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INTRODUCTION

Australian Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists came together as one Christian body on 22 June 1977. The Union of the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Congregational Union of Australia brought to birth the new ecclesiastical body in the Holy Catholic Church known as the Uniting Church in Australia. This has been described by the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, Dr Francis Rush, as

the most significant ecumenical event in Australia's history. <(1)>

The purpose of this research is to identify and record the main events leading to the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia. The long, chequered story of Union negotiations between the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Australia has never previously been told in its entirety. CHURCH UNION IN AUSTRALIA recounts the details of this socio-religious drama, which has been enacted on the Australian stage during the past century.

At several stages of this human drama, specific resolutions have been passed in Church courts expressing the hope that the history of a particular period would be preserved. <(2)> But such resolutions have never resulted in any prepared recorded histories of the proposed Church Union of that period. Indeed, at several stages in the story, when negotiations resulted in dismal failure, a conscious effort was made to forget what happened because the outcome was so painful and frustrating. <(3)>

Recently, scholars have been drawn to particular sections of this fascinating human drama in order to study the interesting dynamics at work both within an individual religious institution and between different such institutions. <(4)> But these studies have been limited to one or at most several aspects of the drama, rather than covering the whole story.

The method used in this research has been principally to discover and describe. Because of scarcity of reliable information in secondary sources, every attempt has been made to find and use primary sources previously unavailable. These have included large collections of letters written by the leading participants in the Union negotiations, minutes of committee meetings and working papers prepared for various kinds of conferences oriented to discussing aspects of Church Union. Where possible, interviews with prominent participants in the Church Union drama have been taped.

Because many primary sources have been used for the first time in this research and they may be difficult for other students to

secure, some of the quotations from them have been longer than would have been the case if they had been easier to procure for further study. Some of these documents will be deposited with the collection the Rev. Robert MacArthur has been preparing for Mitchell Library, Sydney. Others will be deposited in the Uniting Church Archives, Sydney.

Because of the wealth of material that has been unearthed and used, the author has given top priority in his method to the clear presentation and description of the sequence of events. It is only after such a careful narration and rehearsal of the story has been made that sound analysis of the dynamics involved can follow.

The magnitude of the task has created its own problems. It would have been much easier, and in some ways more satisfying, to study a much shorter period of time with greater thoroughness in both reporting events as they occur and analysing their significance. But such a limitation to a small segment of the story would have defeated our basic aim of presenting the whole story of CHURCH UNION IN AUSTRALIA

Secondary sources, such as news releases or editorial comments from secular and Church press, monographs and histories of particular periods, have been used to supplement primary sources only when such were either unavailable or insufficient to tell the story adequately. These have been particularly necessary in the first two chapters.

The phenomenon of three distinct national Churches coming together in one organic unity provides the student of religion with an ideal opportunity to study the complex dynamics operating within large institutional religious groups. The more diverse the individual Churches have been in doctrine, history, order, liturgy and ethos, the more difficult has been Union between them.

When the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches of Canada joined in 1925 to become The United Church of Canada, the American Institute of Social and Religious Research financed a study of it by C. E. Silcox. This was published under the title Church Union in Canada. The purpose was stated as follows:

to make a thorough examination and appraisal of the present operation of The United Church of Canada and of the process by which Union of the three constituent denominations was brought about, in order that the methods and results, scientifically recorded and analysed, of this practical example of Church Union on a national scale may be made part of the available body of information regarding Church unity. <(5)>

We have similar but somewhat more limited goals in the present study, CHURCH UNION IN AUSTRALIA . The same three Churches are involved. But the period of preparation for Union was longer in Australia and the socio-religious context in which the three Churches had existed prior to Union was different here from that in the British-French colonies of North America. The need for us to record so much material covering the 76 years in which negotiations were carried on in Australia will seriously limit the possibility of adequate analysis within the compass of this particular research project.

Thanks are due to those many people, too numerous to name individually, who have assisted in various ways throughout this study. Staff members of Mitchell Library, National Library, United Theological Library, Theological (St Andrew's) Library, New South Wales Library and the Archives of the Uniting Church have been most helpful and cooperative. The assistance of the Rev. Robert MacArthur in collecting material on Church Union has been invaluable. His collection, which has been deposited in Mitchell Library, will make the task of future studies on Church Union in Australia much easier.

Among those who have given particular assistance are the two Archivists whose constant interest in this study has given continued support. These are the Rev. Glenn Lucas, the Archivist-Historian of the United Church of Canada in Toronto and the Rev. Eric Clancy, the Archivist of the N.S.W. Synod of the Uniting Church in Sydney.

My faithful secretary at Wesley College over seven years, Maherunisha (Mary) Rahemtula, has been both patient and precise in transforming my longhand scrawl on constantly corrected sheets into legible typewritten pages. Old Canberra friends, Fred and Joan Temperly, have assisted in the laborious task of proofreading.

Finally, my longsuffering yet always loving wife, Anne, and the members of my family deserve special thanks for surrendering their claim on my time during vacations, weekends and nights at home, when much of the research for the following study was undertaken. Without their constant support, CHURCH UNION IN AUSTRALIA would not have been completed.

James S. Udy
The Residence
Wesley College
University of Sydney.

CHAPTER ONE

METHODISM, PRESBYTERIANISM AND CONGREGATIONALISM TAKE ROOT IN AUSTRALIA.

The first white immigrants to Australia came from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They attempted to transplant into their new home under the Southern Cross the religious institutions to which they had belonged in their old neighbourhoods. It was inevitable, therefore, that the various denominational religious groups operating in the 'old country' throughout the nineteenth century were soon represented in the settlements Great Britain founded in the South Pacific. Consequently, Methodism, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism took root early in Australian soil.

SOIL INTO WHICH CHURCHES WERE TRANSPLANTED.

The community settled at Botany Bay in 1788 was little more than a prison, isolated from London and the rest of the world. The gaolers were in almost total command, subservient only to an autocratic Governor who had absolute power. Conditions were far from conducive to the nurture of religious life and the development of Churches.

Reports from both Church and State sources indicate clearly the unfavourable social milieu in which all the Churches took root in Australia. An ordained Congregational Minister, the Rev. James Fleet Cover, who arrived from Tahiti with missionaries <(1)> of the first London Missionary Society in the Nautilus on 14 May 1798 described Sydney in the following blunt terms:

Here we have to contend with the depravity and corruption of the human heart, heightened and confirmed in all its viciousness by long and repeated indulgences of inbred corruption. <(2)>

Governor Bligh reported to the British Government in 1810 that drunkenness was widespread, female convicts normally became prostitutes and two thirds of the children were illegitimate. He stated:

The colony was a community of exiles, each dragging down the others further into the filth of moral corruption and the slime of physical sordity. <(3)>

When Governor Lachlan Macquarie assumed control of the penal settlement on 1 January 1810, the European population of New South Wales was 10,452 of whom 13.7% were convicts. In Van Diemen's land 18.7% of the 1,321 new arrivals were convicts. Eleven years later, at the close of Macquarie's rule, the European population of New South Wales had risen to 29,783 of whom 41.1% were convicts. The satellite community in Van Dieman's land numbered 7,185 of whom 53.3% were convicts.

These figures indicate that the number of convicts sent to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land increased greatly during the term of Macquarie, 1810-21. This increase was particularly evident in 1815. The main cause was that the end of the Napoleonic wars resulted both in the reduction of convict labour in the English dockyards and also the post-war depression which produced, in turn, a rise in crime.

This steady increase of criminal offences in England became linked wrongly in the minds of some people with exaggerated stories, drawn from a few exceptional cases, that convicts and emancipists could make fortunes in New South Wales. The British Government became worried by these stories because, as the cost of transportation was great, penal reformers were demanding that it be replaced by imprisonment in penitentiaries. The result was the appointment by the Government of a commission to investigate the general conditions at Botany Bay and the working of the convict system there. The person chosen, Judge J. T. Bigge, was in New South Wales from September 1819 to February 1821. Soon after his arrival in the colony, quarrels broke out between Bigge and Governor Macquarie because of his friendships with malcontents, his interference with the Governor's ambitious public works programme and his objection to the emancipist policy that Macquarie had so carefully developed to make convicts more responsible members of the community. Bigge's two reports were printed in 1822 and 1823.

In the period following Macquarie's departure, administration became more efficient in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land and the chances of convicts evading regulations or escaping punishment became fewer. The employment of 'convict clerks' in government service was gradually reduced. Failure to work effectively for private masters or breaches of discipline resulted in a return of the convicts to government service. The worst feature of transportation from the point of view of the convict was the arbitrary system of discipline. Short of execution, the most severe 'secondary' punishment inflicted on convicts was transportation to penal settlements such as Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Moreton Bay, Norfolk Island or Macquarie Harbour in Van Diemen's Land.

The continued increase of crime in England made some people question the effectiveness of the entire transportation system. A Select Committee of the House of Commons was therefore appointed in November 1837 to review it completely. Although this report,

tabled in August 1838, recommended that transportation be discontinued, the British Government was not prepared to do this. Instead, it decided both to abolish 'assignment' and to stop transportation to New South Wales but to continue transportation to Tasman's Peninsula or Norfolk Island in the case of those sentenced for periods longer than seven years. By 1846 this system had broken down and was in danger of being completely abolished. However, the new Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey, announced in September 1847 a new scheme to revive convict transportation to Australia. About 2000 convicts were introduced into New South Wales under his plan.

There was considerable public hostility to this reintroduction of transportation and the fact that convict gangs had been introduced into Van Diemen's Land. Associations to end all transportation to eastern Australia (including Tasmania) were formed in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart and Launceston. This goal was achieved in 1852 when the last transport left Britain for eastern Australia. Transportation to Western Australia continued until 1868. This resulted chiefly from the fact that Grey's proposals were accepted in Western Australia as the system he proposed helped to satisfy the desperate need for labour there.

Between 1788 and 1868 more than 160,000 <(4)> convicts were transported to Australia. Few convicts returned to England after their sentences expired. They preferred to stay in Australia to make their homes and have their families. They therefore constituted a strong socially moulding force in the early years of the Australian community and left an indelible imprint on religious thought and life in Australia.

Conditions in a prison colony made unusually heavy demands upon early missionaries. For example, the first Methodist minister, the Rev. Samuel Leigh, who came to Sydney in 1815 and whose health was severely affected by deprivations and constant travel under difficult circumstances, was told candidly by his superintendent in England, the Rev. Joseph Benson:

You are killing yourself doing what neither
God nor the Committee expects or requires.
<(5)>

The second Methodist minister, the Rev. Walter Lawry, described some of the difficulties in pastoral work in this diary entry of 14 July 1818:

I have been around the Colony twice - my last
round took me a fortnight, during which I
slept only one night in a bed, and that was

in a small room in which 12 or 14 persons beside myself slept. In this wonderful bed, three of us lay, observing the same wise arrangements with the hogs. They lie head and tail, so did we. At other places, however, I got no bed. I generally sleep on chairs or settles or sofas. <(6)>

In 1836 there were only thirty-five clergymen of different denominations for the population living in the nineteen counties of New South Wales, which stretched from the Manning River to Moruya and inland for some 140 miles. These ministers were based mainly in the centres of population. Eric Clancy has analysed in 'Rural Methodism in N.S.W.' <(7)> the harmful effect of this scarcity of ministers on the religious and moral life of the community.

Judge W. W. Burton, reviewing the 1836 Census, pointed out that:

There were ten counties for which there was no Minister of Religion, of any denomination, and these contained at that time 6,667 Protestant and 2,867 Roman Catholics. <(8)>

Two Quakers, James Backhouse and George Walker, wrote to the Governor on 18 January, 1837:

We cannot but regard with mournful interest, the low state of morality and the necessarily consequent defect of religious principle in the generality of the inhabitants of this colony. <(9)>

Bishop Broughton wrote similarly to the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in the same year:

these persons...are placed in a situation as dreadful to contemplate as that of any race of heathen existing upon the earth. <(10)>

One of the early Presbyterian ministers, the Rev. William

Hamilton, records the same desperate conditions in the country areas of the Colony. Travelling between Goulburn and Berrima during 1837 and 1838 he wrote in his diary:

I am continually shocked by the religious indifferences of those among whom I live. <(11)>

His diary of 25 February 1838 added:

The demons of strife and avarice pervade this country and godliness and charity are obliged to shrink into a corner. <(12)>

Faced by such considerable indifference and even active opposition, the early non-Catholic missionaries to the Colony generally cooperated closely with one another. Protestants often shared their buildings with each other. And in the widely spread out settlements where ministers were scarce, pastoral care and the celebration of the Sacraments were given to settlers regardless of their denominational tags. (13)

However, there was always a degree of anxiety, even at times fear, on the part of the Protestants towards Catholics. This Protestant-Catholic conflict sometimes became very bitter as seen in the mass Protestant rallies that followed the attacks on Protestant missions by Cardinal Moran in the 1890s and the speeches at the opening of St Mary's Cathedral. <(14)>

METHODISM TAKES ROOT IN AUSTRALIA.

Methodism was the result of the Evangelical Revival in eighteenth century England which Albert Outler has described as:

that unexpected uprush of religious vitality into which Wesley had been plunged and whose leader he was to be for the succeeding half-century. <(15)>

After his 'warmed heart' experience at a society meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, on 24 May 1738 <(16)> the Rev. John Wesley, assisted by his brother the Rev. Charles Wesley and others, gathered into religious societies those who, through his

preaching, had expressed:

a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins. <(17)>

John Wesley, as a good administrator as well as scholar, preacher and pastor, was able to hold together the Wesleyan societies formed all over Great Britain and Ireland. However, within several years of his death in 1791 a number of schisms arose within the mainstream of British Methodism not on the basis of theology and doctrine but mainly as a result of differences in polity and administrative procedures.

The main groups formed by secessions from the Wesleyan Methodists included the Methodist New Connexion in 1796, the Primitive Methodists in 1811 and the Bible Christians in 1815. The Wesleyans remained the largest branch of Methodism during the nineteenth century.

Smaller Methodist groups included the Protestant Methodists (dating from 1827), the Arminian Methodists (dating from 1831), the Wesleyan Methodist Association (dating from 1835) and the Reform Movement (dated from 1849). These merged to form the United Methodist Free Church in 1857.

All these branches of Methodism established mission fields in the prison colonies of the Pacific. The earliest and by far the strongest missionary work was carried out by the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

The first clear record of Methodist work in the Botany Bay prison colony describes Wesleyan class meetings formed in 1812 at Windsor and Sydney. The Windsor Society was founded by Edward Eager <(18)>, an Irish solicitor who had been sentenced to death at Cork Summer Assizes for forgery but who underwent a deep religious conversion following the visit of a Methodist preacher while he was preparing for execution and as a result had his sentence commuted to transportation for life. The Sydney society was begun by two Wesleyan London schoolmasters who had been appointed to take charge of the charity schools in Sydney, Messrs Thomas Bowden and J. Hoskin. <(19)>

In response to the plea from the members of these societies, the British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society appointed the Rev. Samuel Leigh to Sydney Cove. He arrived at Port Jackson on 10 August 1815 in the 'Hebe'. With the approval of Governor Macquarie and the goodwill of the Rev. Samuel Marsden, Leigh immediately began an itinerant ministry which took him from

Sydney to Parramatta, Windsor and Liverpool. The first Methodist Chapel was built at Castlereagh in 1817.

The much needed assistance to Leigh arrived on 1 May 1818. He was the Rev. Walter Lawry, who was soon followed by the Rev. Ralph Mansfield and the Rev. Benjamin Carvosso in 1820. With the arrival of the Rev. Joseph R. Orton in 1831, as Chairman of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in New South Wales, there was a rapid development of Methodist witness. Among the many extensive journeys he made on Church business were four trips beyond the Blue Mountains and visits to New Zealand and Van Diemen's Land. During his Chairmanship, Orton became associated with Wesleyan Societies in five settlements that later became State capitals.

Orton visited Melbourne in 1836. The following year there was a thriving Methodist class meeting there. As it grew, this society was served by Wesleyan local preachers James Dredge and E. S. Parker. The Rev. Samuel Wilkinson was eventually appointed in 1841. Victorian Methodism became a separate district in 1850.

Orton also visited Adelaide where services had been started in 1836 by local preachers John C. White <(20)> and Jacob Abbot. After appealing to the Wesley Missionary Society for a minister, the South Australian Wesleyan settlers were surprised by the unexpected arrival of the Rev. William Longbottom who, destined for Western Australia, had been shipwrecked on the South Australian coast in 1837. He stayed in Adelaide as the first Wesleyan minister. In 1839 a chapel was built in Hindley Street, Adelaide; but it was soon replaced by a chapel in Gawler Place.

When Orton visited Hobart he learned that a Wesleyan society had been begun there in 1820 by laymen Benjamin Nokes and Captain George Waddy. The following year, the Rev. William Horton was appointed as Minister and a chapel was built in Melville Street. Horton was followed by the Revs. Ralph Mansfield and Benjamin Carvosso, who extended the Wesleyan witness to Macquarie Harbour in 1828 and Launceston in 1832.

Perth was the fifth settlement with which Orton was associated. Two Wesleyan families had arrived at Fremantle in 1830 in the Tranby, which had been chartered for the trip from England. They commenced services immediately and maintained a strong Methodist witness until the arrival of the first Wesleyan minister, the Rev. John Smithies, in 1840. The first church was built in Murray Street, Perth.

Brisbane did not receive its first Wesleyan minister, the Rev. William Moore, until 1847. However, Wesleyan societies were in existence years before this. Mr George Little had built a Mission Hall in Queen Street, where other laymen like Mr Williams and

Captain Fursman regularly conducted services.

All schismatic Methodist groups which broke away from the Wesleyan Church in England after the death of John Wesley took root in Australia during the first half of the nineteenth century or soon afterwards. <(21)> However, the Wesleyan Methodists remained the predominant group.

The Primitive Methodist Church started its missionary activities in South Australia in 1840 when John Wiltshire, a Methodist local preacher, conducted the first recorded service under the auspices of the Primitives. In 1846 two Primitive Methodist ministers, the Rev. J. Long and the Rev. J. Wilson, arrived in South Australia. Two years later Wilson commenced services in Sydney. The Church spread to Victoria in 1848, to Tasmania in 1858 and to Queensland in 1863. The first annual assembly of the Primitive Methodist Church was held in South Australia in 1856.

Bible Christians commenced work in South Australia when John Rowe and John Way arrived in the colony from England in 1850. This developed into a significant witness which has been described by Dr Arnold D. Hunt in the following way:

Histories of Methodism in Great Britain treat the Bible Christians as one of the minor deviations from nineteenth century Wesleyanism...The situation in South Australia (from which the writer comes) was very different from that in England...In many country towns in the colony the Bible Christians were the dominant and in some areas, the only Methodist presence. <(22)>

The Bible Christian ministry was extended to Melbourne and the goldfields in 1853 by the Rev. William Hocken. In 1866 two Bible Christian ministers were sent to Queensland; but this mission was not as successful as in the other two states and it was closed in 1892, the members joining with the Wesleyans several years later. The Bible Christians never became an organised group in New South Wales; but a mission was founded by the South Australian Bible Christians on the goldfields of Western Australia in 1896.

The Methodist New Connexion was established in Adelaide by the Rev. James Maughan in 1862. Three years later the movement spread to Victoria. However, it later joined with the Bible Christians in South Australia and with the Wesleyan Church in Victoria.

The United Methodist Free Church took root in Victoria in 1857 and in New South Wales in 1870. It spread to various centres, such as Newcastle, eventually opening two churches in Queensland.

These different branches of Methodism, which resulted from differences among the followers of John Wesley in England, had happy relations with one another in Australia. They were one in doctrine and largely one in polity. But each had a separate and distinct denominational life in the new land. The schisms were all transplanted from Great Britain. None were created in Australia.

PRESBYTERIANISM TAKES ROOT IN AUSTRALIA.

Australian Presbyterianism was essentially Scottish in origin and character <(23)>. Although the Scottish Reformation at first adopted the Genevan Calvinistic model, it later adopted the patterns of English Presbyterianism.

After serving as pastor of an English refugee church in Geneva, John Knox preached in Scotland during 1555-56. The following year some nobles led the Scottish reforming group in signing the first great covenant binding themselves to support the Reformation. Knox returned permanently to Scotland in 1559 and the following year the Scots Confession of 1560 was drawn up and accepted by Parliament.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries various schisms disrupted Scottish Presbyterianism <(24)>. As in the case of Methodism, the Presbyterian settlers who came to Australia from Scotland and Ulster transplanted these schisms in their new land. But unlike Methodism, Australian Presbyterianism also developed its own schisms.

Although Presbyterians who migrated to Australia in the nineteenth century were from Scotland and Ireland they came in the twentieth century from Europe, mainly Holland and Hungary. They were all bound together by the same basic standards of theology and polity. The theology was based on the Scriptures as the supreme standard of faith and doctrine and the Westminster Confession of Faith drawn up in 1647 as the subordinate standard. The polity was based on the Presbyterian form of government.

At the period when emigration began in Australia, following the close of the convict period, there were three main Scottish Presbyterian bodies which were quite separate from each other in their organisation although, as mentioned above, they had a similar theology and polity. Their main differences were in their attitudes to Church-State relationships. These Scottish problems,

transplanted into Australian soil, greatly affected the witness and development of Presbyterians in the British colonies in the South Pacific. It is necessary, therefore, to review these three main Presbyterian bodies in Scotland at the midpoint of last century.

First, the United Presbyterian Church brought together various Secession Churches and associated presbyteries in 1847. The members of this Church were committed to the independence of the ministers from lay patronage. It followed that they maintained their ministers and Christian witness by voluntary giving. As United Presbyterians were generally intellectuals, industrialists or wealthy merchants they developed or demanded a greater share in church administration. They placed strong emphasis upon the concept of eldership, giving the lay elder equal status with the minister. Oratorical preaching was often a central feature of United Presbyterian services.

Second, the Established Church of Scotland accepted the restoration of patronage although many members resented it. The parish minister was normally closely linked with village and general public life especially matters pertaining to education and poor relief. The Established Church of Scotland reflected more clearly than the other two groups here reviewed the effects of the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival initiated by the Wesley brothers in England.

Third, the Free Church of Scotland was formed when Dr Thomas Chalmers led 474 of the 1,200 ministers of the Church of Scotland and a large group of lay representatives out of the General Assembly. This Great Disruption, as it was called, took place in 1843. Although the ministers involved lost their churches, manses and rights to parish ministry, they reorganised and soon became a significant force in Scottish life. They wanted complete ecclesiastical independence but did not thereby demand the operation of the voluntary principle.

Presbyterian settlers took longer to transplant their religious institutions in Australian soil than did Methodist settlers. Allan A. Dougan has attributed the late appearance of the Scottish Churches in Australia to the fact of the uneasy situation in Scotland. But there were two more important factors operating.

First, Presbyterians placed less importance on laity conducting services and preaching than Methodists. In spite of the Presbyterian emphasis upon the role of the elder in teaching and administration, there was not the same emphasis on preaching and the conduct of services as in Methodism.

Second, in Methodism the small class meeting led by a layman

could not only continue for years without an ordained minister but it could grow and initiate steps to secure an appropriate minister from England. In each of the Australian States there was at least one Methodist class meeting in existence some years before a minister arrived. In most cases these class meetings of lay Methodists arranged for the appointment of an ordained minister. In Presbyterianism, however, laymen did not take as much initiative without ministerial leadership.

Presbyterian settlers first met for services in 1803 <(25)> at Portland Head on the Hawkesbury near Windsor, New South Wales. They built there in 1809 Ebenezer Church which, since union, has become part of the Uniting Church and is now the oldest Christian Church in Australia where regular services are still held.

The early ministry in this church was ecumenical, typical of many other churches in the early days of the Australian colonies. The leader of those who first worshipped here was an elder named James Mein. Several priests of the Church of England preached here and between 1808 and 1813 the church members accepted a Congregationalist minister, the Rev. J. Youl. Another minister was the Rev. Samuel Leigh, the first Methodist minister in the colony.

The first Presbyterian communion service of which we possess a record was conducted in 1824 by Dr John Dunmore Lang who had arrived in Sydney the previous year.

Dr Lang proved to be a very active person; but he was also a stormy petrel in the colony. What he lacked in diplomacy he more than compensated for in energy. He founded Scots Church, Sydney, and the first tertiary educational institution in the colony, the Australian College. In addition, he made at least nine trips to Scotland to recruit ministers and migrants, was elected six times to the New South Wales Legislature, wrote constantly and travelled widely not only to Britain but also throughout Australia and to the United States.

The Presbytery of New South Wales was formed on 14 December 1832. Three years later, when Lang returned from Britain with new ministers, he was surprised to learn that he had to submit to the presbytery <(26)>. As a result, he separated from the Church of Scotland on 11 December 1837. Together with an elder from his own congregation and nine ministers <(27)>, he created a new Church under the Synod of New South Wales. Three years later he was instrumental in forming the Synod of Australia with presbyteries in Sydney, Windsor, Campbelltown, Maitland and Melbourne. Only afterwards he was deposed <(28)> and forthwith established yet another Church that accepted the voluntary principle and was termed the Synod of New South Wales.

The first New South Wales church to adopt the principles of voluntarism and ecclesiastical independence as understood by the Scottish United Presbyterian Church was established in Sydney in 1855 under the ministry of the Rev. Hugh Darling. He was followed by the Rev. Adam Thomson, who became the first principal of St Andrew's College within the University of Sydney. This United

Presbyterian Church joined with the Free Church congregation that broke away from Scots Church and formed the St Stephens congregation, meeting first in Phillip Street and later Macquarie Street, Sydney.

A fourth Presbyterian Church developed in New South Wales after the Disruption in Scotland. This was the Synod of Eastern Australia. It became associated with the Free Church of Scotland. Following the great division in Scotland, the Synod of Australia tried to maintain good relations with both the Established and the Free Church in Scotland. But this proved to be impossible even though the problems in Scotland had little relevance to the conditions prevailing in Australia. The Synod of Australia at first appeared to favour the Free Church; but it later passed a resolution which some thought sympathised with the traditional Church of Scotland. As a result, the Rev. William McIntyre of Maitland led the protest in 1846 and initiated the formation of the new Church, the Synod of Eastern Australia.

In Tasmania, the first Presbyterian minister belonged to the United Secession Church of Scotland. The Rev. Archibald McArthur arrived in 1822, having been sent by the United Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh at the request of settlers in Van Diemen's Land, which had been a penal settlement since 1803. The Rev. James Garrett arrived six years later. A Church of Scotland minister, the Rev. John Mackersy reached Tasmania in 1832 together with the Rev. John Anderson, who had been ordained by the Presbytery of New South Wales for missionary work there. Mackersy and Anderson together formed the Presbytery of Van Diemen's Land in 1835. Dr Lang was closely associated with this event. Garrett joined this presbytery which, after dividing in 1834, used the name the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania.

Even though Tasmania was geographically small, the Free Church of Scotland sent ministers to work there in competition with the Presbyterian Church that had already been established. The first of these ministers was the Rev. James Lundy, who arrived in 1850.

Finally, there were in Tasmania disputes in 1844 and 1860 over doctrinal matters, which resulted in litigation that was taken to the Supreme Court. These disruptions weakened the witness of the Presbyterian Church in the island.

Victorian Presbyterians were not torn by the same tensions that disturbed their colleagues in New South Wales and Tasmania. This was one of the important reasons why Presbyterianism became stronger in Victoria than elsewhere in Australia.

Presbyterian services were first conducted in Victoria in 1837 by the Rev. James Clow, three years after settlers arrived at Port Phillip. The following year, the Rev. James Forbes was appointed to Melbourne by the Presbytery of New South Wales. He was soon followed by four other ministers and the Presbytery of Melbourne was formed in 1842.

Four years later Forbes, who had begun the congregation that

became known as The Scots Church, withdrew and with some of his congregation established a Free Church. The Free Presbyterian Church of Australia was founded the next year, 1847.

The United Presbyterian Church was planted on Victorian soil in 1850. This later divided again.

Queensland witnessed the development of both the Free and United Churches; but not the Established Church of Scotland. Although Dr Lang visited Brisbane in 1845, the year after free settlers began to arrive, and Thomas Mowbray settled there in 1847, the Presbyterians did not found their Church here until 1849. Some Presbyterian services had been conducted as early as 1847. Relating to the Free Church principles of the Synod of Eastern Australia, the Rev. W. R. McLeod formed a congregation at Brisbane in 1850 and then moved to other centres of population. The witness of the United Presbyterian Church began with the congregation which became St Andrew's, Brisbane.

In South Australia, Presbyterian services commenced in 1839. The Rev. Ralph Drummond and the other early Presbyterian ministers there were associated with the United Presbyterian Church. The Church of Scotland was represented later by the Rev. Robert Haining and others.

Presbyterianism was late taking root in Western Australia. The Rev. David Shearer began regular services at Perth in 1879. He was followed by the Rev. Robert Hanlin in 1886. Both these ministers were from the Free Church of Scotland.

Reviewing the tangled story of the various Presbyterian bodies in Australia, this obvious question emerges. Why in a new land were different Presbyterian Churches perpetuated, when each of them proclaimed a similar faith and even polity? The deep issue of Church-State relations which had created such disruption within Presbyterianism in Scotland had no basis in the colonies in the South Pacific where there was no possibility of repeating the pattern of patronage that, through historical events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had developed in Scotland.

The key to understanding religious differences among Australian Presbyterians is simply stated by Alan Dougan in these four words:

They are pathetically nostalgic. <(29)>

Here is the explanation for what would otherwise seem to be idiosyncratic happenings within Australian Presbyterianism. In the early years of last century, personal correspondence with families in Scotland helped to shape events in Australian Presbyterianism where circumstances were quite different from those experiences in Scotland. Dougan, who spent a life time in

Australian Presbyterianism, where his strong intellectual leadership and administrative skills have been honoured by his Church, explained the action of early Presbyterians as follows:

They adopted here (in Australia) the stances which they would have adopted had they remained in Scotland. <(30)>

In an effort to understand the nostalgic religious thinking, and more particularly feelings, of many early Presbyterians in Australia, it is important to note that reconciliation was not really reached in Scotland until 1929. In this year the Church of Scotland was reunited with the United Free Church which had resulted from the union of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches in 1900. The conditions on which reunion was made possible was the passage of the Church of Scotland Act in 1921. This adjusted the Church-State relations which had been the cause of the original schism.

There is an interesting phrase in Rolf Sjolinder's study, Presbyterian Reunion in Scotland, 1907- 1921, which sharpens up the significant influence of history in Presbyterian divisions. Referring to the years between the passing of the Church of Scotland Act, 1921, and the reunion in 1929 of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland, Sjolinder writes:

There was unfolded in a brief decade almost four hundred years of Church history. The task of the two Churches was not less than to reconcile history without giving up history. <(31)>

The problem for Presbyterians in Australia during the second half of the nineteenth century was to reconcile the new conditions of life in their adopted land with those they had left in Scotland and Ireland without completely obliterating their nostalgic feelings for the latter.

CONGREGATIONALISM TAKES ROOT IN AUSTRALIA

Congregationalism is a loose term referring to the descendants of those sixteenth century English Independents who believed that the Church would be reformed according to New Testament principles by stressing the autonomy of local Churches in separation from the State. George Yule has aptly described the original Congregationalists in this passage from his study, entitled The Independents in the English Civil War:

The aim of the Independents was a new form of Church organization, a form of decentralized Calvinism, or, as the Presbyterian Bastwick put it:

they wanted not Presbyterianism
dependent but Presbyterianism
independent. <(32)>

In the small city-state of Geneva the question as to how reformed faith spread to the nation-state did not arise, but when the reformed faith spread to the nation-state it was an important issue, and the form of organization that developed was Presbyterianism, in which local congregations were grouped under the control of presbyteries and the presbyteries were under the direction of the General Assembly in a highly organized system. The Independents place the supreme power in the local congregation, not in presbytery or Assembly which bodies should exist solely to give mutual help and advice. <(33)>

The Savoy Conference of 1658 brought the Independents together to draw up a doctrinal statement. This expressed the central Independent idea on church government. The Declaration of the Savoy Conference closely resembled the Westminster Confession of Faith. For example, the doctrine of predestination was taken over verbatim from the 1648 document.

The emigration of convinced Independents in the early years of the nineteenth century resulted in the foundation of Congregational churches in the Australian colonies. However, the very nature of church government adopted by Independents created considerable difficulties for the growth of Congregationalism in these sparsely settled communities.

The first Congregationalists to arrive in New South Wales were sent by the London Missionary Society to Tahiti, in the South Pacific. Threatened by the appalling living conditions there, they retired to Botany Bay in 1798. Here James Fleet Cover, Rowland Hassall, William Henry and others began conducting services. Their ministry extended to Parramatta and other settlements nearby. The only attempt to form a Congregational church was made by William Pascoe Crook in 1810. The life of this congregation was brought to a close because of the return of the missionary members to the islands coupled with opposition from Government House.

Congregational services did not commence again in Sydney until 1832. A building was erected and the Rev. William Jarrett became the minister of this congregation in 1833.

Van Diemen's Land received its first Congregational minister in 1830. He was the Rev. Frederick Miller, whose arrival resulted from the constant requests from Henry Hopkins, a Congregational layman who had settled in Hobart Town in 1822. This ministry resulted in the formation during 1832 of Australia's oldest continuing Congregational church.

The Tasmanian Congregationalists were instrumental in securing the services of the Rev. William Waterfield for Melbourne in 1838. Through his ministry, a Congregational church was also formed here the following year.

Congregationalism was represented in South Australia early in the life of this settlement. The Rev. Thomas Quinton Stow, who was amongst the first settlers, formed a church in 1837.

Western Australian Congregationalism traces its inception to Henry Trigg, a committed layman who conducted services in his own home in Perth in 1845. He acted as honorary pastor after a chapel was erected in 1846. Eventually the Rev. James Leonard arrived to minister to the small congregation in 1852.

Queensland Congregationalism began in 1849. Samuel P. Welsby, a schoolmaster who had been brought to Australia by the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, gathered a congregation in Ipswich until the formation of a United Church of Baptists and Congregationalists in 1853. The Rev. Thomas Deacon served an interim ministry for a year. The following year this church became specifically Congregational.

In Brisbane, other immigrants sponsored by Dunmore Lang formed a United Evangelical Church in 1849. However, the Presbyterian and Baptists withdrew several years later. The remaining Congregationalists secured the Rev. George Wight as their own minister in 1858 and formed their own church the following year.

The expansion of Congregationalism was hindered in Australia by several inbuilt factors. First, Congregationalists refused to accept government grants for the building of their chapels. Second, there was no central ecclesiastical organisation to plan an overall policy of ministry, or to finance development and supply ministers in newly opened areas. Third, as Lindsay Lockley states, it was:

their belief that their witness was most effective among more thoughtful people.
<(34)>

These factors were partly responsible for the fact that Congregationalism in Australia never developed the same strength as either Methodism or Presbyterianism. In fact, it never attracted as much as 5 per cent of the population in any Australian colony. However, it exercised an influence greater than its comparatively small membership would indicate.

During the nineteenth century, Congregationalism was particularly active in the struggles to eliminate government aid to religion and to replace denominational with a secular-based, state-financed system of education. Congregationalists constantly worked for what they believed was an Australian community based on Christian principles. To this end, their influence in politics was often considerably out of proportion to their numbers.

For example, Congregationalists in South Australia before 1900 provided 40 percent of the Legislative Councillors and twelve and a half percent of the House Assembly <(35)>. Again in the 1880s, two-thirds of the New South Wales Press belonged to the Congregational Church <(36)>. This tendency of Congregationalists to become involved in public affairs constantly strengthened the influence of Congregationalism in the Australian colonies throughout the nineteenth century.

Government geologist to assist in developing Australia's mineral resources.

The goldrushes dominated colonial life during the 1850s and remained an important factor shaping the progress of Australia for the next fifty years. During the 'boom days' of the fifties, men of all classes went off to the diggings to try their luck, thus bringing social upheaval to the settled communities they left and social chaos to many of the 'boom towns' to which they went. Some of these vent adventurers had as many as 10,000 diggers. More permanent structures such as houses, shops, churches, hotels and dance halls were eventually built where satisfactory finds of gold gave the field a degree of permanence.

In spite of the difficulty of securing proper police protection, community life developed reasonably well, even if rough and austere. However, significant riots were not unknown. As for example, at Bendigo in the 1850s, at Lambing Flat, New South Wales, in 1860-61 and at Clonsilla, Victoria in December 1871. Because of the involvement of the Chinese in some of these clashes and for other reasons, sentiment against them grew to the point where restrictions were made on their immigration thus paving the way for the White Australia Policy which severely limited Asiatic immigration for the next century.

The gold rushes greatly increased population in some areas and decreased it in others. More people coming to Australia were not content to stay around the principal cities but were opening up wide tracts of country in various states. Because of this rapid development, it was difficult for the Church to provide both

CHAPTER TWO

TOWARDS DENOMINATIONAL UNITY

The discovery of gold in payable deposits in 1851 'precipitated Australia into nationhood' <(1)>. Next to the convict system, which created isolated colonial settlements around Botany Bay (Sydney), Port Phillip Bay (Melbourne), Moreton Bay (Brisbane), Macquarie Harbour (Hobart) and Swan River (Perth), gold was the most important social influence shaping the development of Australia in the nineteenth century. The wealth generated from the goldfields benefited both capital cities and country towns and played a major role in opening up Australia. This, in turn, prompted a movement towards denominational unity among the Methodists and Presbyterians in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

Gold discoveries had been made as early as 1823; but this news was purposely repressed as the government feared the grave social consequences that would follow a goldrush and influential squatters were afraid that it would seriously disturb the pastoral economy by aggravating the labour shortage. This situation changed after Governor Fitzroy advocated in 1849 a policy of exploiting the mineral resources of New South Wales. As a result, the British Government appointed Samuel Stutchbury as Government geologist to assist in developing Australia's mineral resources.

The goldrushes dominated colonial life during the 1850s and remained an important factor shaping the progress of Australia for the next fifty years. During the 'roaring days' of the fifties, men of all classes went off to the diggings to try their luck, thus bringing social upheaval to the settled communities they left and social chaos to many of the 'canvas towns' to which they went. Some of these tent settlements had as many as 40,000 diggers. More permanent structures such as houses, shops, churches, hotels and dance halls were eventually built where satisfactory finds of gold gave the field a degree of permanence.

In spite of the difficulty of ensuring proper police protection, community life developed reasonably well, even if rough and austere. However, significant riots were not unknown, as for example, at Bendigo in the 1830s, at Lambing Flat, New South Wales, in 1860-61 and at Clunes, Victoria in December 1873. Because of the involvement of the Chinese in some of these clashes and for other reasons, resentment against them grew to the point where restrictions were made on their immigration thus sowing the seeds of the White Australia Policy which severely limited Asiatic immigration for the next century.

The gold rushes greatly increased population in some areas and decreased it in others. More people coming to Australia were not content to stay around the principal cities but were opening up wide tracts of country in various states. Because of this rapid development, it was difficult for the Churches to provide both

sufficient ministerial personnel and adequate financial resources for property development and missionary witness. Duplication of work by different groups of either Methodists or Presbyterians seemed to be highly wasteful when resources were so limited. Therefore one factor prompting reunion within Methodism and Presbyterianism was a utilitarian, practical desire to unify forces.

