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

The third meeting of the C.S.I.-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission was held at the United Theological College on 8th and 9th January, 1963. One of the main tasks of the Inter-Church Commission is the drafting of 'a constitution with a doctrinal statement on the basis of the work already done by the joint Theological Commission'. At the second meeting a draft of the doctrinal statement under the title 'The Faith of the Church' was agreed upon and this statement is now being studied by the Churches. The third meeting was convened primarily for the purpose of considering the Shape of the United Church.

In preparation for the discussion on the Shape of the United Church the Commission considered the statistical survey made by Mr. R. D. Paul and the comparative study of the constitution by the Rev. W. P. Peery. The discussion of these statements raised several questions relating to the Shape of the Church. Should the United Church be episcopal? Can it be partly episcopal and partly non-episcopal? Should there be one common synod or several synods? Should the administrative units or Dioceses be defined by geographic boundaries or could they overlap? On certain issues the Commission was able to reach a common mind. It was agreed that the Dioceses should be defined by geographic boundaries as far as possible. It was also agreed that there should be one common Assembly or Council or Convention for the whole United Church which will be the final legislative body in matters of Faith and Order. However, there was consensus of opinion that the Church should be divided into four or more synods organized on a linguistic basis. The synods will be divided into Dioceses, the Dioceses into circles or areas or districts, the circles into pastorates and the pastorates into congregations.

On the question of whether the Church should be episcopal or otherwise the Commission could not reach a common mind. The C.S.I. members reminded the Commission of their attitude to episcopacy expressed in the constitution, and in the statements, particularly those made by the C.S.I. Theological Commission. While the C.S.I. does not believe episcopacy to be of the esse of the Church they hold that abandoning episcopacy will mean breaking away from the fellowship of a large body of episcopal Churches which will be harmful to the course of the union of

Churches. Some Lutheran members also pointed out that episcopacy was in no way contrary to Lutheran Doctrine. However, it was agreed that no hasty decision should be made by the Commission. Therefore the Commission decided to appoint a committee consisting of—The Most Rev. A. H. Legg, Rt. Rev. H. Sumitra, Mr. R. D. Paul, Dr. M. L. Kretzmann, Mr. K. D. Benjamin, the Rev. Dr. D. Winkler and the Rev. W. P. Peery (Convener) to draft an outline of a constitution with the section relating to the ministry having two alternate forms, one on the basis of an episcopal ministry and the other on the basis of a structure of ministry partly episcopal and partly non-episcopal. The Commission will meet again in Bangalore on 5th to 7th November, 1963, to consider the report of this drafting committee and the reports from Churches on the doctrinal statement.

Brief reports were received at this meeting of regional Inter-Church Conferences held in Madurai, N. Malabar, Mysore, Andhra, Coimbatore and Tiruchirapalli. All the reports indicated that such conferences were extremely helpful. The need for implementing the practical recommendations made by the Commission for closer co-operation between the Churches was emphasized in most of these conferences. The Commission reiterated the importance of such conferences for bringing the clergy and the laity to participate intelligently in the movement for union. The need for wider study of the agreed statements as well as the statement of The Faith of the Church was stressed. It was also suggested that there should be more systematic exchange of news between the Churches. To this end it was decided to ask the editors of the *South India Churchman* and the *Gospel Witness* to arrange for exchange of news items as well as relevant articles.

The Commission would also call upon the Churches and individual Christians to continue to pray ardently for union. The litany prepared by the second meeting has been found helpful and we would commend it for wide distribution and regular use in the Churches.

J. R. CHANDRAN,
Secretary.

RT. REV. R. B. MANIKAM,
RT. REV. H. SUMITRA,
Chairmen.

11th January, 1963.