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The History of a Joint Catechism: Progress in India

HERBERT M. ZORN

Efforts toward union have generally been characterized by emphasis either on "order" or "faith." To epitomize these emphases with the phrases "union first, agreement later" and "agreement first, union later" approaches caricature; but it does serve to indicate the direction in which each emphasis is headed. Both these emphases seem to partake of the same weakness, the supposition that the other side, somehow or other, will be taken care of. The "union first" supposes that agreement will grow out of union; "agreement first" supposes that a series of agreed propositions is going to take care of the organizational problems of union. Certainly no thinking ecumenist is going to subscribe to either caricature. A balanced view of faith and order seems to hold the greatest promise of ecumenical progress.

Yet there seems to be a dimension which is overlooked here. Generally, efforts in the areas of faith and order have concerned church leaders and the clergy. The laity and the local congregations have a minimal involvement until the decisions have been made. It is here that many union efforts have failed or schisms have vitiated the union efforts.

The author is professor at Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, India, and a member of the Inter-Church Relations Committee of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church. As such, he was a member of the committee which prepared the catechism. Currently on furlough, Professor Zorn is teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, during the year.

The dimension of the laity and the local congregation has figured in the negotiations between the Church of South India and the Lutherans. In addition to conversations on doctrine and discussions concerning the form of church order which a possible new united church would have, the CSI-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission has developed a joint catechism for use among catechumens and confirmands in the negotiating churches before a possible union and, of course, in the proposed united church. This work has been pursued in the conviction that any union must involve all the people concerned already in the early stages of negotiation. In other words, people who are learning the principles of their Christian faith in the same way are going to view a union among themselves as a very natural thing and will support it more readily. Theologically, they will be speaking the same language, a factor which is vital to good communication.

THE SITUATION

The Church of South India is a union organization of about 1,500,000 Christians from the four Southern states of India: Kerala, Madras, Mysore, and Andhra. They come out of the Anglican, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed communions. Their original missionary connections were with British, German, Swiss, and American mission societies. Protestant Christians in South India who are not members of the Church of South India include Lutherans, Bap-

tists, Salvation Army, and Pentecostals — and a few high-church Anglicans, as well as American Methodists. Lutherans in South India number some 375,000 in five churches: the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, connected with the Lutheran Church in America; the South Andhra Lutheran Church, connected with The American Lutheran Church; the Arcot Lutheran Church, connected with the Danish Missionary Society; the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, connected with the Leipzig Mission and the Church of Sweden Mission; and the India Evangelical Lutheran Church, connected with The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. There are also some 350,000 other Lutherans in the northeastern part of India, not involved in these negotiations for geographical reasons.

The population of South India is roughly that of the United States and would normally present work for all Christians without any interference or competition. However, in many places the Church of South India and Lutheran churches are working in close proximity to each other; competition is often an unfortunate result. When new areas are entered, it is vital to have a clear understanding of responsibility for such new work. With the growing mobility of population, Christians of various denominations are moving into the areas where others are established. When to transfer members and when to try to establish new work as they move are questions that must be considered cooperatively. Finally, the frequent small village with three or four churches serving it when it is not large enough to support one exhibits the scandal of division at its worst. Not only is it atrocious stewardship, but the non-Christian asks the embarrassing ques-

tion: "What kind of Christian do you expect me to become?" In short, the ecumenical question is one of extreme urgency in South India.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The CSI-Lutheran joint catechism has grown out of the discussion between the Church of South India and the Lutheran churches in South India. These discussions began already in 1947, the year of the formation of the Church of South India. In a 1951 Madras meeting of representatives of these two groups, the question of a joint catechism was raised. The opinion was expressed that, while theological discussions at higher levels were certainly important, a common method of instructing candidates for Baptism and the Lord's Supper would bring the matter of unity into the heart of each congregation. At this meeting, however, no definite action was taken.

A joint theological commission of the CSI and Lutherans met in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1959 and developed a series of agreed statements on several prominent theological issues. These theological discussions took the greater part of the commission's time, but in the 1956 meeting the commission asked the four southern seminaries to take up the question of whether such a common catechism was a feasible venture. In November 1956 representatives of Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum, Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, Gurusala Theological Seminary, Tranquebar, and Tamilnad Theological Seminary, Tirumairaiyyur, met at Tirumairaiyyur to investigate this matter. The whole matter of catechetical instruction was discussed; papers were read on evidences and developments in Old Testament and New Testa-

ment times, in the early church, during the Reformation, and in modern times. This consultation found that, in its opinion, the preparation of a common catechism was both feasible and advisable in the context of such union negotiations. It recommended that such a catechism should be built on the basis of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus the catechism would be integrally related to the worship of the church.

