



Church Union  
in  
South India

927

A HISTORY OF ITS PROGRESS

Q6:453.v21  
N43,  
418 351

389

# **Church Union** **in** **South India**

**A HISTORY OF ITS PROGRESS**

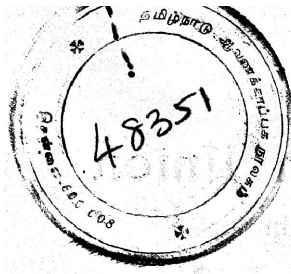
**BY**

**Adolphus J. Arangaden**

**PRINTED AT**  
**THE EMPIRE PRESS, CALICUT.**

**1943**

**PRICE AS 12**



## FOREWORD

This account of the negotiations for closer union between three churches in South India, up to the time when the proposed scheme took its final shape and the negotiating Churches were asked to give their vote for or against the plan, has several distinctive features.

First of all, the author is a minister of one of the negotiating Churches, himself a member of the Joint Committee on Union, who has followed with keen interest the progress of the discussions. He is thus one of those who long for the Church to be, the *Una Sancta* on Indian soil, composed of different churches grown together. This booklet, therefore, carries a message, though in its outward form it is just an account of the negotiations for union.

Secondly, as a member of the Basel Mission Church in Malabar, the author evinces particular interest in the gradual advance of his church towards union, and describes at length the negotiations which promoted it. Incidentally, he refers to the reaction of the Home Board of the Basel Mission to this new development in their Indian field. The chapters dealing with seemingly local questions are, therefore, of larger significance, and form an additional contribution to the general discussion about the union of churches. The Basel Mission Church, with its combination of Lutheran tradition and Reformed tradition, has never allowed itself to be



identified with any one denomination, but has, in its own way, been prepared for the principles which govern the proposed Union of Churches in South India. These principles are the supremacy of the Word of God as given to us in the Scriptures and a readiness to learn new truth along with others, who also submit to the sole authority of the Word, though they might differ from us in other matters. This endeavour, accordingly, constitutes, in a special way, a challenge to the Basel Mission—in some of its areas at least—to consider whether it can afford to keep outside a movement which is working out its own principles in a larger field.

Lastly, by giving in the opening chapter the sad story of the divisions in the Christian Church, from the early centuries till today, the author sets the whole question in its right perspective, and impresses on our minds the need for the union of churches. The Scheme, as it stands, has certainly many defects; but it is to be looked upon as an earnest attempt to show obedience to the will and command of Christ.

Calicut,  
August 22, 1943. }

A. Streckeisen

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

. After twenty-three years of joint consultation, the negotiating Churches have now reached a stage at which they have to decide whether or not they should finally vote for entering into the proposed union. It is at such a juncture that this booklet is published, in the hope that it will be helpful to those who are interested in Church Union. In preparing it, my task has been mainly one of putting together records of deliberations and events which have, I believe, in the providence of God, worked for the attainment of the agreement so far reached.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all those who have in any way helped me in the publication of this booklet. Dr J. H. Maclean, and the Rev. A. Streckeisen, General President, Basel Mission in India, have both been pleased to go through the manuscript and suggest improvements. But for the encouragement received from these as well as from Dr P. E. Burckhardt, Convener, Committee on Union, Synod of the United Basel Mission Church in India, and Mr C. J. Lucas, Headmaster, American Arcot Mission Training School, Vellore, I would not have ventured to publish these pages. Finally, I cannot but acknowledge my deep debt of gratitude to Messrs George Thomas and E. J. Edona, Lecturers, Malabar Christian College, Calicut, for the invaluable help they have rendered in putting the finishing touches to the manuscript and seeing it through the Press.

Kerala United Theological  
Seminary, Trivandrum,  
September, 1943.

A. J. Arangaden

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. How Dissensions Crept into the Christian Church...	1
II. A New Vision at Tranquebar ...	6
III. Negotiations Begin: the Church of Eng- land and the South India United Church...	13
IV. Union of the Malabar Church with the South India United Church...	19
V. Evolution of a Scheme of Union ...	28
VI. The Methodist Church Enters into the Negotiations...	40
VII. The Congregationalists Examine the Scheme...	42
VIII. An All-India Conference on Church Union...	47
IX. A Critical Stage ...	48
X. The West Coast Churches of the Basel Mission...	53
XI. Ten Theses on Church Union, 1930 ...	58
XII. The Deadlock of 1935 ...	65
XIII. An Urgent Call to Unity ...	69
XIV. Basel Mission Home Board's Advice to the West Coast Churches...	74
XV. The Proposed Scheme and the Councils of the South India United Church...	81
XVI. A Clearer Perspective ...	91

# Chapter I

## How Dissensions Crept into the Christian Church

As we learn from the first epistle to the Corinthians, a tendency to dissension was present in the Church from very early times. Church History describes the growth of many controversies about matters doctrinal and otherwise, which ultimately led to division in Christian communities. It is not necessary for the present purpose to examine in detail the minor dissensions which stained the annals of the early Church. The first great schism which has left an indelible mark upon the Christian world took place in the eleventh century. The seeds of this calamity were sown in 689 A.D., when the Council of Toledo decided, without the sanction of the Churches in the east, to insert in the Nicene Creed the word 'Filioque' indicating the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father. The final rupture, however, did not take place till the middle of the eleventh century. In 1054 A.D., Michael Cerularius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, precipitated a crisis by denouncing the malpractices of the Roman See in a letter full of invective and by seizing the Latin churches and monasteries of Constantinople. Pope Leo X intended to check the onslaughts of the Patriarch by a clever piece of diplomacy, and sought the alliance of Constantine, the Eastern Emperor. The latter tried his utmost to effect a reconciliation. The extravagant

demands of the Roman legates, however, rendered the attempt futile. The infuriated Pope issued a bull which purported to depose the Patriarch from office unless he recanted the offending letter. Legates from Rome waited in vain on the Patriarch with the object of bringing about a settlement. At last they laid on the altar of St Sophia a document imposing an anathema on the Patriarch, and returned to Rome. Michael retorted. He called a council which denounced, deposed and anathematized the Pope. Thus mutual recrimination and excommunication resulted in a schism which separated the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople from the jurisdiction of the Pope.

Subsequent events proved still more disastrous. The latter half of the fourteenth century saw the great papal schism which divided western Christendom for nearly forty years. This was occasioned by the gradual decay and corruption of the papal system which culminated in the coming into power of two rival Popes, who incessantly anathematized each other. One resided at Rome, and the other at Avignon in France. Italy, Germany, England, Poland and Scandinavia accepted the authority of the Roman Pope; France, Scotland, Spain and Lorraine paid their homage to the Pope at Avignon. In 1409, some leading bishops and the University of Paris made earnest endeavours to bring this division to an end, and as a preliminary measure suggested the abdication of the rival Popes. But they refused to resign.

A council which met in the cathedral at Pisa, therefore, deposed both of them and appointed a new Pope. But he died within a year. His successor so scandalized the Church by his depravity that the claims of the deposed Popes were revived. At last, to terminate this aggravated schism a General Council was held at Constance in 1414. This council became a landmark in history. Its magnitude and importance may be imagined from its membership. Fifty thousand delegates representing almost every nation, court and university of western Christendom attended the council. It was with three distinct objects that this council was summoned:— to complete the re-union of western Christendom, to effect ecclesiastical reforms, and to suppress heretical teachings in the Church. This general council confirmed the decision taken at Pisa, by distinctly subordinating the Papacy to general councils, which were declared to be the supreme and irrefutable exponents of the Church's requirements. The papal schism was thus healed; but the avowed objects of the general council were not realized. Out of the Church's experience at Constance the conviction gradually developed that a genuine reformation of the Church could be attained only through the rejection of Papacy and council alike as the supreme authorities in religion. Some attempt at reform through a council was made in 1449; but its measures were ineffective. Then followed a period covering about seven decades, which paved the way for the Reformation.

On the bronze door of the Castle Church of Wittenburg can be seen today a long Latin inscription which consists of the ninety-five theses against the corruptions of the Papacy, affixed by Martin Luther to the old wooden door of the church on the 31st of October, 1517. This bold declaration ushered in the great movement which shook the foundations of the Papacy. The Pope at once proclaimed Luther a heretic and excommunicated him from the Church. Within a few years the Reformation extended through the whole of Lower Germany, and permanently established its seat in Upper Germany. Gradually but steadily Luther's influence spread beyond the bounds of Germany also. Wherever the Reformation was accepted, Protestantism took root, and separation from the jurisdiction of the Pope became a matter of necessity. The effects of the Reformation were so momentous and far-reaching that people realised that a new life had entered the Church and awakened her. This awakening was mainly due to the restoration of the word of God to its rightful position in determining the doctrine of the Church, and the life and conduct of her people. But it was also soon realized that even a reformation in the Church could be carried to such excess as to endanger her very existence. For, in 1552, an ultra-reforming section, called Anabaptists, turned the theology of Luther in a new direction and proclaimed 'the faithful' to be exempt from all human legislation! Whatever the excesses of the reforming tendency might have been, it was evident to all,

disinterested observers that the revolutionary spirit could not be suppressed.

The Reformation thus divided Europe into two sections. One was under Papal supremacy, and united in doctrine. The other found contentment in remaining as groups of ecclesiastical communions and national Churches. Its component parts were separated not only by doctrinal differences, but by widely diverse theories of the relation between Church and State.

Nearly two centuries had to elapse after the Reformation before the churches of Europe realized their duty to evangelize the world. Some of the leaders of the Reformation were far from initiating any missionary enterprise abroad. Adrianus Saravia (1531—1618), a Dutchman, who eventually became the Dean of Westminster was the first theologian who maintained that 'the command to preach the Gospel to all nations binds the Church'. In response to this appeal, in 1661, George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, succeeded in sending three of his followers as missionaries to China; but, as they did not reach their destination, the mission failed. It was in the beginning of the eighteenth century that foreign missions actually started their work. Bartholmew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plütschau, who were sent out as missionaries from Denmark, arrived at Tranquebar on the Coromandel Coast in India, on the 9th of July, 1706. Since then, and especially in the nineteenth century there was such a great



influx of missionary bodies into India, that the number of missions with headquarters outside India has come up to about one hundred and sixty. These may be classed denominationally as follows:—(1) Anglicans (2) Baptists (3) Lutherans (4) Presbyterians (5) Methodists (6) Congregationalists (7) Smaller bodies. It is natural that as the direct result of the work of such a vast array of missions, with divergent views on non-essentials and different practices, Christian churches, with diverse denominational differences, should come into being. Such, in brief, is the story of the schisms, separations and divisions which have remained unhealed to this day and make the pages of Church History sad reading.

---

## Chapter II

### A New Vision at Tranquebar

After about two centuries of missionary enterprise the truth dawned on the Anglican and Protestant Churches in the west that if Christian unity is achieved throughout Christendom it would probably be as a direct result of foreign missions. The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (1910) emphasized the need for securing united action and closer co-operation by the different missionary bodies and churches in the mission field. But it was felt that such collaboration alone would not adequately conduce to successful evangelization, for the churches

in the mission field were divided in many respects owing to denominational differences, and as such, they could present only a disunited front to the non-Christian world. The need, therefore, for organic union in the mission field was soon felt and some efforts were made on the lines both of federation and organic union. The year 1913 saw a move in this direction in the mission fields of China, Japan and East Africa.

But in India some attempts at organic union had already been made. In 1901, two Presbyterian churches—one connected with the American Arcot Mission, and the other with the United Free Church of Scotland Mission—had come together to form one Church. This union was soon to be followed by another between churches in South India and Ceylon which had a congregationalist origin, and the two bodies thus constituted were united in 1908 under the title, the South India United Church. The missionary societies represented in this union, besides those already mentioned, were the London Missionary Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This move in South India was watched with keen interest by leaders of the church and missionary statesmen in India and elsewhere, and some of them gave valuable advice to the churches as to the course they should adopt in achieving their end. It is significant to note that the opinion of those missionary statesmen and ecclesiastical leaders coincided to a large extent with

that of Adrianus Saravia quoted above. As early as 1590, Saravia had contended that 'the maintenance of the Episcopal Office was necessary to the fulfilment of the task of evangelism.' It was almost an echo of this statement that was heard in 1912, when Dr Whitehead, the then Bishop of Madras, pleaded for the acceptance of the doctrine of Episcopacy. Addressing the members of the national Conference of Missionaries in Calcutta, the Bishop said:—

"I believe myself that whatever the reason for its adoption, the ultimate ground for the principle of Episcopacy lay in the fact that it was imperatively needed as a safeguard to unity ; and I believe also that it is as much needed for that purpose today as it was then, and that it is far more needed in India than it was in the early Church. When I ask, 'If I give up this, what principle should I adopt?' I find it can only be this, that anybody of Christian men and women are at liberty to make their own arrangements for their ministry. Now, I have often thought of this alternative principle, and it seems to me that not only does it everywhere throw open the door to division and schism, but, if we were to proclaim it in India, the necessary and inevitable result would be the creation of caste churches. When the Indian community is freed from the restraints of foreign mission-

ary societies, if it accepts this principle, it will necessarily and inevitably take the line of least resistance, and then we shall see in India divisions based on caste, far more numerous and infinitely worse than anything that the Church has yet seen in the east or west."

