

another pastor after the one they had chosen had been dismissed by the Union at the order of the Department of Cults. The leaders of the Timisoara Association then refused to send this church a pastor who would give them the Lord's Supper, and they threatened her deacons should they dare to administer it themselves.

Many "unwritten laws" governing the life of our churches have recently been introduced. One stipulates that a pastor only has the right to preach in his own church and nowhere else. If a pastor wants to preach elsewhere, he must get the approval of the inspector of cults for his district, or that of the Baptist Union leaders. Now, does this not limit the freedom of movement and speech which is given to us in the Constitution and by this country's laws?

An even more disturbing and dangerous instruction, given by the inspectors of cults, only allows the pastor and members of the local church's committee to preach. How can we reconcile this with our fundamental belief that every Baptist is a priest, and that every member of the church has not only the right but also the duty to contribute to the life of the church and to speak at and lead its services? Yet this instruction is actually implemented by many pastors and by many churches.

Such State interference in the life of our churches reached a head in the spring of this year. A delegate of the Department of Cults was sent to the town, Simeria, and, threatening to withdraw permission for that church to function, asked the secretary of the church to receive back into membership a group of men, whom that church had excluded a few years ago. If we have reached a point where even the quality of a member of a church can be judged by someone from outside, then is it not time for us to ask ourselves "Whose is this church?"

Baptists in Romania are loyal citizens, with high moral standards, who wish to have a chance to show this. They believe that they can contribute something valuable to building up our socialist life, and consequently ask for the right to exist as Baptists in this society, in every sphere of its activity and at every level. The Romanian State will only benefit internally and externally if it accords us the right to a free and undisturbed existence.

The Bible teaches us to love the country in which we live, to respect its authorities, and to give them all that is due to them. However, the Bible further teaches us that our Supreme Master is God. His authority demands from us an unconditional and absolute commitment. When this is affected, we prefer to renounce this life on earth, because we believe in eternal life with God our Creator and with Christ our Saviour.

JOSEPH TON

Chinese Bishop Talks to a Missionary

This year Dr. E. H. Johnson, an ex-China missionary, who is now Secretary for Research and Planning of the Board of World Mission (Presbyterian Church) in Canada, visited China for 22 days. He knew Bishop K. H. Ting (see RCL No. 3, pp. 15-16) personally and went to see him. Bishop Ting said the following to him, according to Dr. Johnson's report:

At the present time in Nanking some 500 Christians are meeting regularly in four areas of the city, in different halls and meeting places, often on Sunday

but also at other times, depending on the rotating schedules of the workers. Denominations have disappeared, and so have the differences between clergy and laity. Leadership is becoming less and less ecclesiastical, although the Nanking group and other Christian groups do have ordained and former professional clergy among them. Those who formerly were pastors and priests often keep their titles, but the people feel leadership does not need to be in the hands of professionals, and the former professionals are simply individual members of the whole Christian group. Looking ahead at church development, Bishop Ting feels that de-clericalization and de-professionalization are the trend for the ministry. Ordained professional ministers are not considered essential in the Christian community, nor are church buildings.

Christians are not sure whether they want to use any of their former church buildings again. The church should be essentially part of the whole community, and should be recognized by an ideological position rather than by buildings. Church buildings still belong to the church and can be opened if the churches wish to do so. The former church buildings are now used as factories, warehouses, welfare centres, etc., and some are rented from the church. The Nanking Christian group has decided never to open all 30 buildings, but possibly four or none at all. They fear that the upkeep of buildings would become a difficult burden and divert the Christian community from more important tasks. They do not want to be seen again in Western style buildings, which speak of the years of Western domination. Nor are they sure that a church programme centred on a building is the right expression of Christian life in the context of the new society.

In China today Christianity is for the most part congregational and local. Bishop Ting referred to one area where a whole county in Chekiang has as many Christian services as it did before Liberation. In that county the pastor is serving as a tailor. . . The seminary staff continues and is engaged in the process of formulating what kind of expression the church should have and what kind of theological college they want for the new society of China.

Such a report is interesting but should not be taken as the "objective truth" according to L. La Dany in Hong Kong (see p. 28).

FATHER BORIS ZALIVAKO

Father Zalivako (see *RCL* No. 3, pp. 25-26) is reported to be close to death, according to Sinyavsky, the Soviet writer, now teaching at the Sorbonne.