The actual work of drafting a catechism began in 1961. A draft catechism written for the children of Christians was presented to the second meeting of the CSI-Lutheran Inter-Church Commission in 1962. The commission printed it in its minutes and asked for comments from the concerned churches.

In the next 2 years the commission concentrated on constitutional matters. However, at its fifth meeting in 1964 the commission appointed a catechism draft revision committee, with instructions to rework the original draft. This committee consisted of representatives from Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil.

In the draft presented to the commission at its sixth meeting in July 1966, the committee presented a different approach. The committee felt that it was important to prepare a catechism that would be an answer to questions from inquirers as well as a basis for instructing the children of Christian parents. The commission approved this orientation, made some general remarks, and returned the draft for further revision to a new committee. This com-

mittee consisted of representatives from Kerala United Theological Seminary, Concordia Theological Seminary, and Tamilnad Theological College, Tirumaraiyyur.

The revised draft of this committee was the chief basis for discussion at the seventh meeting of the Inter-Church Commission in July 1967. Two days were spent in discussing this document and a number of revisions were made. The actual carrying out of the revisions was given to a committee of the commission and the final document appended to the minutes of the seventh meeting. The pertinent section of the minutes of the seventh meeting is as follows:

The Draft Catechism

The latest draft, prepared by the drafting committee appointed at the 6th Meeting (the Rev. I. Jesudason, the Rev. C. Selvamony, and the Rev. H. M. Zorn, convener), was discussed at length during the meeting. Each question was individually studied, revisions were suggested, and changes indicated.

A drafting committee consisting of the Rev. O. Jonsson, the Rt. Rev. C. S. Sundaresan, and the Rev. H. M. Zorn, convener, was appointed once again to incorporate the suggested revisions and changes into a further draft with the following instructions:

1. This drafting committee shall, in the light of the discussions of the meeting, but also in keeping with the form and continuity which is necessary for a pedagogical tool such as a catechism, redraft the catechism.

2. In the process of drafting, efforts should be made to produce this catechism in at least one of the South Indian languages. The word "produce" is used to indicate that the effort should not be simply a translation from the English. However,

an English edition should be produced as well.

3. Upon completion of the catechism, it is commended to the concerned churches for experimental use. The Commission desires that it be used in the vernaculars in various situations. As the various churches use this catechism, the Commission invites their comments for future revisions.

NOTE: It is understood that the catechism will not form part of the constitution. It will be an instrument of teaching commended to the Churches or to the United Church. It will not be the only document authorized for instruction. It will be used as a guide but will not have the authority of the statement on The Faith of the Church embodied in the constitution.

APPROACH AND PLAN

The catechism is directed at Christians as well as at non-Christian enquirers. There are two reasons for this. First, if a doctrine is stated in a way that a non-Christian cannot understand it, a simple Christian will also have difficulty in understanding it. Conversely, if a doctrine is vivid and clear to a non-Christian, a Christian will also find it vivid and clear. Second, Christians should learn their Christian doctrine in such a way that they can hand it on to their non-Christian acquaintances without having to recast it into a different mode of thinking; if they learn something that can be handed on to non-Christians clearly, they are equipped for their task of witnessing clearly to their faith.

A fact of life in the church influenced this decision to combine the needs of Christians and non-Christian enquirers into one catechism. If a catechism for Christians alone had been prepared, years would

have gone by before a catechism for non-Christians would be prepared. The urgency of this task would have been weakened when one document had been completed.

It should be added here that the catechism is not meant to be a tract that can be handed out to enquirers. Rather it is a basis of instruction for people interested in the Christian faith, whether they are already Christians or not. Normally, it requires a person grounded in that faith to teach the catechism adequately. The catechism is a highly distilled statement of Christian beliefs; for study and explanation, reference must be made to Scripture and the traditional explanations of the church through the ages.