The conference at which these opinions were expressed did not see its way to take definite steps in the direction of organic union, but it organized the National Missionary Council (which came afterwards to be known as the National Christian Council) and much was done to promote co-operation in Christian work. Among other efforts was a forward movement in evangelism, in connection with which some conferences were held. It was at one of these held at Tranquebar, the place where, more than two hundred years earlier, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau had landed as pioneers of evangelism in India, that a proposal was made by two of its members, Messrs Azariah and Santiago, that the conference be continued for another two days to discuss the possibility of organic union on the basis of the Lambeth Quadri-lateral. This conference consisted of thirty-nine members. Seven of them were Anglicans. Twenty-six had come from the South India United Church, two from the Lutheran Church, and four from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. As the members of the latter two churches were not then prepared to express any opinion as to the likelihood of their churches taking any formal action in the matter of

Church Union, the Anglican and the South India United Church members alone attended the meeting for deliberations on Union, and forthwith drew up an agreed statement with reference to the question.

**A Summary of the Statement is as follows :—**

We, as individual members of the Anglican Communion and the South India United Church, having met at Tranquebar in the first Ministers' Conference on Church Union, after prayer, thought and discussion, have agreed on the following statement concerning the union of the Anglican Church with the South India United Church.

"We believe that union is the will of God, even as our Lord prayed that we might all be one that the world might believe. We believe that union is the teaching of Scripture, that 'there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.'

"We believe that the challenge of the present hour, in the period of reconstruction after the war, in the gathering together of the nations, and in the present critical situation in India itself, calls us to mourn our past divisions and to turn to our Lord Jesus Christ to seek in Him the unity of the body expressed in

One Visible Church. We face together the titanic task of the winning of India for Christ—one-fifth of the human race. And yet, confronted by such an over-whelming responsibility, we find ourselves rendered weak, and relatively impotent by our unhappy divisions—divisions for which we were not responsible, and which were imposed on us from without; divisions which we do not desire to perpetuate.

"In this united Church we believe that three scriptural elements must be conserved:—the Congregational, the Presbyterian and the Episcopal elements. By the Congregational element is meant that element which represents 'the whole Church' with 'every member' having immediate access to God, each exercising this gift for the development of the whole body. We believe this Church should include the delegated, organized or Presbyterian element, by which the Church could unite in a General Assembly, Synods or Councils in organized unity. We believe it should include also the representative, executive or episcopal element. Thus all the three elements, no one of which is absolute or sufficient without the other two, should be included in the Church of the future; for we aim not at compromise for the sake of peace, but at comprehension for the sake of truth.

"In seeking this union, the Anglican Members stand for one ultimate principle—namely, the Historic Episcopate. The members of the South India United Church believe that it is a necessary condition that the episcopate should reassume a constitutional form, on the primitive, simple, apostolical model. The latter further make one condition of union—namely, the recognition of the spiritual equality, of the universal priesthood of all believers, and of the rights of the laity to their full expression in the Church.

" Upon this common ground of the historic episcopate, and of the spiritual equality of all members of the two churches, we propose Union on the following basis:—

(1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation.

(2) The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

(3) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

(4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted."

This basis of union is popularly known as the Lambeth Quadrilateral, as it was first adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888.

---

## Chapter III

### Negotiations Begin : the Church of England and the South India United Church

#### 1. *Action taken by the South India United Church.*

The General Assembly of the South India United Church which met on the 29th of September, 1919, expressed its joy at the growing desire for a united Church in India, and its fullest sympathy with the idea of union with the Anglican Church. The General Assembly expressed its hope of the possibility of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar also entering into this union. Further, the General Assembly sent its requests to the nine Church Councils under it to consider the advisability or otherwise of adopting a Constitutional Historic Episcopacy. In its communications to the councils the General Assembly made the whole position very clear in the following terms :—

(1) By Constitutional Episcopacy is meant that form of Episcopacy in which the Bishops shall be elected by, and responsible to, the General Assembly.

(2) There shall be mutual recognition of the absolute equality of the ministry and of the members of the uniting Churches.

(3) The resultant Church shall be an autonomous entity.



The Executive Committee of the General Assembly also, in their circular letter, dated the 25th of November, 1919, to the Church Councils under them, clearly stated that, by accepting the Constitutional Historic Episcopacy, no one was expected to accept the doctrine of 'Apostolic Succession', though the way was left open for others to do so, if they wished.

The General Assembly also instructed the Executive Committee to confer with the representatives of the Anglican and the Mar Thoma Syrian Churches to bring into effect the contemplated union of the Churches in South India.

## 2. *Action taken by the Anglicans.*

The Episcopal Synod of the Church of England in India met in February, 1920, and likewise expressed its fullest sympathy with the Church Union movement. Further, by appointing its representatives to work on a Joint Committee of the two churches, the Episcopal Synod very clearly evinced its sincere desire to come into organic union with the South India United Church.

## 3. *The position of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church.*

After the conference of ministers held at Tranquebar in May, 1919, and the conference of missionaries at Kodaikanal the same year, a statement was published on behalf of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church.

in Malabar, by the suffragan of the Church and two other prominent members. Although in their statement these leaders expressed themselves in favour of the proposal, it was evident that the Mar Thoma Church had not made up its mind either for or against entering into the contemplated union.

#### 4. *Joint Action by the Negotiating Churches.*

The first meeting of the Joint Committee of the Anglican and the S. I. U. C. Churches was held at Bangalore in March, 1920. After prayerful deliberation for two days, the delegates drew up a statement in which they recorded their full agreement with reference to the basic principles of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, namely : (1) The Holy Scriptures (2) the Creeds. (3) the Sacraments. With reference to (4), the Historic Episcopate, they made a more definite statement as follows :—

"(1) We believe that the principle of the Historic Episcopate in a constitutional form is that which is more likely than any other, to promote and preserve the unity of the Church ; therefore, we accept it as a basis of union without raising other questions about episcopacy.

"(2) By Constitutional Episcopacy we mean :—

- (a) that the Bishops shall be elected by representatives of the diocese and approved by representatives of the province.

(b) that the Bishops shall perform their duties constitutionally in accordance with such customs of the Church as shall be defined in a written constitution.

(c) that the continuity with the Historic Episcopate will be effectively maintained, it being understood that no particular interpretation of the Historic Episcopate be demanded.

"(3) We are agreed that after union all future ordinations to the Presbyterate would be performed by the laying on of hands of the Bishops and Presbyters; and that all consecrations of Bishops would be performed by Bishops, not less than three taking part in each consecration.

"(4) By autonomy in the resultant Church we mean :—

(a) that the Church in India ought to be independent of the State.

(b) that the Church in India must be free from any control, legal or otherwise, of any church or society outside of India.

(c) that, while the Church in India is free from such control, it would regulate its actions by the necessity of maintaining fellowship with other branches of the Catholic Church with which we are now in communion."

With reference to the question of the equality of the ministry, it was recorded that the S. I. U. C. makes it a condition of union that its present ministers (Presbyters) shall, after union, be recognized as ministers (Presbyters) without re-ordination.

The Joint Committee met for its second session in December, 1920, at Bangalore. It was then that certain practical difficulties were pointed out by the Anglican side in regard to their acting in accordance with the agreements made at the previous meeting. The intention of both parties in the negotiations was that the resultant Church should be an independent and autonomous body, free from State control. This involved negotiations for severing the Anglican Church from the State. Although that Church had already begun working on this problem, quite apart from the negotiations with the S. I. U. C., it was felt that the legal difficulties involved would take a long time to solve, and that the contemplated corporate union of the churches would be indefinitely postponed. In the Anglican Church, in the northern dioceses, a very large proportion of the membership was European, and not directly affected by the problems which influenced churches in South India. The churches in the south were, moreover, linked together by language and race, and, therefore, could form a national regional church.

It thus became evident that the best way of solving the practical problems was to entrust the

matter to those who were linked together by race and language, and lived in a smaller area where continuous consultation was possible. It was the earnest hope of the Anglican section that their Church as a whole would be willing to entrust the working out of the principles laid down for the union to the judgment of the local Bishops guided by the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference.

At the second session of the Joint Committee the following proposals were made regarding the ministry of the Church after union:—

(1) It is found that arrangements are necessary with regard to the ministers of the uniting Churches who were ordained before union, and are working in either Church at the time of union.

(2) Any such minister shall be at liberty to ask of the Bishops of the Church in the area affected by the union a fresh commission such as would have enabled him to minister in the Church to which he did not belong before union.

(3) In regard to ministrations in the area affected, the authorities of the Church in that area will undertake that any minister ordained before the union, who does not avail himself of the liberty mentioned above, shall not exercise his ministry, whether permanent or occasional, in places where, in their judgment, the exercise

of his ministry will raise conscientious scruples in the congregation concerned, or be injurious to the interests of the Church in that area.

(4) Any minister who does not avail himself of the liberty mentioned above will have no claim, by virtue of the union, to any rights or status outside the said area which did not belong to him before union.

As these proposals were not found acceptable to the South India United Church, they were dropped later on.

---

## Chapter IV

### Union of the Malabar Church with the South India United Church

The circumstances in which the Malabar Church became a party to the negotiations for wider union need to be specially mentioned. This was occasioned by her affiliation to the South India United Church, which happened in March, 1919, exactly two months before the Tranquebar Conference. Some time after the outbreak of the great European War (in 1914) all German missionaries in the districts of South Kanara, South Mahratta and Malabar were interned, and the Basel Mission Industrials, consisting of several Weaving and Tile Factories on the West Coast were sequestered by Govern-

ment, as they were considered to be German concerns. Naturally, this caused considerable alarm in all the three churches. The work of the Mission and the Church was, however, continued for three years under the guidance of the General Local Committee of the Mission, composed entirely of Swiss missionaries. In spite of untold difficulties they would have carried on their work in Malabar if circumstances had permitted. But this was not to be. Turkey had joined Germany against the allies in the Great War, and the Government of India apprehended that the presence of the German-speaking Swiss missionaries in Malabar where there are fanatical Moplas, might, in the circumstances, be a source of trouble. Hence Government intimated its decision to remove all missionaries of the Basel Mission from Malabar. The General Local Committee was, therefore, forced to request other missionary societies in India to shoulder the entire responsibility for some parts of its extensive field. The mission organizations and churches in the Nilgiris, were handed over to the Wesleyan Mission, and some parts of North Kanara were entrusted to the National Missionary Society. The General Local Committee thought it could confine its activities to South Kanara and South Mahratta, where help was now being given by a new organization which had its headquarters at Lausanne in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. This mission thus constituted, which was known as the Kanarese Evangelical Mission, was recognized by the Government of India,

and had on its staff an English missionary appointed by the National Missionary Council. As for Malabar, the parting General Local Committee met at Coonoor on the 16th of May, 1918, and in consultation with the District Committee of Malabar and the special Swiss delegate who had arrived from Europe, made the following decision : —

The General Local Committee empowers the District Synod Board of Malabar to arrange for the election of an extra-ordinary Church Assembly to meet in June. The number of delegates to this assembly shall be proportionate to the strength of each congregation—three to every five hundred or fraction thereof.

The Pastors in charge of the congregations shall be *ex-officio* delegates. All ordinary members of the Church, and Catechists, including those employed in the evangelistic department, are entitled to stand for election. The Presbyteries are requested to give to their respective congregations all the information they need about the proposed meeting. The Assembly shall sit for one day, and discuss the question of affiliation to the South India United Church. This Assembly is further empowered to elect a Temporary Commission of not more than twelve members, six of whom shall be Pastors, or Catechists in charge of congregations to draft a Constitution for the Church in Malabar and a Trust Deed for its



property. These drafts will be examined by the G. L. C., and as soon as the final version is approved and accepted, the G. L. C. will transfer the church property to the Trustees of the Church, and hand over the administration of the Church to authorities who are constitutionally established.

Mangalore,	}	In the name of the G. L. C.
6th June, 1918.		Sd/- B. Lathi, General President.

The decision of the G.L.C. was duly communicated to all the fourteen congregations in Malabar, and, in compliance with the same, an extra-ordinary Assembly of the Malabar Churches met at Calicut on the 3rd of July, 1918, and resolved to take immediate steps to accept and assume the autonomy of the Malabar Church and be incorporated into the South India United Church as advised by the G. L. C.

It took nearly eight months for the Temporary Commission to draft the Constitution for the Church and the Trust Deed for the property. Having approved the drafts in March, 1919, the G. L. C. sent the following parting message to the Malabar Church:—

*Announcement of the G. L. C. to the Churches of Malabar.*

In recommending to the Churches of Malabar the constitution prepared by the Temporary Commission, and approved by the G. L. C., we expect the Churches to accord to the

fundamental document due appreciation and adherence, and request them to carry out the election of the various authoritative bodies of the Church according to the constitution and the provisional rules.

