C.S.I.-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission

The second meeting of the C.S.I.-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission was held at Vishranthinilayam, Bangalore, from 6th to 8th June, 1962, under the Joint Chairmanship of Bishop H. Sumitra of the Church of South India and Bishop R. B. Manikam of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church. It may be recalled that the Inter-Church Commission had been set up with the following terms of reference:

(*a*) to take steps to implement the proposals of the joint theological commission for closer fellowship between the churches.
(*b*) to prepare a catechism for use in the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches.
(*c*) to organize regional conferences of the two churches.
(*d*) to draw up a constitution, with a doctrinal statement for a united church.

Progress in establishing closer fellowship between the churches has been slow. But the concern for closer co-operation and union has been shared by both churches. The work of the Inter-Church Commission, and particularly the spirit of fellowship and mutual understanding which marked the two meetings, has been encouraging and is a matter for praise to God.

Goal

The Commission has affirmed that the ultimate goal for the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches in South India is the formation of a united church. The work of the Commission is to serve this end.

Doctrinal Statement

By a unanimous vote the Commission adopted a Statement of Faith to form part of the constitution of the United Church. The statement is sent to the churches for study and comment. It is hoped that an interim report from the churches on this statement will be available by April 1963.

Common Catechism

The Commission also received a preliminary draft of a Common Catechism. This draft will be sent to Theological Colleges

and other select groups for careful study. The Sub-Committee on Catechism will revise the draft in the light of comments and suggestions from the different groups. The draft finally approved by the Inter-Church Commission will be sent to the churches for their adoption.

The Shape of the Church

The third main item on the agenda was the shape of the United Church. Some papers had been written on this subject expressing both the C.S.I. and the different Lutheran points of view. But the Commission did not have sufficient time at this meeting to discuss the subject adequately. It was therefore decided to devote the whole of the next meeting, scheduled to be held in January 1963, for this subject. The main issues to be thrashed out will be the kind of organization and the pattern of the ministry that the new Church should have. In preparation for the meeting two Lutherans, the Rev. W. P. Peery and the Rev. K. Krupadanam, have been asked to make a comparative study of the C.S.I. Constitution and the different Lutheran Constitutions. Mr. R. D. Paul has been asked to prepare statistics of congregations, baptized persons, communicants, ordained ministers and institutions in the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches and to produce a map of the whole area showing the present distribution of work.

With regard to the ministry in the new Church the Commission recorded the following convictions:

(*a*) All ordained ministers of the uniting churches must be accepted as ministers of the United Church without any kind of further ordination.

(*b*) Provision must be made for receiving after union into the ministry of the United Church, without further ordination, ordained ministers of all the parent churches.

Regional Inter-Church Committees

In order to help the churches to implement more effectively the earlier proposals for closer fellowship and to promote local inter-church conferences for the study and discussion of church union issues, the Commission has proposed the setting up of four Regional Inter-Church Committees, one for each language area. The Inter-Church Committees will work under the Inter-Church Commission and will report to it at each meeting what has been done. The Regional Inter-Church Committee will consist of the President and Secretary of each Diocesan Council of the C.S.I. and the President and Secretary of each Lutheran Church in the area. Where the Church does not have a President or Secretary, the Church may be asked to appoint other suitable members to serve on the Committee. Each Committee will appoint its own officers. If possible the Committee may also secure the full-time

or part-time services of a person for the effective functioning of its work. The following members of the Commission have been asked to be interim conveners of the Regional Committees:

Rev. V. John for Andhra.
Rt. Rev. R. B. Manikam for Tamilnad.
Rt. Rev. A. H. Legg for Kerala.
Rev. C. Arangaden for Mysore.

The Regional Inter-Church Committees will take steps to promote mutual fellowship, understanding and co-operation between the ministry and members of C.S.I. and Lutheran Churches. A number of ways have been suggested for this, such as joint evangelistic work, periodic united services, interchange of pulpits and elimination of duplication in pastoral and institutional work.