The catechism begins with an introduction which points the enquirer to Jesus Christ as the center of the Christian faith (qu. 1-2). Then it refers to the Fatherhood of God in creation and preservation (qu. 3-4). It introduces the problem of sin by starting with the will of God and proceeding to man's disobedience, preserving the distinction between sin as disobedience in general and sins as individual acts (qu. 5-13). From this point it proceeds to the doctrine of salvation as God's answer to man's need (qu. 14-18). The work of the Holy Spirit is then described, bringing men to this salvation (qu. 19-22), followed by a single question on the Trinity (qu. 23). Subjects of the church (qu. 24-25), and believers (qu. 26-27) then complete the discussion of the Apostles' Creed. (For clarity of understanding, the Ten Commandments have been inserted after the first article of the Creed, rather than at the beginning.)

Under the heading "Worship and

Prayer" (qu. 28-32) the catechism deals with the meaning of the Lord's Prayer. Five questions (qu. 33-37) are then inserted on the meaning of the Christian life. Questions 38-45 deal with the Word and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Two final questions (qu. 46-47) dealing with eschatology bring the catechism to a close.

This catechism has been prepared with translation into the South Indian languages in view, and agreed translations have been published in at least Tamil and Malayalam. It would take a separate essay to explain the differences in word order and grammar between these languages and English. Suffice it to say that in some cases what is complex in English can be comparatively simple in the South Indian languages, and, of course, vice versa. Purpose and result clauses and frequent use of the passive often become clumsy in translation. The weaknesses and strengths of the following document have to be weighed with this in mind. (Rev. Zorn's explanatory comments are included in the parentheses following each question and answer. Ed.)

Catechism for Christian Instruction

1. *What is the main subject of the Christian gospel?*

The main subject of the Christian gospel is Jesus Christ.

(The question asks "What?" while the answer is "Who." This is intentional; it indicates that the normal question is a "what" question, while the Christian answer is always a "who" answer.

"Gospel" in English is a technical religious term; in the South Indian

languages it can have the more common meaning of good news, without the religious overtone.)

2. *What does the gospel affirm about Jesus Christ?*

In Jesus Christ God's kingdom of love, power, and glory has come into the life of the world. Through Jesus Christ we know God as our father and receive the Holy Spirit as comforter.

(Speaking of Jesus Christ at the beginning is an attempt to set the direction of the catechism. Questions 1 and 2 make it clear that Jesus Christ is the center of the Christian gospel; this will be explained further under the heading "Salvation," but it must be affirmed here.)

God and Creation

3. *What is God's relationship to us?*

Christians confess: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." That is, God by His almighty power brought into being and continues to preserve man and all other things that exist.

(Pantheism in Hindu thought is clearly excluded by this distinction between God and His creation.)

4. *Why do we call God "Father"?*

We call God "Father" because as a loving father He has created and continually preserves all things, because in Jesus Christ He has made us His children, and because by His Spirit He enables us to call upon Him as father.

(Islam's overemphasis on the transcendence of God is combated in this answer.)

*God's Will and Man's Sin*5. *What is God's will for man?*

God's will is that man should love God above all things and his neighbor as himself.

(Considerable thought went into this question. "God's will" is a broader term than indicated here; yet, it is necessary to make clear that the Decalogue is an expression of the will of God. It is not merely a distillation of the ethical thoughts of men as in the Hindu Laws of Manu. It can be added that in translation the "fate determining" will of God could be indicated by a different word. However, the tension between God's will for our actions and God's will for our salvation is not completely resolved.)

6. *What is meant by loving God above all things?*

In the Ten Commandments God has said:

"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make yourself any graven image; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy."

(The Decalogue is stated somewhat differently from the usual Lutheran form. The inclusion of Ex. 20:2 is important for understanding that God who has redeemed His people

is speaking these words and that we are not dealing here simply with tribal custom or moral tradition. The inclusion of the "graven image" commandment arises from the Reformed tradition; the actual numbering of the commandments doesn't arise here. These are certainly adiaphora.)

7. *What is meant by loving one's neighbor as oneself?*

The Ten Commandments go on to say: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you. You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's."

8. *Where is this love of God and your neighbor taught more fully?*

Jesus Christ and His apostles have taught these things more fully in the New Testament. We can see this especially in the words and loving service of Jesus Christ.

(The phrase "love of God" referring to the answer to question 5 is used rather than "will of God," used in that question. This is done purposely. Its purpose, though a bit subtle, is to remove the catechumen one step farther from thinking of the Law as a possible way of salvation.)

