



# THE WINDOW

No.7 — February 1986

PRESIDENT: RT REV JOHN GIBBS

Anglican-Lutheran Society

## THE LUTHERAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING

by *Dean Robert Patkai, Chairman: Lutheran Council of Great Britain*

Nearly all Lutherans would want to say that they see Lutheranism as an interpretation of Christianity, as one tradition of churchmanship alongside others. Although it may be unique among the historic churches in the degree of importance it assigns to its Reformation-era founders, in the attentiveness it gives to their writings and insights, and in the fact that it bears a founder's name (quite contrary to Luther's own wish), Lutheranism is not sectarian. It affirms its loyalty to the saving gospel of God originating in the Christ-event, rather than to Luther, although it would hold that Luther has classic significance on account of his uniquely clear expression of the nature and centrality of the gospel.

Luther had a powerful sense of the unity, catholicity, and continuity of the church. He and his co-workers never intended to found a new church or a new sect within the Church any more than the Anglican reformers intended to cut themselves off from the historic catholic church by shaking off the administrative claims of the Pope and by incorporating certain Protestant features within a broad Catholicism. Lutheranism began as a reforming movement within the Western Church. It has been said that "the Reformation began because the reformers were too catholic in the midst of a church that had forgotten its catholicity." The reformers were catholic because they were spokesmen for an evangelical tradition in medieval catholicism, of which Augustine was the source. The reformers were able to point to many churchmen down through the centuries who had taught evangelical doctrine, especially Bernard of Clairvaux. Medieval catholicism did indeed contain a variety of traditions and perspectives and the reformers argued that a certain segment of that ancient body of tradition was in fact the true and apostolic one and that it should no longer be neglected or suppressed but freely proclaimed.

But the late medieval church was unable or unwilling to absorb this reforming movement, which was forced to organise itself outside the boundaries of the papal church in order to have the opportunity to speak the truth as the reformers saw the truth and to assume

responsibility for the spiritual life of people who had been virtually abandoned by the Church of Rome. Luther and his colleagues never left the church of their childhood, but were expelled from it when the demand for obedience came into conflict with the insights of scholarship and the claims of conscience.

Yet the Reformation was a catholic movement. The reformers set the evangelical theology of Augustine against the systems of later teachers to prove that they were not introducing novelties into the Church. The continuity of the reformers with the ancient church was evident in their retention of the creeds and dogmas of the first four centuries. This continuity is the major theme of the Augsburg Confession, which declared as late as 1530 that on several central issues there was no disagreement. On the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation, on the importance of the Church's teaching tradition, on the necessity of liturgical forms of worship, and in the acceptance of the episcopal structure of church government, the reformers were truly catholic. In 1530, they still hoped for reconciliation with Rome because of this important area of agreement and because of their confidence that even disputed matters might be resolved so that all Christians might live "in concord in the one Christian church." Not until 1546 did reunion negotiations finally terminate.

The basic Roman reaction was to reject the Reformation protest. Since the protest was aimed at the sectarian denial of catholicity by the 16th century Church of Rome, which selected some elements from the variegated tradition and suppressed others, it can be truly said that the Reformation was "a tragic necessity." The reformers were concerned only with restoring original Christianity and with revivifying those evangelical strands within the broad tradition which bore witness to the apostolic deposit. This was a positive aim,

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## ANGLICAN DEACONESSSES

*by the Rev'd Stanley Baxter*

There have been deaconesses in the Church from the earliest times, and the office was developed in the 3rd and 4th centuries. It is described in the "Apostolic Constitutions" as well as in the "Didascalia Apostolorum" (third century).

It was the function of the deaconess in those days to care for the sick and the poor of her own sex, to instruct female catechumens, and to be present whenever women were interviewed by the male clergy. It was also an important part of her ministry to assist at the baptism of women. As the practice of adult baptism became less frequent, so did the importance of the role of the deaconess. Moreover, because of the very important role of women in the Monophysite and Nestorian communities, the office of deaconess was abrogated at both the Council of Epaon (517) and of Orleans (533).

In the Eastern Church the deaconess had more prerogatives including the wearing of the stole and assisting in the administration of the chalice. Even so, the office soon disappeared.