Another factor towards union was theological. In a new land where conditions of life were quite different from those in England and Scotland, where the divisions within Methodism and Presbyterianism had developed, Church members were hard pushed to explain their divisions, particularly as they followed a Master who prayed concerning his disciples:

that they all may be one. <(2)>

Because there was constant overlapping of witness, people began to ask in the words of Methodist historian, James Colwell:

Why these divisions? With the same theology, singing the same hymns sprung from the same stock, and with few exceptions, the same method of Church government, why are they not one? Whatever reasons may have existed to explain the secession, is there anything now to justify its perpetuation? <(3)>

REUNION WITHIN AUSTRALIAN METHODISM

The first serious, recorded call for Methodist reunion was in 1877. Referring to various sections of the Methodist family coming together in other parts of the world, the editor of The Weekly Advocate commented:

We are happy to add that there are evidences of a growing cordiality between the various sections of Australian Methodists...We hope, in an early issue to point out some of the advantages which may be expected to ensue from the honourable unification of these denominations, which are already substantially the same in discipline and doctrine and spiritual life. One Methodist Church would be, we think, a much greater

power than half-a-dozen Churches. <(4)>

Nothing appears to have been done until the Ecumenical Methodist Conference <(5)> met in London in 1881. The purpose of this gathering was to bring closer together the various branches of Methodism across the world so that each could support the other thus making their witness more effective. This Conference provided a stimulus to consider organic union in Australia as well as in other parts such as Canada, Britain and Ireland where dialogue was in progress.

happening:

The impetus of World Methodism to consider union negotiations in Australia was reflected in the Wesleyan General Conference that was held in Adelaide in 1881. Here it was resolved:

That, in the interests of Christian charity and union, and in the hope of economising the energies of the various Methodist Churches, this Conference declares its readiness to consider any well-devised scheme that may come before it for effecting a union of those Churches. <(6)>

Three years later, the four Methodist bodies met in Victoria under the chairmanship of the Rev. Dr Watkin. At this meeting a basis for union was adopted. <(7)>. Victorian Methodists were keen to push the union; but New South Wales Methodists were not. The matter oscillated for a number of years between keenness for and indifference to union.

A motion favourable to union was pushed through the Wesleyan General Conference of 1884 directing that union negotiations be opened up with the other branches of the Methodist family in the Colonies; but no clear moves were made prior to the next General Conference which resolved that there should be cooperation in united services. Again, little more was done to give effect to the resolutions of 1884 except in some of the smaller Methodist bodies where some mergers took place. For example, the Methodist New Connexion of South Australia joined with the Bible Christians of that State in 1888 and the same body in Victoria joined with the Wesleyan Church in Victoria in 1888.

During 1891 committees were set up in most of the state conferences to consider Methodist union. In July Dr Brown chaired in Sydney a special committee that had been formed to discuss the advisability of organic union among Methodists in Australia. With only two dissentient votes it was resolved at this meeting:

that union would be in the interests of Christ's Kingdom and for the glory of God.
<(8)>

The Rev. W. Wools Rutledge wrote an article in 1892 in which he outlined the history of the union movement in Australian Methodism. One phrase he used expressed clearly what had been happening:

It has boomed, and cooled off, and boomed again. <(9)>

Rutledge was blunt in his criticism of the lack of initiative shown in implementing the resolutions of the General Conference.

During these three years the Conference failed to carry out the express directions of the General Conference, namely to open communications with the other branches of the Methodist family. Had it done so it might have found that there was little ground for the opinion expressed in the resolution the following year (1888):

"in the absence of any manifested general desire for union on the part of the other Methodist Churches of this colony, no definite action is called for".
<(10)>

Rutledge completed his article by quoting from the Fernley lecture given by the Rev. R. Green:

Is it that we have not grace enough to be one in brotherly fellowship, or is it that we have not wit enough to bring it about. <(11)>

Although nothing specific was actually accomplished, the denominational journals of the time indicate that there was a great deal of discussion on union in the various Methodist bodies around Australia. For example, early in 1894 there was a report on Methodist Union in Canada in which the following comment was made:

I told my father it (Methodist Union) was a burning question here. <(12)>

In this article the Rev. John Calvert, a Wesleyan Methodist, had argued against union because of bad effects in Canada. W. F. James, the Joint Secretary of the South Australian Methodist Union Committee, replied to these charges three weeks later. He argued that Union would not throw ministers out of circuits, that ministers among the minor Methodist bodies were not inferior to Wesleyans and that the superannuation scheme after union would not be appreciably less than the level enjoyed by Wesleyan ministers prior to union. <(13)>

On 3 February 1894 The Methodist, which was sold in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria as well as New South Wales, carried a brief report from the Primitive Methodist Assembly:

On the question of Methodist Union a resolution was passed declaring such Union to be both desirable and practicable. <(14)>

This report, together with other comments on union that had been published, sparked off a long correspondence which began in the 17 February issue of The Methodist and was continued in the following issue on 24 February. Commenting on the substance of these letters, the editor of The Methodist stated:

United Methodism means a revived Methodism. This has been demonstratively proved in the case of Canadian and Irish Methodism. <(15)>

The crucial debate on whether there would be a 'United Methodism' took place at the Wesleyan General Conference in May 1894. The debate on union created intense excitement. The issues were considered to be so important that:

the rule limiting speeches was lifted for the Methodist Union debate. <(16)>

There were 32 speakers in the debate which lasted eight and a half hours. One of the delegates spoke for fortyfour minutes. The motion in favour of Union was carried 101 to 14 <(17)>.

The resolution gave power to the Annual Conferences to move into union with other Methodist bodies. In addition, the Conference adopted a Constitution and accepted a series of detailed regulations which were to operate in the United Church. <(18)>

Following the General Conference, there were more letters forthcoming from those who were both for and against union. For example, the Rev. W. H. Fitchett wrote an open letter urging Wesleyan Methodists to join with other Methodist bodies. The Rev. G. A. Nolan countered immediately pointing out that New South Wales was not ready for union. <(19)>

The significance of the 1894 General Conference is summarised by Colwell as follows:

The General Conference of 1894, which met in Adelaide, marked the practical settlement of the question, after which Union in Australia became only a question of time. In a debate, able and vigorous but in which it seemed doubtful as to what the issues would be, it was eventually resolved:

That union with the other branches of Methodism in these colonies practically identical in belief and teaching with itself, springing from the same spiritual stock, and separated from it merely by differences in ecclesiastical order, would be for the glory of God and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom.

This resolution was followed by the submission of a plan of Union, and power was given to the Annual Conference to carry union into effect upon the Basis set forth. <(20)>

Reporting on the Methodist Union debate in Adelaide, the editor of The Methodist argued that this was the watershed in union negotiations between Methodists in Australia. Serious discussions had been carried on in the courts of the Churches for fifteen years. But no decisions had been reached which determined the final outcome. He entitled his editorial 'The Great Debate on Methodist Union' and stated:

The great debate on Methodist Union has closed and General Conference had delivered us from further agitation on this subject by giving to all the annual conferences a well and carefully defined basis on which Union with each other and all the other Methodist Churches may be consummated. <(21)>

Although vigorous debate continued, reports from Primitive Bible Christians and United Free Churches indicated that these minor Methodist Churches were:

willing to join but want it to come at national level rather than state. <(22)>

There was still considerable opposition within the larger Wesleyan Church. For example, W. W. Clarke appealed against Methodist Union in the following strong terms:

I appeal to the Ministers and adherents of the Wesleyan Methodist Church for the sake of the Church to stop and consider the impending danger. Is it right or expedient to impose additional monetary burdens upon ourselves, which Methodist Union in this colony would certainly mean. <(23)>

The editor of The Methodist commented on this and other negative statements that appeared in the press by saying in his notes and comments on 29 September 1894:

The spirit of union is in the air and in many respects we are glad that it is so. <(24)>

Before organic union became an actual fact in Australia, a great deal of hard, detailed work had to be completed. Various differences in polity had to be overcome and matters of socio-economic status had to be discussed and resolved. <(25)> In addition, financial interests in buildings and agencies, readjustment of circuit boundaries and ministerial supply had to be worked out with great care. <(26)>

One by one Methodists in all the Australian States except New South Wales agreed to Union on the basis adopted by the Wesleyan General Conference of 1894. Queensland was first in 1898. Both South Australia and Western Australia followed in 1900. Finally, Victoria agreed in 1902.

Union came with great difficulty in New South Wales. Colwell described the checkered progress here in the following words:

New South Wales, with characteristic caution, made haste slowly. <(27)>

The difficulty was among the Wesleyans who formed the largest group. At the end of 1891 there were 387 Wesleyan churches in New South Wales, 135 ministers, 452 local preachers, 7,978 members and 24,797 children in the Sunday Schools. At the same time, the Primitive Methodists had only 77 churches in the State, 29 ministers, 150 local preachers, 2,070 members and 6,678 children in Sunday Schools. The United Methodist Free Church had only 17 churches, 6 ministers, 30 local preachers, 643 members and 1,565 Sunday School scholars. <(28)> The Bible Christians were not represented in New South Wales. Individual members usually joined with other Methodist groups. These figures make clear that the final decision to unite lay with the Wesleyans.

Leaders of the three Churches met in the Centenary Hall, Sydney, on 28 June 1892 to discuss and, if possible, further organic union within Methodism. At this meeting, a Wesleyan layman, Mr. W. Robson, moved the following resolution, which was seconded by the Rev. G. James, a Primitive Methodist minister:

That this meeting records its deep and solemn conviction that in Christ's Kingdom in these colonies, an organic union of the several Methodist Churches is desirable, provided a satisfactory basis of such a union can be agreed upon. <(29)>

This resolution was carried 30 to 2. One of the opponents, the

Rev. W. Clarke, who was a Wesleyan, argued:

No separate branch of Methodism had asked for union...they were in a state of transition...there would be a large surplus of ministers...times were bad...different idiosyncrasies of men...the tendency is to decentralisation. <(30)>

These arguments were used again and again in the debates that continued for some years as opposition increased among the Wesleyans. When the vote of Quarterly Meetings was taken across the State, the outcome was positive but not decisive. It revealed that there were many who were undecided. For example, 19 circuits did not take a vote either approving or disapproving union on the basis presented and 8 answered only in general terms. <(31)> The editor of The Methodist interpreted this indecision as indicating that the people were not ready for union. <(32)> This was strongly attacked by W. W. Rutledge, the most outspoken unionist among the Wesleyans, and the Rev. E. Crozier, spokesman for the Primitive Methodists.

An important debate took place at the 1894 New South Wales Wesleyan Methodist Conference. This was opened by Rutledge who moved:

That this Conference forwards the Basis of Union as suggested by the N.S.W. Joint Committee to the General Conference and recommends it to take such steps as in its wisdom it may see fit, towards bringing about within a reasonable time the organic union of the Methodist Church of Australia, and that in the meantime in order to facilitate Union, the Conference agrees to the appointment of 12 ministers and 12 laymen, who, acting conjointly, with representatives of other sections of the Methodist Church, shall form a Joint Committee or Council, the business of which shall be...<(33)>

An amendment to this was moved by the Rev. G. Lane to the effect that the Conference approve the creation of a Methodist Federal Council rather than organic union, as the time was not opportune for the latter. This amendment was carried 74 to 47 <(34)>

The New South Wales Conference did not accept immediately the decision of the 1894 General Conference. The debate here raged for almost seven years. At times, this was acrimonious and heated. At other times it evinced more grace and sensitivity. The Methodist Federal Council carried out surveys. The papers carried letters. And District Synods as well as Conference staged debates that covered the same issues over and over again. Some of the speakers on both sides became well known for their views that were repeated in different debates. Voting on some occasions was very close among the Wesleyans. Finally, the Wesleyan Conference of 1901 voted 98 to 10 to consummate Union. <(35)> It was decided that 1 January 1902 would be the date when Union would be effective in New South Wales.

At midnight on 31 December 1901, the separate branches of Methodism in New South Wales ceased. A meeting of praise and prayer was held in Centenary Hall, Sydney, on 1 January 1902. Other demonstrations took place in other centres such as Newcastle where 2,500 people gathered in a great tent. When the Bishop of Newcastle, Dr Stanton Lucas, was giving his greeting here he expressed the thinking of many people when he said:

The federation of all the Methodist Churches sets a noble example, and leads the way for further Union. <(36)>

The editor of The Methodist wrote in the first issue of 1902:

At last, Methodist Union is an accomplished fact. On the one hand there is no sense of defeat - on the other there is an entire absence of that sense of victory that leads to boastfulness and glorying. It is the Lord's doing. Our Divine Lord is saying, 'Behold, I have set before you an open door'. <(37)>

The editorial in The Sydney Morning Herald expatiated on the wider implications of Methodist Union. It stated in part:

The event which will be marked to-day by the assembling of Methodists at Centenary Hall is of great Connexional interest, but it also has a considerable importance for the general community. The reUnion of all branches of

"the people called Methodists" in the States of the Commonwealth is, as we show in our retrospect of the movement, not a new ideal. It is in complete harmony with the spirit of the age in kindred and other directions...To the general community it cannot be otherwise than noteworthy and satisfactory to find the various bodies of Methodism engaged in a cordial cooperation. No other body, it is safe to say, even with the fullest recognition of the great awakening of the Church of England in the last half-century, has such a record in the evangelisation of the masses of England, Wales and Ireland. For a century and a half it has gone with the English speech everywhere, and in the world which Wesley declared to be his parish it has brought further fruit abundantly. It is easy to wish well to a body which has done so much for humanity as this world embracing Connexion, once a band of decided and persecuted reformers working amongst the poorest, the rudest, and the least evangelicised of all nominally Christian peoples of the eighteenth century...For the present we have achieved the desirable end of uniting in essentials, in Church government, in organisation for the objects of a great Christian society, the whole body of Methodist adherents in Australia. The immediate result may be expected to be a great development of the resources and power of the Methodist Church, and that cannot but make for the public welfare. Next we have the important result of checking division and substituting combination. Of the ultimate consequences of such a policy, whether in moulding the progress of Church organisation in other countries and conducing to better relations among Christian societies, we cannot speak; but the prospect is fairer and more hopeful for every such demonstration of that unity which is an old Scriptural ideal for brethren. <38>

The first Conference of United Methodism was held in the Town Hall on Tuesday, 25 February, 1902 <(39)>. The new President, the Rev. W. Wools Rutledge, in his Official Address stated that in spite of the bitterness in many of the debates leading up to Union and the large number of Wesleyans who voted against Union, all circuits, ministers and congregations came into the United Methodist Church <(40)>. The large minority of those who voted against Union was prepared to accept the decision of the majority as reflecting the Will of God.

Once all the States had voted for Union it was only a matter of time for the States to come together. This happened when the first General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia met in 1904. At this time, the Methodists represented ten per cent of the total Australian population.

REUNION IN AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIANISM

Although reunion within Scottish Presbyterianism did not occur until 1929, movements towards Union began much earlier in Australia. As early as 1854, there were signs of it in New South Wales.

This N.S.W. Union movement bore practical results in 1864, when the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales was formed by the Union of the Synod of Eastern Australia and the Synod of New South Wales. The following year the Synod of Australia and the United Presbyterians joined to form the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales with seven members of the Synod of Eastern Australia staying out of the Union.

In Tasmania, the Free Church Presbytery joined with the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania in 1896 adopting the latter name. Twelve years later, it developed a partial Union with the Victorian Church, thus bringing it greater strength because of more adequate resources such as theological education and administrative leadership.

In Victoria, moves towards Union came even earlier than in New South Wales owing mainly to local conditions. In 1851, twenty seven Free Church ministers, nineteen ministers from the Established Church and another who had no firm links with any Presbyterian group were gathered into the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. During the following decades, this Church rapidly increased in membership and influence in the general community because of the migration of Scottish settlers to the rich pastures of the Western District and the growing wealth of those who had been successful in the goldrushes of the 1850s.

In Queensland, members of the Free and United Churches joined in 1863. The Established Church of Scotland had not been transplanted as an independent entity into this colony. When those who had been associated with the Established Church came to the State they joined either of the other Churches.

In South Australia, the Free and United Churches were united in 1865 and adopted the name, the Presbyterian Church of South Australia. The Church of Scotland was represented by Robert Haining and others but they were unable to create an ecclesiastical authority in that State. In 1924, the Presbyterian Church of South Australia was united with the Victorian Church and began sending their theological students for training to the Victorian theological training centre at Ormond College.

In Western Australia, the Free Church joined with the Victorian

Church in 1892; but by 1900 there were still only 14 congregations and as the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Australia seemed imminent this link with Victoria was broken and the Western Australian Presbyterians formed the Presbyterian Church of Western Australia.

The culmination of the Union movements within Australian Presbyterianism came in 1901, when the various State Churches formed a Federal Union and together became the Presbyterian Church of Australia. The basic Presbyterian standards were accepted as the framework for this Union. The General Assembly was given supremacy in matters of doctrine, worship, missions, theological education and youth work. This fact is crucial in assessing the significance of the vital decision taken by the General Assembly on 1 May 1977.

The Presbyterian of 20 April 1899 contained an interesting comment on the formation of the General Assembly. It stated:

The Federal Assembly approved a Basis of Union including the Westminster Confession as a subordinate standard in the light of the Declaratory statement that God made a free offer of salvation to men without distinction. <(41)>

This last sentence was a considerable modification of the strong Calvinistic position that had been clearly enunciated in earlier theological statements of the Presbyterian Church. It reflected a shift in the theological thinking of Australian Presbyterians. Years before it had been argued persuasively in The Stockwhip :

people lost their faith when they found it impossible to reconcile a God of love with the horrors of Hell and the reprobation of many. <(42)>

The Presbyterian of 23 May 1891 had indicated that there were still many Presbyterian ministers who warned preachers against shirking the task of explaining the overwhelming damnation reserved for sinners. <(43)> The Bulletin openly scoffed at this Christian concept of Hell <(44)>. In this it was reflecting a growing conviction in the community.

The Presbyterian Moderator, Dr Cosh, expressed in 1895 that it was necessary to believe in free will in moral and spiritual matters <(45)>. This represented the same change in emphasis in

the Church that was reflected in the Basis of Union on which the State Presbyterian Assemblies joined together in the General Assembly. The Presbyterian commented:

A notable victory for liberal views was gained in the Federal Assembly in 1899 which declared... <(46)>

It is interesting to note here that some Presbyterians who dissented from the decision of the General Assembly of Australia on 1 May 1974 have suggested returning to the theological position prevailing among Presbyterians before 1901. For example, there has been an attempt to cut out or at least modify the Declaratory Statement in the light of which the 1901 Basis of Union stated that the Westminster Confession should be read and accepted. As Murray R. Adamthwaite wrote in an article for The Bulletin of the Westminster Society:

Certain changes are desirable in the light of the appalling licence that Liberals have assumed to themselves on the basis of the Declaratory Statement. <(47)>

Perhaps the emphasis on this more conservative, more rigidly Calvinistic theological position among many continuing Presbyterians after 1 May 1974 was one of the reasons why the Moderator of the General Assembly of Victoria, the Right Rev. W. A. Loftus, wrote in September 1977:

Our Church has come alive in a way that we have not known since 1901. <(48)>

Presbyterians welcomed the moves towards the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia. <(49)> Their own Union of colonial Presbyterian Churches followed less than 6 months after this political federation. The Presbyterian Church of Australia was born on 24 June 1901.

CONGREGATIONALS UNITE

Congregationalism, as we have already noted <(50)>, emphasised the authority and control of each local congregation in church

matters. This polity made it difficult to develop united action by various congregations similar to that possible in Methodism at conference level or in Presbyterianism at presbytery level.

The high priority placed on independency within Congregationalism made it extremely difficult to grapple with problems in developing cities and sparsely populated country areas. This was demonstrated in both England and New England. In Australia the problems of Congregationalists were compounded by large distances between centres of population and the anonymous nature of inner city areas.

In order to strengthen individual congregations and to develop united plans for ministry between different congregations, Congregationalists found it necessary to bind autonomous Congregational Churches together. For this purpose of mutual support, the Congregational Union of Australia was formed in 1888.

However, this was so weak that it was almost of no value when Brisbane wanted to have the Union meet there in connection with centenary celebrations in 1903. The second Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia met in Melbourne in October 1904. But the constitution was not finally adopted until the third Assembly met in Sydney during April 1907. For a number of years New Zealand was associated with Australia in the Congregational Union.

First, Churches in Australia were free independent bodies. The Presbyterian Church had never been linked to the State as it had been in Scotland, where it had taken root, nor was the Church of England part of the Establishment after 1805 (Burke's Bill), as it had been in the early days of the colony. This meant that the Congregational Church could not rightly be called a 'free' or 'non-conformist' Church in the Australian setting. Methodism was also seen as a Church in its own right rather than an association of evangelical renewal societies within the Church of England as it had been in Britain prior to the death of John Wesley in 1791 or a group of Chapels as it was regarded afterwards. Although in 1850 Methodists formed the largest community and Presbyterians and Congregationalists were on the state rolls, all were enjoyed much the same status in the census up to the 1911 A.S.W. Census. Methodists formed 10.2% of the population, Presbyterians 7.9% and Congregationalists 5.2%.

Second, these three Churches had been affected in the closing decades of the nineteenth century by the liturgical movement which had been at work in England and was a growing influence in Australia. There was a movement away from the austerity that had marked these three Churches in the years of their birth and a move towards more aesthetic worship. Methodist 'preaching places' were no longer 'chapels' as in England, but they were often fine churches in brick with elaborate spires, organs and choirs.

CHAPTER THREE

ONE GRAND CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Unity was a central theme of discussion in Australia as the twentieth century dawned. It was on the lips of politicians as they talked about Queen Victoria signing the proclamation binding together the six British Crown Colonies in the South Pacific into the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901.

Unity was also being discussed by many church people in the early months of 1900. The Presbyterian Churches in the six States accepted the Scheme of Union agreed upon by the Federal Assembly in 1900 and became the Presbyterian Church in Australia on 24 June 1901. The Methodists were also preparing for the union which was consummated on 1 January 1902. And the Congregationalists, in spite of the formation of the Congregational Union of Australia in 1888, found themselves planning closer union after 1903.

TRENDS WITHIN PROTESTANTISM ENCOURAGING UNION

By 1900 there were trends at work in Australian society bringing closer the three main non-episcopal Protestant communities that had been transplanted from Great Britain and Ireland a century earlier. These trends encouraged Union between Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

First, Churches in Australia were free independent bodies. The Presbyterian Church had never been linked to the State as it had been in Scotland, where it had taken root. Nor was the Church of England part of the Establishment after 1835 (Burke's Bill), as it had been in the early days of the colony. This meant that the Congregational Church could not rightly be called a 'free' or 'non-conformist' Church in the Australian setting. Methodism was also seen as a Church in its own right rather than an association of evangelical renewal societies within the Church of England as it had been in Britain prior to the death of John Wesley in 1791 or a group of Chapels as it was regarded afterwards. Although in 1900 Methodists formed the largest community and Presbyterians and Congregationalists were on the whole more affluent, all three enjoyed much the same status in the community. In the 1901 N.S.W. Census, Methodists formed 10.29% of the population, Presbyterians 9.91% and Congregationalists 1.86%.

Second, these three Churches had been affected in the closing decades of the nineteenth century by the liturgical movement which had been at work in England and was a growing influence in Australia. There was a movement away from the austerity that had marked these three Churches in the land of their birth and a move towards more aesthetic worship. Methodist 'preaching places' were no longer 'chapels' as in England; but they were often fine churches in brick with elaborate spires, organs and choirs.

For example, the editor of The Methodist reported this move towards richer liturgy within the Methodist Church in the following way:

The New President dwelt...upon the immense importance of cultivating more reverence and beauty in our public services. We are very thankful for that timely word...We once heard the late Dr Osborn say, in a characteristic aside, "What we want in Methodism is a great deal more ritualism"...he meant a scriptural attention to the details and refinements of public worship and the spirit of awe and reverence in which extreme High Churchmen and Romanists may teach us so much.

He added:

increased reverence and beauty in our public worship should be questions to which Synods and Conference might give careful attention.
<(1)>

Even the sons of Puritans were moving to more ordered worship with many of the aids that had marked the Anglican Church. In 1901, the Australian Independent suggested that an ordered form of worship had advantages over the more usual spontaneous prayer <(2)>. Two years later, the Rev. J. Fordyce addressed the Australian Congregational Union (1903) with these words:

We may use the best here both of vocal and instrumental music to generate emotion, to sustain emotion, and to prepare men and women to listen to Divine things. <(3)>

The Presbyterian Church was also influenced by the new liturgical movement within the Church. Newly erected churches were a little less austere than they were in Scotland or had been previously in Australia.

This trend towards a more ordered worship, more in keeping with the Catholic tradition, was not without its opponents. For example, the Methodist reported a controversy for over six months

when the Rev. W. Halse Rogers suggested to the Methodist Conference in 1903 that a form of service would place Methodism closer to the 'Holy Church' and suggested the reading of Psalms, the singing of the Te Deum and Jubilate, the recitation of the Decalogue and the use of the Apostles' Creed <(4)>. These opponents to more ordered worship reflected Primitive Methodist attitudes in Australia rather than the Wesleyan heritage.

Third, the three Churches were moving together theologically. The Calvinistic emphasis which was attacked so strongly by John Wesley was being diluted within Presbyterianism both in Scotland and Australia <(5)>. Even the N.S.W. Moderator, the Rev. W. M. Dill-Macky, was able to say, as early as 1899, that the struggle between Arminianism and Calvinism had ended <(6)>. The Presbyterian of 20 April 1899, in discussing the forthcoming Union, pointed out:

the Federal Assembly approved a Basis of Union including the Westminster Confession as a subordinate standard in the light of the Declaratory Statement that God made a free offer of salvation to men without distinction. <(7)>

The federal constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Australia drawn up in 1900 modified the Confession of Faith by a statement supporting free will and rejecting the strict Calvinist view of Predestination. <(8)>

Fourth, the socio-economic factors in the Australian community prompted these three Churches to work more closely together. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, these Churches, apart from the Methodists in some areas, were being displaced from the inner city working class areas and their resources were being strained almost beyond breaking point to meet the growing problems of providing pastoral oversight in the far flung areas of the country. There were deficiencies in both finance and man power. To meet the growing needs, particularly in sparsely populated areas, these Churches often shared buildings as well as ministerial oversight.

Fifth, these Churches, together with the Baptist and some Anglicans like those in the diocese of Sydney, were drawn together by the sectarian storm which broke across the country at the turn of the century. Pope Leo XIII had issued the encyclical 'Praeclara Gratulationis' during June 1894 calling all schismatics back to the fold <(9)>. Cardinal Moran interpreted the implications of this by speaking on 'The Reunion of Christendom'. He meant by this, a return to Rome of all those who had broken away either at the Reformation or afterwards <(10)>. At the dedication of St Mary's Cathedral, Cardinal Moran spoke in a way that was interpreted as an attack on Protestants. <(11)>

These remarks sparked off a blaze of sectarianism that bound the Protestant community more strongly together. The Protestant Church press carried numerous articles on the supposed attack on Protestantism. For example, The Methodist of 29 September 1900 devoted three pages to the huge protest rally held in the Sydney Town Hall. It began:

Never perhaps before in the history of the city of Sydney has such an enormous gathering assembled in the Sydney Town Hall as that which filled it on Monday night in response to the initiation of the Evangelical Council "to protest against the attacks on Protestantism and vice-regal presence at the dedication of St Mary's Cathedral". <(12)>

A series of editorials in the religious papers of the day attacked Romanism. These carried provocative titles such as 'Coming Storm' <(13)>, 'Awake thou that Sleepest' <(14)>, 'The Roman Catholic Hierarchy a Menace to Australian Unity' <(15)> and 'The Cardinal's War Wishes' <(16)>. The editorial in The Methodist of 17 January 1903 stated bluntly:

Cardinal Moran has lost no time since his return to Sydney in showing that he has parted with none of those qualities which have made him the champion disturber of the peace in Australia. <(17)>

The sectarian controversy, which Cardinal Moran revived in 1895 by expressing doubts about the spiritual integrity of Protestant missions in the Pacific, lasted until the outbreak of war. In 1914, Protestants and Catholics cooperated. That was for the formation of the Council for Civic and Moral Advancement. But this only lasted for a short time.

Opposition against the common 'Romanish' enemy constantly drove Protestants together in the early decades of the century. The editor of The Methodist was able to describe sectarianism in Australia in the following way:

Sectarianism has come to have practically only one meaning as it is used amongst us, and that is strife between Protestants and Roman Catholics. <(18)>

One of the ways in which Protestants were able to withstand the pressures created by the Catholic community was the formation of the Australian Protestant Defence Association, which developed chapters in all cities and most major towns. This reached the zenith of its power about 1906.

Sixth, the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, again together with the Baptist and Anglican Churches, had cooperated in supporting the liberal stance during the hard times of the 1890s, when economic conditions created suffering for so many workers during the great strike and the infancy of the labour movement. They continued to work together in the early years of the new century for common causes such as the preservation of the Victorian Sunday, the reduction of hotels, local option and the limitation of gambling within the community through legal prohibitions.

Seventh, the undogmatic teaching within Protestantism in the late nineteenth century was intensified by religious instruction in the public schools. The Acts of 1880 in N.S.W. and 1872 in Victoria made it possible for some teachers to take simple religious instruction in public schools and made specific provisions for ministers to come into schools regularly. This was particularly the case in country districts; but it was also happening in the cities. Protestant ministers shared in this religious teaching in schools. Because of their lack of man power, Congregational ministers were able to do little of this work which meant that children from Congregational families joined with Presbyterian or Methodist classes. And often these two groups in country areas were taught together, because ministers could only visit the schools at irregular intervals.

The Sunday schools of these Churches also contained children from different denominations, even in areas where their own Churches were represented. For example, the Montague Street Methodist Church Sunday School accepted 355 children between 1894-1904 who were non-Methodist. Of these, 202 were Anglican in spite of the fact that there were three Anglican Churches in Balmain, 51 were Presbyterian in spite of the presence in Balmain of two Presbyterian Churches and 53 were Congregationalists, in spite of one Congregational Church in Balmain. <(19)>

This latitudinarianism among non-episcopal Protestants was further intensified by such groups as Christian Endeavour, which was founded in the U.S.A. but flourished in the Australian Church scene, and the formation of Union Churches <(20)> in country areas where non-episcopal ministers arranged their services in order not to clash with one another. Clergy also gathered together in fraternals in the city and larger country areas. <(21)>

Eighth, the Council of Churches, representing the six largest Protestant denominations in N.S.W., had been formed in 1889 <(22)>. This was active until 1900, but finally folded in 1911. The N.S.W. Evangelical Council was formed in January 1899. This

contained both lay and ministerial members who were interested in the cause of evangelism. The Council's effective contribution ended by 1914. William Winn and William Arnott, both keen Methodist lay business men, resigned in 1917. However, it limped along until 1921.

BEGINNING OF UNION DISCUSSIONS

In the light of these eight socio-religious trends in Australian society, it was not a surprise that the Rev. T. E. Clouston, lecturer in Historical Theology at St Andrew's College and Minister of the Glebe Presbyterian Church, introduced into the Sydney Presbytery in March 1901, a motion requesting the Australian General Assembly:

to appoint an influential Committee to devise a scheme for the federation of as many as possible of the Protestant Churches of Australia, with power to confer with the representatives of other Churches, so as to promote closer fellowship and organised cooperation with a view to the ultimate formation of one grand Church of Australia.
<(23)>

T. E. Clouston had been one of a small group of ministers who perceived that the controversy was no longer between one Christian and another or even one Church and another but between basic Christian affirmations and their total denial. Nine years earlier Clouston had declared:

Those questions of purely speculative theology, which so exercised the minds of our fathers, such as predestination and free will and the extent of atonement and the like, are utterly out of place in a community where men are doubting whether there be a God or no.
<(24)>

As more ministers began to see the witness of the Church in society in the ways suggested here by Clouston and to present the Gospel in the light of Higher Criticism and what was loosely called 'Modernism', there were those who warned of dire consequences. For example, the Irish Presbyterian leader who was held in the spotlight of public attention in Sydney for three decades, the Rev. W. Dill-Macky, declared:

as preachers had shirked the task of telling of the overwhelming damnation reserved for sinners, the fear of God had vanished and the mass of people relapsed into indifference. <(25)>

When Dr Clouston moved the overture from the Presbytery of Sydney on the Federation of Protestant Churches of Australia in the N.S.W. Presbyterian Assembly on 10 May 1901, it was received warmly. The State court then took action to transmit this overture to the General Assembly of Australia <(26)>.

The following day, the Sydney Morning Herald carried with enthusiasm the news announcing the plan to form one grand Church of Australia. Quoting freely from statements made in the Assembly the previous day, the Herald gave as reasons for the move towards Union the following:

Whereas there are many Protestant Churches working in Australia for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ and whereas they are preaching practically the same gospel and the theological differences which have hitherto separated them have ceased to have a living interest and they now differ from each mainly in matters of church government and forms of worship which none of them regard as essentials of the faith...And whereas it would be an immense gain to the Christian Church if a united front could be presented in this land to the forces of sin and unbelief... <(27)>

When Dr Clouston and the Rev. J. Lamont supported the overture in the General Assembly of Australia, it was again received warmly. The Assembly resolved:

To sustain the overture in so far as to express sympathy with the great ideal of a United Evangelical Christian Church of Australia. <(28)>

It further resolved: the same to the other Churches for their consideration and as affording a basis for further discussion. <(35)>

To appoint a committee to consider the principle on which the Presbyterian Church of Australia is prepared to consider the question of a larger Union and to report to next Assembly. <(29)>

Strangely enough, the same Assembly later defeated a motion, proposed by the Rev. J. Macauley, that a Committee consult with other Churches to end duplicating ministrations <(30)>. It is difficult to understand why this motion for cooperation was rejected so soon after the previous motion was accepted so readily. Broome suggests that the plan 'to end duplicating ministrations':

was shunned because the general view was that the Churches could not drift into Union through cooperation, but must at the onset explicitly state a basis of doctrine and polity. <(31)>

I cannot find any arguments to support this view. However, if it was the case, this matter was important in understanding the final act of Union. In the early 1970s prior to Union, many Joint Causes (Presbyterian-Methodist-Congregational) had been established across Australia. And the three Churches could be said to have 'drifted' into a Union in North Australia.

Clouston's motion to end Protestant schism captured the imagination of quite a few clergy and laymen. He had presented his vision of one grand Church of Australia in an article in The Presbyterian entitled 'Is A Larger Union Possible'. <(32)>

The Wesleyan Conference, that was in the session at the time, agreed to discuss 'Protestant federation' <(33)>. The Congregational Union of N.S.W., which met in October 1901, also agreed to begin negotiations for 'closer Union'. <(34)>

The Presbyterian exploratory committee tabled a report on Presbyterian fundamentals at the second Assembly. After much debate the Assembly resolved:

Without taking the Articles in the Report into detailed consideration, or expressing final approval of them at this stage, agree

to forward the same to the other Churches for their consideration and as affording a basis for further discussion. <(35)>

The Presbyterian Committee on the Federation of Protestant Church, formed in September 1902, sent invitations to hold conferences on the matter of a closer union to the Archbishop of Sydney and the Bishops of all the dioceses of the Anglican Church, the President of the Methodist General Conference, the Chairman of the Congregational Unions in each State, the Presidents of the Baptist Unions in each State and the Presidents of the Conferences of the Church of Christ in each State. <(36)>

Dr Clouston reported to the 1903 General Assembly that sympathetic and cordial replies had been received from most that had been written to. The responses from both Methodist and Congregational Churches were particularly warm. Assembly was informed:

owing to the wide areas covered by these Churches, it was not possible to arrange for any general conference. Under these circumstances, the members of the Committee resident in New South Wales met, and resolved to request the members of the Committee in each State to act as a sub-committee in that State, to carry on such negotiations as might be found desirable, and to add to their number other brethren whose assistance would be of value in these conferences. <(37)>

The Sydney Morning Herald reported fully on these moves towards Union. It stressed these comments made by the Moderator in his opening address:

Through both personal and clerical acquaintances it becomes increasingly clear to me that any moves this assembly may make towards eventual Union with our brother Churches in Christ would be welcomed by the large majority of our respective congregations. <(38)>

THE SHOCK DECISION BY PRIVY COUNCIL

About this time concern was being experienced within some

sections of the Presbyterian Church because of the implications of Union between the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church. After long and patient negotiations <(39)> a strong vote for Union was taken in Scotland. In the Free Church of Scotland the voting was 643 to 27 for Union and in the United Presbyterian Church the voting was unanimously for Union. This was a most remarkable consensus. Nevertheless, the 27 members of the Free Church of Scotland threatened legal proceedings. The religious press around the world was so impressed with the voting figures that the objections of this small minority were not taken very seriously. The Methodist commented:

their attitude and threats appear as insignificant as they are unworthy. <(40)>

However, the legal threat from the 27 members of the Free Church of Scotland was far from insignificant. It had deep implications for every Union in which the Presbyterian Church has been involved this century.

The Methodist carried an editorial entitled 'An Astonishing Decision' in which the following blunt comment was made:

By a majority of 5 to 2 the Law Lords of the House of Lords have reversed the decision of the Scottish Court of Sessions, and have declared that the minority of the members of the Free Church of Scotland, who objected to Union with the United Presbyterian Church are entitled to all the Free Church funds and also to the Churches and manses belonging to the Free Church. <(41)>

This extraordinary legal decision in favour of 27 members of the Free Church of Scotland, who refused to accept the Westminster Confession concerning the authority of the General Assembly <(42)> and defied the explicit teaching of Scripture against Christians taking one another into the civil courts, <(43)> had severe repercussions in Australia seventy years later. In fact, it was carefully studied and used by those who attempted to thwart the efforts of the large majority of Presbyterians to bring into reality the splendid vision discussed in and supported by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1901.

For example, the Rev. Neil MacLeod, who led the walkout of continuing Presbyterians when the Moderator of the N.S.W. General Assembly voted to unite on 1 May 1974, was well aware of the crucial significance of the Privy Council decision to Australian Church Union negotiations. Referring to an attack on him by the

Rev. Bill Camden, Macleod wrote to Australian Presbyterian Life:

Did Mr Camden never hear of the famous Free Church case in Scotland, when 27 dedicated ministers sought "justice" against their 1001 brethren in the Uniting Church?

Perhaps he does not realise that our Continuing Presbyterianism is today the recipient of that justice. <(44)>

Many Presbyterians seriously questioned whether justice was done to the 1001 members of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church who in good faith voted to unite in their Christian mission. There were those who sharply attacked the argument of the Rev. MacLeod such as the letter from John Howard published in the Australian Presbyterian Life which read in part:

We're left with Mr MacLeod saying, in effect, that the ends justified the means. I have always been under the impression that that particular piece of wisdom was one more suited to Communist policy than to Christian doctrine. <(45)>

The Privy Council decision completely denied any rights to the vast majority of members of the Free Church of Scotland whose 616 delegates followed the procedures set down not only in Presbyterian Law but also in the early Church Councils and through almost two thousand years of Christian history. In other words, the Privy Council decision disfranchised those who had taken a democratic decision after thoughtful and prayerful discussion over a long period.

Heated debate raged in Scotland and overseas because of the totally unexpected decision of the Privy Council. A Royal Commission was set up to study the far reaching implications and to endeavour to lessen the inequities created by it. This Commission finally ruled:

the property adjudged by the Privy Council to belong to the Wee Frees is only to be theirs in so far as they are able to execute the trusts thereof; this will at once liberate a vast number of Churches, manses, and

colleges, which by every claim and principle of right belong to the United Free Church. <(46)>

UNION CONFERENCES BEGIN

The Anglicans did not reply to the Presbyterians immediately. Neither did the Baptist Unions nor Conferences of the Church of Christ indicate any real interest at the prospect of union. This lack of enthusiastic response from the latter may be explained by the fact that the Baptist Union and the Church of Christ were talking about a Union which was attempted in 1906; but the negotiations were unsuccessful. <(47)>

The Presbyterian Union Committee began separate discussions with the Methodist and Congregational Committees in 1903. As agreed the previous year, conferences were held on a State basis.

The N.S.W. Joint Committee, representing the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, after conferring on the many aspects of Union, resolved:

That, in the judgement of this Committee, the hand of God is to be distinctly and gratefully discerned in the providential upraising of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches...and is persuaded that the separate existence of these Churches...has been amply justified by the results...But the Committee is deeply convinced that the time has now fully come when the question of the closer union of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches...should be seriously considered with a view to their ultimate organic Union. <(48)>

In its report to the 1903 General Assembly, the Presbyterian Unity Committee listed a number of reasons by which organic Union should be pursued between the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in Australia. These included general agreement on all essential doctrines, similarity in their methods of government and the fact that in Australia those local circumstances and historic conditions do not exist which in the United Kingdom explained and justified the separate existence of these two Churches. <(49)>

The advantages of organic Union between the two Churches were then listed. These included multiplied resources, economy, a powerful effect on the community, more effective approach to social and philanthropic enterprises, more adequate discharge of

missionary obligations and lastly:

giving more practical and visible effect to the Saviour's prayer:

That they may be one...that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. <(50)>

The main difference between Presbyterians and Methodists was in the placing of ministers. Whereas the latter had an itinerant system in which ministers stayed between three and five years only in one appointment, the former allowed for ministers to stay the remainder of their lives when called to a parish.