Call to Prayer

It had already been said before that the work of the Commission should be supported by the earnest prayers of the churches. The Commission at this meeting approved a litany of Prayer for the union of the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches. The churches are asked to use this litany both for corporate prayer and for household and personal prayers. The strength of our concern for unity is measured only by the earnestness with which we pray for it.

Request for Financial Help

The promotion of union between the churches also requires money. We do not want the union conversations to be carried on only at the level of the Inter-Church Commission. Regular and effective conversations and discussions should take place at the local and regional levels. We also want to distribute all relevant literature connected with the work of the Commission as widely as possible among the members of the churches. We do not at present have sufficient resources to meet the cost of printing and all the Committees and Conferences which have to be held. Therefore the Commission decided to make a special request for help to all friends of Church union in India and abroad. Contribution for this purpose may be sent to Rev. J. R. Chandran, Secretary of the Inter-Church Commission, 17 Millers' Road, Bangalore 6.

J. R. Chandran,
Secretary,
C.S.I.-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission

United Theological College
Bangalore 6
11th June, 1962

The Faith of the Church

(A doctrinal statement prepared by the C.S.I.-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission. This is meant to form part of the constitution of the United Church).

1. *The Scriptures:*

This Church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired record and testimony of God's revelation of Himself to mankind and as such the Word of God. The Scriptures bear witness primarily to the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, who through them continues to speak to men today. The Church holds and confesses that the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the supreme and decisive standard of the Church's faith and life. It acknowledges that it must always be ready to correct and reform itself in accordance with the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2. *Creeds and Confessions:*

This Church accepts and acknowledges the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed as a true response and witness to the Word of God and as safeguards to the faith of the Church.

It recognizes the Athanasian Creed as giving a true exposition of the Trinitarian faith.

It also acknowledges its responsibility to confess its faith in the context in which God places it and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, always conscious of the fact that all creeds and confessions are subordinate to the authority of the Scriptures.

Teachers of doctrine in this Church will be free to use as guides for instruction confessional documents which are already in use in any of the uniting churches, namely

The Anglican Catechism,
Thirty-nine Articles,
Westminster Confession,
Luther's Shorter Catechism, and
The Augsburg Confession.

3. *Faith in God:*

We believe in God the Father through Jesus Christ.

The One, Holy God has revealed Himself to us fully in Christ, though He has not left Himself without witness to all men.

We call Him 'Father' because in Christ He has revealed Himself to us as Father. We believe that we are God's children through faith in Christ the Son of God. We declare that God is love, and that love was manifested by the Father in sending His Son and is declared to us in the Gospel of Christ crucified.

This God in whom we believe is the one almighty Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is the same God as He who called Israel out of Egypt and revealed Himself to them in acts of deliverance; but God has revealed Himself finally and fully to us in Christ.

God has given us a new understanding of His almighty power because in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension He has triumphed over sin, death and the devil. We have a new knowledge of His creative work because in Christ we are being created anew.

We believe in Jesus Christ our Saviour as Lord and God.

Our knowledge of God in Jesus Christ is not a message about God by someone other than God: but we believe that God Himself became man in Jesus Christ to deliver mankind from the power of evil and to bring in His kingly rule. He who knows Christ knows the Father. Christ has accomplished for us what God alone can do. He has redeemed us from sin by His atoning death and resurrection. In Him alone we are justified by grace through faith. In Him, who has overcome all things that separate man from God and man from man, we are reconciled to God and to one another and belong together as members of one Body.

Because of the new life which we have in Christ, we believe that He is the eternal Word of God who gives life and light to men.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit as the Lord, the Giver of Life.

From the beginning the Church has had the experience of the Holy Spirit the Comforter according to Christ's own promise. His indwelling is none other than the presence of God Himself.

The Spirit is the giver here and now of the life of fellowship which we have as members of the Church, the Body of Christ. He works in our lives, interpreting Christ to us, convicting us of sin, assuring us of our sonship in union with the divine Son, and building us up in holiness of life. That same life in the Spirit is the foretaste and guarantee of eternal life hereafter.

