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The Fraternal

February, 1976

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A very happy New Year to you all. Writing as my full-time ministry draws towards a close, I look back with gratitude to God for the years of service; for all the "Fellowship" has meant to me. Being upheld in prayer by my brethren has been encouraging, especially in times of need. Through the years, changes have come; new avenues of ministry have opened up for some brethren. New approaches are needed. Some ways in which we did things no longer obtain. We were asked to pioneer the Probationers Summer Schools. These are now under the auspices of the Min. Rec. Committee and have a new format in keeping with the days. In all this forward movement we rejoice. All this indicates our changing times and raises questions about the place of our "Fellowship". That such is needed, I have no doubt, but how it can fulfil its vital task of "Fellowship" has to be worked out. Pray that the spirit that was involved in its beginnings may prevail now; that wisdom and guidance be received as the future unfolds. In many ways these are great and challenging days. God grant that we may grasp them. Every blessing for the future.

RICHARD C. ROWSELL

EDITORIAL

Although the last edition of *The Fraternal* appeared under my editorship, it was, in fact, prepared by my predecessor, Raymond Brown. He kindly undertook to see it through the Press as I was in America at the time. This means that his services as Editor over the past nine years or so have gone unremarked.

Raymond did a splendid job. He managed somehow to minister to the very diverse spiritual needs and hold in sight the wide theological spectrum of our ministry. It was no mean task, and one that I cannot possibly hope to accomplish with the same ability.

Thank you, Raymond, for serving us so well, first in the midst of a busy pastorate, and later with the burdens of the Principalship at Spurgeon's College.

AN ECUMENICAL BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Part of my job, as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, is to "liaise" with Christians in other denominations and to represent Baptists in the Councils of such bodies as the Free Church Federal Council, the British Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Sometimes the work is exasperating; at other times it is exhilarating; at all times it is humbling and challenging. It is a good thing to meet—preferably over a length of time—with Christians from quite different traditions and backgrounds, to be forced to enunciate one's convictions and to listen to the strongly felt convictions of others. It is even better to join in worship with them and to discover, beneath the variant forms and expressions of worship, a common core of belief and devotion which Paul calls "the tradition" which he himself had received from the apostles (I Cor. 19 v. 1 N.E.B.) and which is enshrined for us today in the Holy Scriptures. In such company one recognises prejudices for what they are (not least in oneself), rejoices in the insights given to God's people called Baptists and appreciates how rich and varied are God's gifts to his Universal Church.

This article is an attempt to share with readers of the *Fraternal* some of the developments of recent months in inter-Church relations in this country and further afield.

The Churches' Unity Commission

This Commission began its work in October 1974 with the Revd Dr John Huxtable as Executive Officer. The Revd John Nicholson was subsequently appointed to work alongside him, on behalf of both the C.U.C. and the B.B.C. as an ecumenical field officer. Early on two Working Groups were set up. The first of these is examining what is meant by "visible unity" and trying to discover the ways in which this can be achieved. It is obvious that no neat answers can be given. It is recognised that to seek visible unity means to be involved in a **process** whereby "centred diversity" may find increasingly adequate expression. Such a process will mean an examination of what constitutes Christian initiation, how this relates to the mutual recognition of members and the mutual recognition of ministers. Already in these discussions the question of baptism has been raised and a sympathetic hearing given to the claims of believers' baptism.

The second Working Group is more pragmatic in its approach and, until now, has played a listening role. Evidence has been received from those taking part in Local Ecumenical Projects concerning their "growth points" of Christian witness and also concerning the points at which there is the greatest measure of frustration. This frustration is most evident in relation to such matters as baptism, confirmation and the recognition and definition of Church membership; the recognition of ecumenical congregations by the constituent Church bodies and their precise relation-

ships to them; the appointment of ministers; the general use of resources, particularly finance; and communication between local situations and Church bodies or officials at regional levels.

The Baptist members of the Commission are fully aware of their responsibility in such matters and have already made valuable contributions to the on-going discussions. They ask for the continuing prayers of their fellow-Baptists not just for themselves but also for the Commission itself and its search after that "visible unity" to which we are committed.

Ecumenical Congregations

The growth of ecumenical congregations is an important factor in the life of the Church in England at this time. Some of these function on the basis of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act (1969), retaining separate church rolls but in most things functioning as one fellowship in terms of Christian witness and service. Others operate as united congregations where members bring into one fellowship their diverse Christian insights and traditions. In a number of these Baptists are involved and in some have played a leading part.

In this connection a valuable paper entitled "Making unity visible locally" was presented in March, 1975, by the Advisory Committee for Church Relations of the Baptist Union to the Council which received it as representing the present position in the Committee's thinking. It deals in the main with the question of how such ecumenical congregations are to be related to the separate national denominations. The question is a particularly interesting one for Baptists with their long tradition and practice of "open-membership" in which believers' baptism is not required of members. Should its appeal be spurned and so encouragement be given to the perils of parochialism and isolation and the possible creation of an "ecumenical denomination"? Or should there be a positive response? If so, of what kind should it be?

The paper emphasises that any such applications for membership should be the result of responsible decision made after due attention to the basis and aims of the Union and should show evidence of an honest wrestling with and recognition of the basic claims of the denomination's tradition and practice. Given these things, and due Association recommendation, it suggests that "a denomination that seriously seeks the visible unity of Christ's Church and is properly mindful of its own complex traditions may be expected to welcome such ecumenical congregations, and with caring responsibility to foster the continuance of their real commitment."

The Council has requested the General Purposes Committee to take up a careful examination of this issue forthwith and to report back its findings and recommendations in due course. It is recognised by the Group set up by the G.P. & F. Committee that the question of the multiple

membership of the **individual Christian** is to be considered only in the light of this more basic issue of **the congregation's** multiple membership of denominations. The problem arises in its most acute form in the case of new members who are making a Christian profession for the first time and seek membership of the Church in the context of an inter-denominational congregation. What is their relationship to the Church bodies represented in the ecumenical congregation? All this is of more than theoretical interest. Such problems arise increasingly out of real, practical situations and require a careful and sympathetic examination of the initiatory process which in turn involves an assessment of the place and meaning within it of baptism. An interesting and helpful attempt to explain what is meant by the initiatory rite has been made by the Joint Liturgical Group in the booklet **Initiation and Eucharist** (S.P.C.K. 1972), of which the Revd Neville Clark is co-author.

Local Ecumenical Projects

A feature of Church life in England over the past ten or fifteen years has been a rapid growth in Local Ecumenical Projects, not least in urban and new town situations. There are differences of opinion within the Baptist denomination as to whether Baptists should be involved in an ecumenical approach to mission or not. It is clear, however, that even those involved in separate development will inevitably be called upon to serve the needs of Christians from other Church traditions.

