

Zoltán Káldy: A New Way For The Church In Socialism?

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For over a quarter of a century Bishop Zoltán Káldy has been a prominent figure in the public life of Hungary. Since replacing the deposed Lajos Ordass in 1958 as bishop of the Southern Diocese of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, Káldy has been the driving force of his church, and in 1967 he succeeded Lajos Vető as Presiding Bishop. Káldy has also made his mark in the political arena as a longstanding member of the Hungarian Parliament, the Patriotic People's Front and the National Peace Council. In August 1984 Káldy's career took on a larger international dimension when the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation elected him its President. He was thus elevated to the first rank of the world's religious leaders, and occupies an office held by such leading figures of the twentieth century ecumenical movement as Archbishop Anders Nygren, Bishop Hanns Lilje, and Dr Franklin Clark Fry. However, the man, his theology and his politics remain little known outside his native land.

Káldy was born on 29 March 1919 in Iharosberény, a small village in the southwest of Hungary. He followed his father's footsteps into the Lutheran ministry. He was ordained in 1941 after studying at the Lutheran theological faculty at Sopron. His first assignment was as a curate in the southern city of Pécs. He remained there until 1958, becoming assistant pastor in 1944, pastor in 1945, and Dean of the Tolna-Baranya region in 1954.

Káldy began his ministry in the mainstream of his church's evangelisation movement. This movement had re-emerged from the trials of the Second World War as the Hungarian Lutheran Church's main vehicle for regeneration. It was characterised by traditional interpretations of the Scriptures and symbolical writings, evangelistic services and conferences, devotional meetings and a concentration on the vertical relationship between God and the individual. Káldy's powerful preaching eventually earned him the reputation of one of his church's finest evangelists. One of his contemporaries recalls that he "had awakened a great response in about seventy congregations by his evangelisation weeks."¹

The magnitude of the problems facing the Hungarian nation arising

from the war encouraged Káldy to address public issues. In the summer of 1944 he was compelled by the suffering of the Jews, who since May of that year had been deported from German-occupied Hungary to concentration camps in Germany, to visit the ghetto in Pécs. His aim, he wrote was “to offer some help to the people dragged there.”² In the same year he wrote an article in the Lutheran weekly *Evangélikus Élet* (Lutheran Life) against the heretical project of Nazi extremists to produce a “Magyar Bible”, in which legendary Hungarian heroes would replace the Jewish prophets and apostles.³

The period of Nazi domination of Hungary, though brutal and bloody, was short. By February 1945 the Soviet army had taken Budapest, and within two months the country was entirely free from German forces. The nation was now faced with the momentous task of establishing a new political, economic and social order. For Lutherans at this time, according to Bishop Ernő Ottlyk, “the question of the political role of the church was the decisive problem that stimulated thinking.”⁴ But there was no unanimity within the church regarding this question. Lutherans were divided into three general groupings. There was a body of opinion headed by the future Bishop László Dezséry and the scholar and National Peasants Party official Miklós Pálffy that advocated energetic support for the centre-left coalition government’s radical reform programme, which included sweeping land reform and the nationalisation of church schools. Bishop Ordass⁵ spoke for the largest party within the church when he undertook “positively and sincerely to serve . . . the public order and the free democratic system”,⁶ but also to lift up the church’s voice “whenever it sees such things that are not reconcilable with the moral nature of power, the teachings of the Gospel, and justice.”⁷ Ordass put this principle into practice by opposing the plans for school nationalisation — which he thought violated the church’s historic autonomy — and by criticising the mass deportation from Hungary of Germans and the irregularities of the 1947 general election and the land reform. The third element in the Lutheran Church was made up of those with strong pietistic instincts who wished to see the church stand distant from the state and political affairs. Káldy propounded this position in a 1946 article. He argued that “the task of the church cannot be to serve world-views, fashionable notions of the age, political and economic systems or human wisdom, nor to produce general material well-being in the world.” On the contrary, he asserted, “its aim and function is to make its members aliens, wanderers, pilgrims and strangers in this world, and to lead them through this world, constantly proclaiming: ‘Set your affections on things above, not on the things of the earth’.” Káldy was particularly concerned with the danger of conformism and the loss of the church’s distinctive identity. He warned that “from whatever side comes the desire pressing for ‘the bringing up-to-date’ and the accommodation of the church, the lord of the world

Satan stands behind it,” and that “accommodation always goes together with assimilation.” But Káldy concluded on a note of hope: “One must not fear that these rigid attitudes of the church will make it out of season and obsolete. It will not pass onto the scrapheap of things outmoded! It will not do so because . . . the church remains contemporarily eternal by permanently standing in opposition to the world,”⁸