9. *Does man obey the will of God?*

No, he turns away from God and makes false gods for himself; he has also turned against his fellowman and lives in hatred, lust, greed, and distrust.

(Actual sin is being considered here before original sin; see the following two questions. It is sound pedagogy that through showing the effect—actual sin—you demonstrate the cause—original sin.)

10. *Why does man not love God and his neighbor as he should?*

He is unable to do this, because, as a result of his disobedience, he is a sinner.

11. *What does it mean that man is a sinner?*

It means that man has lost the relationship of loving trust and obedience in which he was created, and lives instead in distrust and enmity toward God and his fellowman. Man thus incurred God's wrath and punishment as well as the hatred of his fellowman.

(Questions 10 and 11 establish the source of sins as original sin, man's corruption. Question 11 makes clear that the cause of wrath and punishment is sin, in the general sense, and not specific sins. This is important in a context which thinks in the automatically retributive categories of *karma*.)

12. *If God is a holy Father, why is there so much evil in the world?*

Evil is the result of sin. That is, when man rebelled and disobeyed God, cor-

ruption entered every part of his individual and corporate life.

(This question deals with the fatalism of the Hindu who is caught in the toils of *karma* and of the Muslim who is tempted to make God the ultimate cause of evil.)

13. *How can man be saved from this corruption?*

Man cannot save himself, but God has saved him in Jesus Christ.

Salvation

14. *What has God done to save man?*

He has sent Jesus Christ into the world, as the church confesses: "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

15. *Who is Jesus Christ?*

Jesus Christ is true God, the Creator and Lord of all things. He is also true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary; during His earthly life He was tempted in all points, yet without sin, called sinners into His fellowship, healed the sick, preached the good news of the kingdom; He suffered and died under Pontius Pilate, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and lives eternally.

(In early drafts of the catechism this answer started out as Luther's

explanation; the changes and additions rose out of a number of concerns, for example:

- a. There must be no hint of polytheism or henotheism; thus, "Creator and Lord of all things."
- b. The historicity of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord's life is essential; thus, "Pontius Pilate" is repeated.
- c. Against Docetism, which is built into incarnational Hinduism, our Lord's "ordinary" acts are important; thus, "tempted . . . healed . . . preached . . . suffered . . . died . . . rose again . . . ascended . . . lives" establish the unity of His person against any idea of theophany or incarnation in the Hindu sense.)

16. *What has Jesus Christ done for us?*

By His life of perfect obedience and by His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ suffered for our sins, broke sin's power, reconciled us to God, opened the way for us to live eternally as the sons of God, and showed us what perfect manhood can be.

(The emphasis on "perfect manhood" combats the idea of *nirvana* of Buddhism and the somewhat parallel "absorption into the infinite" of higher Hinduism.)

17. *What do the words "He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty" mean?*

These words mean that though Jesus Christ is hidden from our sight, He is still always with us, ruling the world, caring for His church, and interceding with the Father for all His people.

(The Bhagavad Gita says that Krishna (Vishnu) comes among men when conditions require it, teaches and guides them for a time, and then returns to his transcendent godhead. His body is a mere vehicle. Such transcendent separation is negated in this question and answer.)

18. *What do we believe about Jesus Christ's coming again?*

We look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ when He will gather His own to Himself, when God's judgment will be pronounced and His victory over evil will be complete, and the whole purpose of creation will be fulfilled.

(Once again the distinction between God and His creation is emphasized, compare question 3. In addition, this answer proclaims that creation is the Lord's and therefore good, not evil *maya*.)

The Holy Spirit

19. *How do we know that the whole purpose of creation will be fulfilled?*

Because Jesus Christ has given us His Holy Spirit as a foretaste of this fulfillment.

(This question and answer tie creation, redemption, and sanctification into an integral unit.)

20. *Who is the Holy Spirit?*

The Father and Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit through whom the prophets spoke and of whose work the church confesses: "I believe in the

Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

(The fact that the question is not answered directly is not without purpose. This and the following question state that the Holy Spirit is one who is sent and who does the acts of God. Thus He is neither part of us (Hinduism) nor a created angel of the top echelon (Islam). It is noteworthy that in the South Indian languages "catholic" can be translated with a word that does not carry the confusion that led Luther to use "Christian Church" in the Third Article.)

