

For presentation to the Commission on Baptist Heritage, Baptist World Alliance, Dresden, July 1999.

Knud Wümpelmann
President of the Baptist World Alliance 1990-1995
by
Bent Hylleberg
Denmark

Introduction

In his autobiographical notes¹ Knud Wümpelmann (KW) begins by mentioning his date of baptism, Easter morning the 12th of April 1936, being then a thirteen year old teenager. This is typical for KW and his understanding of life: Life springs from God's grace - and men become what God's grace create through them. In this sketch, I will present what God did in KW's life among Baptists throughout the world by painting a portrait of KW using four strokes of the brush.

1.

'I Danmark er jeg født, dér har jeg hjemme; dér har jeg rod, derfra min verden går...'

H.C. Andersen, 1850.

'In Denmark I am born, there is my home; there are my roots, from there my world begins...'

KW was born - as was Hans Christian Andersen - in Odense on Funen, and his life, too, became a fairytale. He was born in 1922 and grew up as the only child in a good Christian family. His father suffered from an incurable tuberculosis, which had been given up even by the most famous doctors in Copenhagen. The family asked a Pentecostal minister to pray for him and he was instantaneously healed. This happened when KW was six years old.² Afterwards he firmly believed in God's power: 'God is able!' became a catchword for his ministry.

The family belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, but after this healing they were baptized as believers by the Pentecostal minister, who borrowed the local Baptist church for baptismal services. So it happened that KW became an active Sunday-school-child in the local Baptist congregation, where both he and his parents later became members. Because KW's parents owned a home for elderly people guest-speakers who visited the congregation in Odense usually stayed in their home. In this way KW got to know personally many interesting pastors, evangelists and foreign missionaries, among them the Chinese leader Watchman Nee and the Swedish missionary to Congo, Aron Andersson.

KW was educated in the area of Post and Telegraph Service. He began his education on the day of the outbreak of the Second World War. After five years of education from 1939 to 1944 in different places in Denmark he graduated. From his upbringing in Odense he had learned to appreciate Christians from different denominations. Living in different places during his education, Christians from different churches now learnt

¹ This paper was prepared in co-operation with KW, i.e. he kindly lent to me his personal papers and notes. KW has since 1979 lived next to the Baptist Theological Seminary, Tølløse, where I began to teach in 1985.

² See KW: 'The EBF and the Charismatic Movement', in Report on the Seminar-Consultation of National Baptist Unions of Socialist Countries, Moscow 1979, pp. 37f.

to appreciate KW as a committed Christian. For a period he prayed his morning prayer with a Lutheran; later he was asked by his Lutheran landlady in Copenhagen to conduct the devotion in her pension once a week. And he joyfully did.

Living in different places, KW belonged to several local Baptist congregations. Staying for short periods in each place he could not serve in ministries that required continuity. Therefore, he asked his young pastor in Aarhus, Kjell Kyrø-Rasmussen (KKR), if he could give him a list with names of elderly people who needed a visit. The pastor took the opportunity to ask KW if he ever had thought of becoming a minister. From this moment KW's life changed. God had now confirmed his personal call for ministry. Many years later a Danish newspaper wrote: 'From the beginning KW considered a career with the Post and Telegraph Service. If he had continued there he certainly would have become the General Secretary. And the Danes wouldn't have had so many problems with the Department as we have today!'³

Now KW began his second education - three years of theological training from 1944 to 1947 at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Tølløse. Here he once more experienced the German occupation of his country when the Seminary buildings were seized by German soldiers in the spring of 1945. The students were then hosted in a local Baptist home belonging to a bank manager for half a year until the war was over. Shortly afterwards, KW was engaged to one of the daughters; he had found his Karen. 1947 became a key year for Karen and Knud Wümpelmann: He graduated from the Seminary, they were married, and they met the world-wide Baptist-family at the BWA-congress in Copenhagen.

The name 'Wümpelmann' has its origin in German, where it was used for the warrior who went ahead of the soldiers carrying a streamer [in German: Ein Wimpel] in order to show the direction for the army; therefore, he was called 'The Wimpelmann'. And precisely this became the task for KW - being the standard-bearer for Baptists who dedicated their lives for the Kingdom of God, serving Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit - in Denmark, in Europe and world-wide.

2.

'Give tongues of fire and hearts of love to preach the reconciling word...'

J. Montgomery, 1823.

'Tunger af ild og dog prædiken mild giv dem, du salver og sender' - N. F. S. Grundtvig, 1837.

