

Documents

Hungarian Lutheran Controversy

In his open letter of 10 July 1984, sent from West Germany to the General Secretary and Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, Zoltán Dóka, a Hungarian Lutheran pastor, criticises Diakonia Theology, which has become the "official and mandatory theology" of his church, and Bishop Káldy personally for the allegedly autocratic style in which he runs the church. The letter was circulated among journalists attending the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation held in Hungary from 22 July to 5 August 1984.** The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr Carl Mau, said at a press conference on 26 July that he and others often received letters criticising one or another church leader, and inasmuch as it was not LWF policy to publicise such attacks, the existence of the letter and its contents would not be publicised by the LWF. He found himself wondering why the letter had arrived at the Assembly at this particular time: the new president of the LWF was to be elected on 31 July, and Bishop Káldy was known to be one of the candidates. He said that the question of Diakonia Theology ought to be discussed by the LWF, but that such a discussion needed to be "depoliticised". In response to the continuing interest of journalists in the topic Bishop Káldy himself attended a press conference on 27 July and read out a prepared statement on the Dóka letter. He maintained that this was not the best time for a discussion on Diakonia Theology, and stated that Pastor Dóka's allegations against himself personally were "simply untrue", and arose out of Dóka's*

own personal disappointments over his failure to gain promotion in the church. By 30 July, the delegates to the Assembly had heard of the controversy, and began questioning the LWF's handling of the issue. A delegate from Denmark, Bishop Ole Bertelsen asked why delegates had received a copy of Bishop Káldy's response to the letter, as read out at the press conference, when they had not received a copy of Dóka's original letter. Dr Mau defended the distribution of Káldy's response, saying that Dóka's letter had previously been widely publicised and circulated. He added that the fact that the Assembly was being held in a socialist country had aroused additional interest in the whole matter. "Rumours started to spread," said Dr Mau, and controversy "attracts the greatest interest among journalists". The decision had therefore been made to share with delegates what Káldy had told the press. He added that reproducing the ten-page Dóka letter and translating it into English would have taxed the Assembly's document facilities.

On 31 July, in a packed and sometimes tense press conference, East European church leaders from Hungary, Poland and Estonia defended their church life and theology against what they described as a "defamation campaign". On the same day, Bishop Káldy was elected President of the LWF. In his brief acceptance speech he made reference to the degree to which he had "suffered . . . from prejudice and slander," but promised to "forget what is behind."

On 21 August, Dóka returned to Hungary, and was suspended without pay from his official duties by Bishop Káldy, who was said to be gathering signatures from priests in Hungary supporting his own action. Church legal proceedings against Dóka were

*See RCL Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 130-48.

**See RCL Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 333-35.

threatened, on the grounds that he was suspected of having violated certain aspects of the fundamental law of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, probably that he had "committed an act in violation of the penal code", "given evidence of disobedience or disrespect towards church authorities", and "given evidence of an attitude not compatible with his office or calling, or violated his obligations arising from that". The Dean of Pest District, László Keveházi, under whose jurisdiction Dóka comes, criticised Dóka in the Hungarian Lutheran weekly *Evangélikus Élet* (Lutheran Life). Pastor Dóka wrote a rebuttal, but the editor, György Mezösi, declined to publish it, saying that if he did, he would also be obliged to publish letters accusing Dóka of being "envious, ill-

Zoltán Dóka
Pastor of the Lutheran congregation at Hévízgyörk

Open letter to President Josiah Kibira, General Secretary Carl Mau, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Executive Committee, and to all those in the LWF who feel a sense of responsibility for the Hungarian Lutheran Church.

Dear Brothers:

Forgive me for burdening you with my letter. My conscience compels me to do so. I consider it my duty to report to you without delay something which many people in the Hungarian Lutheran Church think but dare not say openly. I ask you, therefore, to take into consideration the pressing responsibility which I feel before God for the Hungarian Lutheran Church and which I express here.

Up to the present day the leadership of the Hungarian Lutheran Church (hereafter HLC) has misled the world Lutheran community by stating that its pastors and congregations uniformly confess the so-called *Diakonia* Theology (hereafter DT). The truth is that the concept of DT has not yet reached the consciousness of the congregations, and only a minority of pastors approve of it. Most of those who approve do so only out of personal interest or fear, and only in a public capacity. In confidential circles, however, they criticise and reject the concept. This rift is one of the most characteristic and saddest aspects of the spiritual and theological situation of the HLC.