We believe in the Triune God.

We know God by revelation and the experience of Christian faith as one God and yet Triune. We bow before this mystery and worship one God, eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, living and reigning in perfect unity.

4. *The Church:*

The Church is the body of those who are chosen by God to be His people, who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The

Church has received from Christ Himself its call to discipleship and its commission to make disciples of all nations. It is the fellowship of men with God and with one another. Its life is sustained by the continued presence of the risen Lord through the Holy Spirit.

The Church as the Body of Christ has a God-given unity because there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; and it is called to manifest this unity to the world.

The Church is holy because God who is holy has granted to its members forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit, and has chosen them for fellowship with Himself through worship, witness and service. They are therefore all called to holiness of life.

The Church is catholic and apostolic because at all times in each place and throughout the world it is called to continue the mission of Christ committed to the apostles and is entrusted with the same Gospel which they proclaimed.

As long as these characteristics are not fully manifest in its life, the Church on earth falls short of God's will for it. But we live in the confidence that God who has begun a good work in us continues it through the Holy Spirit and will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

5. *The Ministry:*

The ministry is the gift of God through Christ to His Church for the fulfilment of His purpose. Jesus Christ Himself is our great High Priest, and His Body the Church and every member of it is called to a priestly ministry. He is the good Shepherd, and His Church is called to seek the lost and to lead them into the way of salvation. He is the Son of Man who came to serve, and the Church is called to serve the world.

Within this ministry of the whole people of God, from the beginning Christ has given to His Church a ministry in the special sense of persons set apart to preach the Gospel, to proclaim God's will for men, to declare His forgiveness to penitent sinners, to gather together and shepherd His flock, and to feed them with the bread of life, through the means of grace which He has appointed.

The ministers of the Church are set apart by the rite of ordination. In ordination God, through His Church, commissions and empowers for the ministry to which they are called the persons whom the Church believes He has chosen. This commission is given not that the minister may have the pre-eminence, but that, in accordance with the mind of Christ, he may give himself in service.

6. *The Sacraments:*

This Church believes and confesses that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were ordained by Christ as visible means of grace through which we are incorporated into and built

up in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. In them the Word of God is operative through the material elements and outward actions, through which God bestows His grace in Christ unto forgiveness of sins and a life of fellowship with Him.

In the Sacrament of Baptism God adopts us as His children, granting us through faith the benefits of Christ's redemptive work and newness of life. Since Baptism is first and foremost an act of God, the Church holds that infants also should be baptized, and brought within God's covenant of grace. Further, since baptism does not depend primarily on our faith or our response but on the promises and faithfulness of God, the Church rejects the practice of rebaptism.

In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Christ, who is really present, gives us His body and His blood to eat and to drink in accordance with His words at the Last Supper 'This is my body . . . This is my blood . . . Do this in remembrance of me'. While all who participate receive the Sacrament, to those who receive this gift of Himself in repentance and faith He grants forgiveness of sins, life, salvation, and the power to be His witnesses to the world, and calls upon us to pledge ourselves to a renewed life of holiness and fellowship with one another. In this Sacrament we commemorate with thanksgiving and proclaim the once-for-all events of His sacrificial death and resurrection by which He redeemed the world, we know and confess the presence of the risen Lord with us, and we look forward in hope to His coming again in glory.

A Call to Prayer

The Theological conversations held between the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches during the years 1948 to 1959 revealed a substantial agreement in doctrine, as a result of which an Inter-Church Commission has been set up. This Commission has met, first in August 1961, and again in June 1962. It has drafted a common statement of faith and is at work on a Common Catechism for submission to the churches. It has also made proposals for closer fellowship and co-operation in the hope that these will lead eventually to complete union.

We call upon all Christians and particularly members of the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches in South India to pray earnestly for the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit in the work of the Commission and in the relations between the churches. The Litany given below may be used for the prayer both in the Church and in homes.