Quite early on, in November 1968, a report on "Areas of Ecumenical Experiment" was accepted by the Baptist Union Council. This report indicated that "the decision whether or not to take part in (such) ecumenical experiments is a matter for the Associations and local churches or, where none exists, of the individual Baptists in the area." Subsequently it was agreed that Home Mission Fund monies could be used in inter-Church work in local situations up to a given figure in support of the salaries of Baptist ministers or lay members or of an inter-Church team having a Baptist among its number or, in exceptional circumstances, whether or not Baptist leadership is involved. Money from the Loan Fund could not be given direct for ecumenical buildings, but in a few cases borrowings have been made for this purpose by the Association which has accepted responsibility for repayment.

In 1973, in response to initiatives from the Anglican and Methodist Churches and at the request of the General Secretary of the B.C.C. there was brought into being a Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England (C.C.L.E.P.E.). Its function is to keep the Churches informed of local ecumenical projects, to discuss matters of concern remitted to them, to give guidance on the rules of the various Churches as these affect legislation etc and to bring to the attention of the Churches problems which arise from time to time. One important task it has carried out is

to revise and re-write the document "The Designation of Areas of Ecumenical Experiment" (B.C.C., 1969) under the title "Guidelines for the Creation of Local Ecumenical Projects". This is a valuable document which sets out procedures in respect of such projects, the function of sponsoring bodies, the appointment of ministers etc. A much fuller account of ecumenical experiments, shared churches and other united ventures is given in "Adventures in Unity" by David Blatherwick, published in 1974 by the B.C.C.

The U.R.C. and the Churches of Christ

For some years representatives of the Baptist Union and of the Churches of Christ met for discussions with a view to finding a closer bond of relationship. In the end these did not seem to be leading anywhere and so the Churches of Christ looked in the direction of the recently formed United Reformed Church. A Joint Committee was set up and a report produced for the Annual Assemblies of 1974. A further interim report was presented on the negotiations between these two bodies at their Assemblies in 1975. This latter concentrated attention on two issues—baptism and ministry. Proposals were presented for holding together two convictions about the practice of baptism in one Church and in particular the vexed question of "re-baptism" and the availability of both forms and both modes of baptism in each congregation. Two basic forms of ministry are contemplated—a "general ministry" which would be full-time and stipendiary, and a "local ministry" made up of people employed in secular life. The Joint Committee sees its work in the context of wider unions and is seeking comments from other Churches on its proposals. The discussions continue.

Covenanting for Union in Wales

The Church in Wales, the U.R.C. Wales Province, the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Methodist Church have now decided to enter into covenant "to work and pray for unity" on the basis of a proposed and agreed Covenant. The South Wales Joint Board (Baptist) was not a signatory to the Covenant, but ten or more local Baptist churches expressed the strong wish to commit themselves in this way. An impressive service inaugurating the Covenant was held in Aberystwyth. It was expected that provision would be made subsequently in the Church of Wales "Bill" making it possible for Baptist churches to participate. Sympathetic reference was made to the Baptists by the Archbishop. It was noted that the wording of certain parts of the Covenant with regard to Christian relationships went beyond anything said before in this country.

The Roman Catholic Church

Discussion with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church has continued at almost every level. Baptists have often been surprised (and this has been reciprocated on the R.C. side) at the measure of agreement and the depth of

sympathy which have been evident in spite of equally deep disagreement in matters of both faith and practice. There is surely cause for thankfulness to God for the new understanding that has arisen since Vatican II. We note in particular the conversations initiated between the B.U. of Scotland and the R.C. Church in that country.

Serious consideration was given to the report of a Joint Working Party entitled "The Implications of Roman Catholic Membership of the British Council of Churches." Such membership was not in fact pursued, but a consultation has been set up to consider further certain theological and ecclesiological matters and to examine still further future relations.

Somewhat the same decision has been reached by the Roman Catholic Church in its relationship with the World Council of Churches. Ten years ago a Joint Working Group was set up resulting in joint study and collaboration in a number of fields. In this very process they have come to see more clearly the obstacles which still need to be overcome if fellowship and collaboration among the Churches are to grow. It is unlikely that the R.C. Church will seek membership of the W.C.C. in the foreseeable future, but the need is felt for the creation of a forum to enable both bodies to evaluate together the development of the ecumenical movement.

Two Faith and Order documents

At the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the W.C.C. held in Lorraine in 1971 the Director, Dr Lukas Vischer, emphasised the importance of Christians clarifying together the fundamental affirmations of the Christian faith and suggested that an attempt be made to give "a coherent account" of "the hope that is in us" (I Peter 3. 15). As a result, an invitation was sent to the Churches to set up groups which would "reflect on and bring to expression what they understood as the salvation of God, for which they give thanks in worship and which they are commissioned to proclaim". The Commission met in Accra in the summer of 1974 and heard an encouraging report of responses made. A most interesting report is now available under the title "Giving Account of the Hope" which is worthy of careful study, not least by our own Baptist people.

The encouraging response made to the invitation is in itself a clear indication of the desire on the part of the Churches and of many individuals to understand more clearly the significance of their Christian faith. It soon became evident that there was a confusing variety of ways in which the Gospel is understood, proclaimed and lived. An examination of the nature of the Christian hope, preferably across denominational boundaries, necessarily entails encounter and even controversy. The natural tendency is to avoid this, but only through such growing pains will the body reach maturity.

During 1974 a small group, including some Baptists, met in Bristol College to take part in "A Conversation about Hope". The discussion and the findings make interesting reading. Could more Baptists up and down the country seriously consider, either among themselves or preferably with Christians of other denominations, the essentials of the faith and the ground of their hope in Christ? Such an exercise could, I believe, prove to be for us both a humbling and an enriching experience.

A second document sent out by the Faith and Order Commission is a composite work entitled "One Baptism, one Eucharist and a Mutually Recognised Ministry". Earlier study had been given to these topics in 1971 at Louvain by the Faith and Order Commission which included eleven Baptists. The final stage in the preparation of the present document took place in Accra in 1974. Dr Morris West and Dr Horace Russell were among those who participated and Dr Beasley-Murray attended as the representative of the Baptist World Alliance. It is suggested that ministers and ecumenical groups might engage in the study of the texts. A response has been asked from our own Baptist Union. The Advisory Committee on Church Relations is now making arrangements for a reply to be sent to Geneva in due course.

Whatever our particular attitude to ecumenical involvement may be, it seems to me quite imperative that Baptists should be fully involved in theological and ecclesiological debates of the kinds indicated above. They have a rich tradition out of which they can speak and, as I have found for myself, they have a great deal to learn from others if they are prepared to approach such opportunities with open hearts and open minds.