Karen and Knud Wümpelmann had their first home in Pandrup, a small town in northern Jutland where KW became the assistant pastor of a congregation of more than 500 members. They stayed here from 1947-50. His colleague was a wise, elderly minister, Laurits Jørgensen, who was educated at Morgan Park, Chicago, and who had served as President of the Danish Baptist Union for ten years. He was a balanced leader, known for this saying: 'You can tell the truth in two ways - do it one way and the hearts will open, do it another way and they will close'.⁴ KW's sense for diplomacy was undoubtedly stimulated through Jørgensen's gentle and yet firm style of ministry. A second lesson which Karen and Knud Wümpelmann had to learn in northern Jutland had to do with endurance and hard work in ministry. KW served a big and scattered congregation with five churches and several mission-stations and with a bicycle as the only means of transportation. He earned only a small salary and yet the expectations of the minister's hospitality were great in post-war Denmark suffering from a shortage on almost everything. During the same period their first son, Jørgen, was born in 1949. KW became the editor of 'D.B. Junioren' - a magazine for Danish Baptist Teenagers - a position he held for four years, 1948-1952.

Their second home was in Copenhagen from 1950-64 where KW also began his ministry as an assistant pastor, but now in a different setting. His colleague here was Dr. F. Bredahl Petersen. Here KW learnt from

³ Berlingske Tidende, 7th of August 1989, when KW in Zagreb had been nominated as the coming President for BWA.

⁴ Bent Hylleberg and Bjarne Møller Jørgensen: 'Et kirkesamfund bliver til', København 1989, pg. 306.

Bredahl Petersen's heavy international engagement, his scholarly career and teaching, his involvement in Baptist-aid programs in Poland, Holland and among German refugees in Denmark, of which 300 became baptized, his pioneering work in the growing post-war fellowship of European Baptists, being one of 'the founding fathers' of EBF and its first President in 1950 - and at the same time serving as the President of the Danish Baptist Union, 1949-54!⁵

In Bredahl Petersen KW also met an eager evangelist with a vision - not only for Europe, but also for Copenhagen. The congregation grew in his years as pastor with 100% up to 450 members (in 1953). His projects included not only the construction of the new big Købner-Memorial Church, inaugurated in 1939, but also new residential buildings around the church - the second one ready for its purpose in 1951 as pension and hall of residence for Baptist students coming to Copenhagen. From 1945 the church-building also became the residence of a kindergarten, in addition to the already existing youthwork and Baptist scouts. KW became an ardent young minister who served not least the youth of the congregation, but already in 1951 he also chaired a special committee planning a mission-campaign with about 100 weeks of preaching in 175 different places all over the country. Danish Baptists had already seen his organizing talent.

In 1955, after two years of studies in the United States (see below), the Købner-Memorial Church asked KW to become their leader and minister, a position in which the family served until 1964, having had their second son Mogens in 1955. After the leave of Bredahl Petersen in 1955 KW had to fight serious deficits in the economy of the church - and he succeeded. Another challenge for KW was to teach a rapidly growing congregation whose inner needs had not been sufficiently met in the last part of Bredahl Petersen's ministry. When KW left the church after ten years of ministry in order to become the first General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union, the Købner-Memorial Church numbered 360 members. Over the same period the membership decreased in the Union as well.

The Danish Baptist Union very soon became aware of KW's gifts. Back from the United States he became member of the Union's Sunday School Board and served as its chairperson from 1957. This brought him directly into the leadership of the Union with a seat in the Executive Committee of the Danish Baptist Union (i.e. the Committee of Home and Foreign Mission). He now created a correspondence course for training of Sunday School teachers with 260 participants from all the congregations. He also became the Baptist member of the interdenominational Danish Sunday School Society. He was especially aware of the need for nurturing the Christian faith of teenagers brought up in the free church milieu; for those he wrote a pioneering catechism (see below).

Re-elected to the Executive Committee in 1959 he became a member of the Foreign Mission Subcommittee. After a year KW became the chairperson of this committee which worked especially with mission in Central Africa (Burundi and Rwanda) where Danish Baptists had started its own mission field in 1928. In 1963 he visited these countries shortly after their independence (1962) and the formation of the two new Baptist Unions (1960). A dream from his childhood came true. Having this chair he became the observer for the free churches in The (Lutheran) Danish Mission Council. Here KW had to face a new pioneering task in Danish church life.

In The (Lutheran) Danish Mission Council, KW soon became known and loved for his ecumenical approach to ministry. What he had learned as a child in Odense among Christians from different denominations now became a reality in his ministry between different churches. This was a breakthrough in a Lutheran state-church setting where Baptists had been imprisoned only one hundred years before and where they were still considered sectarians by most Lutherans. In 1963 KW was elected as one out of four - another one was a Lutheran bishop - for a special task within the Mission Council. This small group should draw up guidelines for a new Danish (Ecumenical) Mission Council where the free churches would be received as full members. The following year KW was elected as the first free church representative into the steering body of this new

⁵ For Dr. F. Bredahl Petersen, see Bernard Green: 'Crossing the Boundaries. A History of the European Baptist Federation', Didcot 1999, passim. In 1957 Bredahl Petersen emigrated to The United States.

ecumenical Mission Council. Later, he did a similar pioneering work within the Danish Bible Society (1970) and DanChurch Aid (1978). As the General Secretary for EBF he was able to act as facilitator for both bibles and money from these bodies given for the benefit of Eastern European Baptists.

