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RELIGION, STATE and SOCIETY

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Editorial

Martin Luther taught that through his 'twofold governance' God not only renews individuals directly by means of the Spirit but also works through human institutions to achieve his will. In Luther's opinion God's spiritual and temporal governance and the human institutions employed for this task are not dualistically opposed to each other but complementary and interrelated.

In his book *Two Kingdoms: the Use and Misuse of a Lutheran Theological Concept* Ulrich Duchrow tells us that Luther himself never formulated any systematic 'doctrine' concerning 'two kingdoms', but that it was in the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany that a dualistic interpretation of Luther's teachings on this subject began to prevail, finding full expression in the liberal Lutheranism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Luther's thinking is 'unmistakably multi-dimensional and complementary', says Duchrow, 'locating dualism in the proper place', that is 'in the struggle against the power of evil in every sphere of life.' The new liberal Lutheranism, however, saw 'Christianity as restricted to the personal, inner sphere; the preacher is forbidden to comment on political matters.' A quotation from one of the later works of Friedrich Naumann is representative: 'I vote and recruit support for the German navy, not because I am a Christian, but because I am a citizen, and because I have learned not to apply the Sermon on the Mount to basic questions of concern to the state.'

It was in the 1930s that the term 'the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms' became fixed in use, as German Lutherans of the new 'liberal' persuasion made use of a political interpretation of this doctrine to justify National Socialism. To counter the influence of these 'German Christians' the Barmen Theological Declaration, drafted originally by Karl Barth, was adopted by the 139 delegates to the First Confessing Synod of the German Protestant Church in 1934. The second of the six 'theses' of this Declaration stated that 'we repudiate the false teaching that there are areas of our life in which we belong not to Jesus Christ but to another Lord'; but as Günter Krusche relates in this issue of *RSS* 'German Christian' spokesmen retorted by giving thanks for Hitler as, in Luther's words, a 'pious and faithful ruler'.

Krusche is sad to note that the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms has subsequently tended to be seen as an 'accommodating' ideology rather than a 'confessing' Christianity, especially when contrasted to the Reformed doctrine of the Sovereignty of Christ. Throughout the 1960s the Theological Commission of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) wrestled with the problems raised by the doctrine; in the 1970s this task became even more important since 'profound crises and tensions' (in Duchrow's words) about the role of the church in the world were evident in the LWF itself and in Lutheran churches in several countries: Ethiopia, Namibia, South Africa, Chile, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic.

It is clear that since the Second World War the problem of the role of the church in the world has been posed in a particularly acute form in the communist countries. In this issue of *RSS* we are publishing four of the papers presented at a conference last year on the Lutheran experience of communism. The contributions show that the 'doctrine of the Two Kingdoms' has had both a negative and a positive influence in

defining the church's role.

Günter Krusche argues that the very conscious task the Protestant Church in the GDR set itself to 'remain the church' while both rejecting the role of political opposition and resisting marginalisation was clearly in the context of the 'Two Kingdoms' doctrine, and that it is precisely a pietistic withdrawal of Christian faith to the inner personal sphere that is *rejected* by the doctrine. The doctrine

> makes all realms of life subject to God. There can be no question of this implying an arbitrary realm in which the Christian can do or not do whatever he or she wills: nor does it support withdrawal into the spiritual as the only area that counts. For Luther there is no dichotomy between the realms.

Church people in the GDR certainly made mistakes. 'But of one thing we can be certain despite constant assertions to the contrary: the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms was not used as a pretext for concessions to the state.'

Meanwhile, as the Southern Lutheran Diocesan Council of Hungary has admitted in its Declaration of 1990, 'Our church became the servant of this regime instead of pursuing its prophetic mission ... This was allowed to happen because a tentative consensus prevailed which found all to be in order and also theologically justified.' (See the article by Robert Patkai.) András Reuss indicates that the problem for the Lutheran Church in Hungary derived from that same insight perceived by Krusche as part of a correct understanding of the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms: that God has power over all, and hence that even those who do not believe in God nevertheless have to serve him if he so wills. The Persian King Cyrus was after all 'anointed' of God for the sake of Israel. Reuss argues that Hungarian Lutherans were overenthusiastic and too uncritical in their acceptance of this insight. 'The possibility of receiving good gifts from evil people was taken almost for granted, as was God's willingness to work for us just as he did for Israel through Cyrus.'

Reuss distinguishes as a separate problem for the Lutheran Church in Hungary during the communist period the temptation to a pietism which implied detachment from the secular world. We have seen earlier that it was just this detachment which characterised the 'liberal' Lutheranism of the late nineteenth century. 'The historical development by which the pietistic elements gradually merged into the evolving forms of the "doctrine of the two kingdoms" has not yet been adequately studied,' says Duchrow. The Hungarian and East German experiences would seem to indicate that an inclination towards pietism was not in fact the main feature of the Two Kingdoms doctrine which was relevant in the process of defining church–state relations in those countries under communism.

