

# Concordia Theological Monthly



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# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

## THE CHURCH AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN CYPRUS

*Theology Today* (October 1958) points out that the Greek Catholic Church cannot establish its innocence of the civil violence in Cyprus despite its request to the W. C. C. for prayers to find a "rapid, just, and peaceful settlement." The W. C. C. at Geneva promised the Archbishop of Athens to grant his petition. Upon this, however, the writer in *Theology Today* comments: "There is no record that at any time since violence first began on Cyprus the Greek Church or any of its leaders has spoken against the use of murder as a political weapon. Death and grave injury have come to Turkish policemen, whose duties were ordinary police duties and in no way political, by the action of Greek Cypriots, but the Archbishop was silent and the Church was silent. It is only the violence and death that the Greek Cypriots have at last (after several years) called down upon themselves that the Churches of the world are to pray about." Upon the petition of Bishop Anthimos, the acting ethnarch of Cyprus, that the W. C. C. "use its high influence so that an end may be put to this unbearable situation," the writer comments: "The bishop himself is claimed by the British to be actively implicated in the Greek Cypriot campaign of bushwhacking which has persisted for so long. It is only Turkish bushwhacking which he finds 'unbearable.' There would have been a great deal more sympathy for these appeals by Christian men to Christian men if those who made the appeals had at any time in recent years responded to the pleadings of Christian men that they publicly deplore the long succession of murders and attempted murders carried out by their followers. Their blunt refusal to do so has identified them with the acts which brought about a state of virtual civil war in Cyprus." The writer closes with the remark that the archbishops in more ways than one are "all mixed up."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE NEW TESTAMENT

Under this general heading the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (October 1958) offers a summary of an article by J. A. O'Flynn, "New Testament and Mythology," on the subject, which appeared in the *Irish Theological Quarterly* (24, 1—12; 109—121). To Protestants the summary is interesting because it points out the Roman Catholic view of Bultmann's method. We read:

For Bultmann God's saving act, the "Christ-event," centers around the Cross and Resurrection. B. distinguishes the bare historic fact of

the Cross (*historisches Ereignis*) from its *geschichtliches* and *eschatologisches* aspect, whereby it becomes for men an ever-present reality, a salvation-event, mediating to the believer God's liberating judgment. This saving significance of the Cross lies beyond the reach of rational proof and objective demonstration, and thus of criticism; it is contained solely in the preaching of the Word of God, confronting the individual with the challenge to decide for or against it, to accept or reject. Hence for the old "mythical" categories of redeeming sacrifice, ransom, satisfaction, etc., we must substitute the idea of encounter, confrontation, and decision. How exactly does the Cross as preached mediate saving virtue to us? "The Cross, properly understood, . . . reveals to us at once the full extent of our fallen condition as sinners subject to the powers of the world and our utter incapacity to rise above that condition by reliance merely on our powers; to that extent it is a judgment of condemnation. . . . But it is also a liberating judgment because . . . it also makes known that what we cannot do for ourselves God does for us when, in the encounter with the Christian message, the believer takes the decision to throw himself open to the love of God" (pp. 10—12). The Resurrection is intimately linked with the Cross in the saving message of preaching—not as a historical miraculous proof of the virtue of the Cross, but simply as the expression of its significance, viz., Christ's death is not to be considered as a mere ordinary human death, but as God's liberating judgment on the world, depriving death of its power.

For B. the Resurrection is not a historical event; its place in the Christian message is to present the Cross of Christ as the salvation-event, not merely a condemnatory, but also a liberating, judgment. To the same eschatological salvation-event pertain the word of preaching, the apostolic preacher, even the Church in which the word is proclaimed. Faith rests on no signs; it is *nuda fides*, a heroic decision to appropriate the salvation-event, God's approach to man by Christ. B.'s views, for all that they impoverish the Christian message, have aroused wide interest, partly because his intentions are good, partly because the problems he raises are important, viz., the nature of divine revelation and its relation to history. Yet Protestant reaction generally has been unfavorable; demythologizing is a threat to the basic salvation facts of the NT kerygma. Though B. regards the actual problem of the notion of myth as secondary, his choice of the term is unfortunate: [the] NT uses *mythos* to denote speculations out of harmony with sound doctrine. The problem of so-called "mythical elements" in Scripture is nothing new for Catholic scholarship; due attention to the "analogy of being" and analogical language generally, makes the alleged incompatibility of the NT presentation with modern man's outlook much less formidable. Though B. does

not, as some allege, deny all objective reality to the divine intervention in Christ, his postulate that "the Christian Easter faith is not interested in the historical question" is completely contrary to NT evidence; his exegesis is often quite arbitrary, governed as it is by the postulates of his system.