The question of the Lutheran Church’s relationship with state and society was decided only after the complete communist takeover of the government in 1948. During the last six months of that year church schools were arbitrarily nationalised; Bishop Ordass and his colleagues, Lay President Baron Radvánszky and General Secretary Sándor Vargha were arrested; and the churches were subjected to vigorous press vilification. Against this background the Lutheran Church accepted a concordat with the state in December 1948, which implicitly annulled its claim to autonomy. In the several years immediately following this agreement the state authorities brought about the deprivation of Ordass’s ecclesiastical office by a church tribunal; the severe restriction of the church’s evangelistic, social and educational work; and the replacement of the entire national leadership with men amenable to the government, including at least three Marxists — László Dezséry, who became Bishop of the Northern Diocese, József Darvas, the writer and government minister who was appointed Lay President of the Southern Diocese, and the journalist and government official Ernő Mihályfi who became national Lay President.⁹

The success of the state in overriding all political opposition and in silencing criticism from the churches had a profound impact on Lutheran churchmen. Many became convinced of the truth of what Bishop Ottlyk recalls as an important lesson of this period: “Individual personalities could not obstruct historical development. There could be no such forces either in our society or in our church that would hold back development, progress and the furtherance of life for very long. This way led to the direction of socialism.”¹⁰ This lesson was not lost on Káldy. While he retained his original character as an evangelistic preacher, by the early 1950s he had moved far from the narrow pietistic views expressed in his 1946 article on the church’s relationship with the world. In 1952 in the Lutheran pastor’s periodical *Lelkipásztor* Káldy wrote that the church’s preaching “should give help, strength and guidance to the entire life-course of men made of flesh and blood, who live in our times, in our economic and social order, and in our political situation.” He then went on to defend “political preaching” — a term that was closely identified with the church leadership’s practice of supporting the government’s policies from the pulpit — and he warned that “Christ does not allow us to

*“Socialism” in Hungarian political vocabulary means socialism based on Marxist-Leninist principles, or “the first epoch of communism”. (*A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára*, Budapest, 1962.)

withdraw behind some kind of inner line, where we can say that the world should remain."¹¹

Káldy also began actively to participate in what Bishop Ottlyk refers to as this period's "fundamental theological task" — "to see that the church could not serve the designs of reactionary political powers", and "to bring about the purification of the theology of the church and its whole life from those non-theological elements, * which, in apparent or concealed form, want to bind the axle of the church's wagon to political reaction."¹² On the one hand, Káldy sought to stem the widespread dissatisfaction concerning the powerful influence of men of Darvas's and Mihályfi's mould within the church. He did this by condemning the notion that it is possible to "realise in this world a 'pure' church, in which there is not 'much hypocrisy and evil'," and by arguing that the "Scriptures and our Confessions forbid the church to cut itself off from pseudo-Christians."¹³ On the other hand, Káldy spoke against those of his colleagues from the evangelistic movement who were still reluctant to participate in the new political life of the church. In a 1953 address to a meeting of pastors from the Pécs area Káldy stated: "All groups are sectarian whose members live or have lived in spiritual seclusion, in rigid isolation from the things of the world, or in exclusiveness. All groups are sectarian whose members turn away from the great questions of the nation under the pretext that they are occupied with 'the salvation of souls'." He singled out in particular the former members of the dissolved Bethany Union — an affiliate of Christian Endeavour — "who were evidently sectarian from their attitudes of opposition to the questions of the nation and to the official church."¹⁴ Káldy offered a solution to this problem:

Bishops and deans have the right to call to account the teaching and attitudes of the pastors, and pastors have the same right with regard to members of the congregations concerning this question. I would like to ask those pastors who are notorious for sectarian teachings, and those about whom the bishops are convinced, to state in writing that they do not confess the sectarian teachings mentioned in this address, that they do not teach them, and that they will do everything from their own side to liquidate sectarian teachings and groups in their congregations.¹⁵

Káldy was rewarded for supporting the church leadership in 1954 with the post of dean of the Tolna-Baranya region. This appointment matched the pattern of political appointments made since "de-Stalinisation" began in Hungary in June 1953, according to which those who were not too closely identified with the country's Stalinist leadership were drawn into

* "Non-theological factors is a term used in Hungarian church circles to refer to society, people, state etc." (see *In Christ — Hope for the World*, Zoltán Káldy, ed., Budapest, 1984, p. 4.)

positions of authority. Káldy was thought by the Lutheran leadership to be a valuable asset. It wished to broaden its base of support in response to signs of discontent in both the church and the nation at large, and Káldy retained influence among the disaffected members of the now tightly restricted evangelisation movement. Káldy sought to exert this influence at a national pastors' conference in the summer of 1955. In a speech entitled "The Attitude of the Contemporary Hungarian Lutheran", he outlined what he regarded as correct Lutheran attitudes towards the state. The starting point for Lutherans, he maintained, was Romans 13 and the writing of Luther on questions of temporal power. From these Káldy deduced:

The contemporary Hungarian Lutheran regards the present-day Hungarian state authority as a servant of God, and accepts that authority as coming from the hand of God. If, however, he accepts it as coming from the hand of God, he will honour and help it in all good things that promote a more beautiful and happier life for its subjects. He will carry out this help with the freedom of faith, the obligation of love, thus with good conscience, in a positive way with Christian honesty.

