

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

VOL. XVI., No. 4.

OCTOBER, 1955.

Editorial Notes

FOR many British Baptists—especially as it provided for most of them their only opportunity in a life-time of attending such gatherings—the Baptist World Congress will be an abiding and glowing memory. This Jubilee Congress will go down in our history as the largest gathering of Baptists ever to have assembled in Britain or, indeed, in Europe and also as the most internationally representative B.W.A. Congress ever. It was a memorable and spectacular demonstration of the mounting strength and deepening fellowship of Baptists throughout the world and, for considerable numbers, transformed the Baptist World Alliance from a statistical boast into a communion of persons.

The scanty notice which the Congress received in our national press occasioned surprise, particularly among American delegates who, of course, were not aware that newsprint was still rationed and perhaps did not realise that the neglect was also due in part to the somewhat pietistic nature of many of the addresses and that to catch the ear of the press in this country one must coin sensational phrases. But the neglect of the press reflected the lack of interest in such events on the part of this country's population. Indeed British Baptists themselves could not be said to have been, on the whole, conspicuously interested and one also suspects that interest among them in such events is usually in inverse proportion to geographical proximity.

For those who attended, the Congress was a great experience. If, as must be admitted, few of the addresses were really outstanding, what made it so exhilarating? Magnitude, novelty, the presence of sixty nationalities and the sense of belonging to a vast and virile world movement all contributed. There were also memorable happenings and some deeply moving moments. In spite of the dimensions of the audiences one has heard many delegates speak of the sense of fellowship which prevailed. However one may attempt to explain it, to have been there at all was in itself a great experience not likely to be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to have attended. Not the least enjoyable of the many meetings was the Historical gathering in the Dr. Williams's Library, when it was

a privilege to meet friends interested in Baptist History from a variety of nations.

The occurrence of this Congress will raise in the minds of others beside the leaders and experts the question of the relation of world-wide denominational federations like the Baptist World Alliance to the Ecumenical movement. Between 1867 and 1930 seven of these confessional organisations have been formed and are likely to flourish. As Dr. H. P. Van Dusen has said, "The relation of world-wide confessionalism . . . to world interdenominationalism is one of the most baffling and urgent problems of current ecumenical discussion." Is there any contradiction between loyalty to the B.W.A. and the World Council of Churches? Obviously many Baptists feel that there is and prefer to lend the weight of their allegiance to the promotion of Baptist world fellowship. Others feel that the one is as important as the other. It should not be overlooked that some are indifferent to either. The problem demands attention, for it seems certain to become more acute.

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With reference to the paragraphs in our last issue relating to Berea Chapel, Criccieth, and the Baptist connections of David Lloyd George, a correspondent informs us that this church joined the Caernarvonshire Baptist Association in 1939 and affiliated to the Baptist Union of Wales in 1940, five years before Lloyd George's death.

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One of the most lively and useful of the many Baptist societies in Britain today is the Baptist Students' Federation. It is also one of the newest, for its formation dates back only to 1947. In that year representatives of the six societies of Baptist students then in existence—the Robert Hall Society (Cambridge) which, founded in 1902, is the oldest of these bodies, the John Bunyan Society (Oxford), the Edward Terrill Society (Bristol), the David Fernie Society (Newcastle) and the Rushbrooke Society (Leeds)—meeting in conference at Birmingham decided to form the Federation to serve as a link between them and to encourage the formation of similar groups in other Universities. By the beginning of this present year the number had grown to 17, with several hundred members. The aims of the Federation are to provide fellowship among Baptist students, to encourage responsible Christian service, to witness among non-Christian students and promote mutual understanding among Christian students of all denominations. Provision is made for individuals at colleges, hospitals and other centres where no Baptist society exists to become personal members of the Federation. A terminal News-Letter is issued and an Annual Conference is held every Easter. Since 1951 the Federation has undertaken evangelistic

missions in a number of districts. Another recent development has been the formation within the Federation of a Fellowship, at present numbering about 80, of those contemplating overseas missionary service, while in 1952 an Association of ex-Students was formed to encourage them to play their full part in the life of local churches and keep them in contact with the Federation. This year's President is Mr. John Biggs of Downing College, Cambridge, and the Secretary is Mr. Brian Whitaker who (at University Union, Sheffield, 10) will be glad to hear from, or to be informed of, any young men and women going from our churches to Colleges, Training Hospitals, Universities, etc. It should be emphasised that the Federation is for students of all categories and not for theological students only. The growth and development of a body of this kind is obviously of great significance for the denomination and its future leadership. It is to be hoped, therefore, that churches will play their part by encouraging students from their congregations to join one or other of the societies connected with the Federation. While its membership has reached an impressive total, obviously large numbers of Baptist students are not yet linked with what is clearly one of the most hopeful and promising of recent denominational developments.

A number of donations—ranging from five shillings to ten pounds—have been received toward clearing the heavy deficit on the accounts of the Historical Society. Further gifts will be gratefully received. Please give generously—and immediately.