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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE USE OF δικάω IN THE SEPTUAGINT

Under this heading Dr. N. M. Watson in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (September 1960) offers an interesting study on the LXX translation of the Hebrew verb קָדַשׁ with δικάω. The article is intended as a contribution to the continuing debate on the proper translation of the verb in the epistles of St. Paul. The question which he faces is how far the verb should be given the forensic or declaratory meaning "to acquit" or "to declare righteous," and how far it should have the more general soteriological meaning "to vindicate," "to set free," "to save." After a careful examination of numerous passages the writer concludes his investigation with the following sentences: "We have now examined those passages in which δικάω is chosen to translate some word other than קָדַשׁ, and we have asked whether these passages give us reason to think that the LXX translators intended the verb δικάω to carry a significantly different range of meanings from that carried by קָדַשׁ. We have been more particularly concerned with the question whether the LXX translators had the picture of a judge as clearly in their minds when they used δικάω as did the authors of the Hebrew Bible when they used the Hebrew verb. We have found that in most of these passages where, at first sight, there may seem to be a departure from the normal meaning of δικάω, these apparent departures are instances of forced translation, caused by the difficulty of finding an exact translation of the original Hebrew. Our conclusion is that the LXX translators intended δικάω to carry substantially the same range of meanings as that carried by קָדַשׁ, and that,

when they used the Greek verb, they did have the picture of a judge as clearly in their minds as did the authors of the Hebrew Bible when they used the Hebrew equivalent."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

THE CARDINAL DOGMA OF RELIGIOUS EXISTENTIALISM

Under this heading Dr. W. E. Steinkraus of Union College, Barbourville, Ky., in *Religion in Life* (Autumn 1960) challenges what he believes to be the cardinal dogma of religious existentialism, namely, that of the primacy of faith, together with its corollary that reason is corrupt until it is enlightened by faith. The dogma of the primacy of faith with its corollary of the total corruption of human nature cannot, he says, be verified by either a priori proof or empirical generalization. At best, he thinks, it is merely a hypothesis about the religious life for which there is little support and against which there are some arguments and evidence stated earlier in the article. At worst, it is an arrogant dogma which professes to rule on all philosophies of religion without giving an account of itself. But in spite of such traits, the primacy of the faith is a principle which has infected much of contemporary thinking. It has become a phenomenon in the sociology of theological knowledge. It is a principle implicit in some of the otherworldly statements made by groups of churchmen, and it is a dogma working behind the scenes in the formulation of morbid resolutions concerning man's frailty and sinfulness proposed at Christian student conferences. It has become a criterion for the selection of theological school faculties and for the choice of manuscripts by fad-conscious book publishers. It is a dogma presupposed in many esoteric discussions, and it is taken for granted in the

writings of some of the most vocal theologians and philosophers of this decade. And yet, in spite of the tremendous sociological, psychological, historical prestige and pressure exerted on behalf of views undergirded by this dogma, it is at base unsupportable and erroneous. — So far the censure of the dogma by Dr. Steinkraus, who with many other recent neomodernistic colleagues quite obviously does not like the doctrine of the primacy of faith and the corruption of human nature. Indirectly, however, he pays a high tribute to the dogma inasmuch as he shows that in many areas of conservative theological thought it is a very live and potent issue today.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

REFLECTIONS ON CULLMANN'S IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Under this heading the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (October 1960) scrutinizes "a few key concepts in the introduction and first chapter" of Oscar Cullmann's book *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament*, which appeared in an English translation in New York in 1958. Originally it was published as a *Festschrift für Karl Barth zum 70. Geburtstag* under the German title *Unsterblichkeit der Seele und Auferstehung der Toten*. But both the French and the Italian version have "or" for the German "und," thus placing the two doctrines by the very title in an irreconcilable antithesis. This antithesis is justified, for Cullmann in his book has in mind the Greek or Platonic view of the immortality of the soul in its contrast to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. For the Greek, death came as a friend, releasing the soul from the prison of the body, and for him it would have meant a calamity if the liberated soul would be forced to return to its discarded prison by the resurrection of the body and its reunion with the soul. The writer of the review raises the

question whether the point at issue has been made sufficiently clear and whether perhaps the astounding diversity among scholars on Cullmann's thesis does not stem from confusion on the points at issue, the terms and the value to be given crucial arguments. He comments favorably on Cullmann's thought that the New Testament never argues from, or appeals to, the idea of a natural immortality and that the New Testament concept of death and resurrection is anchored in the Christ event.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