As for rebellion, Káldy believed that it could be justifiable only in the event of the state "forcing us to deny our faith or to commit inhuman acts." That not being the case, he concluded that "the Hungarian Lutheran of today cannot rebel against the state, because he who opposes the state authority in a rebellious way defies the order of God."¹⁶

Discontent continued to mount in the Lutheran Church as the nation moved towards revolt. Bishop Vető recollected that in the summer and autumn of 1956 the Lutheran leadership was accused of governing illegally, following a political policy without reference to church tradition or to theology, factiousness regarding appointments, and adopting the "cult of personality" system.¹⁷ One of the first public displays of opposition came in August 1956 when 11 pastors called for a renewal of the evangelisation movement, and for a self-examination of all aspects of church life. These pastors also condemned that element "from within the circle of the evangelisation movement that proclaims only those parts of the message of the Word which is in harmony with the so called 'party line'"¹⁸ — a remark that Bishop Ottlyk claims was directed primarily at Káldy. In the face of such pressure the church authorities felt compelled to make concessions. In 1956 officers of the Lutheran World Federation worked out an agreement with representatives of the Hungarian government and Bishops Dezséry and Vető for the full rehabilitation of Bishop Ordass. This was followed on 9 October by the unveiling by Bishop Vető of a reform programme. Among its major proposals were the ending of extra-legal preparatory conferences, the establishment of a new church press

editorial committee, and the reintroduction of regular pastors' meetings.¹⁹ Káldy sought to defuse the unrest among the clergy by urging support for Vető's programme. At the meeting where the programme was made public he stressed that what had taken place since 1948 was not all bad, and he called on his colleagues to promote the unity of the church and the aims of the nation by rallying around Vető's proposals.²⁰

Vető's initiative proved to be too little, too late. By the end of the Month the nation was in revolt, Bishops Dezéry and Vető had resigned their offices, and Bishop Ordass assumed the vacant posts of Bishop of the Southern Diocese and Presiding Bishop. He retained these offices for nearly two years and was recognised by the state as the head of his church. However, problems soon developed between Ordass and the state authorities. Ordass accepted that the church had no option but to live and work in Marxist-socialist Hungary. He was therefore prepared to play an active role in public life and to assist in the reconstruction of the country. But he refused to comply with the demands of the state regarding changes in church personnel — for example, the reinstatement of Mihályfi and Darvas, and the removal of pastors thought to be associated with "counter-revolution". In addition he would not tailor his statements on public affairs to the wishes of the government.

Káldy's views and activities during the revolution have not been made publicly known. But as the tensions between Ordass and the government intensified in 1957-58, Káldy came to the conclusion that the consequences of continued conflict would be harmful to the interests of the church. It was known that the state authorities had threatened to withhold 25 percent of the state's pastors' salary subsidy to the Southern Diocese unless Ordass made the demanded personnel changes.²¹ He was also aware that the State Office for Church Affairs had labelled the events in the Lutheran Church during the revolution as "counter-revolutionary" — a charge that in 1957-58 customarily preceded imprisonment or execution. Káldy could see no way for the church to avoid martyrdom without the leadership making radical changes. He therefore aligned himself with a faction which sought to pressure Ordass to submit or resign. In April 1958, when the former Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, and several of his colleagues were on trial for their "counter-revolutionary" role in the uprising, Káldy reminded the clergy that the very same charge was hanging over the church.²² He also publicly spoke out in Ordass's presence against the church leadership's failure to follow a "well-considered policy for the church in a society building socialism." He cryptically concluded that "if Bishop Lajos Ordass cannot undertake all this, then there is scarcely any other solution than that he should do something in some other way in the interest of the realisation of a settlement."²³

