

An Ecumenical Notebook

by "TYCHICUS"

From Fish Hoek, South Africa

The session of St. Kirian's Presbyterian Church, Fish Hoek, has agreed to make their church building available to the Bantu Presbyterian Church for services on Sunday afternoons.

(Presbyterian Leader)

From the U.S.A.

Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, 59, stated clerk (Chief executive) of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was elected General Secretary of the World Council of Churches by an "overwhelming majority" in a closed session of the W.C.C.'s Central Committee. He succeeds Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft who is retiring.

Dr. Blake was born in St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. on the 7th November 1906. He studied at Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary. He also did post-graduate study at New College, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Dr. Blake was elected president of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. in 1954 and served until 1957. He continues to serve as a member of its General Board.

Dr. Blake was a delegate to both the second and third Assemblies of the World Council of Churches; to General Councils of the World Presbyterian Alliance; and to Faith and Order Conferences held at Tuna, Sweden, and Oberlin, Ohio, U.S.A.

Dr. Blake has also gained prominence in the U.S.A. for his sympathy to the Civil Rights movement.

(Christian Recorder)

From Geneva

The fourth assembly of the World Council of Churches will be held at Uppsala in Sweden in 1968. The assembly will be divided into six sections. The sections will deal with:

1. The Church's unity in a shrinking world.
2. The Church in Mission.
3. The churches' rôle in social change.
4. The churches' rôle in international relations.
5. The worship of God in a secular age.
6. A new style of living.

(Christian Recorder)

From Africa

From February to June 1965 a survey team investigated the present situation of the Church in West and Equatorial Africa. The survey area included 21 nations (Cameroun, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazza), Dahomey, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Portuguese Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spanish Equatorial Africa, Togo and Upper Volta).

Some of the more significant findings were:

- (i) The population explosion in this region is estimated to be thirty thousand a week, or 1.6 million a year.
- (ii) This represents an increase each week of about 15,000 in the Muslim community, 2,000 in the Protestant community, 4,000 in the Roman Catholic community, and some 10,000 in animistic society.
- (iii) Of the total population of 110 million, some 36 million are Muslims, 4 million Protestant, 5 million are Catholics and about 65 million are animists.
- (iv) Evangelism has progressed at very uneven rates among the 374 tribes in this region. Highly evangelised tribes live next door to virtually unevangelised tribes.
- (v) In the whole region, there is a total of 180 churches and

missionary bodies at work (mostly the latter). Several of these bodies are linked confessionally with bodies in other countries, but since the names employed are usually quite different, the impression given is of a vast confused network of unrelated organizations.

(vi) There is an almost complete absence of evangelistic thrusts by the autonomous churches across international frontiers. Two exceptions only are known; the Methodist Church in Ghana is sending pastors to the Gambia and the Anglican Church in Nigeria a pastor to north western Liberia.

(vii) On the other hand, one of the most remarkable phenomena noted in the survey is that the so-called separatist churches have embarked upon a spontaneous northward expansion, in which congregations are being established in the large Muslim cities of the north, as well as in countless smaller interior towns. Since members of these African independent churches are estimated to number 700,000 in the region under survey, this northward thrust, involving such a strong evangelising community, constitutes a major missionary achievement.

(International Review of Missions)

An Ecumenical Glossary

Biblical Theology. A term often used to describe a contemporary approach to the Bible which takes the Bible's witness and message to be definitive for faith. During the last twenty-five or thirty years we have seen this approach taken with new seriousness by theologians and churchmen of every Christian Tradition. The "rediscovery of the Bible" has been one of the most important factors in drawing the churches together and making the modern ecumenical movement possible.

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Can One be a Tramp and a Church Goer?

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the ladder of society. Other tramps came, more work was done.

The experience with the tramps was never a peaceful one. Like everyone else, they had irresponsible moments. They would drink too much, sleep too late in the morning or quarrel among themselves. Their society was not so terribly different from any other.