In the following paragraphs I would like

willed, uninformed and sick." We are publishing below a copy of Keveházi's article, and of Dóka's reply.

By the beginning of November, however, the news came that charges against Dóka had been dropped. In October, the Pest Deanery had been presented with three motions: to condemn Dóka's action; to condemn the content of his letter; and to express confidence in Bishop Káldy. All three motions failed to win majorities (the first by 7 ayes, 1 nay and 14 abstentions, the second by 6 ayes, 2 nays and 14 abstentions, and the third by 8 ayes, 1 nay and 13 abstentions.) Dean Keveházi, for his part, had been so overwhelmed by criticisms levelled at him for his anti-Dóka article that he withdrew from any further involvement in the matter.

to shed light on the true situation of the HLC, as one who for decades, to the present day, has been a direct witness to all that has happened and is happening in the HLC. I shall do this in connection with three questions:

1. What are the main reasons for the inner rift within the church?
2. What has led to the present situation?
3. What are the chief characteristics of the present situation?

1. What are the main causes of the inner rift within the church?

- (a) the errors of DT and
- (b) the practical application of DT by the church leadership.

(a) It is common knowledge that "diakonia" is not the central theological concept of the New Testament, either in the synoptic gospels, or in the Johannine or Pauline literature. This bare fact makes it doubtful whether one is free to build up a theological concept which emphatically describes itself as biblical, on one individual peripheral New Testament idea. It is much more important to recognise that "diakonia" is a formal concept in the New Testament which can suggest entirely differing things, from service at table to the redeeming service of Jesus. But precisely because of this there is a danger that these different concepts might become mingled in a theologically inconsequential and illegitimate way, so that they are placed in the same category. In my opinion this is happening in DT. As an illustration of this, I would like to refer to one view of the nature of the church.

To the question of what the task of the church in the world is, DT gives the following answer: The task of the church is the proclamation of the gospel, together with the distribution of sacraments, and the practice of diakonia. With regard to the latter, it is specially emphasised that it is not enough for diakonia to deal only with individuals, and that it must extend to the burning questions both of one's own society and of the whole of humanity. In itself this can only provoke approval. But given this definition, it immediately appears puzzling — especially to Lutheran ears — that one has to make special mention of diakonia, when it is simply a result, an ethical consequence, in the life of those who answer "Yes" in faith to the gospel. DT, however, again and again emphasises that diakonia is not merely the fruit of a faith awakened through the gospel, but is also independent from the gospel, ranked equally with the gospel as the peculiar task of the church. Such differentiation is justified by saying that in the synoptic gospels Jesus sent out his disciples not only to proclaim the approach of the Kingdom of God, but also to exorcise demons and cure the sick. There is no need to comment in more detail about the correctness of this interpretation to those who are at all familiar with New Testament exegesis.

On the basis of the above-mentioned definition, the thesis of the Augsburg Confession "about the church" has often been criticised as one which must be filled out with the task of practising diakonia. It is said that neither Melanchthon* nor Luther gave a complete answer to the question of what the task of the church should be, because both held the proclamation of the word as the sole treasure and task of the church. But I am convinced that the "amplified gospel" is the fundamental error of DT and at the same time is, properly speaking, an erroneous teaching of church history. This false theology makes no distinction between the acts of God and the acts of men, but mixes them and makes them appear equal. When Bishop Káldy repeatedly stresses: "that church which only proclaims the gospel is not a church", it is apparent that DT subordinates the gospel to diakonia, or to a socio-ethical concept. This ethical-ideological

construction, however, robs the gospel of the final gracious Word of God for sinners, of its independent freedom from every human activity, and thus weakens it.

Simultaneously, the free Christian act is deprived of its well-spring and is deformed into justice through works and piety through service. This false theological basis of DT makes the theological thinking and preaching of the clergy uncertain, and this uncertainty continues to have an impact on the piety of the congregations.