World Council of Churches Assembly at Nairobi

This Baptist Union was represented by Dr Morris West, Mr John Briggs and myself. Dr Payne, as a President of the W.C.C. was also present. The Assembly work was divided into six sections: Confessing Christ Today, What Unity Requires, Seeking Community, Education for Liberation and Community, Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation, and Human Development.

Helpful preparatory material had been prepared for use in the Churches including Bible studies in a booklet entitled "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites." Six dossiers of notes relating to the six sections and a resource kit with colour transparency are also available. There is not much evidence that Baptists in this country have taken up seriously a study of these documents or this theme.

Inter-Confessional Conversations

The first joint meeting in a series of theological conversations officially sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Baptist World Alliance took place in Ruschlikon in December 1974. Dr Payne contributed a paper

on "The Distinctive Elements of the Baptist and Reformed Heritages Today". A plan of work was adopted for the next three years with a view to providing information on the present theological positions so as to help overcome differences and in particular illumine the different convictions held concerning baptism.

At the B.W.A. Executive in Kentucky in 1974 it was agreed to initiate bilateral theological discussions with the Lutheran World Federation which, it was reported, seemed eager to enter into conversations similar to those agreed upon with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. A progress report in this connection is now awaited.

The account given in this article is only a very sketchy description of a few of the ecumenical events and developments of recent months in which Baptists have been involved. It is altogether clear to me that, for our own sake as well as for the sake of the Christian Church at large and its worldwide mission, we cannot afford to stand on the touch-line as spectators or, far less, to turn our backs on "the field of play" as if what is going on there doesn't really affect us. Baptists stand for a form of churchmanship and represent an evangelical tradition which are of very considerable importance to the thinking, the life and the witness of the World Church at this time. One still hears occasionally the word "ecumenical" being contrasted unfavourably with the word "evangelical" as if they represented theological opposites. This, I believe, is an utterly wrong judgment. One way to counter-balance or correct what some would see as wrong emphases or as error in the ecumenical movement is for those who represent the evangelical tradition, as Baptists do, to share much more fully in the exciting and challenging debates which are going on in our day. God is doing great things in and through his Church of many denominations and one. Without a dimension to our Christian vision which is at one and the same time inter-national, inter-confessional and inter-denominational our understanding and our contribution will surely be impoverished. This article is a plea for greater understanding, deeper sympathy and fuller involvement which will lead to greater enrichment for ourselves and for all other Christians with whom we become involved.

D. S. RUSSELL

TWICE-BAPTIZED CHRISTIANS— A WAY FORWARD FOR CHURCH REFORM AND UNITY.

At present, the United Reformed Church and the Churches of Christ in England are discussing a scheme of union. One of the problems they have to face is that while the U.R.C. allows both believers' and infant baptism (with the emphasis in practice on the latter), the Churches of Christ insist on believers' baptism—in some ways, more strongly than most Baptist Churches. A committee representing both churches has made interesting suggestions on this point, which, I think, implicitly call for a more constructive response from Baptists than we have offered up till now in relation to discussions on unity.

If the proposals were followed, a united church would come into being in which not only would both infant and believers' baptism be practised, but individuals might be allowed, however grudgingly, to be baptised both as infants and as believers. This suggestion is momentous, for it breaches the centuries-long taboo against baptizing individuals more than once. It is momentous, too, because it opens up a future which would be generous compensation for such a sharp break with tradition.

This future concerns more than the mere uniting of existing church groupings, for the problem of baptism consists in more than the fact that it divides us and gives us badges of disunity. The problem of baptism is even more serious as an indicator of our present uncertainties over the meaning of Christian faith and the way in which individuals enter into its reality. Even if there were no Baptists, there would be a crisis for baptism amongst paedo-baptists: they too ask whether infants can be committed to faith in the way their baptismal rites suggest, but cannot always realize in practice. And no-one who knows Baptists can pretend that all is well on our side: anti-sacramentalists, believing it is of the essence of faith not to be ritually embodied, are countered by advocates of Pauline sacramental realism who, in turn, cannot carry with them many who value baptism highly but only as an act of witness. Apart from the question of its divisive effect, our thinking and practice of baptism need reform if they are to build up Christians in the faith.

To manipulate baptisms merely to get unity would be unprincipled, trivializing. We must have reform, too. But we can get it only in a united church which practises both forms of baptism, not merely allowing them but rejoicing in both, and conscientiously free to let Christians be baptised both as infants and as believers.

This view, I know, will not command immediate agreement on all sides. What can be said in its support?

A church which practised both baptisms would have to distinguish clearly between them without denying either.

This would set infant baptism free from the burden of what I call "biographical prediction": that is, that the effects of baptism are articulated in the rite in terms of what he will be or will become as he grows up—that he will be a Christian, in some sense, that he has renounced the devil and will be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. But many baptised infants do not turn out in such ways. Hence the forlorn attempt to restrict baptism to children of "Christian" parents who will give them a "Christian" upbringing. It must fail, for even if we could infallibly distinguish Christian from non-Christian parents, we have no grounds for believing that Christian upbringing infallibly makes children Christian. The only way out is to acknowledge that the rite of infant baptism developed from rites and from preaching that had adult believers primarily in view, and that when it came to be applied mainly to infants virtually no adjustments were made to its content, despite the fact that whatever may be the unity of God's grace, there are serious human differences between an infant and a believer. As a result, descriptions of the adult believer were taken over and applied to the infant in relation to whom they can only have reality in the form of predictions. The historical development of the rite calls now for reform. If it were undertaken, infant baptism would become the Church's joyful celebration of the ultimacy of God's grace for this infant, and so for all, simply because they are his creatures, those for whom Christ died. Infant baptism would not be determined in an unprincipled way as a mere ancient adaptation and corruption of a believers' baptism rite, but it would become a telling of the Good News in its universality. What is it that the Church can declare to and about every man, regardless of his faith or lack of it? That is the formative question in infant baptism, rightly understood. If the Church dares to speak only about and for its own members, the children of Christian parents, it proclaims that it does not believe that God is the God of all the earth and of all men. Of course, there can be no question of forcing all infants to be baptized; the practical pastoral issue, however, is whether the Church has the clarity of faith to be able to say something to **all** who **come** to it.

If a church practised both baptisms, infant baptism would no longer be loaded with all the meaning of believers' baptism. It would be left with a meaning the Church and world cannot do without. This is not the place to attempt a full systematic account. It is enough to indicate the main line of development.