Two of them, a couple in their mid-forties, who considered themselves to be husband and wife, worked so efficiently and appeared to have the alcoholic problem so well in hand that we were able to find jobs for both of them. They moved from the church cellar where they had been sleeping in make-shift beds to a cheap hotel. When anyone asked if our work with the tramps was successful we always cited this couple. They had been tramps and now they were productive members of society. But no one within the group believed that this couple was the real success of our contacts with the tramps, and as a result no one was terribly surprised to find them back in the soup line thoroughly re-integrated into the ranks of the tramps within a period of two months.

What was the purpose of our work? It was definitely not to do good to tramps. Most of us would insist that the tramps had done far more for us than we had done for them. Our work was not to make the tramps church-going Christians. If this had been our goal, we should have had to convert the church-going members of the parish before even making contact with the tramps. Our intention was simply to witness to Jesus Christ as a Christian community that knew no limits. Our witnessing was without ulterior motives in so far as we merely attempted to be at the service of our fellow men and women.

Reactions to this apostolate by church-going Christians were sometimes amusing but most often sad. There were objections that our church was becoming a gathering place for drunkards, dirty, poorly dressed men and women. There were complaints that one could not enter or leave the church without

being approached from all sides by poor people who wanted money. Some parishioners even noticed that we offered accommodations in a dark damp church cellar to all tramps without asking any proof of their marital status. This particular moral question never seems to have been posed when the tramps were sleeping on the pavements or under the bridges.

Before leaving the parish I celebrated a farewell mass to which all of the tramps were invited. Almost a hundred of them came and assisted devoutly and in silence at a liturgy that many of them had not witnessed since childhood. After the mass an old tramp shook my hand and thanked me. "It is the first time in fifty years", he said, "that I came into a church to pray. The last time I was thrown out by a sacristan who told me I had no right to be there."

The tramps made us aware of the gap which separates Christians from the world. Our church and its members were too respectable for them. Our poverty only consisted in giving of our super-abundance. Their poverty shocked, shamed, and repelled us. Yet Christ certainly had their poverty in mind when he said, "Blessed are the poor". Communion with the tramps continues in this Parisian parish under the direction of its pastor.

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It is to be distinguished from the approach both of **fundamentalists** and **liberals**. Sometimes it looks like fundamentalism in that it contains a reaction against the liberal movement in theology. But it would be even more true to say that it grew out of the work of the great liberal critics. Having learned from them to study the Bible with the aid of scientific historical techniques, scholars were driven to examine their own presuppositions afresh and to take with a new seriousness the historic faith of the Church. What we have to do with in the whole Bible is the witness of believing men.

They write of what they believe God has said to Israel and in Jesus Christ. As a result, the Bible must be said to mediate the unique revelation of God, and in spite of the human errors of its writers, is rightly called the Word of God.

(The Life and Mission of the Church)

CHRISTIANS AT PRAYER

PRAYER FOR UNITY

"Only twenty years ago a quite small number of people — of different Christian denominations — were convinced that they ought to pray **especially** (though such prayers already existed) for Christian unity. To-day we have evidence that probably millions in every continent of the world are joining in this prayer. Numbers do not matter very much; what matters is that Christians should pray in harmony for their Lord's known will for his Church — that they should care more and more, as he did, for the **union of all his people, in love towards one another and in witness to the world.**"

These words are taken from a leaflet distributed by the Christian Council of South Africa. The leaflet appeals to all Christians in South Africa to unite with Christians in the Southern hemisphere to pray for Christian unity during the week 22-29th May.

The leaflet contains an order of service and a meditation and prayer guide for each day of that week.

Leaflets are available at a cost of R1.50 per 100 from the Christian Council of South Africa, P.O. Box 2846, Cape Town.

PRAYER FOR YOUTH

The heads of eight churches in South Africa have signed the call for prayer for the Students' Christian Association on the 8th May, 1966.

As in past years students, as members of the S.C.A. and related bodies, will attend and take leading parts in church services at which special prayers will be said for the youth of South Africa.

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LET WEL

Die Redaksie van Pro Veritate verklaar dat hy nie verantwoordelik is vir menings en standpunte wat in enige ander artikel van hierdie blad verskyn as die inleidingsartikels en redaksionele verklarings nie.