(b) The socio-ethical manipulation of the gospel is shown in practice particularly when DT is applied by the church leadership. To be sure, only a few people within the member-churches of the LWF know that there is no religious freedom in the HLC. I repeat: in the HLC there is no religious freedom. The state's church policy, surprising though it may seem, demonstrates more concern for the interests of the pastors and congregations than does the church leadership. It is all the more scandalous and unendurable that the church leadership has declared DT to be the official and obligatory theology of the HLC. Everyone who resists this pressure, even in the smallest way, exposes himself to existential danger, as Bishop Káldy continually emphasises in a manner intended to intimidate the pastors.

Dear brothers, you must know this and you ought not to pass over in silence the fact that theological terror reigns in the HLC. This is the truth, which members and representatives of the church leadership try to hide from foreign churches in every possible way. The church leadership maintains this terror by telling the civil authorities that those who dare criticise DT are enemies of the state. In this way they skillfully make theological debate impossible. This is a real and perilous slander.

Together with many of my colleagues, I must admit patiently and with understanding that it is no easy task for the state to develop a church policy which will remain faithful to its fundamental ideological position, and at the same time allow ideas of humanity rooted in universal human rights to prosper. During my 32 years of church service, however, I have recognised more clearly that the church leadership, which manifests loyalty to the state, has not offered true and genuine help in the development of its church policy. A few years ago Bishop Káldy frequently stressed verbally

*Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), a Protestant reformer and associate of Luther, was mainly responsible for the Augsburg Confession of 1530 — Ed.

and in writing that it is not enough for a pastor to be an obedient citizen who maintains good relations with the local and state authorities, nor is it enough if a pastor of the HLC merely fulfills his calling correctly and in an up-to-date manner by accepting socialism — with the exception of atheism — and by actively and directly supporting the socialist aims of the state. Such statements, however, only appear in the Hungarian Church press, never in foreign languages!

Here I must make a personal remark. I always was and still remain sensitive to questions of social justice, because I myself came from a poor family. My ancestors were for the most part agricultural proletarians and day-labourers. I did not learn the truth of socialism from books, but I recognised it in the tears of my dear mother, who with my father educated and taught five children. But Bishop Káldy, precisely as bishop, presented his own DT to us pastors as an obligatory theology, and socialism as a mandatory ideology. I protest against that, and I am not inclined to accept that it is just.

2. What has led to the present situation?

In 1958 the state proposed to the congregations that they should elect Zóltan Káldy as bishop. The congregations accepted this proposal. The majority of pastors and congregations looked with expectation towards the work of this one-time pietistic evangelist, because at the time of his induction he promised a just order of church life corresponding to the gospel. At that time there was no question of obligatory DT. Moreover, he stressed freedom of theological work.

From the beginning, however, there were opponents in the church who attacked him. A shameful power-struggle began, which destroyed much of the HLC's strength. Bishop Káldy used five different methods to strengthen his power:

a) He accused Bishop Ordass and his co-workers in public and condemned them as enemies of the state, and as those who would drive the coach of the church into the ditch. He did this frequently, always with crude and threatening words, and without allowing the accused and condemned the possibility of freely defending themselves. The so-called "Ordass affair" is an unsettled issue in the HLC to this very day. The humiliations which accompanied Bishop

Ordass to his death burden the conscience of many.*

b) He always endeavoured to win the confidence of the state and thus to find a defence against his opponents. In his own words he strove to "beat" his enemies in the race to the state office. Here then is the most powerful motive of his whole political activity.

c) An especially important tool of his was the cultivation of foreign relations. In the past he spoke, and still speaks, two kinds of language. This was evident at a pastors' conference at Lake Balaton. He does not use his domestic language when on foreign travels, but instead accuses his opponents of such faults and presents himself as defender of the faith. By this method he has succeeded in winning to his side numerous foreign churches, bishops and the LWF itself.

d) Bishop Káldy's role in his struggle for power is also evident in the church press. After his installation, he quickly took over the leadership of the press office of the HLC, and since then all publications bear a "*nihil obstat*" in his name. On the basis of his ever-increasing power he feels justified in censoring articles, studies and books, in other words, striking out sentences or larger sections, or simply inserting his own views in the text. He handled many of my articles in this way, and also my commentary on Mark. But there is no forum in which to protest against this because the press is in his hands.