Infant baptism must respect the terrifying openness of the child's being—there can be no biographical prediction, even of the most general kind. We know neither whether this child will be a plumber, a preacher or a pop-star, nor whether he will be good or bad, happy or sad. The rite must leave his biography unwritten. It must in fact recognize that it is a splendid and, even more a terrifying fact about the child that his biography is not yet and cannot yet be written. What we have to say at this point concerns not the content but the context of the biography yet to be written. We

declare the truth (which has all kinds of pastoral consequences but is true apart from them), that the context in which the openness of this child will be filled is nothing other than the grace of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. In the end, we declare, the only reader of this biography who will read it all, who can understand it all, and who has a right to decide about it is—God. The importance of the church's being able to do this hardly needs argument. We live in a world where many other contexts for humanity have the plausibility of apparently unshakeable tyrants. Infant baptism in this context is a basic act of hopeful defiance, an entry into the freedom of God.

We cannot pick out individual infants, but we know that a fair proportion of them are destined for hell on earth. Hell will fill the emptiness between their birth and death. It will crush them, maybe it will make explicit confession of faith and hope in God and goodness biographically impossible for them. "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" That question is not irrelevant to any act of infant baptism that respects clearly the awful reality of the child brought to the font. There it meets the ultimate answer, from the Risen One, who has the keys of death and hades, that is, who comes from beyond the biographical bounds of man and yet is one with us. Then we know that if we make our bed in hell, He, too, is there. Whatever the content, the context is the free grace of the living God. And because it does not depend on the content, this context is for all and determines all.

It is clear that I am not asking for a rewriting of infant baptism so that it is like Baptist services of "Infant dedication" (so-called). Such services are dominated by biographical predictions, except that they are cast in the form of prayers of hope. We safeguard ourselves against the falsification of the prediction—or we confess ourselves unable to say anything certain about any child on the basis of the Gospel. Whatever the value of the service for the parents and the church who take up the task of caring for the child, it says virtually nothing about the child in himself. That is why Baptists must confess they have not solved the problem of what to do with infants in church, however justified their objections to traditional infant baptism. And what they lack is what a reformed infant baptism could supply: a concentration on the infant in the light of the Gospel of God. Hence the simple elements of baptism are quite appropriate here: the triune name of God is the ultimate context of the child's existence, while water—water of life, of washing, even the water of the deeps, the hellish abyss of life through which we are saved—has a variety of meanings which as always in baptism are controlled by the Gospel, the Name of God. But water has liturgical value, giving a concrete application to the child that is hard to replace in other ritual forms.

Infant baptism, understood in this way, would actualise important aspects of the Gospel, according to which the

fundamental conditions of new life for all men are disclosed in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen and present in this world. But there are other elements, indispensable to and perhaps more prominent in New Testament baptism. In these, there is an individualising element, a focus on the sinner who repents, the believer who confesses, the disciple at the point of leaving all. If baptism in the former sense is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ as the baptism of new creation, in the latter sense it is rooted both in the baptism of Jesus as the beginning of his individual way of ministry and in the baptism of Christians who are to be disciples. Here the biographical element is essential—though even now not predictive. And it is impossible to do justice to this side of baptism without seeing that it involves the self-consciousness, the decision, the believing and obedience of someone old enough to understand, or to respond to preaching. Infant baptism proclaims the Gospel as the salvation of humanity; the baptism of believers is the proclamation of the Gospel as the foundation of the church, of the company of those who have been chosen in grace so to know grace that they are made one in the serving fellowship of God's grace in the world.

The two baptisms cannot be telescoped into one without loss of clarity. Each requires the other: not one being dominant in one church, the other in another church, but both together accepted in one church, practised happily and offered freely to all Christians.

What then about the principle of "one baptism"? It is no way infringed. Already, we have no difficulty in accepting that many baptisms of different individuals are one baptism by virtue of the Trinitarian name and the water. We see that both infant baptism and believers' baptism are one. We can see unity in the events of baptism—confirmation—first communion, despite their being divided over time. We can see one baptism in the New Testament reports of many different baptisms and their varying interpretations—which, as I have argued, cannot be brought to a simple unity in which all the meaning might be realized in one act. All this is to say that the unity of baptism does not depend, and has never depended, on a unity to be discovered in some feature of the event of baptism itself, or in interpretations which are part of the baptism, except the Name of God. Then why should it be made to depend on its being performed only once to each person? This would make sense only if each person was from beginning to end one simple thing, so that the person's being in Christ could be indicated adequately in one simple act. But persons exist at two quite different though not separated levels; at the unconscious, passive level of infancy, and at the conscious, purposive, individualised and individualising level of adulthood. We are not one or the other: we become both and remain both, and we do not help ourselves by denying one or the other. Yet as churches, we make a claim for baptism as a complete initiatory rite—it suffices to make a man a Christian—only to refuse to administer it in a way that shows we have some under-

standing of the full scope of manhood. A united church with a reformed baptismal practice could do that.

No doubt, it will be objected that to allow one person to be baptized twice is to open the door to neurotic persons to get themselves baptized every time they feel a special spiritual crisis. I think that would be pastorally undesirable, but I do not see it as an extreme sacramental solecism in any other way. In any case, good paedobaptist and baptist principles, which are the foundation of my argument here, are a sufficient defence against it. Baptism is not to be given at the whim of the recipient—regardless of the understanding of the Church. It is a shortcoming of the position of the United Reformed Church—Churches of Christ document that it sees the initiative for believers' baptism as coming from individuals who want something extra, whereas it ought to come from a church which has the courage and insight to teach and offer what most fully can express the Gospel. The real safeguard (which follows from this first consideration in some ways), is that both baptisms which are in the one Baptism rest on and testify to the priority of God's grace and calling. Therefore a man should and can be told that his baptism as a believer into discipleship is never invalidated or cancelled by his failures, so that he needs to be baptized again. He knows still that he is baptized, and so he is enabled to evaluate his failure in the context of his being, and knowing that he is, within the grace of God. In the call to discipleship which has come home to him he knows that grace is infinitely sufficient (infant baptism), but he knows it is no antinomian grace (believers' baptism). In both cases, what he knows is God's grace that came to him as he is—as infant and as hearer of the word of grace—and that the reality of what was there declared to be his state is not the result of his will or wish but of God's.

To conclude. I am well aware that baptism is not the only obstacle to unity, even from the side of baptists. I know, too, that my view will be hotly contested, which is one reason why it may not help unity discussions, for they depend on putting theological controversy to sleep if at all possible. But, on all sides, we admit that baptism is in a crisis, and with it, our preaching of the Gospel, our applying it concretely to individuals inside and outside the churches. Meantime, the bulk of theorising about the baptism is still trapped by our divisions into apologetic for either paedobaptism or believers' baptism, although the baptismal crisis is plain to see on both sides of that divide. The theories do not overcome the crisis partly because they are developed within the terms laid down by the basic structures of the crisis. Thinking that will break out of the weary and inadequate denominational apologetic must presuppose a different kind of church—a united church freer for the fullness of the Gospel. And perhaps such speculations as these will contribute to the coming of such a church.