It was significant that so little difficulty was experienced reaching a common basis of doctrine between Presbyterians and Methodists. It was also indicative of the widespread enthusiasm for unity that the report used the term 'organic Union' rather than 'federal Union'. This latter term was used many times in the Church Union drama by those who were unwilling to surrender denominational loyalties.

The report on discussions between Presbyterians and Methodists in Victoria was as enthusiastic as it had been in N.S.W. After thorough comparison between articles of faith and aspects of church government between the two Churches, members of the Committee felt compelled:

to set in the forefront of the Report the conviction at which they have unanimously arrived - that the two systems are based on fundamental principles which are essentially the same. The result is that while there are considerable divergencies in detail, these are only such as should be readily overcome by Christian wisdom and patience. <(51)>

REACTIONS TO UNION CONFERENCES

In some sections of the Church, a sense of euphoria was developing which saw the possibility of Union very soon. However, there were also those who were more practical in their understanding of the difficulties involved in bringing religious institutions together, particularly where there were so many members who wanted their churches to remain the same. For

example, the Scottish editor of The Methodist cautioned:

no one need take fright lest we should come to Union too soon...years will come and go before this Union is accomplished. <(52)>

The conferences between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in N.S.W. and Victoria were as successful as those between Presbyterians and Methodists. In N.S.W., the Joint Committee began with the Act of Incorporation of the Congregational Union and the Declaration of Faith adopted by the General Assembly of America at New York in 1902. In Victoria, the committees compared the Manifesto of the General Assembly and the doctrinal schedule of the Model Trust Deed of the Congregational Union and declared:

these two documents are, in respect of doctrine, in substantial agreement, and that no serious differences exist between the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Churches in this direction. <(53)>

At the end of 1902, two leaders of the Presbyterian Christian Unity Committee, the Revs. Dr Clouston and Professor Harper, visited the Congregational Union to report on the progress made so far. On behalf of the gathered Congregationalists, Dr Roseby said:

they welcomed these delegates "with great hearts" and rejoiced that the amalgamation of Presbyterians and Congregationalists may now be regarded as within the range of practical Church politics. <(54)>

Other Congregationalist leaders were not quite as enthusiastic. In Melbourne, Dr Bevan:

reminded an audience recently of what Congregationalism stands for and pleaded that the powers of the individual church in its church meeting should not lightly be given up. <(55)>

In Sydney, another Congregationalist, Mr J. Thompson:

CONGREGATIONAL OPPOSITION

reminded the audience that they were not yet
Presbyterians ! <(56)>

There were also Presbyterians who were beginning to question seriously whether Union was in the best interest of the Presbyterian Church. These comments were seldom theological in nature. They mainly concerned Scottish backgrounds, social status and financial resources. For example, the Daily Examiner commented:

for long the principal task of the Church was to provide religious ordinances for expatriate Scots...There were several Gaelic congregations in some cases the use of this tongue being understood by the Australian born children. <(57)>

The press at times made reference to the fact that 'an alien character was prolonged in the Presbyterian Church by the import of Scottish ministers'. The Presbyterian complained in 1898:

Migrant ministers knew nothing of horses.
<(58)>

Indeed, there were those who continued to suggest what had been strongly argued years before by J. D. Lang:

there was a danger that the Scottish character of the Presbyterian Church would leave it isolated from the boisterous Australian nationalism of the last two decades of the century. <(59)>

On the other hand, there were those who supported the Rev. J. Russell when he argued at the Assembly in 1898 that it was inevitable that there should be a loss of traditions of the homeland on the part of Presbyterians. <(60)>

CONGREGATIONAL OPPOSITION

At the end of 1904, strong dissent from the proposals for Church Union were expressed by several members of the Congregational Union at its meetings at the Independent Church, Melbourne. The editorial in the Australian Christian World summed up the position of Union negotiations in the following way:

The Congregationalists of Australia, if we may judge from the discussions in their Melbourne conference, are hardly yet prepared for organic unity with the other denominations. Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists in the larger states have been discussing unity...but on no side does there seem to be very much enthusiasm. <(61)>

A long article entitled 'Ecclesiastical Jingoism' gave a full report of the debate that took place on Church Union in the Congregational Union. The Rev. P. J. Murdoch spoke of the remarkable charity of temper which had prevailed at the deliberations of the recently held congress on Union, although matters were discussed on which the Churches differed profoundly. One press report commented:

He had never seen such a frank expression of opinion in Union negotiations: the spirit of love was almost equal to that which prevailed at the Presbyterian General Assembly. (Laughter) The conference was clear on the practical possibility of Union between Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists. This smaller Union must come as a beginning. Congregationalists were becoming more Presbyterian every day. (Laughter). <(62)>

The Rev. G.A.W. Legge opposed the adoption of the report on Union on these basis:

These proposals for Union inevitably implied the extinction of Congregationalism. These recommendations differed little from the

vital truths already held by Presbyterians or even Methodists, but they differed profoundly from their beliefs and traditions as Congregationalists. <(63)>

Principal Betts of the Congregational College also opposed Union and said that he would be very glad when the question was out of the way and attention could be given to denominational work. <(64)>

METHODIST REACTION

The N.S.W. Methodist Conference, meeting in Sydney during February 1904, greeted a negotiating committee on Union with applause. In his official presidential address, the Rev. W. Halse Rogers reviewed the steps taken to develop Union discussions with other Churches with a view to securing the closer association of the evangelical Churches in the State. He reported on the talks that had been held between Methodists and Presbyterians on the matter of organic Union. Stressing the importance of these talks, he made it clear that patience would be necessary before success could be expected in Church Union negotiations. He said:

Perhaps no more important communication has ever been laid before a N.S.W. Conference...There must be ample time for all this. It must mean years - it may mean decades - before any final step is taken. The most sanguine friends of the movement on both sides are fully aware of this, and would deprecate, as inimical to the best interests of Union, any attempt whatever to rush it. <(65)>

Several months later, these issues were discussed at the General Conference of the recently formed Methodist Church of Australasia. After considerable discussion on the subject of possible organic unity with the Presbyterian Church, it was resolved:

That in view of the overtures that have been made by the Presbyterian Church in the direction of Organic Union with the Methodist Church, this Conference expresses its cordial

appreciation of the spirit which has prompted such overtures and declares that, in its judgement, such an Organic Union is eminently desirable provided that a satisfactory basis of Union can be formulated. <(66)>

The reasons discussed in the Methodist General Conference for the moves towards Union were similar to those outlined in the Presbyterian Assembly. These included:

the creation of a strong national religious sentiment and force which may be applied and directed to a comprehensive system of Home Missions...the more adequate discharge of the great missionary obligation which rests upon the Christian Churches of Australasia in regard to the tribes and people of Polynesia and adjacent groups and to India, China, and other non-Christian countries...(and) the giving more practical and visible effect to the Saviour's prayer, "That they all may be one that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me". <(67)>

DEVELOPING A BASIS OF UNION

In August 1904, the Joint Committee of the three negotiating Churches met and appointed sub-committees on doctrine, polity and cooperation in ministerial training. Then the hard work began. As the various sub-committees began their work of trying to develop a Basis of Union it was soon discovered that the way ahead would not be as easy as most Unionists had presumed. Nor was the outcome as clear and definite as was at first thought possible. The Methodist of 26 November 1904 carried an editorial entitled 'The Movement for Union'. In this the editor asserted:

Like all great questions that of the proposed Union between the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches of Australia is proving that it is not without difficulties. <(68)>

However, enthusiasm was high and it was expected that the difficulties in the way of Union could be overcome. In his

presidential address to the NSW Methodist Conference, the Rev. Richard Sellers indicated that one of the great barriers to organic Union on the part of Congregational churches was being slowly and perhaps unintentionally broken down by the spread of connexional ideas in the development of their polity. He summed up his remarks by saying:

the overture for the Union of Churches was very cordially received and the opinion was expressed that such Union is most desirable, providing a satisfactory basis can be formulated. No doubt the effort to draw up such a basis and secure its acceptance by parties to the Union will be made without unnecessary delay...<(69)>

Sellers was practical enough to realise that Union would not be secured without patience. He therefore added to his remarks:

It will be well not to be in a hurry...<(70)>

The large Presbyterian Committee was reappointed at the 1905 Assembly. The following year the eight page Basis of Doctrine included in the report was received.

Opposition to Union became evident in this Fifth Assembly. One amendment stated:

in view of the strong and pronounced attachment of many of our ministers, office-bearers and members to the Presbyterian Church as at present existing, and the fact that there seem to be insuperable difficulties in the way of several of the Protestant Churches coming into the proposed Union...the Assembly resolves to proceed no further in the meantime in the direction of Union. <(71)>

In spite of some strong supporters, this amendment was successfully defeated. The Committee was then reappointed again.

During 1906, the early enthusiasm that had been shown for organic Union was lessened considerably because of growing opposition.

The editor of The Methodist, who had been a strong supporter of Church Union was forced to reflect:

It cannot be said that much progress is being made with the movement for the Union of the churches in Australia. The committees representing the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches may be quietly at work; but if so, they are doing good by stealth and blush to make it known. Nothing has been heard of their doings for the past year or two. <(72)>

Some months later, the editor of the Australian Christian World expressed similar concern over the growing apathy towards Church Union negotiations among Presbyterians. In his editorial he stated bluntly:

The Reports of the discussion on this subject in the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia are so meagre that no one who was not actually a member of the Assembly or a listener to the debate can easily tell what Presbyterians think about unity. It is quite clear that one section of the Church, at all events is not prepared for organic unity. In the view of Dr Cairns there are insuperable difficulties in the way. No doubt there are many difficulties, but whether they are insuperable or not is quite another matter. <(73)>

The following month, the editorial of The Australian Christian World identified a significant problem that the Congregationalists saw barring their way to organic Union. He reported this in the following way:

The Chairman of the Congregational Union of NSW, the Rev. F. V. Pratt MA...found the chief barrier to Union from the Congregational standpoint in the Creed subscription of other Churches. Congregationalists did not so much object to creeds as to the use that had been made of creeds and he held that they would never be justified in accepting creed-subscription as the price of unity. <(74)>

NEGOTIATIONS WITH ANGLICANS

Union negotiations were complicated and strength was gained by anti-Unionists in 1906-7 when the Presbyterians entered into unilateral talks with the Church of England. The quinquennial Anglican General Synod, which met in 1905, accepted the Presbyterian invitation of two years earlier <(75)>. As a result of this invitation, two three-day conferences were held, the first in November 1906 and the second in October 1907.

Agreement was reached upon the view of Scripture and the Creeds; but difficulties arose over ordination. However, at the second conference it was resolved that there should be recognition of existing orders, there being no demand for re-ordination in the proposed united Church. The episcopal office was to remain but was to be elective, perhaps with a limited tenure.

Two of the Anglican delegates dissented from this decision. But the remainder agreed to support it. By suggesting the recognition of Presbyterian orders, these Anglican delegates moved beyond the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888. Understandably, the Anglicans wanted to wait until the decision of the 1908 Lambeth Conference before proceeding further.

The resolutions of the first conference were made public; but those of the second were kept until 1910. However, it was reported that both Churches were able to see eye to eye with regard to such questions as ordination, its method and significance, and several other delicate and controversial questions.

The other two negotiating Churches reacted strongly to what seemed to them a breach of good faith. After all, the Sydney Anglican Synod had appointed an exploratory Committee on union as early as 1903, which had met on several occasions with the Joint Committee of the three negotiating Churches. By 1907, a programme of cooperation in evangelism and moral reformism had been drawn up.

Dr T. E. Clouston explained that Anglicans had taken up the invitation made by the Presbyterians in 1903; but this explanation, though accepted, did not explain away the unwise procedure that had been followed by the Presbyterians in developing new negotiations with the Anglicans at the same time as they were in discussion with the Methodists and Congregationalists.

The Methodists were anxious to get somewhere with the negotiations, or drop them altogether. They were therefore suspicious when the Presbyterians continued dialogue with the Anglicans. The matter was resolved satisfactorily when the

Assembly agreed:

That after the Conference to be held in October, all further negotiations with that Church shall be carried on in common with the Churches with whom the Committee already has been negotiating. <(76)>

INTEREST IN TRIPLE UNION INCREASED

The decision of the 1907 Assembly to discontinue separate Union negotiations with the Church of England focussed interest again on triple Union. The Proposed Basis of Doctrine that had been prepared by the N.S.W. section for the 1906 Assembly had been submitted to the Victorian section. After some amendments had been suggested, the amended Basis was presented to the 1907 Assembly. This consisted of 16 chapters that were described as:

not so much a creed for subscription, as a testimony to those points of the Christian Faith, which are held in common by all the negotiating Churches. <(77)>

The Committee asked the Assembly to send down this Proposed Basis of Doctrine to State Assemblies for information and suggestion. It indicated further that the Scheme of Polity was being developed; but it was not yet in a sufficiently forward state to be presented to the Assembly. <(78)>

The Assembly therefore resolved:

the Basis of Doctrine as agreed by the Joint Committee of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches be sent to the State Assemblies and Presbyteries for information and suggestions. <(79)>

Following the 1907 Assembly, Principal A. Harper, of St Andrew's College, wrote an article which summarized the situation that had been reached in the Union negotiations and identified several causes in preventing the consummation of Union between the three negotiating Churches. He said:

Hitherto discussion has been justified mainly on the grounds that the interests of truth made it imperative. It was supposed that the three non-Episcopal Churches were separated by the need to testify for important aspects of the truth which were ignored or denied by the others. But that can no longer be regarded as true. A common doctrinal statement, approved by the representatives of the negotiating Churches has been published...and in the negotiations at present in progress have no other present issue than to show that neither in doctrine nor in polity can justification be found for the separate existence of these Churches, that will be sufficient to secure the Union we long for at some future date. For Churches which hold the one Head cannot continue to justify a harmful separation by nothing but appeals to tradition or to prejudice. <(80)>

Two years later, when the large Presbyterian Committee was reappointed, the 1909 Assembly gave it explicit instructions:

to continue vigorously the negotiations with the other Protestant Churches and endeavour to present a full Scheme of Polity to the next Assembly. <(81)>

The Assembly further added:

it rejoiced that practical steps towards Union had been taken in that theological students of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches have attended lectures in common for the past two sessions. <(82)>

During the sessions of the 1909 Presbyterian General Assembly, the Rev. H. Skinner welcomed two visiting members of the Methodist Church and one Congregationalist minister. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that there was 'great applause' when Skinner said in his welcoming address:

I welcome our brothers in Christ as representatives of their Churches and I say to them and to their congregations join us. <(83)>

However, in spite of the great applause, the Rev. Dr I. James expressed the contrary opinion of the Assembly members when he said in the Union debate:

There is frequent talk of uniting the Protestant Churches in Australia. Change is not always for the better. <(84)>

The Committee included in its report to the 1910 Assembly a detailed resume of negotiations during the previous nine years. This included the fact that the Scheme of Polity, along with the Basis of Doctrine, had been presented to the Congregational Union of Australia at its meeting in Hobart in January 1910 and a motion had been passed expressing general approval. The report also included the fact that general approval had been given to the Scheme of Polity, together with the Basis of Doctrine, when these had been presented to the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia at its meeting the previous May. <(85)>

Although there was a serious attempt during the Assembly debate on Union to dismiss the Committee, this resolution was eventually carried:

The Assembly...expresses a general approval of the basis of doctrine and scheme of polity, and transmits them to the State Assemblies and Presbyteries, and instructs them to carefully examine the documents and report any amendments or suggestions. <(86)>

The Australian Christian World reported on the action of this 1910 Assembly with considerable hope that the consummation between the three Churches was not too far away. It even included reference to Dr Clouston's suggestion that the Church of England might join the Union in the near future. It stated:

A report dealing with the Union of the

Churches, similar to that already presented to the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Congregational Union was placed before the Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia today. Professor Clouston in moving its adoption detailed the negotiations which had taken place and expressed the hope that the time was not far distant when the Church of England would similarly fall into line so that a great Protestant Church could be established. <(87)>

There were, however, other voices sounding a warning that Church Union was not supported by the rank and file of the Churches. For example, the Rev. J. E. Carruthers, a most respected and trusted leader in Methodism, spoke about Union talks in the following way:

From the Methodist standpoint, it is not easy to write upon the subject of the Union of the Churches. The question has not yet become a people's question, and until it is brought down from the clouds in a form sufficiently tangible to be submitted to popular consideration, it is difficult to say how the rank and file of the Church are prepared to regard it. It has to be confessed that at present there does not seem to be any special enthusiasm in the matter. <(88)>

There was an increasing number tending to become less enthusiastic for Union because little seemed to be happening beyond producing more reports and asking the simple question posed by the Rev. Dr Fordyce of Woollahra Congregational Church in the symposium on 'Aspects of Union', which formed an editorial in The Methodist:

Why is Union so slow ? <(89)>

There were indications of progress during 1910. In January, J. E. Carruthers contributed an article to the Sydney Morning Herald in which one of his main points was:

The Presbyterians agreed to have only one set of negotiations going on at a time. <(90)>

Then in October, The Methodist carried an almost full page report on the discussion at the Presbyterian General Assembly. The fact that action had been taken to hand down the Basis of Union to the lower courts was interpreted as a big step forward <(91)>. Several weeks later, the editor, in an article entitled 'How to Promote the Union of the Churches', commented:

Three Churches have sent down general approval from federal courts to state and district courts for consideration. <(92)>

At the close of this article, the editor issued this warning:

Don't let us hurry and regret it! <(93)>

RISE AND FALL IN UNION ENTHUSIASM

Several world events during 1910 intensified enthusiasm for Union in Australia. The first was the great World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which underscored as never before the unity of Protestant Churches. The second was the development towards Union in Canada. Carruthers in a survey of the Union movement in 1910 commented:

It needs scarcely be said that success in Canada will give an immense impetus to the movement all over the world. Canada may unite in 1913. <(94)>

Early in 1911, a special public meeting was held in Pitt Street Congregational Church, Sydney, in order to arouse enthusiasm for the triple Union in Sydney. The Governor, Lord Chelmsford, chaired this. Leaders of each of the three Churches spoke in favour of moving ahead, indicating that they expected that Union would come in the near future. At the close of the discussion, this large meeting, which was mainly composed of members of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches, resolved:

that it would be for the promotion of the kingdom of our common Lord and Saviour, and for the religious benefit of the community that our Churches should be united into one great Church. <(95)>

Several days later, the Rev. Dr Morley, who was not only recognised as the mouthpiece of Methodists in Union matters but was also the secretary of the United Church Committee, said:

One thing is perfectly certain, and that is the necessity that exists for church Union especially as between such bodies as the Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists. <(96)>

Dr Morley, in his interview with The Argus, went on to say that the Union of these Churches could be reckoned among the almost certain events of the future. <(97)> He argued:

For a good many years past those doctrinal differences which were formerly so pronounced have been steadily minimising. The old fight between Calvinism and Arminianism, for instance, once a source of such denominational dissension, is now scarcely heard of...There is a marked tendency to approximate in regard to doctrine. <(98)>

The Rev. George Tait, Clerk of the General Presbyterian Assembly of Australia and secretary of the Presbyterian Church Union sub-committee, was as optimistic as Dr Morley about the certainty of Union negotiations. When he was interviewed he said:

The first impelling and sustaining motive of the church Union movement is the conviction that loyalty to Christ and His teaching demands the Union of Christian Churches, where it can be accomplished without the sacrifice of essential truth in doctrine or of efficiency in polity. The second impelling and sustaining motive is the conviction that

Union is strength and dissension weakness. The aim of church Unionists is not ecclesiastical self-aggrandisement, but practical efficiency - the mobilisation of Christian forces for the better fighting of a common foe. <(99)>

This honoured Presbyterian leader argued that all real problems in the path of Union had been overcome. When he was pushed to identify precisely the difficulties that now prevented Church Union he said bluntly:

They may be broadly summed up in those human weaknesses, perversenesses, predilections and prejudices, which were chiefly responsible for the divisions of the past, which can only be overcome by utter self-surrender of the mind and will to God. <(100)>

Five months later, the religious press carried the story of the successful meeting of three Union Committees in the Assembly Hall, Collins Street, Melbourne. The Australian Christian World stated enthusiastically:

An important development occurred yesterday in relation to the general negotiations now proceeding with respect to the proposed Union of the Churches. <(101)>

During 1912, there were several warning signs that anti-Unionist forces were gaining strength, particularly within the Presbyterian Church. Strong speeches were made at the Presbyterian Assembly of Victoria against Union. For example, the Rev. T. Neilson argued:

The Presbyterian Church had to fight against ritualism and in so far as the other Churches differed from the Presbyterian Church, he would wait. <(102)>

Dr Rentoul, who had always been a strong opponent of Union, said bluntly that he did not know how anyone could suppose that

Congregationalism and Methodism could be mixed. He then asked emphatically:

Why were Presbyterians in Australia asked to surrender their Presbyterianism when in Scotland there was no notion of federation, and no notion of it in America with all America's spiritual fervour. <(103)>

Responses from Presbyteries and State Assemblies that were reported to the 1912 General Assembly were not encouraging. All 16 Presbyteries which replied rejected section V of the Scheme of Polity which dealt with the term and method of appointment of ministers to charges. Most gave general approval to the rest although there were hundreds of amendments and suggestions made. Returns were only reported from three State Assemblies. Of these Tasmania disapproved, N.S.W. approved with certain amendments but disapproved section V and Victoria said it was impossible for so large a body to criticise the details of the documents presented while at the same time indicating general disapproval.

As expected, Dr Clouston, who had fought for Union for twelve years, moved the adoption of the report on Union negotiations and added that the Assembly express satisfaction at the general approval of the basis of doctrine. However, the Rev. J. Gray moved an amendment which was not only strongly supported but was only narrowly defeated by a vote of 36 to 32. <(104)>

This amendment was an attempt to kill the entire Union movement. It read:

That the Assembly assures the evangelical Churches of Australia of its cordial esteem and goodwill, and earnestly desires the spiritual unity of all the people of God; but in view of the diversity of opinion indicated in the returns from State Assemblies and Presbyteries and by reason of existing conditions, finds that the organic Union of churches as outlined by the committee in their proposed basis of doctrine and scheme of polity, is impracticable; resolves to proceed no further in the meantime in the direction of an incorporating Union. <(105)>

In presenting this amendment Gray argued that the proposed unity would cause Presbyterianism to disappear. He even added a theological argument:

The New Testament left the question open, and allowed for the coming into existence of different Churches. <(106)>

Supporting this amendment, the Rev. T. J. Smith of Melbourne argued that he knew of no Scripture teaching which advocated Church Union. He said:

Legitimate denominationalism was a natural development of the Christian Church. <(107)>

There were, of course, those who strongly opposed the amendment and presented the opposite point of view. For example, the Rev. David Ross of St Kilda argued that by merging into a larger Church, Presbyterian traditions would not be lost. There was great applause when he finished his speech with the words:

Nothing should be done to prevent the ultimate creation of one great Australian Protestant Church. <(108)>

Another significant motion on Church Union at this Assembly was that moved by Professor Adam in relation to negotiations with the Church of England. Apparently, the Presbyterians were growing impatient with the discussions that had been continued with the Anglicans for eight years. Nothing else could account for the fact that the strongest Presbyterian Unionist in Victoria moved:

That the Assembly instructs its committee that further negotiations with the Church of England in Australia with a view to organic Union are futile until that church has claimed and secured for itself such autonomy as would make Union practically possible. <(109)>

Not only among Presbyterians but also among Congregationalists, there was a distinct loss of enthusiasm for Union during 1912. At the annual Conference of the Congregational Union of Victoria, Mr

C. M. Holmes reported that although the statement of doctrine and polity on church Union had been sent to all churches, only twenty four had replied. Of these, eleven were generally favourable, nine were opposed to Union, but in favour of federation and four were favourable to Union but opposed to the scheme submitted. <(110)>

THE VISION FADES

During 1913-14 severe frustration was experienced by Unionists in the three Churches. This was expressed in different ways in each of the national courts of the participating Churches.

The 1913 Methodist General Conference reaffirmed its conviction in the goal of Christian Union; but at the same time recognised the impracticability of this in the face of growing opposition in the other two Churches. These two decisions were stated clearly in a double barrelled motion that read:

That this Conference expresses its profound sympathy with the movement which is seeking to bring about a closer Union among the Churches, and recommends our Annual Conferences to promote the movement as far as possible.

That the Committee on Union of the Churches be thanked for its services and be discharged. <(111)>

The Congregational Union, meeting for its fifth Triennial Assembly in Adelaide in 1913, made no mention of Church Union negotiations either in reports, resolutions or addresses. It was as though Church Union had become a non-issue with the Congregationalists.

The 1914 Presbyterian General Assembly heard the eighty members of its special Federation of Protestant Churches Committee report having:

revised the "Proposed Basis of Doctrine" and "Scheme of Polity" in the light of returns sent in by the State Assemblies and Presbyteries and it is now submitted as amended. <(112)>

The real attitude of Presbyterians towards organic Union was

reflected in the fact that there was a strong attempt in the debate that followed the reception of this report to dismiss the large Presbyterian Committee. This strategy of the anti-Union forces was only thwarted by the casting vote of the Moderator as 41 voted for and 41 voted against the amendment:

to inform the other Churches that in the judgement of this Assembly the negotiations towards Union should cease at the present.
<(113)>

Although the moderator broke this tied vote and the Presbyterian committee was reappointed, negotiations towards Union were for the present at an end. The vision of 'One Grand Church for Australia' had faded and the determination to bring this vision into reality had been successfully killed.

One of these truths is the doctrine that the organic unity of the Church is the natural expression of its spiritual unity. In visible fellowship in worship, in the observance of the Sacraments, in mutual edification, in the administration of affairs, in the extension of the Kingdom... The war has turned this doctrine on our attention. <(11)>

Additional stimulus was provided by the success of union negotiations in Canada. The Basis of Union, as agreed upon by the Joint Committee of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of Canada, was printed for the information of Ministers, Elders and members of the Church by the Presbyterian Union Committee. The fact that this move towards union had been initiated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1899 and adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ontario in 1910 'as a basis upon which this Church may unite with the Methodist and Congregational Churches' (1911) seemed particularly significant to the Presbyterian Union Committee which drew the attention of the Church to it.

PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY INITIATES PER-DIVISIONAL PLAN

The 1914 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia passed the following resolution:

In view of the fact that the Great War has added fresh urgency to the project of Union, and in view of the fact that the

CHAPTER FOUR

THE UNITED CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Experience during the First World War generated a new sense of urgency for Church union. Chaplains from Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches worked with Christians of different denominations in the A.I.F. and other Services. They suffered the same hardships. They used similar forms of worship. They wore the same uniforms. For all practical purposes they were accepted by servicemen as interchangeable.

The General Assembly meeting at Sydney in 1916 heard the Rev. George Tait of Melbourne speak on the theme 'Light Thrown by War on the Organic Unity of the Church'. Here he stated that the Great War threw new light on neglected truths. For example, he said:

One of these truths is the doctrine that the organic unity of the Church is the natural expression of its spiritual unity...a visible fellowship in worship, in the observance of the Sacraments, in mutual edification, in the administration of affairs, in the extension of the Kingdom...The war has forced this doctrine on our attention. <(1)>

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PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY INITIATES NEW DISCUSSIONS ON UNION

The 1916 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia passed the following resolution:

In view of the fact that the Great War has added fresh urgency to the project of Union, and in view of the fact that the

Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Canada have resolved to unite and their basis of union is accessible, the Committee be instructed to arrange, if possible, for joint meetings of the full committee of the negotiating Churches, or their accredited representatives at some convenient centre for two or more days. <(3)>

Melbourne Presbyterian George Tait wrote and printed the thirty-six page booklet Church Union, What Canada is Doing <(4)> in 1917. This was widely distributed throughout Australia.

The Methodist Church at this time had no Union Committee. The Presbyterian Union Committee when giving its report to the 1916 Assembly was forced to explain that it could not carry out the wishes of the previous Assembly because:

the last General Conference of the Methodist Church did not reappoint their Union Committee. <(5)>

The Report went on to say:

the reason for this action of the Methodist Church was, your Committee believes, not any coldness towards the Union movement, but disappointment at its slow progress. The General Conference meets again early next year, and there is no doubt that if this Assembly resolves to continue Union negotiations the Conference will reappoint its Committee. <(6)>

Some Presbyterians were so keen for quick union with the Congregationalists that they moved that the Assembly Committee be instructed:

to enter into negotiations with the authorities of the Congregational Church with a view to securing a Basis of Union with that Church. <(7)>

However, this motion was defeated. <(8)>

As anticipated by the Presbyterians, the 1917 Methodist General Conference, convinced that 'Church Union would be in accordance with the will of God', <(9)> did reappoint a Committee:

to prepare a Basis of Union and take such other steps as may be deemed desirable to bring about a federation of organic union of kindred Churches. <(10)>

This Committee in the next three years held thirteen meetings and arranged for the Basis of Union to be presented to Quarterly Meetings and Synods across Australia. <(11)>

In 1916 the Congregational Union formed a Committee for the Promotion of the Closer Union of the Churches and authorised it to negotiate with other Churches 'with a view to closer union'. <(12)>

Further, it was suggested that in view of the possible development within the next three years <(13)>, the Executive was:

empowered to convene a special session of the Assembly to deal with any proposals that may be submitted. <(14)>

Three years later, the Union expressed:

thankfulness to Almighty God for such measures of progress towards union as is reflected in the Basis submitted. <(15)>

After discussion, it approved:

the Basis proposed as one - though not necessarily final - upon which the union of

these Churches may reasonably be effected.
<(16)>

SUB-COMMITTEE FOR THE PROMOTION OF COOPERATIVE ACTION IN N.S.W.

The N.S.W. Sub-Committee appointed by the Joint Committee for Church Union demonstrated the type of cooperation that developed. The first meeting of this sub-committee was held in the Congregational Church, Pitt Street, on 17 December 1917. The Chairman was the Rev. Dr J. E. Carruthers, the President-General of the Methodist General Conference. The Secretary was the energetic Congregational Administrative Secretary, the Rev. W. L. Patison.

At this meeting the Chairman stated:

The sub-committee had been appointed to consider the possibility of cooperative action on the part of the negotiating Churches and with a view to giving effect to resolutions passed by the Federal bodies of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. Steps would also be taken by the Sub-Committee to deepen and extend the interest of the members of the Churches in the movement for union. <(17)>

Also at this first meeting in 1917, it was resolved:

that this Committee, having been appointed to prepare a basis of cooperative action between the Churches, resolve to invite leading workers in the spheres of Home Missions, Temperance, Christian Education, Devotional Fellowship and Evangelism, and to consult as to how far and in what way cooperation is possible, in order to collect information for the report to the Joint Committee. <(18)>

This meeting further asked Dr Carruthers to draw up a general statement for submission to the Joint Committee setting forth:

- a. The actions of the Church Courts which

have led to the appointment of the Committee for Union.

b. The reasons which made the union of the Churches specially desirable and urgent in the near future.

c. Advantages to be gained from such a union.

d. Suggested methods of promoting the spirit of union. <(19)>

Launched with such enthusiasm, the meetings of the Sub-Committee, and the correspondence its resolutions engendered, continued to foster union in many areas of Church life during 1918. For example, the Sub-Committee wrote to the Principals of St Andrew's, Leigh and Camden Colleges, requesting information concerning any united approaches to the training of Ministers in the three negotiating Churches. After receiving the reports from these three centres of theological training, another sub-committee was set up for the purpose of developing plans for more cooperative work in theological lectures. Other sub-committees were formed to develop the union movement in the areas of Home Missions, Young People's Departments, Religious Effort in Factories and the Domain, Secondary Education and Devotional Fellowship.

Reports were prepared on these different aspects of Church work and witness for presentation to the delegates from the three Churches when they met in Melbourne. The Chairman and the Secretary of the Sub-Committee for Cooperative Action made clear their intention, when they wrote to the Principals of the Theological Colleges of the negotiating Churches on 1 July 1918, in the following words:

It is expected that there will be a meeting of the Joint Committee for Union in Melbourne towards the end of next month and we are anxious to have our report ready by then.
<(20)>

The correspondence of the period reveals a strange dichotomy in attitudes of leaders within the Presbyterian Church. For example, the N.S.W. Presbyterian Home Mission Committee at its meeting on 9 July 1918 resolved:

That this Committee regrets that it cannot

see its way to proceed further with the negotiations for cooperation, but desires at the same time to re-affirm its complete sympathy with the negotiations for Union. We believe that this end can be most quickly achieved by the negotiating Churches concentrating all their efforts on the main issue and it is not possible to attain the practical fruits of union ahead of the accomplished fact or at least a definite decision to unite such as is the case in Canada. The Committee will be glad at all times to furnish any information regarding its work which may be desired by the Union Committee. <(21)>

It is difficult to assess the significance of what was being said in this resolution, as we do not have available the background debate prior to the motion being put to the meeting. The resolution itself reads like a committee compromise between two different points of view. This assessment is reinforced by the reaction of the recipients to the letter written on 23 July 1918 by the Chairman and Secretary of the Sub-Committee for Cooperative Action after the resolution had been received by them. This letter reflected their apparent confusion as to what the resolution meant when it stated:

While regretting the decision of your Committee not to proceed further with the negotiations for cooperation, we note and appreciate its re-affirmation of complete sympathy with the negotiations for Church Union...Are we to understand that the Minute covers the negotiations for Cooperation in Domain and Factory Work? <(22)>

The reply to this was the following curt, blunt note dated 7 August 1918:

Dear Sir

Re: Cooperative Action

Referring to your letter of 23rd which was before the Home Mission Committee yesterday, I was instructed to advise you that the

withdrawal of the delegates from that Committee is to apply to both States.

Yours faithfully,
Thomas Morgan, Convener. <(23)>

This simply deepens the mystery about what was happening in the Presbyterian Home Mission Committee.

This Committee seems to be making two contradictory statements in the motion quoted above. At the same time as it 'regrets that it cannot...proceed further with the negotiations for Cooperation' it also affirmed 'its complete sympathy with the negotiations for Union'. This certainly looks like the old argument of a person being prevented from getting near water until he could swim! How do we explain this apparent double talk? At least several answers are possible.

DENOMINATIONAL POLITICS

Dr Richard Lucy in Presbyterian Politics <(24)>, has argued that the Presbyterian Church was unwilling to drift into Union. Rather, it wanted a clear and definite decision to be made for Union first before attempting any gradual cooperation. Although this is suggested in the Home Mission resolution of 9 July 1918, which indicates the need for 'at least a definite decision to unite', the present author considers that this is not the real explanation.

The key to the apparent double talk is found in the fact that there was a significant difference of conviction within the Presbyterian Church from the beginning of negotiations with the Methodist and Congregational Churches. About sixty percent of the members in the Church desired Union while about forty percent did not want it, although they were quite willing to support verbal attestations of Union as an abstract goal. This minority strongly objected as soon as practical plans for united work were implemented.

The Home Mission resolution tried to accommodate both points of view. While affirming clearly the goal of Union, it raised objections when attempts were made to implement these goals, especially in the sensitive area of Home Missions, which involved the building of new Churches, the opening of new causes and the financing of old causes and Churches.

This division of opinion within the Presbyterian Church can be seen even within the same Presbyterian institute. The President of the Theological Faculty at St Andrew's College, Dr Samuel Angus, who was against Union, explained rather bluntly in his letter of 11 July 1918 to the Secretary of the Sub-Committee for Co-Operative Action:

There is at present no joint teaching by the Theological Colleges and none in contemplation so far as we are aware. I may add that two years ago our Faculty asked the Methodist and Congregational colleges to unite for a year or for the duration of the war: the Methodists decided not to unite on that occasion while the Congregationalists accepted our invitation. <(25)>

On the other hand Dr Andrew Harper, the Principal of St Andrew's College, was enthusiastically for Union. His reply to the Sub-Committee on the same matter exudes a far greater warmth for cooperation in theological training. Writing to the Chairman, Dr J. E. Carruthers, on 6 July 1918 he said:

I regret to say that nothing of that sort is in existence at present.

1. Some 10 years ago and onwards we had joint classes for students of the three denominations, but that came to an end some four years ago.

2. The only cooperation we have had of late was that when Professor McIntyre was called to Recruiting Work, Mr Thatcher, Principal or Warden of the Camden College, took part of his work and this year when Professor McIntyre was again absent on moderatorial duty his classes were taken by Professor Thatcher for the first term of this year.

3. One Congregational student has attended our Hall this year.

Consequently if there is to be any real cooperation in Theological Education between the three Churches it will have to be restarted on lines something like those on which cooperation was formerly run. <(26)>

There was opposition to Union in the other two Churches at this time; but it was not as widespread or entrenched as the opposition within the Presbyterian Church. In the light of the comment by Professor Angus concerning the unwillingness of the Methodists to join in classes at St Andrew's, it is significant

to note here the enthusiastic Methodist support for cooperative work in theological training, as reflected in the letter of the Principal of Leigh College, the Rev. W. E. Bennett, to the sub-committee. This was written on 8 July 1918:

It will be in the highest interests of the movement towards cooperation if your committee writes to each Principal concerned suggesting the appointment of say two members of his Committee or Council and of himself to meet with those similarly appointed in order to confer together and devise some common plan for cooperation. Such a suggestion or call from your Committee to approach our Committee to seek united action...of all movements towards Union I believe the most important to be one most easily effected is that of united action in the training of our ministry and I for one shall do all I can to hasten its consummation. <(27)>

The explanation for the apparent unwillingness of the Methodists to join in those classes at St Andrew's College must be other than their unwillingness to be part of the movement for Union that was gathering strength at this time. Several factors are clear. First, Leigh College had recently opened on the large property at Enfield and the Methodists were trying to get this firmly established as a residential theological community. Second, Enfield was separated from St Andrew's by considerable distance which made commuting to all classes exhausting and time consuming.

Camden College, on the contrary, was within walking distance of St Andrew's. Further, because of the war only one Congregational student had been left in Camden College <(28)>. This made it more attractive both for the Warden and the student for lectures to be given in St Andrew's College.

UNITY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Dr G. W. Thatcher, Warden of Camden, wrote an interesting three page letter to the Sub-Committee outlining the cooperation that had taken place in theological education during the previous decade. This draws attention to several important facts in the story of Union and the changing attitudes of at least one of the significant leaders within the Congregational Church. The letter stated:

When I took up my duties as Warden of Camden College at the beginning of 1910, I was

informed by Dr Harper that in connection with the Union of the Churches movement it was the custom for the Heads of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Colleges to arrange for some lectures which were attended by the students of the three Colleges. Although opposed to the scheme of Union then proposed, I willingly entered into their arrangement. Soon afterwards the "Boards of Joint Theological Studies" was constituted...

In addition to this work the Board, after conferences with the University Senate, succeeded in getting a bill introduced into Parliament by the Minister of Education to establish degrees in Divinity in the University of Sydney. The bill was read once but has since hung up...

Trusting that your Sub-Committee may be thoroughly successful in effecting that cooperative action in different spheres of Church work which may immensely increase our power for Christian service. <(29)>

Prompted by the suggestion of the Principals of the Theological Colleges a meeting was held on 7 August 1918 in the Pitt Street Congregational School Hall. The reason for this was clearly stated in the notices sent out to the five representatives from each of the three Churches.

The purpose of the meeting, as stated in our last communication, is to take whatever steps may be necessary to initiate a movement towards greater cooperation in the matter of ministerial training. <(30)>

Following this meeting plans were formed to coordinate the theological courses by the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. The Congregational Union was not consulted as Camden College was an independent theological training centre. Considerable progress was made in this area of the Union movement.