The Danish Baptist Union had for some years discussed the need for a General Secretary. Until 1964 when the Union celebrated its 125th anniversary mostly pastors had served as volunteers in the known functions of a General Secretary. But this year the annual conference decided almost unanimously to call KW for this ministry. In Baptist congregations, in different ecumenical circles in Denmark and abroad in Baptist life and mission he was already known and respected for his unselfish and amiable ministry. The decision of the conference proved to be a blessing for the Baptists of Denmark. Both Karen and Knud were diligent servants of the Lord; they dedicated their efforts, their home and their lovely personalities to the work of the Danish Baptists for the next sixteen years, 1964-1980.⁶

Within his first year in ministry as General Secretary, KW visited all congregations in the Union, 42 in number. And so he did regularly each year in his next three years in office. He cared for the congregations as well as being a minister to the ministers. He understood his ministry as 'general', i.e. 'for all', ["kat 'olos"] - for the sake of God's people⁷. As a part of his ministry, KW was responsible for the foreign mission, the relationship to the world-wide Baptist family, and some of the ecumenical relations to churches in Denmark and abroad. Within the Union he struggled to upgrade the fellowship in different areas - in offerings stressing generosity, participation and fairness, in theological education including new buildings for the Seminary in Tølløse, in evangelism understood as word and deed, in renewal of structures for home mission - and in profiling the Baptists in their Danish context.⁸ Here KW's education within the Post and Telegraph Service became a resource for him. A report from the President of the Union reads in 1966: 'KW works with a comprehensive statistic material; every area in the Union is analysed and surveyed'.⁹ Afterwards, when KW had done his homework, action was taken in co-operation with the leadership of the different committees and the local churches for the sake of the Kingdom.

KW's obligation to ministry was heavy and his capacity for work became legendary among Danish Baptists. On one occasion 'KW' was interpreted as 'kilowatt': 'One K(ilo) W(att) is an equivalent to 1000 Watt and if you put it into one bulb you will get an enormous light! I know that KW doesn't agree! Let us then divide into light and warmth and we all agree!'¹⁰ Accordingly, when KW became the General Secretary of EBF/BWA-Europe the Danish Baptists made two full time jobs out of one getting a new General Secretary but also a Secretary for International Mission.¹¹ For 16 years Karen and Knud Wümpelmann had served Danish Baptists in a visionary, hard working but primarily reconciling ministry of the Gospel.

3.

'In Christ there is no east or west, in Him no south or north, but one great fellowship of love...'

John Oxenham, 1908.

'I Kristus er ej øst og vest, ej heller syd og nord, kun kærlighedens fællesskab...' - Einar Torstensson, 1947.

As General Secretary of the Baptist Union from 1964 KW was responsible for the relationships to both EBF and BWA. Each year he reported in written form with enthusiasm and love from these Baptist-bodies and he tried to open the eyes and ears of Danish Baptists for the blessings flowing from these international fora.

⁶ When the Unions leadership expressed thanks on behalf of the Danish Baptists to KW Karen was always mentioned. See Baptist Yearbook 1974, pg. 50; and Baptist Yearbook 1980, pg. 42. - And their service for Baptists world-wide always became a ministry for both of them; when KW was asked to become the General Secretary of EBF/BWA-Europe he said: 'My wife and I have after careful consideration accepted this call'; see Baptist Yearbook 1980, pg. 81.

⁷ From the introduction to his very first annual report as 'general' secretary, see Baptist Yearbook 1965, pg. 14.

⁸ From KW's annual report, Baptist Yearbook 1967, pp. 16ff.

⁹ Carl Thomsen, Baptist Yearbook 1966, pg. 15.

¹⁰ John Poulsen, Baptist Weekly 14-15/1969.

¹¹ Baptist Yearbook 1980, pp. 41f.

When KW became *the General Secretary and Treasurer of EBF* in 1980 he had already served as President of the European Baptist Federation 1977-79 and as the General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union he had served in EBF's council for thirteen years (since 1967). But his relationship to European Baptists reached back much further. In 1952 KW served as host in the Congress Office at the first European Baptist Congress organized by the Købner-Memorial Church of Copenhagen.¹² The year before KW participated in the Pastors' Conference at the new Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschtikon, inaugurated 1949. These two platforms for European Baptist fellowship and theological reflection became important for the life and ministry of KW.