Ordass would not yield. In June 1958 he was again deprived of his office when the government ceased to recognise him as Bishop. Káldy

seized the opportunity to publish his thoughts on the church's present and future situation in an article entitled "How Should We Proceed?". He described the church in 1958 as "a car out of control that had finally landed in a ditch." He also charged that those in leadership had been guided by the concept of a "martyr church". Káldy rejected four possible options: 1) martyrdom for the sake of "saying no to a socialism based on materialism"; 2) "conforming to the state by giving up the church's articles of faith without any reservation"; 3) caring "only about the conversion of people and their attainment of salvation"; and 4) "mixing together Christianity and Marxist ideology." He labelled "the only solution" as the "fifth way": "The church should be a church in socialism. It should proclaim the law and Gospel of God clearly and truly. It should serve the sacraments according to the commandment of Christ our Lord. It should execute its service of love sacrificially. But while it fulfils this service, it must know that it does so in a Hungary that is building socialism. It accepts the state authority and its position in socialism as coming from the hand of God. Thus it does not look at the new world being built around it as a sphinx with a stone face, with a stone heart and with rigid eyes. Instead, with love, a warm heart and responsibility, it helps with its own resources in the realisation of all that is good for the Hungarian people, and beyond that for the good of the whole of humanity."²⁴ Within six weeks of the publication of this article Káldy emerged as the sole nominee for the office vacated by Ordass. The Presidium of the Hungarian People's Republic sanctioned this nomination, and he was duly elected bishop on 10 October 1958. Of the 340 ballots cast by the congregational presbyteries, Káldy received 318.

Káldy's installation took place on 4 November 1958 at Budapest's Deák Tér Church, amidst high hopes that he would succeed in leading a united church to reconciliation with the government, and at the same time safeguard the integrity of the Gospel. In his inaugural address Bishop Káldy amplified his understanding of the "fifth way" especially in the area of political service. He stated:

When we make decisions in political questions, we shall not say "the Scriptures tell us this", but referring instead to human intelligence we say: "sober reason tells us this". With this we shall avoid forcing tendentious words beneath all our political acts. However, with reference to sober reason the Christian man cannot allow for himself some unprincipled tactical manoeuvring or spinelessness in political questions. But in decisions sincere conviction governed by sober reason must be present. Surely it is self-evident that the intelligence of the Christian man is not independent of faith, and precisely because of that he comes to decisions on political questions before God "according to the norms of faith".

On the basis of “sober reason” Káldy concluded that:

the church can and must cooperate . . . in public life with a state standing on the foundation of materialism for the good of our people.²⁵

The most pressing task for Káldy after his installation was to make the personnel changes demanded of Ordass by the government. Bishop Vető, who had been reinstated in the Northern Diocese in 1957, had already set the purge in motion. Káldy promptly fulfilled the wishes of the government by removing the deputy bishop and several deans. He completed the purge by arranging the deposition of several other pastors whose removal the state authorities did not demand. The deposed Ordass was also prohibited from undertaking pastoral work, and clergymen were discouraged from having contact with him.²⁶ Káldy defended these moves in his 1963 Bishop’s report. He argued that “retrograde individuals standing in the service of political reaction” had “corrupted the life of the church”. He also rejected the accusation that the arbitrary dismissals had violated the congregations’ right of self management, stating that “the church leadership naturally respects the principle of well-defined autonomy, but it does not permit the idolisation of it.”²⁷

Once personnel matters were arranged, Káldy turned his attention to developing a theological basis for the church’s mission in the context of Marxist Hungary. The sterility and uncertainty of the Hungarian Lutheran Church’s theological thinking in the late 1940s and early 1950s had made it difficult for the Dezséry-Vető leadership effectively to rally the support of a broad cross-section of the church for their policies. The product of Káldy’s endeavours was “Diakonia Theology” — “diakonia” being the Greek for “service”. Diakonia Theology was formally unveiled in an address entitled “The Life Form of the Church: Diakonia”, which he made on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate from the Lutheran theological academy in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia in 1964. The basic concepts of Diakonia Theology as outlined by Káldy had already been established in “How Should We Proceed?” and in his installation oration. They also run parallel with the “Theology of Service” propounded by the late Hungarian Reformed Bishop Albert Bereczky. But at Bratislava Káldy presented for the first time a comprehensive Scriptural justification for diakonia occupying the focal point of the church’s mission in the world. He also amplified his understanding of the political dimension of diakonia:

How can and must the church fulfil its broad horizontal diakonia? Above all, I do not mean that with a diakonia attitude the church should assume a higher authority above all economic, social and political orders and regimes; and that with it the church should step forward, saying that “only it can solve

all the problems of the world". It does not belong to the diakonia of the church to give some kind of "Christian programme" for the regulation of the "temporal questions" of the world. It must instead fulfil its diakonia by helping and supporting those endeavours which are already in *de facto* existence and which struggle for the attainment of peace and happiness for mankind. When the church fulfils this diakonia, it is not engaged in the service of aims that are foreign to its own existence but it executes its own diakonia, which arises from the love of God towards man.²⁸