In the 19th century the office was revived in the Lutheran and Reformed churches. The first Protestant deaconess community was founded at Kaiserswerth in 1836 by Pastor T. Fliedner. The first deaconess in the Church of England (Elizabeth Ferard) was ordained by Bishop A.C. Tait of London in 1861.

The present day deaconess in the Church of England is normally ordained at the same time and in the same place as male deacons, and carries out the same functions. She is, however, a lay member of an Holy Order, and he is a member of the three fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. The obvious confusion that arises from this is one of the reasons that the Church of England has passed legislation in the General Synod to allow women to be admitted to the diaconate and, therefore, to make them a part of the three-fold ministry.

There are many, such as the present Bishop of London, who are strong opponents of the ordination of women to the priesthood but would agree to them becoming deacons, and would see this as a means of establishing a permanent diaconate. Many others, however, would regard this as the first step in admitting women to the priesthood.

There are a number of provinces in the Anglican communion that admit women to both ministries, and, at the time of writing, the General Synod of the Church of England is debating a motion (which has already been passed by the majority of diocesan Synods)

that would allow women priests ordained abroad to exercise their priesthood in a limited way while in England. As the Church of England is a national church, however, much of this legislation has to come before Parliament, and there will certainly be some opposition.

If the legislation regarding admitting women to the diaconate is passed by Parliament later this year, it will mean that the order of deaconesses in the Church of England will gradually die out. All present members of the order and those in training at the time that the measure is passed will have the choice of remaining or being ordained as deaconesses, or being admitted as deacons. From then on, however, there will be no future ordinations of deaconesses.

## CONVERSIONS TO CATHOLICISM

The conversion of European Anglican and Lutheran clergy to the Roman Catholic Church is a steady, ongoing phenomenon, according to the 'Catholic Herald'. One of the main reasons is said to be the rise of women in the respective churches' priesthoods. The paper says that as leading Church of England clergy in Oxford continue to follow (Cardinal John) Newman's footsteps to Rome, a "considerable number of Lutheran ministers in Sweden have also been converting to Catholicism." It is reported that some 30 high church Lutheran clergy have joined the Catholic Church in Sweden over the last five to ten years. Quoting Scandinavian sources, the paper says the trend is continuing. Of the 100-200 Lutherans who become Catholics each year, several have been clergy. A development in the Catholic diocese of Leeds has highlighted such conversions and the movement for married clergy in the Catholic Church. Three married former Church of England clergy are now known to be seeking ordination in the diocese.

(LWI)

## LUTHER FAMILY

*by Fred Pankow*

"Before I was married, the bed had not been made for a whole year. I worked all day and was so tired at night that I fell into bed without knowing anything was wrong," Martin Luther once confessed. All this was to change after his marriage to Katherine von Bora, June 13, 1525. The wedding was, of course, a defiance of the laws of church and state back then, and could be punished by death; that's why Lawyer Jerome Schurf opposed the step. But Luther had denounced the forced celibacy of monks and nuns, denying the validity of their vows and upholding the sanctity of marriage.

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**LUTHERAN SELF-UNDERSTANDING** *Continued from page 1*  
 but since this aim involved a process of purification it required a negative attitude toward the established order. The programme of theological reconstruction undertaken by Luther and Melancthon grew out of an exegetical discovery made by Luther during his profound struggle in the monastery with the problem of human worthiness. Once Luther rediscovered the biblical meaning of "the righteousness of God," he was forced to re-think and re-state the inherited tradition from the perspective of utterly free and personal grace, just as Paul's acknowledgement of Jesus as Messiah compelled him to a drastic reinterpretation of the basic institutions of Judaism.

In its critique of Roman Catholic forms of church life, Lutheranism appeared to be a great simplification of religion. The claim of the papacy to absolute teaching authority was rejected and Scripture was regarded as having supreme and sufficient authority as the Word of God, spoken in Christ, witnessed to by the apostles, and used in every age by the Holy Spirit to create faith. The seven Roman sacraments were reduced to the two that have the same content as the gospel and carry an external sign in which God himself is present and active. The existence of the Church, the validity of the sacraments, and the authority of the clergy were made dependent upon the operation of divine grace in and through the Word. It was said that no divinely authorised mode of church order had been given. Instead the universal priesthood determined both church order and Christian vocation.