In pursuance of the resolutions of the extra-ordinary Assembly held on July 3, 1918, we request the said Assembly to meet again at Calicut on Friday, March 21, 1919, at 3 p. m., for the purpose of fixing the date from which the affiliation of the B. M. Malabar Church should take effect.

As the present authorities will be relieved of their responsibilities from the date of affiliation and the new authorities are yet to be elected, we authorize the extra-ordinary Assembly to nominate at the said meeting three representatives of the Malabar Church who, in conjunction with the representatives of the S. I. U. C., will be responsible for the management of the Church until the new authorities assume their office.

Trusting that the B. M. Christians of Malabar will in these days of transition, as well as in the future, prove conscientious and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, we, the parting G. L. C., commit them and their Church to the all-sufficient grace of God, praying that He may

keep, increase and bless it through Jesus Christ for ever.

Calicut,	}	Sd/- J. Meyer,
13th March, 1919		District President,
		For the General Local Committee.

On the evening of the 20th of March, 1919, when the Temporary Commission met in the Church at Calicut, the General Local Committee of the Basel Mission, and the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of the S. I. U. C. were also present. At that meeting the question of the arrangements to be made for the future administration of the mission work in Malabar was raised. The members of the General Local Committee of the Basel Mission both jointly and individually declared their inability to continue to work in Malabar, and also expressed their deep regret at not finding any Missionary Society in India which was prepared to take over the administrative and financial responsibilities for the work. It became clear, however, that both the parting General Local Committee and the Executive of the General Assembly of the S. I. U. C. were unanimous in accepting one fundamental principle—namely, that the mission work in Malabar must be undertaken only by a missionary society officially connected with the S. I. U. C. with which the Malabar Church had affiliated itself. But in the course of further discussion, it became also clear that the General Assembly of the S. I. U. C. being only a legislative body in ecclesiastical matters and a

connecting link between the churches that had entered into an organic union, could not, in the very nature of things, undertake any responsibility for financing so elaborate a mission organization. The situation thus became quite critical and alarming.

It was a gloomy evening ; and the perplexity of the situation seemed to add to its gloom. Those few Christian men—Indian, American, Scotch, English and Swiss—sat in front of the altar in that historic Church at Calicut—all of them filled with grave uncertainties and fears. There was a rumour that the Government of India had issued an order for the liquidation of the Basel Mission Industrials. The properties of the Mission and of the Church had been placed in the hands of the Custodian of enemy property. These developments had caused a panic throughout the Church in Malabar. The leaders who had assembled to consider the future of the Malabar Church, and of of the Mission found themselves therefore gazing at an undefined catastrophe looming in the encircling darkness. The discussions had come to a stop. Only a few whispers could be heard. Just then one member proposed to spend a few minutes in silent prayer. As they knelt in silence, it was felt that the Lord was in their midst ; His voice was heard in unmistakable accents. Afterwards a few members of the Executive Committee went out and conferred together for a short time. They returned to the meeting and made an announcement which proved a real message of hope to the Malabar Church and

Mission. The announcement was to the effect that the Executive Committee trusted that some missions, especially the United Free Church of Scotland Mission, the London Missionary Society and the Reformed Church in America, which were organically connected with the South India United Church, would give their financial support for the continuance of the missionary activities in Malabar. This was virtually the origin of what later on came to be known as the Malabar Mission. The extra-ordinary Assembly of the Malabar Church met on the next morning. After prayerful deliberation they resolved to request the Executive of the General Assembly to affiliate the Malabar Church to the S. I. U. C., and to recognize it as an integral part thereof from the date of affiliation, application for which would be made as soon as the new constitution was approved. Finally, on the 23rd of March, 1919, the constitution was drawn up and adopted by the Churches and the General Local Committee.

On April 1, 1919, the S. I. U. C., acting under a mandate from Government through the National Missionary Council, assumed responsibility for the whole work carried on by the Basel Mission in Malabar. The mandate stated that the responsibility was to be exercised in conjunction with the Malabar Church. In compliance with the express desire of the leaders of the Malabar Church to assume the fullest measure of control over the whole work, and on the recommendation of its own Executive and that of the Malabar Church Council, the General Assembly

of the S. I. U. C., decided at its meeting held at Calicut on September 26, 1919, to hand over control of the whole work, as an experiment, to the Church Council, operating through a Joint Board of Management consisting of seven members of the Church and five appointed by the S. I. U. C.—the Assembly retaining only a joint veto for its five representatives.

From this time until the return of the Basel Mission in 1926, the work in Malabar was carried on under the joint direction of the Malabar Church Council and the representatives of the S. I. U. C. During those seven years of great difficulty the S. I. U. C. rendered invaluable help to the Malabar Church and Mission through its representatives. Not only did the S. I. U. C. largely contribute to the financial support of the Mission but also lent the services of several able leaders consisting of Scotchmen, Americans, Englishmen and Indians. Some of them resided and worked in Malabar at a time when no communication with the mother mission was possible. Their effective preaching, Christian example, and the guidance they gave in all matters relating to Church and Mission will ever live fresh in the memory of the Malabar Church. The last and most memorable service they rendered to Malabar was to move the British Parliament to permit the Basel Mission to resume their work on the West Coast of India. Although, with the return of the Basel Mission, the South India United Church ceased to have any official control of the mission work in

Malabar, the Church in Malabar still continues to be a part of the South India United Church, and is governed by its general constitution which provides for the autonomy of the churches under its care and oversight.

---

## Chapter V

### Evolution of a Scheme of Union'

The third meeting of the Joint Committee was held in Madras in 1921, when detailed statements of agreement were drawn up relating to the following:—

#### 1. *Government of the United Church.*

##### (i) **Size of the Dioceses**

The Committee considers that the aim of the scheme should be to establish Dioceses smaller than the present Anglican dioceses and that the division of the dioceses should, as far as possible, be on a territorial basis. As the membership of the uniting Churches is about equal, it would be advisable that in the beginning the number of dioceses in each of the two uniting Churches should be as nearly equal as possible.

##### (ii) **The Governing Bodies**

It is agreed that the present Council system, with the Pastorate Committees, Local Councils (variously called 'Circles' and 'Districts' in the Anglican Church), the

Diocesan Council and the Provincial Synod (General Assembly), should be adopted—subject to such modifications as the circumstances of the dioceses demand.

(a) The Pastorate Committees and Local Councils:—It is agreed that the present scheme of Pastorate Committees and Local Councils should be continued and that in the united Church each diocese should be at liberty to draft its own rules for these, subject to the final approval of the Provincial Synod (General Assembly).

(b) The Diocesan Council:—The Church Council of the South India United Church would generally be, in size and constitution, the basis of the Diocesan Council.

It is agreed that this Council should consist of (1) the Bishop (2) all the clergy (ministers) (3) lay representatives chosen on a definite proportional basis and (4) co-opted members. The Bishop shall *ex-officio* be the Chairman.

It is agreed that the duties of the Diocesan Council should be those at present assigned to the Church Councils of the South India United Church, namely,

(1) oversight and care of the congregation within the diocese

(2) organization and recognition of pastorates and local councils



∴(3) approval of candidates for ordination and the appointment of clergy (ministers) to pastorates

(4) counselling and aiding unorganized groups of believers

(5) decision on references and appeals

(6) encouragement and maintenance of evangelistic work

(7) discipline of the church according to the constitution

(8) election of representatives to the Provincial Synod (General Assembly)

Note:—Each Diocesan Council would be free to adopt its own rules for the appointment and transfer of clergy (ministers).

### (iii) Powers of the Bishop

(a) The Bishop shall be President of the Diocesan Council, and have the right to visit committees and councils in the diocese.

(b) Location of clergy shall be carried out by the Bishop in accordance with the rules formulated by the Diocese. It is highly desirable that the Bishop should conduct, or arrange for the conduct of, the service at which the minister is inducted to his charge.

(c) The Diocesan Council will approve and communicate to the Bishop the names

of candidates selected for ordination, in accordance with the rules formulated by each Diocesan Council.

The Bishop will enquire into their fitness, and, if satisfied, he will ordain them in the form prescribed. If he does not approve of a candidate, he will inform the Diocesan Council of the fact, and they may at their discretion take steps to enquire further into the fitness of the candidate; but the Bishop cannot be compelled to ordain a man whom, after careful enquiry, he does not approve.

- (d) The spiritual care of ministers and workers shall be the Bishop's special responsibility.
- (e) In accordance with the rules laid down by the Provincial Synod, the Bishop will give formal licenses to the clergy to officiate and preach in the Diocese.
- (f) Cases requiring discipline shall be tried by Courts authorized to do so by the Provincial Synod. Any sentence which involves excommunication will require the approval of the Bishop.
- (g) Charges against the clergy shall be submitted to the Bishop in the first instance, and he will proceed to deal with each

- case in accordance with the rules to be formulated by the Provincial Synod.
- (h) As chairman of the Diocesan Council the Bishop shall have a veto on resolutions concerning certain classes of subjects prescribed by the constitution. This veto can be the subject of appeal to the Provincial Synod, whose decision will be final.
  - (i) The Bishop will not have control over finance, or any arbitrary powers not conferred by the constitution.
  - (j) While the utmost freedom should be allowed in public worship, it will be the duty of the Bishop to advise the churches in this matter and to cause to be prepared special services and prayers as may be required from time to time. He should also be empowered to take notice of any grave irregularities, if they should occur in public worship. It will be of great benefit to the churches if the Bishop receives reports from them as to the usefulness of different services.
  - (iv) **Voting by Houses of Laity, Clergy and Bishops in the Provincial Synod**

Consideration of this question was relegated to a committee.

## II. *Creeds; their Use; Declaration of Assent.*

- (i) In accepting the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as a sufficient statement of faith

of the Church for a basis of fellowship, it is competent to the church after union to issue supplementary statements concerning faith, for the guidance of its teachers and the edification of the faithful, provided that such statements are not contrary to the truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

- (ii) The Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed should be used as the basis of one part of the instruction for Baptism, it being understood that at first the Apostles' creed will be so used. According to the present custom in the Anglican Church the creed is used as prescribed in the Prayer Book and the candidates are asked at the baptismal service to affirm their belief in its terms; and in the South India United Church it is frequently used in the service and questions are asked of the candidates dealing with their faith.
- (iii) The use of the creeds in worship is an act of adoration and thanksgiving to Almighty God for His nature and for His acts of love and mercy as well as a joyful remembrance of the faith which binds together the worshippers. While it is competent to the Church to legislate concerning the occasions on which

- the creeds are to be used in worship, it is agreed that neither the General Assembly (the Synod), nor the Diocesan Council, nor any other Church authority will forbid their use in worship.

(iv) Declaration of Assent:—It ought to be observed first that individuals share the belief of the Church in proportion to their capacity and experience. No two say any creed with precisely the same understanding. One may accept it as a whole as capable of being proved 'by most sure warrants of the Holy Scriptures', and as being the faith of the Church Universal throughout the ages. Some portions of the creed he accepts in quite a different way as having deeply influenced his own life and entered into the very heart of his thinking and feeling. With his growth in religion, more and more of the creed becomes part of his personal religious experience. But it is equally possible for him to give a conscientious assent to the clauses of the creed either because they have entered into his religious life, or into the religious life of the Church, or simply because he believes them warranted by the Holy Scriptures. When the clergy or others

make a formal declaration of assent to the Creed this should imply at least one of these three positions towards all its clauses. It is no business of the Church to enquire curiously into the individual's state of mind on each clause. By assent the Church means real assent which may take any of the above-mentioned three forms.

The General assembly or Synod of the Church shall determine what profession of faith shall be required of persons seeking to be ordained by its bishops, it being understood that in making the union both churches agree that at least a sincere belief in the truths enunciated in the Nicene Creed will be required.

- (v) By the expression 'Nicene Creed' is meant that creed which is commonly so called, though it is not the creed of the Council of Nicaea, but the creed of the Council of Constantinople, which is known to scholars as the Constantinopolitan Creed.
- (vi) It is desirable in effecting the union to provide that the act or agreement of union shall not be invalidated, if in the future the Church should return to the original form of the Constantinopolitan Creed by omitting the words 'and the Son' from the article of the Holy Spirit.

### III. *Confirmation.*

Confirmation, as it is understood in the Anglican Church, may be administered by any of the bishops of the united Church in any congregation, which desires it. Persons who have been thus confirmed will be admitted to Holy Communion throughout the Church.

In other cases the service of admission to full membership now in use in the South India United Church or some similar service shall be employed and persons who have been admitted according to this method will be admitted to Holy Communion throughout the Church.

### IV. *Marriage.*

It is understood that the rules now in vogue in the Dioceses and Councils which will be included in the united Church shall continue after union till the Provincial Synod of the Church shall determine otherwise.