A year later, on 17 July 1919, Dr G. W. Thatcher as the ex-Chairman of the original Commission for Cooperation in Theological Training, was able to write to the Secretary of the Sub-Committee in the following optimistic terms:

Following letter from the Baptist Union of New South Wales dated August 1918:

In accordance with the resolutions passed by the Committee of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Colleges and confirmed (as was necessary) by the Presbyterian Assemblies and Methodist Conference of N.S.W. the theological courses of the three Churches have been assimilated, instruction is given to all by the united staffs of the three Colleges, and a Joint Faculty has been created for matters of internal regulation...The plan is working well and with much satisfaction to all concerned.
<(31)>

STEPS IN N.S.W. TO FOSTER UNION

Successful steps were taken in other areas of the Union movement. On 14 March 1918, letters went out to a carefully selected group of leaders in the three Churches inviting them to attend a conference in the Congregational School Hall, Pitt Street, on 26 March 1918. These letters stated:

The main purpose of the conference is to consider to what extent and by what means the spirit of Union may be fostered and extended among the members of our Churches generally while the negotiations for Union are proceeding.

It is most important that every effort should be made to deepen the interest of those whose verdict ultimately must decide this question.
<(32)>

This letter went on to stress the necessity to see Union 'as a means to the greater glory of God' and closes with the assertion that the Churches working together could be more effective in bringing 'their united will and voice' to bear on 'matters of grave public and spiritual concern'.

Combined services were arranged by the three Churches throughout N.S.W. on such special days as Anzac Day 1918, Empire Day 1918 and the Anniversary of the War on 6 August 1918. Effective publicity about these united gatherings was spread throughout N.S.W. These cooperative activities across the State created an unforeseen difficulty with other Churches. For example, the Convener of the Sub-Committee for Cooperative Action received the following letter from the Baptist Union of New South Wales dated 7 August 1918:

We have been requested by the Council of the Baptist Union to call your attention to a matter which is causing some misunderstanding in our Churches. On several occasions recently arrangements have been made for united services, especially for intercession, by the sub-committee of which you are the convener. Our Baptist Churches have not been consulted in the arrangements, although afterwards they have been invited to take part. The notices have appeared bearing the names of representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches only and many of our Churches have wondered why there was no representative from the Baptist Union. <(33)>

Similar enthusiasm was demonstrated in the other areas of the Union movement such as in Domain and Factory Work, Temperance and Sunday School Work. However, here also some of the Presbyterian members of committees showed reluctance to take practical steps towards Union while, at the same time, agreeing to espouse Union in their public statements.

For example, the Convener of the Presbyterian Temperance Committee wrote on 5 September 1918 to the Sub-Committee for the Cooperative Action stating:

I am unable to take any action for the following reasons:

1. My Committee has no authority from the Assembly for such concerted action as your Committee suggests.

2. My Committee is comprised of men from all over the State hence it is impossible to bring them to Sydney and I dare not act without first having called them together.
<(34)>

JOINT CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEES ON UNION

A Joint Conference of the Committees on Union, appointed by the Supreme Courts of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational

Churches of Australia was held in Melbourne from 3-6 September 1918. Between 40 and 50 representatives from all States of the Commonwealth attended this conference which worked out a Basis of Union including doctrine and polity.

The proceedings were marked throughout by cordial good feeling and brotherliness. There were indeed earnest discussions and differences of opinion on various points, but the general agreement reached in the end of the matters set forth in this Basis was very gratifying and affords reasonable ground for hope that the Basis will commend itself to the several Churches by whose representatives it has been drawn up.

It was only after much preliminary preparation and consultation by correspondence between the representatives in the various States that a draft Basis was drawn up and circulated among the members of the several Committees in the various States by the Victorian section of the Joint Committee, acting by consent, as the Executive. This draft Basis was thoroughly discussed and amended at various points by the Joint Committee during its three days' Conference in Melbourne. <(35)>

The draft document began by stating:

the name of the Church formed by the Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Australia and Tasmania shall be "The United Church of Australia". <(36)>

The document contained nineteen articles of doctrine. These dealt with God, revelation, the divine purpose, creation and providence, the sin of man, the grace of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, repentance and justification, adoption, regeneration, the new life, prayer, the law of God, the Church, the Sacraments, the Ministry and Lord's return, Church order, the resurrection and future life and Christian service and the final triumph. <(37)>

The doctrine was based on the Scriptures as the prime source and

ultimate standard of faith and reaffirmed the evangelical affirmations of the Reformation. The first nine articles were very similar to those presented in 1907. The other seven articles of the old scheme were rewritten and new articles included on prayer, ministry and Church order. Three questions were to be asked ordinands for the Ministry, one of them being the acceptance of the Statement of Doctrine of the United Church.

The polity attempted to recognise the procedures adopted in three Churches. But in its final form it was more in line with Presbyterian practice than with that of the other two Churches. It followed closely the scheme developed in 1914 except for a further concession made to the Presbyterians in the call of ministers rather than their appointment.

THE PROPOSED BASIS OF UNION

The Proposed Basis of Union attractively prepared in a sixteen page booklet was distributed widely through the congregations of the three negotiating Churches across Australia. It is clear from this paragraph in the introduction and the reception by the three Supreme Courts that many in the three Churches thought that Union was imminent:

It is now submitted by this Joint Committee to the Supreme Courts of the several Churches concerned, with the earnest prayer that God may guide these Churches to a wise decision on this momentous question of Union, which is of such vital importance to their future efficiency and usefulness in this great Commonwealth of Australia. <(38)>

The Basis, as might be expected, had its critics from the beginning. Some thought it was too cumbersome and detailed while others thought that it omitted important aspects of Reformed doctrine and polity. For example, Rev. A. C. Stevens, the Congregational Minister of Glenelg, expressed rather facetiously in a letter to the Australian Christian World what some Congregationalists thought about the Basis:

It consisted of three Church constitutions stitched together by the needle of expediency, and where the scissors of destruction had to be put into the material it was guided by the hand of the majorities. To seventeen parts of Congregationalism add forty parts of Presbyterianism and

forty-three parts of Methodism. <(39)>

It was natural that members in all three Churches looked at Union from the perspective of their own tradition. Many congregations were so bound by traditional patterns, that had been shaped by past experiences, that they were opposed to change. This created an apathy towards the Union movement. The leaders of it had the task of digging people out of their cultural, social and spiritual burrows by placing before them the vision of a truly Australian Church which would bring together Christians from different traditions and combine their efforts.

Sociological factors in Australia at this time increased their difficulties. First, although Federation had been a fact for nearly two decades there was still considerable jealousy and rivalry between the six States, particularly in delicate matters that involved the surrender of certain rights and privileges. Second, many parts of Australia were cut off from the rest of the world. This tended to minimize the importance of those events in other parts of the world which gave impetus to the Union movement immediately after World War I. The most significant of these were the decisions of the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists to unite in Canada, the culmination of the long battle for the Union of Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and the strong call for Union made by the 1920 Lambeth Conference.

COMBATTING APATHY

Working within those sociological parameters, Union leaders constantly faced the problem of combatting the apathy of Church members by press releases, visits to Churches, particularly country centres, and personal contacts. This is clearly stated in the following letters, the first reflecting the position in New South Wales, the second in Victoria.

On 7 February 1920 Rev. W. L. Patison advised Dr A. Harper that Dr Macintyre should be sent to the country to combat apathy in the following ways:

There are scores of things he can do if he will and I have an idea that he will...If he could be set free to go to the country during the taking of the votes and you to some of the more important centres like Goulburn, if there is the opportunity and you can spare the time, I think the present apathy could be changed to enthusiastic support. It seems to me that one of the first things to do will be to arrange for a great gathering of an

inspirational character as early as possible.
<(40)>

Dr D. S. Adam of Ormond College, Melbourne, focussed attention on the same problem of combatting apathy when he wrote to Dr Harper on 9 February 1920:

LEADERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

I agree with you that it is desirable to decide soon what steps should be taken to reach the people and seek to rouse them to some interest and enthusiasm. <(41)>

Dr Adam faced the dilemma that, in arousing interest in Union, he also aroused opposition to it from Victorian Presbyterians. He was constantly weighing the necessity for discretion in relation to anti-Unionists with the need for an educational programme. Judging him with hindsight, he erred in placing too much emphasis on the former opponents' reasons rather than appreciating to the full the emotional base from which they acted. He was more concerned to have the precise words in the Basis correct than to find ways in which the Basis could be accepted as a great vision of Christian unity.

For example, on 12 February 1920 Adam wrote another letter to Harper requesting suggestions for improved public relations but clearly stating that action on the amendments must be top priority. Adam wrote:

I shall be glad of any suggestions from you as to what might be done to rouse interest and enthusiasm among the people though I think our time at this meeting will mainly be taken up with considering suggested amendments. <(42)>

This careful academic approach to the Union movement in Victoria was very different from the more pragmatic, practical attitude shown in N.S.W. The N.S.W. section wanted to develop enthusiasm and interest in the vision embodied in the Basis rather than to spend precious time refining the language of it. In almost desperation the N.S.W. Secretary, Rev. W. L. Patison, wrote on 21 January 1920 to Harper who was holidaying in Lorne, Victoria:

If the Executive could consider the

amendments later on and bend attention to the plan of attacking the apathy which seems to be so widespread, greater good would result. I do hope you can arrange to be present when they meet. <(43)>

LEADERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee for Union, to which the negotiating Churches appointed delegates, had as its mandate the preparation of a Basis of Union on which the Churches could vote. Although there was a section of this Committee in each State most of the work was done in N.S.W. and Victoria where the great majority of Church members resided.

The Victorian section acted as the Executive. The Chairman of the Joint Committee was a Victorian Presbyterian, Dr D. S. Adam of Ormond College. Although he was assisted by his secretaries, Methodist Rev. R. Bayles and Congregationalist Rev. H. Watts Grimmett, he did a good deal of the letter writing himself.

The N.S.W. section displayed more team work in its leadership. The Chairman here, as in Victoria, was a Presbyterian, Dr A. Harper. The Secretaries were the Rev. W. H. Beale, a Methodist and the Rev. W. L. Patison, a Congregationalist. A very warm feeling developed between these three leaders in N.S.W. This developed among them a great respect and trust for one another which helped Unionists in the three Churches grow together.

Two years after the 1920 vote was taken Dr Harper, who usually camouflaged his most intimate feelings in true Scots fashion, wrote a deeply personal letter to his young Congregational assistant thanking him for his never failing help in the Union movement. This brought the following touching reply from Patison on 9 January 1922:

I cannot say how thankful I was to receive your letter of December 28 and to learn that you so valued me as a friend. I have often been deeply touched by those whose regard I treasured, but never more humbled than when I read your letter, which I shall keep always to remind me of some of the possessions I owe to the Union movement. I find it difficult to think that your "old age" needed to be "rescued" from "torpidity", but there were times when I was so seriously ill, and Mrs Harper was so anxious, whether our zeal had outrun discretion. It is most gratifying to know that you do not regret giving up the few years of quiet and preparatory rest and

meditation, to which you once looked forward with so much anticipation. If you came back into the movement through any influence of mine, you really brought me with you and you have kept Mr Beale and me in the movement. But we shall never wholly convince each other on this point, so we shall simply do as you mention and allow our feelings to find expression in praise. Mrs Harper's attitude all through these exacting years has been truly great. <(44)>

Personal letters like this one help to give us a better understanding of the rich quality of the leaders of the Union movement in N.S.W. Patison and Beale worked closely together as co-secretaries. For the most part their correspondence deals with the practical matters of the Union movement, such as the almost endless list of meetings that had to be called or documents that had to be prepared. Very occasionally we find brief side references which reflect the great respect each had for the other. This had its impact in the movement as a whole.

For example, when Patison wrote to Harper on 7 February 1920 expressing his joy that Dr Harper had returned to Sydney 'so much better for the change and rest', he brought him up to date on Union matters. Among other issues raised, he paid high tribute to his Methodist Co-Secretary of the N.S.W. section of the Joint Committee in the following way:

Yesterday I saw Mr Beale and you will be glad to know that he is...as ready for his share of work as ever. I have been greatly cheered by his unflinching devotion to the movement. Others grow dubious of the result, but he seems to grow more confident. The only time he was really discouraged was when Dr Carruthers' ruling was first sent to him.
<(45)>

This intimate feeling of support for one another among the N.S.W. section of the Joint Committee helped to strengthen them in times of discouragement and frustration. This is reflected in sections of the letter Patison wrote Harper on 7 February 1920. Here he writes:

Mr Beale told me that Dr Morley, who is in Sydney just now, is very much in the doldrums and thinks that the Presbyterians are likely to find it impossible to make headway against

the opposition. It was a treat to see Mr Beale's face as he told me of his reply to Dr Morley. I regard this tendency in many who were enthusiastic supporters of Union to consider the cause lost because of the voting of Presbyteries in Victoria and N.S.W. and of the Quarterly Meetings and Synods in N.S.W. as the most dangerous obstacle we have to face. <(46)>

REACTION IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Early in the public discussion of the Basis were critical statements from prominent Congregationalists, who were afraid that the principles of independency were threatened. The Christian World carried an article by the Rev. Edward S. Kiek, Principal of Parkin College, Adelaide, arguing that 'Free Federation' should be the ideal rather than 'Corporate Reunion'. Kiek wrote:

I believe in Federation rather than in Corporate Reunion:

- (1) because it is far more practicable.
- (2) because it is inherently more desirable.

Corporate Reunion is an attempt to get back to the past; Federation is in line with the tendencies of the present. Corporate Reunion is at war with the facts of human psychology, and especially with the facts of religious experience; Federation recognises these facts, while emphasizing the unity that underlies them. <(47)>

Other Congregationalists objected to the use of theological statements, the denial of local autonomy within congregations and the development of bureaucratic controls. They were quick to quote authoritative statements of historic Congregational polity and doctrine like the following:

The distinctive principle of the Congregational Church polity is, that every

Christian church (local church) or congregation, is entitled to manage all its own affairs, and to stand independent of, and irresponsible to, all authority saving only that of the Supreme and Divine Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ; and as to doctrine their distinctive principle is "that the Sacred Scriptures are their only standard of faith and practice, and that human traditions, Fathers and Councils, Canons and Creeds, possess no authority over the faith and practice of Christians". <(48)>

The objections of Congregationalists were stated most clearly in the following memorandum from South Australia. This was prepared by and issued over the signatures of Principal Edward S. Kiek and the Rev. Aubrey C. Stevens, Minister of the Glenelg Congregational Church. It is quoted in full as it reflects clearly a strong and consistent objection by many Congregationalists who followed Kiek:

MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE PROPOSED UNION OF
THE METHODIST, PRESBYTERIAN AND
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

We, the undersigned Ministers and Laymen associated with the Congregational Churches of South Australia, think it fitting that we should declare the grounds on which we are opposed to the consummation of the above Union on the Basis now presented for our consideration and adoption. We do this in no spirit of faction, but with a full recognition of the lofty and conscientious motives which inspire brethren from whom we differ in all humility and with sincere regret.

We desire to place on record our conviction that it is at once our duty and our privilege to cooperate in every good word and work with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We are eager to manifest this conviction in any manner not inconsistent with fundamental principles. We believe in the unity of Christians as one Body in Christ.

We further affirm our loyalty to the verities of evangelical faith, which our Congregational Churches have ever maintained and declared.

But we submit that the existing Basis involves sacrifices of principle to which, as Congregationalists, we cannot assent. The polity contemplated - which is connexional in form and spirit - reduces to a minimum the rights and functions of the local Church: the Church Meeting, for example, becomes a mere shadow. The Basis sets up a system of Circuit Meetings, Presbyteries, Conferences and Assemblies, constituted on the principle of indirect representation: this system is highly complicated and cumbersome, tending naturally to the development of a kind of ecclesiastical bureaucracy which we most strongly deprecate: in it the principle of Christian democracy is so diluted that the individual Church member, bereft alike of effectual power and actual responsibility, is likely to lose all vital interest in the proceedings of the "higher" Courts of the United Church. We further view with alarm the powers conferred on the proposed Settlement Committees, which we apprehend will not be advantageous to the best interests of the Ministry and the Churches.

But many of us, who might have reluctantly acquiesced in the sacrifice of our Congregational polity, view with even more aversion the amendments which impose on candidates for the Christian Ministry the duty of assent to a Statment of Faith comprising 26 articles and incorporating two ancient Creeds. We deny that there is the slightest analogy between such a document and those Declarations of Faith which from time to time have been issued in the name of the Congregational Churches of England and America. These latter were issued for public information and have never been regarded as binding on any of us. The proposed Statement of Faith includes many highly debateable propositions, convering every subject within the ambit of Christian Theology. It is admitted that this Statement is only to be accepted "in substance", but who is to determine which is substance and which is not? This is not apparently left to the candidate, in as much as Conferences are

empowered and required to "examine" every candidate on the subject-matter of the Statement. It is surely obvious that this entire procedure is likely to cause hindrance to tender consciences and to exclude from the Ministry able and godly men who are unable to assent to the formulas prescribed. It is as inconsistent with the spirit of the times as it is inconsistent with the spirit of the New Testament. As Archbishop Temple pointed out long ago, the study of theology is "precluded" if the conclusions are "prescribed". We gravely fear that, under the conditions contemplated, men will be tempted to a species of casuistry inconsistent (in our judgement) with self-respect and with the respect in which the Christian Ministry ought to be held by the lay public.

On these grounds we affirm our steadfast opposition to Union on the Basis now contemplated and pledge ourselves to use all our influence to prevent so disastrous a consummation. We appeal to our fellow-Congregationalists to read and seriously consider the amended Basis, and not lightly to surrender the great heritage which is ours.

(Signed)

EDWARD S. KIEK, M.A. Oxon and Adelaide, B.D.
Lond.

(Principal of Parkin College, Adelaide).

AUBREY C. STEVENS, B.A. Adelaide
(Minister of Glenelg Congl. Church)
<(49)>

The opponents of union within the Congregational Church became more vocal as the voting drew closer. In a letter to Dr Harper on 4 June 1920, the Rev. W. L. Patison complained:

almost every note in our paper this month, bearing on union, is jaundiced. I am protesting against this and shall see that the position is set right next issue. <(50)>

To assist its members in voting, the Congregational Church prepared a document entitled 'The Proposed Church Union'. The Rev. F. J. Searle wrote on 'Why I support it' and the Rev. G. A. W. Legge on 'Why I oppose it' <(51)>. Without discussing the

issues raised here it is fair to say that the spirit evinced in this document was much more conciliatory than the Presbyterian counterpart. There was certainly less venom in the case against Union than in corresponding Presbyterian material.

As Secretary of the N.S.W. section of the Joint Committee, Patison also had difficulty securing essential information from the Executive Committee in Melbourne. His customary respectful, sensitive spirit suffered a slight relapse when he wrote to Dr Harper on 12 July 1920:

I sent a wire to Dr Adam today asking for a list of the amendments definitely accepted. His delay in letting us have this information is unaccountable and if the vote is favourable it will be almost in spite of the Executive Committee. <(52)>

THE VOTE IN THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The outcome for the Congregationalists when the members of the three Churches voted on the Proposed Basis of Union early in 1920 was in no small measure due to the vigorous commitment of the Rev. W. L. Patison in the Sydney Church office. He did everything to further the cause of Union. His large personal correspondence displays the endless patience, careful thinking and generous Christian spirit with which he attempted to bring to birth the United Church in 1920.

In spite of the opposition from some Congregationalists, particularly in South Australia, the final voting figures of members released by the Congregational Union in 1920 showed a strong desire for Union, 83.44% being in favour with 16.56% against. Broken down into States the figures revealed some interesting facts. In N.S.W. 3132 voted yes and 544 no; in Victoria 2512 voted yes and 253 no; in South Australia 1296 yes and 493 no; in Queensland 1179 yes and 215 no; in Western Australia 401 yes and 245 no; and in Tasmania 521 yes and 45 no <(53)>. Opposition to Union was strongest where the Church was weakest i.e. in South and Western Australia. On the other hand, the two States where Congregationalism had its strongest representation - N.S.W. and Victoria - were most committed to Union.

LEGAL WRANGLE OVER METHODIST VOTE

Within the Courts of the Methodist Church there was considerable thought and discussion on the subject of Union prior to the vote. The 1917 General Conference had appointed a Union Committee to prepare, with similar committees of the other two Churches, an

appropriate Basis of Union. In addition, it directed that this Basis should be submitted to Quarterly Meetings, Synods and Annual Conferences.

This direction was to create considerable confusion and generate not a little tension within the leadership of the Methodist Churches. An illustration of this confusion and tension can be seen in the following sequence of events.

The Sydney Morning Herald of 18 August 1919 carried a letter signed by the Revs. W. H. Beale and W. L. Patison as Secretaries of the Joint Committee on Church Union stating:

the Methodist Church is sending the proposed basis (i.e. of Union) to the people and asking for their decision early in December.
<(54)>

Mr. W. J. Kessell of Drummoyne, N.S.W. wrote to the President of the N.S.W. Conference on 19 August 1919 with the following request:

As the Minutes of Conference do not indicate that any such action was authorised or even contemplated, may I ask for your ruling as to whether such reference to the people can be made in the absence of a specific direction from an authoritative Church Court. It is conceivable that in the absence of such direction circuits would be within their rights in refusing to make arrangements for the taking of the vote. <(55)>

The N.S.W. President, Rev. J. G. When, answered this letter on 20 August 1920 by saying:

I am of the opinion that the decision arrived at by the New South Wales Committee on Church Union that arrangements should be made to take a vote of the members of the Church (of eighteen years of age and upwards) in December next in regard to the proposed Basis of Union, does not conflict with the resolutions passed by the last New South Wales Conference re Church Union. <(56)>

Mr Kessell, unwilling to accept this assurance from the President, wrote again on 22 August 1919 demanding a specific ruling as to the legality of the Committee on Church Union taking a poll of Methodist members across N.S.W. when Conference did not specifically include this in its resolution. He argued:

I am not in the least concerned as to whether the decision of the Conference Committee on Church Union has that negative virtue with which you have endowed it but I am anxious to know whether it has the necessary attribute of legality - which is quite a different matter. In short, my contention is that when the Committee assumes the power indicated in your letter its action is "ultra vires". Let me put my question in plain language. Do you definitely rule that the Committee referred to has the power to make arrangements to take a vote of the members of the Church. <(57)>

Rev. J. G. When replied on 23 August 1919 that although Kessell had the right as a member of the Methodist Church to ask for a ruling he, as President, had the right to decide on what specific questions he would give a ruling. He made clear that he was unwilling to rule on the matter submitted by Kessell. However, he wrote:

The Conference Union Committee, after consultation with the Rev. Dr. Morley, Convener of the General Conference Committee, and after full discussion at two separate meetings decided to submit the Basis of Union to the members of the Church in N.S.W.

For reasons, which I need not specify here, I am not prepared to accept the responsibility of vetoing the decision of the Committee. The next Conference may decide whether or not the Committee has exceeded its powers. <(58)>

Kessell, again unwilling to accept When's explanation, wrote again to the President on 27 August 1919 requesting a ruling by the President-General on this matter. When wrote the following day expressing his willingness to send Kessell's appeal to the President of the General Conference if it were submitted in the correct form, the nature of which he outlined. The appeal in three parts was duly forwarded by Kessell to When on 1 September

1919. The receipt of this was acknowledged by the President on 2 September 1919.

The submission to the President General of the Kessell appeal created considerable tension and initiated an unexpected complex and emotionally charged constitutional crisis within the Methodist Church. This concerned the rights of the State Conference vis a vis the Commonwealth based General Conference.

The President-General, Dr J. E. Carruthers, ruled that the State Conference did not have the power to order a vote of its members as the General Conference had specifically only stated Quarterly Meetings, Synods and State Conferences. This ruling, which was published immediately in the Church and secular press, created great embarrassment to some Methodist leaders as three State Conferences - Victoria and Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales - had decided and already announced that a vote would be taken among all Methodist members in each State and the Trustees of Church buildings.

Writing to the President-General on 6 September 1919 the President of the Queensland Conference, the Rev. B. Frederick, put the position of his Conference very strongly in the following words:

Certain Annual Conferences have decided to remit the Basis of Union to Church Trustees or to Church Members - or to both. This decision in no way conflicts with the resolutions of the General Conference. It is in harmony with the Constitution, Laws and practice of Methodism. It is a matter of local regulation and is governed by Paras. 295 and 312 Book of Laws. No Church Court and no Church Officer outside the Annual Conference concerned can interpose. Under par.173 Book of Laws any appeal relating to such business within an Annual Conference must be sent to and be dealt with by the President of the Annual Conference concerned.
<(59)>

The President of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference, the Rev. A. E. Albiston, also wrote to the President-General in the following terms:

1. The evident meaning and intention of the General Conference in directing that Quarterly Meetings and Synods should vote on the subject of Church Union before any Basis

of Union shall be finally agreed to by the Annual Conference is that each Conference should have such valuable information as the votes of these representative courts would furnish to help it in coming to its final decision. The General Conference would have no wish - nor has it the power - to exclude other sources of information which would render similar help to an Annual Conference in arriving at a wise decision on so important a question.

2. The Victoria and Tasmania Conference directed that "Trustee Meetings and the Adult Membership of the Methodist Church be given opportunity of expressing an opinion on the proposals" (Minutes 1919 - page 78, sec.10) in addition to the question of the Union being submitted to Quarterly Meetings and Synods, as directed by the General Conference. Such an extension of the field of enquiry is not only no violation of the directing of the General Conference, but a commendable application of the spirit and purpose of those directions, with a view "to making assurance doubly sure". <(60)>

In spite of the letters from the Presidents of the New South Wales, Victoria & Tasmania and Queensland Conferences, the President of General Conference ruled on 17 September 1919:

When an Annual Conference is acting under the direction of the General Conference on a matter referred to it by the General Conference it is explicitly limited in its action by the terms of the reference under which it is acting. <(61)>

On 27 September 1919 the President of the New South Wales Conference wrote a three page letter to Carruthers arguing that his ruling was:

- (a) wrong in law
- (b) opposed to the spirit of our Church constitution and

(c) a serious interference with the rights and liberties of all the annual conferences.

I sincerely trust that you will not allow your ruling to stand without further consideration. <(62)>

The President-General wrote to Wheen on 27 September and again on 29 September 1919 arguing that his Ruling was correct in his opinion and must stand. Wheen in turn sent a brief note on 4 October but followed this upon 7 October with a long nine page single spaced letter in which he again critically attacked Carruthers both for his Ruling and the lack of wisdom in rushing it into print.

Carruthers answered Wheen on 8 October and then again on 15 October 1919 recapitulated his position ending with this firm statement closing the correspondence:

You may regard this correspondence as closed. It is so, so far as I am concerned. <(63)>

Wheen, unwilling to accept the personal accusations in this letter, replied on 31 October 1919. This letter almost amounted to a censure of the President-General. It makes quite clear how strong were the currents of emotion generated by this incident not only in New South Wales but throughout other sections of Australian Methodism. Wheen wrote:

I am in receipt of your letter of the 15th October. I regret that you have been led to make certain personal charges and I believe that on more careful consideration you will yourself regret having made such statements.

We must be careful not to let this correspondence drift on to personal lines and so divert attention from the main question. Notwithstanding your peremptory intimation that I "must regard this correspondence as now closed" I am compelled, with all respect, to point out that a categorical assertion on your part that I "persist in raising an issue which is not involved, and...as carefully avoid the crucial consideration upon which the appeal was founded and on which...(the) Ruling was based" is bewildering to me. I do not think that a careful perusal of my

arguments on the main question will in any way justify that assertion. It is surely due to all the Conferences concerned in the Ruling and also to the members of the Methodist Church throughout those Conferences that such an assertion should be substantiated by argument and conclusive evidence. At present I see no reason to modify anything that I have written in regard either to the appeal or the Ruling. <(64)>

Apart from the clash of very strong personalities, this correspondence demonstrates how seriously Methodist leaders prepared for the vote on Union. They were anxious to secure as much information as possible from various segments of the Church before the final decision was taken. This is an important fact to keep in mind because some Presbyterians who were against Union wrongly accused the Methodists of being willing to vote for Union on any Basis.

THE VOTE IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

The 1920 Methodist General Conference resolved that a vote by ballot of members 18 years of age and upwards and Trustees of Church Properties should be taken in September 1920. The two questions set down by General Conference were:

1. Are you in favour of the organic Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Australia and Tasmania ?

2 If in favour do you approve of the proposed Basis of Union as adopted by the Joint Committee on Union, with such amendments (if any), as the General Conference or its Committee may agree to ?
<(65)>

Of those voting across Australia, 88% of Methodist members and 86% of Trustees of Methodist Properties were in favour of Union
<(66)>

The Report of the General Conference Committee on Church Union to the 1923 General Conference closed with the following expression of its attitude towards the Union question:

This Committee is of the opinion that the tendency towards the division of earnest Christian communions that has operated for some centuries has reached its limit and is giving place to a recognition of the greater effectiveness of visible unity. It places on record its solemn conviction that the new forces now leading to the breaking down of walls of partitions and to the gathering together of the members of Christ's flock, find their justification in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, and are of Divine origin. Whether men will hear or whether they will forebear, the Committee feels it to be its solemn duty to bear its conscientious witness to the importance and splendour of the vision that has burst upon the Christian Church, and it expresses its entire agreement with the movement for organic Union of separated Christian bodies. <(67)>

The 1923 General Conference looked forward with considerable confidence to the consummation of Union. To this end, the following three resolutions were carried by this Conference prior to the re-appointment of the Committee:

1. Affirms its conviction that Church Union in the direction contemplated and in accordance with the terms of the Basis of Union as finally revised would, if harmoniously effected, tend to advance the interests of the Kingdom of God.

2. Expresses its gratification that the members and Trustees of the Methodist Church throughout the Commonwealth have by so large a vote shown their sympathy with a great ideal and affirmed their readiness to sink personal considerations in the desire to promote the unity of Christ's Church.

3. Is convinced that any movement towards Union can only be successful as it is based on a large measure of goodwill in its favour on the part of the negotiating Churches. <(68)>

THE VOTE IN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH COURTS

The story of the involvement of the Presbyterian Church in the Union movement was more complex than that of either the Congregational or Methodist Churches. This will be told in greater detail as it contains the key to the union movement between 1918 and 1923.

Presbyterians had initiated the Union movement in 1903 and rekindled interest in it between 1914 and 1916 when the Methodists had dismissed their Church Union Committee and the Congregationalists had grown cold on the issue. Yet opposition in their own ranks towards it was evident in 1918, when it looked for the first time as though the goal expressed in Presbyterian Assembly resolutions for two decades could be achieved.

There were attempts made at the 1918 General Assembly to stop negotiations altogether. Although these were unsuccessful and the Basis prepared by the Joint Committee in Melbourne was adopted, the danger signals were seen by those Presbyterians who had become deeply committed to Union with Methodists and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Australia.

As well as the active opposition of anti-Unionists, Presbyterian Unionists, like their Congregational and Methodist colleagues, had to contend with a considerable degree of apathy among many members and adherents. This problem, however, became more difficult for the Presbyterians because in an effort to prevent a deep division within the Church on this issue some leaders, particularly in Victoria, cautioned against any attempt to launch an educational programme.

At the beginning of 1920 the Joint Committee for Union carefully prepared, published and disseminated widely across Australia one large foolscap page entitled Union of the Churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational).

The general goals of the Union movement were clearly stated here as follows:

God has set a splendid vision before the Church in our day. All over the world, and in every communion, there are multitudes of Christians who are living in the hope of seeing the walls of partition between the Churches broken down. This vision gives to life a new outlook and significance... Union is the solution of many of the most pressing problems within Christendom... This world-wide movement is of the Holy Spirit, and is in harmony with the teaching and prayer of Jesus...

The great "Faith & Order" movement has drawn together in conference practically all the Churches of Christendom; and the Lambeth "Appeal to all Christian People" has

expressed an earnest and prayerful desire for Re-Union. It is now given to the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches to make a not unworthy contribution to the cause of Union.

We need a Church distinctively Australian, which shall make its own contribution to the character of our nation and to the Church Universal. Denominational lines which were drawn before Australia was settled by our race, have largely lost the meaning they once had and have ceased to have any meaning in the relations of the Churches contemplating this Union...Denominational divisions have become religiously unhealthy and wasteful of both men and means. A proper distribution of our resources would practically cover all the inhabited parts of our vast continent...The call is for prayer and zeal and action. Members of Christ, we are members one of another! We believe the people of our Churches recognise this as never before and that they are weary of the divisions which have marred so much of their best work.
<(69)>

This document was signed by Dr D. S. Adam, as Chairman of the Joint Committee, and by his two Victorian secretaries, the Revs. R. Bayles and H. Watts Grimmett, together with Dr A. Harper, Chairman of the N.S.W. section, plus his two secretaries, the Revs. W. H. Beale and William Patison. As it was widely distributed throughout the negotiating Churches across Australia, it was one of the factors which led the membership of the three Churches to give a mandate to their leaders to move into Union.

The vote of the Presbyterians in State Assemblies was very encouraging and in the Presbyteries satisfactory. In his letter of 17 February 1920 to Dr Harper, Dr Adam revealed:

the latest Presbyterian results of voting on Union on the proposed Basis are as follows:

State Assemblies approve 6 disapprove 0

(Votes at Assemblies) approve 246 disapprove 100

Presbyteries approve 28 disapprove 18 no return 3.

Votes at Presbyteries approve 300 disapprove 210 no return 12.

All will depend on how the people vote when the matter is referred to them. <(70)>

This was the understanding of everyone at the time. The final figures revealed that in N.S.W. 10 Presbyteries approved and 7 disapproved; in Queensland 3 approved and 2 disapproved; in Tasmania 1 approved and 2 disapproved; in Victoria 9 approved and 8 disapproved and in both South and Western Australia all three approved in each case. In all, 29 Presbyteries approved and 19 disapproved. Or taking the actual number of Presbytery members voting 300 approved and 217 disapproved. <(71)>

The desperate need to develop an educational programme before the people voted continued to concern Union supporters. For example, after W. L. Patison received a letter from Dr Adam stating that 'we had not time to consider propaganda', Patison wrote to Dr Harper on 20 February 1920 explaining his alarm at this omission in the Executive Meeting:

Propaganda was not discussed and this is, perhaps, the most vital question just now. Opponents are waxing bold and taking our silences as the stillness of death. <(72)>

Four days later, on 24 February 1920, when he learned that Dr Harper had not attended the meeting in Melbourne, he wrote:

I am very glad to know that you did not go all the way to Melbourne last week to consider the doctrinal statement for that can be done here without undue haste though, possibly, if you had gone the Committee might have seen the wisdom of discussing propagandist work. My own fear is that the longer we delay the sending of the question to our local Churches and greater danger we incur of increasing and deepening the apathy. <(73)>

Nearly two months later the educational programme was still lagging, especially in the Presbyterian Church. This prompted Dr Harper to write to his Victorian counterpart on 7 April 1920 in what for him were strong terms:

We had a meeting of our section of the Joint Committee on Union and had a long conversation on the present position. It seemed to us all that if the vote of the session and congregations is to be really worthy of the Churches concerned concerted action to inform and educate the people can no longer be delayed. I am therefore asked to write to you as Convener of the Presbyterian Section to enquire as to several matters. <(74)>

There followed five specific questions about voting procedures within the Presbyterian Church and then this bald comment about future plans in N.S.W.:

We came to the conclusion that when we had answers to these questions we should at once proceed to organise an educational campaign on the following lines... <(75)>

As the time for the vote of members drew closer Presbyterian leaders in other States expressed deep concern at what was happening, or more particularly, what was not happening in Victoria. The Joint-Convener of the Presbyterian Committee for Union in N.S.W., the Rev. George R. S. Reid, wrote to Dr Adam on 11 June 1920 in the following sensitive but blunt terms:

Opinion in favour of Union seems to be much more advanced among us than in Victoria and like yourself we are naturally disappointed with the attitude of your Assembly. We recognise the difficulty of the situation, however, where half the people are in doubt or opposition and (there is) the necessity of moving warily. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that the appeal to our people as a whole throughout Australia resulted in a decided majority in favour of Union and in the face of that and the still more enthusiastic response given by the other Churches, we feel we cannot, in honour to ourselves and fairplay to them, desist from propagating the movement in all reasonable ways. We may, I think, appeal particularly to Victorian Presbyterians to reconsider things in this

aspect and to remember the pressing need of Union elsewhere and the growing desire for it so that our Church in Victoria should not be left in the invidious position of blocking future progress. <(76)>

This letter then outlined the close cooperation that had developed in N.S.W. for the past two years through the Joint Council of Cooperation with sub-committees co-ordinating work in ministerial training, Sunday Schools, social questions and Home Missions. He added, as did other Union leaders of this period:

Some of us foresee difficulty in obtaining the fruits of Union before it is consummated because each denomination, so long as we exist separately, will be inevitably tempted to assert its own rights and interests - unless indeed the friction, jealousy, competition and antagonism from which we suffer too often under our present system be overcome by a more Christian spirit in view of ultimate Union. <(77)>

This long letter closed with a passionate appeal, through Dr Adam to his fellow Presbyterians in Victoria, to see the vision of a United Church of Australia. It brought together points which were made constantly in the correspondence concerning the Union movement:

In conclusion I may say that though we have no campaign of propaganda on foot our committee holds itself free to advance the movement along the lines we have hitherto followed by keeping the common objective before the minds of our people, by giving due publicity to it, by creating a Christian conscience on the question so that present obstacles of pride and prejudice and fear and mistaken ideas of loyalty to Presbyterianism may be removed and the gifts and services of our sister-Churches appreciated and the great spiritual contribution they have to bring to our common stock recognised and in general the conviction of what a United Church might do for Australia and the Kingdom of God instilled into our people's minds and especially the younger generation who will

live to see the future triumph of our cause.
<(78)>

The phrasing of this paragraph, and the lack of any periods to break it up, reflect something of the emotion with which the words were written in firm and obviously rushed longhand.

Another expression of concern about the way Union negotiations were going in Victoria was voiced by Dr Ronald G. MacIntyre in his letter to Dr Harper on 16 August 1920:

I think we ought to be careful not to commit ourselves officially through Dr Adam to an entangling pledge. I can understand Dr Adam's desire for the two favourite arguments against Union which are being used in this State.

(1) that cooperation in a Federal Union will meet the whole case and

(2) that any attempt at organic Union will split the Presbyterian Church.

If in order to meet the latter we say officially that we shall not go on to Union if a minority opposes then we bind the hand of the Church indefinitely. <(79)>

As the time to vote drew closer the interest in Union became more intense. Although some voting papers and educational material were prepared by the various State committees, a considerable amount of documentation was channelled to the States from Melbourne mainly by Dr Adam. For example, on 6 May 1920, Dr Adam wrote to Dr Harper in Sydney:

I have been endeavouring to hurry up the printer (Brown Prior & Co., Queen Street,, Melbourne) to get the papers re Union sent out to the Church offices of the various States as soon as possible. The 'Memoranda' for session clerks, copies of the Basis of Union and the proposed amendments, together with a small leaflet issued by the Joint Committee last year giving reasons for Union and answering objections, are now ready. <(80)>

It is interesting to comment in passing that when Dr Adam went to see the printer about the delay in this consignment, it was discovered that the printer had delayed sending it. He explained:

He had not sent it off but was waiting to send it by boat as he thought the cost by rail would be too much. There is no boat however till next Saturday which would mean that it would be Tuesday or Wednesday of next week before you would get it. <(81)>

Later, Dr Adam sent a rushed note to Dr Harper dated 24 July 1920 stating:

Your telegram asking for 10,000 voting papers and 10,000 copies of the "Present Position" has reached me.

25,000 voting papers were sent to your Church offices at Sydney per S.S. Karoola on 12th July...I have made inquiries today and have found out the following facts. The S.S. Karoola was held up in port and did not get away for Sydney till 17th inst. It would probably not reach Sydney before 21st or 22nd and the parcel may not have been delivered at the Church office at the time when you wired. <(82)>

Communications across Australia whether in the form of mail or material constantly provided a problem for the 1920 Union negotiations. This practical difficulty in overcoming the physical isolation of a large continent was not fully overcome even fifty years later!