Anguish within the Lutheran Church over the Two Kingdoms doctrine and its implications is no doubt a healthy phenomenon, and part of what Krusche sees as 'one of the permanent features of Protestant social ethics', that is, 'attempting to determine the relationship between church and state or between church and society.' By contrast, 'the Orthodox tradition lacks an effective political vocabulary to distinguish between the separate spheres of state and society.' This is one of the reasons adduced by Richard Sakwa in his article in this issue of *RSS* to account for the failure of Christian Democracy in Russia to develop into a significant political force. In his 1992 article 'Christian Democracy in Russia' (*RSS* Vol. 20, No. 2, 1992, pp. 135–68) Sakwa noted that 'Christian Democracy has emerged as one of the major currents in post-communist life' and saw the potential basis for its growth as the decline of most forms of social legitimation in Russia. He saw a possible contribution from a Russian

form of Christian Democracy in mediating between what we might in shorthand call the 'collective' and the 'individual': the Russian Christian Democratic Movement, he noted, 'has tried to steer its own path between, on the one hand, the decayed communist regime and its dangerous illusions and, on the other, what was perceived as the national nihilism of the left radical westernising democrats.'

In his second article on the subject, in this issue of *RSS*, Sakwa describes a situation in which these hopes have so far not been realised. One factor, which has affected the development of all political parties and especially those with a democratising agenda, has been a change in the political atmosphere: a growth in antiwesternising attitudes amongst the Russian political elite since mid-1992, and the 'partial rejection of the global democratising project' signified by the elections of December 1993. However, Christian Democracy in Russia has also had its own specific problems, some of which are connected with its relationship with Russian Orthodoxy. In its Western European version Christian Democracy has located itself in the concept of civil society; in Russia this possibility is subverted to the extent that any Christian Democratic grouping has sought to identify itself with the Russian Orthodox Church: '... the implicit antistatism of the movement runs counter to Orthodox traditions and the postcommunist project of resurrecting Russian statehood.' As Aleksandr Shchipkov points out in his article in this issue of *RSS*, in the St Petersburg Christian Democratic Union there are virtually no members who are established practising Orthodox: they are neophytes, Protestants and even sympathetic unbelievers.

Sakwa perceives that the Russian Orthodox Church is in a paradoxical position in postcommunist Russia: it 'is one of the most important bodies in civil society today, but is associated with patterns of behaviour that undermine civil society.' Perhaps symptomatic of this dualism is the church's unease when it comes to endorsing any kind of political activity. Patriarch Aleksi has more than once asserted that the role of the church is to reconcile and mediate, and that the priority for Orthodox clergy must be pastoral work rather than political involvement. In this issue of *RSS* we are publishing some of the documents produced during the controversy over the defrocking of the priest Fr Gleb Yakunin. Fr Gleb argues eloquently that his activity is quite canonical; at the same time it is clear that his defrocking was carried out in the context of a Holy Synod decision taken in October 1993 to forbid clergy of all ranks to stand for political office. All the priests who were being put forward as candidates were given an option by the Synod either to withdraw their candidature or to run as laymen — which meant defrocking. All the priests except Fr Gleb chose the first option.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the defrocking of an individual priest, however, the central issues raised by Fr Gleb, concerning needful renewal and revitalisation of the Orthodox Church, merit serious attention. While the church claims to be 'keeping out of politics', argues Fr Gleb, it is in fact presiding over a resurgence of intolerant statist nationalism whose proponents claim that they are champions of Orthodoxy. Fr Gleb is concerned that the church is failing in its responsibilities not so much through taking the wrong action or making the wrong statements as through failing to act or speak at all.

September 1994   Philip Walters

Notes on contributors

Günter Krusche was born in 1931. He studied theology at Leipzig University and from the late 1950s taught at a seminary for preachers in Saxony. From 1974 he lectured in practical theology in Berlin. From 1977 to 1984 he was moderator of the Commission on Studies of the Lutheran World Federation and from 1978 to 1983 he was a member of the WCC Programme of Theological Education. From 1983 to 1993 he was regional bishop of Berlin.

Robert Patkai is president of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain with special responsibility for ecumenical activities and a lecturer in the History of the Reformation at Mill Hill Missionary College.

Paul Philippi of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, lives in Sibiu. He is president of the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania.

András Reuss was born in 1938. From 1961 he served as pastor in various Lutheran parishes in Hungary. From 1973 to 1984 he was Secretary for Foreign Affairs for the church. In 1989 he became professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Budapest and dean of the seminary in 1992. In 1991 he was cochairman of the Synod of the Lutheran Church in Hungary.

Richard Sakwa is Senior Lecturer in the Government and Politics of Russia at the University of Kent in Canterbury. He is the author of *Soviet Communists in Power: Moscow during the Civil War, 1918–21* (1988), *Soviet Politics* (1989) and *Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985–1990* (1990). He is currently preparing a book on the problems of democratisation in Russia.

Aleksandr Shchipkov was expelled from the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages in 1978, joined the Christian Seminar led by Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, and worked as a manual labourer. He is now a journalist specialising in church–state relations and the political involvement of Christians in Russia. He is writing a book on Christian Democracy.

Gleb Yakunin is an Orthodox priest and former prisoner of conscience as a result of his work on behalf of the rights of religious believers in the Soviet Union. Since his release in 1987 he has been active on the democratic wing of Russian politics. He was defrocked at the end of 1993 for his political involvement. He is now a member of the Russian Duma.