In the 1980's much effort had to be put into the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschtikon. Partly due to deficits and partly because of a growing crisis between SBC and EBF regarding the Seminary. As General Secretary of the EBF KW served as chairman of the Seminary's Board of Trustees (1980-89). In 1989 Dr. Keith Parker, the President of the SBC/FMB, handed over the key of the Seminary to KW as the EBF General Secretary as a symbol of transference of ownership. A great day of partnership between men of honour - to be followed by days of distress and disappointment. But when troubles multiplied Karl Heinz Walter had been installed as new EBF General Secretary.¹³

But most of KW's engagement was put into Eastern Europe. Already in 1970 KW was challenged by EBF. He was asked to pioneer behind the Iron Curtain in the Soviet Union in order to make contact and if possible a better understanding between the two groups of Baptists living there - one of them trying to minister in a legal way (AUCECB), the other one (called Reform Baptists, CCECB) being in open conflict with the communist regime and therefore persecuted. KW's first visit took place in the beginning of 1971.¹⁴ In these pioneering years of reconciliation KW rarely met representatives from the Reform Baptists, but he was well informed about their conditions and point of views.¹⁵ This visit were for KW as important as was his years of theological studies in the States and his mission to Central Africa on behalf of the Danish Baptists since 1963. Now he really experienced fellowship across borders and unity in Christ in spite of different conditions for ministry.

In the Nordic Baptist Unions KW simultaneously played an important role in creating fellowship between Baptists in East and North. From 1970 annual conferences were held in a Scandinavian or an Eastern European country, and the number of participating Eastern European Baptists increased continually also when the gatherings took place in Scandinavia due to the unaligned status of the these countries in the Cold War period. The program was established primarily for lay people and it was set up as a joint venture between Baptists in Scandinavia and the ABC/USA in order to equip lay leaders for their ministries and to create a breathing hole for believers in Eastern countries.¹⁶

KW visited the Soviet Union about twenty times during his ministry in EBF and BWA. Some of the visits were due to invitations for Peace Conferences arranged by the Orthodox Church together with the Baptists. Mostly, he met with the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs, and in time he met the Reform Baptists, too. KW was much concerned about such visits as opportunities for reconciliation and bridge building. A firm stance for peace and human rights was important as were more visits into and more theological books for the East. Therefore KW gave high priority to these themes and as EBF's General

¹² See Bernard Green, op. cit., pg. 23. KW participated in each European Baptist Congress in years to come except in Berlin 1958 and in Amsterdam 1964.

¹³ To the troubled history of Rüschtikon, which accelerated in 1990, see Bernard Green, op.cit., pp. 185ff.

¹⁴ Op. cit., pp. 53ff. The two groups of Baptists bore the names 'All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists' and 'Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists'.

¹⁵ Six accounts from KW's journey to the Sovjet Union were published in Baptist Weekly, 6-12, 1971. See also KW: 'European Baptists and Baptists in the USSR', in Denton Lotz (Ed): 'Baptist Witness in the USSR', ABC/USA 1987, pp. 49ff.

¹⁶ For a history of 'The Lay Conference', see Sven Svenson: 'Building Bridges. Personal Conclusions Concerning the Activities of the Lay Conference Committee 1970-1996', Stockholm 1996. See also, Bernard Green, op. cit., pp. 69ff and 179ff.

Secretary he and others visited all Eastern European countries on behalf of the Books and Translations Committee.¹⁷ When the wall came down in 1989 KW's term as General Secretary came to a close; but God had opened a new era in European life - for Baptists, too.

A new challenge for Christians in Europe was pointed to by KW in 1982 when he drew the attention to the twenty-four million Muslims in today's Europe. He spoke of a 'new challenge on our doorstep'. At the same time he mentioned the growing problem of refugees in Europe and characterized this as an opportunity to welcome and care for 'the strangers within our gates'.¹⁸ Over the years he had not only been a visionary leader, but on his constant journeys around Europe he had been 'a patient negotiator, a constant encourager, a faithful advocate and a tireless visitor' - and everywhere his 'kind and gracious personality endeared him to European Baptists, who trusted him widely and recognised his statesmanlike qualities and deep spirituality'.¹⁹ Asked about his capacities KW spoke with humour about his health: 'Thanks to God, I am a sound sleeper and I have a stomach like an ostrich!'²⁰

After 42 years of ministry - 17 years as a pastor in two different local Baptist churches except two years of theological studies in the States, and 25 years as General Secretary for both Danish and European Baptists - KW had reached the age of retirement. But God still had a task for him - although he himself worked for the nomination of a colleague, Birgit Karlsson, General Secretary of the Swedish Baptist Union - as *President for the Baptist World Alliance*. For this capacity he had been trained for more than 40 years having met the BWA for the very first time at the Baptist World Congress in Copenhagen in 1947. Here he served on the Committee of Theological Students.²¹

KW's official ministry within the BWA began when he was elected General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union. He served for 30 years on the General Council 1965-95, for 5 years on the Study Commission on Co-operative Christianity (ecumenism, 1970-75) and another 5 years on the Congress Program Committee (1975-80). A special ministry was done on the Study Commission on Baptist-Lutheran Bilateral Conversations (1986-89).²² Since 1965 he had participated in each Baptist World Congress. When nominated KW bore with him the history of the BWA for about half of its time as a Christian world family. Analysing his engagement for the Alliance it becomes obvious that KW unveiled his knowledge of Baptist history and identity for the benefit of the present day Baptists.