Although Lutheranism seemed to be a simplification of religion in contrast to the medieval church, in relation to other non-Roman families of churches it still appeared to be too complex and conservative. Its stress upon the objective presence and activity of God in the sacraments led it to affirm the doctrines of the "real presence" and of infant baptism. These doctrines were unacceptable to certain left-wing reformers who regarded them as remnants of magic and medievalism. Lutherans retained many pre-Reformation forms of liturgy and administration. An effort was made to eliminate errors from the traditional customs but when this had been done the tendency was to use settled patterns of church life. On the whole, it is true to say that Lutherans preserved and defended whatever was not opposed to Scripture, while many other Protestants accepted only what was commanded by Scripture.

As Lutheranism marked itself off from the Roman and non-Roman churches of the day it seemed a curious combination of radicalism and conservatism. To some it was a "revolt", to others a "half-way house." It was almost

inevitable that Lutheranism should create this impression for its distinctive principle had always been to be firm at the centre and flexible on the periphery. The centre was defined as the experience of the forgiveness of sins by faith in the atoning work of Christ as revealed in Scripture. All other matters were regarded as instrumental to the experience and proclamation of "justification by faith alone". This central doctrine was thought to mark off a theocentric understanding of soteriology from all anthropocentric forms of theology and piety. All peripheral matters were left to the freedom of the congregation. The result was a variety of organisational, liturgical, and dogmatic patterns within Lutheranism. The principle of flexibility enabled the Lutheran tradition to adapt itself to many political and social structures. Today it is the largest Protestant communion, numbering about 70 million members and more than 100 Churches throughout the world.

### VATICAN SAYS INDULGENCES VALID

Plenary indulgences that free Roman Catholics from the punishment due for sins can be granted long distance by bishops via radio or television, according to a new Vatican decree. The decree issued by the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary Office in response to queries received from diocesan bishops says indulgences they grant via broadcasts are as valid as those the pope grants in the same way.

In order to be eligible for the special benefit, a catholic must also go to confession, repent, take communion and pray for the intentions of the pope. Plenary indulgences are granted by the pope through apostolic blessings and three times a year can be granted on his behalf by local bishops. The pope has often granted indulgences over radio and television, but there was some question as to whether bishops could do the same. The new decree establishes that they can.

Indulgences have been the object of debate between Catholics and Protestants for centuries. Protestant Reformer Martin Luther violently attacked the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century for granting indulgences in exchange for money. That practice has since been banned, but the general principle remains, and the new decree says the Vatican hopes "esteem for indulgences grows in the Christian people." The decree also hails modern-day news media, saying they are gifts from God when they are used "to help spread spiritual gifts."



## MINISTRY IS 'MAGNETIC ATTRACTION'

An almost magnetic attraction draws the ecumenical debate to ministry issues, said Dr Harding Meyer, director of the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, addressing ecumenical officers of the Lutheran Church in America's (LCA) 33 synods on November 21st. The address, entitled 'Essential aspects of today's dialogue on ministry,' focussed on mutual recognition of ministries by churches currently engaged in ecumenical dialogue. The issue has frequently emerged as an obstacle on the road to Christian Unity.

Meyer called upon conference participants to look beyond a mutual recognition of ministries as the goal of dialogues between churches, because, he said, that "falls short of an authentic vision of unity." They must look instead toward a joint exercise of ministry, he said, which translates to intercommunion. Issues under debate include who should be ordained, what their role should be in the church, how the episcopate should be ordered (i.e., what sort of hierarchy should exist) and the obligations of those who are ordained ministers of the church.