### V. *Intercommunion.*

- (i) It is not intended that the consummation of union between these two churches should have the effect of excluding from Communion in the Church after the union, such persons as have formerly enjoyed the privilege of receiving Communion in one of the uniting Churches. In order to secure some equality of treatment in different parts of the united Church, general rules will have to be framed by the Provincial Synod or

General Assembly, which the diocesan authorities will apply to individual cases.

- (ii) Again, it is not intended that the consummation of union between the churches should have the effect of laying open to excommunication or other church discipline, a member of the future united Church who receives Communion from some other church in places where no church services are conducted by the united Church or who, in places where the united Church is working, receives Communion on special occasions in other churches, provided that in either case the church to which the said member of the united Church goes for Communion is one with which, before the union, members of either of the uniting Churches were accustomed to communicate.

## VI. *The Ministry of the Church.*

### (i) **The Diaconate**

It would be in accordance with a custom which has prevailed in the Church for more than a thousand years, if all persons were required to pass through the Diaconate before being ordained to the Presbyterate. In view of ancient history it cannot be said that this is essential to the validity of the higher order of ministry. But one of the questions which need determining is whether it should be required as a condition



that in the future united Church candidates for the Presbyterate should have passed through the Diaconate.

## (ii) The Presbyterate

The Committee considered the interpretation of the resolution passed at its first session that 'after union all ordinations should be by Bishops' in relation to the position of ordained ministers who might, after union, offer to enter the ministry of the Church as ordained ministers without further ordination in the united Church and in relation to the Missionary Societies and the Churches which supported them.

A sub-committee was appointed to consider this subject further and report at the next meeting.

In April, 1923, when the fourth meeting of the Joint Committee was held at Pasumalai, it was reported that the General Assembly of the South India United Church which met in 1921, had expressed very strong dissatisfaction with the proposals of the Joint Committee on the equality of the ministry. The continuation of what was virtually a dual ministry in the united Church seemed to them to militate against the attainment of real unity. This led the committee to the adoption of a proposal which it had once rejected, namely, a mutual commissioning of ministers. This proposal was strongly advocated by Prof. Vernon Bartlett of Mansfield College, Oxford, in 1921, who urged that it would effect the purpose

which all desired of including in the commission of ministers, elements which might be lacking on one side or the other.

The commissioning service was to be one of the series of acts consummating union, in which a declaration should be read by all ministers. It was proposed that the bishops and clergy of the Anglican Church be commissioned by certain representative presbyters of the South India United Church; and the ministers of the South India United Church, by a bishop and certain representative presbyters of the Anglican Church. Then the words of prayer would be read by each of these groups, and they would then lay their hands on the heads of those of the other church who were to be commissioned. This would be the last act of the churches as separate bodies.

#### Declaration to be read by All

"We are gathered together in the presence of God to receive, and on behalf of the churches we represent, to give a mutual commission for a wider ministry in the Church of God. We offer thanks to the One Head of the Church for the privilege of the service which He has permitted us all to render in our several ministries and for the manifestations of the working of His Spirit through our imperfect means.

“None of us dare in any way repudiate the ministry which we have received or dishonour the Spirit of God who has called us to His service. We are here publicly and formally seeking additional recognition of a new call, and a fuller authority for a wider service in the united Church, and implore for ourselves God’s care and strength to fulfil the same”

The above form of the Commissioning Service was communicated to all Church Councils under the General Assembly to ascertain their opinion.

---

## Chapter VI

### **The Methodist Church enters into the Negotiations**

At the fifth meeting of the Joint Committee, held in Madras in February, 1925, the Wesleyan Methodist Church was represented very strongly by fourteen members, duly appointed by the Provincial Synod of their Church in response to an invitation from the Joint Committee. This meeting was mainly engaged in ascertaining how far the Methodist representatives found themselves in agreement with the findings of the first preliminary report.

In the same year the General Assembly of the South India United Church met at Salem. The reports from the several churches, with reference to the proposed Commissioning Service clearly

indicated a strong feeling in the churches against the laying on of hands which formed one of the acts of the Commissioning Service. The Assembly, therefore, had to instruct its committee on union to urge the Joint Committee to find a better solution.

This was reported at the sixth meeting of the Joint Committee in February, 1926, and then the Committee came very near a deadlock. Some time had to elapse before the Joint Committee could move forward again. It was by the perceptible guidance of God that the Committee was able, after prayerful reconsideration, to report in 1929 that a much clearer understanding of one another's mind had become possible, as manifested in the meetings held in 1928 and 1929, at Madras and Bangalore respectively. The Committee then reported that it was agreed that all ministers of the negotiating Churches should become, by the act of union, ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the united Church. In putting this clause into practice the sentiments of those who held conscientious objection were to be fully respected.

Since the Wesleyans Joined the negotiations in 1925, the draft of the Scheme of Union had to be revised. The work of revision was not completed, even tentatively, till 1929. In that year the Joint Committee, at its eighth meeting held at Madras, sat for ten full days with forty-two members present, and considered in great detail all the questions

relating to the formation and working of the united Church. The statements of agreement were in many cases modified, and at last put in such a shape that the whole might form a complete and consistent scheme. The proposed Scheme of Union was first published in 1929.

It is important to record here that the Indian Church Measure of 1927 had, meanwhile, been passed. By this the Anglican Church in India, which, till then, had been a State-aided Church under the British Government, ceased to be such, officially separated from the Church of England, and came to be known as 'the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon.'

---

## Chapter VII

### **The Congregationalists Examine the Scheme**

It was by the Congregational section of the South India United Church that objections to the Scheme were first raised. Some leading members of the London Missionary Society in Travancore felt they could not accept a scheme which, they said, was not in line with the cardinal principles upheld by them as English Congregationalists. A pamphlet was published which contained an examination of the proposed scheme from the Congregational standpoint, and was issued with the approval of seventeen ministers and eight laymen of four Church Councils

of the South India United Church, namely, Travancore, North Tamil, Telugu and Kanarese. Some of the principal points of objection raised in the pamphlet are noted below:—

I. *The Individual Congregation and the Individual Church Member.*

One of the most obvious characteristics of historic Congregationalism has been the importance it has attributed to the individual congregation and the individual church member. In the united Church as outlined in the scheme, it seems certain that this emphasis on the importance of the individual congregation and the individual church member would disappear.

II. *The Ministry and the Sacraments.*

Congregationalists believe in a ministry; but they have no room for priests. They do not believe that there are any functions of the ministry which cannot be properly and validly performed by unordained members of the Church. Such a belief imports both into the idea of ministry and into the idea of sacraments an untrue element. Here is an irreconcilable cleavage upon matters of vital importance.

III. *The Historic Episcopate.*

It is clear that the phrase 'Historic Episcopate' will mean one thing to one party, and another thing to another party. This seems to be a

very insecure basis on which to build a vital spiritual union. The very emphatic insistence on the maintenance of 'continuity with the Historic Episcopate both initially and thereafter' is itself calculated to inculcate upon the Church ideas of a ministry in sole possession of certain graces and powers which can be passed on almost mechanically from one to another, and which are radically contrary to the whole Congregational conception.

These objections were met by Bishop Western of Tinnevely in a letter published in 1929, wherein in the clearest terms the Bishop explained, from the Anglican position, each of the points raised in the pamphlet issued by the Congregationalists. The reply in the main was as follows :—

- (1) In any union between churches it would be impossible to maintain the full Congregational position. The Congregational Churches of the London Mission have already recognized this by their joining the South India United Church.
- (2) The institution of the Historic Episcopate does not necessarily imply the idea of a ministry 'which is conceived to be the sole channel of certain gracious operations of the Holy Spirit', or 'to which certain graces and powers are restricted'. As a general principle there must be room in the united Church for those who hold these views, as well as for those who consider no functions of the ministry too

sacred to be properly and validly performed by unordained members of the Church. The case of the Church of England itself, or again, of the Swedish Church, shows that it is quite possible to include very different views on this matter within one Church.

- (3) The Historic Episcopate can co-exist with a variety of theories about 'Apostolic Succession,' as in the Church of England, or, indeed, with a denial of it in almost every sense as in the case of many Evangelical Churches.

In the Church of England itself there is probably a majority of people who do not hold the doctrine of 'Apostolic Succession.' Dr. Headlam, the Bishop of Gloucester, has called that doctrine 'mechanical and untrue.' In the course of a critical analysis of the whole question in an article in the Prayer Book Dictionary, he remarks as follows:—

"The idea of Apostolic Succession is really a deduction from the right theory of Orders, and the mistake has been to make Orders depend upon Apostolic Succession and transmission. The authority to consecrate and ordain, or to perform all spiritual offices, resides in, and comes from, the Church to which God has given His Spirit. The idea of transmission is an additional and later conception which, instead of expressing the idea of succession, has by its exaggeration of it led to a rigid and mechanical theory of the ministry.



As the grace of Orders depends upon the authority of the Church and not upon a machanical transmission, all objections from supposed irregularities of ordination are beside the point, and the opinions of churchmen and others who have maintained that in certain circumstances a presbyter may ordain, are explained. Ordination depends upon the authority of the Church, and not the Church upon Ordination."

When the twelfth General Assembly of the South India United Church met at Bangalore in October, 1929, the delegates from the London Missionary Society in Travancore proposed amendments to the scheme and asked for the deletion of the word 'historic' from the phrase 'Historic Episcopate' as used in the scheme, and also for the omission of the expression 'without intending thereby to imply, or to express a judgment on, any theory concerning Episcopacy'.

As there was considerable debate on the proposed amendment, the Assembly resolved to appoint a committee to draw up a summary of the discussions, together with other points on which there were differences of opinion, and report to the Assembly during its sessions. This committee presented its report after two days suggesting that the words, 'in doing so, they declare that no particular theory regarding Episcopacy shall become the official doctrine of the united Church, and they do not

commit themselves to the position that 'episcopal ordination is the dividing line between a valid and an invalid ministry,' be substituted for the expression which the London Mission delegates had proposed to omit. In view of this modification these delegates withdrew their motion to amend the scheme.

The ninth session of the Joint Committee was held at Madras in November, 1930, when the resolutions of the Wesleyan Synod and of the General Council of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, were considered. In the light of those resolutions, modifications were effected in the wording of a number of paragraphs. The second edition of the scheme, thus revised in the light of fresh criticisms and suggestions, was published in 1931.

---

## Chapter VIII

### **An All-India Conference on Church Union**

The year 1931 was remarkable for the holding of the first all-India Conference on Church Union at Nagpur. At this meeting representatives of the Church Union Movement in South India, consisting of Anglican, Wesleyan and S. I. U. C. delegates, had the opportunity to meet representatives from North India, consisting of delegates from the United Church of North India, the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Society of Friends. This conference was held in accordance with a resolution of the Round Table

Conference on Church Union held at Delhi in 1931, at which eight different denominations were represented. It was also at the special request of this Round Table Conference that representatives of the South India Union Movement attended the conference. The main object of the conference was to consider the principles that should be adopted in the formation of a united Church for the whole of India.

After prayerful discussion, the Conference agreed to advise the Churches which it represented to promote the cause of union by adopting the course stated below :—

- (1) Definite steps should be taken to associate members of the various churches in united evangelistic efforts.
- (2) The churches should be given opportunity for common acts of worship.
- (3) Definite opportunities should be provided for the interchange of ministers in the preaching of the Word of God.

## Chapter IX

### A Critical Stage

The tenth session of the Joint Committee held at Bangalore in June, 1932, was one of great importance. It was at this meeting that the Committee felt that it could not possibly agree on the matter of the Thirty Year Period as laid down in the Scheme — (see p. 15, Proposed Scheme—Basis of Union) —

There was continuous debate on this question for hours together, and yet no agreement could be reached. Afterwards the Committee spent a few minutes in silent prayer. When the discussion was resumed a proposal made by one of the members was found acceptable to all. That proposal was adopted and now remains embodied in the scheme, providing that at the end of thirty years the Church, in deciding whether there should be any exception to the rule of an episcopally ordained ministry, should consider two points :— (a) the unity of the ministry within the Church (b) the maintenance of communion and fellowship with the churches outside the union. To the members of the Joint Committee this experience was another evidence that the Holy Spirit, in answer to definite prayer, was guiding the Committee in its work.

• There were also other occasions, at this meeting and even prior to it, when the sections representing the different churches felt that they could not come to an agreement on certain vital questions. These were not vain contentions. All the sections thought that they could not agree without sacrificing some of those principles for which their church had stood for centuries past, and which had become a great and precious spiritual heritage to them. Their ancestors and spiritual fathers had passed through severe trials for the sake of those principles, and even purchased them with their blood. No wonder, then, that these men, however earnest and keen they

might have been in striving for the consummation of this union, could not easily come to an agreement. The leaders of the negotiating Churches, Anglicans, Wesleyans and the S. I. U. C. churchmen, who came to know of the grave difficulties through which the Joint Committee was passing, naturally looked forward to the next meeting of the Joint Committee with anxiety and fear. The prayers of God's faithful people in different parts of the world, however, sustained the Committee in those difficult times and enabled it to continue its labours.