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DEFENCE ASSOCIATION

More serious than the delay in getting material out of State offices was the aggressive activity of the anti-Union forces within the Presbyterian Church in Victoria. A committee of five had been appointed by the State Assembly to draw up a statement against Union to be printed with a statement in favour of Union. But, commented Dr Adam to Dr Harper in a letter dated 19 July 1920:

they had no right to style themselves the "Presbyterian Church Defence Association" as they do at the head of their statement in this combined pamphlet. <(83)>

In the same letter Dr Adam disclosed the following fact:

the anti-Union committee would not permit us to see what they had written before the pamphlet was issued and now that it has been issued and circulated I find two serious mis-statements of fact - one in par. 6 regarding Union in Canada and another in par. 11. I have thought it necessary to write a letter correcting these erroneous statements which I am sending to various papers and of which I enclose a copy. <(84)>

This long letter to the secular press made clear to the public the deep division within the Presbyterian Church over the Union issue. The important release was circulated widely in Victorian papers through the Country Press Association. It was doubly significant because it came from the pen of the Presbyterian leader who had been so careful not to offend those against Union and had refrained over a long period from developing educational material in Victoria because of the danger of dividing the Presbyterian Church.

Dr Adam first of all made clear that although the five members had been:

appointed by the Presbyterian State Assembly of Victoria as a committee to draw up a brief statement on behalf of those opposed to Union with the Methodists and Congregationalists they had no right to style themselves "The Presbyterian Church Defence Association". <(85)>

Then he proceeded to point out that there were:

two serious errors as to matters of fact which may confuse and mislead voters which

therefore need to be corrected in the interests of truth. One is in par. 11 where it is said "We are asked to vote for Union on the Proposed Basis of Union. But strange to tell there is no definite Basis of Union". Now on the contrary, there is a definite Basis of Union, adopted by the General Assembly of Australia, as to Doctrine and Polity, as one on which Union may be consummated.

Nothing could be plainer. The remit is from the General Assembly of Australia, on a clearly stated issue, and is in no way affected by anything which State Assemblies, whether in Victoria or N.S.W., may have resolved or done in this matter, as is suggested in this par.11...To say therefore that there is "no definite Basis of Union" on which we are asked to give our vote is contrary to fact .

The other misleading statement is at the end of par. 6 where it is said, "Even in Canada, where they seem to be moving towards incorporation, the movement has now wholly stopped." As a matter of fact after definitely resolving in 1916 "to unite with the Methodist and Congregational Churches", (by a vote of 406 to 90), and to take steps to carry this policy into effect "at the first Assembly following the end of the first year after the close of the war" the Canadian General Assembly wisely decided that, during the war time, and until the time specified in the resolution of the Assembly of 1916 came round, "there should be a temporary cessation of propagandism on both sides. The fact so specified has not yet come, - but it will soon be here now". <(86)>

Dr Adam closed this very important press release by indicating that he had shown it to and received the concurrence of the other four members of the Assembly's Committee which drew up the statement on 'Reason for Church Union'.

Once launched, however irregularly, the Presbyterian Church Defence Association proved an aggressive force working against Union. It is ironical that those who purported to defend the Presbyterian Church began to work in direct opposition to the specific directions of the Supreme Court of that Church. Rather than accepting the position that had been reached with almost endless patience and discussion and after carefully worked out democratic decision making procedures, this Association set

itself up as a legislative body preparing documents which were structured to destroy the position already adopted by the General Assembly on Church Union.

For example, the Association prepared in 1920 a three page typed document stating among other things:

1. There are two parties in the Presbyterian Church with regard to the question of incorporate Union, viz:-

the Unionist or "incorporate" party, and the non-Unionists or "cooperative" party.

2. Previously (from 1914 to 1920) the Unionist party was in the ascendant: hence it was said that the Church was for Union.

3. Now, the non-Union party is in the ascendant: hence it is said that the Church is against Union.

4. Neither statement is quite accurate; both are misleading.

5. But the position of the party which is in the ascendant should be stated, so that the other Churches should realise where our party stands and should not be able to say in the future that they were led astray. <(87)>

This pronouncement was in effect a forthright attack upon the position taken by the General Assembly on Church Union. It therefore violated the clear statement in the Westminster Confession, Chapter XXI, section III, that every Presbyterian was expected to accept the decision of this Supreme Court of the Presbyterian Church.

THE EDUCATIONAL PLAN IN N.S.W.

Three months before the vote of the people was to be taken the Union leaders in N.S.W. began to put plans into effect for the education of Church members. One aspect of this plan was outlined in a letter to Dr Harper on 3 June 1920 from Dr Ronald G. MacIntyre. This, in turn, had the effect of arousing the opponents of Union. Writing from the Church offices of the Presbyterian Church in Sydney, he said:

I saw the Manager of the Country Press Association today and had some conference with him. Last night I wrote out a brief article - a kind of preliminary canter - which he was good enough to say was "dashed good stuff". He took the bait like a hungry fish. He is sending the article at once to 15 or 20 of the country dailies, which are what he calls "our prime beef" to be inserted in the "leader" column. The selected papers are at strategic centres from Grafton to Hay and cover a great part of the State. He tells me that when the smaller country papers see the big ones get on to this question they will be after the same stuff and that will serve us better - being the givers rather than the beggars...I feel sure that the opposition will get busy when they find the Press throughout the country is on the move, and we ought to meet them. <(88)>

The attitude of confrontation, expressed at the end of this letter, was certainly different from that shown in Victorian Presbyterian circles. Yet it was evident that there was the same fear of dividing the Church. Reading the postscript to this letter the modern reader is left wondering how deep was the difference of opinion among the staff of the Sydney Presbyterian Church offices where Dr MacIntyre had written the letter:

P.S. This needs no reply, but in any case do not address to Church offices. R.E.M. <(89)>

The second aspect of the educational plan was to arrange deputations to various Churches throughout the State. For example, the Rev. Patison wrote to Dr Harper on 12 July 1920 with this request:

Will it be possible for you to accept the following engagements ?

July 28th Hurlstone Park Methodist Church combined meeting.

August 3rd Auburn combined meeting.

August 4th and 5th Bathurst and Orange.
<(90)>

We do not know what sort of reception Dr Harper and other speakers were given at these centres. But we do know the cold reception they received when they planned to go to Goulburn several weeks later. For the Presbyterian Minister, the Rev. George Tulloch, who strongly opposed Union, wrote to Dr Harper on 20 August 1920:

I note by today's Goulburn paper that a deputation consisting of Mr Beale and yourself is to visit Goulburn on Tuesday in the interests of "Church Union". I wish to point out to you that Mr Burton has ignored his own Minister and myself and the request for a deputation is quite unauthorised. I am quite of the opinion that the request is in order to try and set some of my people against me and I shall be compelled to state the facts of the case to my people on Sunday...I would have had no objection to a request for a deputation being made but my session did not ask for same and there the matter dropped and I have not asked for any on the anti-side. I was asked to go to Newcastle to speak against but declined to do so as I have my own work to do here...bitterness will be caused by a Methodist layman trying to put me in a corner. If you come under the circumstances I cannot promise you a Presbyterian congregation to hear you. <(91)>

When the voting figures began to come in, there was considerable excitement among the Union leadership. But at the same time, concern was expressed at what appeared to be legal barriers ahead. Both these emotions were shown in the letter Dr Harper wrote to Dr Adam on 14 September 1920:

I am delighted to hear that our results are like Queensland 2 to 1, but I am disappointed that Queensland is not better and that you think Victoria will be worse than that. I got the returns from St Stephens Church Sydney today. They are very satisfactory, 391 Communicants voted, 320 yes and 71 no. 230 Adherents voted, 208 yes and 22 no. That makes 528 yes and 93 no.

But the main reason of my writing now is as to your idea of the next step. That is to me an entirely new idea - that you suggest to send down a statement of Doctrine (with a formula of subscription) to the State Assemblies and Presbyteries to see if a three fifths majority would approve of its adoption as our subordinate standard in place of our existing standard...Further it would seem unfair to the other two Churches...Again, would this course not involve that before we do anything with the main question we should have to deal with the amendments which the Joint Committee has passed? If so we might be blocked by a stone walling discussion on every amendment and we might not get any decision on the matter of the Church's position to the Basis.

We here are thinking in this direction. Our main effort should be to secure what the approval of the Church has given us. This could be done by taking the Basis as approved and passing a resolution welcoming the expression of the mind of the Church in favour of Union and accepting the vote as a mandate from our people to proceed to further negotiations on this Basis as to things not dealt with in it - Property, Finance and Legislation. <(92)>

THE VOTE OF PRESBYTERIAN MEMBERS

The desire of Presbyterian members for Union was clearly reflected in each of the voting categories. Across Australia 83 sessions voted yes and 43 no; 190 Congregations voted yes and 76 no; 806 Elders voted yes and 616 no; 22,899 communicants voted yes and 16,895 voted no, 17,791 adherents voted yes while 10,578 voted no. In all 41,216 members and Elders voted out of a possible total of 73,370. <(93)>

The 1920 General Assembly received the report that Presbyterians across Australia had given:

a total vote of members and adherents together of about 60 per cent for and 40 per cent against Union which is very much the same proportion as in Canada in 1916. <(94)>

In spite of this strong opposition, the Presbyterian Union Committee optimistically reported to the General Assembly:

your committee recognises that a considerable minority of people of our Church have at this time voted against Union on the proposed Basis, but they hope that with further consideration and conference and with much amendment in the Basis of Union as may be finally agreed upon these brethren will ultimately join with the Church as a whole in the cordial acceptance of a policy of Union. <(95)>

An opportunity had been given at the referendum for those voting either for or against Union to send up suggestions for amending the Basis. As a result, a considerable number of amendments was presented to the Assembly.

Following lengthy discussion and the presentation of many motions of dissent the Assembly moved:

to remit to the Committee the proposed amendments approved by the Joint Committee and instruct it to confer further with the other negotiating Churches regarding these and any other proposed amendments on the Basis sent up with the approval of any State Committee on Union. <(96)>

Immediately after the Assembly, the difference of opinion on the way ahead, which had been present earlier, became more significant. The N.S.W. Presbyterians wanted to act on the mandate given by the membership of the Church and push ahead towards Union. However, the Victorian group considered that all the amendments had to be dealt with first. This division is clearly apparent in the letter Dr Harper wrote Dr Adam on 14 September 1920.

A second difference between the Presbyterians in N.S.W. and Victoria became more clear after the vote, although it was present beforehand. It concerned the education programme to inform members what was happening in the Union negotiations. Those against Union termed this 'propagandism'. Legally this issue revolved around the interpretation of the understanding arrived at by the General Assembly that, for the peace of the

Church, disruptive propaganda concerning Union should be discountenanced. Because this understanding was couched in such vague terms and therefore open to various interpretations, the Presbyterian General Committee on Union took up the matter in its meeting held at the close of the Sydney Assembly on 29 September 1920. More than twelve months later, on 12 December 1921, Dr Adam found it necessary to point out at some length the details of this agreement even though Harper and other leading N.S.W. Presbyterian Unionists were present at the meeting a year earlier. Adam argued:

At that meeting an agreement was come to as to the interpretation to be put on the Assembly's decision. I have by me the minute of that meeting taken not by me but by someone appointed by the meeting to act as secretary. The following is an extract from the minute:

"Took up consideration of the Assembly's decision on Union and its interpretation. It was agreed that the Committee is not at liberty to organize a propaganda in favour of Union in the press or otherwise but that misstatements in the press regarding Union may be replied to and members of the Committee in their private capacity are free to act according to their judgement. Took note of the matters to be considered in conjunction with the Committees of the other negotiating Churches viz:

- (1) matters definitely remitted to the Committee by the Assembly.
- (2) matters on which conference had already been initiated.
- (3) cooperation in common work on the basis of the Union scheme and with a view to ultimate Union.

The importance of establishing a truce in regard to propaganda for or against Union was recognised as a matter deserving every effort. <(97)>

Dr Adam added an interesting postscript, explaining why he felt free to attack some statements by Dr Rentoul, the arch opponent of Union in Victorian Presbyterianism, in the press:

In accordance with the finding of this meeting, when the decision of the last Canadian Assembly in favour of Union was published and Dr Rentoul endeavoured in the press to minimize its significance I considered it a duty to answer him in the press and thus got an opportunity of giving full particulars regarding the important decision of the Canadian Assembly and its significance which appeared in the "Argus", "Age" and "Herald" here.

But the decision of our General Assembly on 29th September, 1920, though of course it does not bind the full Joint Committee of the three Churches, makes it necessary, I think, that the Presbyterian Committee should act cautiously in the matter of propagandism until next General Assembly has authorized a fresh "referendum" to the people on a more fully completed "Basis of Union". Of course it is quite right and proper they publish the amendments agreed to in the Basis as widely as possible and explain their significance.
<(98)>

CONSIDERING AMENDMENTS AFTER THE VOTE

After the vote, the major task facing the three Churches was to work through the more than 200 amendments to the Basis that were received by the Joint Committee. This involved a lot of detailed work. In this task, the N.S.W. and Victorian sections worked closely together and representatives of the other States were brought in whenever possible. For example, on 2 June 1921, Dr Adam wrote to Dr Harper stating:

We had an informal meeting of our State Committee on Union during the sittings of the Assembly now just over. We talked over the question as to the date by which we might hope to get all further suggested amendments sent in...I shall call the Executive and lay the matter before them as also the question of adding to the Executive the convener and secretaries in each State. <(99)>

The N.S.W. secretaries answered this letter on 8 June in the following terms:

At our meeting yesterday it was unanimously decided to recommend to the Executive

(1) Definitely to fix July 31st next as the date upon which all amendments to the proposed doctrine and polity shall be in your hands as Chairman of the Joint Committee. <(100)>

Other recommendations concerned hastening 'the completion of the whole work entrusted to the joint Committee', deepening and extending interest in the movement for Union and stimulating 'the movement for cooperation'. This letter pointed out:

those present learnt with regret of the somewhat disquieting attitude which the discussion in the Victorian Presbyterian Assembly revealed. <(101)>

The slow progress that was made within the context of continual frustrating experiences was shown in a brief letter Dr Adam wrote Dr Harper on 8 June 1921. This note also provides an all too rare glimpse of the magnanimous and gentle Christian spirit of the leaders of the Union committee within the Presbyterian Church. Usually they were extremely careful in their correspondence and public statements to camouflage what must at times have been feelings of extreme irritation at the actions of some of their Presbyterian colleagues. Adam wrote:

The spirit of our meeting yesterday has had the effect of consigning the first letter to the W.P.B. and of substituting the enclosed. Your example was not lost on me and I am sure we shall only gain by being conciliatory. I am sorry I made the unkind reference to the fate which may have overtaken our letter of Dec. 13th. Such things are better left unsaid. We continued on until a half to seven last night. Eight out of the 9 possible were present and the absentee was in Adelaide. The whole of the suggestions outlined were accepted unanimously and very cordially. Details left to the three H.M. Supts. to work out and to report upon later. I had no idea that the results would have been as they turned out. <(102)>

By 19 October 1921, all the amendments had been dealt with by the Joint Committee and the Proposed Basis of Union as finally revised was ready for publication. On this date Dr Adam wrote to Dr Harper indicating that there only remained 'mere drafting details which might well enough be rectified by the secretaries in future editions without further reference to the Joint Committee'. Dr Adam suggested in this letter that the whole report 'lie on the table until the meeting of the State General Assembly in May 1922'. He wanted to take this course in order to avoid receiving:

any fresh amendments for the consideration of the General Assembly Committee as that Committee considers it has completed the work entrusted to it by the General Assembly of Australia having given ample opportunity to all interested whether individuals, congregations or Presbyteries - to send suggested amendments till the date it was authorised by the Assembly to fix for this purpose. <(103)>

PLANS TO FACILITATE UNION AFTER THE VOTE

After the vote of the people across Australia for Union, various plans were made to facilitate the formation of the United Church. First, the Executive, which until now had been the Victorian section of the Joint Committee, was enlarged so as to give each State section of the Committee a more definite part and interest in the movement as a whole.

Second, at the Melbourne Conference of the Joint Committee in September, 1921, two sub-committees were constituted. The one sub-committee was charged with the duty of drawing up the clauses relating to property, finance and institutions. It was considered at the time that this task was comparatively simple. As the Rev. W. L. Patison wrote in the Australian Christian World :

With the Canadian Basis as a guide, these clauses ought not to occasion much difficulty, especially as leading laymen and those who are most conversant with denominational trusts and finance have been appointed for the task. <(104)>

The business of the other sub-committee was to explain the terms of Union and to keep the people of the Churches throughout Australia fully informed of all that was being done in the matter of Union.

This sub-committee on Educative Effort had a membership of twelve, four from each of the negotiating Churches with the Rev. W. L. Patison as Convener. The personnel was confined to members of the N.S.W. section of the Joint Committee. Its proposals were to be reported to each State section of the Executive of the Joint Committee simultaneously so that such proposals might be considered with the least possible delay by each State section of the Joint Committee, whose sanction was necessary before they could be carried into effect in that particular State. That is, although the sub-committee was empowered to initiate such movements as might secure the end for which it was appointed it rested with each State section of the Joint Committee to determine to what extent the sub-committee's suggestions could become effective.

THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIVE EFFORT

As soon as the sub-committee on Educative Effort began work, the old differences between N.S.W. and Victoria on the matter of propaganda caused difficulties. For example, at its first meeting on 7 November 1921 this sub-committee, among other things, planned to produce:

a manifesto setting forth the present position of the movement and the grounds on which Union is advocated, a monthly paper or magazine solely in the interests of the movement, conferences and public meetings in cities and country districts to promote a true spirit of Union and cooperative efforts whenever possible. <(105)>

Details of these plans were sent to the sections of the Joint Committee in the various States. As soon as this document was tabled in the Victorian section meeting on 9 December 1921, the Methodist Secretary, the Rev. H. A. Overend, was directed to write to the sub-committee convener in the following terms:

our section of the committee expressed a strong fear that to issue such a manifesto and hold such meetings would be a breach of the understanding come to in the last General

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church Union Movement, we feel it would be unwise to embarrass our Presbyterian friends in any way at this delicate stage of the negotiations. For this reason too no. (4) which suggests the publishing of a monthly paper or magazine was disapproved. Had it not been for this understanding come to by the members of the Presbyterian Assembly I am sure our section would have looked at (3) (4) and (6) differently. <(106)>

The opposition in Victoria to any educative effort and the very restrictive way of interpreting and implementing the Assembly's decision proved to be fatal to the Union Movement. It remained a recurring sore in the body of those who worked so hard for Church Union.

The responses to the N.S.W. suggestions indicated opposition in Queensland and apathy developing into opposition in South Australia. Western Australia did not react. At least there is no letter from this State in the correspondence file which records clearly the reactions from other States.

The letter from the Secretary of the Queensland section, the Rev. W. Brown, contained this cryptic comment:

I am sorry to say nothing has been done as yet regarding the suggestions your committee sent forward. The fact is that so many difficulties seem to be raised in a certain quarter that it is difficult to maintain animation in the movement. <(107)>

From South Australia the Rev. George Hall, the Secretary of the South Australian Methodist Conference, wrote on 1 December 1921 to the Rev. Patison:

Your letter and plan of work to hand. I have asked Rev. D. McDiarmid to call a meeting of our Joint Committee at an early date to look at the matter; but I find it difficult to get the other Churches to move along on this question. <(108)>

The next project of the Sub-Committee for Educative Effort in

N.S.W. was to forward to nineteen religious and denominational papers across Australia a copy of the amendments to the Basis for publication. Some of the papers carried this in full, others printed parts. A few like The Messenger 'a journal of social and Christian work' published in Melbourne, regretted that as much the same material had been published several months earlier it could 'scarcely duplicate a former report'. The Editor, H. Kelly, said in his letter to the Rev. Patison on 9 January 1922:

Please understand that this is not due to lack of interest - my own views favour Union.
<(109)>

The Sub-Committee was also anxious to publish a monthly magazine or paper. But because of the strong opposition to this plan from the Victorian section of the Joint Committee the idea was dropped. Other plans such as the holding of combined mid-week prayer meetings once a month, the observance of Union Sunday on the second Sunday in March each year and the arranging of conferences and public meetings in cities and country districts were developed.

Finally, the Sub-Committee for Educative Effort urged:

Cooperative efforts, whenever practicable, as outlined in Appendix II of the Basis, should be encouraged. <(110)>

Appendix II to the Basis read as follows:

Your committee was instructed, while continuing negotiations for Union, to endeavour to secure in the meantime without undue delay "a basis of cooperation and joint action in matters in which it may be found possible to make common cause."

In addressing itself to this task, your committee has found some difficulty in deciding, especially in regard to Home Mission and Church Extension work, how far it may be possible to attain the practical

fruits of union ahead of the accomplished fact or at least a definite decision to unite, such as in the case in Canada.

The spheres in which it seems that some measure of cooperation might be attainable, prior to and apart from union are:

- (1) Home Mission and Church Extension Work
- (2) Secondary Education, (including schools and Colleges)
- (3) Training of candidates for the Ministry
- (4) Religious Instruction in Public Schools and Sunday Schools
- (5) Temperance and moral
- (6) Devotional Fellowship and Evangelism. <(111)>

The Joint Committee, meeting on 2 September 1921, adopted a series of resolutions whose purpose was to increase the degree of cooperation between the three Churches with a view to Union. The four page printed document, which contained these, listed them under these headings:

- A. Re Home Missions
 - (i) Guiding Principles
 - (ii) Possibilities
 - (iii) Schemes of Cooperation
 - (iv) Principles of Cooperation
- B. Re Education and Welfare of Youth
- C. Re Theological Training. <(112)>

The purpose clearly stated in the guiding principle for Home Missions could equally well apply to the other areas. Care was taken not to disrupt the harmony of united work in delicate areas. The Joint Committee therefore resolved:

That in view of the present position of the movement for Union, nothing should be done in Home Mission or Church Extension work to complicate the negotiations for Union, or that may have to be undone when Union is consummated. <(113)>

These suggestions for cooperation were worked out differently in the various Australian States. Some States did more than others. In order to see how the general principles were worked out in specific situations we will study more closely what happened in N.S.W.

COUNCIL OF COOPERATION

A Council of Cooperation had been formed in N.S.W. to initiate, coordinate and implement activities of the three Churches working together. It consisted of thirty-six members chosen annually by the Presbyterian Assembly, Methodist Conference and the Congregational Union of N.S.W.

Regulations for this Council, which were adopted on 30 May 1921, stated:

The object of the Council shall be to promote the proposed Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches of Australia, by encouraging inter-Church relations and cooperation in all matters in which common action may be practicable and by cultivating the spirit of Union in every possible way. <(114)>

BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION IN N.S.W.

Early in its programme, the Council grappled realistically with the most complex and difficult area of cooperation - Home Missions and Church Extension. A detailed plan for cooperative action in these four areas of Home Missions was worked out:

1. In relation to Church Extension
2. Congested or Sub-City Areas
3. Bush Mission Work
4. Over-Churched Towns

The following significant letter was sent to the Home Mission Committees of the three Churches on 8 August 1921. It shows the great care that went into the development of the scheme and the ambitious hopes of its architects that the three Churches could work very closely together before Union in this delicate area, where decisions concerning new Churches and financial assistance

to old ones were made. The letter signed by the Secretaries W. L. Patison and G. R. S. Reid, read:

We send you herewith a copy of the report on Cooperation in Home Missions, adopted by the Council at its meeting today. Under separate cover we are also sending to your care a sufficient supply for your Home Missions Committee or Board. In drawing up this report the Council appointed a special sub-committee, consisting of nine of its members, all more or less acquainted with Home Mission operations and including the Superintendent or Secretary of each of the three Home Mission Departments. It will thus be seen that the proposals have had not only serious but expert consideration and their practicability as well as desirableness has always been kept in view. In forwarding these proposals to the departments which alone have it in their power to carry them into effect the Council does so with the earnest hope that they may have that early and prayerful consideration which they deserve. <(115)>

Within the next two months, answers had been received from the Home Mission committees of the three Churches. The Congregational Home Mission Board adopted all the recommendations. The Methodist Home Mission Committee also adopted all the recommendations but requested that it be stated:

in those places where schemes for Church extension have been initiated prior to adoption by three denominations of a Plan of Cooperation those schemes need not be interfered with and may be carried to completion unless the denomination immediately concerned shall in the interests of the larger Union forego its rights in the matter. <(116)>

The response from the Presbyterian Home Mission Committee was more complex. The convener, the Rev. Thomas Morgan, indicated that it was first moved:

That this Committee while not committing

itself meantime to (the) scheme in detail sent forward by the Council of Cooperation, expresses its willingness to consider on their merits special cases of proposed cooperation submitted to them by the Council. But as it is too early to pluck the fruits of Union before the question of Union itself has advanced further, the committee claims the rights to conduct the work committed to it by the Church under its own authority. <(117)>

This motion was later amended, by a vote of 13 to 10, to read:

That in view of the present position of the movement for Union, nothing should be done in Home Missions or Church Extension work to complicate the negotiations for Union, or that may have to be undone when Union is consummated. In other words, that such operations should now be carried on in terms of Union rather than in terms of denominationalism. <(118)>

After these three letters were received, a Board of Administration was set up to give effect to these and other proposals agreed to. Five persons were appointed from each Home Mission Committee to this Board. The first meeting was held on 10 February 1922.

The Board took its mandate extremely seriously. During the first year, nine meetings of the Board were held. The proposals for cooperation, as agreed upon, were printed and a copy sent to each Minister of the negotiating Churches in N.S.W. The principle dominating these proposals was that in all future Home Mission and Church extension operations nothing should be done to jeopardise the negotiations for Union or that would need to be undone in the event of Union.

The Board not only undertook the frank disclosure of information regarding sites already acquired or which were about to be purchased, but also the opening up of new causes. Further, it endeavoured to modify denominational procedures to the extent that would allow the formation of community Churches.

During the first year of operation, the Board gave attention to the formation of community Churches at Artarmon, Northbridge and North Lidcombe, united mission effort at Pymont, cooperation at Pallamallawa and Garah in the Moree district, clashing interests at Tahmoor and the suggestion from the Sutherland Methodist Quarterly Meeting that the whole of the Sutherland-Cronulla

District should be worked on a community basis.

Although the work of the Board began with such high hopes and great enthusiasm, difficulties developed within the first six months, mainly because one of the Churches continued to act unilaterally in some areas where it had been agreed that the Board would coordinate work. <(119)>

For example, while the Board was negotiating for cooperative work at Artarmon and the Methodist District Synod had agreed to delay their Church extension operations there, the Presbyterian Home Mission Superintendent indicated that his Committee intended to begin services almost immediately in Artarmon. The Presbyterian services began some weeks later. <(120)> Similar situations developed at Pymont and Tahmoor.

The frank and careful way with which the Board initially approached its work can be seen from the following correspondence, which also reveals some of the complexities involved in its work. On 22 April 1922, the Rev. G. Chalmers wrote to the Rev. W. L. Patison:

The Board of Administration in connection with Cooperation of the Churches should, I think, consider the question of the erection of a Methodist in close proximity to the Presbyterian Church in Gladesville. <(121)>

In reply the Rev. W. L. Patison wrote on 5 May 1922:

At the last meeting of the Board of Administration for Cooperation in Home Missions the matter referred to in your letter of the 22nd March was very carefully considered, but it was felt that the Board could take no action. <(122)>

The Secretary explained that the Methodist Church had been represented in Gladesville for six years, that they had 70 families and 140 scholars connected with their work, that they had sold a piece of land originally held because they considered it too close to the Presbyterian Church and that they planned to build on their new site.

The letter concluded:

Had the Methodists been entering Gladesville for the first time, it would have been different. The Board regrets that no further action can be taken. <(123)>

The second illustration concerned Pymont. The Board had set up a sub-committee to look at work in this area. However, the Presbyterian Interim Moderator, the Rev. David F. Brandt, wrote on 3 April 1922 to the Financial Secretary of the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church stating:

I have yours dated 27th ult., re the Cooperation Movement in Pymont. My firm conviction is that it would be very unwise to do anything in the matter there that would interfere with the present conditions of affairs. <(124)>

The reason given was explained in this way:

As you might know Miss Harris has been magnificently generous to us and...the work is going on harmoniously. <(125)>

The Secretary of the Presbyterian Home Mission Committee, Mr William Ward, then reported to the Board on 19 April 1922 concerning its Pymont discussions:

As you will see, Mr Brandt is very emphatic that we should not touch matters at that place as everything is going on harmoniously. <(126)>

Two months later at the Board meeting on 12 June 1922 it was noted that the Rev. W. L. Patison reported:

That the meeting arranged by the Rev. D. Brandt for the evening of June 2nd in the Pymont Presbyterian Church, with the object of discussing cooperative action in the Pymont district, had not been held. It was

resolved to report the matter to the next meeting of the Board. <(127)>

In a telegram message to the Convener of the Sub-Committee on the day the meeting should have been held Mr Brandt stated:

That the meeting had not been convened, and he was not able to say when a meeting of the Congregation would be held to deal with the matters. <(128)>

GROWING FRUSTRATION IN THE BOARD

The frustration experienced within the Board after it had been functioning for six months was expressed in this notice of meeting sent to all Board members on 25 July 1922 by the two Secretaries who were in charge respectively of the Methodist and Congregational Home Mission Committees. The notice read:

At the meeting of the Board, yesterday afternoon, the attendance was disappointingly small. This disappointment was further accentuated by the fact that apologies for absence were received from only three absentees.

It was not considered advisable to transact any business of importance, but the progress reports revealed the fact that, for reasons which will be discussed at the next meeting, the work of the Board of late, has been largely a waste of time. In view of this it has been decided to convene a special meeting of the Board at 3 p.m. next Monday, the 31st instant, at 139 Castlereagh Street, to deal with the business for which the Board was definitely appointed, or to take such other action as may commend itself to the Board in the light of the apparent deadlock which seems to have arisen. <(129)>

Following this special meeting the Convener, the Rev. W. L. Patison, wrote a three page report to the members of the Board which is in parts brutally frank. It reflected some of the tension which at this time was causing frustration in different sections of the negotiating Churches across Australia. The report

was written in the form of a letter, dated 31 July 1922. It was sent to all members of the Board. It read, in part:

It is just six months since the Board entered upon its work with a degree of enthusiasm, and confidence, which encouraged the hope of success. The object of the Board, which was created at the suggestion of the Presbyterian Home Mission Department, was to give effect to the printed proposals of the Council of Cooperation...nothing could have exceeded the care with which the proposals were first drawn up by those experienced in all Home Missions work..(The Home Mission Department considered the movement to be of serious importance). It was not unreasonable to expect that, given ordinary confidence in one another, encouraging results would be achieved. But it has to be acknowledged, after six months' effort the results have been disappointingly small. Indeed, it is not too much to affirm that, of late, the work of the Board has become very largely a waste of the valuable time of exceedingly busy men. I feel compelled to say, reluctantly, but with all sincerity, that unless some way is found of doing more effectively the work for which the Board was definitely called into being, I cannot see my way to continue in office, or to ask others to devote time to a movement which has been so largely abortive. Nor do I consider that the Methodist or Congregational Home Mission Departments can be held to be in any way responsible for the deadlock which has been reached. It rests entirely with the Presbyterian Department.

My own Board seriously considered the proposals, and realised their full significance, before accepting them...The Methodist Department has expressed its readiness to do the same...

Unless the Board can be assured of some such confidence in one another, and mutual trust, as the disclosure of such information would manifest it must largely fail in the work it was created to do. Such an attitude as that taken up by the Presbyterian Home Mission Department in connection with their new charge at Artarmon, is quite out of harmony with the spirit and intention of the proposals; and its repetition must lead to a revival of the competitive conditions

existing prior to the creation of the Board...The failure of the proposal for Joint Mission work at Pymont, which the Board adopted so enthusiastically and unanimously, was disappointing chiefly because it was turned aside...

Moreover, although three months have elapsed since the suggestions regarding Northbridge were first made, no reply has yet been received from the Presbyterian Home Mission Department; and its attitude to the North Lidcombe undertaking has still to be made known...

It is useless to think of proceeding further with the work the Board was supposed to do, until we are assured that the Presbyterian Home Mission Department intends to treat the Board's definite proposals with that seriousness of purpose which the other two Departments have shown. Failing some such assurance, no other course seems to me to be open to the Board, than to report to the Council of Cooperation that further progress is impossible. <(130)>

This long quote focussed on a recurring cause of frustration throughout the whole six years of Union negotiations. In the Methodist and Congregational Churches, there were both Ministers and Laity who were aggressively against Union. But, when their State and Federal courts took a decision after a democratic vote, they were prepared to accept this as the vote of the majority. In the Presbyterian Church this was not so. In spite of decisions in Federal and State Asssemblies for Union, the minority groups not only refused to accept this democratically determined position but took every opportunity to attack and defeat it.

BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION DISSOLVED

At the end of the first twelve months the Board prepared an Annual Report outlining its work. This included the following pessimistic assessment of its achievements:

The Board regrets that more definite results have not been achieved, and the question arises as to the wisdom of continuing an organisation whose efforts have been so largely futile. On the other hand, it must be said, in fairness, that where occasions of

misunderstanding, and of friction have been frankly faced and some serious attempt made to dispel distrust, the greatest good has resulted. The Board is more convinced than ever that the proposals drawn up by the Council of Cooperation and adopted by the three Home Mission Departments if given a chance to prove their work will more than fulfil all that was expected of them. But it is essential that there should be perfect frankness on the part of all concerned; an equally determined effort by the Home Mission Departments to discountenance everything likely to violate the principle by which the Board's operations are supposed to be governed; and a clear recognition of the fact that the cooperating Churches have organic Union in view. <(131)>

This correspondence was signed on behalf of the Board by its two Secretaries, the Revs. W. L. Patison and W. H. Jones.

The end of the Board of Administration came quite abruptly. On 30 July 1923, Patison and Jones wrote to W. Grant Forsyth, the Acting Convener of the Presbyterian Home Mission Committee in the following terms:

Those who were present felt that nothing further could be done to promote the work for which the Board was called into being until it was known what action your own Committee has determined upon in view of your Assembly's recent deliverance on the question of Union. The Methodist and Congregational Home Mission Departments are prepared still to carry into effect the proposals which were adopted when the Board was created but such proposals were with a view to Union. <(132)>

The reply from the Presbyterian Home Mission Committee to this letter was as brief as it could possibly have been. It was dated 9 October 1923 and sent by Mr W. Wood on behalf of the Rev. W. Grant Forsyth. It read:

Dear Sir:

Referring to your letter of the 30th July last, addressed to the Rev. W. Grant Forsyth, regarding the matter of Cooperation, I have to advise you that the subject was brought up

at the meeting of the Home Mission Committee on the 2nd inst., when it was resolved that the Committee would proceed no further in that matter.

Yours faithfully,
<(133)>

There is a touch of irony in the fact that with the hundreds of times the name of the convener occurs in the correspondence of the period this is the only letter which spells it incorrectly. It is 'Pattison' rather than 'Patison'. Does it indicate that the person writing the letter was in undue haste and careless about the spelling of a name he had used many times before? The error would not have gone unnoticed on this death warrant of the Board by the one who worked so patiently and with such attention to detail in this enterprise of the Union movement.

The enthusiasm of the N.S.W. based Sub-Committee on Educative Effort, particularly in relation to the work of the Board of Administration and the memorandum, was not unnoticed by some members of the Victorian section. On 1 February 1922 the Rev. H. A. Overend wrote to Patison in the following terms:

We greatly appreciate what your sub-committee on Educative Effort is doing. It seems the only "alive" thing in the movement just at present and though our sectional committee did not look with favour upon a "manifesto" yet it was only in deference to the attitude of the Presbyterian Assembly...Your enthusiasm and vigorous work is a lesson and inspiration to us all. <(134)>

FATAL WAIT FOR PRESBYTERIAN DECISION

Waiting for three years after the vote of the membership of the negotiating Churches was fatal to the Union movement in Australia. The people had made their decision for Union. This was clear. But the excitement in implementing the vision of the United Church could not be successfully sustained over the next three years when it seemed as though little was happening.

There was, of course, plenty to do in the Committees of the Churches. The Joint Committee worked through the two hundred and sixteen amendments and incorporated a quarter of these into the Proposed Basis. In addition, Councils of Cooperation were set up in various States. As we have seen this was particularly active in N.S.W.; but in other States, where the leadership was not as strong, less was done. There was little for the people of the Churches to do but wait. And while waiting, they became prey

either to the aggresssive opponents of Union or to apathy.

DIFFICULTIES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The Cooperating Committee in South Australia was continuing to experience difficulties not only because of Presbyterian opposition but also from influential Congregational leaders as well. On 18 November 1922 the Rev. George Hall wrote to the Rev. W. L. Patison in these blunt terms:

Shall I hear from Dr Harper or Prof. Adam concerning what has been done to bring the S.A. Presbyterians into line? We must try and get a meeting of members of the Joint Committee for the State at an early date. The Methodist Conference meets in March and if the Presbyterians still refuse to meet the situation here will be a serious one. <(135)>

Such comments drawing attention to the reluctance of the South Australian Presbyterians are strange, in the light of the fact that, only two years before, the Assembly of this State voted strongly in favour of Union, as did also its three Presbyteries. Within another twelve months, the South Australian Presbyterian Assembly was to change its first vote and decide in the second round against Union.

An important question we must ask is why within three years was the position of the South Australian Presbyterian Assembly completely reversed. One of the important factors was certainly the forthright and rather belligerent attitude of some of the prominent Congregationalists there. It is therefore necessary to look more carefully at this focus of opposition to which we have referred earlier.

The oppositin came from sturdy independents who thought the Basis far too connexional and who feared lest the twenty-one articles of the doctrinal schedule might prove a serious hindrance to the liberty of theological thought. It should not therefore have been such a 'bombshell' when Principal E. K. Kiek of Parkin College attacked strongly the Basis in the Congregational Union just as the whole matter was ready for a second time to be sent for final approval of the Congregational Union. Professor Kiek said:

I feel so strongly on the matter... that I am not going to impress on my students a faith which I am not prepared to believe in myself. <(136)>

The Rev. Willett Bevan, in seconding Principal Kiek's series of motions against the acceptance of the amendments to the Basis during the sessions of the Congregational Union, said:

What it all amounted to was that they were asked if they were willing to give up their Congregationalism. If it was for the glory of God he was in favour of it, but he wanted to be sure that it was. There had been so much whittling down of the aims and tenets of Congregationalism in the preparation of the new scheme that they were being asked to work now in one of the narrowest channels that freedom had ever been called upon to do so in. <(137)>

The Rev. A. C. Stevens strongly supported this opposition to the Basis by saying:

to set down a number of articles of faith and then hire men to preach that creed was only a matter of propaganda. It has always been the view that the Minister was urged by the Holy Spirit. The minute they put a set creed in front of him they were making him merely a propagandist for the benefit of the three Churches concerned. <(138)>

The Rev. J. C. Kirby, whom the Chairman described as the Father of South Australian Congregationalism, took the other side. He pointed out that they were the weakest of three contracting bodies and must be willing to make concessions. He stated quite bluntly:

It is not likely that after the continued battling through the centuries we shall be able to force Congregationalism down the Presbyterian throat. It cannot be done and we must make concessions. <(139)>

The Rev. P. Watson supported this point of view that some

concessions should be made. He suggested that the whole matter be sent back to the individual Churches so that they could express their thinking on the amendments before a final decision was made. He stated that he was:

Sympathetic with the views of Mr Kiek, but the Union must have a creed of some sort, some sort - of basis, some standard of reference. <(140)>

Cecil E. Tapp wrote a long letter to Kiek on 20 May 1922 in which he expressed some of the attitudes among Congregationalists towards Union. The first reflected a very pessimistic view of the future of Congregationalism, which he described as follows:

I have been disgusted at the pessimistic tone sounded specially by some of the young men of our Union. I remember talking to one of our prominent S.S. leaders some time ago and he pleaded the necessity for Union owing to the fact that we were losing ground. He stated he would support the adoption of the Basis because the position was either Union or Extinction. <(141)>

Tapp then expressed the opposite view which he personally adopted, in these strong terms:

I feel the adoption of this Basis which has been rendered 100% worse by the amendments would mean the Extinction of the Congregational spirit and witness and the persecution of our preachers - for there is no doubt who would be the "hunted" in the case of the heresy hunts which would be inevitable. <(142)>

The theme of this letter reflected the strong feelings of those Congregationalists who were against Union. This is clear from this paragraph:

I think that it would be wise to drop the

whole of this wretched Basis and get to work in a far more modest manner in a way which would promote the spirit of "unity" amongst the denominations and which would also preserve to each denomination its distinctive features. This would safeguard the individual sects and Churches against internal disruption. <(143)>

Tapp's letter discussed a number of issues which were raised in Congregationalist circles at this time. For clarity, these points will be stated one by one and then discussed as in the letter by quoting from the letter.