In practice Bishop Káldy links the political diakonia for his church with the construction of socialism. He made this clear when addressing the Eighth Hungarian Peace Congress in 1973:

Our Protestant Churches are not neutral. There is no "third way for travellers" between socialism and capitalism. They cannot look at the conflict of world dimensions between socialism and capitalism with the cool wisdom of "those who know everything". We stand unambiguously on the side of socialism.²⁹

Káldy perceives the major problems facing the world in terms of the Marxist concept of the universal struggle between the forces of "imperialism" or "capitalism" and the "progressive" forces of socialism. In his view no solution will be found in a "blending together" of capitalism and socialism, because "there are fundamental and substantial differences between the two social systems, which cannot be washed away and which are irreconcilable."³⁰ He believes in the ultimate triumph of socialism, as he stated in *Evangelikus Élet*:

Socialism will supersede capitalism throughout the world, because it means a morally higher and more pure social order, and it serves better the good of the individual and the community.³¹

In the realm of day-to-day politics Bishop Káldy identifies diakonia with the programme of the Patriotic People's Front, stating that "national unity, socialist patriotism and civil fidelity . . . are natural accessories of the practical attitude of a Christian and of love towards our fellowmen."³² The People's Front is the main forum for the participation of Marxists and non-Marxists in the nation's political life, under the acknowledged leadership of the Communist Party. The People's Front serves as the prime institutional mechanism for the party's "policy of alliances", whereby the party and the government enlist the support of those outside the party in the pursuit of "socialist national unity". The aim of the "policy of alliances", according to the People's Front chairman Gyula Kállai, is "gradually to assert the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, and make it dominant in our entire public thinking."³³ A party-approved history of

the People's Front defines its function as "participation in the realisation of the policy of the party."³⁴ The link between the church and the party can be seen by examining the inter-relationship between Káldy, the People's Front and the party during one year. In 1976 the People's Front held its Sixth Congress. Káldy called on the Lutheran community "to help and support wholeheartedly and with complete conviction the good common cause of our country . . . as outlined in the programme of the Patriotic People's Front."³⁵ This same 1976 programme of the People's Front gave assent to the policy of the party as set forth by its Eleventh Congress in 1975:

The Eleventh Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party analysed our social development and it determined our tasks: the building-up of the developed socialist society. The Sixth Congress of the Patriotic People's Front agrees with this very significant national programme, and it regards the task of the movement as being to strengthen the socialist national unity of the Hungarian people with the leadership and participation of the party and with the gathering of forces constituting the nation, to link them to these great tasks.³⁶

To give assent to the programme of the party continues to be one of Káldy's main functions as a member of the Presidium of the People's Front and as a member of Parliament.

World peace is an issue with which Bishop Káldy actively and visibly deals as both a churchman and politician. This interest is reflected not only in his membership of the Hungarian Peace Council, but also in his involvement in the Christian Peace Conference and the World Peace Council. One of Káldy's first overtly political performances came while still dean in 1955 in conjunction with the Fifth Hungarian Peace Congress.³⁷ More recently, in 1983, he represented the Lutheran Church at the foundation of the Inter-Church Peace Committee of the National Peace Council, and became one of its vice-presidents. The National Peace Council and its committees operate "within the framework" of the People's Front. Káldy's views on the peace issue are in line with the policies of the party and the People's Front. In his maiden speech in parliament in 1971, Káldy maintained:

Because imperialism — in whatever form it appears: in the form of economic, political or military pressure — always means the danger of war, efforts for peace necessarily encompass the fight against imperialism. These two are inseparable from each other. When our government and our people fight against imperialism they are then simultaneously working for peace, and conversely: when they strive for peace they also fight against imperialism "all in the same breath".³⁸

Peace he similarly associates with socialism, stating: "In our mind socialism and peace are inseparable and interdependent."³⁹ Therefore, he condemns the threatening "endeavours directed by the United States towards world domination," and argues that "we must fix the international peace movement at the side of the endeavours of the governments of the Soviet Union and the socialist states directed towards the defence of peace."⁴⁰ During the 1980s Bishop Káldy has shown concern that peace movements may be diverted from this path. In a 1983 radio interview he warned of the activities of "certain imperialist circles" which:

support discord within the western peace movements. Thus they set western peace movements against western peace movements. The second phase is the setting of the western peace movements against the peace movements inside the socialist countries. This second phase has already taken place. The third phase is the inspiration of certain bodies to break away from peace movements inside socialist countries.⁴¹

This "third phase" is a reference to the emergence in Hungary of peace groups unaffiliated with the National Peace Council that lay equal stress on the removal of both American and Soviet weapons from Europe.