The following news paragraph and editorial appeared in *The Madras Mail* of December 28, 1932:—

### Church Union in South India

London, December 28, 1932.

#### *Critical Stage in Negotiations—*

#### *Bishops Ask for Prayers*

A letter to *The Times* signed by twenty English Bishops draws attention to the critical stage in the negotiations for Church Union in South India, and asks that prayers should be offered throughout the Churches in Britain that Indian Diocesan Councils should give their final approval to the proposal.—Reuter

#### Editorial

Twenty English Bishops have asked that prayers be offered throughout the Churches in Britain for the success of the Church Union Movement in South India. The negotiations have now

reached a stage at which it may be fairly claimed that union is in sight, provided the general approval of the membership of each of the negotiating Churches be forthcoming. The Bishops' appeal makes it clear that whatever opposition may have formerly existed in Great Britain towards the Scheme of Union has now died down.

The eleventh session of the Joint Committee sat at Madras from the 29th of November to the 3rd of December, 1932. It was at this session that a drafting committee was appointed to re-arrange all materials in the proposed scheme in two documents—the Basis of Union and the Constitution. The Basis of Union was re-arranged and re-drafted so as to contain the fundamental principles approved by the negotiating Churches as the basis on which they were prepared to unite. This is a permanent document unalterable in the future and will always stand as a monument to the three churches that negotiated for union. The Constitution of the Church which forms the second document contains the details of organization, which can be altered in the future according to necessity.

Two other important items of business were also transacted at this meeting.

(i) *Presbyters in the Consecration of Bishops*

On behalf of the Wesleyan delegation a resolution was moved, demanding that, in the consecration of bishops, presbyters should

always join with the bishops in the laying on of hands. The proposal was subsequently modified by adding that dioceses which so desired might adopt the laying on of hands by bishops only. In the discussion the Anglican delegates stated that, in view of the advice given to the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon by the Lambeth Conference, it would be extremely difficult for that Church to accept such a proposal, and consequently the proposal was withdrawn and the provision left as originally drafted.

(ii) *Service of Commissioning for Existing Bishops*

While withdrawing the proposal that presbyters should take part in all consecrations of bishops the suggestion was made that it would help matters if the present Anglican Bishops received a commission at the inaugural service of the united Church at the hands of Presbyters representing both the Methodist and the South India United Churches. The whole Committee, especially the Anglican section, welcomed and approved of the general idea that in some solemn and formal way representative Presbyters of those two churches should signify their recognition of the bishops, as Bishops of the United Church; but the Committee postponed consideration of the exact form which that commissioning should take.

This eleventh session of the Joint Committee had two special features which deserve mention. One was the presence of nine visitors from various sections of the Lutheran Church, who had been invited by the Committee as it had learned that they were interested in the Union Movement. These visitors remarked that they had all along been watching the progress of the negotiations for union and had realized that ultimately the Lutheran and other Christian bodies must again come together. They felt that, though there were many difficulties in the way, the Holy Spirit would finally reveal the solution to all. The second point of interest was the news that a conference in East Africa at which representatives of the episcopal and other churches of that area were present had proposed to negotiate for Church Union. It was gratifying to the Joint Committee to learn that this group in East Africa, under the convenership of the Bishop of Mombasa, had definitely accepted the South India Scheme of Union as the basis of their negotiations.

---

## Chapter X

### **The West Coast Churches of the Basel Mission**

#### *I. The Invitation to Union.*

At the eleventh session of the Joint Committee it was reported by the Bishop of Madras and by the Secretary of the Committee that they had had



conferences and correspondence with individual members of the Basel Mission and its officers with reference to an important development on the West Coast. It was a probable union affecting the whole area of the Basel Mission including Malabar, South Kanara and South Mahratta. In view of the facts revealed by those consultations the Joint Committee invited the Basel Mission and the authorities of the Churches in South Kanara and South Mahratta to send their delegates to the next meeting of the Joint Committee, either as visitors or as members of the Committee.

When the Home Board of the Basel Mission advised the Malabar Church in 1932 to become reunited with their sister churches in South Kanara and South Mahratta, the Malabar Church Council had to approach the Executive Committee of the General Assembly of the South India United Church for permission to do so. The Executive Committee took immediate action, and the draft constitution of the United Basel Mission Church in India was referred to a special committee which studied it and suggested a few alterations. The Malabar Church Council adopted many of them, and then gave the assurance to the Executive Committee that the Malabar Church would continue her membership of the South India United Church. On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the fourteenth General Assembly, which met at Calicut in September, 1933, passed the following resolution:—

"It is resolved to approve the action of the Malabar Church Council in uniting with the Churches in South Kanara and South Mahratta on the understanding that such action will probably lead to union with the S. I. U. C., and that this union will lead to a larger union."

It is obvious that this resolution implied an invitation from the General Assembly to the churches in South Kanara and South Mahratta to enter into union with the South India United Church, and thereafter into that wider union which was under negotiation.

It is also clear that the union sought by the Malabar Church in 1932 with the Churches in South Kanara and South Mahratta was in reality a reunion of churches which had been in organic connection with one another from very early times. For these churches were established by the Basel Mission, which began its work on the West Coast in 1834. As mentioned above it was the Great European War of 1914 which caused their separation in 1919.

## II. *The Heritage: Undenominationalism.*

The Basel Mission was from its very inception a Union Mission, and has continued to remain so to this day. It is called a Union Mission in the sense that it came into being from the earnest desire for evangelism of the Lutheran Church in South Germany and the Reformed Church in Switzerland. As early as 1852 the pioneers of this Mission laid

down that, in establishing and bringing up churches in the fields of their missionary labours on the West Coast of India, they should refrain from impressing upon those churches any distinctive mark of denominationalism. This is clearly seen in a statement made by them in the Preface to 'The Liturgy of the German Evangelical Mission Churches in South Western India' which reads as follows:—

"The Basel Committee of the German Evangelical Missionary Society, being an association of Christians in communion with different Protestant Churches established in Germany and Switzerland, formed for the sole purpose of carrying on missionary operation in non-Christian countries, and disavowing the intention of establishing an ecclesiastical union resting on a new Confession of Faith superseding the articles of established churches, has no wish to impose upon the congregations collected in non-Christian countries by the preaching of the Word of God, the creed of any European Church, be it named Lutheran or Reformed or United, but desires that the Mission Churches abroad should keep the Word of God, which has been preached to them and believed by them, in sincerity of heart, and grow in the knowledge of the same Word of God which is the pure and all-sufficient source of Wisdom in divine things. On the other hand, it is the Committee's wish

and hope that the congregations established in those non-Christian lands through the agency of its missionaries may become and remain a church united in the bonds of Christian love and fellowship."

Here we find a breadth of vision which allows sufficient freedom to these churches to define a doctrine for themselves based on the Word of God, at some time in the future when their opportunity will come from God. The foresight which allowed ample margin for the future growth and self-determination of these churches, has vouchsafed to them also a comprehensiveness whereby they are able to accommodate different aspects of the same truth. This comprehensiveness has been acknowledged and exemplified in the doctrinal basis of these churches which comprehends both the Lutheran and Reformed doctrines.

For more than a century now, these churches have uninterruptedly confessed their faith in God by continuing to acknowledge the absolute truth revealed in Jesus Christ, in the interpretation of which these two doctrines blend and supplement each other. The brief doctrinal document commonly called 'The small Catechism of Luther' is recognized as the authoritative formulary of these churches. While, therefore, disavowing any particular doctrine which may distinguish them as a special denomination, they earnestly and unceasingly strive to safeguard the purity of the true Apostolic faith, handed down through centuries, as an inestimable treasure of the One Holy Catholic Church.

## Chapter XI

### Ten Theses on Church Union, 1930

In advising the Malabar Church to enter into the wider union with the Anglicans and the Wesleyans, the Rev. K. Hartenstein, D. D., Director of the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, prepared and sent them the following theses on Church Union :—

#### Part I

*First Thesis* :—Christ created His Church on earth by His Spirit, at Pentecost. Wherever His pure Word is proclaimed and believed in, and wherever His Spirit moves human beings, there His Church is formed amongst all nations. This Church is the *Una Sancta*. Today this unity is still hidden ; but we know that in God's new world it will be a visible reality (John 10. 16).

*Second Thesis* :—The unity of the Church in which we believe has a threefold basis :—

- (a) The Church has one Lord (I Cor. 12 ; Eph. 4). He is the Son of God, who came in the flesh, died for the world, broke through the bonds of death, the Victor and the Lord, who will come again and gather His Church into His Kingdom.
- (b) The Church has One Word of God, as it is given unto us in the Old and New Testaments. Here alone, but all-sufficiently here,

does the Lord give to His Church, what she needs for time and eternity.

- (c) From her earliest days the professing Church made herself a creed, an epitome of the divine message of the Bible. She needs this to be able to understand clearly the Word of God, to keep herself from any syncretism, and to train coming generations in the right way, the so-called 'Apostolicum'.

*Third Thesis* :—Church History tells us of a whole variety of individual and diverse churches. Each has its own particular characteristics which have developed under the leading of God. Each confesses one and the same Lord, but as perceived by each from its particular point of view. Thus the denominational differences have become the wealth of the Church. The one Church is not a church rendered uniform. But all the churches should know, therefore, that they are only members of the one body, Christ, that the Lord is greater than their thoughts, and His Kingdom more comprehensive than any single church. According to the will of the Lord (John 17) the churches should all lay their stress, not on the disuniting factors, but on the One who unites them, the mediator crucified for the world, and on their faith in Him, that the spirit of unification may grow ever stronger.

*Fourth Thesis* :—The true Christian, therefore, must be a unity, created by the Lord and not manufactured by men. It must be a unity of Faith and

Doctrine; not a rendering uniform of the frame and the constitution. The aim of this unification must not be earthly power and grandeur. The Church must remain beneath the Cross; it must be a light for the world, and a sign of the coming Kingdom of God.

## Part II

*Fifth Thesis*:—The Indian and the European leaders who for eleven years have been striving after Church Union, have evidently been working in the spirit of earnest prayerfulness, and of hearkening to the voice of God (see Foreword to the Proposed Scheme). Their aim is the union of all true believers, and their will, to gather together and unite all forces for the evangelizing of South India. It is their purpose to unite the Congregational, the Presbyterian and the Episcopal elements.

*Sixth Thesis*:—The fact is of decisive importance that the historical heritage of these three denominations is to be retained and taken as a contribution to the structure of the Church in India. The Anglicans bring their foundation of a clear doctrine and their accentuation of the ministry especially of the Episcopate; the Presbyterians emphasize the importance of the ministry of elders and of the responsibility of the Synod; the Congregationalists realize the importance of the individual religious community, and of the individual layman. Of all this an organic, though not a uniform, whole is to be developed; one that does not do away with

the value of individualistic characteristics, but that seeks to emphasize, above all, the unifying factors.

*Seventh Thesis* :—The foundations of this new Church are to be the following :—the Scriptures, the Apostolic Creed, the two Sacraments, and the Episcopate. It is to be an Indian Church that is independent of the state, and of other societies ; but by that it does not lose its connection with the mother churches. The problems concerning the constitution and the outer framework are set forth in 'the Proposed Scheme' ; but almost all of them are still under discussion.

*Eighth Thesis* :—In special, there is a lack of clearness on the following points :—

- (a) The significance of the Episcopate, and the proper meaning of the expression, the Historic Episcopate, (rather the Biblical Episcopate) are still left quite vague.
- (b) The proposed transition period of thirty years, during which the way is gradually to be paved for a unity in structure, constitution and ministry, as well as for inter-communion within the union, and with other churches outside it—these seem to be vague ideas.
- (c) The question regarding the leadership in the Church—the powers of the individual bodies (Pastorate Committees, Diocesan Council, Synod, Episcopacy)—has not been yet settled.



- (d) The form of Divine Service, Confirmation, etc., are still open questions.
- (e) The question whether the Lutherans and the Evangelical Syrians, as well as the Baptists, should take part in the union has not been settled. Without these churches, no union of the Christians of South India would be a real one.

### Part III

*Ninth Thesis* :—In dealing with the question whether we should join in a union of the churches in India, if we are called to do so, we must distinctly bear in mind three dangers :

- (a) The Danger of Sacerdotalism :— The strong accentuation of the ministry, especially of the Episcopate, may be a great gain for the church. But here lies also the great danger of the church becoming rigid and bound up in formalism. We may not give due weight to the necessity of personal conversion, the importance of the living community, and above all, the realization that the Word of God must retain its pre-eminence above everything.
- (b) The Danger of Secularism :—Here dangers are imminent, even before the union may become an accomplished fact. It is to be feared that the union brought about would become one of power ; that untrue

spiritual compromises may be made, and that more stress may be laid on questions concerning the constitution than on the purity of faith, and the working of the Holy Spirit. A church may be ever so well-organized; yet it may be a dead church, if it lacks the Word, and 'the Spirit that quickeneth.'