21. *What is the function of the Holy Spirit?*

The Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel to faith in Jesus Christ, convinces us of sin, enables us to believe, and unites us into the fellowship of the church. Dwelling in us, He equips us with gifts for His service, sends us out as His witnesses, and causes His fruit to be borne in us.

22. *What is the fruit of the Spirit?*

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23a)

(This, the only direct Bible quotation, states in simple words where the Spirit leads. It found its way into the catechism during the final discussion. Its strength lies in its unarguable directness in challenging the individual who claims this Spirit.)

Trinity

23. *What does it mean to believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?*

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit signify to us, not three gods, but God revealed to us as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. Thus we worship God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To describe this mystery of threeness and oneness, we use the word Trinity.

(Here is an attempt to walk the narrow path between polytheism or henotheism of Hinduism and strict monotheism of Islam, to avoid any pantheistic implication, and still to preserve the essential mystery of the Trinity.)

The Church

24. *What is the church?*

It is the people whom God has called through Jesus Christ into fellowship with Himself to worship Him and bear witness to Him.

(The tendency to think of the church as an institution or as an influence is combated by the word "people.")

25. *Who are members of the church?*

The members of the church are those who, believing in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and having been baptized in the name of the Triune God, are united as Jesus Christ's Body with Him as Head.

(In English this lacks clarity which would appear in translation. More clumsily, but more accurately, it could be restated: "those who, because they believe in Jesus Christ

as their Lord and Savior, and have been baptized in the name of the Triune God, are united as Jesus Christ's Body. . . .")

Believers

26. *What is a believer?*

A believer is one who trusts in God through Jesus Christ for forgiveness, salvation, and life.

27. *How do believers remain and grow in faith?*

Believers remain and grow in faith by regular study of the Word, taking part in the church's worship, by prayer, and by a life of daily obedience.

(This answer is clear, if "how" in the question is understood as "in what way" and not as "by what means," a distinction which is clearer in the South Indian languages. The question of "by what means" is taken up in question 37.)

Worship and Prayer

28. *How does the church worship God?*

When the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are administered, God comes to meet His people assembled as a church. His church responds by praise, confession, prayer, and self-commitment.

(The answer is broader than the question; it provides both setting of worship and its definition.)

29. *How has Jesus Christ taught us to pray?*

Jesus Christ has taught us to pray in His name and has given us the Lord's Prayer as an example of how we should pray.

(That the Lord's Prayer is an example of how we should pray and not an incantation — *mantra* — is a fact that needs constant emphasis.)

30. *What is the Lord's Prayer?*

"Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

31. *What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about praying?*

In the opening words, Jesus Christ reminds us that, though God is high and holy, He also cares for us tenderly as a father and invites us to pray to Him as children, also remembering the other children of God's family. It also teaches us that we Christians are to be concerned first about keeping God's name holy, the extension of His rule, and the fulfillment of His will; and that, guided by this concern, we may ask for all our needs of body and soul. With the last words, we confidently declare our faith that God is Lord of all and that He will hear and answer our prayer according to His holy will.

(This answer is heavily loaded with material. Efforts to divide it up, however, resulted in weakening the wholesome emphasis on unity and interrelationship of the parts of the Lord's Prayer.)

32. *In what circumstances do Christians pray?*

They pray in the fellowship of the church, in their families and other groups, and each Christian individually day by day lifts up his heart in love and praise to his heavenly Father, looking for guidance to His holy Word and asking for the Holy Spirit's presence in all his doings.

(The emphasis on corporate prayer is doubly important in a land where so many work on the assumption that communion with God is normally an individual matter and that the fellowship of the believing community is at best incidental.)

The Christian Life

33. *What is meant by the Christian's life of daily obedience?*

It is the life in Christ lived at every moment in full and glad submission to the will of God the Father, to the glory of His name and for the welfare of our neighbor.

34. *How do we lead this life of obedience?*

We lead this life by following Jesus Christ on the way of the cross, by loving all men, especially our fellow-Christians, by serving all men as responsible citizens of our nation, and by helping others to know Jesus Christ as Lord. In all this we are called to be witnesses to Him.

(The phrase "responsible citizens of our nation" is particularly important in a young nation in which Christians are just coming out from under the cloud of suspicion about pro-British leanings.)