Next to peace, the international issue with which Bishop Káldy is most deeply involved is that of Third World development — an issue which, like peace, is high on the agenda of the Lutheran World Federation. He also looks at Third World development from the perspective of the international struggle between "imperialism" and "socialism", and dismisses talk of "North-South conflict" as one of the "tools of imperialism" employed for "tactical reasons".⁴² In a 1965 article he attributed underdevelopment to the past "colonial fate" and the present "neo-colonial burdens" of the Third World. He also stressed that "religion can cause economic backwardness". For an example of this, he drew attention to India, "where about two hundred million horned cattle live freely as 'holy animals' because Hinduism does not allow them to be slaughtered."⁴³ Káldy does not accept that the West plays a constructive role in Third World development. In Parliament he depreciated the usefulness of western material assistance to developing countries:

The so-called "development aid" sent to numerous Third World countries, as well as the sending of agricultural and technical specialists, in most cases serves the purpose of prolonging the rule of the old colonial props, preserving the dependence of the former colonial peoples, and in the end results in giving a new face and a new cloak to colonialism.

In the same speech he also counted among the "tactical and strategic tools" of imperialism "the launching of local wars with the aim of . . . holding the peoples of the so-called Third World in fear, and thereby sub-

jugating them to its interests." According to Káldy "socialism will solve the problems of the hungry people."⁴⁴

Káldy does not neglect to speak out on some domestic issues. The aim of the Protestant Churches in this regard, he told the Fifth Congress of the People's Front, should be to "provide help to society by awakening and nourishing socialist patriotism."⁴⁵ Soon after becoming Bishop, Káldy urged Lutherans to accept the government's programme for compulsory re-collectivisation of agriculture.⁴⁶ It is, however, on moral issues where the traditional teaching of the church coincides with the views of the party that Káldy speaks out most frequently. In 1972 he reported that the churches were striving to promote "esteem and respect for the family and family life, marriage, mothers and fathers, teachers, leaders of the state and society, the old and the orphaned, and working people."⁴⁷ Káldy has been especially outspoken regarding "the crisis of the family." In a radio interview he pointed to long hours for working mothers and moral laxity in the country's cultural life as major contributing factors.⁴⁸ Káldy's concern about this issue, along with that of other church leaders, had an impact on the decision of the People's Front to establish a committee to promote family well-being. Under Káldy's leadership the Lutheran Church has been a party to the "Alcoholics Mission" and the "Wayward Youth Mission" of the Country's Protestant Ecumenical Council, though Lutheran participation has hitherto lagged well behind that of the Reformed and Baptist Churches.

Bishop Káldy is vigorous in promoting his theological and political views within his church. His main institutional tool is the 1966 Constitution of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, of which he was the prime architect. The preamble to this constitution — known as the "Solemn Declaration" — sets the tone for the whole of church life. It begins with a statement of thanksgiving for deliverance from "fascist inhumanity, the injustice of the system of great capital and great land-owners, and sectarian oppression." This is followed by undertakings to uphold the Scriptures and creeds, to respect the legal order of the state, and to practice diakonia for the collective peace and well-being of humanity. All pastors and church officers are prohibited by Law VI, para. 12 of the Constitution from showing "evidence of an attitude contrary to the contents of the Solemn Declaration." This clause is coupled with others that make showing "evidence of disobedience or disrespect to the church authorities", and revealing "an attitude not compatible with one's calling or office" punishable offences that may result in defrocking.⁴⁹ The most recent defendant against these charges has been Pastor Zoltán Dóka of Hévizgyórk, who criticised Diakonia Theology and Bishop Káldy's autocratic methods in an open letter to the Lutheran World Federation.⁵⁰ Káldy has assured the nation's Parliament that "we do not give scope in our church to retrograde forces",⁵¹ and in speaking to the General As-

sembly of his diocese about pastors and laymen with "incorrect theological views" he promised that "we will not allow anyone to thwart our way, and if required we will give evidence of this with the appropriate measures."⁵²