KW was aware that he had become the President of a world organisation.²³ In his presidential reports he always focused world-wide being aware of the different political contexts in which the Baptist Unions had to serve and cooperate. He not only brought this hermeneutical perspective to his practice, but he also saw the need for analysis, planning and strategies on a world-wide scale and his reports were illustrated by figures and numbers telling the fascinating facts of growth within the BWA fellowship²⁴ - facts he used to challenge and encourage Baptists world-wide to serve more diligently. To a dedicated service also belongs a healthy economy. KW struggled continually in this area to reach the budgets, to find resources for relief-programs and to establish an endowment jubilee 2000-fund. But he knew that economy has to do with commitment. Our ministry should be lived out 'not only in kind words..., but also in practical deeds, ... and in financial support'.²⁵

¹⁷ Bernard Green, op.cit., pg. 77 (KW agreed with David Russell about the priorities) and pp. 170ff.

¹⁸ Op. cit., pp. 89f.

¹⁹ This evaluation of KW's nine years of ministry for EBF are words of Bernard Green, op. cit., pg. 123.

²⁰ Holbæk Amts Venstreblad [a local newspaper], 4.8.1982 - an interview for KW's 60th birthday.

²¹ Johs. Nørgaard (et al): 'Baptisternes syvende Verdenskongres', København 1948, pg. 179, and the 'Official Report of the Seventh Baptist World Congress', London 1948, pp. 60f.

²² KW served also on the Steering Committee of the Conference of International Mission Secretaries 1980-89.

²³ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1991, pp. 39f. and President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1994, pg. 39.

²⁴ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1993, pp. 41f. and President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1995, pp. 51f.

²⁵ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1994, pg. 42, and President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1991, pg. 41.

Examples of the mentioned hermeneutical approach can be found in KW's report given in 1990 in the dawn of a new era, that began with the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the communist world. As a member of the official Danish delegation to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1990 he described the results of this conference for Europe as another European Magna Carta - given to us for the purpose of mission.²⁶ And representing the BWA at the United Nations' World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 he used the opportunity given him to stress Baptists' concerns for religious liberty as the fundamental human right: 'If there is not freedom of religion and consciousness *for all*, there is not religious liberty *at all*'.²⁷ And KW rejoiced being an international observer at the first democratic election in South Africa, representing the BWA being one of the NGO's with consultative status at the United Nations. And he did not forget the Baptists in South Africa: 'The end of apartheid was celebrated with great joy, new hopes and deep felt thanks to God in both black, coloured and white Baptist Churches.'²⁸

A Christian world-family lives in different regions. Coming from the oldest one of these (EBF, organized in 1949) KW always worked hard to implement effective regional bodies in the life of BWA²⁹ - rejoicing when Africa as the last continent finally was organized as a Baptist-region (AABF, in 1982). During his presidency KW travelled to each of these regions using his European experience. He had seen the great influence on European Baptists from the Seminary in Rüsclikon, and he stated, that the need for theological training was obvious in both Africa and South America. Two other aspects were observed by KW. Coming from a small Union he drew attention to the fact that almost 2/3 of the BWA member bodies were minority churches with less than 25.000 members each.³⁰ And speaking about his beloved Africa he stated: 'Let it not be forgotten that one out of every eleven Baptist churches in the world is in Africa!'³¹ As a caring president he went to the churches in Rwanda shortly after the genocide in 1994 to bring comfort and hope. And together with Roger Fredrikson he led the BWA Good Will Mission to Manipur, India 1995, trying to reconcile the fighting Kukis and Nagas.

Speaking about Asia KW participated in 1992 in the bicentenary jubilee of William Carey. Remembering this joyful event he called Baptists to renew their mission goal and methods: 'Carey's inspiring example of careful examination of actual needs around the world, of deep and unselfish holistic concern for the peoples living in the poorer part of the world, and of visionary and courageous action continues to challenge Baptists around the world.'³² Two years later he visited the Protestant Church in China and spoke not only of mission but in the perspective of Christian Unity, he stated: 'Perhaps we should regard the Chinese experiment as one of God's pilot projects for the future of the Christian Church.'³³ A follow up on his final challenges to Christians in Europe took place when BWA (1993) held a Conference on Un-evangelized People dealing especially with mission among Muslims³⁴, and when BWA prepared for a proposed initiative for a bilateral dialogue with the Orthodox Churches.³⁵ Once again we were told that mission and unity belongs together in KW's vision for the church of tomorrow.³⁶

²⁶ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1991, pp. 39f.

²⁷ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1993, pg. 43, and President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1994, pg. 41. Here KW spoke of 'a holistic approach to human rights', including both the personal rights (traditionally stressed by western countries, being freedom of conscience, religious liberty, freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture etc.) and the social and economic rights (earlier stressed by the communist countries, now by the developing countries, being freedom from poverty and freedom to develop) - all human rights being universal.

²⁸ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1994, pg. 39.

²⁹ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1993, pg. 42.

³⁰ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1990, pg. 54.

³¹ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1994, pg. 39.

³² President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1993, pg. 41.

³³ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1995, pg. 40. This was KW's second visit to China having been there in 1986, too, with a BWA-delegation.