The work of the press is superficial and irresponsible. It is quite clear that certain publications appear in print not because of their content but because of who the authors are. Really important things do not appear, or appear only in a limited edition. The most recent example of this is that the new mandatory hymn book, published in 1982, is not available. The limited edition soon ran out and Bishop Káldy has suggested that a new edition cannot be expected for some years. Pastors are forced to send away empty-handed the believers who want to buy the hymn book. A press working in this way is directly damaging to the congregations.

e) The last and best weapon of Bishop Káldy against his enemies, as later transpired, became the implementation of the

*See the review article on Bishop Ordass in RCL Vol. 11, No. 2, 1983 — Ed.

concept of DT. In part only, and not in the first instance, the aim was to give the church an unambiguous place within socialism. He had already accomplished this in a large measure before he became bishop, otherwise the state would not have proposed him to the congregations for election. Moreover at that time no questions were yet being raised about DT. His primary aim, however, was to make himself theologically independent from a few theologians, to "beat" them in the race to the state office, because he could not answer their criticisms with political mud-slinging and intimidation. When he succeeded in declaring DT the official and mandatory theology of the HLC there was no more doubt that he had vanquished his opponents in every way — politically and theologically.

3. What are the main distinguishing marks of the present situation of the HLC?

(a) Káldy's theological impact is naturally connected with a cult of personality. The most recent manifestation of this was the celebration last autumn to mark the 25th anniversary of his consecration as bishop. This was the main theme of the church press for a whole month. On the other hand, however, Bishop Káldy looks down on the pastors with a self-assured lack of regard, from the unattainable heights of infallibility. He has no time for them and has no brotherly relations with them. The pastors have no spiritual guardian. Many of them live in spiritual isolation, with inner bitterness and with a continually diminishing love of their vocation. The monthly pastors' assemblies are "morally" obligatory. One must submit speeches in three copies. Remarks are registered in an official notebook, on the basis of which the speakers can afterwards be disciplined by the bishop. Because of this the atmosphere in these meetings is not one of frankness, and rarely provides any help with parish work.

b) The most serious consequence of the theological terror and the cult of personality, however, is that the standard of theological work in the HLC falls ever lower. Scholarly work is impossible where freedom of research is absent and where researchers must confirm already-established answers. The chief task of professors is the justification of DT. This also means that theological work in the HLC has no scholarly world perspective, because it cannot keep pace with foreign research. Bishop Káldy up-

holds this situation when he says that DT is the world's best theological concept and so we have no need of foreign, especially "western" theology. This conceited theology will do incalculable harm to the spiritual and intellectual life of the church. The damage is already great and it is vastly important that there should be a complete rethinking in total freedom and openness of the HLC's theology, church law and church politics, before suitable pastors have run out of energy for the rethinking, before the congregations are dispersed or absorbed by the sects, or before the inner life of the HLC finally collapses.

The LWF could render a great service to the HLC if it were to help bring about as soon as possible a free and brotherly dialogue within the HLC. Until then all relations — except for material support — are only for appearance's sake and help only to conceal the internal situation of the HLC. Without this help the LWF's Budapest Assembly will only cause more damage because it will further the decay. Foreigners will spend comfortable weeks in Hungary, enjoy Hungarian hospitality, see flourishing congregations. They will listen to fine words of greeting and "everything is in order" speeches, with many biblical quotations and fashionable socio-ethical and theological phrases. Nevertheless with blindfolded eyes and blocked ears they will return home without having noticed even a solitary splinter of the cross which the HLC bears in reality.

I ask all who read this letter that they should not regard it as an attack on the person of Bishop Káldy. Please understand this letter to be a cry for help from the pastors of the HLC, of which they would approve — of this I am sure — even though they are forced to deny it from fear.

I ask forgiveness if with this letter I cause Bishop Káldy pain. He well knows that I have many times made statements critical of DT, and of the method by which he thrusts it on the church, but he has always rejected my criticism, or has failed to reply to me. Now I feel myself compelled to speak publicly. I have consciously avoided speaking about the fateful impact of his activities on my personal life. If his activity touched only me, I would henceforth be silent. But what we are talking about here is not personalities, but above all, the gospel of God, and if this is taken away from us, we are all lost.