1. N.S.W. and Victoria were the strongest States and therefore had greater voting power. This was resented by the smaller States.

The Australian Union's decision in connection with Church Union was a foregone conclusion for the preponderance of delegates from N.S.W. and Victoria would swamp any votes from the smaller and more distant states. Especially considering the N.S.W. Union at a special session had passed resolutions identical with those carried at the larger assembly. <(144)>

2. Some Congregations were ignorant of the actual Basis but approved it because they were in favour of the spirit of Union.

Thank goodness the vote from our three Churches here was an intelligent vote for each Church held meetings which were largely attended and the Basis was thoroughly explained...It seems to me that the rights of individual Congregational members are being usurped by Committees composed of people who are insisting that the only door to Union is the one they are holding open and to close this door would mean the absolute shutting down of all possibilities for a closer cooperation. <(145)>

3. The question of denominational funds and institutions was raised. Some Congregationalists were unhappy about the destiny of

funds that had been given for purely Congregational purposes.

It seems to me we are heading for serious troubles. What is to happen to the Churches and men who decline to "walk into the parlour?" What about funds and institutions funded for purely Congregational purposes in the event of a certain number of Churches deciding to remain true to their principles. <(146)>

4. Denominational identity was threatened. Some felt this should be stressed.

Our denomination needs to be stiffened up. It seems to me that we have either to make good or go under and it is worth the attempt to make good. <(147)>

5. Union was regarded by some as a practical necessity for continued existence as a Church.

I have felt for a long time that as a people we have been looking to Union as a drowning man clutches at a straw and such an attitude is unworthy of us. <(148)>

On 13 February 1923 the Minister of Adelaide's Stow Memorial Church, the Rev. G. W. Wright, wrote to the Rev. Patison:

The Cooperating Committee is not too happy here, I regret to say, the Presbyterians are withdrawing from it. Some dispute with the Methodists regarding starting a new Adelaide suburb. I do not know the merits of the case, but Perry Jones says the latter are to blame. As far as I can see the issue will be decided in Victoria and N.S.W. It is hard to get joint sectional committees together here. <(149)>

DIFFICULTIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Very little was done in Western Australia. In a letter dated 7 April 1922 from a Victorian Joint Committee Secretary to his opposite partner in N.S.W., the Rev. H. A. Overend said:

I have had the same experience as you with Barclay of W.A., never having a line from him concerning anything yet. <(150)>

However, in the same letter, Overend commented to Patison:

I am glad to hear that Tasmania is now taking an active part in the movement. <(151)>

DIFFICULTIES IN QUEENSLAND

The situation in Queensland was not much better than in Western Australia. The Secretary of the Queensland Joint Committee on Church Union, the Rev. William Brown, indicated this when he wrote to the Rev. W. L. Patison on 29 January 1923:

I have not been able to do anything in regard to Joint Committee work since my return from Sydney partly for health reasons and partly because our Committee has been somewhat disorganised. Dr Glaister, the Chairman, has now sailed for Scotland. Dr Merringlow is away. When he returns I hope we shall meet and I propose asking to be relieved of the Secretaryship. <(152)>

DIFFICULTIES IN VICTORIA

The position in Victoria deteriorated as time went on. There was strong leadership for Union; but the expression of enthusiasm for it was constantly inhibited, because of an oversensitive reaction to the Presbyterian minorities against Union. This is clear from correspondence between the principals in the Church Union drama of the period. For example, on 7 April 1922 Overend wrote to

Patison in the following terms:

I received yours of the 3rd yesterday...I am sorry Dr Adams was not able to attend your Conference in Sydney, but I am glad you had so representative a gathering. Much good, I am confident, will come of it. I am glad you discussed the present situation in Victoria, for it is a somewhat delicate one for us of the Methodist and Congregational Churches. While we are most anxious that our Union proposals shall be given effect to, as soon as possible, yet we have been embarrassed by the attitude of the opponents of the scheme in the Presbyterian Church. I quite agree that the matter, as far as that Church is concerned, must be settled as speedily as possible and am in hearty agreement with the decisions the Sydney Conference arrived at.
<(153)>

Two months later, on 6 May 1922, Overend wrote to Patison again:

You will be sorry to know that at a meeting of the Victorian members of the Full Joint Committee representatives of the three Churches held on Wednesday last the suggestions of the Sydney meeting and of Dr Harper were not agreed to. The proposals of holding public meetings and united prayer meetings to educate the people and create the proper atmosphere were laid before the meeting in the terms of your letter - and I hoped that we might get something going: but when Mr Davidson and one or two others informed the meeting as to the delicate present position in the Presbyterian Church in Victoria speaker after speaker urged that to engage ourselves to such a programme would only be retarding the movement. As a compromise I moved that whilst we refrained from public meetings and used the Press, a series of united prayer meetings and Communion Services be arranged for. An amendment on this was however moved to this effect "That in view of the facts disclosed to the meeting we feel that it would be unwise to take any further steps in advocacy of the proposed Union until after the Presbyterian Assembly meets in September

next". This was carried. The whole debate turned on the fact or understanding amongst our Presbyterian brethren that no propaganda work should be done until next Assembly on which our friends feel sensitive. We were assured by Mr Davidson and others that everything is being done by them to bring about a successful issue in September and if we will patiently wait till then they are very hopeful of carrying the day. General Clarke informed me that the letter I wrote to the Editor of "The Presbyterian" enclosing the manifesto your Committee issued and requesting its publication has been brought before some meeting by the Editor (an official meeting I presume) and it was decided not to publish it. You can see from this how difficult it is for us to do anything at present. <(154)>

Further to the refusal to publish the manifesto, the following editorial comment appeared in The Presbyterian, published in Melbourne on April 19 1922:

The Rev. H. A. Overend has forwarded us the text of an article on Church Union, giving a summary of the "present position and prospect" under the four heads of "The Final Revision of Doctrine and Polity", the "Lambeth Appeal", the "Position in Canada", and "The Rising Tide". After careful consideration the editors feel sure that the article must be classed as propaganda, and is therefore excluded from our columns by an understanding with the Assembly. <(155)>

Commenting on this action by the editors, Patison wrote to Dr Harper on April 28 1922 in the following blunt way:

Whether it would be worthwhile to show that their "careful consideration" of the Assembly's pronouncement has brought them to a mare's nest, you must decide. <(156)>

The position reached in Victoria was best stated by Dr Adam who, as Chairman of the federal Joint Committee, was main spokesman

for the Presbyterian Unionists in Victoria. He wrote the N.S.W. Secretaries of the Joint Committee, W. H. Seal and W. L. Patison, a four page letter on 18 July 1922 explaining the Victorian point of view. Here he strongly disagreed with the N.S.W. representatives in wishing to call the Joint Committee on Union together before the Presbyterian General Assembly in order to take:

Such steps as may be deemed to be desirable to revive interest in the Union Movement, and to arrange propoganda in view of the taking of a further vote on the question of Presbyterianism. <(157)>

Dr Adam commented:

How could the Joint Committee on Union take steps "to arrange propoganda" before the General Assembly had decided to take this further vote? Would not the holding of a meeting of the Joint Committee at that time and with that purpose be premature and likely to provoke resentment as an attempt to influence or interfere with the freedom of the Presbyterian Assembly in the matter on the part to some extent at least of those belonging to other Churches? At a meeting of the Executive of the Joint Committee held here while Dr Harper was passing through the Committee heard this view and afterwards deliberated thereon and decided that it was not the part of the Joint Committee to seek to influence the Presbyterian Assembly in any way in the matter, but rather the part of the Presbyterian Union Committee itself. The Methodist and Congregational members of the Executive were especially strong on this point and held it would do harm rather than good for the Joint Committee to come in and attempt to do propogandist work in the interests of Union at this stage. <(158)>

The attitude in Victoria constituted a problem throughout the whole six years of the negotiations. It created in that State a degree of apathy which constantly disturbed leaders of the Union movement in other States.

The differences of approach to the Union movement in N.S.W. and

Victoria became more obvious later in 1922. The former was enthusiastic and positive, while the latter could best be described as ultra-cautious and negative. This was known and had considerable effect in the other States. The role of Victoria was particularly significant because the Executive of the Joint Committee was based there and even the N.S.W. members found it difficult to get action through it.

In a long letter to Dr Harper on 12 July 1922, the Convener of the Joint Committee clearly stated the need for caution in Victoria with these words:

Strong opinion was expressed that any appearance of undue haste or of forcing the issue would tend rather to defeat than to help forward the cause of Union at present. The opposition in Victoria seems very determined to bring about a split in the Church if Union is forced on in face of a minority anything like so strong as was revealed by the last vote. <(159)>

Dr Adam went on to explain at some length the basic reason why the Victorian Sectional Committee was unwilling to take the initiative and push towards Union as the N.S.W. Sectional Committee wished. Here he outlined issues so crucial to the whole story, that we quote it in full:

I can see that an opposing minority belonging to the former Presbyterian Church of Victoria would have a much stronger fighting position for holding out against any change in the doctrinal standard of the Church adopted in 1900, and claiming to retain all rights and privileges belonging to them as office bearers of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, than would a similar minority in N.S.W., Queensland, S. Australia or Tasmania. If you will look at the various enabling acts passed in 1900 by the different Parliaments, you will see what I mean. There are not a few in Victoria who, though anxious for Union, would not be prepared to vote for it, if they knew it would mean a serious split in the Church, and a dispute at law over property claims between the majority and the opposing minority under that last clause of the Victorian enabling act of 1900, which I fear would be inevitable. Our best hope of trying to bring

about a successful Union, it seems to me is to endeavour by every reasonable conciliation and patience to secure as large a majority in favour of Union here in Victoria as possible so that any Ministers or office bearers of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, objecting to alteration in the subordinate standard and claiming still to retain their rights and privileges in terms of the last clause of the small minority and cause as little trouble as possible. <(160)>

The influence of the use of what Dr Adam described here as 'every reasonable conciliation and patience' in the work of the Executive of the Joint Committee was felt in all States. In retrospect, it was the main single factor in the collapse of the Union movement in the twenties.

N.S.W. continued to fight an uphill battle. But a great deal of damage had already been done. This is clear from a frank letter the N.S.W. Secretaries wrote on 12 July 1922 to Dr Adam as the Chairman of the Joint Committee for Union. The following is a significant excerpt from it:

At a meeting of our Section of the Joint Committee yesterday afternoon, very serious consideration was given to the present position of the Union movement which was deemed to be disquieting. The idea seems to have become fairly general in most of the States, and even here in New South Wales, notwithstanding efforts to check it, and nothing further can be done by the Joint Committee to deepen interest in the movement or even to keep what interest there may be from flagging, because of some kind of embargo which the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church placed upon the united work of the Committee. <(161)>

The N.S.W. Committee rejected this interpretation of what the Assembly had done and pointed out that it is also:

One which we believe the Conference at Melbourne, last September, deliberately set aside, when it enlarged the Executive and appointed sub-committees to deal with Educative Effort, and to draw up general

clauses on law, property, etc. for the completion of the Basis. <(162)>

The Revs W. H. Beale and W. L. Patison then drew attention to a further problem:

Another impression which seems to have gained considerable ground of late, and which the Committee believes to be equally erroneous, though even more mischievous in its effect, is that the next Presbyterian General Assembly will reverse the decision of Presbyterianism regarding Union. <(163)>

Taken together, these two factors prompted the N.S.W. sectional committee to castigate the Executive in Melbourne for its failure to give a strong lead in the Union movement following the mandate given by the membership of the three Churches in the 1920 vote. The accusation was sharp and to the point:

At yesterday's meeting, the greatest dissatisfaction was expressed at the want of progress which has characterised the movement since last September, and it was felt that for the distinct waning of interest which is apparent, the attitude of silence and inactivity adopted by the Joint Committee, rather than any direct opposition to the movement, must be largely held to be responsible. <(164)>

The N.S.W. Committee felt it was 'of the utmost importance to meet before the Assembly' <(165)>. Dr Adam, however, considered that nothing useful could be done before the Assembly. This was certainly not the view of the Presbyterian member of the N.S.W. Committee, who wrote to the Convener on 22 July 1922 apologising for his absence from the next meeting but stating categorically:

a meeting of the Joint Committee must be held prior to the Assembly for us to obey the instructions of the Australian Assembly to consider and report on the matter of property, trust funds, etc. <(166)>

The Rev. W. J. Gray closed this letter by summing up in an honest and rather blunt way what he thought about the leadership that was being given the Union movement from Melbourne:

I hope our Committee will not be unduly influenced by Dr Adam's personal views nor by the (generally pessimistic) representations of his Committee. Melbourne is an important city and Victoria a rich and influential State, but neither the one nor the other nor both is Australia, and Australia desires and needs Church Union, and needs it urgently. <(167)>

This attitude was shared by others. Even the Rev. W. L. Patison, who had worked closely with Dr Adam for five years in the furtherance of Union, was prompted to say in his letter to Dr Harper on 2 January 1923:

I am afraid Dr Adam will become heavier the longer he is carried on the shoulders of this movement, but we must persevere. <(168)>

PLANS FOR JOINT COMMITTEE

Plans were made to hold the Joint Committee in Sydney from 7-9 November. This was to climax with a public meeting in St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, at which His Excellency the State Governor had agreed to preside. The purpose of this gathering of leaders from the States was clearly stated in this pulpit notice sent out to the Sydney Churches concerning the public meeting and requesting prayers for its success:

The chief object of the Conference is to decide upon some common course of action for the whole Commonwealth respecting cooperation with a view to Union; and the deepening of the interest of the people of the Churches concerned in the movement as a whole. <(169)>

But, even in spite of the obvious enthusiasm of the N.S.W. section, maybe because of it, the Victorian section continued to

reaffirm that it would not be pushed into an educational programme without its full consent. In a letter dated 6 October 1922, the Victorian Secretary, the Rev. R. Bayles, discussed with the N.S.W. Secretary arrangements for the hospitality for the Victorian delegates. But the letter closed with the following paragraph stating that Victorians must be left to decide what was right for Victoria and not be pressured by the forthcoming Conference:

WORDS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

With regard to other matters mentioned in your letter the following resolution was passed:

"We express our opinion that while it may be advisable for the Full Joint Committee to consider a scheme for an Educational Campaign and also to draw up a statement of the present position it must be distinctly understood that it should be left to the discretion of each State section as to how far any proposals that may be made should be put into effect within its bounds." <(170)>

1922 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 1922 General Assembly of Australia received the Amended Basis and moved:

to approve the amended Basis of Doctrine and Polity as in harmony with Presbyterian principles, and approve of Union on this as a Basis so far as concerns Doctrine and Polity. <(171)>

This Assembly also instructed the Committee:

to send this Basis down, in the first instance, to State Assemblies, and thereafter to Presbyteries, Sessions and Congregations, with instructions to report, through the Committee, before 15 November, 1923. <(172)>

There was considerable discussion and many amendments were attempted. The whole motion, comprising seven sections, was presented. This was approved 92 to 70. <(173)>

WORK OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee welcomed the 'deliverance' adopted by this 1922 General Assembly, that in the meantime, cooperation with a view to Union be actively prosecuted. In order that this cooperation could be prosecuted effectively, particularly in Home Mission and Church extension work, the General Assembly recommended:

that State Assemblies, Conferences, Presbyteries, Synods, etc. take the necessary steps to secure:

(a) that there should be the fullest confidence, and interchange of information, between the respective committees, and Boards, concerning the present position and prospective development of denominational enterprises;

(b) that such modification of present denominational procedure be authorised as will permit the forwarding of community Churches (i.e. the establishment of a Church, or change, in any given locality representing the negotiating Churches in such locality) and such other cooperative action as may be deemed to be necessary. <(174)>

Four Committees were set up to work with the Joint Committee during the following year. These were Property, Law and Finance, Educative Work, Cooperation and Preparation of the Manifesto.

The first of these was instructed:

to pay due regard to the uniform classification of properties, and to report their findings to each State Section of the Joint Committee at the earliest possible date. <(175)>

The second was asked to publish a signed manifesto and distribute it throughout the Commonwealth on 1 January 1923, to secure the observance of 18 March as Union Sunday with appropriate interchange of pulpits and to arrange conferences, public meetings and group meetings whenever possible. Agreement was also reached that this sub-committee should publish a paper or magazine early in 1923 in the interests of Union.

THE MANIFESTO

The Manifesto was prepared early in 1922 and published in more than sixty of the leading papers of the Commonwealth, as nearly as possible on the same day, Thursday March 23. In not a few instances leading articles also appeared, in some papers, in sympathy with the movement. <(176)>

This manifesto, entitled 'Church Union, Present Position and Prospect', was a very low key presentation of the position and prospect of the movement for the Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Australia. It began by stating:

the vote given by the members and adherents in September 1920...definitely established corporate Union as the policy to be approved and promoted and that the divisions of the Reformed Churches...can be healed without contravening conscience. <(177)>

The manifesto continued in the second paragraph to articulate the theme of the 1918-1923 Union movement. It stated:

All who believe in this movement will agree that it must win not force its way. Consequently, and in order that the process of winning may be expedited, there is need that the mind of the Church, in all quiet and non-polemic ways, should be educated and informed as to the greatness of the issues involved. <(178)>

In retrospect, it is difficult to understand why the Victorian Presbyterian refused to publish it for fear it would inflame the feelings of its membership and why the Presbyterian members of the Victorian section of the Joint Committee dissociated themselves from its preparation.

The manifesto went on to outline three factors that had deepened interest in the Union movement. These were firstly the final revision of the doctrine and polity, secondly, the Lambeth Appeal and thirdly, the position of the movement in Canada.

The manifesto closed, as it had begun, on a low-key appeal for unity within the body of Christ in the following terms:

Everywhere the tide of feeling which favours Union is steadily rising. Christian men in all lands are being caught up into a vision of the Church as the body of Christ which makes them look upon unnecessary divisions as a wound in that body which it is their first business to heal...all missionaries are for it, but even they are outrun in zeal by their converts who are saying that but for the echoes of battles of long ago, which their revered missionary teachers unconsciously brought with them, the rising native Churches would break down every barrier and have only an Evangelical Christian Church in India, one in China, one in Japan. This too is what Australia, so long as Australia is within the Church, has affirmed. The large majority, we believe desire one Evangelical Church in Australia and will rally round it as round nothing else. <(179)>

THE SECOND VOTE OF STATE ASSEMBLIES

In accordance with the instructions of the 1922 General Assembly, the amended Basis was sent to the State Assemblies in 1923. This second vote in the State Assemblies was lethal to those Presbyterians who had worked so hard for Union.

The State Assemblies of New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania voted as formerly in favour of Union although in the two former cases by diminished majorities - New South Wales 114 to 83, Queensland 31 to 26 and Tasmania 8 to 4. The other Assemblies voted against Union on this amended Basis, Victoria by 148 to 140, South Australia by 11 to 10 and West Australia by 16 to 14.

Under the constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, a majority of State Assemblies was required to effect a change in the subordinate standard of the Church. Looking at the figures

from South Australia one could argue that a deadlock in the Union movement had been reached by one vote !

The implications of the fact that three State Assemblies voted against Union on the proposed Basis were discussed at a meeting of the Union Committee of the Presbyterian Church held on 20 June 1923. Here it was resolved:

This committee considers it inadvisable in existing circumstances to carry out the instructions of the General Assembly of Australia with regard to the sending down of the amended Basis to Presbyteries, Sessions and Congregations for a vote and decides not to do so and to report this to the General Assembly of Australia. <(180)>

When this was reported by the Chairman at the next meeting of the Victorian section, the Rev. G. Tait moved:

That in the opinion of the Victorian Section of the Joint Committee in view of the present position and the decision of the Presbyterian Committee on Church Union, a meeting of the Joint Committee in December 1923 is unnecessary. <(181)>

It had been decided at the Sydney meeting in November 1922 that the next full meeting of the Joint Committee should be in December 1923. The above resolution was seconded by the Rev. R. Bayles and agreed to. It was further resolved:

that the minutes of the Joint Committee and its various sections be as far as possible collected, preserved and made accessible to the membership of the Joint Committee. <(182)>

This proposal to prepare and issue to the membership of the Joint Committee a clear historical statement regarding the Union Movement from its inception to its breakdown was never put into effect. At least no reference can be found to it now.

A statement of what had been done at this Victorian meeting was

sent to the sections of the Joint Committee in the other States. The Church Union Committee explained to the 1924 Assembly:

whereas in 1920 all the State Assemblies, by decided majorities, expressed approval of Union on the proposed Basis of Doctrine and Polity - Victoria by 123 votes to 48, New South Wales by 41 to 23, Queensland by 26 to 13, Western Australia by 15 to 11, Tasmania by 11 to 5, and South Australia unanimously - in 1923 three of these State Assemblies expressed disapproval of Union on that same basis slightly amended so as to bring it more into accord with Presbyterian wishes and suggestions - Victoria by 148 votes to 140, South Australia by 11 to 10, and Western Australia by 16 to 14. <(183)>

In the light of this unexpected development delegates to the 1924 General Assembly felt compelled to recognise the evidence of such a divided state of feeling and opinion among the office-bearers and people of the Presbyterian Church of Australia as to make it inadvisable to press forward to organic Union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches. They therefore resolved:

to await the time when, under the leading of Divine Providence, a way may be opened up whereby these and other divisions of Christ's one Church may be happily healed in accordance with His Will. <(184)>

The Church Union Committee was then thanked and discharged <(185)>. At the same time, a new Committee was appointed:

to endeavour, in conjunction with the State Assemblies, to promote such cooperation as may be found practicable under existing circumstances and as may help towards more effective Christian unity. <(186)>

The original motion presented to the Assembly used the word 'Union'; but this was amended to 'unity'. It was obvious that the anti-Union forces within the Presbyterian Church had triumphed. The United Church of Australia which had been given such care in the prenatal stage was killed just prior to its birth.

REACTION TO UNION COLLAPSE

The other two Churches were obviously very disappointed at this sudden end to the enterprise into which so much effort had been poured for over two decades. The Executive Committee's report to the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand meeting at Hobart in 1925 clearly reflected this disappointment:

During the past Triennial period events have happened not altogether inspiring or encouraging. One had reference to the three Churches contemplating Union on the proposed Basis initiated by the Presbyterian Church. Under the signature of the Moderator General and the Clerk of the Assembly, the Presbyterian Church of Australia expresses its appreciation of the Christian courtesy and patience with which the Committees of the Sister Churches met its Committee during the long negotiations, and forwarded the Minute passed by the Assembly in Sydney in September, 1924. <(187)>

The 1926 Methodist General Conference was bluntly notified as follows:

shortly after last General Conference information was received from the Presbyterian Union Committee that it has come to the decision that it was useless to proceed further with the movement at present. <(188)>

The Methodist Union Committee was then promptly discharged <(189)>. The speed with which this operation was taken reflected the intense disappointment of the Methodists in the complete collapse of union plans.

The reaction among the rank and file members of the three Churches to the end of this great vision of three evangelical Churches working together in serving Australia was mixed. There was, of course, not a little frustration on the part of many. Some were silenced either through embarrassment or sheer

disbelief at the rapid change in events. Others were relieved, because they could slip back into their old patterns of behaviour. A few were vocal in expressing their feelings like 'An Australian Presbyterian' who wrote from Brisbane in the 6 November 1924 issue of The Courier. He said:

Lest silence may appear to be acquiescence with the humiliating decision of the Presbyterian General Assembly recently held in Sydney to drop negotiations for union...I desire, through the medium of your columns, to express my own deep regret and that of many other Presbyterians at this lamentable end to years of honest endeavour to find a basis of union. I do so for the following reasons:

(1) It was the Presbyterian Church that initiated the negotiations...

(2) The reason given to the public for the breaking off of negotiations is that "the integrity of our Church was threatened". That is a minority threatened to reject the decision of the majority of the members of the Presbyterian Assembly, where majority rule is law...

(3) The hopes of many Presbyterians have been dashed to the ground...

(4) But the chief reason of regret that Presbyterians were weak enough to allow themselves to be stampeded lies in the fact that Christianity in Australia has suffered a blow. It has been wounded in one of the houses of its friends. It is notorious that the Protestant denominations have overlapped one another in a spirit of competition, like rival shops. The Churches themselves have confessed the scandal of it...

One is humiliated as a Presbyterian...Let us hear what defence our spiritual guides have to offer for their retrograde action <(190)>

REVIEWING THE COLLAPSE OF THE UNITED CHURCH

The question posed by 'An Australian Presbyterian' is certainly not easy to answer. But we must attempt to identify some of the

factors why the United Church, which had such a healthy early pregnancy between 1918-20, became still born three years later, when many were preparing to celebrate the arrival of a healthy ecclesiastical infant in 1923.

The cause of death was clearly within the Presbyterian Church. Both the Methodist and Congregational Churches had such a clear mandate for Union from their members that they were prepared to handle the amendments to the Basis in their State and Federal Courts without a second vote of their memberships.

The Presbyterian Church, however, was required by its constitution to refer all the amendments to its members. This was never done as a majority of the State Assemblies did not approve Union. As mentioned earlier, if one delegate in the South Australian General Assembly had voted differently, the vote of the membership would have been taken as directed by the 1922 General Assembly.

Death must be traced to the vocal minority in the Presbyterian Church. The interesting question posed by 'An Australian Presbyterian' was: 'Why did this minority object to Union?' The question still remains unanswered.

The first objection, made by the Presbyterian minority, concerned doctrine. The amended Basis was not exactly the same as the Westminster Confession. But it encompassed the main items of this historical theological statement. The Basis was so comprehensive that some Congregationalists complained loudly that they were being placed in a theological strait-jacket.

No one ever tried, by sustained theological argument, to prove any heresy in the Basis of Union. At worst, it could only be argued that some theological issues were insufficiently discussed and inadequately expressed. Even the Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church explained to the other two Churches:

so far as revealed in the course of these negotiations for Union there is no bar in principle to Union between the three negotiating Churches. <(191)>

The second objection, from the Presbyterian minority, was that the polity was not truly Presbyterian. This was as difficult to sustain as the first. The supporters of Union replied to it by saying:

Presbyterianism cannot be lost because the United Church will be Presbyterian in order. <(192)>

Not only the polity, but also the terminology was Presbyterian. This disturbed the Methodists, who were so proud of the effective working of their connexional system that they were loathe to change it. And the Congregationalists considered that the autonomy of the local congregations was being sold too cheaply. However, most Methodists and Congregationalists were willing to surrender significant aspects of their own systems and accept what was basically Presbyterian polity in order to have the Presbyterians in the United Church. Even the long debate on the way ministers should be appointed in the United Church was finally resolved in favour of the Presbyterian call system.

A third objection, among the Presbyterian minority, was that Presbyterian property and bequests would be applied contrary to the intention of the original benefactors. This objection reinforces the conviction that some opponents to Union were less than completely honest in their efforts because those who gave money to the Church (whether Presbyterian, Methodist or Congregational) intended it to be used for the advancement of the Kingdom of God rather than the furtherance of denominational names or interests. It illustrates the kind of non-theological arguments designed to arouse emotions antagonistic to Union.

A fourth and very important objection was expressed bluntly in The Messenger of 2 March 1923:

The opposition by the various Presbyterian congregations is only a fight for Scottish and Irish nationalism. <(193)>

This comment is perhaps the most honest reason for the opposition of the minority within the Presbyterian Church. There were those who simply wanted to cling to old ways, rather than try to express the Gospel in a new country in a new way. They were prepared to listen with greater attention to the skirling of the pipes on the heathered hills of Scotland than to a man from Nazareth who prayed:

that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou has sent me and hast loved them. <(194)>

That is to say, Scottish ethnic considerations exerted more influence than Christian theological convictions in aborting the Union movement between 1916-23. These ethnic factors remained as

strong no matter how much the Basis of Union was amended. For the vocal minority they became embodied in Presbyterianism. Voting for Union, therefore, was tantamount to voting against what gave them self-identity.

Discussion on Church Union began in Canberra only two years after the Presbyterian General Assembly resolved that it was

(inadvisable at present to press forward to organic Union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches on this (i.e. 1929) Basis. (1))

A combined meeting of the Canberra representatives from the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational denominations declared:

Canberra offers an opportunity for the manifestation of fellowship in Christian service such as may not be ignored without grave responsibility. (2)

This combined meeting was held on 13 March 1929. It resulted from informal conversations in Sydney, after the opening of the Federal Parliament in Canberra in 1927, between the leaders of the three denominations and the preparation by a representative delegation from Sydney of a memorandum to the members of the three participating Churches in Canberra, who considered it at separate local conferences in 1928.

The outcome of these discussions was a paper entitled Conversations Concerning Cooperation at Canberra (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational Churches). The section of this document headed 'Guiding Principles' reflected clearly the thinking of the members of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canberra during 1928. It stated:

While it is understood that this united effort in Christian service is not intended to disturb, or in any way weaken the denominational loyalties of those engaging in it, the hope is expressed that in all that concerns the local work of the Churches and Sunday School there will be sincerest cooperation and even deeper loyalty than

CHAPTER FIVE

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANBERRA

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could have been called forth by these Churches acting separately. <(3)>

Further, this Canberra conference of delegates from the three Churches passed the following two resolutions which were endorsed by each Church meeting separately:

That this meeting of representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches heartily approve the general plan of cooperation as outlined. That in the judgement of those present, and with a view of furthering the movement for cooperation, it is desirable that a provisional local Council be appointed, consisting of the local ministers and four representatives from each of the three denominations, such representatives to be appointed in accordance with the usual procedure of the denomination concerned. <(4)>

CANBERRA COOPERATIVE COUNCIL FORMED

The first meeting of the Council of Representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational denominations in Canberra was held at the Hotel Wellington on Monday, 7 May 1928 at 4.30 p.m. The Rev. John Walker (Presbyterian) was appointed Chairman, the Rev. E. L. Vercoe (Methodist) Vice-Chairman and Mr. C. R. Greig (Congregational) Secretary. This meeting made important decisions in three areas.

First, interchange between ministers and congregations was to be encouraged in the following way:

Pleasure was expressed by members of the meeting at the conduct of services in the Friendly Societies Hall at Eastlake in the morning by the Methodist Church and evening by the Presbyterian Church. <(5)>

The meeting resolved:

That members of each denomination situated in the District should be advised to attend the services both in the morning and evening at the Friendly Societies Hall. <(6)>

Second, it was decided:

that the services being held on the north side of the river should continue as they are at present. <(7)>

This excluded the Methodists worshipping in the new building at South Ainslie and the Presbyterian cause at Braddon. Both these congregations continued on denominational lines:

because of the great difficulty that would be experienced in re-arranging certain financial commitments. <(8)>

It is significant to note that these two congregations were excluded from the cooperative movement not because of theological issues but because of the existence of two pieces of property and financial consideration.

Third, a sub-committee was appointed:

to arrange for combined Sunday School services to be held at Eastlake...It was considered that there was great scope for cooperation in this direction between the three bodies. <(9)>

Enthusiasm for cooperation was very high. But the movement was not without some difficult practical problems. Chief of these were the government conditions associated with the development of that land given to each Church for a 'Central Site', such as the high minimum cost of the buildings and the time limit within which construction on these sites should be commenced. A second series of problems emerged because the Australia-wide appeal for the Methodist Central Church was continuing concurrently with the cooperative movement.

In spite of these difficulties, the second meeting of the Canberra Cooperative Council indicated considerable progress. It was held in the Prebyterian Hall at Ainslie on Friday, 14 December, 1928, at 8 p.m. On this occasion the Rev. John Walker reported upon the Brisbane General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and stated that cooperation was definitely endorsed by the Assembly. <(10)>

The meeting then discussed the resolutions agreed upon at a conference of federal representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. The first, that the three sites for Central Churches be retained <(11)>, was endorsed. The second raised some objections but was finally passed. It read:

It is desirable to build one main Church, or portion thereof, speedily, and that the erection by the Presbyterians of their Central Church, or portion thereof, be approved, on the understanding that it be used for Sunday and other services by the three denominations. <(12)>

An amendment:

that the Central Church should remain absolutely the possession of the Presbyterian Church or any other Church of any other denomination and that the system of control should be vested in that body only <(13)>

lapsed for want of a seconder. The Presbyterian minister stressed the need for a spirit of cooperation between the three denominations. <(14)>

The third resolution, which was carried unanimously by the meeting, involved almost immediate action. It stated:

It is desirable at once to build a hall for Sunday School and community purposes and that the erection by the Methodists of such a hall, on their central site, be approved. <(15)>

It was further agreed:

that services be commenced at Molonglo, Westridge, or Westlake and Russell Hill; that the service in the Ainslie Presbyterian Church Hall on Sunday evening and services in Kingston be made cooperative. <(16)>

METHODIST CENTRAL HALL PLANNED

The Methodist Church General Conference Committee, meeting in Sydney on 14 January, 1929, decided to go on with the erection of the School Hall on the Methodist Site <(17)>. At the next Methodist Quarterly Meeting on 4 February 1929 this action was endorsed. An extract from the minutes reads:

Reports of representatives to the Canberra Central Committee and the Council for Cooperation were adopted. These showed that a School Hall to cost 5,000 pounds is to be proceeded with on the Central Site and that the scheme of cooperation is to commence forthwith. <(18)>

Later in the year, the School Hall on the Methodist Central Site was commenced. Simmie & Co. of Canberra was the successful tenderer. The building, which comprised a main hall and a kindergarten hall, together with classrooms, kitchen and toilets was promised for occupation during March, 1930. <(19)>

In preparation for this event, the meeting of the Canberra Cooperative Council held at the Presbyterian Church Hall, Ainslie, on 1 March 1929, resolved:

that the three ministers be asked to draw up a roster of services as from the beginning of April. <(20)>

When Central Hall was eventually opened, the united services were indicated on the circuit plan under the heading 'Cooperative Services (Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational)'. The services at the Reid Church (renamed on 24 April 1929) were listed as specifically Methodist. This practice of distinguishing between the services at Central and Reid that continued until the

end of October, 1934, is clearly stated in the plans of the services.

CONGREGATIONAL CENTRAL SITE CHANGED

One clear indication of the depth of cooperation during this period was the discussion in the Council on the proposal of the Congregationalists to change the site for their central building from Kingston to Acton-Turner. The Congregational minister on the Council, the Rev. F. F. Wheaton, reported that this site would be useful for cooperation or as a Central Site <(21)>. A Congregational layman, Mr K. Binns, referred to the fact that Kingston was a floating population and he thought it better to remove to Acton-Turner coming as near to Civic Centre as possible to make a Central Church. <(22)>

Rev. E. L. Vercoe then moved:

That this meeting having heard the report of the Rev. F. F. Wheaton representing the views of the local Congregationalists re-building proposals, express their agreement with the proposed plan for the Congregationalists withdrawing from building at Kingston. <(23)>

After the motion was carried, a second was submitted and passed. It read:

That if the Central Cooperative body thought it wise for the Congregationalists to build at Acton-Turner, it would be with the consent of this local Council. <(24)>

At a later meeting of the Council, Mr Wheaton stated that a committee from the Congregational Home Mission in Sydney had visited Canberra investigating sites at Turner-Acton. A tentative site was selected near Civic Centre. <(25)>

COOPERATIVE SERVICES COMMENCE

As relationships reached a deeper level within the three cooperating Churches, the issue of authority in policy making was raised. At the seventh meeting of the Council held at the

Presbyterian Manse on Friday, 4 October, 1929, it was resolved:

That each of the cooperating bodies consider a scheme as to how the Church on the Central Site is to be governed and report to a later Council. <(26)>

This initiated the development of 'proposals for services in the School Hall on the Methodist Central Site' <(27)> It was decided:

the services to be held in the Hall should be known as the Cooperative Services of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of Canberra. <(28)>

The specific proposals of the Council covering such diverse details as the financial support, the orders of service, the preaching plan, the celebration of sacraments, the appointment of stewards and the operation of the Sunday School were eventually accepted by the governing bodies of the three Churches. <(29)>

It is indicative of the sensitive approach to the whole cooperative movement that the Council decided unanimously that the Congregational Hymn Book be used at Public Worship <(30)>. It was stated that the Congregationalists had sacrificed in the interests of cooperation <(31)>. They had supported a full-time minister for twelve months and helped to make the cooperative cause stronger in Canberra. It was felt by all that the use of the Congregational Hymn Book would identify the Congregationalists more closely with the cooperative movement.

The opening of the Methodist Hall announced a new and more intensive phase in the denominational cooperation at Canberra. The Council secured the loan of the organ in the Friendly Societies Hall, Kingston, for use in the new Methodist Hall <(32)>, and approved the purchase of a piano and the appointment of Mr A. R. Peters as organist. Mr E. Fulton was appointed choir master and Mr A. Bolle Sunday School Superintendent.

Further, Mr Campbell reported that the Christian Endeavour Society was to hold its fortnightly meeting in future on the Central Site <(33)>. The Rev. J. E. Owen informed the Council:

that he had organised a Young Men's Club

called St Andrew's Club for bible study and social intercourse. Mr Owen sought approval for the transfer of the activities of the society to the cooperative movement. The meeting was unanimously of the opinion that the suggestion was a good one and should prove a strong force in cooperation. <(34)>

Central Methodist Hall was opened on 3 May 1930 by the Methodist President-General, the Rev. Frank Lade. Reporting the event as 'of great interest to the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational communities in Canberra,' the Australian Christian World commented:

It may become a date of importance in the religious history of Australia. <(35)>

This article entitled 'Church Cooperation at Canberra' continued:

The whole of the proceedings were notable for a fine spirit of unity which promises great success for the cooperative movement, which may now be said to have entered upon its real testing period...From now until the Presbyterian Church is completed - probably twelve months hence - the three Churches will cooperate in the most important Church work that they do in the Federal City. The ministers will conduct services in the new hall in rotation according to an order of service agreed upon amongst themselves. Probably for the first time in history, the Congregational Hymn Book will be used exclusively in the Methodist Hall in divine worship in which the members of the three denominations will join without any distinguishing features. The decision to use the Congregational book was made partly because under the scheme of cooperation the Congregational Church will have no building in Canberra, having volunteered to defer building operations in order that the cooperative scheme may be thoroughly tested under the best possible conditions. <(36)>

A month prior to the opening of Central Hall, which became known

the following year as the Cooperative Church Hall <(37)>, all the circuits of the Victorian Conferences were contacted by the Canberra members of the Canberra General Conference Committee. The purpose was to appeal to Victorians to meet their portion of the financial target set for the various State Conferences by the Brisbane General Conference. This letter shows clearly how the Methodists radically re-shaped their plans to build their Central Church in order to make the cooperative movement a reality.