- (c) The Danger of Syncretism :—It is important that an indigenous Indian Church should come into existence. But in aiming at this, the fact should not be disregarded that nationalistic ideals do not count in the Kingdom of God (Gal. 3. 28), and that, in particular, the Indian spiritual heritage must, by complete conversion, pass under the judgment of the Cross. Christ is not the crown and fulfilment of Hinduism; He stands for its condemnation and its re-creation by His Spirit alone.

#### Part IV

*Tenth Thesis* :—In the matter of a union on Biblical lines we have to acquiesce. Further, we must acknowledge that denominations do not play such an important part in India as in the history of the Western Churches. There are three things we must consider in asking ourselves what we are to do.

- (a) The character of the Basel Mission and her churches is that of a union of Reformed

and Lutheran, of Ecclesiastical and also Pietistic characteristics and peculiarities. This union was created—and it was also maintained during the War—for the sole purpose of service in the Kingdom of God by mission work. The basis of this unity is personal faith in our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the hope of the coming Kingdom of God, and a resting on the entire Word as revealed in the Scriptures. This character must, by all means, be maintained.

- (b) Our churches in India are, by the leading of God, an indivisible whole. Therefore, they should join the new union only as one Basel Mission Church.
- (c) The vague and unclear state in which the discussions on union still are (see Thesis Eight) must keep us from taking any rash step. We do not know how far still the way may be to the goal. Important questions must needs be cleared up first. Above all, however, we may not take any step precipitately, but must watch and wait to see how the Lord may direct our churches.

Karl Hartenstein

## Chapter XII

### The Deadlock of 1935

#### I. *General Approval of the Scheme by the General Assembly in 1933.*

The fourteenth General Assembly, which met at Calicut in 1933, heard the report of its Committee on the Scheme of union and adopted the following resolution :—

"In view of the changes that have been made in the Scheme of Union, the General Assembly is glad to find itself in a position to express general approval of the Scheme as published in January of this year. In giving this general approval the Assembly regards the Scheme as involving the acceptance by the uniting Churches of two principles, namely, (1) the value of a constitutional Episcopacy which maintains continuity with the past and (2) the full spiritual equality and value of the ministries of the three uniting Churches.

"Further, in view of the difficulties expressed in certain quarters, the Assembly instructs its Committee on Union to press for a clear statement in the Basis of Union, embodying also the second principle, since the first is already sufficiently expressed. This action would bring great relief to many members of the South India United Church.

• "The Assembly commends the Scheme, as now revised, to the Church Councils with the request that the councils consider the whole matter carefully and prayerfully, and report their views to the convener of the Union Committee, not later than the 25th of August, 1935".

## II. *Reports from Church Councils.*

The twelfth and the thirteenth sessions of the Joint Committee were held in February, 1934, and February, 1935, respectively. As instructed by the General Assembly of 1933, the scheme had been commended to the eight Church Councils under it for consideration and comment. The Assembly's Committee on Union also had, meanwhile, endeavoured to secure a clearer statement regarding the full spiritual equality and value of the ministries of the three uniting Churches. This matter was, accordingly, placed before the twelfth session of the Joint Committee in 1934, and an effort was made by that committee to meet the wishes of the General Assembly. When the new formula was communicated to the Church Councils, it was found that, even as modified, the statement was still unacceptable in some quarters. Consequently, the statement was placed before the Joint Committee at its thirteenth session in 1935, and modified. The statement regarding Episcopacy also had to be altered so as to meet the objections raised by the General Assembly.

In spite of these and other modifications effected in the Scheme, it was found from the reports received from the Councils of the South India United Church that only three of them had accepted it. Three others were not prepared to adopt it, while two had not expressed their views at all.

*The North Tamil Church Council:* With reference to four important questions, namely, (1) mutual recognition of ministries (2) credal clauses (3) lay ministry (4) powers of the Bishops in the Synod, they found that the scheme was not acceptable to them.

*The Telugu Council:* Their difficulties with regard to Historic Episcopacy, and the inter-celebration of Holy Communion had not been met, and, therefore, they had finally come to the point of rejecting the scheme.

*The Travancore Council:* The revised scheme did not yet give effect to the principle of absolute equality of the ministers of the negotiating Churches, and the adoption of the scheme was likely to obstruct, and, perhaps, eventually to end the fellowship which the South India United Church had established with the London Missionary Society of Travancore and with their mother church in England, and, therefore, they expressed their inability to approve the scheme in the existing form.

The two councils that did not report at all were those of Jaffna and Malabar.

### III. *The Deadlock.*

In September, 1935, the fifteenth General Assembly of the South India United Church met at Madras, and the consolidated report of the S. I. U. C. Committee on Union, which contained the above-mentioned reports from the various Church Councils under the Assembly, was discussed at length. The question at issue was whether the time had come for the definite acceptance or rejection of the scheme. It was keenly felt that the abandonment of the proposals would surely bring great disappointment to many within the South India United Church itself, while it would be deeply deplored by the other two negotiating Churches, the Anglican and the Wesleyan Communion. (Of these, the last, by the Union accomplished in Britain in 1933, had come to be known as the Methodist Communion.) Then again, it would be a profound disappointment to many well-wishers in other parts of the world who had looked upon the churches in South India as pioneers in a movement unprecedented in the history of the Church. Still, believing that the union was the will of God, and feeling that an effort in which the South India United Church had been engaged for sixteen years could not be so abruptly abandoned, the Assembly resolved as follows:—

- “(i) The General Assembly, having heard the report of its Committee on Church Union, and the discussion which took place in the Assembly, and having before it the resolutions of six of the Church Councils, finds

that a considerable section of the Church still has grave difficulties about a number of points in the Scheme of Union.

"(ii) The General Assembly, accordingly, puts it on record that it seems necessary to allow some years more for the discussion of these points within the councils and churches of the S. I. U. C., with a view to arriving at such a degree of unanimity as will make union possible.

"(iii) In the meantime the Assembly instructs its Committee to endeavour, while continuing negotiations with the representatives of the other two churches, to lead the churches into contacts of fellowship and service, in order that by such means the members of the different churches may even now grow into an increasing measure of unity and mutual understanding."

---

## Chapter XIII

### An Urgent Call to Unity

After the meeting of the General Assembly in 1935, a World Conference on Faith and Order was held at Edinburgh (1937) in which delegates of the General Assembly took part. That majestic body, consisting of four hundred and fourteen delegates



from one hundred and twenty-two Christian Communions in forty-three different countries of the world, placed on record how, on the one hand, they deplored the unhappy division of Christendom, and, on the other, rejoiced that God in His infinite mercy was paving the way for its re-union. The following is quoted from the report of the Conference.

"We believe that the divisions of Christendom in every land are such as to hamper the manifestation of the unity of Christ's body. We deplore this with all our hearts; and we desire this conference to summon members of the churches to such penitence that not only their leaders, but the ordinary men and women who hear their message, may learn that the cause of Christian unity is implicit in God's word, and should be treated by the Christian conscience as an urgent call from God.

"We rejoice that a sense of kinship is now drawing Christians nearer to each other, and that in many partial ways a foretaste of full fellowship between several communions is even now being sought and found."

Referring to the South Indian movement in particular, the Conference resolved as follows:—

"This conference has heard, with deep appreciation, of movements towards Church Union in many parts of the world. It regards the Scheme of Church Union in

South India, about which three Churches are now negotiating, as deserving of particular attention and study, because in it an attempt is being made to include within a United Church, Communions holding to the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational principles. The importance of prayerful study of this scheme is further shown by the fact that union negotiations based on its principles are in progress in other parts of the world. In dealing with this and with similar cases, the Churches of the East and the West alike may be called upon for great acts of trust."

The sixteenth General Assembly of the South India United Church, which met at Trivandrum in October, 1937, acknowledged receipt of the report of this second World Conference on Faith and Order, referred it to its Committee on Union with instructions to assist the Church Councils in the study thereof, and further asked the Committee to submit resolutions to the next meeting of the Assembly for its consideration and action with reference to the matters in the report.

That the report of the World Conference had quite an unexpected effect on this meeting of the Assembly in regard to the union question can never be doubted. For the discussions which followed made it clear that the deadlock of 1935 was being resolved. This was unmistakably indicated in the following resolution of the General Assembly :—

• The General Assembly of the S. I. U. C. notes with deep satisfaction the growing desire on the part of Christians for closer fellowship with each other, and the real desire also for actual corporate union. The Assembly wishes to re-affirm its genuine desire to do all in its power to promote the union of the three Churches now negotiating.

Realizing that there were still a few vital points in the scheme that were not acceptable to some of the Councils of the S. I. U. C. or to some of their parent societies and churches, the Assembly urged the Joint Committee to adopt certain changes, believing that such changes would enable the churches under the Assembly and its Councils to empower the Assembly in 1939 to give its approval to the scheme and proceed with the steps leading to the consummation of Union.

Of the five changes proposed by the Assembly, two are noted below:—

- (i) *Inter-Communion and Inter-Celebration before Union.*

As a confirmation of the mutual recognition of the ministries of the Word and Sacraments in the three negotiating Churches, so clearly expressed in different ways in the Basis of Union and the Governing Principles of the Church, the General

Assembly urges the Joint Committee to take steps to secure the adoption of the practice of Inter-Communion and Inter-Celebration between the negotiating Churches before Union.

(ii) *Lay Celebration of the Lord's Supper.*

It is at present the practice in some areas of the S. I. U. C. to license suitable men to conduct the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Assembly urges that provision be made in the Scheme to permit a Diocesan Council, if it so desires, to frame rules with due safeguards for the granting of licenses to laymen of approved Christian character and experience to conduct the celebration of the Lord's Supper in particular places and for definite periods of time.

The General Assembly authorized its Committee on Union to submit the foregoing resolutions and observations to its Councils for their consideration and necessary action, and asked those councils to report to the Assembly through its Committee on Union whether they were prepared to accept the proposed Scheme of Union if these modifications were embodied therein, so that after receiving the requisite approval from the Councils, the Assembly at its next meeting in 1939 might proceed with the steps necessary for the consummation of Union.

---

## Chapter XIV

### Basel Mission Home Board's Advice to the West Coast Churches

The Rev. Karl Hartenstein, D. D., Director of the Basel Mission, who came to India in December 1938 as a delegate to the World Missionary Conference held at Tambaram, near Madras, returned to Basel in the spring of 1932 and after conferring with the Home Board on the question of Church Union in South India, communicated their advice to the Churches on the West Coast in the following encyclical:—

**To the Ministers, Co-workers and Members  
of the**

**United Basel Mission Church in India**

DEAR BRETHREN,

It has been a great joy for me to take part in the Synod of the United Basel Mission Church in Calicut from the 8th to the 12th of March. There we considered carefully the question whether the United Basel Mission Church should join a larger ecclesiastical body in India. I have submitted this important question to the Home Board of the Basel Mission after my return. After careful consideration the Home Board wishes to send you, dear brethren, the following message:—

i. Perhaps the most important gain which we had from the World Missionary Conference at Tambaram was a new understanding of the situation of the younger

churches in every mission field; this situation calls for closer connection and union of the churches. A letter, which the leaders of the younger churches unanimously submitted to the Conference, speaks of the very painful results of the divisions among the Protestant Churches, of competition between denominations and of sects coming up everywhere. The conference was asked to do everything in its power to lead the younger churches towards Union, and also to examine whether the continuation of our divisions is still justified, or whether that which is common to us does not outweigh the dividing forces. The younger churches declared that in loyalty to their mother churches they would not proceed on the way towards union without their consent but at the same time they implored the elder churches to do everything possible to overcome the painful divisions, to bridge the differences between the denominations and to lead the way to the unity of the Church. The two main reasons for this request are:— (1) that the anti-Christian forces all over the world are gathering momentum, and that a Church divided in itself cannot withstand them; and (2) that our Lord Himself had prayed at his last gathering with the disciples "that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me". It was often said during the deliberations that the message of salvation in Christ to the whole of mankind can be accepted by

mankind, only if this message is proclaimed by a Church which in itself reveals the miracle of inner unity. Thus the Tambaram Conference has become in itself an earnest summons to the Christian Churches to reconsider the question of their denominational divisions, and to pray and work for the unity of the body of Christ among the nations.

2. Can the Basel Mission join in this world-wide union movement? To this question the Home Board's answer is a full and joyous "Yes". From its beginning the Basel Mission has been a union mission founded on the Scriptures. Christians belonging to German, Swiss and French Churches have even co-operated in the Basel Mission. Further, the Basel Mission is a fellowship in which Lutherans and Reformed Christians and also members of the so-called Free Churches have joined together for the propagation of the gospel in all the world. For this reason the Basel Mission has not established denominational churches in any of the five mission fields in which it is working, but congregations and churches on a broad evangelical basis, bringing to them the pure gospel and believing that God's Holy Word and Spirit will lead them on in the right path. The Basel Mission is thus in Europe the trustee of many congregations belonging to different denominations. Thus the aim of the true biblical union has been pursued from

the beginning in our Missionary Society, and is now again joyfully acknowledged.