The Grace of God be with us!
With brotherly greetings (signed).

ZOLTÁN DÓKA
Kuchen, 10 July 1984

László Keveházi
Dean of Pest District
"Theologised Treason"

It has come to the knowledge of the clergymen of the Pest District of the Lutheran Church that Zoltán Dóka, pastor at Hévizgyörk, and Maria Dóka, an unordained pastoral assistant, have not returned from abroad, at least not by today, notwithstanding the expiration of their passports.* Moreover, Pastor Zoltán Dóka wrote a letter to the leaders and Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation, and went so far as to circulate it in Hungarian translation through irresponsible individuals. We therefore feel that we are free to speak out with regard to this matter.

We do not accept, and we condemn the content of the letter, which actually speaks about two matters. On the one hand, it discusses the significance of Diakonia Theology. We read in the letter that the word "diakonia" is scarcely to be found in the New Testament, and that its content is peripheral. After that the writer of the letter made a slip of the tongue when he wrote that the meaning of the word begins with service at table and ends with the service of Jesus' crucifixion. Our question is: Is this not precisely the message of the whole New Testament? Is there any question as to whether the crucifixion of Jesus is such diakonia, on the basis of which we can serve "at table"? By our reckoning diakonia is the centre and heart of the gospel, and the fruit and service of our faith. No-one can take this away from us. We remember when Zoltán Dóka spoke among us. To our joy he wrote his commentary on Mark in such a

*Maria Dóka is Pastor Dóka's daughter. She now resides in Sweden. Pastor Dóka returned to Hungary on 21 August 1984, 12 days before the publication date of "Theologised Treason". Dóka notified Bishop Káldy and Dean Keveházi of his return on 23 August. The same day he received a telegraphic reply from Bishop Káldy's office and by 24 August Dóka had received a letter from Keveházi ordering him not to carry out his pastoral duties —
Tr.

spirit. Moreover, the members of the Pastors' Working Group remember him saying that Diakonia Theology helped in the writing of his book. Which is the genuine view of Zoltán Dóka? His letter wounded us particularly when he wrote that we subscribe to the theology referred to out of fear or ambition. Zoltán Dóka must know how this theology became ours over the years. Moreover, he must know, contrary to his letter, how it gradually became accepted by our congregations, where the pastors preach it. We know that not everyone subscribes to it, but we reject the manner of Dóka's presentation.

The second part of his letter deals with the "power struggle", or his view of how Zoltán Káldy came to power. We do not deny that there have been serious ecclesio-political struggles in our church, and that at such times powerful interests played a role. But it is not just to libel like this the person who led our church away from struggles and a dead end. Why does the letter not mention the attacks that our bishop has suffered many times from within and without? Nor are we told — though it is a fact — that this very Diakonia Theology helped our church out of the mire, and coloured and enlivened the life of our church, not in the sense of "servility", or "orientation", but in the sense of the service of Christ. Zoltán Dóka must know that we show solidarity with our leader and not one who attacks him from abroad.

We do not accept, and we condemn the intention of the letter either.* According to the letter, and its writer's statement, he did not want to hurt the bishop with his letter, nor to interfere with his LWF presidential candidacy, nor did he wish evil for the church; instead he wanted to bring about "an atmosphere of free discussion" in our church. We shall not repeat what our bishop said in this regard; as he was preparing for the world assembly he had no time to carry on theological discussions, but afterwards

*This sentence does not make grammatical sense. It would seem that the words "and we condemn the intention of the letter" were subsequently inserted between "accept" and "either" in order to give greater emphasis to the rejection of Dóka's letter. Such tampering with Keveházi's article may partially explain its general awkward style. —

Tr.

there would be time to do so. But from our point of view we must say frankly that the intention of the letter appears to be quite different. The letter became public for the first time on 15 July. The Executive Committee of the LWF commenced on 16 July. Duplicated copies translated into Hungarian were "scattered" about during the days of the presidential election. This uniformly caused the body of Hungarian Lutheran clergymen, and also foreigners to think that the writer of the letter was attacking the candidacy of our bishop, or more precisely that of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, bringing into question the life, the very existence of our church. Many foreigners among them said to me that this letter had the impact of a "time bomb". He [Dóka] speaks of terror, but at the same time he uses the tools of terrorist action. Many of us feel that he did not do this alone. He seems to have been helped by many. We are sure of the intention behind this letter, and we do not accept it.