Meyer pointed to the emphasis on ministry in dialogues as evidence of the importance of the issue. He said that dialogues often gravitate to the ministry issue. Because of this other important issues sometimes get overlooked. In Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, ministry has become a central issue. After his unprecedented exchange of letters with Pope John Paul II, LCA Bishop James R. Crumley said that the biggest issue yet to be resolved is the ministry. Telling the group that each church should reconsider its own practices rather than ask for change from other churches, Meyer called for a reconsideration of the process of ecumenical dialogue. "Rapprochement is only possible after reviewing a church's own inherited and traditional positions," said Meyer. "And ministry is particularly appropriate for redefinition." He said, "Ecumenism is not only a matter of improving outward relations with each other; the quest for fellowship and unity between churches cannot be separated from the quest for renewal of churches."

In a historical overview of ordained ministry within Lutheranism, Meyer said that Lutherans are again considering the relationship between a universal priesthood of all within the church. Meyer said that the LCA must "unambiguously recognise and affirm the ordained ministry," which, he stressed, is not optional, "but essential." He also discussed the need for an episcopal structure of the church, which unifies a church body and provides oversight and assistance to individual churches. In the Lutheran

tradition, such an ordering does exist. The question of bishops and their role has emerged as an issue in almost all ecumenical dialogue. (Lutheran Church in America)

## LUTHER FAMILY

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It was a bold decision, Danish thinker, Soeren Kierkegaard concluded 300 years later. It dramatically called celibacy into question; it founded the Protestant parsonage; and it "created Protestant morality," according to the German historian, Otto Pfeleiderer. Another famous historian, Philip Schaff, said that because of this marriage "Luther deserves to be esteemed as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind."

"Katherine rose at 4 a.m. to clean the former bachelor's quarters, whitewash the stone walls, decorate the ceiling, milk the cows, tend the chickens, bees and pigs, raise vegetables, or prepare three square meals. John was the oldest child; he came in 1526. Elizabeth was born in 1527 but died eight months later. Magdalen arrived in 1529; Martin, Jr., in 1531; Paul in 1533; and Margaret in 1534. Margaret died in her father's arms at age 14. "Darling," Luther said as he laid her into the coffin, "you will rise and shine like a star, yes, like the sun. I am happy in spirit, but the flesh is sorrowful and will not be content. The parting grieves me beyond measure. I have sent a saint to heaven." After the funeral, he remarked, "My daughter is now well cared for, both as to body and soul. Now we Christians are not to mourn. We know that so it must be, for we are most sure of eternal life."

Luther's affection for his children was evident throughout their childhood and later years. Whenever he was away and wrote Katherine, he always included words of endearment like, "Kiss Johnny for me" and "I'll try to bring something for Johnny, Lennie, and Lena." The tenderness Luther showed to his children led George Prentiss of Union Theological Seminary to write, "He stands alone of all public men in history for his tender sympathy with childhood." When Luther arose at 6 a.m. together with his children, he said the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and a psalm. Luther also loved to gather the children together to sing folk and gospel songs. It was on Christmas Eve, 1533, while he was rocking the baby, that he composed "From heaven above to earth I come." His children sang it for him on Christmas Eve 1535.

Martin and Katherine also had time for each other. She enjoyed reading the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms. The hugging and blessing of children by the Saviour was reflected in the pious love Martin and Katherine showed their offspring. Luther was to say, "The greatest work you can do is to train your child in the fear and knowledge of God. If Christendom is to grow strong, you must begin with the children."



## NEWS NOTES

Women ordained abroad measure approved by English dioceses

A measure to permit women priests from overseas churches of the Anglican Communion to officiate as priests when visiting England has been approved by a substantial majority of Church of England dioceses. The Women Ordained Abroad Measure was approved by 35 diocesan synods--81 percent of the total--and has been rejected by only eight. The legislation will return to the General Synod in February and may win final approval in July. A two-thirds majority in all three houses--bishops, clergy and laity--will be needed for it to take effect. An analysis of the diocesan voting shows that the measure won the approval of slightly more than three-quarters of the bishops, just over two-thirds of the laity and a similar proportion of the clergy. (LWI 3/86)

Swedish Lutherans and Methodists recommend full communion

A joint Swedish Methodist-Lutheran commission has recommended that the two traditions establish full eucharistic fellowship, and fully accept ordinations conducted under the auspices of the other. If accepted by church authorities, the result could be joint participation in ordinations and consecrations of bishops and other ministers. Methodists in Sweden are part of the US-based United Methodist Church. Most Swedes are counted as members of the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden. (LWI, 49/85)

Eucharistic practices in Hanover unchanged despite fear of AIDS

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover is not considering any changes in its eucharistic practices despite fears by some that use of the common cup may lead to infection with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), said Oberlandeskirchenrat Dieter Vismann. OLKR Vismann said that there is no danger of infection from the 'human T-cell lymphotropic virus type III,' which causes AIDS, through communion. Infection with this virus comes only through direct bodily contact, he said. This conclusion was reached after a study of scientific evidence was presented to all the West German Landeskirchen (regional churches) by the state medical research office and other research centres in the country. (LWI 3/86)

ANGLICAN BISHOP AND LUTHERAN BISHOP SUE BRITISH MP

Two Namibian church leaders are suing Mr Nicholas Winterton, Conservative MP for Macclesfield, England. Anglican Bishop James Kauluma and Lutheran Bishop Kleopas Dumeni are taking the action over Mr Winterton's allegation that they had approved a death list that was shown to them by a SWAPO leader in Zambia.

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## A-L INNER-CITY COOPERATION

*by Reino Sirvio, Supervisor FLM*

Eleven years ago several workers of the Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM) arrived in London. Their aim was to bring the good news to East London's Asian community. Since then the work has extended to the inner-city areas of Birmingham, Preston and Slough.

FLM workers are placed in local Anglican churches where they are regarded as staff members. They participate in all parish activities, and in some cases occasionally lead worship, preach, and conduct prayer meetings. Their main task, however, is to present the Gospel to local residents and invite them to church. The workers are recognised by Anglican bishops, and operate under the leadership of the local clergy.

The first FLM workers were associated with the London City Mission. But as the

mission activity developed, FLM decided to seek a broader partnership with British Christians. An agreement for evangelistic witness was reached with the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society. One FLM worker is related to 'In Contact Ministries, while another is also on the staff of 'Operation Mobilisation'.

There are presently ten full-time workers on the FLM staff in the U.K. But FLM also sends out teams of young volunteers for short term work. The teams help local churches in their outreach. In return they receive useful training in evangelism in a multi-cultural society. Last summer 50 young Finns participated in this voluntary programme. The great majority of FLM workers are lay people. Some of the leaders, however, have been ordained, or have had theological training.



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**ANGLICAN & LUTHERAN BOOKS**

Anglican members of the Society in the U.K. often ask how books, reports and other publications about the Lutheran Church can be obtained, and Lutheran members, particularly in other countries, ask for information about Anglican publications. A good range of books written in English, on Lutheran doctrine, worship, history, music and other subjects is available from Lutheran Special Ministries, 8 Collingham Gardens, London SW5 0HW, Tel. 01-373-5566. A price list of items in stock is available on request, and many other items can be ordered. A large stock of Anglican books and other materials is available at Church House Bookshop, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1 3BN.

**SOCIETY AGM**

The Annual General Meeting of the Anglican-Lutheran Society will be held on Saturday, 8th March 1986, at the International Lutheran Student Centre, Thanet Street, London WC1H 9QH, commencing at 2.15 pm. In addition to reports and related discussion, the agenda will include the election of the Treasurer,

the Secretary, the Anglican lay and Lutheran clergy members of the Committee. Nominations for these offices may be made from the floor or submitted to the secretary in advance in writing. In the latter case, the names of the proposer and the seconder must be indicated, and the agreement of the nominee must have been obtained. A special talk will not be given this year, as lectures are a central feature of the Society's conference in May. All members of the Society are entitled to vote at the A.G.M. Non members are welcome to attend and participate in discussions.

**NORDIC CIVIL RELIGION REPORT**

'The Church and Civil Religion in the Nordic Countries of Europe' is being offered to readers of The Window by the Department of Studies of the Lutheran World Federation. Published in 1984, it includes sections on Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland. A limited number of copies is available. If you would like one, write to: The Revd Dr Béla Harmati, Secretary for Social Systems, Department of Studies, Lutheran World Federation, Route de Ferney 150, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

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