Consequent upon the decision of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches, throughout their central courts, to carry on cooperative work in the Federal Capital, the General Conference Canberra Committee decided not to build a Church on the central site at an estimated cost of 30,000 pounds as first proposed, but to build a Church hall at a cost of 6,000 pounds. The Committee has therefore involved itself in an expenditure in Canberra (apart from the Reid Sunday School Hall, which is part of the local responsibility) of 9,000 pounds. Methodist expenditure in Canberra has been on a modest scale compared with that of the Presbyterian Church, which is at present erecting a magnificent Church at an expenditure of about 40,000 pounds (first portion). Because of the peculiar layout of Canberra, only about half the local Methodists will be able to use the central building for worship; the remainder will still worship at the suburban Church at Reid. Presbyterians and Congregationalists will share in the use of the building, but its erection is solely a Methodist responsibility. It would be utterly impossible for the handful of Methodist people to raise the money required for the central building, particularly as they have undertaken to share the heavy trust debt that still remains on the Reid property. <(38)>

This letter, signed by E. L. Vercoe, W. V. Lancaster, W. Campbell, J. S. Crapp and J. E. Edwards closed with the following comment:

This is a national appeal to us as Australian people and the obligation is certainly ours as responsible officers of the Church and citizens of the Commonwealth to see that our

Church makes its contribution to the spiritual wellbeing at the Nation's Capital. <(39)>

Methodist Central Hall became the physical base for the cooperative movement. It greatly strengthened the work. At the Congregational Biennial Assembly in Melbourne on 20 November 1931 this was made clear in the report that stated:

With the opening of the Central Methodist Hall, early last year, cooperation entered upon new and more promising progress. <(40)>

This intensification of cooperation between the Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians in the 'southern half of the Capital' <(41)> led Mr C. R. Greig, who had served as the very efficient secretary of the Council, to resign. Living at Reid, Greig wrote to the President of the Church Cooperative Council on 13 February, 1931 as follows:

It is with regret that I tender my resignation as Secretary of your Council. I feel that the time has arrived when one more in touch with the centre of the cooperative movement should take over the reins of Secretary, which I have carried up to the present. Since the Church services have been held at the Central Cooperative Hall I have found it increasingly difficult to keep in touch, as a Secretary should, with the movement. <(42)>

This resignation was accepted with regret and there was entered in the minutes an expression of appreciation of the work and interest displayed by Mr Greig, who had been secretary since the inception of the Council <(43)>. The position of secretary was accepted by another Congregationalist, Mr H. J. Exley, living in Empire Circuit, Forrest.

Another example of the growing cooperation between the three denominations was the combined Christian Education Program at Methodist Central Hall. Following the report from Mr Bolle that 'the new Sunday School on the Central Site...was flourishing', <(44)> the Council, on 4 July 1930, resolved:

that this Council gives permission to the Sunday School Teachers' Meeting to draw up a constitution and to present it to this Council for confirmation. <(45)>

The constitution was considered at the next two meetings of the Council and finally approved on 13 February 1931. <(46)>

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BEGINS

The Foundation Stone of the Church of St Andrew was laid by His Excellency the Governor-General on Wednesday, 27 November, 1929 at 11.30 a.m. Almost a year passed, however, before the Council discussed the implications of changing the services to St Andrew's as was agreed in the original plan. On 22 August, 1930, the Methodist minister initiated a discussion on the steps to be taken in preparation for changing the united services from the Methodist Hall to 'St Andrew's Cathedral'. The minutes of the Cooperative Church Council contain this record:

Rev. Vercoe referred to the prospective transfer of cooperative services from the Methodist Hall to St Andrew's Cathedral and said that as the matter would be mentioned at the forthcoming Methodist Conference the Methodist representative on the Council desired to know whether any alterations in the present arrangements were likely to be proposed. Dr Walker stated that he did not think any alterations were likely to be suggested. <(47)>

All three denominations looked towards the opening of the new Presbyterian Church as the complete fulfilment of the cooperative movement. The Canberra Committee reported to the Biennial Assembly in Melbourne on 20 November 1931 as follows:

Regarding the immediate future of our work in Canberra, the Committee understands that with the opening of the Presbyterian Central Church, the same conditions as now exist will govern the united services and Sunday School. <(48)>

STRONG SUPPORT FOR COOPERATIVE SCHEME

With 'the cooperative hall' completed on the Methodist Central Site and the Church under construction on the Presbyterian Central Site, W. J. Campbell indicated to the Council meeting, on 13 February 1931, that he wished to make a statement on the cooperative scheme at the forthcoming N.S.W. Methodist Conference. To this end, he requested the membership of each of the three denominations to express their opinion as to the success of cooperative Christian work. Following discussion the Council resolved:

to call a meeting of the local Methodists to secure a declaration of their views as to the functioning of the scheme to date, and it was suggested that the Presbyterians and Congregationalists should act similarly so as to reaffirm their confidence in cooperation and their resolve to continue. <(49)>

The outcome of this action was reported at the next meeting of the Council, on 20 March 1931. Mr Edwards tabled this resolution which had been passed by a recent meeting of Canberra Methodists:

This meeting of Methodist members and adherents approves of the continuance of the cooperative scheme in Canberra, in the hope that it will lead to a greater measure of cooperation between the Churches and ultimately to a United Australian Church. <(50)>

The thinking of the Presbyterians was expressed in a letter to the Council from K. C. Waugh of Dominion Circuit, Forrest, on 2 June 1931. Part of this read as follows:

At the annual congregational meeting of the Presbyterian Church of Canberra, held on 1st June, there was a discussion upon the subject of cooperation...The congregation unanimously endorsed the cooperative movement and a resolution was passed as follows:

That this congregation warmly

endorses the movement for cooperation between Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches in the Federal Capital, and, believing that this movement is in unison with the Divine Will, prays for its advancement in such measures as thereby will the Kingdom of God be extended.

I shall be glad if you will inform the Council of the resolution and assure them of the earnest desire of members of the Presbyterian Church to do all in their power to help the movement. <(51)>

The local opinion of Congregationalists was clearly expressed in this excerpt from the report of their Canberra Committee to their Biennial Assembly in Melbourne on 20 November 1931:

The conditions under which cooperation should be carried on in the Methodist Central Hall were largely suggested by Methodists themselves... Apart altogether from Congregational influence, it was decided that the Congregational hymnary should be used at all united services... The united services have been well maintained, and the Congregationalists are unanimously in favour of continuing cooperation as the best means of meeting the spiritual needs and peculiar conditions of the Federal Capital. They feel that by the extremely fair and generous treatment which they have received from the two stronger denominations, they are not only kept from losing their own identity, but given an opportunity for spiritual influence as great, if not greater than they could have had under any other circumstances. They enjoy the confidence of Methodists and Presbyterians alike, and by this are specially stimulated to manifest a loyalty to the best ideals for which Congregationalism stands. <(52)>

The indication in this report that the Methodists initiated the cooperative movement was made clear on the occasion when the Council discussed the termination of the Rev. E. L. Vercoe's ministry in Canberra after five years. The Chairman, the Rev. E.

Owen, spoke in complimentary terms of his work in Canberra and expressed regret at the prospect of his departure <(53)>. A Congregationalist representative, Mr K. Binns, according to the Council minutes, supported Mr Owen's remarks and said

'that the success of cooperation was largely due to Rev. E. L. Vercoe. He also paid a tribute to Mr Vercoe's self-effacing attitude when the cause of cooperation could thereby be served'. <(54)>

Cooperation continued to grow not only in worship services on the Central Site but also at Duntroon and Molonglo. The Council, on 16 October 1931, decided that a roll of members and adherents attending the cooperative services be supplied by the respective ministers <(55)> in order to provide for a record of attendance to be kept for examination by the ministers <(56)> and the possibility of agreement to definite ministerial oversight by a particular minister <(57)>.

At this same meeting the question was raised of the application of cooperation to the Churches at Reid and Braddon <(58)>. But nothing further was done in this matter. The minutes of the Cooperative Council stated:

It has been decided by this Council that any new work opened up within Canberra should be approved by this Cooperative Council. <(59)>

Cooperative services were not restricted to the Methodist Central Hall. For some years they had been held at Westridge and Westlake <(60)>. At the Council meeting of 4 December 1931, the Rev. R. C. Barlow, reported that the services at Duntroon and Molonglo were being conducted on a cooperative basis <(61)>.

Every effort was being made to deepen the sense of community within the cooperative congregation meeting in Central Hall. Considerable effort was expended on arranging a social evening. Specially printed invitation cards were sent to all members and adherents inviting them to the Cooperative Hall <(62)>.

This social, held on 2 December, was so enjoyable and successful in bringing people together that the Council resolved to hold a similar function early in March 1932 <(63)> and expressed:

the desirability of holding a social on the

north of the river...in the interests of cooperation on the north side of the river. <(64)>

During the discussion on the issue of witness in the northern section of Canberra <(65)>, Mr Campbell reported that this subject would be discussed at the Methodist Quarterly Meeting. Mr Bolle reported that the matter had been dealt with at the Presbyterian Church Session and the principle of ministerial oversight had been endorsed. It was agreed that the Revs. J. E. Owen and R. C. Barlow should act for periods of three months in rotation.

Another difficult matter was raised at this meeting. This concerned the question of finance, as affected by the transfer to the Presbyterian Cathedral <(66)>. The issue was deferred until early in 1932:

in view of the difficulty in forecasting the opening date and the uncertainty of the financial position. <(67)>

At the next meeting, on 5 February 1932, W.J. Campbell indicated that a notice of motion had been given at a recent Methodist Quarterly Meeting requesting that the three Canberra Churches should either move towards Union or terminate cooperation. This resolution was passed by the Methodists on 29 April 1932 and forwarded for consideration of the Cooperative Council on 6 May 1932. It read:

That this Quarterly Meeting is of the opinion that its two years' experience of religious cooperation with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches had amply demonstrated the practicability of establishing a united Church in Canberra. In view of the great difficulty which the members of the various Churches have admitted in maintaining loyalty alike to the cooperative movement and to the various denominational activities, we intimate to the General Conference Canberra Committee our desire that steps be taken at the forthcoming General Conference to establish a United Church in the Federal Capital to replace the present cooperative work. Further, we invite the Local Council for Cooperation to endorse the view that the time is ripe for the

establishment of a United Church here, and to request the Joint Committee for Church Cooperation to approach the governing bodies of the respective Churches to take action at an early date to give effect to this proposal. In the event of any of the cooperating bodies disapproving of this proposal we are of the opinion that it would be in the best interests of the work of the various Churches in Canberra to revert to denominational activities until such time as the cooperating Churches have successfully negotiated for the establishment of a United Australia Church. <(68)>

The representatives of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches were asked to secure the reactions of their various governing bodies to the alternatives set out in this resolution. These were presented clearly to the Council at its meeting on 22 July 1932.

The Session and Board of Management of the Canberra Presbyterian Church expressed the attitudes of Canberra Presbyterians on 21 June 1932, in the following way:

The members of the Session and Board of Management of the Canberra Presbyterian Church are of the opinion that efforts should be made to bring the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches at Canberra into closer Union and they therefore recommend to the representatives of the Presbyterian Church who are members of the Central Cooperative Committee at Sydney, that arrangements be made for a representative of each of the Cooperating Churches to visit Canberra with the object of developing the cooperation that at present exists and establishing a United Church at Canberra if this is possible. <(69)>

The Canberra Congregational Church, on 8 May 1932, also took a very positive stand and resolved:

We, the members of the Canberra Congregational Church, having carefully considered the Resolution of the Methodist Quarterly Meeting, passed on the 29th April

1932, are in complete agreement in the desirability of establishing a United Church in Canberra; for it has always been our sincere hope and endeavour that the Cooperative arrangement should lead to the establishment of a United Church of the three denominations in the Federal Capital.

We therefore commend to the Central Committee of the Australian Union for favourable consideration and appropriate action the resolution of the Methodist Quarterly Meeting, together with the foregoing opinion of the Congregational Fellowship. We also express the strong hope that until such Union is consummated, cooperation as at present existing will be continued and developed. <(70)>

After these statements on Church Union by the three cooperating Churches had been discussed, the Council resolved:

that a delegation from the Sydney Joint Council representative of the three Churches visit Canberra at an early date to discuss the development of cooperation and negotiations for a United Church be heartily endorsed and we urge that such a visit be arranged as soon as practicable. <(71)>

SYDNEY JOINT COUNCIL VISIT TO CANBERRA

This meeting was convened in Central Methodist Hall on Tuesday, 9 August 1932. After the devotional opening, the Rev. J. W. Burton suggested that each of the Sydney representatives should report on the recent meetings of the Sydney representatives with their local Church authorities. This was done.

The Rev. Dr McIntyre, speaking on behalf of the Presbyterian Church, stated:

the meeting of Presbyterians had been unanimous in its desire for a united fellowship in a Union Church for the whole of Canberra treated as a single parish or circuit to be administered locally. Both clergy and members would, however, retain all their denominational rights. <(72)>

The Rev. H. W. Woodhouse, the Methodist spokesman, gave a brief and cautious expression of the consensus in the Methodist Church. He said:

The local Methodists aimed at an increase of cooperation, both in areas and intensity, rather than Union. They desired the inclusion of the northern suburbs in the sphere of the work. <(73)>

This comment concerning greater cooperation rather than Union is inconsistent with the position previously stated by the Methodists. The explanation for it can be found in the minutes of the Methodist Quarterly Meeting held on 26 November 1932, when E. W. T. Yandell expressed a minority opinion evident months earlier by moving:

That while we support the spirit of unity between the Churches, we consider that the time is not ripe for an attempt at Union - this being evidenced by the lack of any demand from the body of Church members especially on the Presbyterian side. <(74)>

Mr Woodhouse had attempted to reflect the thinking of those in the Reid congregation, who indicated that they were against organic Union by supporting this recommendation of Mr Yandell when the issue surfaced at the Quarterly Meeting.

Mr K. Binns, the Congregational representative, followed H. W. Woodhouse and stated:

The Congregational Church made a plea, not for greater cooperation, but for unity. The Congregational Church had no buildings and no minister in Canberra, but they desired a greater share in the responsibilities of the movement. <(75)>

The statements from the three Churches were then followed by discussion. Sixteen principles were then formed and carried

unanimously. The first of these was:

That the joint meeting favours the idea of forming in Canberra a united Church fellowship under one central authority, and proceeds to discuss how this may be carried out. <(76)>

The second principle gave the title to this chapter. It read:

That the Church be called 'The United Church of Canberra (Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational)'. <(77)>

FROM COOPERATIVE TO UNION

When the representatives of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches gathered at Braddon in December 1932 to discuss the formation of 'The United Church of Canberra', W. J. Campbell expressed the high hopes of many members of the three Churches in Canberra when he said:

I believe that we may strike a spark tonight that will kindle a flame for united Christian work that will spread throughout the Commonwealth and make possible the achievement of great things for God. <(78)>

Although a keen Methodist all his life and a Methodist Local Preacher since 1911, Mr Campbell had caught the vision of Methodism being absorbed in a wider Christian Church in Canberra.

The following year Mr Campbell reported with confidence to the New South Wales Conference of the Methodist Church that the high hopes for a United Church in Canberra had been converted into firm agreements by the various courts of the three denominations. He spoke at the Home Mission Demonstration in the Lyceum Theatre, on 1 March 1933, in these terms:

We have made an agreement, endorsed by the governing bodies of the three Churches and

the local congregations of the three Churches meeting separately and unitedly which provides for the greatest measure of unity yet consented to in Australia. This agreement provides among other things for:

1. One membership roll.
2. Equal ministerial collegueship.
3. One governing Council.
4. One common fund.
5. One preaching plan.

Yet provision is made for adherence to legal requirements to the three Churches pending consummation of Union throughout Australia - a day which we dare believe is not so distant as some now think. <(79)>

The vision and conviction of leading Canberra members of the three cooperating Churches were clearly reflected in these closing comments of this permanent Hansard officer of Federal Parliament:

We look forward with earnest hope and much confidence to the unification of all the work of the three Churches throughout the Federal City. We expect so effectively to demonstrate the essential unity of these Churches as to hasten the coming of their complete unity throughout the Commonwealth.

Our fellowship with the people of the other Churches has been so happy and our Christian experience under the ministry alike of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational preachers so spiritually satisfying that we feel we must pursue this quest for unity.

We ask you thoughtfully to contemplate this advance. It is challenging in its possibilities. Here is no movement of mere expediency but a brave endeavour by a noble company of Christians in the three Churches in Sydney and Canberra to realise, in part at least, the Christlike ideal of a United Church of Australia. <(80)>

The report prepared by the committee of the combined planning meeting on 9 August 1932, there were continued refinements made in the carefully prepared document entitled General Arrangement for United Work in Canberra. This eventually received the unanimous approval of both the Sydney authorities and the local congregations. At the Council Meeting, on 3 April 1933, the hope was expressed that the scheme should be put into operation as early as possible <(81)>. To this end the members struggled to solve the remaining financial difficulties, such as a guarantee to the Reid Trust to enable them to meet their interest obligations <(82)>.

At a crucial point in the implementation of the plan for the United Church of Canberra, the Rev. J. E. Owen, who had made such significant contributions to the negotiations, accepted a call to the Gardiner Presbyterian Church and indicated that he would be leaving Canberra in July. Following considerable discussion respecting the effect of Mr Owen's departure, the Council resolved:

That in view of local developments, the Council is of the opinion that the move for an extension of united work in Canberra be postponed until after the meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly in September, and that in the meantime, the cooperative work be continued on the present basis. <(83)>

CHURCH COURTS APPROVE CANBERRA UNION

During the meeting of the Council on 2 June 1933, Dr Walker reported:

that the N.S.W. General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had received with pleasure the report on the proposed extension of united Church work in Canberra...that there were indications of a fresh movement towards general Church Union. <(84)>

In the light of this statement, it was suggested that a report be furnished to the General Assembly, meeting in September, in relation to united Church work in the Federal Capital. It was agreed that this report should also be sent to the other two denominations.

The report prepared by the committee of Messrs Waugh, Binns and Campbell was adopted at the Council meeting on 28 August 1933. The following significant addition was made to it by way of amendment:

The Council is of the opinion that owing to the necessarily divided loyalties of the people due to denominational and cooperative work being carried on side by side as at present, it is impossible successfully to continue the existing limited scheme of cooperation. <(85)>

This amendment was agreed to unanimously.

With the prospect of the early opening of St Andrew's Church, the guidelines that had been laid down earlier in the document General Arrangement for United Work in Canberra was carefully studied by each denomination and by Council together. Various amendments were suggested and discussed at the Council Meeting on 23 January 1934.

RADICAL CHANGE OF APPROACH

Seven weeks later this Local Council for Cooperation was informed as follows:

the Canberra Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia was preparing to open the Church of St Andrew and that the regular use of that 'Cathedral' Church would involve certain conditions as to preaching appointments and finance. <(86)>

These conditions proved unacceptable to the Local Council. They completely changed the basis of cooperation on which the congregations of the three Canberra Churches had been agreed for almost six years.

After considerable discussion together, concerning the implication of these conditions and then careful consideration by each of the Churches that had been working in the cooperative scheme, the following motions were carried:

1. That this meeting is of the opinion that in the present circumstances the existing limited scheme should be discontinued as from the date of the opening of St Andrews Church.

2. That the Local Council remain constituted with a view to the continuance of negotiations for a united Church. <(87)>

At the next meeting of the Council, on 30 November 1934, it was reported that the Sydney Joint Committee had endorsed the Council resolution of 15 March <(88)>. It was then resolved:

That the Acting Secretary be authorised to summon a meeting of the Council when requested to do so by any members thereof. <(89)>

But no other meeting was ever held. The United Church of Canberra had been killed by the totally unexpected, unilateral action of one of the national Church courts.

STRONG LOCAL REACTION TO CHANGE

A mood of despondency, frustration and failure was felt by all those in the three Canberra Churches, who had worked so hard for the United Church of Canberra. All had lost something for which they had eagerly hoped and in some cases for which they had sacrificed. For example, the Methodists had given up their plan to build the Methodist Central Church for which the 1926 General Conference had given authority for funds to be solicited across Australia. Congregationalists had also sacrificed their denominational interests in various ways and Canberra Presbyterians were forced to sever the close links they had formed with Canberra Methodists and Congregationalists through united worship and work over seven years.

The disappointment felt by those who were deeply involved in this exciting drama of ecumenical achievement was shared with the author by a number of Church members, who were still living in Canberra when he researched this story. One of these, who was a youth leader in the Methodist Church at the time and has remained an active member of National Memorial (now Wesley) Church, commented feelingly:

It was very, very disappointing after expecting to be and working for a United Church all those years. <(90)>

The disappointment and frustrations among Congregationalists at the collapse of the United Church of Canberra were expressed by Principal Kiek, of Parkin Congregational College, Adelaide in the following way:

I note with regret that the Presbyterian attitude at Canberra has driven further the wedge between them and us; They haven't played the game at all. <(91)>

Maynard Davies, a Congregational layman on the Joint Commission on Church Union recorded his reaction fifty years later. He expressed the conviction that the failure of the Canberra Union negotiations:

set back the Congregational cause in Canberra by ten years. In the words of my late friend, Canon (sic) Binns, all that our homeless flock in Canberra had to show for years of cooperation was a set of Methodist hymn books. <(92)>

The sharpest comment on the collapse of the United Church of Canberra came not from disappointed Church members but from the secular press of the day. The Canberra Times of 23 August 1934, carried in bold type the story of Church cooperation, or lack of it, on the front page under this heading:

Church Cooperation
Setback to Movement in Canberra
Present System to End with
Opening of St Andrew's
<(93)>

A significant question was asked in the opening lines of this story on the front page of the Canberra Times:

Built at a cost of 50,000 pounds St Andrew's

Presbyterian Cathedral will be officially opened on Saturday September 22. This fine building will undoubtedly be an achievement and a triumph for Presbyterianism, but will it also be a permanent monument to the incompatibility of three religious denominations with similar creeds and views. <(94)>

REASONS FOR THE CHANGE

Exhaustive research has been unable to reveal the real cause or causes for the change of plans just prior to the opening of St Andrew's. It was certainly not a local Presbyterian decision, as the leaders of St Andrew's had reported enthusiastically to the Canberra Church community on 21 June 1932:

the members of the Session and Board of Management of the Canberra Presbyterian Church are of the opinion that efforts should be made to bring the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches at Canberra into closer Union and they therefore recommend...that arrangements be made for...establishing a United Church at Canberra. <(95)>

Several Canberra residents, who were active in the Union movement at this time, have told the author that several large sums of money were promised for the building of St Andrew's by Victorian Presbyterian laymen provided St Andrew's remained exclusively Presbyterian and did not become part of the United Church of Canberra. No documentary evidence has been found to support this contention. If it were established, it would reinforce the conclusions of the last chapter that the barriers to union between the three cooperating Churches were not really theological or ecclesiastical but financial and ethnic. That is, there were those Presbyterians who were more concerned with the continuation of that Scottish pattern of life exemplified in the Presbyterian Kirk than with the growth of a strong united Christian witness in the Australian National Capital.

It is significant that the official history of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales does not even mention the foregoing story of Church Union, which was well known not only by Church members and citizens living in Canberra at the time but also by Church leaders across Australia.

In that section of The Challenge of the Years dealing with the

early years of the Church of St Andrew's Cathedral, C. A. White simply makes the following comments:

There had been conferences with representatives from the Methodist and Congregational Churches regarding cooperation in building. The three sites were not far apart. The population was not yet large enough to maintain three large Churches, and therefore the idea was very sympathetically received that meanwhile only one Church should be built. The question 'which one?' was almost automatically answered. We were ready to build; the others were not. But if a hall were built as was proposed there was the question where should it be, and the conditions for the three denominations to use it. It had been agreed that the Congregationalists erect a Church hall at Kingston. <(96)>

Apart from the complete omission of the story of the long negotiations to form the United Church of Canberra, there are three serious errors in this historical record. First, the Methodists rather than the Congregationalists built the Church hall at Kingston.

Second, the comment:

The population was not yet large enough to maintain three large Churches and therefore the idea was very sympathetically received that meanwhile only one Church should be built. <(97)>

is not correct. The records of the conferences, and discussions over the seven year period indicate clearly that the motivation in developing the United Church of Canberra was theological rather than financial. If, as White suggests, the Presbyterian leaders outside Canberra supported the Union Movement on financial grounds alone, the receipt of large donations for the building of St Andrew's would have eliminated the need for Union. This would add weight to the local tradition that the plan for the United Church of Canberra was changed because some large donations were received immediately prior to the opening of St Andrew's.

Third, White is wrong in asserting that the Presbyterians were

the only Church group ready to build in the early 1930s. As early as 8 December 1925, plans were developed by the Joint Committee in Canberra for the erection of buildings on the Methodist Central Site <(98)>. These plans were presented to the 1926 General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia which resolved:

that a commencement be made without delay of a necessary central Church and a Parsonage in the Federal Capital; that competitive designs be invited throughout the Commonwealth for the buildings on the central site, providing for the buildings to proceed in sections as necessity demands and as financial resources allow; that necessary suburban Churches also be commenced and built as occasion requires; and that the immediate outlay on two Churches and a Parsonage be not less than 12,500 pounds. <(99)>

This campaign to raise funds for building the Methodist Central Church was pushed hard throughout the States of Australia, following the 1926 General Conference. An elaborate brochure was produced giving details of 'the Methodist Church to be erected on the Central Site'. The Architect's drawings were published and some details of what was planned as the centre of Methodism's witness and worship in Canberra. The text of the brochure opened with the comment:

The site selected for the Central Church is one of the best in Canberra. It has an area of nearly five acres, is an island site, being completely surrounded by the wide roads. <(100)>

Additional impetus was given to the Australia-wide appeal through the various State Methodist journals. For example, the 27 June 1928 issue of The Spectator, the official journal of the Victoria and Tasmania Methodist Conference, carried a full page article entitled 'The Methodist Church in Canberra'.

Large pictures of both the front elevation and interior view of the gothic cathedral structure which won the competition for the building complex on the Central Site, accompanied the article. It urged all Methodist congregations to support this project of Australian Methodism.

The Spectator explained:

The South Ainslie Church was erected from the fund created by the States at the direction of the General Conference, but the central committee thought it fair to leave the local people with a debt of 1,500 pounds. <(101)>

The article continued:

The greater task is now immediately ahead of the Church - that of erecting the first section of the Central Church. <(102)>

CANBERRA STORY ILLUSTRATES TWO PRINCIPLES IN CHURCH UNION DYNAMICS

We have stressed this third error in the historical presentation of the Canberra Church development presented by C. A. White for this important reason. Although the Canberra Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists, who had worked closely together in worship and witness for seven years, were convinced of the wisdom of developing the United Church in Canberra, Presbyterian leaders outside Canberra were still thinking and acting in the denominational categories assumed by historian C. A. White. This difference between the Presbyterians in Canberra and the rest of Australia was certainly a strong influence in the collapse of the Union Movement which was almost consummated in Canberra.

Presbyterians outside Canberra tended to interpret the Union discussions in the National Territory simply as a temporary arrangement, as C.A. White suggested in his historical account. However, those Presbyterians who had worked and planned with Methodists and Congregationalists in Canberra for seven years were prepared to move beyond Presbyterian denominational thinking. Their vision is best expressed in these comments of W. J. Campbell before a full Lyceum Theatre on 1 March 1933 <(103)>.

An important principle emerges from the different attitude towards Church Union between those who worked together in Canberra for seven years and those who merely talked theoretically about Union there. In working and witnessing together, Church members from different denominations discovered how insignificant were some of the matters that separated them. In practical cooperation, they were able to clarify their

priorities. This aspect of the dynamics of Church Union will be illustrated in greater detail in chapter eight where the formation of the United Church of North Australia will be discussed.

Another important principle in Church Union negotiations is clearly pointed up in a comparison with the decisions of the members of St Andrew's Church in relation to the United Church of Canberra and the later vote of the members of the same Church in 1972-73. In the former situation all the evidence available indicates that the members were unanimously in favour of Union; but in the latter they voted strongly against Union and constituted the only Presbyterian congregation in Canberra that remained out of the Uniting Church.

How can we explain this complete change of mind and heart in one local congregation? The change was so complete that it cannot simply be accidental.

Certainly, various changes took place within this congregation during the thirty eight years between the two decisions to unite. But these changes cannot fully explain the radical alteration of attitude, particularly as all the other Canberra Presbyterian Churches in which the same changes took place over the years, voted so strongly for Church Union in 1972.

The explanation for the difference in attitude must be traced to the leadership of this Church congregation. During the crucial years of Church Union negotiations between 1927-33, the Rev. J. E. Owen was very positive in his desire to guide his congregation into the United Church of Canberra. On the other hand, during the later period of Union negotiations between 1954-72, the long settled and greatly respected minister, the Very Rev. Hector Harrison, was firmly against Union.

During seven years as superintendent of the Methodist National Memorial (now Wesley) Church, the author had many talks on Church Union with his neighbouring minister at St Andrew's across National Circuit. He has often listened to his late friend and colleague in Christian witness express his strong opposition to Union. Discussions on this subject generally terminated with a firm statement such as:

I know Presbyterians will never unite. It is a waste of time to discuss this matter. I want to be carried out of St Andrew's as a Presbyterian. <(104)>

It was the Very Rev. Hector Harrison who, as a past Moderator-General, chaired the meeting of the small group of delegates who walked out of the General Assembly in May 1974, after the vote for Union was taken in Melbourne by the

Presbyterian Church of Australia. He therefore played a prominent part in the formation of the continuing Presbyterian Church in Australia.

The author flew back to Canberra from these Church Union meetings with Hector and discussed both the significance of what had taken place in Melbourne and what those who were against Union planned to do in the immediate future. At one stage in this conversation, he said:

We plan to fight against the vote that has been taken in all the courts of the land. We plan to get as much as we can. <(105)>

As my family met me at Canberra airport, I offered to drive Hector home. He readily accepted the offer. In spite of the fact that there were three strangers to him in the car he continued to relate, with considerable glee, how he and other Presbyterians, who refused to accept the decision of the General Assembly on Church Union, were planning to fight this decision!

It was inevitable that the strong anti-Union thoughts and feelings of Hector would deeply affect the entire congregation of St Andrew's. His wish was fulfilled in that he continued to remain a Presbyterian until he was carried out of St Andrew's. As a result, the Church which during its years of construction was planned to be the central worship centre of the United Church of Canberra remains today the only ecclesiastical edifice built by Presbyterians in the Australian National Capital to remain outside the Uniting Church.

TRIPLE UNION QUESTIONED

When Mr Petition, generally so gentle and diplomatic, received news that Principal Eick had initiated a movement to reopen the question of triple union, he wrote to him on 21 May 1940 in these blunt terms:

I am not hopeful of much from the Presbyterians. At Canberra they have made cooperation extremely difficult owing to their studied discourtesy. It is quite likely that their big Church will prove a thorn in the cooperative movement...

Here there is a very strong feeling that if the negotiations are reopened and the Presbyterians stay out that the remaining...

CHAPTER SIX

THE UNITED CHURCH OF AUSTRALASIA (METHODIST-CONGREGATIONAL)

The collapse of the triple Union in 1924 left the leaders in the Methodist and Congregational Churches confused and uncertain about the next step towards Union. The members and various courts of all the Churches had voted for Union; but the second vote in the courts of the Presbyterian Church had frustrated the mandate so clearly given by the membership of the three Churches across Australia.

For several years there was further talk about Union among the Churches; but no action was taken. Then recommendations began to emerge from the State bodies. For example, within four years of the failure to form the United Church of Australia, both the Queensland Methodist Conference and the Congregational Union of Queensland had suggested a dual Union.

Two years later, the the South Australian Methodist Conference responded warmly to the approach of Principal Kiek, then the Chairman of the South Australian Congregational Church, in the following terms:

Your desire for a Union between yourselves, the Presbyterians and ourselves was received with enthusiasm and we are unanimously in favour of a united Church wielding a mightier influence for righteousness in our land.
<(1)>

TRIPLE UNION QUESTIONED

When Mr Patison, generally so gentle and diplomatic, received news that Principal Kiek had initiated a movement to reopen the question of triple Union, he wrote to him on 21 May 1930 in these blunt terms:

I am not hopeful of much from the Presbyterians. At Canberra they have made cooperation extremely difficult owing to their studied discourtesy. It is quite likely that their big Church will prove a tomb for the cooperative movement...

Here there is a very strong feeling that if the negotiations are reopened and the Presbyterians stay out that the remaining two

ought to come to some definite understanding.
<(2)>

Principal Kiek replied to this letter with equal honesty on 5 June 1930. Although he admitted that he still had 'strong objections to the excessive elaborations of the theological aspects of the basis', he made quite clear that he was strongly in favour of Union. His comments are much more positive than they were at the time of the 1920 vote and afterwards.

Personally I am most reluctant to abandon the idea of a triple Union. The moral and spiritual effect of a triple Union would probably be greater than that of a dual Union, assuming that the Presbyterians all come in. (But the Canadian experience and our own knowledge of the situation here make it doubtful if such an assumption is justifiable!)...When the Methodist Conference and the Presbyterian Assembly met here in March I sent important letters to both bodies. The Methodists at once responded and appointed a strong committee but the Presbyterians were very hesitant and made technical difficulties on the score that their feeble Church here is now organically united with Victoria. (Incidentally I may say that they are withdrawing from our College cooperative scheme and sending their students to Ormond: I think this is the result of pressure from Victoria)...I think we should wait till the Presbyterian General Assembly has met. I advise that we make a definite request to this august body to make clear what their attitude is. If they 'shilly-shally', as I fear they will, I think we should then move our Australian Assembly (Melbourne - May 1931) to proceed with the Methodists. <(3)>

In his reply to this letter on 18 June 1930, Patison drew attention to an important issue which was often under the surface in Union discussions but seldom articulated for obvious reasons - the social and economic status of members of the three participating Churches.

C.E. Silcox in Church Union in Canada found that economic status was very important in the Canadian Union negotiations. It may well have been as powerful a negative force in Australia as it was in Canada. These comments from Patison, an astute Church

politician over many years, would lead one to think so. The letter from which this quote is taken was written to Principal Kiek in longhand from 264 Pitt Street, the main Congregational administrative office in Sydney:

Your experience of Methodist ministers did
 I hope you will go on with the conversations even if Presbyterians wait till Sept. before coming in, for if there should be in S.A. any strong feeling that the event of the Presbyterians withdrawing, or, as you say, 'shilly-shallying', the two should come to some understanding alone, there is no telling what may result. My own view is that nothing would so stir up the pure minds of Presbies as to know that we had come to see that on spiritual grounds, we had more in common with Methodists than we had with Presbyterians on other grounds. The fact is that prejudice, on the grounds of ignorance and snobbishness, makes it impossible for Presbyterians to cooperate or unite with Methodists, and they are quite sure that we are similarly impressed. <(4)>

GROWING UNDERSTANDING AMONG MINISTERS

In the same letter, Patison made an interesting comment on his impressions of both Methodist and Presbyterian ministers. He was responding to this section of an earlier letter dated 5 June 1930 from Principal Kiek:

I have done some 600 miles of motoring in the north parts of this State. I went through Gawler via Clare and Gladstone to Port Augusta, thence via Quorn and Peterborough back to Clare...In this enormous itinerary I came across no Church of our order after Gawler, except those in the Maitland District, which I was officially visiting. It is perfectly evident to me that our peculiar system of polity is unsuited to Australian conditions...I was immensely impressed with the work the Methodists are doing. I called on many of the ministers. I think I had fellowship with at least twenty of them. They cover the ground in a wonderful way and seemed a most devoted set of men: several of them might be called 'saints'. <(5)>

To this assessment Patison replied on 18 June 1930:

Your experience of Methodist ministers did not surprise me for it is confirmed by my own. The more we come to know them, the more we shall find that 80% may be described in the words you use. I have not found that Presbyterians so impress me, except here and there, to anything like the same extent. <(6)>

It is significant that Rev. Edward S. Kiek, M.A., B.D., as Principal of Parkin Congregational College, the most influential Congregational leader in South Australia and one of the most significant Congregationalists in Australia at the time, had become so convinced that 'our peculiar system of polity is unsuited to Australian conditions'. This was no doubt the reason why Principal Kiek did not make the same strong objections to Union in the early thirties as he had done ten years earlier. Kiek was even prepared to surrender the independency for which he fought so hard in the early twenties as is clear from this letter written to Patison on 7 July 1930:

I am not worried about a prospective abridgment of our vaunted "independency": I should welcome it, our system is in my opinion quite unsuited to Australian conditions. <(7)>

In this same letter Kiek shared two items of news concerning Church Union discussions. The first concerned the difficulties developing in the negotiations with the Baptists that the South Australian Congregationalists were fostering by 'local negotiations'. In an earlier letter to Patison on 5 June 1930 Kiek had said:

You probably know that we are negotiating with the local Baptists, who are very different from the N.S.W. Baptists. <(8)>

A month later, however, Kiek confided to Patison:

We have had a reply from the Baptists re our local negotiations. They have agreed to a campaign of "education" among the Churches and wish us to regard the negotiations as still in progress. My own opinion is, very definitely, that nothing will come of them.

Many of the Baptists are simply rabid sectarians: they don't want any Union with anybody. In the other States this is even more the case. <(9)>

This assessment of the possibility of Union with the Baptists was also expressed in a letter written to Patison by Rev. E. J. Stacy, the Secretary of the Congregational Union of South Australia. In his letter, dated 9 July 1930, he said:

You will notice that the Baptist letter refers to the possibility of Union with the other three Churches, but we regard this as very problematical. <(10)>

The second matter Kiek discussed with Patison concerned a large representative meeting between Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. He was optimistic about South Australian Presbyterians, but determined to support dual Union if the Presbyterian General Assembly refused to act.

Most of the Presby representatives were and are strong Unionists, but I know that there are Presbys here with other views. The meeting was altogether good: we unanimously agreed to memorialize the Presby. General Assembly. Principal Lade (President General of the Methodist Church of Australia) was in the chair: The Methodists are keen enough...If the Presbyterian General Assembly shelves the matter, I think we should go ahead with the Methodists. <(11)>

PRESBYTERIAN POSITION CLARIFIED

The 1930 Presbyterian General Assembly passed unanimously a three

part resolution. This was summarised by the Convener of the Presbyterian Christian Unity Committee, Professor E. G. Macintyre in his official letters to the Congregational Union and the South Australian Methodist Conference in the following way:

We reaffirmed our conviction that there is no bar in conscience to Union with the Congregational and Methodist Churches and, further, that we look forward to such Union as a goal set before us. At the same time we felt that as the previous negotiations came to an end mainly because of lack of unity within our Presbyterian Church it was only fair to the other Churches concerned that we should be more of one mind among ourselves before engaging in formal conference with representatives from these Churches...Meantime we desire with you to explore possibilities of cooperation with the goal of a closer Union in view. <(12)>

It was clear that the participation of the Presbyterian Church in Union discussions was at an end for the time being. Principal Kiek wrote to Patison:

The whole question of Union with Methodists ought to be seriously discussed at our Melbourne meetings in November. If we wait for the Presbyterians, it is pretty certain that you will never see Church Union, and I gravely doubt whether the youngest student will ever see it. <(13)>

Even the closing comments of Dr Macintyre about the 'desire with you to explore the possibilities of cooperation' in his letters to the Churches did not generate any hope among the leadership of those two Churches. Indeed many would have endorsed this blunt comment by Principal Kiek:

Cooperation is all right in theory, but it is next to impossible to secure it in practice while things are as they are. All the talk about it strikes me as nothing but a device to postpone Union. <(14)>

By the early months of 1931 the effects of the depression were being felt across Australia. Inflation was increasing and many businessmen were anticipating a catastrophe. There was little confidence anywhere in the country and opposition was growing towards the Scullin Government. As people were thrown out of jobs, Church budgets decreased and as an inevitable result ministers' stipends were lowered. However, it was reported from various parts of Australia that something like a revival was taking place resulting in the growth of many congregations.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR DUAL UNION

Congregationalist leaders like Kiek and Patison were anxious to raise the matter of dual Union at the forthcoming Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand to be held in Melbourne. But they did not wish to appear too eager and so give the impression that they were willing to have Union at any cost. Patison suggested that the matter should be raised by either South Australia or Queensland where the subject had already been discussed at the State level. He gave what seems to us fifty years later to be a strange reason for N.S.W. not initiating Church Union discussion at a national Church conference - the political turmoil under the Lang Government !