3. Do we need Union in India? Also to this question the Home Board answers with a unanimous and joyous "Yes". In our area on the West Coast the situation is comparatively easy, as we are practically the only Evangelical Mission there. Anglican congregations are small, and the sects have not become anywhere a real danger to our churches. But there are other difficulties, and one of these is that we are very isolated. Outwardly we have little connection with other churches in South India, and receive little spiritual help from them. We are also a comparatively small church in a numerically large non-Christian environment. These are circumstances which call us to earnest self-examination and raise the question whether we should not enter into closer contact with other Missions and Churches, for the strengthening of our spiritual life and evangelistic witness. We have had at Tambaram many conversations about these questions with leaders of the Indian churches. We were also invited by the representatives of the Lutheran Federation to come into closer contact with them. But it became clear to us that we cannot join them, as they themselves are a denominational body. The members of the Lutheran Federation have to accept as the standard of doctrine a statement drawn up in 1530, which is partly



directed against the Reformed Churches. The acceptance of this standard of doctrine would estrange us from the reformed members of our mission, and to this the Home Board would never agree. God has blessed the union between Lutherans and Reformed Christians during a hundred years in our own midst, and so we shall never give up this fellowship. One evening at the Conference the leaders of the South India Union Movement spoke to us. We were much impressed by the earnestness of this quest for union, by their readiness to learn from each other and to make sacrifices. We had the strong feeling that it will be a great blessing if our church will become a member of this large Church that is to be.

4. Shall we accept the South India Church Union Scheme? With regard to this question the Home Board wishes to give you, dear brethren, the following for your consideration. At this decisive moment we must examine ourselves in the presence of God, and ask his Holy spirit to purify our motives. It would be easy to think on the following lines: We are a small church, and would like to become a large, strong and powerful church. We are a poor church, and would like to become a wealthy church. We are an Indian Church, and would like to become, through this union, free from the Western denominational teaching. But these are all considerations which will not bear the test. If we enter the union

with such considerations, we shall not have God's blessing.

Then what considerations should lead us? Apostle Paul says: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This expression 'of faith', means that we cannot think of external benefits, but that we must be ready, even in this larger church, to bear the cross of contradiction, and of obstruction to the message of our crucified Lord.

This expression, 'of faith' tells us that we are, and will ever be, pilgrims on this earth, and that though we shall be members of an Indian Church rooted in Indian soil, "we have here no continuing city, but seek one to come."

This expression 'of faith' further means that we shall treasure the spiritual inheritance of our fathers and hold fast the full, clear and pure gospel in this union guarding against all dangers of compromise.

Let us, therefore, give you two words of advice. The first is that our Synod may give a clear expression to our faith. Here we should try to explain the full message of the Apostles' Creed in such a way that it applies to the present-day problems in India, and draws a clear line of demarcation against Syncretism, worldliness, and non-Christian religious heritage. Then we may place this confession before the Joint Committee on Union with the question whether they will

give room within the Union for a Church with such a confessional basis and are ready to allow this as a standard of teaching in the theological institutions of the Union.

Let us further make a clear statement with regard to Episcopacy. We fully appreciate the need for an independent spiritual authority in the younger churches. But we would emphasize that it is to be a shepherd's office, a pastor ministering to pastors, a spiritual leadership, as we see it in the New Testament. We believe that the Joint Committee on Union will have full sympathy for both requests and enable us to contribute our special gifts to this future Church.

In any case, it is a venture of faith. We believe that God's Word and God's Spirit will shape the future life of the South India Church according to His Will. We must, therefore, in all our problems, turn to the Bible, and take our guidance from its teaching.

We believe in particular that this Union will become a blessing to our Church in so far as we shall come into living contact with other churches ; for we shall be strengthened with their spiritual gifts, and better fitted for the essential task of evangelizing our non-Christian brethren. Let us not forget the purpose of our Lord's Prayer for the unity of His disciples, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me". If, in this way, and

with these motives and these hopes, we enter into the Union, God's Holy Spirit will bless us abundantly

Dear brethren, we thus give you the counsel to approach the Joint Committee on Union in this sense, and, if they agree to our requests, to enter into the negotiations as a fourth partner, in the expectation that soon the hoped-for results may be achieved. We shall be glad in future also to assist the United Basel Mission Church in solving all important questions, and help it to find that way which is in accordance with His will.

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as your brother and co-worker in the Church of God.

(Sd) K. HARTENSTEIN

This message of the Home Board was duly translated into the vernaculars of the three districts of South Kanara, Bombay Karnatak and Malabar and printed copies of it were distributed among the members of the Church.

---

## Chapter XV

### **The Proposed Scheme and the Councils of the South India United Church**

The seventeenth General Assembly of the South India United Church met at Madura in September, 1939. The sixteenth session of the Joint Committee on Union was also held in the same year

at Madras. The deliberations of both these meetings had to be conducted under the clouds of war. In Europe and the Far East, battles were raging which seemed to be the beginning of a world-wide conflagration. The uncertainties and perplexities attendant on international hostilities cast their shadow on those deliberations as well.

At this meeting of the General Assembly its Committee on Union presented the reports from the various Church Councils. The Madura and Kanarese Councils had approved the 1936 scheme, and were ready to unite on that basis. The Madras, North Tamil and Jaffna Councils were prepared to approve the scheme, if the resolutions passed in 1939 were fully accepted. The Travancore Council was not satisfied with the scheme, and asked for considerable modifications. Malabar wanted further changes along doctrinal lines. The Telugu Council did not send any reply.

The Assembly, having discussed the recommendations of its Committee, passed certain resolutions and authorized the Committee to present those resolutions to the Joint Committee on Union at its next meeting for its consideration.

After about ten week's time the sixteenth meeting of the Joint Committee was held at Madras in November, 1939. The Committee considered the resolutions of the General Assembly as well as the recommendations of the Consultative Committee of

the Lambeth Conference, and adopted the following amendments to the scheme:—

### I. *The Faith of the Church.*

- With reference to two resolutions of the General Assembly of the South India United Church on the faith of the Church, and with reference to a communication from the Malabar Church Council relating to the Confessional basis of the Church, it was resolved to substitute the following for Section 3 of the Basis, with consequential changes in Chapter II, Section 5 of the Constitution, as printed in the 1936 edition of the scheme:—

"The uniting Churches accept the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation and as the supreme and decisive standard of faith; and acknowledge that the Church must always be ready to correct and reform itself in accordance with the teaching of those Scriptures as the Holy Spirit shall reveal it.

"They also accept the Apostles' Creed and the Creed commonly called the Nicene Creed as witnessing to and safeguarding that faith; and they thankfully acknowledge that same faith to be continuously confirmed by the Holy Spirit in the experience of the Church of Christ.

"Thus they believe in God, the Father, the Creator of all things, by whose love we are preserved ;

"They believe in Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God and Redeemer of the world in whom alone we are saved by grace, being justified from our sins by faith in Him ;

"They believe in the Holy Spirit, by whom we are sanctified and built up in Christ and in the fellowship of his body ;

"And in this faith they worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.

Notes:—(i) The uniting Churches accept the fundamental truths embodied in the creeds named above as providing a sufficient basis of Union ; but do not intend thereby to demand the assent of individuals to every word and phrase in them, or to exclude reasonable liberty of interpretation, or to assert that those creeds are a complete expression of the Christian faith."

(ii) }  
(iii) } Same as former Notes (i) & (ii)

## II. *The Ministry in the Church.*

The following should be substituted for the first clause in Section 5 of the Basis of Union, and, *mutatis mutandis*, for the first clause in Chapter II, Section 7 of the Constitution:—

"The uniting Churches believe that the Church is a royal priesthood of believers and all its members have direct access to God, all have their share in the commission and authority of the whole Church, and, therefore, they all have their duty to perform in order that the priestly work of the Church may be fulfilled.

"The uniting Churches believe that the ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His Church which He has given for the perfecting of the life and service of all its members."

### III. *The Episcopate in the United Church.*

After considering Resolution (D) of the General Assembly of the South India United Church, it was resolved to substitute the following for the opening clause in the second paragraph of Section 9 of the Basis, and, *mutatis mutandis*, in Chapter II Section 11 of the Constitution:—

"Whatever differences there are, all the uniting Churches are agreed that, as Episcopacy has been accepted in the Church from early times, it may in this sense fitly be called historic, and that it is a form of Church Government which at the present time is expedient for the Church in South India. Any additional interpretations, though held by individuals, are not binding



on the united Church. The meaning in which the uniting Churches thus officially accept a historic and constitutional Episcopacy is that in the united Church....."

IV. In the last sentence of the same paragraph in Section 9 (p. 9), the Joint Committee, accepting the recommendations of the Consultative Committee of the Lambeth Conference, resolved to substitute the words 'any judgment upon' for the words 'the denial of'. The Joint Committee did not, however, accept the other proposal of the Consultative Committee to amend the wording of the 4th paragraph in Section 1 of the Basis.

V. *Relation of the United Church to Other Churches.*

After considering Resolution I of the General Assembly of the South India United Church, the Joint Committee resolved that the following amended form of Sections 17 & 18 of the Basis of Union be accepted and that consequential changes be made elsewhere before a new edition of the scheme was issued.

"Section 17. *Relation of the United Church with Churches in India:* The Church of India, Burma and Ceylon has permitted the severance of the Dioceses of Madras, Tinnevely, Dornakal and Travancore and Cochin from its provincial organization in order that those dioceses should become part of the

autonomous United Church of South India, this severance being accepted for the sake of unity and in the full expectation that the United Church of South India will welcome and endeavour to assist movements for similar union in North India. Such unions in South India and North India would naturally have their consummation in a fuller union on an all-India basis, in which the several parts of all the churches will come together again.

"Meanwhile, it is hoped that cordial relations will always exist between the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, and the United Church of South India, and that, whenever suitable occasions arise, there will not be any hesitation in taking counsel with one another.

"Similarly, the uniting Churches wish to assure the Methodist Church in North India, Burma and Ceylon, and the churches in North India with which the South India United Church is now in fellowship, that the united Church will always be ready and glad to respond to any proposal for taking common counsel.

"Any question of arranging for formal or regular consultation is left to the decision of the united Church after union."

## VI. *Consecration of Bishops.*

The Joint Committee accepted the first part of Resolution (E) of the General Assembly of the South India United Church to substitute 'three presbyters' for 'two Presbyters' in Chapter IV, Section 25 of the Constitution. But the proposal to omit the clause in the same section permitting a diocese to have a consecration by the laying on of hands of Bishops only was rejected.

## VII. *Composition and Membership of the Synods.*

After careful consideration of Resolution (A) of the South India United Church, as well as its resolution on the same subject passed in 1937, the Joint Committee resolved to substitute the following for Chapter IX, Rule 2 of the Constitution:—

"Every diocese shall be represented in the Synod by not fewer than two presbyters and four laymen, and shall have one additional presbyter and one additional lay representative for every complete 10,000 baptized members in the diocese above the first 10,000, up to a maximum of 6 presbyters and eight laymen representing any one diocese."

## VIII. *Conduct of Business in the Synod.*

After consideration of Resolutions (B) & (C) of the General Assembly of the South India United Church, the Joint Committee resolved to substitute

the following for Chapter IX, Rules 22 & 23, and that in view of this provision further consideration of voting by houses be dropped:—

"Rule 22. When any proposition is brought before the Synod which directly concerns

(a) the faith and doctrine of the Church;

(b) the conditions of membership in the Church, and the rules which govern ex-communication from the Church ;

(c) the functions of the ordained ministers of the Church ;

(d) the worship of the Church, and any forms of worship proposed for general use in the Church ;

the matter shall be discussed in the Synod in the usual manner, and amendments thereto may be passed ; but the proposition as approved, whether amended or not, shall be referred to the Diocesan Bishops sitting separately for that purpose. The Bishops shall transmit the proposition to the Synod, if approved by a majority of them ; or they may, by a majority of two-thirds, either modify it and transmit it to the Synod for final voting, or refuse to transmit it in any form. In either case they shall submit reasons to the Synod why they urge the acceptance of the proposition in a modified form or why they refuse to submit it in any form. If the synod accepts the

proposed amendment of the Bishops, the proposition may then be passed and become an act of the Church.