HADDON WILLMER

A FIRST REPORT FROM NAIROBI

From the 23rd November to December 10th, 1975, the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. A total of 676 delegates were present representing the 271 member churches of the Council. Of these delegates 389 were designated as clergy and 287 as lay. Amongst the 676 there were 152 women and 62 designated as Youth Delegates, i.e., under 30 years of age. In addition to the delegates the large number of Fraternal Delegates, Advisers, Observers, Staff and Guests took the total of those present to well over 1,200—probably more. Indeed, one of the critical comments about the Assembly was that at times the delegates felt overwhelmed by the number of advisers and staff who were constantly at hand with advice and debate interventions. The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland was represented by Dr David Russell, Mr John Briggs and myself.

This report is being written within a few days of my return from Nairobi and there has been no chance to reflect on the events. What I set down here are the impressions of the Assembly as I saw it and shared in it.

In order for you to make any sense of these impressions, a word must be said about the organisation of the Assembly. It began with Plenary Sessions held in the main hall of the magnificent (no other word will do!) Kenyatta Conference Centre. The theme of Jesus Christ Frees and Unites was opened up in **Plenary Sessions** through addresses, music and drama. The Assembly then broke up into small **Bible Study Work Groups** which worked together on Bible passages illustrating the theme. After these came **the Sections**—six in all—which again looked at the Assembly theme under various headings, e.g., Confessing Christ Today, What Unity Requires, Seeking Community, Education for Liberation and Community. In addition, the Assembly which is the World Council's supreme governing body, had the responsibility for reviewing work done since the previous Assembly and for defining policies and programme priorities for the next seven years. This work was begun in four **Hearings**, which were designed as forums in which delegates could obtain information, raise questions and comment about World Council policies and put forward proposals for future programme thrusts, and completed in the reports of the Hearings to the Programme Guidelines Committee, which in turn reported to a Plenary session. The **final Plenary session** of the Assembly received the reports from the Sections, from the Programme Guidelines Committee (and certain other Committees which had been convened during the Assembly) and agreed the Message to the Churches. Within all these activities, we worshipped together sometimes in hundreds, sometimes in tens. From time to time, amidst all the talk and discussion, we remembered that the Assembly was beyond all a celebration of the Christian faith. Out of that understanding and from the crowded experience of

eighteen hectic days there are three general impressions which I carry with me as my initial reaction.

(1) At Nairobi I caught a glimpse of the Church Universal

This came to me not so much in the crowded plenary sessions, but in the small Bible study work group in which I shared. We were the Church Universal in miniature. The composition of the group was as follows:-

Two Roman Catholics, one from France and one from Kenya.

Three Orthodox, a Greek Orthodox from Turkey, a Coptic Orthodox from Egypt and an Ethiopian Orthodox.

Two Anglicans, one from Zambia and the other from Australia.

Four Methodists, one each from Fiji, Antigua, Korea and the United States of America.

Two Presbyterians, one from the United States of America and the other from New Zealand.

One United Lutheran, from East Germany.

One member of the Evangelical Church in West Germany in the person of Dr Martin Niemöller.

One member of the Church of Bangladesh.

One member of the Church of the Brethren in the United States of America.

Two Baptists, one from Burma and the other from the United Kingdom.

It was an extraordinary experience to sit down with such a group, each of us with a Bible in our hands, to study together St John Chapter 8. The cynic might suggest that the outcome would resemble the disunity symbolised by Babel. In the event, what happened was closer to the fellowship of Pentecost. All agreed that the fundamental enslavement was to sin and it is from that slavery that Christ liberates us. On the basis of that liberation the Church is freed and united to share in liberating mankind from other oppressions. To work in this Bible Study Group was for me a never to be forgotten experience. The walls of denominationalism and of culture were broken down by the Holy Spirit. We were one in the Lord. From now on I shall see the one holy, catholic, apostolic Church made visible in that remarkable group of Christians around the open Word of God. Nothing can take that experience away from me.

(2) At Nairobi I experienced acutely the differences of culture within the Christian Church

Whilst the unity within the Bible study was real enough, the differences and tensions of culture and background were just as real. That these differences and tensions did not finally break the bond of oneness in Christ is evidence enough of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. I am bound to say that this holding together in fellowship in the face of such vast differences seemed to me to put to shame the all too

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To the Readers of the "Fraternal".

Dear Friends,

"... wot's the use o' runnin' arter a man as has made his lucky and got t' other end of the Borough by this time?"

The Pickwick Papers, Charles Dickens

Sam Weller disclosed his attitude to life quite early in "The Pickwick Papers" in this expression of philosophical tolerance. He had grown up and educated himself in the back streets of London and in particular in the environs of the Borough. Luckily for Sam, Pickwick took him on as a personal man-servant and for him all ended happily.

But what of the young Sams of today when materialism is the keynote of the style of living; when might carries the vaneer of right; when the attitude seems to be "What is yours is mine if I can get it"?

Education must play its part. A *Times* leader some time ago said "Education will fall short of its purpose if it does not include some preparation for living ...".

Churches must play their part but that lies in a twofold direction. Positive teaching of course is the one part but what about the avoidance of temptation?

Thefts from Churches are increasing and sometimes it seems that deacons are accepting the fact of thefts as an inevitable fact of life—a kind of "Wot's the use of runnin' arter a man as has made his lucky".

Valuable equipment of all kinds now belongs to churches and integrated organisations e.g. band instruments, amplifying equipment, tape recorders, projection equipment, colour TV—you name it and I can tell you how often it is stolen.

Sometimes it is clear that thieves have a pre-knowledge of premises and of the nature of equipment.

Security must be tightened and valuable equipment made the responsibility of Property Stewards. Above all thefts should not be accepted simply as a symptom of social malaise. Any theft should be followed by a retrospective scrutiny of security and by a process of self examination to ascertain if by careful forethought a theft could have been avoided by the diaconate.

Forethought often precludes the need for rueful afterthought.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. L. COLVIN

General Manager

often petty divisiveness of our own Christian context. The differences and tensions of Nairobi can be illustrated in three ways:

(a) The African Christian tends to see the more recent history of his continent rather differently to those of us who are European. It is by no means easy to see the truth of the matter. All too often the white man is seen as an oppressor and an exploiter rather than as a liberator through education and technological development. Freedom is seen in terms of Africa for the African. It was good that the Assembly met in Africa; the delegates were able to try and see Christianity and the Church through the eyes of Africans. It was not an easy exercise but a necessary one. It was tension creating and difference creating, nevertheless the unity in Christ held. But my attitudes can never be quite the same again.