³⁴ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1994, pg. 40.

³⁵ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1995, pg. 53.

³⁶ See Knud Wümpelmann: 'Mission in a Changing Europe' in American Baptist Quarterly 2/1996, pp. 146-157. Here his final remark reads: 'There is in Europe an urgent need for evangelization, reconciliation and unification.'

KW was therefore also deeply concerned about 'severe tensions' within the Baptist family itself, not least about the situation within the SBC. These tensions have he wrote 'caused much concern and prayer for a peaceful solution. To our deep-rooted Baptist heritage belongs the readiness to fight both for our own conviction and for the freedom of others to follow their conscience, that 'speaking the truth in love we may grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ'.³⁷ Maybe it was in respect to these difficulties that KW thankfully compared BWA to 'the famous bumble bee which theoretically should not be able to fly but nevertheless does so quite well. The differences between the member bodies of the BWA are great and of many kinds: political, cultural, sociological and theological, so that tensions naturally occur. But the divine call to unity and the need for fellowship and cooperation has also throughout this quinquennium proved to be stronger than the dividing force of diversities'.³⁸

Denton Lotz hit the mark when he gave thanks to KW for his BWA-ministry by saying 'Farewell to a World Pastor' and continued: 'Each president brings certain qualities which build up the body of Christ. We are particularly grateful to Knud Wümpelmann for his pastoral service... He has been a strong advocate for the poor and dispossessed. His concern for peace and human rights have been exemplary. In difficult times he has encouraged and comforted Baptist leaders... His commitment to the compassionate ministry and the evangelistic ministry of the whole church has encouraged and uplifted Baptist work everywhere!'³⁹

When KW in 1995 was asked what he wanted his presidency to be remembered for he typically replied: 'My 'presidency' is not so important! What counts is God's mercy to His people and of that we have received a great deal: the growth of our membership..., the unity in diversity strong enough to keep us together, the help in times of great distress..., and the gift of hope for a great future'. And the manner in which this future could be obtained became KW's last message to Baptists world-wide being the BWA president: 'Love one another, because love won another!'⁴⁰

4.

'I believe in God, the Father..., in Jesus Christ..., and in the Holy Spirit...' The Apostles' Creed, about 200.

'Jeg tror på Gud, Faderen..., på Jesus Kristus... og på Helligånden...'

In Danish Baptist life KW became one of a pair of twins, the other being the already mentioned minister, who challenged KW about a life dedicated for ministry, K. Kyrø-Rasmussen (KKR). Being of the same age and mind they supplemented each other splendidly - KW having the pastoral, representative and administrative ministry, KKR being a provocative theologian, a journalist and the Union's representative in ecumenical bodies at home and abroad.⁴¹ In theological terms their ministries became a joined venture only with different profiles - KW wrapped in diplomacy, KKR in provocative nakedness!

KW began his theological training in Tølløse, in the days of Johannes Nørgaard's presidency at The Baptist Theological Seminary. Here he was influenced by teachers as J. Nørgaard (a barthian approach to theology) and Bredahl Petersen (church history) - both of them deeply engaged in studies of Baptist life and heritage. After five years of ministry KW and his family went to the United States for further education from 1952-54. Karen and Knud had obtained scholarships from the World Council of Churches and the Fullbright Fund.

³⁷ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1991, pg. 40.

³⁸ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1995, pg. 53.

³⁹ General Secretary's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1995, pp. 65f.

⁴⁰ Baptist World, 4/1995, pg. 14.

⁴¹ K.Kyrø-Rasmussen, 1920-86, was pastor in Copenhagen from 1955 as was KW and from 1970 he became the pastor of the congregation in Tølløse, where the KW's lived from 1979. KKR was the representative to The Ecumenical Council in Denmark (1954-86) and to The World Council of Churches to which the Danish Baptist Union belonged from the time of the formation of WWC in Amsterdam in 1948. KKR was also a member of the Union's Executive Committee in the years 1955-68.

Their stay was planned in co-operation with the (then) American Baptist Convention, and they chose Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City - first of all in order to get a chance to become acquainted with both Northern and Southern Baptists.

At Central Seminary KW got credit for most of his studies in Denmark, so he was able to graduate with a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) in 1953 and a Master of Religious Education (MRD) in 1954. In order to provide for their stay KW preached almost every Sunday in the area. During a season of holidays they toured the States and visited the congregations of the Danish Baptist General Conference of America.⁴² The years in the States became an opportunity for a broader perspective both theologically and experientially.