The summary closes with a statement which to Lutherans does not make sense since to them saving faith rests upon the objective Gospel promises. We read: "However, his demythologizing is essentially linked with the Reformers' theology—a 'requirement of faith itself'; the crisis provoked by him in Protestant theology is insoluble on the principles of that theology."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

"AN ANSWER TO PETER BRUNNER"

Under this heading Hans Asmussen, in the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (Nov. 15, 1958), replies to Brunner's sharp criticism of the composite volume *Katholische Reformation* (cf. CTM, Dec., 1958), of which Asmussen was one of the authors. According to Asmussen, Brunner failed to grasp some of the important points made in that book; for instance, when he speaks of the need of a mere reform in the case of the Roman Catholic Church but of the need of a reformation in the case of the Lutheran Church. Asmussen takes occasion to express his preference for the Roman Catholic Church to most of the churches in the World Council of Churches by enumerating the following points: the real presence in Holy Communion, the office of the ministry, and the efficacy of the Word and the liturgy (*ritus*), in all of which he believes the Roman Catholic Church to be closer to the Lutheran than are most of the churches in the World Council of Churches. In the latter he senses a concentration of antichristianity in conflict with Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession. This moves him to say: "Why should I deny that I am drawn thither, where one is not ashamed of the martyrs?" He regards the differences between himself and Brunner sufficiently important to call for a discussion face to face.

The most important question is: How close is Rome to the Lutheran Church with respect to the doctrine of justification by faith? Where this question is ignored nothing else matters. L. W. SPRIZ

BRIEF ITEMS FROM NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*Turku, Finland.*—The Church Assembly, legislative organ of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, postponed action here on the knotty problem of admitting women to the ministry. By a vote of 75 to 45, delegates to the quinquennial conference recommitted the issue

to a special committee for further study and report to the church's next assembly in 1963. The committee has been studying the question for the past five years.

Expressing its opposition to placing women on an equal footing with men as pastors, the committee recommended instead that women be given a special ecclesiastical status. Under its proposal, women who are theological graduates would be eligible for ordination as "curates" or "vice pastors" and would be permitted to engage in all regular congregational duties except administering the Sacraments. In unusual circumstances, however, with the approval of the cathedral chapter, women would be allowed to give Communion to persons in hospitals and prisons who cannot attend regular church services.

A high proportion of women are studying at the theological faculties of the Finnish Church, 91 at Helsinki, and six at Turku, it was reported, but the number has dropped over recent years from 33½ per cent to 28 per cent of the enrollment. It was also reported that of the 252 women theological graduates now in Finland only 42 are directly employed in the service of the church. Another 51 are married to pastors. Of the rest, 32 work for various religious organizations, and 110 are employed in schools.

*Strasbourg, France.*—The next general assembly of the Lutheran World Federation will be held in the summer of 1963 at Helsinki, Finland, the federation's executive committee decided here, October 30. Acting on a recommendation of the LWF officers, the committee accepted an invitation from the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and agreed that 1963 would be better than the originally planned time, the summer of 1962. The officers had pointed out that the next assembly of the World Council of Churches is scheduled for Ceylon in the New Year period of 1961—1962.

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

*Rome.*—Italy's Constitutional Court ruled here that non-Catholic religious groups in this country may open churches, oratories, and other places of worship from now on without prior government permission. The issue was raised before the court by the Rev. Francesco Rauti, an Assemblies of God minister, who allegedly had been harassed by local authorities for opening places of worship without previous authorization. Three lawyers appeared before the court and claimed for evangelicals the right of "strict application of constitutional principles" granting freedom of religion to all groups.

The court held that the prior permission demanded by a decree issued in 1930 under the former Fascist regime violated Article 19

of the Republican constitution, which says that all people have the right freely to practice their religion in any form. This article, the court stated, said that all individuals or groups may spread their beliefs and follow them, in private or public, provided their rites are not contrary to public morals.

The court rejected, at the same time, the principle that the appointment of non-Catholic ministers must be approved by the government because they perform marriage and other ceremonies, which must have the force of official acts.

*Geneva.*—Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist of Geneva, executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, wired the federation's "warmest greetings" to Bishop Zoltan Kaldy upon his installation as head of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church in Hungary. At the same time he accused Hungary's Communist government of intervention in religious affairs. "The prayers of the church go with you," Dr. Lund-Quist assured Bishop Kaldy. He added, however, that the LWF regarded the removal of former Bishop Lajos Ordass, one of Hungary's staunchest anti-Communist religious leaders, as a "unilateral government act in displacing the Lutheran leader who was trusted by the Church."