R. B. MANIKAM, *Bishop*
H. SUMITRA, *Bishop*
Joint Chairmen
For *The Inter-Church Commission*

8th June, 1962

A Litany of Prayer for the Union of the C.S.I. and the Lutheran Churches in South India

Let us offer our praises and prayers to Almighty God.

Adoration:

O God the Father, who hast made us and all the world:
We praise and adore Thee.

O God the Son, who hast redeemed us and all mankind:
We praise and adore Thee.

O God the Holy Spirit, the giver of faith, hope and love:
We praise and adore Thee.

Thanksgiving:

For Thy power and love shown forth in Jesus Christ, and for our salvation in him:
All Glory be to Thee.

For the continuing fellowship of Thy Church in belief and worship:
All Glory be to Thee.

For all who have declared Thy Gospel to the nations and established Thy Church in this land:
All Glory be to Thee.

For prophets and reformers who have stood for truth in the midst of falsehood and for right in the midst of wrong:
All Glory be to Thee.

For the witness of Thy Church today and for Thy leading of us to show forth more and more our unity in Christ:
All Glory be to Thee.

For the increase of co-operation and understanding which Thou hast given us hitherto:
All Glory be to Thee.

Intercession:

We pray, O God, for Thy Church in all the world that it may be one even as Thou art one:
Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Grant to Thy people in South India the unity which Thou dost will and by the means which Thou dost choose:
Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Guide the members of the Church of South India and the Lutheran Churches as they seek to fulfil Thy will for them:

Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Remove the misunderstandings, break down the barriers and overcome the pride and prejudice which oppose Thy way:

Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Give us penitence and humility as we seek to show forth the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:

Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Forward our working together in the care of Thy flock and the furtherance of Thy Gospel:

Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Give wisdom to those who think and plan, and right understanding to those who commend the fruit of their work:

Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Guide us into all the truth and bind us together in the harmony of love:

Hear us, we beseech Thee.

Let us Pray:

O Lord, God Almighty, grant that we may be united in the bonds of peace and charity; that we may form but one body and one soul in one and the same hope, and in one and the same faith, so that we may all find one another in one and the same love of Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Report of a Conference

The Third Inter-Church Study Conference on Church Union for the States of Maharashtra and Gujerat (the former Bombay State) met at the Spiritual Life Centre, Nasrapur, near Poona, from the 20th to the 24th of March. This year's theme was 'Things That Divide: Looking Together at the Non-theological Factors in Church Union'.

Sixty-one persons from six out of the seven negotiating Churches in the North India Plan were present, from Ahmedabad in the North to Kolhapur in the South and from Bombay in the West to Nagpur in the East. In addition there were two observers from the Swedish Hindustani Mission.

The Chairman, Rev. Prof. D. M. Kennedy, of Wilson College, Bombay, in the opening address suggested as the motto for the Conference 'Speaking the truth in love' (Eph. 4:15): 'Matiness obscures the truth. Simply to slap each other on the back would not heal the divisions of the Church.' We needed to give the facts to each other, correcting each other's ignorance. There were

two short cuts: first, disguising from each other our hurt reactions and, second, being so exasperated that we gave up speaking in love. Both were to be avoided. How could we be led by God along the narrow ridge between a false heartiness and opposition? By love as a gift from God.

The whole Conference was divided into five groups under a Leader for Bible Study and another Leader for discussion. Bible Study followed an outline that had been prepared for use at the Conference and which had previously been worked through by groups in Bombay. Of some thirty-six non-theological factors which had been mentioned from time to time in ecumenical literature, the Planning Committee of the Conference had chosen six as follows:

1. Varieties of ethical judgement, e.g. concerning smoking, dancing, card playing, money raising.
2. Vested interests in property and positions.
3. Dislike of the unfamiliar (habits of kneeling, sitting, standing in worship; dress, voice, language; extempore versus set prayers; hymn books, buildings and their use, etc.).
4. Misrepresentation of other Churches.
5. Problems of Mother Churches: 'Defeated imperialism, race consciousness, cultural superiority, pride in institutions built by the sacrifice of these Churches.'
6. Institutionalism.