The 1966 Church Constitution also guards the church's ecumenical activities by stipulating in Law I, para. 13, Art. 1 that it "should oppose all such endeavours, which divide humanity or obstruct the development of our homeland."⁵³ Bishop Káldy believed that this clause was in danger of violation when the World Council of Churches openly discussed human rights violations in the Soviet Union at its Nairobi Assembly in 1975. He claimed before the Hungarian Parliament that the Assembly had become a "tool of the cold war". This development prompted Káldy to meet representatives of other Eastern European churches, and to make their collective "dissatisfaction known to the Presidium of the World Council of Churches". The bishop believed that this representation had succeeded for he reported: "We have information that this was not in vain, and we hope that in future they will hold the position of the churches of the socialist countries in greater respect."⁵⁴ More recently Bishop Káldy has had to contend with critical views expressed within the circles of the Lutheran World Federation. In 1983 he complained bitterly to the Federation's Communications Committee about "propagandistic accusations" published in the West, especially in *Lutherische Monatshefte*, which portrayed Diakonia Theology as a justification for conformity to the norms of the government.⁵⁵ Again in February 1984 he telexed the Federation's Director of Communication to protest "against the publication of the article (in the German *Lutheran World Information*, No. 5/84) full of lies written by . . . an émigré living in Norway."⁵⁶ The Federation responded positively by tightening its self-censorship policy regarding Eastern Europe.⁵⁷

The Hungarian Lutheran Church has reaped some benefits from Bishop Káldy's twenty-five years of leadership. Foremost among them is the restoration of the government's confidence. This has resulted in the continuation of large-scale state financial aid, which according to the 1948 concordat was due to expire in 1968. Without this aid the Lutheran Church could not maintain its present level of activity and would be obliged to join the ranks of the free churches. Good relations with the government also enable the church to speak out on behalf of long-standing Christian values — the dignity of labour, honesty, sobriety and the sanctity of family life — in such public forums as the Patriotic People's Front, and to engage in state-sponsored Christian-Marxist discussions. Critics of the bishop's policies, however, suggest that the price for these benefits may have been too high. They question the propriety of embracing a detailed political programme so completely, and, in particular, one that is based on and explicitly advances an ideology of which atheism is an

integral component. There is also concern about the monopoly enjoyed by Diakonia Theology, the sacrifice of the church's historic autonomy, and the interpretation of church laws in a way that stifles open discussion of church affairs.

Prior to the announcement of Bishop Káldy's candidacy for the Presidency of the Lutheran World Federation most publicly expressed criticism of his leadership came from observers living outside Hungary. Since then, however, Bishop Káldy's words and actions have been more closely followed throughout the world. Accordingly, several Hungarian churchmen have broken silence and offered public criticism. Besides Zoltán Dóka, Pastor László Csengődy and the layman Árpád Fasang Jr have spoken out and several *samizdat* articles have been circulated.⁵⁸ Furthermore, in September 1984 the pastors of the Pest county deanery failed to provide a majority in favour of a motion of support for the bishop. Such rare signs of disquiet suggest that the system established by Bishop Káldy is under strain. Some doubt that it can survive for long without theological, political and administrative changes, on account of constraints imposed by the bishop's position in the Lutheran World Federation and the present trend towards greater cultural pluralism in Hungarian society at large. But pressure for change need not lead to sharp division within the church or conflict with the government. Over the past two decades the Hungarian nation has shown itself to be adept at undertaking gradual reform without injuring vital state interests. Yet the question remains: Can Bishop Káldy and his brethren reach some concensus for reform, thereby paving the way for vitality in the Hungarian Lutheran Church, and at the same time setting a positive precedent for other churches that are still struggling to find their way in socialist societies?

¹Fabiny, Tibor, "Hungarian Lutherans Take the Way of Service," *Lutheran World Information*, 7 June 1984, No. 22/84, p. 11.

²*Új Élet*, xxxix évfolyam, 1984, különszám, p. 2.

³Ottlyk, Ernő, *Hűség Istenhez es népünkhöz egyházunk történelmében*, Budapest, 1965, p. 379.

⁴Ottlyk, Ernő, *Az evangélikus egyház útja a szocializmusban*, Zoltán Káldy (ed.), Budapest, 1976, p. 38.

⁵Eibner, John V., "Lajos Ordass: Prophet, Patriot or Reactionary?," *RCL*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 178-87.

⁶Ordass, Lajos, *Válogatott írások*, István Szépfalusi (ed.), Bern, p. 112.

⁷Ordass, p. 110.

⁸*Új Harangszó*, Győr, június 16, II évfolyam, 12 szám, 1946 (cited in Szépfalusi, István, *Pótszigorlat* 1955, 1983, pp. 251-52).

⁹Ordass, László, "Staat und Kirche in Ungarn", *epd Dokumentation*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 4 November 1984, Nr. 47a/84, p. 36. According to the third edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Darvas formally joined the party in 1956.

¹⁰Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus egyház útja a szocializmusban*, p. 64.

¹¹Káldy, Zoltán, "A jelennek szóló igehirdetés", *Lelkipásztor*, November 1952 (cited in Káldy, Zoltán, *Új úton*, Budapest, 1970, p. 105 & 115).

¹²Ottlyk, *Hűség*, p. 387.

¹³Káldy, *Új úton*, Budapest, 1970, pp. 255-56.