Dr. Ordass was "requested" by the Church Council of the Southern District last June to relinquish his post, five months after the Budapest Radio announced he had had to "resign" as the church's presiding bishop because he found himself in "complete isolation, due to his policy of non-co-operation with the government."

Bishop Kaldy, a 39-year-old bachelor, was elected to his new office last October with the approval of the Communist government. He had been senior pastor at Pecs since 1954 and was said to have enjoyed a wide popularity among his fellow ministers. In his installation sermon the bishop promised "to do everything possible in my position so that good relations between our Lutheran Church and the Hungarian People's Republic may be further developed," the LWF news bulletin reported. It quoted from *Evangelikus Elet*, official publication of the Hungarian Church.

Bishop Kaldy, the bulletin said, stated that his church must take part "wholeheartedly and joyfully" in the work of the Lutheran Federation and the World Council of Churches. However, it added, he urged these bodies to free themselves from the temptation to see Hungarian churches "through certain persons' eyes." This, said the bulletin, was an allusion to Dr. Ordass and some of his associates who found it impossible to come to terms with the Communist regime.

Voicing regret that "during the past two years our churches did not receive from the LWF such spiritual support as could have enabled them to solve our problems here," Bishop Kaldy meanwhile expressed gratitude for the material help given to Hungarian Lutherans both by the LWF and the World Council of Churches. He pledged himself to do everything possible so that "members of our Lutheran Church may be faithful sons of our nation and good citizens of our country."

"God is at work," the bishop declared, "even in the Socialist order and through its representatives. Christians are free to co-operate with everybody in the best things. Certainly we want to help our nation, with every means and in everything good, to develop Socialism."

*Thousand Oaks, Calif.*—A new \$15 million Lutheran university here will be named Ventura University after the county in which it will be situated. The name was selected by the board of governors of the California Lutheran Educational Foundation, which is composed of representatives of five Lutheran denominations supporting the institution.

While the entire campus will not be completed for 15 years, the first section, to cost \$4,000,000 will be opened in 1961 or 1962. The completed university will cover 206 acres 45 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Supporting the university are the Augustana, Evangelical, American, United Evangelical, and United Lutheran churches.

*Munich, Germany.*—A move to increase dissemination of literary works by and about Martin Luther was announced at the annual meeting of the Martin Luther Association here. The society also re-elected as its president Dr. Paul Althaus of Erlangen University. A prominent Lutheran theologian, he has held the office since 1927.

Founded at Wittenberg on Reformation Day in 1918 by Rudolf Eucken, noted German philosopher, the association endeavors to promote a better understanding of Martin Luther and his works. Toward this purpose the group publishes several periodicals containing the latest findings of Luther research.

The association suspended activities during World War II but was reactivated in Hamburg in 1953.

*Washington, D. C.*—The United States Supreme Court ruled here that a wife may not be permitted to testify in court against her husband, even if she wants to. In a unanimous opinion delivered by Associate Justice Hugo L. Black the court held that to do so would jeopardize the sanctity of marriage.

U. S. courts have long followed the common law rule that husbands or wives may not be compelled by a court to testify against each other.

The Department of Justice in connection with a Mann Act case in Alabama, however, had asked the Supreme Court to approve voluntary testimony of a wife.

"The basic reason of law for refusing to pit wife against husband was a belief that such a policy was necessary to foster family peace," Justice Black said, "not only for the benefit of husband, wife, and children, but for the benefit of the public as well."

"Such a belief has never been unreasonable and is not now," said the Justice.

"It is hard to see how family harmony would be less disturbed by a wife's voluntary testimony against her husband than by that which is compelled," he observed. "In truth, it seems that more bitterness would be engendered by voluntary testimony."

"The Government argues," Justice Black said, "that the fact that a husband or wife testifies against the other voluntarily is strong evidence that the marriage is already gone. But not all marital flare-ups in which one spouse wants to hurt the other are permanent. The widespread success achieved by courts throughout the country in conciliating family differences is a real indication that some apparently broken homes can be saved provided no unforgivable act is done by either party. Adverse testimony given in criminal proceedings would, we think, be likely to destroy almost any marriage."

*Birmingham, Ala.*—Traditional separation of church and state would be jeopardized by the election of a Roman Catholic as President of the U. S., the Alabama State Baptist Convention said in a resolution adopted at its annual meeting here.

The "fundamental position" of Southern Baptists on separation of church and state "and religious freedom of all citizens" would be endangered, the resolution said, "by the election of an individual as President of the U. S. whose religion teaches him his church should be supported by the state and be above the state." It asked that "this matter of such serious religious concern be dramatically called to the attention of those in national political leadership." Southern Baptist leaders in the field of national political affairs were asked "to give vigorous and timely expression" to the Baptist position.