"Rule 23. If a proposition has been referred to the Bishops sitting separately under the provisions of Rule 22, and the Bishops have refused to submit it in any form to the Synod for final voting, or if the proposition fails to receive the support of the necessary majority, the matter shall be dropped. If desired by a Diocesan Council, the matter may be again proposed at the next ordinary session of the Synod ; and after discussion and amendments, if any, shall again be submitted to the Bishops. If the Bishops again refuse to submit it to the Synod in any form for final voting, a vote of the Synod shall nevertheless be taken on the proposition in the form in which it was originally referred to the Bishops. If in such voting the proposition obtains a three-quarters majority of the members of the Synod present and voting, this vote shall be recorded, and the proposition shall be referred to the Diocesan Council, together with the special report made by the Bishops. If the proposition so referred be accepted in substantially the same terms by not less than two-thirds of the Diocesan Councils, it shall again be considered by the Synod at its next ordinary meeting, and when so

considered, Rule 22 of this Chapter shall not apply, but it may be adopted by a three-quarters majority, and if so adopted, shall become an act of the Church.

---

## Chapter XVI

### A Clearer Perspective

Since the meeting of the Joint Committee in 1939, the supreme governing bodies of two of the negotiating Churches have met and discussed the proposed scheme and also considered practical measures to facilitate its adoption. The Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church met at Royapettah, Madras, in February, 1941, and the General Assembly of the South India United Church, at Vadukoddai, Ceylon, in September of the same year. The seventeenth session of the Joint Committee on Union was also held in Madras in October, 1941. The total delegation to the Committee from the three negotiating Churches numbered forty-two, fourteen from each, of whom forty were present. A Holy Communion service for the members of the Committee was held on the second day; and it was celebrated by one of the ministers of the South India United Church.

At this session of the Joint Committee the following subjects were discussed:—

#### I. *Reports from the Conveners of the three Delegations.*

1. The Church of India, Burma & Ceylon:—

As the General Council had not met since

the last meeting of the Joint Committee, no further action was taken.

2. The Methodist Church:— The Church Union Committee had met twice. A resolution passed at its second meeting, which was approved by the Provincial Synod in February, 1941, and later by the Methodist Conference in England, involved unreserved acceptance of the basis of the present scheme, and a determination to enter into negotiations for bringing about the consummation of union on that basis at the earliest possible moment.

3. The South India United Church:— The report of the Committee on Union, which had been accepted by the General Assembly of the South India United Church in September, 1941 was presented, and printed copies were circulated. It showed that of the eight councils, five had voted in favour of the scheme of union, and one for acceptance on certain conditions. Of the two Councils which did not agree, the Travancore Council had a majority of sixty-three per cent in favour of acceptance, but according to the rules a majority of seventy-five per cent was required. The Telugu

Council alone had rejected the scheme by a majority.

The report contained a few requests to the Joint Committee, of which the following were the most important.

(i) *Presbyters Participating in the Consecration of Bishops*

The General Assembly resolves to ask the Joint Committee to consider the question, and make participation of Presbyters compulsory in all consecrations.

(ii) *Inter-Communion and Inter-Celebration before Union*

The resolution of the Madras Council that inter-communion and inter-celebration be allowed as soon as the three negotiating Churches had taken their votes on Union was recommended to the Joint Committee. The General assembly also wished to state that, as several Church councils had already voted in favour of union, and other councils would be largely helped if this was conceded, a larger degree of inter-communion and inter-celebration would be fitting; and that an acceptable solution of this problem would remove one of the few remaining barriers to union.

(iii) *Lay Celebration*

The report on Lay Celebration by the Sub-Committee appointed by the Joint



Committee was considered by the General Assembly. The Assembly approved of its being incorporated into the Scheme in such a form as would best preserve the principles there enunciated.

(iv) *Size and Distribution of the Proposed Dioceses.*

The following resolution of the Executive Committee of the Malabar Church Council was approved by the General Assembly:—

It was unanimously resolved to request the General Assembly to move the Joint Committee to reconsider the question of the size and distribution of the proposed dioceses with a view to having smaller dioceses where the Bishops would be better able to maintain personal contact with the members.

II. *The Proposed Scheme of Union.*

The following Statement and Parts I, II and V of the report on Lay Celebration were considered:—

"It is clear that in the minds of many, Lay Celebration of the Holy Communion is inseparably bound up with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. It must be pointed out that this connection is not inevitable. All the Reformed Churches, including the Anglican, hold the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, or, as

sometimes expressed, the Priesthood of the whole Church. But several of the churches which hold this doctrine most strongly, such as the Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches have maintained it for centuries without finding it necessary to safeguard it by the practice of Lay Celebration.

One of the purposes of this Scheme of Union is to bring into being one ministry of the united Church, in which the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational heritages are genuinely combined; a ministry which will be recognized and accepted throughout the whole area of the united Church, and of which every member will have equal rights and status. It is felt that the practice of Lay Celebration may imperil the unity of this ministry.

The Committee surveyed the practice of different churches and council areas in South India and ascertained that, though celebration of the Holy Communion by unordained pastors was authorized in mass-movement areas of the Methodist Church, and found in some councils of the South India United Church, in most of these areas this custom was of recent origin and restricted in scope. The Committee was of opinion that the emphasis laid on Lay Celebration at the present time by some in

the negotiating Churches was due, not so much to any urgent need for practical action to provide sacramental ministrations in the congregations, as to a deep-rooted fear that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was not adequately safeguarded by the Scheme of Union, and that there was, therefore, a real danger that the doctrine may be crowded out by an almost magical view of the dignity and authority of the individual ordained minister, and of the efficacy of the words pronounced by him in the celebration of the Lords' Supper. The Committee, therefore, felt that what was needed was to make clear the theological issues, and to draw out more fully the true doctrine of Priesthood, rather than to try and insert into the constitution of the united Church further legislation with regard to the ministers of the Lord's Supper. The Committee, therefore, requests that room should be found in the scheme for paragraphs, containing in general, the following substance and meaning.

#### **Part I.—Priesthood in the Church**

The only priesthood recognized in the Church is the heavenly High Priesthood of the risen and ascended Christ. The Church, the body of Christ as participating in His risen life, is a royal priesthood and to it is committed the task of fulfilling on

earth His priestly work. All Christians are sharers in this priestly function, and are equally called to show forth by life and word the glory of the redeeming grace of God in Christ. No individual and no one order in the Church can claim exclusive possession of this heavenly priesthood. But in the Church there have been at all times special ministries to which men have been called by God and set apart by the Church. Those who are ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments can exercise their office only in and for the Church, through the power of Christ, the one High Priest.

## **Part II—The Holy Communion**

In every communion the true celebrant is Christ alone, who continues in the Church today that which he began in the Upper Room. In the visible Church, the celebration of Lord's supper is an act of the Church, the company of believers, redeemed by Christ, who act as the local manifestation of the whole Church of Christ in heaven and on earth. It has, in experience, been found best that one minister should lead the worship of the Church and pronounce the words of consecration in the service of the Holy Communion. From very early times it has been the custom of the Church that those

only should exercise this function who have received full and solemn commission from the Church to do so; this commission has ordinarily been given by the laying on of hands in ordination.

#### Part V—The Sacraments in the Church

The only indispensable condition for the ministration of the grace of God in the Church are the unchangeable promise of God Himself and the gathering together of God's elect people in the power of the Holy Ghost. God is a God of order; it has been His good pleasure to use the visible Church and its regularly constituted ministry as the normal means of the operation of His Spirit, but it is not open to any to limit the operation of the grace of God to any particular channel or to deny the reality of his grace when it is visibly manifest in the lives of churches and individuals.

While accepting Parts II and V of the report on Lay celebration, the Joint Committee discussed Part I and resolved to amend Section 5 of the Basis as follows :—

The uniting Churches believe that the ministry is a gift of God through Christ to the Church which He has given for the perfecting of the life and service of all its members. All members of the Church have

equal access to God; all, according to their measure, share in the heavenly High Priesthood of the risen and ascended Christ, from which alone the Church derives its character as royal priesthood. All alike are called to continue upon earth the priestly work of Christ by showing forth in life and word the glory of the redeeming power of God in them. No individual and no one order in the Church can claim exclusive possession of this heavenly priesthood.

But in the Church there has at all times been a special ministry, to which men have been called by God and set apart in the Church. Those who are ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments can exercise their office only in and for the Church, through the power of Christ, the one High Priest.

The vocation of the ordained ministry is to bring sinners to repentance, and to lead God's people in worship, prayer, and praise, and, through pastoral ministrations, the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments—all these being made effective through faith—to assist men to receive the saving and sanctifying benefits of Christ and to fit them for service. The uniting Churches believe that in ordination God, in answer to the prayers of his Church,

bestows on, and assures to, those whom He has called, and His Church has accepted, for any particular form of the ministry, a commission for it and the grace appropriate to it.

### III. *Inter-Communion.*

1. The Joint Committee was of opinion that a definite advance towards union had been made (a) by the decision of the conference of the Methodist Church in England, according to the request of the Provincial Synod of the Church in South India, that permission should be granted to proceed to the consummation of union (b) by the vote of five councils of the S. I. U. C. in favour of the Scheme of Union and (c) by the generally favourable attitude of the S. I. U. C. General Assembly.

2. In view of the wide-spread desire that this advance should be marked by wider facilities for inter-communion, the Joint Committee resolved that, although full inter-communion would be possible only after all the negotiating Churches have given their final vote in favour of union, the possibility of extending the existing facilities should be considered. For, according to the practice in vogue, inter-communion was regularly permitted only at meetings of the Joint Committee and retreats or conferences directly arranged by it.

3. It was also resolved that the Joint Committee was of opinion that the cause of Church

Union would be forwarded, if this permission was extended to include certain other services, not organized by the Joint Committee, such as:

(a) United services arranged in various localities where members of two or more of the uniting Churches might be brought together for worship;

(b) Conferences such as the Regional Conferences arranged under the auspices of the Madras Representative Christian Council and other Provincial Councils;

(c) Conferences of the Student Christian Movement in which students of the uniting Churches take part.

The Joint Committee reaffirmed the desire that, when once the three churches had voted to enter into union, every effort should be made to secure the adoption of full inter-communion immediately.

#### IV. *Distribution of Dioceses.*

The proposal for smaller dioceses was considered, and it led to considerable discussion both on the desirability of increasing the number of dioceses, and on the advisability of city dioceses. A tentative scheme for division into sixteen dioceses was brought forward, but it was finally agreed that the whole subject should be referred to the Continuation Committee for further investigation and report.

Finally, the Joint Committee felt that it had brought the labours of two decades to a conclusion by evolving a scheme which could reasonably



be expected to receive the assent of the three negotiating Churches. While submitting the scheme to the churches for their vote, the Joint Committee thought it desirable to issue the following appeal:—

### **An Appeal for Decision**

(The following resolutions were adopted *nem con.*)

1. We give thanks to God for the many signs that our churches are nearer to union than they have been ever before. We believe that the time has come to decide whether on the Basis of the Scheme, as it now stands (Parts I & II), these churches will enter into corporate union with one another.

We, therefore, earnestly request that the three churches will agree that the time for negotiation, by way of criticism and amendment of the scheme, is now past, and that they will proceed at the earliest possible opportunity to decide, through the responsible Church bodies, whether they are prepared to unite on the Basis of the Scheme (Parts I & II), as now submitted by the Joint Committee.

2. In view of the grievous and urgent need of the world for reconciliation, we affectionately suggest that, wherever necessary, power be sought to convene extraordinary meetings of Councils and Synods with a view to their reaching a definite decision by the Spring of 1944.

At the time of writing this short history of the movement for Union the voting in the different churches has only begun. It is, therefore, too early to say what the result would be. The success already achieved, however, justifies the hope that the prayers and labours of all these years have not been in vain. For example, a report on Church Union presented by the India Committee of the London Missionary Society to its Home Board in December, 1942, contains the following words of encouragement:—

"India Committee has given some attention to the final edition of the Scheme and makes the following observations for the information of the Board. There has emerged a conception of the united Church far richer than was envisaged when discussions began in 1919. Gains in understanding are of significance far beyond India. The newest features in the Scheme all imply greater recognition than hitherto of those principles which the Joint Commission of the London Missionary Society and the Congregational Unions (1930-1936) wished to see more fully embodied in the Scheme. Some of the amendments go beyond what was asked for in this Commission's report."

The following resolution of Board on this report also inspires us with hope:—

"The Directors receive the foregoing report with thankful recognition of the gains in understanding which have been achieved

through the years, and with clear appreciation of the difficulties which remain. They would remind the Church Councils with which the Board is associated, that, under the Society's 'fundamental principle', our brethren in India are free to assume such form of Church government as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God. In the exercise of this freedom, whatever the final decision may be, the Directors wish it to be clearly understood that they pledge their continued co-operation in the fullest manner with the Church in India. They will follow the remaining discussions with deep and affectionate interest and with the prayer that their friends in India may be led into a clear understanding of the will of God for His Church."

Christian Churches all over the world are watching with keen interest the issue of this movement for union in South India. That its success will have far-reaching results even outside India has already been recognized in many lands. We trust that under the guidance of God this movement will prove to be a blessing to the Churches in India and elsewhere and enable them to bear united witness to our one Lord and Master, even Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world.