Finally, we do not accept, and we condemn the circumstances in which the letter was written. We must say something about the fact that the letter was conceived abroad. Until then we viewed the writer of the letter as a somewhat introverted but honourable person. That is how we saw him and listened to his contributions to the Pastors' Working Group. He was respected among us. He has now lost all this in our eyes. Zoltán Dóka knew very well that he could speak to Bishop Zoltán Káldy as he had done in the past; and he knew when he wrote the letter that he had already had serious conversations and discussions with him. What was the consequence of this? He suffered no disadvantage. According to our knowledge, the last offer our bishop made [to Dóka] was a pastoral position at Deák Tér Church. He [Dóka] wrote a book for us. With great hope we waited for another book. However, the hope of his academic

candidacy was not realised because the successful candidate had a higher academic degree. But we listened to Zoltán Dóka. Moreover, he could have expressed his views, he could have written articles more often than he did. He went abroad many times; whenever he set his mind to it, or wished for it. Now why did he have to write this letter from abroad? Did the writer of the letter really mean it to be of help to us? We believe that he only made our affairs worse, or so at least it appeared for a few days before the election. However the letter did not have the desired effect. The foreigners have now seen the life of our church. Bishop Káldy became President with a great majority of the votes, and our entire church rejoiced. Unfortunately, however, Zoltán Dóka is separated from us. With what kind of theology can these steps and words be explained? Would it not have been more straightforward, if he had a problem, to have stayed at home? We do not say that everything is in order among us. In small and large families there can be problems. Problems and difficulties also occur among us. But who among us would display the troubles of the family in public? We must say of this manner of proceeding: we call it treason with a theological veneer.

We deeply regret what happened, but it is impossible to undo it. We do not know what will happen in the future. However, the fraternity of the Pastors' Working Group* sends word to Zoltán Dóka: it would have been better if he had remained here at home, remained together with us, and struggled with us in the struggle of faith and service. In this way he would have helped us.

Although I could not consult all the clergymen because of the summer holidays, I am writing in the name of the majority of the Pest District Pastors' Working Group.

Published in *Evangelikus Élet*, 2 September 1984.

The article "Theologised Treason", which appeared in the 2 September issue of *Evangelikus Élet* contains some erroneous information. In the following I would like to correct the most important points.

1. I returned home from my foreign travel on 21 August. I informed Dean László Keveházi of this by telephone on the evening of 22nd, and Bishop Zoltán Káldy in my letter of 23rd. Thus the assertion that

I "have not till today returned" could not be substantiated as long as ten days before the publication of the newspaper [*Evangelikus Élet*].

2. In my open letter to the leadership of the Lutheran World Federation I did not write that "the word 'diakonia' is scarcely to

*Pastors' Working Groups include all the pastors of a deanery — Ed.

be found in the New Testament and that its content is peripheral". Neither did I say that "the meaning of the word begins with service at the table and ends with the service of Jesus's crucifixion". Instead I wrote:

It is common knowledge that "diakonia" is not the central theological concept of the New Testament, either in the Synoptic Gospels, or in the Johannine or Pauline literature. This bare fact makes it doubtful whether one is free to build up a theological concept, which emphatically describes itself as biblical, on one individual peripheral New Testament idea. It is more important to recognise that "diakonia" is a formal concept in the New Testament which can suggest entirely differing things, from service at table to the redeeming service of Jesus. But precisely because of this there is the danger that these different concepts might become mingled in a theologically inconsequential and illegitimate way, so that they are placed in the same category. In my opinion this is happening in Diakonia Theology.

