



CANOPY OF PRAYER

September #114-2021

Author

Ortwin Schweitzer
Canopy of Prayer



Dear Praying Friends in Europe

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. Mt 5,13

This word of Jesus has triggered a two-thousand-year discussion. What did Jesus mean? How should this metaphor be translated into life? It is clear that there is a distinct contrast between salt and soup. It is also clear that salt has a task in its environment and must be put there. But if "the salt no longer salts", i.e. wants to stay by itself in the shaker (new interpretation), then you can just dump it out. But what if all the grains of salt want to season and at the same time throw themselves into the soup? Then the soup has become a salt solution and is inedible!

Faith and politics

Faith refers to an invisible absolute authority, therefore likes to set itself as absolute and therefore easily lapses into dominance and suppression of any counter-opinion. This is especially true of the monotheistic Western religions, which have historically developed from each other: Judaism - Christianity - Islam.

The Eastern religions are not exclusive in their approach, as they can integrate everything through innumerable gods (Hinduism) (e.g. "Christ is the 16th incarnation of Krishna!") or do not strive for world change but for inner concentration (Buddhism).

In contrast to religion, **politics** refers to the visible, verifiable and discussable. Politics is the shaping of life - and this looks different according to needs, so does politics. Politics is initially not about God, but about people.

Martin Luther thought this through theologically in his doctrine of the two kingdoms. He says:

God governs the world in two different ways.

a) The "worldly regiment" serves to preserve the world. For this purpose he has set basic orders: government and authority, marriage and family, property, professions. God rules in this way in all the world, even among unbelievers. The world is "God's kingdom", not "Christ's kingdom". In this "worldly kingdom" law, power (even up to the state's monopoly of force) and reason apply.

b) The "spiritual regime" the "kingdom of Christ" serves to redeem the world. Here is the space of grace, which God imparts to people through the ministry of the church in preaching and pastoral care. Where grace applies, there is no need for law and coercion as in the kingdom of the world, but here the freedom of the spirit applies. Both kingdoms belong to God and he rules in both, but in different ways. His good will belongs to both. They are related to each other.



The Christian also lives in both. But he must distinguish whether he decides something for himself **privately** - then he is totally subject to the standards of the Sermon on the Mount; or whether he must decide for others, i.e. **publicly** - then he stands in an "office" in which he must resist evil with justice, might and, if necessary, force: according to the way of government of the world. So that is how Luther saw it.

Evangelical theology does not take such a formal, but rather an individualistic approach to the issue of how faith and politics relate: if only enough people have become Christians, then politics will take care of itself. There was and is no reflection on the difference in methodology between the two kingdoms. That is why all attempts by Christians to establish a "state of God", where life is

lived only according to God's standards, end in chaos. It begins with love and grace and ends in the enforcement of "divine values" with coercion and violence. The latest example: Taliban: first tolerance, then violence. In the Christian scene, the enthusiasts in Münster or Calvin in Geneva are examples in the Reformation period.

With his image of salt, Jesus did not mean that the salt should dominate the soup, but that each grain of salt should dissolve in love

in its place in the neighbourhood, or politics and so on and there change and shape the taste of its surroundings.

Prayer

1. God, confirm every testimony of a Christian wherever he/she expresses himself/herself.
2. God, lead all high-profile, mature witnesses, especially in politics and society, in their witness.
3. May God prevail upon the moderate, reflective Taliban to distinguish politics from religion (which is actually foreign to Islam because it does not know its own "kingdom of grace").

Lausanne Europe 20/21 Conversation and Gathering

This event, a Europe-wide gathering of leaders in churches, ministries, mission agencies, and in the workplace and academia, postponed from last year, will now be online from 17-20 November 2021. Under the theme, Dynamic Gospel – New Europe, this is the central event in a wider online conversation among Impact Groups around Europe to stimulate missiological thinking across the continent.

For more information, visit <https://www.lausanneeurope.org> or contact info@lausanneeurope.org.

Additional Prayer Points:-

1. In many European countries new elections will take place this autumn and some (e.g. Norway, Germany) may be about a change of direction. May the conscious question of God's will for their country and Europe determine many voters.
2. Poland has decided, contrary to the ruling of the EU Court of Justice, to maintain state control over judges - supported by Orbán/Hungary. What does this mean for European unity particularly its institutions? Let us pray.