PRIMACY AND PRIMACIES

With this central theme *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* (Vol. IV, 1960, pp. 2, 3) deals in four illuminating articles: "The Problem of Peter's Primacy in the New Testament and the Early Christian Exegesis," "St. Peter in Byzantine Theology," "The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology," and "The Highest Authority in the Church." They are written obviously in response to the invitation extended to the Orthodox Church by Pope John XXIII to attend the ecumenical council planned by him. St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York is a graduate school for all branches of the Orthodox Church, having at this time 4 professors and about 40 students. The following excerpt, taken from the first article, "The Problem of Peter's Primacy," etc., and written by Professor Veselin Kesich, indicates the general trend of thought expressed by the four authors. While they recognize Peter's place of pre-eminence and honor, they deny "that his authority was transmitted to his successors in a particular church" (p. 17) and so reject the primacy claim of the Roman pope. Viewing the problem of Peter's primacy in the light of the New Testament and early Christian exegesis, Professor Kesich says:

Peter did not possess primacy either during the ministry of Jesus or in the church at Jerusalem. It is true that he occupied the

central place among the Twelve; he was the spokesman of the group and the leader in the church. But he, like the other apostles, lacked the special authority that a doctrine of primacy would have given them. Peter exercised his power in agreement with other leaders in the church. . . . Peter did not exercise "despotic authority" in the church; the life of the church, which had been built on Peter as the rock, was sustained by love and freedom. . . . They [the Fathers] give us no basis to conclude that these Christian teachers supported any doctrine of the primacy of Peter. In their dealing with the three main Petrine passages in the Gospels, they never interpreted them to justify either the primacy of Peter or that of any particular church. They saw in Matt. 16:17-19 proof of Christ's authority, not of Peter's." (P. 17 f.)

The final article, "The Highest Authority in the Church," stresses the thought that God is the highest Authority in the church, though He exercises it through the various episcopal offices.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

BILLY GRAHAM:

A THEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Under this heading *Theology and Life* (May 1960), a quarterly of the three theological seminaries of the recently organized "United Church of Christ," presents a valuable appraisal of Dr. Graham's evangelistic message, in particular, of his doctrine of "decision," of his failure to stress baptismal grace, and the like. We quote a few statements of the writer regarding these points. He says:

Despite the penetrating insights of Dr. Graham regarding the need of decision, he is not always clear as to the exact nature of decision. For the most part when he speaks of decision and also repentance, he has in mind the first moment when man turns from the way of sin to the way of the cross. Yet, although there

must always be a first moment in which this turning or conversion of the will takes place, what about the many moments after this first moment? Does only the non-Christian stand in need of repentance or decision? Martin Luther gave a correct interpretation of the New Testament doctrine when he contended that we must repent or decide daily. Graham differentiates between the moment of conversion and the growth in grace, which is said to follow conversion. But is there any growth in grace apart from the daily converting action enacted by the Holy Ghost? Apart from the momentary descent of the Holy Spirit, can it be said that the Christian is any more secure than the non-Christian? . . . Those of us who stand in the Reformation tradition would also seek to connect conversion and baptism very closely. We believe that the desire to obey is first present in our baptism and if we have been baptized, we are already on the road of conversion even before our first decision. Graham, of course, adhering to the believer's baptism, sees baptism as a sign of our conversion, but does not see it as in any way being a means to our conversion. Regarding infant baptism he very probably is unable to see that this is a genuine means of grace and a veritable door to salvation. . . . In connection with Graham's ambiguity regarding the nature of decision, he at times falls into a type of romantic optimism concerning the capabilities of the converted. He sometimes speaks of faith in Christ as an "absolute cure" for the problems of the world. He also refers to the victory of the Christian as "complete" and "unqualified". . . . What Graham does not fully discern is that even a majority of moral men do not and cannot create the moral society.

These few sentences, which themselves are not always adequate, do not give a complete picture of the writer's appraisal of Graham's evangelistic message; but they point to some very serious flaws that are inherent in his Arminian theology.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER