

THE WINDOW

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Primates of England and Sweden share views, worship and unity concerns

Canterbury in Uppsala by J M Rosenthal

Archbishop Carey, as part of his whirlwind visit of the Baltic and Nordic Lutheran Churches visited the Church of Sweden on 16th-18th April. This stop on the Canterbury Lutheran trail is one of many that marks the completion of the Porvoo Common Statement on mission, ministry and communion in Northern Europe, a published report to be considered by Lutheran bodies and the Church of England.

Ascending the ornate pulpit of Uppsala "Domkyrka" Cathedral, consecrated in 1435 after being in use for over 175 years, Archbishop Carey preached in English as the people followed a written Swedish translation. In his sermon he called for a sense of common mission as a result of signing the Porvoo Statement.

On the question of "disestablishment" Dr Carey said at a press conference "establishment is ever changing". He spoke of the more prominent role he has in the political scene in England (which he called "not an honour but a privilege, a service to members of all faiths") than the Primate of Sweden has in his country. "Disestablishment remains to be seen", Dr Carey said. He said the July General Synod would look at this issue but that he "was content as I find it".

These comments came on the heels of a report in Sweden by the Church Drafting Committee entitled "The State and Religious Denominations". Yet, unlike England, the Swedish church is supported by a state tax. Churches appear prosperous. It was not until 1951 that public worship was allowed other than at state churches. This new report states, "The Church of Sweden has progressively changed its organisational form and has gained greater independence from the state." It calls for church matters to be "adapted to the prevailing religious, ideological and cultural situation" with "due consideration..to be accorded the historically evolved conditions, structure and character of the Church of Sweden". The committee's report affirms that the "overwhelming majority" still belong to the church. Out of 8.6 million Swedes 88% belong to the church, with, as in England, about 4% attending church each week.

Archbishop Carey spoke of the long experience of women priests of 30 years that has "something to offer" the English

church as this unfolds. The Church of Sweden has yet to have a woman bishop. Like England there is a vocal dissident group of clergy against the ordaining of women.

The Swedish visit came to a close on Monday night following a lecture on "Secularism, Theology and the Mission of the Church" to the University Faculty of Theology at Uppsala. The Archbishop stressed that clergy training must focus on - 1. Understanding the world the Church serves 2. Understanding the Gospel we proclaim and 3. Understanding the Church, the instrument of God's mission in Jesus Christ. He said "I firmly believe that the catholicity of the church is seen most precisely by our willingness to be fully open to the world in which we live". He called on both churches to be more firm in their commitment to training the laity for ministry as "both our traditions have affirmed wholeheartedly the priesthood of all believers".

Lutheran/Anglican discussions are moving ahead in other parts of the Anglican Communion as well, especially in the USA and Tanzania, where the two churches work side by side and share resources on many levels. Archbishop Carey visited the USA Lutheran Presiding Bishop in Chicago last October. The Church of England and German Evangelical churches already operate under the Messien Agreement.

[Anglican World - Pentecost 1994. (etd)]

(Other articles about the Archbishop's tour: pages 2 and 3.)

The Anglican-Lutheran Society was established in 1984 with the following aims:

- * *to encourage a wider interest in and knowledge of our respective traditions and contemporary developments within them;*
- * *to develop opportunities for common worship, study, friendship and witness;*
- * *to pray for the unity of the Church, and especially between Anglicans and Lutherans.*

ANGLICAN PRIMATE TOURS NORDIC AND BALTIC COUNTRIES

The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, visited churches in the Nordic and Baltic countries. The April 9th-24th tour came as the region's Lutheran churches prepare to ratify the Porvoo Common Statement, a document promoting closer relations between Anglicans in Britain and Ireland and Lutherans in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The head of the Church of England and spiritual head of the world's Anglicans began his tour with visits to the three Baltic countries, where he met with Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Orthodox church leaders. George Carey also met with government officials, including Estonian prime minister Mart Laar. In Latvia, the Archbishop's retinue stopped at the "Hill of Crosses" at Siauliai for prayers. One week after the Anglican primate's visit, the Lutheran church in Estonia became the first to ratify the Porvoo Common Statement.

During his visits to the Nordic countries, George Carey met with church and government officials, including the presidents of Finland and Iceland, Martti Ahtisaari and Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. In Finland, he met with Lutheran archbishop John Vikström and preached in Turku Cathedral. During his stay in Sweden, he celebrated mass together with Lutheran archbishop Gunnar Weman in Uppsala Cathedral and gave a lecture at the Uppsala theology faculty on 'Theological Education and Secularisation'. He was also received by the Swedish king, Carl XVI Gustaf. In Norway, the primate took part in a discussion on evangelism and diakonia, and preached in Oslo Cathedral (see following article). In Denmark, he met with Lutheran bishop Bertil Wiberg of Roskilde. The tour ended in Iceland, where he preached in Skálholt Cathedral.

The Nordic countries have officially been Lutheran since the 16th century Reformation. Today, they account for 40% of the world's Lutherans. The small Lutheran churches in the three Baltic countries are also of Reformation era rootage but have only in recent years begun to recover following the losses sustained in two world wars and the inclusion in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

George Carey was accompanied on the tour by the Bishop of Grimsby, David Tustin, and the Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, John Hind. David Tustin is co-chairperson of the conversations between the British and Irish Anglican churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches, and of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, as well as Co-President of the Anglican-Lutheran Society.

[LWI]

100 Years Ago in England

A city dinner. I write partly in gratitude, for the splendid hospitality of the Lord Mayor, and partly to protest. Sixteen toasts, involving thirty six speeches! Think, dear reader, what that means after dinner. Will not the arrangers cut down their toast list, and will not speakers learn to restrict themselves to five minutes apiece? We sat down at half-past six that evening, and I got home at a few minutes past twelve, and they had not got much more than half through the toast list when I left.

[CT, 18 May 1894]

INDEX TO ABBREVIATIONS

LWI Lutheran World Information
CT Church Times

AW Anglican World
etd edited

The *Window* is sent quarterly to Members and Associate groups of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. Information about the Society and membership applications are available from the Secretary.

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THE WINDOW

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EXTRACT FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S SERMON AT ECUMENICAL VESPERS IN OSLO CATHEDRAL

Tuesday 19th April 1994

With regard to leadership, our churches have said much together in our conversations over these past five or six years about bishops. One of the strands that has been woven into our agreement is the fact that each of our Churches is the inheritor of the ancient Episcopal Sees in our country. So, in Norway I think of Oslo and Nideros, and in England of Canterbury and York and so many others.

But as we have striven to understand each others' tradition, so we have learnt much about the subtlety of the theology of episcopacy. We have seen, for example, that apostolic succession is not merely about a crude analysis of who succeeded whom. That is, it is not simply a matter of 'hands on heads'. We have seen too that leadership is rooted in the gospel. In other words the pastoral care offered by bishops should be that of good shepherds who know their sheep.

Bishops offer a sign of continuity, but as the Lutheran tradition sharply reminds us, their leadership is there to serve the gospel. It is not something to be seen instead of the gospel - but a sign of the continuity of gospel faith.

The image of the shepherd has, of course, its limitations. In other words it is not simply a case of shepherds leading a church of unthinking sheep. Both Anglicans and Lutherans see lay and ordained as playing a full part in the life and indeed the government of the Church. But still the image of the shepherd does remind us of the reciprocal nature of our care for each other. The shepherd knows the sheep and the sheep similarly know and respond to the care of the shepherd. The future of our churches rests with those who love their Lord and love others. This is the twin 'calling' of ministry and the heartbeat of Christian leadership.

[Lambeth Palace]

FRENCH LUTHERAN AND REFORMED CHURCHES IN FIRST FORMAL TALKS WITH THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The first official dialogue meeting between the Lutheran and Reformed churches in France and the Church of England took place in Versailles on March 7th-11th. The talks were initiated in the wake of the signing of the Meissen Agreement between the Church of England and Germany's Lutheran, Reformed and Union churches in 1991.

The Anglo-French dialogue aims to increase fellowship between the French churches and the Church of England, and to reach a formal accord outlining areas of agreement, shared visions of visible unity and practical steps to increase mutual cooperation. Despite the differences in status of their Churches, the participants noted that they face similar challenges, expectations and pressing needs. They called for increased knowledge of each other's churches and more exchanges to take place at all levels.

Reference was made throughout the talks to the Meissen Agreement; the earlier Leuenberg Agreement, which Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe signed in 1973; and the Porvoo Common Statement, issued in 1992 on completion of a dialogue between the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches and the Anglican churches in Britain and Ireland.

According to a March 16th press release, issued in Strasbourg, the participant churches have to examine the state of communion that exists between them, to gauge the various stages that still need to be passed through on the way toward full and visible unity, against the background of their present convergence and difficulties in theological understanding.

Keynote speakers at the Versailles meeting were Lutheran professor Andre Birmele and Anglican official Mary Tanner, who is also Faith and Order moderator in the World Council of Churches. The talks were co-chaired by Werner Jurgensen, president of the Standing Council of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in France, and Christopher Hill, a member of the Church of England Council for Christian Unity. A drafting committee will meet in February 1995 to prepare a text for discussion at the next full meeting, to take place on June 23rd-28th 1995, in England.

[LWI]

ARCHBISHOP HOSTS LWF GENERAL SECRETARY

The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, was host at an April 25th luncheon in Lambeth Palace, London, in honour of the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Gunnar Staalsett, who completes his term of office later this year.

Dr Staalsett and Dr Eugene Brand, LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical affairs, also attended the Assembly of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB) on April 23rd, which was chaired by the Very Revd Walter Jagucki, Dean of the LCiGB and Co-moderator of the Anglican-Lutheran Society.

[LWI]

THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

LWF WELCOMES ORDINATION OF WOMEN IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The ordination by the Church of England of its first woman priests on March 12th was welcomed by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as an important ecumenical event. The ordinations, held in Bristol Cathedral, "will be a special encouragement to provinces which still have no women priests, since the Church of England is still perceived as the centre of the Anglican communion," said the LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, Eugene Brand. Several national Anglican churches have already been ordaining women for decades.

Brand noted that "while the decision of the English Church further complicates Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, it makes for smoother relations between Anglicans and Lutherans and other Christian world communions where women are ordained." Eugene Brand praised the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, "for sticking to his theological convictions in the face of considerable opposition, but also for his pastoral concern for those who, in conscience, remain opposed." Numerous priests and several retired bishops in the Church of England have expressed a desire to convert to Catholicism because of the decision to ordain women.

The Anglican decision was also welcomed by the LWF Secretary of Women in Church and Society, Musimbi Kanyoro, who said that the ordinations marked an important milestone not only for the Church of England but also for the church universal and for women in general. She noted that women in the Church of England have been waiting patiently for such ordinations to become a reality.

The Anglican decision to ordain women priests is not contrary to Christ's will and is in keeping with the ecumenical spirit, said Douglas Brown, the representative in Rome of the worldwide Anglican communion. He said that the decision distances Anglicanism from the Catholic and Orthodox tradition of an all-male priesthood, but it drew the Church of England closer to churches rooted in the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic News Service (CNS) reported. "We are pleased that we can now be closer to a reciprocal recognition of the orders of the Lutheran church in Europe and the United States, and also the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, which ordain women," Brown said.

The Church of England's ordination of women was strongly opposed by Pope John Paul II as a major obstacle to Anglican-Catholic unity. Catholic teaching says that Christ instituted an exclusively male priesthood by choosing only men as his twelve apostles and that the church does not have the authority to change this. For Anglicans, ordaining women "was a change in church order, not in doctrine," and national Anglican churches are free to decide the issue for themselves, Brown said. Christians must guard against using "the Scriptures as a handbook of church law."

The US newsletter "Religion Watch" reported that Catholic women in the US are increasingly playing roles similar to those of a pastor as the number of Catholic parishes without priests increases. The newsletter recently cited an interview with sociologist Ruth Doyle who authored the book "They Call Her Pastor: A New Role For Catholic Women". Doyle found that in 241 parishes headed by lay people, 74% of the leaders are women. They average 50 years of age, and are in small-town, rural areas. While women leaders cope well, especially after the first year when they gain more acceptance from parishioners, the hiring of a lay leader usually places greater financial strain on parishes that also have to pay priests to conduct the mass and perform other sacraments.

[LWI]

IN SWEDEN, ONE IN THREE MALE PASTORS STILL OPPOSE ORDINATION OF WOMEN

More than one third of male pastors in the Church of Sweden do not accept the ordination of women. In the diocese of Gothenburg, eight in ten oppose the practice, while in Vaxjo diocese every second male pastor is an opponent of the ordination of women. These figures were the result of a survey published on March 17th by the church weekly Svenska Kyrkans Tidning [Church of Sweden Newspaper].

The paper had sent a questionnaire via electronic mail to all the Church of Sweden's pastors. A total of 1,091 pastors replied, which was 46% of those who were reached via e-mail. Of the 792 male pastors who answered, 37% said they oppose the ordination of women. The practice received full backing from the church's 299 women pastors.

Kyrkans Tidning observed that the survey results do not fit the theory that opposition to the ordination of women would diminish at the same pace as the retirement of opponents. One third of male pastors under 42 years said that they question the ordination of women pastors in the Church of Sweden. The corresponding figure among older male pastors was 39%.

The ordained ministry was opened for women in the Church of Sweden 35 years ago. A survey conducted by the University of Uppsala in 1992 showed that one in five deacons was against the ordination of women. One in ten chairpersons of parish councils shared this attitude.

[LWI]

NIGERIA - IRREGULAR ORDINATION

The Anglican Church in Nigeria has declared "null and void" the ordination of three women as deacons by the Rt Revd Herbert Haruna, the Anglican Bishop of Kwara in December. The Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria at its meeting in Abuja from 17 to 20 March unanimously disapproved of the making of deacons in Kwara diocese and endorsed the position of the House of Bishops that the ordination is irregular. "The ministration of the women involved in that ordination is not acceptable in the Church of Nigeria" the Standing committee said in a communique.

[Anglican World - Pentecost 1994]

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH VOTES TO ORDAIN WOMEN PRIESTS

The General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church, meeting in Edinburgh, voted on 16 June to permit the ordination of women as priests.

The decision comes at the end of a two year process - last year the motion was presented for a first reading. Following announcement of the Synod's decision a supplementary resolution was presented. As a result a delay of six months was agreed before any of the ordinations will take place - and the first women priests in the Scottish Episcopal Church will therefore be ordained in December. An amendment to this resolution, put forward by the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, seeking to make formal financial provision for those feeling compelled to resign was defeated, but the Primus (Archbishop) assured Synod that compassionate consideration would be given to individual cases.

Synod also accepted a Resolution acknowledging the good faith of those who disagreed with the decision and affirming that it had no intention to break with the tradition of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic church of Christ.

[From press release: Scottish Episcopal Church]

WALES VOTES NO TO WOMEN PRIESTS

The Church in Wales has said no to ordaining women as priests. This decision came at their Governing Body which met in April in Lampeter, Wales. The vote comes after nearly 20 years of discussion, study and debate.

The vote failed to carry in the House of Clergy by the 2/3 majority needed in each of the "houses" of the Governing Body. The laity and bishops exceeded the 2/3 needed to carry the bill. The block in the House of Clergy came from both traditionalist and modern Anglo-Catholic clergy.

Following the no vote the Archbishop of Wales said that he was "ashamed" of the Church in Wales. He pledged the Bench of Bishops would bring the bill back to the Governing body within 12 months. The process would then likely take another 3 years to come to a vote. He said he prayed that the rejection of the bill would not "drive-out" women from the church's ministry.

[Anglican World - Pentecost 1994. (etd)]

ARCHBISHOP COUNTERS POPE ON WOMEN PRIESTS by Rupert Shortt

Pope John Paul's latest declaration that women cannot be ordained to the priesthood (set out in an apostolic letter to Roman Catholic bishops around the world) "seems to call into question" continuing ecumenical debate on ministry, according to a statement made in reply by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Carey.

Contradicting Roman Catholics who have judged women's ordination to be a matter for open debate, the Pope wrote that "priestly ordination has in the Catholic Church always been reserved to men alone", and that therefore "the Church has absolutely no authority whatsoever to confer priestly

ordination on women." This judgement, he concluded, "is to be definitively held by all the faithful". An apostolic letter is the third most commanding means of expression available to a pope after an infallible pronouncement and an encyclical.

Responding to the Pope's letter on Monday, Dr Carey said the arguments it advanced had been "fully considered during discussion within the Church of England and within other churches and were not found to be convincing."

The Archbishop added that incarnational doctrine was "central" to the decision to ordain women. "It is the full humanity of Christ, rather than his maleness, which the priesthood is called to represent," Dr Carey said.

On the question of authority, the statement described the Pope's letter as appearing "to deny the Church's continuing responsibility to discern the mind of Christ in relation to matters of faith, doctrine and order."

The Archbishop went on to suggest that, in the light of the letter, "some clarification is required of the Roman Catholic Church as to how it sees the future of the ecumenical endeavour."

[CT - 3 June 1994]

FORWARD IN FAITH: SCANDINAVIAN LINK-UP

Church of England clergy opposed to women priests are linking with opposers in the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, in a bid to establish a mutually recognised ministry. It would, in time, have its own bishops, who it is hoped would be consecrated with the co-operation of Old Catholics. The English, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish opposers each sent 20 representative to a conference in London last week. They all want to live in the greatest possible communion with their own Churches, says a statement issued afterwards. It goes on "We need bishops whom we can trust, and our demand is that shepherds should be given to us. Otherwise we have no alternative but to find our own leaders and form a structure for them to fulfil that ministry which present colleges of bishops are failing to provide."

An English representative at the conference said that the co-operation of Old Catholic bishops in the consecration of bishops acceptable to all four national bodies would extend the co-operation embodied in the Porvoo Common Statement (issued last year after talks between British and Irish Anglicans and Baltic and Nordic Lutherans).

[CT 20th May 1994 (etd)]

PROVISION FOR PRIESTS OPPOSED TO WOMEN PRIESTS

Three suffragan bishops, two in Canterbury province and one in York, will be appointed to serve as Provincial Episcopal Visitors (PEV) to minister to people, both evangelical and catholic, in the Church of England, who do not accept the Synod's decision to ordain women as priests. The new bishops will not have voice or vote in the English House of Bishops nor will they be given a seat in the General Synod. The PEV will be responsible to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York respectively.

[Anglican World (etd)]

COMMITTEE NAMES PROPOSAL ON CHURCH-STATE REFORM IN SWEDEN

A proposal to reform the relationship between church and state in Sweden has been submitted by a parliamentary committee. The proposal, which will be widely circulated for comment, envisages greater equality for the various religious communities in Sweden.

The Church of Sweden - the country's Lutheran state church - would be granted an exceptional status as the members comprise about 90% of the population. In a summary of the Church Drafting Committee's proposal, the church information service said: "Full equality can ... not be achieved due to the fact that different denominations base their activities on different prerequisites."

The proposal, which was submitted to the government minister of public administration, Inger Davidson, envisages that the Church of Sweden would become an independent legal body. The present status of congregations as local authorities would be ended. They would become public legal entities that are neither local authorities nor state institutions.

Under the reform proposals, the Church of Sweden would retain its identity as an evangelical Lutheran church with an episcopal structure, as well as its character as a folk church. The state would ensure that the church continues to be democratically structured. Baptism or a statement from a guardian would be required for church membership. At present, membership in the state church is by birthright.

To secure its financial future, the church would levy a statutory church fee instead of the present church taxes, while the state pays for the maintenance of church buildings of cultural interest. While the Church of Sweden would continue to be responsible for the administration of public burial places, the funds would be provided by a state fee levied from taxpayers in the same way as the local authority tax.

Last year, the central board of the Church of Sweden approved a proposal to reform the relationship between church and state. That proposal was in response to a government report circulated in 1992, which presented three options for future church-state relations.

[LWI]

NORWAY PLANS TO SCRAP BAN ON EASTER DANCING

The Norwegian government has said that it plans to scrap an ancient religious ban on dancing at Easter. "We plan to put a proposal to parliament later this spring to end the restrictions," said Ole Herman Fisknes, a director general at the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

The decree on keeping the Sabbath holy was issued by Norway's Lutheran church in 1735. The ban, which applies during much of Easter, including all day Good Friday and Easter Sunday, was made national law in 1965. It bars dancing in public, bingo, cinemas, circuses, cabarets, pop concerts, ice-fishing contests and "excessive festivities" at Easter, Christmas and other religious holidays.

"We plan to present a proposal to Parliament this spring lifting the ban. It may be lifted in time for next Easter," Fisknes said. "The biggest problem is Good Friday and Easter Sunday, since Easter is the absolute peak season at the cinemas and at the mountain hotels." Local officials can grant exemptions, as they do for most cinemas.

Under the complex rules, it is possible, at times, to buy a drink in a bar, as long as the patron doesn't dance. The Associated Press (AP) news agency recounted that one Easter, in a town that enforced the ban, a disc jockey spun his dance records at a disco, but kept saying: "Stop dancing." The crowd thought he was kidding. "I'm serious. Stop dancing," he repeated.

Since the 1700s, the Easter holiday in Norway has legally been five days long, starting Thursday and lasting through Monday. But many Norwegians stretch it to 10 days, starting the exodus the previous Saturday. Although almost 90% belong to the Church of Norway, a recent poll said only 16% were considering going to church during the five-day period.

[LWI]

1994 SUBSCRIPTIONS
to the Anglican-Lutheran Society
The Society's Treasurer would welcome
outstanding subscriptions for 1994 as soon as
possible, please.

EUROPEAN CHURCHES IN MOVE AGAINST RACISM

Church leaders in 16 European countries, including France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy, have responded to an initiative by the Archbishop of Canterbury and backed a statement against racism and xenophobia issued on 18 May. In London that day, with Cardinal Hume and the President of the Methodist Conference (the Revd Brian Beck), the Archbishop launched One Race, an educational pack for churches on racial violence. Later he was visiting communities in east London affected by racial violence and harassment.

The statement says in part: "We are troubled about the unequal treatment given to those of different racial or ethnic origin. We are especially disturbed, indeed outraged, by the growth of harassment and violence directed against such people. Every attack of this kind is an attack on one who is made in the image of God."

[CT, 20 May 1994]

-- CHINA --

BISHOP TING CRITICISES ABUSE OF POWER AGAINST HOUSE CHURCHES

The leader of China's official Protestant church, Bishop K H Ting, has attacked communist cadres who "exceed their functions" and force the country's unregistered Christians underground through repressive tactics.

During a speech to government religious leaders in Beijing, Bishop Ting claimed that the gulf between the government-sanctioned Protestant Three Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and the millions of Chinese unregistered Christians was being exacerbated by "cadres who still harbour a bias toward religion." Bishop Ting made the charge in a 29 January speech.

Bishop Ting said that some cadres claim to oppose overseas religious infiltration, while at the same time attacking and destroying "perfectly fine" religious meeting places, thereby forcing Christians to go underground. He conceded that there remains a "great number of Protestant Christians" who stay outside the auspices of the TSPM. The Bishop urged cadres to refrain from labelling unregistered Christians as illegal as this was causing dissension among the Chinese church. He claimed that such splits are making house churches more susceptible to the manipulation of overseas ministries which he said are opposed to China.

[LWI]

BOOK REVIEW

Bishops on the Bible: Eight bishops on the role and relevance of the Bible today

SPCK Triangle £4.99 (plus post and packing)

This book prints the substance of eight lectures given at the St Giles-in-the-Fields Annual Bible School in 1992. The speakers were all bishops of the Church of England, two of them retired, one in academic life. They were chosen to give a comprehensive spread of approaches, though none would claim to represent a central Evangelical position.

The speakers were given as their brief simply "How I regard and use holy scripture". The result, rightly, is a mixture of personal testimony and reflection on the issue of how in general the Bible should be used today. Topics cover a good range: revelation, preaching liturgy, praying the scriptures, the place of the Old Testament, modern translations, scriptural authority, and reading the Bible from within different cultures.

The course attracted a record attendance - in part, no doubt, because of the interest and importance of its theme, but also perhaps out of curiosity as to what bishops do actually believe about the Bible. For all but the most conservative listeners, any anxieties must have been largely laid to rest. All the speakers adopt a positive attitude toward critical scholarship, but with balanced judgement. To all of them the Bible clearly matters; they are nourished by it; they regard it as indispensable for any truly Christian formation: and they commend it intelligently and with affection.

Space is too limited for debate on particular points, but answers to two general questions may be helpful. First, what has the book to offer? The reader already modestly informed will end up with widened horizons and new understanding. A study group with reasonable knowledge of the Bible, and ready to argue, could use it as the basis of a helpful eight-week

course, though it might be best to rearrange the order of the later contributors.

Secondly, what are the limitations? Two in particular come to mind. Not surprisingly, perhaps, I missed a sense of freshness, of seeing the Bible as a newcomer might. Thus, even though the dark side of scripture is acknowledged, ecclesiastical good reasons for keeping it all come rather too pat, and are nowhere rigorously examined. More strangely (and worryingly), nobody really gets to grips with the question of how the Bible should be used when formulating doctrine or guiding morals. True, the brief was for a personal response to scripture. But these persons were all bishops, and is not that question somewhere near the heart of a bishop's calling?

John Austin Baker

(Dr Baker is a former Bishop of Salisbury).

The eight bishops who contributed to the book were John V Taylor, Alec Graham, Peter Selby, David Jenkins, David Hope, Philip Goodrich, Hugh Montefiore and John Oliver.

[CT 18 March 1994]

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EUROPEAN PROTESTANT CHURCHES DRAW UP COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH

For the first time since the Reformation, European Protestant churches have drawn up a common understanding of the church. Delegates from more than 80 Lutheran, Reformed and United churches, attending the May 5th-10th assembly in Vienna of the Leuenberg doctrinal conversations, also agreed to strengthen the fellowship among the signatory churches to enable them to speak with one voice on contemporary issues relevant to Europe. In addition to chapters on the nature and unity of the church, the paper on 'The Church of Jesus Christ' includes a chapter on the sociopolitical task of the church.

In the Leuenberg Agreement, adopted in 1973, the signatory churches declare church fellowship, which entails a common understanding of the gospel, the mutual recognition of ordination, as well as pulpit and altar fellowship. To deepen the church fellowship and overcome differences in individual doctrines, the churches created the so-called Leuenberg doctrinal conversations. Eighty-six churches, among them five from Latin America, have to date signed the Leuenberg agreement.

Church of England bishop Stephen Sykes, who presented a paper on Protestant-Anglican relations at the Vienna assembly, told the delegates that the Anglicans will not join the Leuenberg church fellowship because of the Anglican understanding of the historical episcopate. The Reformation churches that

have signed the Leuenberg agreement believe there are only two conditions for mutual recognition: agreement on the 'right teaching of the Gospel' and on the 'right administration of the sacraments'. On proposals for a Protestant 'voice' in Europe, Bishop Sykes told the Ecumenical Press Service (EPS) that Anglicans "would prefer that to be one voice of the Christian churches, Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox."

Lutheran theology professor Johannes Dantine said that the lack of flexibility shown by Anglicans regarding the office of bishop was "astounding." Speaking to journalists in Vienna, Dantine said that structures and institutional forms such as the office of bishop could never have the same importance in Protestant churches as in Anglican churches.

In Geneva, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assistant general secretary for ecumenical affairs, Eugene Brand, told Lutheran World Information (LWI) that he hoped the forums for discussion provided by the Leuenberg church fellowship would remain flexible and not get too highly structured. He welcomed two texts agreed by the assembly - on the understanding of the Reformation churches on baptism and communion - as "solid pieces of work" that are ecumenically open and aware.

[LWI]

NORWEGIANS PREPARE FOR 1,000 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Norwegian Lutherans are preparing for next year's 1,000th anniversary of the country's first church building. The site of the building was on Moster Island in Sunnhordland. Although Christianity was very likely in existence in Norway long before 995, this year marked the start of a process that reached its climax at the Battle of Stiklestad, north of Trondheim, in 1030.

The Church of Norway information service reports that, in 1994, Borre in Vestfold celebrates 1,000 years of missionary activity in the area around Viken. King Olav Trygvason's landing at Moster will be commemorated in 1995. Trygvason came from England in 995 to begin his Christianising efforts in Norway. 1995 also marks an anniversary year for Fjaere church in Aust-Agder and for missionary activity in Agder, southern Norway.

In Hole, Buskerud, 1995 will be marked as the 1,000th anniversary of the birth of St Olav. The same year, the pilgrim route to Nidaros will be reopened. A major church celebration is planned in 1997 to mark the 1,000th anniversary of the city of Trondheim. Commemorations will also take place in Selje and in Dragseld in connection with St Sunniva traditions and the Dragseld Assembly of 997.

Norway's Christian beginnings are related to missionary activities emanating from the British Isles. Christianity was finally accepted under King Olav Haraldson, who died in battle in 1030. Though the conflict was politically based, Haraldson was soon honoured as a martyr, was canonised by the local bishop, and became Norway's patron saint, St Olav. His grave in Nidaros, Trondheim, was long a place of pilgrimage.

[LWI]

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