

must be delivered from bondage. Theologically speaking presumption and despair are manifestations of the same disease. The gospel which declares the death of the old and the rebirth of the new through faith by its very nature at once puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts them of low degree. It brings a new creation. The proclamation must be radical enough to do that. It will be "viable" to the extent that is done.

Now this brings us to the second heading under which the viability needs to be discussed, especially with reference to the problem of relating justification and justice, the question of concreteness. The question is raised particularly by liberation theologians. Does not a view of justification which proceeds by way of universal negation, universal judgment of all human projects, relativize all causes to the extent that enthusiasm and concern for *concrete* praxis and social reform, perhaps even revolution, is undercut? Everything is relativized by the eschatological judgment. Will this not end in a politically neutral and therefore conservative or even reactionary theology, so that nothing concrete is in fact enthusiastically espoused or done? If there is to be a concrete praxis, must not something escape such relativization? If not, how can such theology be "viable" today?

The question needs more careful and extended attention than can be given here, but perhaps a few things can be said to foster further discussion. First of all, if justification proceeds by way of negation, then the judgment is indeed universal and all causes are relativized. This flows from the very nature of the gospel and cannot be compromised. The history of the modern world certainly bears tragic witness to the fact that where someone or some cause or other escapes such negation and judgment tyranny and bloodshed result. Where one cause escapes, it becomes a Moloch which devours all others.

Secondly, for Luther's theology, it seems to me that the only way from such universal negation back to the concrete is the way of freedom. The way from death to life is the way of freedom, the spontaneity of faith itself. The Kingdom of God indeed comes by God's power alone, and thus one is turned back into the world for the time being to serve the neighbor. But such turning takes place only to the degree that one believes in the eschatological Kingdom of God, and is thus freed to do so. If we are to remain true to the gospel, we must realize that there are no levers here. If the movement is not one of freedom, all is lost. Moralists, social reformers, ideologues, revolutionaries, and even just plain zealous religious people may no doubt find this frustrating and maddening, but it is of the very essence of the matter. Whenever a cause is exempted from the negation, so as to exert a pressure which destroys this freedom, we come to a serious parting of the ways. At this crossroads the church has seriously to ask itself what it is here for. Is it here to ratify the world's causes or to foster the freedom and spontaneity of faith? That, of course, is not an absolute either/or since the freedom of faith can only exercise itself in worldly causes for the time being. But at the very least it does raise the question of priority and order. When such causes are espoused, it cannot be at the *expense* of freedom, but rather the means through which freedom expresses itself.

Thirdly, I believe it can be argued that justification by faith alone itself and the freedom it creates, drives to utter concreteness in praxis. Luther's view of

the concrete vocation of the Christian proposes just such concreteness. If the negation is complete, one is in the first instance set free from the tyranny of all universalisms and absolutisms and placed back in time to become a truly historical being, to wait and hope for the coming of the promised Kingdom. One is saved by such waiting and hoping for the Lord of time. One wonders whether those who strive for concreteness by seeking ideological privilege for their own particular causes are not, in fact, striving after the lost power of the universal.

But now, if justification by faith alone drives to utter concreteness, how do those so justified arrive at concrete practice, arrive at one concrete course of action over against another? Here we arrive at the third and last question about viability, the question of ideology and the political use of the law. Luther's understanding of the distinction between the two realms, or God's two ways of ruling implies—if it does not explicitly demand—what can be called a non-ideological use of the law. This, it seems to me, is what is meant by the *political* use of the law in the "Kingdom on the left." By this distinction Luther accomplished two things at once. On the one hand, he prevented the ecclesiastical hierarchies from the possibility of using law for earthly tyranny, and on the other he prevented political hierarchies from using law for "heavenly" purposes. Law is to be used for political purposes, i.e., for taking care of people here on earth in as good, loving, and just a manner as can be managed. Reason, i.e., critical investigation using the best available wisdom and analysis of the concrete human situation in given instances, is to be the arbiter in the political use of the law.

Such a view, as I say, seems to propose a non-ideological use of law as the answer to the question about the quest for justice in the concrete. The claim that it is non-ideological depends, of course, on how one understands ideology and the way it functions. For the purposes of sharpening this discussion I am taking ideology and its functioning as the kind of thought and practice exposed in Kenneth Minogue's recent book, *Alien Powers*.³ In Minogue's view, ideology destroys politics. Politics depends upon free and open rational discussion, debate, and compromise in a society where the future is open and not fully known. Ideology rejects such political procedures. The ideologue claims to know (usually by means of "science") the secret of human existence and progress in such a way as to be able to brand all critics of such secret knowledge as unwitting dupes of "the oppressive system." Ideology in this sense places itself beyond all criticism, doubt, and debate. It demands unquestioned allegiance. Anyone who criticizes or even tries to adopt a neutral stance is *eo ipso* deceived. Ideology is secularized sectarianism. It is something akin to a "revelation":

An ideology is the revelation of the grand secret that everything in our culture is designed to obscure the truth of that very revelation. The rhetorical explosiveness of this belief is not difficult to see: it means that anyone who denies the revelation can hardly escape the imputation of being a dupe of the structure. Rhetorically construed, then, ideology is an engine of dogmatism which systematically subverts the real intellectual issue which

³Kenneth Minogue, *Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985).