That is to say, I did not discuss the frequency with which the word is used (it occurs in its noun and verb forms 98 times altogether), but I established that it does not have the central significance in the New Testament that Diakonia Theology claims. It is not as basic as, for example, the concepts of the "Kingdom of God", "justification", or "grace". Neither did I say that its meaning is peripheral, but rather that its meaning may be diverse. In one instance it is extremely important (Mark 10:45), while in another it is theologically insignificant (Mark 1:31). It is in every way inappropriate for us to use it to express the whole theology of the New Testament — i.e., everything that the New Testament says about God. Its dogma narrows down the biblical horizon to the point of exclusiveness.

3. I never said that "Diakonia Theology helped in the writing of my book". Bishop Káldy said this many times in the presence of the pastors. He wrote this sentence, among other things, in the foreword of my book: "I would like to enrich Diakonia Theology in this approach to Mark." In numerous places he also made inserts or changed my text, and he rejected my pro-

tests. In spite of this I never denied that the concept of diakonia gives an important perspective on the careful examination of the mission of the church. However, over the years it has become continually clearer to me just how many possibilities for error this viewpoint conceals in itself: for example, that we should attach the service of the church to one particular theological and practical system, and that we should make it exclusive.

4. The third paragraph of the article asserts that I "labelled the life of Bishop Káldy".* On the contrary, the truth is that my open letter did not at all concern itself with the life of Bishop Káldy, but merely criticised his episcopal activities.

5. According to the fourth paragraph of the article "the writer of the letter is attacking the presidential candidacy of our bishop, or more precisely that of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, and brings into question the life, moreover the very being of our church."

This is an assumption of bad faith, of which there is no evidence in the letter. Moreover, it was only Bishop Káldy, not our church, who contended for the presidential honour, and my open letter said not one word about the presidential election. In the letter I did not bring into question the life and being of our church, but I referred to such phenomena and tendencies that cause the life of our church to be threatened. My letter was not a "time-bomb", but a request for help from those who gathered together in Budapest to discuss the contemporary and burning questions of the Lutheran Churches throughout the world, and to help in finding solutions. Because of that it was necessary to ask for help then and not at another time. Perhaps the raising of the internal problems of the South African Churches was also a "time-bomb"?!

6. The following insinuation is also without foundation: "Many of us feel that he did not do this alone", and: "he seems to have been helped by many." The truth is that no one, not even my wife, knew of my intentions, and I undertook the responsibility alone.

7. The article also frequently passes judgement — chiefly in the fifth paragraph — because "the letter was conceived abroad". This accusation is erroneous

*In fact the fourth paragraph — *Ed.*

because it confuses the political and ecclesiastical spheres. The term "abroad" is a political concept. If I had written to Geneva [the headquarters of the Lutheran World Federation] from Hévizgyörk, it would have been politically a letter from "abroad". However it was not to the Hungarian state leadership that I wrote a letter from Germany, but to the leadership of the LWF within the "inner domain" of Lutherandom. And though the article speaks of "treason", that is precisely what it would have been had I asked the state authorities to help solve our internal ecclesiastical and theological questions. It is not as if the state is uninformed about internal church matters. Because of that I also sent the open letter for information to State Secretary Imre Miklós. But I did not ask his help. He answered my letter — unlike the leadership of the LWF — and after my return home he asked me to see him. In our conversation he expressed the view that he considers the matter an internal church affair in which he did not wish to interfere. One can only approve his position from a theological point of view, and it also corresponds to the constitutional principle of religious freedom.

8. What the article said regarding my service to the church, its possibilities and development is not relevant to the subject

of my letter. I consciously avoided this question. The article with its accusations sought to shift the subject of the questions raised by me to a false platform. The free and frank discussion of these questions — with or without me — is the burning inner task of our church.

9. I addressed my open letter to the leadership of the LWF, not to the people of our church. It was wrong that the article was published in *Evangelikus Élet* and that people, the overwhelming majority of whom are unfamiliar with the background of the matter, still less with my open letter, should read it. But as it has in fact been published, it would have been appropriate to cite it with precision and to report the facts faithfully. I endure the injurious style of the article with love. I regret the loose composition of the letter, which here and there borders on unintelligibility. Notwithstanding the fact that the writer of the article condemned me in the name of others, and branded me as someone "separated" from them, while not once calling me brother, I still regard him as my brother, and I greet him with love.

Zóltan Dóka,
Hévizgyörk,
20 September 1984.