- ¹⁴ Káldy, *Új úton*, pp. 256-57.
- ¹⁵ Káldy, *Új úton*, p. 264.
- ¹⁶ Káldy, *Új úton*, p. 135.
- ¹⁷ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, p. 105.
- ¹⁸ *Lelekpásztor*, October 1956, pp. 618-20. (Signed by János Kájos, Pal Zászkaliczky, Imre Veöreös, László Danhauser, Béla Csepregi, Zoltán Lábórczi, Gyula Lupták, Géza Kovács, Dr Tibor Fabiny, Ernő Smidéliusz and Márton Józsa.)
- ¹⁹ *Evangélikus Élet*, xxi évfolyam, 42 szám, 14 Október, 1956, p. 2.
- ²⁰ *Evangélikus Élet*, xxi évfolyam, 42 szám, p. 3.
- ²¹ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, p. 124.
- ²² Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, p. 113.
- ²³ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, pp. 125-26.
- ²⁴ Káldy, Zoltán, "Hogyan menjünk tovább?", *Evangélikus Élet*, xxiii évfolyam, 29 szám, 20 július 1958, p. 1.
- ²⁵ Káldy, Zoltán, "A püspöki székfoglaló beszéd", *Evangélikus Élet*, xxiii évfolyam, 45 szám, 9 November 1958.
- ²⁶ *epd Dokumentation*, Nr. 47a/84, p.12.
- ²⁷ Káldy, *Új úton*, pp. 43, 48.
- ²⁸ Káldy, *Új úton*, p. 156.
- ²⁹ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, pp. 235-36.
- ³⁰ *Országgyűlési értesítő*, Budapest, 24 június 1971, p. 145.
- ³¹ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, p. 237.
- ³² *Evangélikus Élet*, 4 július 1976, p. 1.
- ³³ Kállai, Gyula, *The People's Front Movement in Hungary*, Budapest, 1979, p. 259.
- ³⁴ Pintér, István and Szabó, Bálint, *A népfrontmozgalom Magyarországon*, Budapest, 1978, p. 214.
- ³⁵ *Evangélikus Élet*, 4 július 1976, p. 1.
- ³⁶ Pintér, p. 214.
- ³⁷ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, p. 90.
- ³⁸ *Országgyűlési értesítő*, 1971, p. 143-44.
- ³⁹ Káldy, Zoltán, *Tovább a diakónia útján*, Budapest, 1975, p. 8.
- ⁴⁰ Káldy, Zoltán, *Új úton*, p. 303.
- ⁴¹ Káldy, Zoltán, "Hiszem azt, hogy az élet megmenthető, *Evangélikus Élet*, xlviii évfolyam, 25 szám, 19 június 1983, p. 1.
- ⁴² *Országgyűlési értesítő*, 1971, p. 145.
- ⁴³ Káldy, *Új úton*, p. 289.
- ⁴⁴ *Országgyűlési értesítő*, 1971, pp. 144-45.
- ⁴⁵ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus*, p. 237-38.
- ⁴⁶ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus*, p. 137.
- ⁴⁷ Ottlyk, *Az evangélikus . . .*, p. 238.
- ⁴⁸ *RCL*, Vol. 12, No. 2 1984, p. 211.
- ⁴⁹ *Magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház törvénykönyve*, Zoltán Káldy, ed., Budapest, 1967.
- ⁵⁰ See Dóka's and subsequent correspondence on pp. 98-106.
- ⁵¹ *Országgyűlési értesítő*, 1971, p. 146.
- ⁵² Káldy, Zoltán, *Tovább a diakónia útján*, Budapest, 1975, p. 9.
- ⁵³ *Magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház törvénykönyve*.
- ⁵⁴ *Országgyűlési értesítő*, 17 December, 1976.
- ⁵⁵ Káldy, Zoltán, "Egyházunk a jövőben is a 'diakoniai theologia' alapján végzi szolgálatát", *Evangélikus Élet*, xlvii évfolyam, 28 szám, 10 július 1983, p. 1. Káldy was responding to an article by Dr Vilmos Vajta that was first published in *Lutherische Monatshefte* and subsequently in *RCL*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1984, pp. 130-42.
- ⁵⁶ Telex, Káldy to Chambron, 8 February 1984, 15:24. This telex refers to a summary of an article by Pastor László Terray of Norway that was published in *LWI* (German edition), No. 5/84.
- ⁵⁷ Memo: 645739.3828186.CHAMBRON, date: 9 February, 1984, 10:38, from: Marc Chambron, to: Friedrich König, Roger Kahle, Sam Dahlgren, Bela Harmati.
- ⁵⁸ *epd Dokumentation*, Nr. 47a/84.