the ordained ministry. I think the Old Catholic way of theologizing would rather explain the ordination of women from within the context of classical theology. To me, the soundest explanation starts from the fact that the incarnation did not imply God becoming 'male' but 'human', and from the fact that Christ-likeness is sacramentally conveyed by baptism and chrismation to both men and women. If the most fundamental Christ-likeness, the soteriological meaning of the incarnation does not limit itself to men, how could ordination to the ministry within this soteriological reality (the church) be confined to men?

The Christian tradition is rich and multi-faceted enough to be interpreted creatively in and for the present time. This creative re-telling (hermeneutics) of the classical faith (orthodoxy) is the relevance and challenge of doing Old Catholic theology.

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