The two speakers dealing with these were the Ven. T. Donald Sully, Archdeacon of Lucknow, of the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, and Bishop John A. Subhan of the Hyderabad area of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia. Open discussion by the whole Conference took place at the end of these talks.

Evening and Morning Worship was led by the Secretary of the Planning Committee, Rev. A. W. Saunders, Methodist Church, Bombay, who acted as Chaplain to the Conference. The meditations took the form of a study of some Bible words to be remembered in Church Union negotiations. Those chosen were: Unity, Liberty, Charity, Mercy, Reconciliation and Patience. Also at Evening Worship the Celebrant of the next morning's Communion Service explained the Order of Service to be used. Holy Communion was according to the Order of the Church of South India (conducted by Rev. Prof. V. T. Kurien); the Methodist Church in Southern Asia (conducted by Bishop Subhan); and the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon (conducted by the Bishop of Nasik, Rt. Rev. A. W. Luther). An open invitation was given to all but it was understood that some could not communicate but would all the same be welcome to take part in the Service.

The main talks on positive principles of Church Union that would help to overcome the non-theological factors were given by Rev. Prof. V. T. Kurien of the United Theological College, Bangalore. His subjects were: An Integrated Concept of the

Church; The Vision of the Coming Great Church; and Solution of Some of the Problems at the Local Level. These talks were then studied in groups and each group reported to a Plenary Session of the Conference which then discussed the group findings.

Mornings ended with Intercessions led by members of the Conference. The half-hour after dinner each evening was given up to music and entertainment from members. On the first evening the British Council of Churches' film strip 'Asian Assembly' on New Delhi was shown, and on the last evening pictures of her stay in the Holy Land by Miss Sarah Paul of Bombay.

On the last evening the whole Conference divided into regional groups: Gujerat, Bombay City, and Maharashtra, and worked out recommendations to be sent to Heads of Churches in the area. These were then adopted in a Plenary Session. They included the following:

(1) Denominational study of the Plan and denominational meetings to discuss Union were still needed.

(2) Joint meetings of different Churches and inter-Church conferences on Church Union at the local level should be held.

(3) Where not already observed the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity should be followed each year.

(4) A survey of non-Roman Christians should be carried out in various city areas.

(5) Communication between Churches should be improved: where effective inter-Church conferences or councils did not exist these should be set up or revived.

(6) The Plan should be studied at the congregational level and the booklets prepared by Rev. Dr. D. M. Kennedy, Rev. A. D. Morris and Rev. E. C. Reddy for various groups should be used.

(7) Steps must be taken to ensure that all necessary information concerning property and institutions be prepared and available so as not to hold up Union. In this connection the questionnaire sent out by Dr. E. C. Bhatty of the National Christian Council was mentioned.

(8) That steps be taken to ensure more co-operation between Churches especially in new areas.

(9) That 'opposite numbers' in different denominations should get together with a view to co-operation: for example, organizers of youth work.

(10) That United Services and interchange of pulpits be regularly arranged.

(11) That a spirit of tolerance and the study of other people's points of view were necessary.

(12) That differing ideas of ethical standards should be studied.

(13) That as far as possible for the next few years the study of Union should have the prior claim upon the time of the denominations.

(14) That duplication of work should be avoided and that the denominations should cease to do what they were doing separately and do everything that was possible together.

At the closing Service the Chairman picked out utterances that had been made during the Conference and used them as the basis of prayer and dedication.

The Spiritual Life Centre lent itself admirably to the needs of the Conference which was well looked after by the hosts, Rev. and Mrs. J. P. Crozier.

ARTHUR SAUNDERS

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS NUMBER

The Rev. D. Rajarigam is Principal of Gurusala Lutheran Theological Seminary, Tranquebar.

Dr. K. C. Mathew is on the staff of the Union Biblical Seminary, Yeotmal.

The Rev. D. F. Hudson is on the staff of Serampore College.

The Rev. V. C. Samuel is on the staff of Serampore College.