Enriched by studies and experiences KW returned to Denmark in order to implement his new insights. As a minister he entered the field of religious education for adults and especially young teenagers of fourteen. His material for these youngsters was tested by some pastors before it was published. In the introduction KW told about his intention - to create a clear understanding of the main points of the Christian faith in order to show the importance of a clear decision for a lifelong journey with Christ. The book appeared as a catechetical interpretation of the Apostles' Creed.⁴³ KW's book was used for a generation and became a breakthrough for appreciation of the Apostles' Creed among Danish Baptists.⁴⁴ This approach to Christian faith became typical for KW's understanding of the task of theology. It must interpret life in the light of God's Trinitarian mission into the world - as Creator and Sustainer, as Savoir and Lord, and as Spirit and Fulfiller. Thus KW introduced into the Danish Baptist Union what Dr. Alexander Maclaren did in the BWA-fellowship in London in 1905.⁴⁵

At the same time KKR published his book on Baptist ecclesiology.⁴⁶ Here he reflected upon controversial points of ecclesiology bringing the ecumenical challenges to Danish Baptists. He argued for the unity of Christians from all denominations and raised the question of 'open' or 'transferred membership' for infant baptized believers, i.e. an open ecumenical Baptist policy in a Lutheran setting.⁴⁷ To ensure unity among Baptist churches exhibiting considerable diversity, KKR argued for the necessity of a ministry which takes care of the whole Union - an 'episkopé'-function. Today KW admits that this position was his as well as KKR's - and he himself looked upon his ministry as General Secretary much the same way as it was described in KKR's theology.⁴⁸ The 'twins' worked together - KKR challenging the tradition, KW building bridges.

Accordingly you cannot put KW into one theological box and put a label on him. From his upbringing he knew both about the ecumenical, the charismatic and the evangelical dimensions of the Gospel. He took his stance for what he had experienced and unfolded this in his theological thinking and his ministry. His point

⁴² KW was later honoured with different degrees: At William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri, 1985 (Doctor of Divinity); at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas, 1985 (Distinguished Service Award); and at Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüslikon-Zürich, Switzerland, 1991 (Scroll of Honour).

⁴³ Knud Wümpelmann: 'Vi tror' [We confess], 88 pages, Aalborg 1966.

⁴⁴ At the same time KKR was member of an ecumenical group planning a service in Copenhagen. Here he had to tell the Lutherans that Baptists in general would not agree to participate in an ecumenical service if the Apostles' Creed became part of the liturgy. See Baptist Weekly, 26/1966. A generation later (in 1989) Danish Baptists published a new hymnbook where the Apostles' Creed is printed for liturgical use!

⁴⁵ Walter B. Shurden (Ed): 'The Life of Baptists in the Life of the World', Broadman Press 1985, pg. 17. Here Dr. A. Maclaren in his presidential message asked the auditorium of Baptists to stand and repeat after him the Apostles' Creed that the world may know, that Baptists stood 'in the continuity of the historic church' and 'what we believe'.

⁴⁶ Kjell Kyrø-Rasmussen: 'Hvad skal vi med kirken?' [What is the Church Good for?], 160 pages, Aalborg 1967.

⁴⁷ KW's introduction to an 'open Baptist'-approach in the question of baptism goes back to a conference on baptism for Scandinavian Baptist theologians in 1956. Here he was attracted by the baptismal theology of Torsten Bergsten, similar to KKR's theology of baptism. Torsten Bergsten's paper was entitled 'Dopet och församlingen' [Baptism and the Church]. It was published in the book 'Dopet - Dåben - Dåpen', Stockholm 1957, pp. 5-23.

⁴⁸ See KKR, op. cit., pp. 91ff. - In written form part of KW's 'episkopé'-function as General Secretary was his 'Manual for Baptist Ministers', 1977.

was always to keep the balance - a personal warm commitment to Christ (evangelical)⁴⁹, ready to receive the power as God's gift for ministry (charismatic)⁵⁰, but always with openness and sensitivity for the present need (ecumenical).⁵¹ His ministry of 'episkopé' became world-wide known for its emphasis on individuals, congregations, unions, Christ's church as such, and the integrity of creation.

An expressive example of KW's ability to implement theological reflection in church life with the perspective of world-wide ministry, Danish Baptists experienced in the year of European turmoil and changes, i.e. 1968. KKR had been the delegate of the Union at the WCC's Assembly in Uppsala. In the Danish Missionary Council KW had worked with the theme from Uppsala, that 'the world writes the agenda of the church'. Knowing what challenge the Baptists needed, the 'twins' asked the Executive Committee to make the Annual Conference of the Union a channel for implementing WCC's perspective of ministry. Therefore, the chosen theme for the Baptist Annual Meeting in the fall of 1968 became 'The field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom' (Matt. 13:38) - and KKR became the main speaker, presenting three bibelstudies.⁵²

In the 1970's KW kept the Union on the classical theology of mission. In the fall of 1973 he participated in a post-Bangkok-Conference on mission in Helsinki. When he came back he wrote: 'Mission is to proclaim Christ for salvation - there is no other name in which we can be saved. Salvation means restoring broken lives of human beings - both physically and spiritually - in the eschatological perspective of hope about all things re-established, but also inspiration to act for the benefit of man in the waiting time'.⁵³ A few years before KW had edited a booklet on Baptist mission in Rwanda and Burundi in which he argued for a holistic and participatory approach in mission understood in categories of preaching, teaching, healing, charity⁵⁴ and justice.⁵⁵ KW's position as a competent theologian was justified when he was appointed as the BWA staff representative to the Baptist-Lutheran Bilateral Commission - working on ecclesiology 1986-89.⁵⁶

KW's theological perspective can also be found in his 'presidential reports' to the BWA Councils. In 1992 he pointed to the following three dimensions of a holistic BWA-ministry: The need for world evangelisation including the continent of Europe, the need for help to people who are suffering from war and catastrophes as drought and floods and for peace with justice and reconciliation - and the need of mutual sharing and

⁴⁹ KW was a member of the steering committee for Billy Graham's crusade in Copenhagen in 1965. Here he wrote: 'A personal invitation is much more effective than is advertisement', Baptist Weekly 19/1965.