35. *What is our guide for the Christian life?*

Jesus Christ Himself is our guide. In His life and in the teaching which He and His apostles gave, He has shown us the true meaning of the Ten Commandments so that we may walk in God's way of holy love.

(The first part of the note to question 1 applies here also. This is a statement of the "third use of the Law" and is rightly placed in this completely different context.)

36. *How are we able to live this life?*

Not by ourselves, but when we remain in fellowship with Jesus Christ and His people, the Holy Spirit brings forth His fruit of goodness in us.

(In translation the word "when" will be temporal and not causal, as it can be in English.)

37. *Through what means does the Holy Spirit do this?*

The Holy Spirit does this chiefly by the Word of God and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper which God has given to His church for its use.

(The word "chiefly" grew out of long discussion. If it were omitted, something detailed would have to be said to explain that "Word of God" implies any and all uses of it. People in India have been drawn to the Savior in situations where the Word was not always self-evidently present. "Chiefly" tried to cover this. Its intent is: As far as we are concerned, these are the means for us.)

Word and Sacraments

38. *What is the Word of God?*

The Word of God is God speaking to men in Jesus Christ, His Son. Of Him, God has spoken in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments written by men moved by the Holy Spirit. In the Scriptures Jesus Christ speaks to us and gives us His Spirit by whose illumination we receive them as the Word of God.

The Word of God is not a code of rules, but by it God calls us to enter the fellowship of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

(Here is an attempt to speak briefly of God's revelation, inspiration of the Scriptures, and the Spirit working in the Word. The final paragraph combats the normal tendency toward legalistic literalism in any young church eager for final answers.)

39. *What is a sacrament?*

It is an act commanded by Jesus Christ, wherein, by the use of visible signs, God gives and seals to us His life-giving grace through faith.

(This answer has something of a scholastic sound to it, but it is stated in a context where one would expect it to be a ceremony by which a visible sign is given a divinely magic quality which can ensure good fortune, health, etc.)

40. *What is Baptism?*

It is the washing with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit according to Jesus Christ's command which all believers receive.

41. *What happens in us through Baptism?*

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit causes us to share in Christ's death and resurrection by washing away our sins, giving us new life in Jesus Christ, and making us members of Jesus Christ's body. Baptism should not be repeated but the baptized believer repeatedly confesses his faith and shows forth his repentance.

(The final sentence is directed against the Pentecostal Anabaptist influence plaguing the young churches in India.)

42. *Why are infants baptized?*

Jesus Christ declared that children can enter the kingdom of heaven and that anyone who enters the kingdom of heaven must enter by water and the Spirit, that is, by Baptism. Therefore infants who will publicly confess their faith only later, are also baptized.

(This states the basic reason for infant Baptism. The argument that "infants can believe" requires a psychological understanding of infants and an understanding of faith which does not readily communicate in this situation.)

43. *What is the Lord's Supper?*

It is the sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in which, in the consecrated bread and wine, He gives us His body and blood to eat and drink in His memory.

(The statement of the Real Presence here is in its simplest form, without an attempt to explain it. The word "in" is used with broad meaning; in South Indian languages

it is the most common preposition with generally localistic meaning.)

44. *What happens in the Lord's Supper?*

In this sacrament, Jesus Christ Himself comes to be present with us, assuring us of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, strengthening us to live with one another as members of His body, enabling us to bear the cross of suffering in our lives, and granting us the communion of dying and rising again with Him.

(This question and its answer are designed to explain the power and effect of the Lord's Supper, not the mode of the Real Presence.)

45. *To whom is the Lord's Supper given?*

The Lord's Supper is given to those Christians who have been baptized, are able to confess their faith with understanding, and who live in daily repentance.

The Last Things

46. *To what does the Lord's Supper direct our hopes?*

The Lord's Supper directs our hopes to the return of Jesus Christ in glory.

(A catechism of this nature should end on an eschatological note; however, this is not a forced question. 1 Cor. 11:26, "You proclaim the Lord's death until He comes," brings eschatology into the very meaning of the Sacrament.)

47. *What does Jesus Christ promise us about His coming in glory?*

He promises us that when He returns, He will bring all of history to its final consummation. He will raise all the dead. Those who have rejected Him will be separated from Him. Those who have received Him will enjoy eternal life and eternal fellowship with Him.

St. Louis, Mo.