(b) One of the Sections discussed the concept of Seeking Community and this involved particularly the relationships with those of other faiths than Christianity—the question of dialogue with those of other faiths is difficult. As the Society in which we live becomes more and more multi-racial, this question becomes more and more relevant for us. Those Christians who have lived all their lives in lands where other faiths predominate live day by day with this question. Whether they like it or not, they live their lives in a constant dialogue with those of other faiths. It is an inescapable part of their cultural context. The matter is not peripheral, an ecclesiastical extra, it is central to their very existence. For them some sort of dialogue is not simply a possibility, it is an inevitability. Some of these Christians become impatient with many of the hesitations expressed about talking with those of other religions. Some of them claim to have benefited in their religious experience through such contact. Those of us from a Western context were challenged to think again (or perhaps for the first time!) about our conversation with members of other religions—and our attitudes to them. Once again there was some tension on this matter, which proved creative through deeper appreciation of different points of view.

(c) One of the more remarkable debates took place on the question of human rights. This issue arose at several points in the Assembly's programme but nowhere more acutely than in a discussion relating to the Helsinki Agreement. It was suggested that whilst many countries were named by the World Council of Churches as violating human rights rarely, if ever, were Eastern European governments mentioned. Naturally such a statement brought an immediate response from Eastern European Christians. The debate was so lively that it was decided to continue it informally later in the evening of the same day. Several hundred people returned for a further instalment of the discussion—one of the frankest I have ever heard in ecumenical circles. After two hours whilst there was no sign of slackening in pace, the moderator called a halt.

To say that there was tension and differences of opinion is to put it mildly. Christians from Eastern Europe asked, time and again, for an understanding of **their** context. They were known and professing Christians in states avowedly atheistic. There is a sense in which their Christianity made them marked men. As I write these words, they will be back in their own lands with the mass media having reported some at least of the debate. Some delegates from the West argued that the imprisonment of Christians of whatever persuasion for whatever reason relating to their faith constituted an infringement of human rights. Obviously this is true as we see things. From the point of view of the Christians from the Communist Lands the matter was not as simple as that. That such a debate could take place within the holding fellowship of the Christian Church whilst certainly tension creating and sometimes bewildering, was undoubtedly both healthy and valuable. It led to deeper understanding at least of the problems, and this in turn nurtures oneness in Christ.

(3) At Nairobi I heard constantly the call to Evangelism

Perhaps I was fortunate to be one of the hundred or so delegates allocated to the Section on Confessing Christ Today. But within this Section there was unanimity that a vital task of the Christian Church was to make Christ known. The terms of reference given to the Section illustrate this clearly. "Confessing Christ is the foundation of the ecumenical movement. . . . This Section has a unique role within the Assembly. It directs our attention, quite explicitly, to the One who stands at the centre of the Nairobi gathering, of the ecumenical movement, of the whole Christian Church. Today, as in every age, the Church is caught up in the joyful, dynamizing confession 'that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'—(Phil. 2:11). This Section's task is to help the Church make confession of its Lord. . . ."

Space forbids more than a few brief comments upon the work of the Section. Its Report has the following headings—Confessing Christ as an act of Conversion; Many Cultures, One Christ; Confessing Christ in Worship and Life; A call to Confess and Proclaim. The final section of the Report, as its title suggests, is a call to Evangelism. The opening paragraphs relate to the Whole Gospel and contain the following definition:

"The Gospel always includes: the announcement of God's Kingdom and love through Jesus Christ, the offer of grace and forgiveness of sins, the invitation to repentance and faith in Him, the summons to fellowship in God's Church, the command to witness to God's saving words and deeds, the responsibility to participate in the struggle for justice and human dignity, the obligation to denounce all that hinders human wholeness, and a commitment to risk life itself."

After paragraphs dealing with the Whole World, the Whole Church, and Methodology, the call ends with a cry for a sense of urgency:

“. . . neither theoretical nor practical differences must be allowed to dampen the fires of evangelism. Confessing Christ must be done **today**. . . . It cannot wait for a time that is comfortable for us. . . . The World requires, and God demands, that we recognize the urgency to proclaim the saving word of God—today. God's acceptable time demands that we respond in all haste. 'And how terrible it would be for me if I did not preach the Gospel'—(I Cor. 9:16).”

To share in the work of this Section and in the preparation of its Report in company with Christians from all over the world made the trip to Nairobi for me truly an inspiration. Please God I can respond to the Call from Nairobi to evangelize and to Confess Christ Today—for how the world needs the Saviour!

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THE BAPTIST COMMUNITY OF THE RIVER ZAIRE

“The cousin of sleep is death”. So runs a local proverb. The preacher challenged the congregation to consider whether they as a church were asleep, or whether they were vigilant and active in the Master's service. The occasion was a service on the 21st December 1974 at Itaga, Kinchasa, to promote further support for the women's work in the city.

On the 5th January 1975 at Kitega Church, Kinchasa, the theme of the whole service and of the sermon was that we should give “glory to God” and to God alone. At the conclusion of the sermon, the men's choir sang spontaneously “Tonda, tonda Njambel!” (Praise God! Praise God!) to a very catchy African melody, and the final hymn of the service repeated this same theme.

The following week, the 12th January, at Limete Church, Kinchasa, there was a service of Dedication for the C.B.F.Z.* Kinshasa Sunday School teachers, of whom about 200 were present. After the Act of Dedication and the presentation of teachers' certificates, the Rev. Kwama preached on the Feeding of the Five Thousand, and in dramatic African fashion, emphasised the words “You, give them something to eat,” and brought home the tremendous responsibility of Sunday School teachers in the work of the Church. Such was the reaction to this challenge, in the circumstances and atmosphere surrounding the Church, that the teachers interrupted the sermon, singing, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?—feed my sheep.” Words from another context but with a very applicable meaning.

Why do I mention these three incidents? I mention them because they represent a reaction of the Church to pressures brought upon them by recent Government decisions.

The Government announced in the summer of 1974 that, because Zaire is a lay-state, that there would be no further public holidays for religious festivals, and that the last one, Christmas Day, was now being abolished. The meaning didn't really sink in at the time. But as Christmas drew nearer, the Christians realised what they would be missing. No amount of explanation of the historic facts that “although no one doubts the fact of Christ's birth, no one really knows the actual date,” seemed to quieten the hearts of the Christian public. It was especially ironic that the President of the country should return from his Far Eastern tour on the 24th December, and that day was proclaimed a public holiday in Kinshasa in honour of his return, whereas the following day, the 25th, was a working day. This did not stop the Christians observing Christmas. Some observed it over the weekend of the 21st/22nd; many during the night of the 24th/25th which is a traditional time for them; some held services during the day of the 25th for those who were

* C.B.F.Z. Communauté Baptiste du Fleuve Zaïre. (Baptist Community of the River Zaïre).

not working, whilst others held the main service after working hours that same day. For many, the services were even more joyful and full of meaning than usual. The State ruling served to awaken Christians to the real meaning of their faith.