⁵⁰ In EBF, too, KW was spokesman for the charismatic dimensions of the Gospel, see KW: 'The EBF and the Charismatic Movement', op. cit., pp. 36ff, and Bernard Green, op.cit., pg. 72.

⁵¹ 'Oikoumene' for KW always meant 'the whole inhabited earth', the world for which God cares. Therefore, the church has to be engaged for the benefit of all.

⁵² See Baptist Yearbook 1968, pp. 51ff, and Baptist Yearbook 1969, pg. 17. KKR's bibelstudies were later edited and published as 'Evangelisation uden bekymring' [Evangelization without Anxiety], København 1969, arguing for a holistic approach to mission.

⁵³ The Baptist Yearbook 1974, pp. 97f.

⁵⁴ Knud Wümpelmann published in 1978 an article with this title: 'Aid is also Mission'. See Nyt Synspunkt 7, Hellerup 1978, pp. 28-34. Here he argues with a Biblical reference that relief work is part of the church's mission: 'Jesus said *both*: 'Go therefore and make disciples' (Matt.28:19) *and* - with reference to The Good Samaritan - 'Go and do likewise' (Luke 10:37). And Jesus demonstrated with his example, that the two functions belong together'. See also Bernard Green, op.cit., pp. 93f.

⁵⁵ Knud Wümpelmann (Ed): 'Baptistsamfundene Rwanda & Burundi' [Baptist Unions in Rwanda & Burundi], 50 pages, Aalborg 1968. See also Baptist Yearbook 1978, pg. 77, where world-wide aid is mentioned as part of a holistic mission. In an interview in 1977, KW being nominated as President of EBF, stressed the dimension of justice, saying about the mistakes of the churches in the Soviet Union: 'Christians have an obligation to speak of political questions and to be in the forefront in order to prepare the way for justice. It was a serious mistake that we misused our opportunity to fight for righteousness. Deeds of charity are not enough.' See Kristeligt Dagblad, 22.12.1977.

⁵⁶ 'Baptists and Lutherans in Conversation', BWA-LWF 1990. This document was translated and published in Denmark in 1992: 'Budskab til vore kirker' [Message for our Churches].

partnership in all fields of mission and churchlife.⁵⁷ In theological terms he spoke of kerygma, diakonia and koinonia being different parts of the one Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Being aware of the value of good communication KW also stressed this holistic approach in ministry in his 'pastoral letters' to the churches. He spoke of global evangelism beginning at the personal and local level, of fellowship understood as unity in diversity with a focus on spiritual and economic partnership, of the need for a world-wide witness in deeds, of the love of Christ for all people expressed through aid, and finally of the responsibility of Baptists to be a prophetic voice speaking for religious freedom, for peace and justice. KW never made theoretical statements about priorities among these aspects of mission - priorities in mission always come to God's people as a call from the context in which the church has to serve Gods kingdom.⁵⁸

It is symbolic, that it was in KW's presidency that BWA's member-churches agreed upon three different covenants, i.e. 'The Seoul Covenant' (1990) on world evangelism (the personal commitment to Christ), 'The Derbyshire Declaration' (1992) with its call to establish new churches (the fellowship of believers), and 'The Harare Declaration' (1993) dealing with the condemnation of the sin of racism (action for signs of reconciliation).⁵⁹

Conclusion:

KW's understanding of his life and ministry began with his baptism - believer's baptism understood as an 'ordination for mission'. Accordingly, believer's baptism interpreted as 'dedication for ministry' became the pattern of KW's life among Baptists - in Denmark and all over the world. Originally, he was educated to become a Post and Telegraph-employee, and this was - in the Pauline understanding of office - what he really became: KW became 'a letter ... written on our hearts to be known and read by all, ... a letter of Christ ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God'.⁶⁰ God was able! - Glory to God for Knud Wümpelmann's ministry among us!

⁵⁷ President's Report, BWA Agenda Book 1993, pp. 35f.

⁵⁸ Baptist World 4/1991, pg. 15.

⁵⁹ Included above in the notes are KW's books and articles which has been published. In his files KW has many unpublished manuscripts, which have not been used for this paper. KW's papers will be kept in the archives of the Danish Baptist Union.

⁶⁰ 2. Corinthians 2:2-3.