Then, on the 30th December, after a three day meeting of the Bureau Politique, cruising along the River Zaire on the President's boat, m/s Kamanyola, a whole series of new measures was announced. This was the "radicalisation of the revolution" or "the revolution within the revolution". The measures were the result of a critical examination of the political, economic, social and cultural sectors in the life of the country, and were designed to combat what were seen as the Ten Plagues affecting the country. These are: misuse of freedom or licence, the agricultural crisis, unemployment, inflation, a consumer society, aspects of education and youth, a costly army, social injustice, social problems, and individualism or egotism.

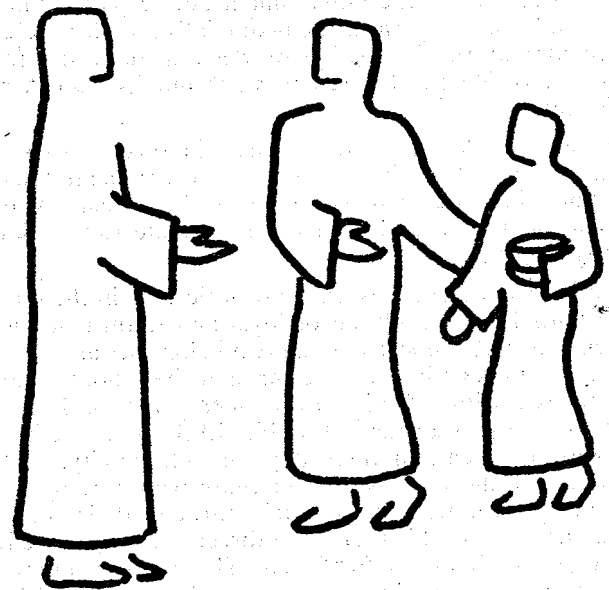
There is not space to go into the background or into details on the measures taken. The basis is the political ideology, called "Mobutism", which has its roots in the ancestral past. It is not founded on the class struggle, but its aim is to unite all Zairians into one family. There will be "centres of meditation" at each place marking important stages in the life of President Mobutu.

The emphasis on agriculture will be on making the country self-supporting, especially in basic foods, so that the country does not have to rely on imports. All large building, producing and distributing companies will be nationalised, and Zairians must invest only in Zaire, and not in overseas banks and property.

The present educational system is judged not to have its roots in the African corporate society and it does not correspond with the drive for authenticity. Hence the need to introduce another system which will develop potentialities in the African way of living. The authentic school will incorporate or adapt the traditional initiation of youth into the world, and will prepare the students for life. At the end of this school-year, every student finishing Secondary School will be obliged to give one year's civic service, either in agriculture, the army, or in political education. Thus there will be no first year in the University or in any Institut Supérieur in 1975/76. All Zairian children in primary or secondary schools overseas must return to Zaire to participate in this new orientation. The teaching of religion in schools has been abolished, and replaced by civic and political education. The educational offices of the Catholics, Protestants and Kimbanguists have likewise been closed. All education is now in the hands of the State.

Thus the State recognises that youth, well-organised, responsible and productive, is the guarantee of the future. The Bureau Politique has decided to reinforce the political and ideological education of the young, and to use them in a vast programme of social and economic reconstruction, and

"There is a lad here" . . .



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to encourage them to be vigilant against all mental alienation.

President Mobutu has said that there is still freedom of religious observance in Zaire, and that nothing is hindering the Churches in their teaching of young people outside school hours. What the Government does reject is "mental alienation"—i.e.: a form of neo-colonialism under the cloak of religion; or the imposition of western ideas and forms, without allowing the Church to work out its own African Christianity.

These measures affect the Church in several ways. One might also add "varying" ways, for Government laws are sometimes interpreted in various ways by officials who are far from Kinshasa, and far from immediate supervision by their superiors.

The immediate changes are most noticeable in the schools. Protestants have a tradition of loyal and faithful service in church and state schools, and many missionaries and Zairians have given outstanding service through the schools, and are remembered with affection by former students. It is very interesting to visit an Institution like I.P.E. Kimpese in their company and hear, in these days of authenticity, of their gratitude for the past. No doubt those who now serve will continue to bear witness for Christ through their character and manner of teaching. But the direct teaching of religion during school hours is forbidden. There was a branch of opinion that believed that the Church school was the Church nursery, and that the pupils were the Church members of the future. Some went so far as to say that Sunday Schools were unnecessary because the children attended our day-schools. Having served in an area where there was a very large number of non-subsidised schools, and where the whole burden of supporting these schools and paying the teachers, fell on the Church, I sometimes wondered whether a disproportionate amount of time and energy was not given to the educational programme.

However, whatever the pro's and con's, those days have gone. The schools are nationalised. How this will work out in practice, where school buildings are often an integral, if not major part of the Church "compound/mission" remains to be seen.

There is evidence that the Church leaders are seeking a creative alternative. The Dedication Service for Kinshasa CBFZ Sunday School teachers represented one such. This is not a new effort, but rather a vigorous reinforcing of the Kinshasa Sunday School programme. At this same service were representatives of "La Ligue pour la Lecture de la Bible" (Scripture Union) and they were asked to organise training camps for the C.B.F.Z. within Kinshasa, for very few can attend the camps they organise outside the city. These, one hopes, are but the beginning of the Church's efforts to reach and win children and young people for Christ.

There will be great changes too in the administrative structure of our Community. Not only is the Protestant Educational Office, which served Protestant schools all over the country closing. But along with it, our C.B.F.Z. Educational Offices, both in the General Secretariat and the four Regional Offices. These have played a very large part in the life and work of our Community up till now in all sorts of ways, some not immediately connected with education. Perhaps the Church has lent too heavily upon them, and must now learn to do without this "crutch"? Anyway, control of schools and payment of teachers will be done directly through the State Educational Offices.

All these things make the unifying of our Lower, Middle and Upper River Churches, and the fusion of the B.M.S. with them, seem like ancient history! Perhaps recent events help us take our eyes off our own tensions and be more positive in our advancement of the Gospel. Perhaps these measures are a pruning, in order that the Church might be strengthened.

We have been one Community, the Communauté Baptiste du Fleuve Zaire (Baptist Community of the River Zaire) for two years now. A great deal of progress has been made, although things are far from ideal. It takes time to unite people from widely different regions; it is not easy to overcome suspicion and fear. One is aware, too, of the dangers of creating and trying to maintain a top-heavy structure. It is difficult for the Christians in villages up to 1,000 miles from Kinshasa to appreciate the importance of a central Secretariat, especially when they have difficulty paying their own pastors. It seemed right to create such a structure. Maybe it will have to be modified. In whatever form, the Community is seeking the most efficient way of co-ordinating our work from Kimpese to Kisangani.

Great as is the desire of the General Secretary, Christian Education and Women's secretaries, and other members of the staff, to travel in the regions and visit even the remotest village, cost is the limiting factor. Such visits would make the General Secretariat come alive for the people. It would be seen relevant because of the conferences and retreats which would be held. But whilst one can travel from Kinshasa to the Lower River comparatively cheaply and certainly very easily; Kinshasa to the Middle River is possible only with much saving; whilst Kinshasa to the Upper River is very difficult indeed. The return boat or air-fare to Kisangani is about £100.

Another factor which will change the life of the Church in Kinshasa and the Lower River, is the coming Independence of Angola. People are crossing the border regularly for exploratory visits. Seven of the fourteen C.B.F.Z. pastors in Kinshasa are Angolan, and a large proportion of members are Angolan. Will they all return to their country? How soon will they return? The Church in these two areas of Zaire has benefited from their dynamic witness. Can the Zairian Church witness dynamically itself? The coming months will provide answers to these questions.

One area in which the C.B.F.Z., in common with other communities, has to think hard about its policy is in the realm of pastoral training. There have been numerous factors during the past year to provoke thought:

- a drastic change in the staffing situation at the Baptist School of Theology at Yakusu.
- an awareness by the C.B.F.Z. that with the rising standard at Yakusu, making it almost comparable with the united theological college in Kinshasa, E.T.E.K., that the C.B.F.Z. would no longer divide its meagre resources of personnel and finance between the two. Thus the decision in May 1974 to close provisionally the Yakusu school and transfer the students to E.T.E.K.
- E.T.E.K. was willing to admit all the students (there were 1st and 3rd year men) but because of lack of funds, the C.B.F.Z. could not be responsible for the 1st year men and their families. Also, the E.T.E.K. Council decided later that it would no longer accept a new intake, mainly because of finance, staff and a confusion over the level of training.
- a strike by the E.T.E.K. students in May 1974 over the title to be written on their Diploma. The students were dissatisfied with just the mention of "4 years' theology"; they wanted "Graduat"—i.e. 2 years post Secondary School. Their hope was to clarify the level so that those who would teach religion in schools and qualify for a Government salary, should receive what was due to a person with that qualification. The College Council was unable to resolve the conflict and called in the officers of the E.C.Z. (Church of Christ in Zaire): the co-ordinating body of all the Protestant Churches in Zaire. Their Executive Committee pronounced that E.T.E.K. and equivalent colleges should become Instituts Supérieurs de Théologie, putting them on a level with other State Instituts Supérieurs, with a programme approaching that of the University, but more practical in approach.

The Churches will be meeting after this article has gone to press to discuss what sort of theological education they really require and at what level. They will think of the costs involved in training, and of the salaries which pastors will expect upon completion of their studies. The present system is: higher education, higher salary.

The recent Government measures provide two new factors in this debate. There will be no more teaching of religion in schools. This will test the vocation of men in training. Are they only there for the salary they would have received from the State? It may possibly affect the numbers of those wanting training, and this in turn will affect the cost per student. The other factor is the Government decision that the Faculties of Theology (R/C, Protestant and Kimbanguist) should no longer be part of the National University. Zaire is a lay-state and cannot logically support financially the Faculties of Theology. So the Church has to consider what measures to take. In one way, this state decision is a relief, for the Church has been troubled over the character of

some of the students the Faculty was forced to accept; students who had no recommendation from the churches.

In December 1974 the Missionary Aviation Fellowship called a conference to review their first six months' operations from Kimpese, and to plan for the coming year. Interest in the Conference can be gauged from the fact that all those invited, attended. Representatives were present from medical, pastoral and agricultural services of the Church, as well as Angolan representatives. The aeroplane has revolutionised work in the Lower River. It makes public health work practicable over a wide area, and has enormous potentialities for assisting the development of the work in Angola. San Salvador, for example, is only a 15-minute flight from Kimpese. However, the aspect of the conference which caught my attention was the development of theological education by extension. This is already being applied by the Community near Boma, and the Conference Centre at Kimpese is looking into the possibilities of developing it. This scheme has the advantage that the student does not have to uproot himself and his family for three or four years to live in an institution where the cost of living is usually much higher than it would be in his own village. Instead, the professor would come to him. Overheads would be at a minimum. Of course, the Lower River is a small region geographically and comparatively densely populated. One can reach the furthest church district within 40 minutes' flying time. Whether such a scheme would work in the vaster areas of the Middle and Upper River is a question which the Church will be studying.

Conclusion. I have concentrated in this article on one or two issues which loom large. I have said nothing about the ongoing work at local level. Each of the four areas of our C.B.F.Z. area has been covered in the last year in the Missionary Herald, and these tell of opportunities, problems, responsibilities, joys and heart-aches.

At the end of 1974 our General Secretary, the Rev. Mfwilwakanda, visited Toronto, Saskatoon and Vancouver to participate in a Canadian Church Conference on Evangelism. As one of six ex-patriate delegates, he was able to give a fresh slant on the approach of the Canadian churches in their evangelism. Thus, Zaire was able to help Canada. We need one another's help. The Churches in Zaire still seek yours.

DEREK A. RUMBOL

WEST HAM CENTRAL MISSION

409 Barking Road, Plaistow, London, E13 8AL

My dear Brother Minister,

I am glad to report that things have gone very happily for me in my presidential year, although I confess that at times life has been quite hectic! I have found our people in good heart although 'pushing against the collar' in many spheres of service, but the thing which has really delighted me is the spiritual atmosphere of so many of the churches I have visited.

I expect that you saw the announcement in the "Baptist Times" some months back, that we were now in a position to announce the launching of our new building scheme at our Barking Road Plaistow site. To put it in a nutshell, we are proposing to build three blocks of flats and flatlets which will provide housing for some 80 people. All the necessary formalities have now been gone through, although it is just possible that we might still be frustrated by the appalling economic state of the country. However, it does look as though we have the green light to go ahead, and I personally hope that we shall be able to take in our first residents sometime in 1978.

I acknowledge with gratitude the great help we are receiving from the officers of the Baptist Men's Movement Housing Association.

The work at Greenwoods and Orchard House, and Marnham House Settlement, and Rest-a-While continues unabated. The cut-back of the social welfare services by Government and Local Authority is reducing some types of application for Greenwoods, and there is never a lack of people who want to come to any of our Homes.

We acknowledge the continuing and rising support of our subscribers and of our friends in the churches, and we thank God for all the encouragement we are receiving.

Let me remind you that we have a NEW MISSION COLOUR FILMSTRIP which is available with tape and/or manuscript, and which is being very warmly received in the churches.

May God's blessing be on you and on your people, and on your own fine work.

Yours very sincerely,

STANLEY TURL

Superintendent of the Mission