Here in N.S.W., just now we are so hard hit by our indescribable government, that it would not be wise for us to raise the question, except privately. <(15)>

In spite of Patison's fear that the political taint of N.S.W. would poison national Church Union discussions it was the President of the N.S.W. Methodist Conference, the Rev. John W. Burton, who made the first move to open discussions on dual Union between the Methodists and Congregationalists. Burton, as the General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia, had been, during 1930, in Samoa where about 70% of the population belonged to the powerful Evangelical Church founded by the London Missionary Society (Congregationalist), about 15% belonged to the Methodist Church and about 15% to the Roman Catholic Church. Burton felt it was a scandal for the Methodists to be in competition with their Congregationalist brethren and suggested that they unite with them. He said:

Look at what we are doing in Australia. We are talking to the Congregational Churches in Australia and we hope to have Union. You

ought to do the same here.

The Samoan Methodists replied deferentially:

Well, sir, we are like the children of the father and if you are our father up there in Australia and you unite first with the Congregationalists we will consider it here; but we are not going to do anything until we know what you are going to do.

That reply dismayed Burton because he knew the difficulties in the Union discussions in Australia. <(16)>

On his return to Australia Burton wrote to Rev. W. A. Marsh of Parramatta as follows:

This is purely an informal letter; but I have had on my mind for some considerable time the possibility of more or less immediate Union between your Church and ours. It seems to me that we may have to wait years before fuller Union, including the Presbyterians, is possible, and meanwhile the interests of the kingdom of God are, in my judgement, suffering. If we cannot have 100 per cent unity, we might be content, for the time being, with say, 60 per cent. <(17)>

The Methodist President reminded Mr Marsh that in South India a United Church had been formed and became a real factor and influence in the community before the proposed Union. He added:

I thought that possibly something of the same kind might take place between us, and, if effective, might have considerable influence upon the Presbyterian, and maybe other Churches. <(18)>

The purpose for making this suggestion was quite clearly to strengthen the Christian forces in the Australian community in order to face the problems that were then looming on the national and international fronts. This is clear from his closing

comments. . . . surrender the progress made with the Presbyterians by working towards a Union which excluded them.

It seems to me that forces against the Christian Church are such that it is most urgent that we should get together as soon as possible and with united effort try to solve the great problems before us. <(19)>

John Burton reiterated these comments when he spoke at the Congregational Assembly in Melbourne later in October <(20)>, as a result of which an informal conference was held between Methodist and Congregational leaders in the Congregational Assembly Hall, Sydney, on 17 December 1931.

The Chairman, the Rev. J. W. Burton, clearly stated the goal of the conference as follows:

to take counsel together regarding the movement for the Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. <(21)>

The recent conference on reunion had convinced him, personally, of the futility of expecting much progress towards reunion, while Anglicans maintained their present attitude to Apostolic Succession <(22)>

The minutes of the conference include this record:

He felt that there was urgent need that those Churches should come together which had been considering Union for so many years; whose people had voted for Union, and whose chief Church courts had stated that there was no bar to Union in which conscience was involved. <(23)>

It is significant that the minutes of this Conference recorded the reading of a letter from Dr Carruthers who was absent because of illness. This letter from the Methodist Champion of Union in the 1920s stated that he felt that very grave difficulties stood in the way of Union between Methodists and Congregationalists alone, and that it would be well to hasten slowly. <(24)>

No more details are given. It seems as though Dr Carruthers was

unwilling to surrender the progress made with the Presbyterians by working towards a Union which excluded them.

DISCUSSION WITH PRESBYTERIANS CONTINUED

Every effort was made to keep the Presbyterian leaders in N.S.W. in close touch with what was happening in Union discussions. Following the Presbyterian General Assembly, Dr Macintyre wrote, on 10 November 1930, a two page letter to all members of his Christian Unity Committee offering some suggestions 'in view of the resolution of last General Assembly on Christian Unity'. Here he stated very forcibly his own convictions:

What we have got to realise is that in all essentials of the Christian Faith we and the Methodist and Congregational Churches are wholly at one. Not only so but our manner of approach to the facts of the faith and the evangelical significance of these facts are practically identical. It is the recognition of this which should ease the way to ultimate Union rather than any formal expression of that faith. <(25)>

Macintyre went on to suggest that all participants of the triple Union should consider the acceptance of the statement unanimously accepted by the World Conference on Faith and Order. Patison, reporting on the visit he and Burton had with Macintyre, in a letter to Dr Prescott dated 23 December 1931 admitted:

Our informal talk with Rev. Dr. Macintyre was encouraging. We found that prior to our Melbourne Assembly meetings he had taken the course of action which he mentioned to me and which I reported to our meeting last Thursday. I was glad to learn this for it shows that all that was done by him was uninfluenced by any thing our Assembly did. <(26)>

Later in the letter, Patison indicated that the Presbyterian reaction to the dual Union between Methodist and Congregationalists was very similar to that predicted by Principal Kiek. Referring to Dr Macintyre, he wrote:

He clearly showed that it came as a surprise that Methodists and Congregationalists should think of proceeding to Union alone, and he unduly stressed the fact that Dr Angus was moving for Union between Presbyterian and Congregationalist sections of the Church. <(27)>

On 10 February 1932 Patison <(28)> wrote to Macintyre inviting him and 'any other members of your committee you may care to bring' to attend the meeting of representatives of the Methodist and Congregational Church Union Committees to be held on 19 February at 264 Pitt Street, Sydney. Dr Macintyre replied on 16 February <(29)> indicating that his Executive Committee had appointed six Presbyterian representatives to be present. They were Drs Angus, Scott West, Macintyre, Anderson and the Revs D. Brandt and G. Reid. This constituted a strong delegation and gave the Presbyterians the same representation as the other two Churches.

The minutes of this conference included this entry:

The utmost goodwill prevailed. It was felt that the conference had done much to clear the way for future action, and not only to remove misunderstanding but to make it less likely in future relations. <(30)>

Dr Angus and the Rev. D. Brandt who had been :

two of the most determined opponents (Prebyterian) of Union when the vote was taken spoke most enthusiastically in favour of the Union of the three bodies. <(31)>

This was a sign of hope for delegates from the other two Churches.

The meeting resolved:

1. Methodists and Congregationalists should explore the possibility of their own closer

Union. Such action would not be misunderstood.

2. It was of great value that the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1930 re-affirmed the conviction that there is no bar in conscience to Union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches; and that such Union is the goal to which the Assembly looks forward...

3. Regarding the basis on which Union might be possible, there seemed to be general agreement that a simple statement of faith...would lead to greater unanimity, and that the polity already prepared would be found to need little in the way of amendment.
<(32)>

It is interesting that this third suggestion was made by Dr Macintyre <(33)>, who was fully aware of the criticism made by some of his fellow Presbyterians concerning the 1920 Basis that it had not been sufficiently detailed in enumerating the articles of faith. It was also Dr Macintyre who had said, when the Victorian State Assembly voted 44 to 41 against re-opening Union negotiations with the other two Churches, that he would not 'split his Church' <(34)>. It was such seeming inconsistencies that prompted Principal Kiek to write to Patison concerning the much talked about 'cooperation':

All talk about it strikes me as nothing but a device to postpone Union. <(35)>

WAITING FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY

It seemed clear that the Presbyterians either would not or could not do anything until the next General Assembly in September 1936. This attitude prompted the Rev. John W. Burton to write to Patison on 5 April in the following terms:

I am considerably perturbed about the whole situation for it seems to me that our friends the Presbyterians are not at all anxious to meet with us.

I hope we shall be able to have a chat together concerning the whole matter and see

if we cannot get from the younger and more progressive side of Presbyterianism some satisfactory indication of their wishes. <(36)>

In spite of the frustration, care was taken not to do anything that would make it difficult for the Presbyterians to come into Union negotiations at any point. Every effort was made to hear what the Presbyterian leaders, who had been against Union in the 1920 vote, were saying. For example, comments like the following were made as Methodists and Congregationalists discussed with one another the best way ahead. The Rev. W. L. Patison reminded Dr Prescott on 14 April 1932:

Dr Angus, you will remember, said he hoped that no agreement would be reached by the two sections, which would make it impossible for Presbyterians to come in, particularly on doctrinal grounds. <(37)>

Again, Dr Prescott shared with Patison, on 10 May 1932, some resolutions he wished to submit to General Conference on 19 May 1932. One statement that Patison thought should be withdrawn <(38)> read:

Conference is emphatic in its wish that this (dual Union) should be regarded only as an initial step towards the triple Union <(39)>

Prescott wrote back to Patison in strong terms from Blackheath by return mail:

I cannot understand why you should all wish the first five lines in 2 to come out. I quite see that you get the point in by your later suggestions. But my idea was that it would be well to put it prominently forward that we wanted to assure the Presbyterians that no dual Union will ultimately satisfy us. And I thought this prominent statement was just what you Congregationalists would like <(40)>

Following discussion on the whole matter of Church Union and consideration of the specific resolutions framed by Dr Prescott, the tenth triennial session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia passed, as an amendment <(41)> to these resolutions, the following motion:

That we express our willingness to discuss the question relating to Church Union with any Church which desires to discuss the matter with us, and we authorise the committee to make arrangements for any such discussion as occasion may arise. <(42)>

The President General of the Methodist General Conference, the Rev. A. T. Holden, gave impetus to the Church Union discussions when he returned from an extensive overseas trip early in 1933. He had represented the Australasian Methodist Church at the special gatherings in England to celebrate the Union between all Methodist Churches in Britain. In addition, he had spent three weeks as a guest of the United Church of Canada. These experiences had convinced him that Church Union was an urgent necessity in Australia. In a letter to the Secretary of the Congregational Union, dated 12 January 1933, he wrote:

I have spent 3 weeks in the United Church of Canada, addressing 25 different audiences in the Dominion and have returned to Australia with a new vision of Church Union. The great work being accomplished, and the wonderful fellowship between all the ministers impressed me beyond words. <(43)>

The President General, convinced that 'we have been in this deadlock long enough', <(44)> recommended that Church Union should be treated as a matter of urgency. Recognising that 'our last General Conference left the door open' <(45)> he called for a move forward in the following way:

I am convinced that it is the Divine Will that we should resume negotiations in Australia, and it ought not to take as long as before to reach finality...I note that your Federal Assembly in May and the Presbyterian General Assembly in September, may make a move forward and I think you will

find that we are flexible enough to advance side by side with our sister Churches in the reconsideration of this vital matter. <(46)>

As guest speaker in Wesley Church, Melbourne, the Rev. A. T. Holden went further than this. Speaking on the effectiveness of a divided Christianity, he said:

The Church of the future in Australia will not be Anglican, Presbyterian, or Methodist, but "The United Church of Australia", embracing all who love Christ in sincerity and truth. The Methodist Church is prepared to take part in such a conference. <(47)>

Little significant action was taken during the next eighteen months, mainly because all parties were awaiting the determination of the courts of the Presbyterian Church. The Rev. W. L. Patison, now President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, explained this to each of the members of his Church Union Committee, to whom he wrote personally:

Two years ago, I reported to the State sections of our Federal Committee on Church Union that informed discussions had taken place between us and Methodists and that Presbyterians, whose opinions had been solicited, had expressed the view that the exploration of Union between Methodists and Congregationalists might well hasten the Union of the three Communion. No further steps, however, were taken pending the decision of the Presbyterian General Assembly last September, and of the State Assemblies in May of this year. It is now felt that everything is to be gained by facing the question without further delay and by deciding to give that definite lead to the movement for Union which, hitherto, has been largely left to Presbyterians. As convener of our own Federal Committee on Church Union, I felt that I should at once advise you of the position. <(48)>

On 15 June 1934 Patison wrote to the Rev. John W. Burton in almost the same terms that Burton, as President of the N.S.W.

Methodist Conference, had written to Mr Marsh <(49)> three years earlier. He said:

At a meeting of our New South Wales Section of the Federal Committee on Church Union yesterday, we discussed what should be our next step, in view of the indefinite position of the Movement in Presbyterianism, and the possibility of further delay...We considered it wise to hold our hand until the General Assembly met, and then to await the decision of the State Assemblies. The attitude of the Victorian Assembly leaves little ground for hope that the negotiations will be resumed - at all events for some time, even years...My own feeling is that we need not wait for Presbyterians to lead in this great matter. May we not provide that lead together, and pave the way for something Catholic enough to meet the demands of these changed times? It would not be wise to begin de-novo, though much in the Basis of 1920 would have to be altered. <(50)>

DUAL UNION DISCUSSED

As a result of this impetus, an informal meeting was held between representatives of the Methodist and Congregational Churches on 24 July 1934, to discuss the possibilities of Union. After general conversation and a review of the 1920 Basis, the following resolutions were agreed to:

1. That in the opinion of this informal gathering Union between the Methodists and Congregational Communion is desirable, with a view to wider Union.
2. That the Statement of Polity agreed upon in former negotiations by the three Communion (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational) be generally approved.
3. That as a basis for discussion, the Faith common to the two communions be accepted leaving the formal statements of that Faith to be determined later. <(51)>

Patison sent notes to each of the Congregational State Union

Committees, in order to keep them abreast of what was happening in N.S.W. The reaction from some of the other States indicated that at the time there was not a strong ground swell for dual Union among the Congregationalists.

The Rev. John Bongers, the Convener of the Queensland Committee on Church Union, wrote from Moorooka, Queensland, on 3 September 1934:

You have done well in Sydney, and I hope we shall not come behind, though there is little enthusiasm on the question of Union, in this State, at the moment. But I look forward to meeting you shortly and talking over the matter. Maybe you will be able to stir up some interest. <(52)>

To get a more exact picture of the attitude towards Union in Queensland there should be added to this note the comments Mr Bongers made to Patison in his earlier letter of 20 July 1932:

Here in Queensland, the movement seems to hang fire, but I believe the will to unite is there and will become evident and active whenever there is a State wide attempt to bring the denominations together for serious conference. <(53)>

It is clear from this, and many other letters, that interest in Church Union waned when negotiations were dragged out over a long period and it seemed as though nothing was happening. Again and again, in the story of Church Union in Australia, waiting inevitably tended to dissolve the enthusiasm for Union.

The reaction of the Rev. J. S. Griffith, Principal of the Congregational College of Victoria, to Patison's letter gives us an interesting sidelight on what was happening in Victoria at this time. There was sporadic dialogue in several States between the Anglicans and Methodists; but it seldom progressed to the point that it became more important than the triple Union discussions, as Griffith suggests here:

Thank you for your letter of the 17th ult. and the Minutes of your informal meeting with the Methodists. I will report to our Union Executive here as the committee on Church

Union was not reappointed at our last Union Meetings.

In this State the moves in which the Methodists are involved for Church Union seem to be not with us but with the Anglican Church. I have no information other than that before the public but our papers reprinted recently that another Conference of the Bishops with the Methodists had been held.
<(54)>

The reaction from Tasmanian Congregationalists was sympathetic. The Rev. H. Watts Grimmett of Christ Church, Launceston, responded to Patison's letter by saying:

The consensus of opinion seems to be all in favour of the proposed negotiations between ourselves and the Methodists, and I feel confident that when the committee to be appointed makes its pronouncement it will be unanimously in favour of the proposal...I have discovered in talking the matter over with some of their (Methodist) leading men here, that the general opinion is that such a Union would be in the best interests of the Kingdom, and specially in those sparsely populated areas of our country where denominational rivalry and competition is unavoidable. <(55)>

Congregationalists in Western Australia were equally enthusiastic for Union with the Methodists. The Rev. Harry Crawford, of Mt. Lawley W.A., wrote to Patison, on 28 September 1934, as follows:

The Committee here is agreed in supporting what has been done in N.S.W. up to the present, and hopes that something tangible will result from the negotiations with the Methodists. As soon as it is possible I will get into touch with the Methodists here to see what their mind is.

As far as I can see, at the moment, if we can agree upon a statement of doctrine, polity will offer no insuperable difficulty. In doctrine I think that we should aim at the utmost simplicity and avoid anything so elaborate as the statement of doctrine set

out in the former proposed basis of Union.
<(56)>

The official Methodist response to the unofficial joint meeting was warm and quick in coming. The Rev. W. H. Jones, the Agent for the Church in N.S.W., wrote to Patison on 17 August 1934, reporting in the following terms on a meeting of the N.S.W. section of the General Conference Committee of the Methodist Church on Church Union:

Full consideration was given to the whole position and ultimately the following resolutions were carried:

1. This committee is convinced that Union between the Methodist and Congregational Churches with a view to wider Union will be for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

2. That the statement on polity agreed upon in former negotiations by the three communions (Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational) be generally approved.

3. That as in the teaching of the two communions there is essential agreement, we believe that the faith common to both should form the basis for consideration, leaving the formal statement of that faith to be expressed later. <(57)>

Mr Jones indicated he was writing not only to the President-General but also to the other States with a view to the whole matter being acted upon at the various Annual Conferences the following February. He closed with the optimistic comment:

However, long before then I hope to be able to give you further progressive reports.
<(58)>

A meeting of the N.S.W. Methodist and Congregational representatives was called to discuss Church Union further on 11 December 1934. Jones called the Methodists and Patison the Congregationalists. There were fifteen present. This meeting accepted unanimously the three resolutions communicated by Jones from the N.S.W. section of the Methodist General Conference

Committee on Church Union.

The meeting then proceeded to discuss questions of doctrine. The Rev. W. E. Bennett, Principal of Leigh College, and the Rev. L. C. Bennett, Master of Wesley College, then presented a statement of faith appropriate for the proposed United Church, which had been prepared at the request of the Rev. W. L. Patison. After discussion and amendments the meeting agreed to this statement:

Whereas in the teaching of the two Communion there is essential agreement, we propose to unite in the common Christian Faith which is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures, generally expressed in the historic creeds of the Church and continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of Christian people, leaving the formal statement of that Faith to be expressed later, if desired, by the United Church. <(59)>

Two sub-committees were appointed to examine:

the basis of polity as set forth in the basis of Union adopted by Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in 1920. The first committee on Church polity to consist of Revs. W. H. Jones, J. W. Burton and a Methodist layman to be appointed; the Revs. W. L. Patison, R. C. Turner and Mr J. C. Cruden, (Rev. W. L. Patison, convener)..

The second committee on Ministerial training to consist of Drs. Tatcher and Wright and Revs. W. E. Bennett and L. E. Bennett (Dr Tatcher, convener).<(60)>

The Joint Committee on Church Union met on 20 December 1934. The brief statement of Faith accepted at the earlier meeting on 11 December was endorsed without a great deal of discussion. Much more time was spent working out matters of polity under the three headings of 'The Church', 'Church Councils or Courts' and 'The Ministry'.

Four names were suggested for the United Church but no decision was taken. These were:

United Church of Australia (Methodist
Congregational)

The United Congregational and Methodist
Churches of Australia

The Methodist and Congregational Churches of
Australia United

The Federated Methodist and Congregational
Churches of Australia. <(61)>

In the light of all the difficulties encountered in the 1918-23 discussion, it is significant to note the proposed procedure that was planned for the months ahead. Inherent in this is the impression that if once the issues were clearly understood the membership of both Churches would accept the Union proposals. The way ahead as recorded in the minutes of the meeting was as follows:

Report to Federal body; appoint
representatives on Joint Committees; empower
Joint Committee to prepare proposals and
submit same, with approval of State
Conferences and Unions, for the judgement of
the people or those qualified to deal with
same, after campaign of education, seek
authority to call together if necessary,
special meeting of Federal bodies. <(62)>

Patison sent a letter to Principal Kiek asking for his comments on the decisions of this meeting. His reaction was very interesting, in view of his strong opposition to the 1920 Basis of Union. In his letter of reply dated 1 January 1935, he said:

I don't think I've anything much to say about the doctrinal basis of Methodist-Congregational Union: the sub-committee appears to have done good work. My only doubt is whether we might not have some people trying to impose an elaborate statement of faith after Union, but I suppose we can count on resisting any such thing. Church Union, like marriage, would be absurd to contemplate without a very large measure of mutual trust. <(63)>

The latter part of Kiek's comment is quite consistent with his position during the previous fifteen years. He wanted the Statement of Faith to be as simple as possible so that members of the United Church would not be forced into a theological straitjacket. He constantly fought to keep Church Union agreements as flexible and open as possible. His analogy of Church Union being like marriage in the 'very large measures of mutual trust' necessary was very apt. This was the emphasis of Congregationalists during all periods of Church Union negotiations.

Later in his letter Kiek, writing from Western Australia where he was spending several months as minister of Perth's Trinity Congregational Church, made two interesting points on matters in the forefront of the minds of many members in both the Methodist and Congregational Churches. The first concerned the difficulty in developing excitement within Congregationalism for the dual Union and the second the disappointment with the attitude of those Presbyterians who had lost interest in the vision of Union. Referring to Dr G. H. Wright, the ex-President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Kiek said:

Wright points out that it is difficult to arouse the same zeal for the dual Union as was aroused by the triple Union. Our people dread lest they may just be absorbed. I note with regret that the Presbyterian attitude at Canberra has driven further the wedge between them and us: They haven't played the game at all. I fear that many Presbyterians belong to an unpleasant sect mentioned in the Gospels whose name also began with P... So far as Church Union is concerned, W.A. is just waiting for what is done in the Eastern States. <(64)>

REACTION FROM CONGREGATIONALISTS

In his enthusiasm to speed up the culmination of Union the Rev. W. L. Patison, as Convener of the Congregational Church Union Committee, sent out to all Committee members on 15 January 1935 copies of the report he had prepared for the Biennial Assembly the following month and asked for comments. The most interesting and perceptive reaction was given by the Editor of the Australian Christian World, The Rev. Robert Dey, himself a Congregational minister:

I have thought a good deal over the Church Union topic which you were kind enough to

discuss with me. As far as I can judge the logic is irresistible and your treatment is excellent. At the same time, I think that taking up the scheme at this juncture might prove disastrous for our Churches. What we really require at the present time, in my opinion, is something to give our people the strong conviction that it is worth while to be a Congregationalist. Many of our people have made very great sacrifices financially and in other ways for the extension of our Churches and the last thing desirable is that they should feel that these sacrifices are of no avail for a continuous testimony.

Were such a scheme submitted to our Churches, I have no doubt whatever that Pitt Street would reject it and possibly also two or three others. I have not the personal knowledge of the Churches in Victoria which I once had but I would be very much surprised if it commended itself to Collins Street. A few of the leading Churches would certainly stand out and Methodism would not feel very happy over a fact like that. I am not in any way suggesting that you should modify your address in any way, but I should advise you to think over what might be said meantime to rally our people, and take from them the idea that it was a waste either to give personal service or money to a Denomination about to cease as an entity. <(65)>

Dey clearly stated here the problem the Methodists faced several years later. Would the Union be worthwhile, if the main Congregational Churches stayed out of it?

Patison also sent the report of the Committee on Church Union for the Biennial Assembly of the Congregational Union, to be held in Hobart during February 1935 to the various State Sections. He received enthusiastic reports from the respective Conveners.

Mr Bongers reported from Queensland:

I have to advise that the Queensland section of the Committee on Church Union met yesterday in Brisbane when it was unanimously agreed "that we approve of the Report for submission to the Hobart Biennial Assembly". One begins to hope that one definite step towards union will soon be taken; and I hope to hear that the Biennial Meetings will

cordially approve the Report. <(66)>

The General Secretary of the Congregational Union and Home Mission of South Australia, the Rev. E. J. Stacy, wrote from Adelaide:

As there was a meeting due of our Union Executives I felt it only right that members should be acquainted with the proposals. There was unanimous agreement that our members could support the adoption by the Assembly of the report on the distinct understanding that no one is as yet committed and that the statements on faith and polity are intended merely for the exploration and subsequent education of our constituencies. We realise that a start must be made somewhere and the general feeling is, I think, that so far everything has been quite satisfactory and that our interests have been well safe-guarded. <(67)>

The General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Western Australia, the Rev. Lincoln Sullivan, wrote from Perth:

I very much regret that owing to such a number of our leading men being away on their holidays it has been quite impossible to have this report discussed hence one is unable (in time for the meetings) to convey the considered opinions of the W.A. Union. If I may express what I think would be the attitude of the W.A. Council, it is that we should view very favourably Union as set out by your Committee. <(68)>

ACTION OF CONGREGATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Following Congregational Assembly, Patison, with considerable enthusiasm, officially informed the Methodist Church through the Rev. W. H. Jones of its actions in the following terms:

I sent you a copy of the Hobart "Mercury", in which there appeared a full report of the

discussion on Church Union and of the Assembly's adoption of the report of the Committee.

It is now my pleasing duty to advise you, officially, that the enclosed report was adopted with practical unanimity and that the only alteration to the resolution set out on page (2) was to substitute the following for the last six words of clause (b), resolution (2) (after a special campaign of education):-

"so that the members be given every opportunity of discussing the mind of Christ".

In addition to the typed resolutions, as altered, the New South Wales Section of the Committee was asked by the Assembly to act as an Executive to the Committee as a whole. Each State Union Executive is empowered to add at least five members to the Committee appointed by the Assembly, and I have been appointed General Convener of the Committee. <(69)>

ACTION BY METHODISTS

Jones replied to this letter by giving the results on Church Union voting in the various Methodist State Conferences:

Doubtless you have heard of the result of the vote in our New South Wales Conference. The vote on the question of the proposed Union was - 98 for and 25 against. Those who voted against the resolution, were not against Church Union, but desire to have inserted a simple statement of faith. The great majority, however, preferred to leave that open.

I have heard from South Australia, where the vote was overwhelmingly in favour, the figures being 135 for, 2 against and 5 neutral. Western Australia and Queensland also favoured the Union by very large majorities. I have no reliable information yet from Victoria but when I receive that I will communicate with you. <(70)>

The reference here to the discussion in the N.S.W. Conference on the Statement of Faith focussed attention on a problem that occurred again and again in the whole story of Union negotiations. Whereas the Presbyterians, accustomed to the Westminster Confession model, always wanted a detailed Statement of Faith and the Congregationalists wanted as simple a statement as possible, the Methodists, following the John Wesley model <(71)>, were half-way between, desiring a clear statement of evangelical doctrine without being exclusive.

The difference between Methodists and Congregationalists, already referred to several times, was pointed up by Principal Kiek when he reported to Patison on Church Union discussions in both the Annual Assembly of the South Australian Congregational Union and the South Australian Methodist Conference on 4 April, 1935:

We agreed to the basis of faith "Whereas...United Church". The Assembly doesn't want any further statement though of course we can't stop the United Church from making one, if it so desire. If we let a stream of theologians loose on making a "statement", Heaven knows what they may evolve. The present "Whereas...United Church" is good enough for us. <(72)>

The Congregationalists were as afraid of elaborate polity procedures in the United Church as they were of elaborate doctrinal statements. For example, Kiek admitted to Patison in the same letter:

It must be admitted that the polity, as set forth in the former "Basis of Union", does seem a very elaborate and complicated affair, not particularly attractive to the Congregationalists. <(73)>

In view of this position it seems a little surprising that Kiek was willing to consider episcopacy. He wrote:

It was thought that we should at least consider the introduction of an episcopal element particularly in view of the probable attitude of our Anglican brethren. <(74)>

Church Union was well debated at the Methodist General Conference held in Melbourne during May 1935. One of the most interesting reports of this debate is in the letter the Rev. J. D. Northey, the minister of the Canterbury Congregational Church, wrote Patison the night after attending the conference as a visitor:

In order to hear and see the tone and temper of the Church Union debate in the Methodist Conference I went to Wesley Church this afternoon. The Conference was overwhelmingly in favour of resuming negotiations with us. This was indicated not only by the large majority of speakers and the decisive vote in favour, but by the summary way in which all amendments were turned down flat.

The debate revealed to me that as with the proposed triple Union 15 years ago, Victoria, through the strong Presbyterian minority, was the lion in the path of progress so with this dual Union the Victorian Conference will be the source of difficulty. However, I feel sure, in these negotiations the difficulty will be overcome. The only opposition speaker who seemed indifferent to the proposed Union was T.C. Rentoul. Horton Williams and Irving Benson were among "the cautious brethren". Professors Albiston and Bennett made good speeches on the pro side, as did your friends Jones and Burton. Some of the Victorian leaders have been influenced by their conversations with the Anglican Bishops. Albiston told them he thought they were placing too much significance on their informal Conferences. <(75)>

The day following the vote in the Methodist General Conference, W. H. Jones wrote to Patison from Carlyons Hotel, Melbourne. Referring to the section dealing with 'Union of Methodist and Congregational Churches' in the printed report given to members of the Conference, Jones said:

The series "B" were the most important in regard to immediate action and we had a splendid debate. I seconded the adoption of that series as they were moved by the convener of the Committee on Details dealing

with such matters. The only opposition came from Victoria and several amendments were moved and overwhelmingly defeated. When the vote was finally taken a forest of hands went up for the adoption and I could not see one hand against. The President General did not declare or count the members so I pressed him for a declaration and he said officially and repeated the declaration, that the vote was "practically unanimous". I will discuss the position with you on my return to Sydney next week, but I think the way is now open for us to go right ahead. <(76)>

PRESBYTERIAN INTEREST REKINDLED

At the same time as the Methodist General Conference was meeting in Melbourne, Presbyterians across Australia read the news that the N.S.W. General Assembly wanted to reopen Union negotiations with the Methodists and Congregational Churches. The Sydney Morning Herald of 12 May 1935 reported this news as follows:

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales, which was opened yesterday morning, reaffirmed its decision in favour of negotiations with the Methodist and Congregational Churches with a view to Union. It recommended Presbyterians to make every endeavour to cultivate such relations with these Churches as would encourage the spirit of Union. <(77)>

The Sydney, Dubbo, Goulburn, Hastings, Hawkesbury, Illawarra, Moree and Orange Presbyteries all approved entering into negotiations with the Methodist and Congregational Churches with a view to Union in the near future. Bathurst, Hunter, Monaro and North Sydney Presbyteries were in favour of delay. Murrumbidgee Presbytery opposed the proposal and Wagga was of the opinion that the time was not ripe for negotiations.

Dr R. G. Macintyre, who submitted the report of the committee on Christian Unity, said, according to the press:

the Presbyterian Church throughout Australia was not yet in a position to enter into negotiations with the Methodist and

Congregational Churches with a view to a Union of the three bodies. The New South Wales General Assembly last year approved of Union; but it had not yet been approved in Victoria. It would be futile for negotiations to be entered into by the New South Wales Presbyterian Church with the Methodist and Congregational Churches until the General Assembly of Australia had considered the matter and the Assembly would not meet until September 1936. <(78)>

WOMEN IN THE UNITED CHURCH

Following the Methodist General Conference, one of the first issues to be raised in Union discussions concerned the status of women in the United Church. For example, soon after the Church Union Committee of the Congregational Union of Victoria was reappointed, a letter was received from the Congregational Women's Association asking that, amongst other things, the following be considered by the Union Committee:

The status of women in the (proposed) Union Church with reference to

- (a) Local Church administration
- (b) The Assembly or Conference
- (c) Ordination for the Ministry <(79)>

This matter was communicated to W. L. Patison by the Secretary of the Congregational Union on 12 June 1935.

The Congregational Church Women's Society of South Australia drew the attention of the Church Union Committee, through Principal Kiek, to the Clause 11(31) 'all existing rights will be conserved.' Principal Kiek commented:

Is it fully understood by our Methodist friends that the "rights" of women in Congregationalism include admission to all courts of the Church? They are eligible for the local diaconate, the Annual Assembly and the ordained ministry. We would like these points to be emphasised in the discussions of the Church Union Committee. <(80)>

Principal Kiek wrote in another letter dated 30 May 1935:

Some of our leading women are anxious to have the formal assurances that their position in the United Church will not be any less dignified and privileged than it is in the Congregational Churches now: they ask me to impress on you the importance of securing this. <(81)>

Three months later Kiek wrote another letter to Patison on the same theme. Among other matters Kiek said:

I hope you will insist that in any statement of polity the principle of sex-equality is recognized and that it is made clear that women are eligible for all offices on the same terms as men. It does not follow that they will be elected, but it must be acknowledged that they may be. I am not satisfied myself with what you say about women ministers. The status of existing ministers must be acknowledged and the united Church must accept responsibility for them...If you are right in thinking that under the new polity few, if any women, will have any chance of election to the higher courts of the Church, it is hardly reasonable to expect our women to be enthusiastic for the scheme. They are, in fact, very much afraid that their existing rights are going to be whittled away. I want you to realise the strength of this feeling. <(82)>

Much the same request was made by the N.S.W. Congregational Women's Association through the General Secretary, Mrs. H. J. Renwick. Signing himself on this occasion Ministerial Secretary, W. L. Patison answered Mrs. Renwick at length in similar terms to those used in writing to the other Women's Association:

Congregationalists have not yet discussed with Methodists the question of the status of women in Union with them alone, but they have never allowed their own attitude on that

matter to remain in any doubt and it can be frankly affirmed that Methodist representatives on the Joint Commission are fully seized of the fact that, in Congregationalism, no distinction is made on the grounds of sex. The Executive notes the suggestion that the equal status of women on the government of the Church should be made quite explicit in any scheme of polity which may be ultimately presented for the consideration of members of Methodist and Congregational Churches, and this suggestion will be passed on to the Joint Committee. It will also forward any other suggestions which the Women's Association may make, and arrange if so desired, for a conference on such matters as you have already raised. <(83)>

This statement did not satisfy the N.S.W. Congregational Women's Association the Secretary of which wrote again to Patison on 7 September 1935. Again Patison wrote Mrs. Renwick stating the Methodist position clearly:

I have just received your letter of the 7th instant, for which I thank you. Since I last wrote to you, I have made enquiries, officially, of the attitude of Methodists to the status of women, with the following results. In their new Book of Laws it is stated, definitely, that where the term "laymen" is used, in respect to the personnel of committees, Councils and boards, such terms include women. It is also stated that words importing the masculine gender include the feminine gender as well. <(84)>

He went on to explain, as he had done earlier, that the ordination of women would raise a difficulty in the United Church, that had not been present in Congregationalism, because the former would guarantee a parish to every minister, whereas in the latter this had not been the case. In the light of this problem, he advised caution. His letter continued:

Local Churches must change in their attitude before we can safely, or fairly encourage women to enter the ministry...In time, this change must come, but we shall be well advised, I think, not to press it unreasonably. <(85)>

Several days after writing this letter Patison received a letter from the Secretary of the Victorian Congregational Union making clear that the question relative to the status of women in the United Church was far from solved. He reported:

The women here in this State are being worked up to a state of enthusiastic interest as to what part women will play in the new Union Movement. They have already had one Session of the Congregational Women's Association to discuss the matter, with a Methodist speaker and a Congregational speaker. Now, within a few weeks of that they purpose to hold a Conference again in association with our Half-yearly Assembly, on practically the same issue. I would be surprised if it did not ultimately constitute a difficulty. One or two are in the van here and are likely to gain a following. <(86)>

The problem concerning the status of women was far from settled. W. L. Patison wrote to the Rev. H. S. Grimwade, Congregational representative on Union matters in South Australia while Principal Kiek was in England, a letter on 14 August 1936, headed 'Non-distinction of sex in ordination'. It read:

In my letter to you of the 30th June, I did not express as clearly as I might have done the attitude of the Executive regarding the ordination of women. At the request of the sub-committee which has been devoting attention to this question, I am again writing to you.

I am also asking other State sections of our Church Union Committee to devote some thought to this matter, and to let the Executive have the benefit of their counsel.

I am not satisfied altogether with the enclosed document which has been somewhat hurriedly prepared and I hope you will not mind the corrections. The points stressed give some idea of the attitude of the

Executive. <(87)>

Attached to this letter was a long statement entitled 'The Ordination of Women and Church Union'. <(88)>

Two months later the Rev. J. D. Northey wrote from Victoria:

There is a strong feminist section in Victoria and Principal Griffith believes it is a part of our special trust from God as Congregationalists to see that the rights of women are protected in relation to the ministry and to representation on Church Councils. Hence we must be sure of particular cases. General statements will not satisfy them. <(89)>

OTHER ISSUES IN UNION DISCUSSIONS

There were many other problems raised in correspondence, as the two Churches witnessing across Australia prepared for Union. Some of these matters concerned property; <(90)> others the Supernumerary Fund for Ministers and Ministers' Widows <(91)>; while still others concerned parish finances and moneys for connexional or corporate funds <(92)>.

Some of these issues involved considerable work, such as the attempt to reach a rough estimate of the total value of Church Properties in each State <(93)>. In addition, there were numerous conferences or committee meetings to discuss issues of either the Statement of Faith or Polity. <(94)>

It was decided to prepare a Joint Statement of 5000 words which could be sent out to both Methodist and Congregational Church members for their information. These were to include some background material on the historical origin of each of the two Churches; the salient features of their beliefs and polities; the resolutions adopted by the Joint Committee; suggestions as to the name of the united Church; methods of coordinating the polities; some reference to Trust assets and liabilities; making ministerial appointments and the ultimate objective of Union with the Presbyterians and other Churches. These items proved difficult to prepare for printing. It was hoped that these statements would be ready for distribution by 10 December 1935. The sixteen page booklet finally came from the printers in December 1936.

The preparation of this Joint Statement brought into focus again

the desire of Congregationalists to have the expression of Belief as simple as possible. Principal Kiek, the outspoken stalwart of this position for fifteen years, expressed it again in his letter to Patison on 30 May 1935:

Others of us are anxious about the Statement of Faith. It is most important that this should be totally unlike the former Statement, with its 22 clauses, covering pretty well everything and couched in language which assuredly showed no evidence of any impact of modern ideas. <(95)>

Kiek was more positive in his expression of the historic position of Congregationalism in this letter written to Patison on 24 August 1935:

I am confident that most of our people want it (the Statement of Faith) to be as short and simple as it can possibly be. We Congregationalists have always stood by the principle that the best (and ultimately the only) guarantee of faith of the Church is the faith of the people, and that we must believe in the guidance of the Spirit to lead us into more truth. This is a vital contribution that we can make to the United Church, and it must not be withheld. <(96)>

Kiek's comment on Methodist ministers is significant in view of his wide contacts among thoughtful ministers of both Churches; but we have no primary sources to assess how many Methodists Kiek had in mind when he said:

Any weakening on this point will disappoint the more progressive Methodists as well as a majority of our own people. <(97)>

As one of the most prominent Congregational leaders in Australia and one highly respected for his theological training in other Churches, Kiek made a surprising comment on the polity section of the Joint Statement, a comment he had made earlier casually and in relation to Anglicans <(98)> but now repeated more seriously with reference to the United Church and with the American

Methodists constituting a model:

As to the polity, I can't see why we mightn't at least consider a modified episcopacy such as they have in the two great Methodist Episcopal Churches of the U.S.A.: at the same time I am inclined to agree with the view that care should be taken not to make unduly drastic alterations in the polity formerly agreed on. <(99)>

His next comment was more in keeping with the traditional Congregational emphasis on simplicity in polity:

If it is possible to simplify it, well and good: on paper it looks rather elaborate. <(100)>

As an argument for greater simplicity in the statement of both faith and polity, Congregationalists in various States submitted that the Methodists and Congregationalists should consider only the dual Union, rather than keep their eyes upon the eventual triple one with the Presbyterians.

For example, the Rev. J. D. Northey expressed to Patison the comments of the Victorian Congregational Union, after their study of the Joint Statement, in the following words:

We believe that nothing will be gained and probably something will be lost, by assuming that a wider Union than the dual Union with the Methodists and ourselves will be possible in the immediate future. Consequently we should aim at the best possible statement of doctrine and polity from our dual point of view. When a wider Union appears practicable a new basis of Union will be needed. <(101)>

In his reply, Patison made clear that at the same time as Methodists and Congregationalists were moving towards dual Union, they were both keeping clearly in mind the vision of triple Union. His comments leave no room for further debate on this matter. Picking up Northey's sentence 'from the foregoing you will see that it cuts across your suggestions as sent to us',

Patison responded:

I am afraid that the first suggestion cuts across more than suggestions which were sent to State Sections of the Committee. Instructions received from our own Biennial Assembly and the Methodist General Conference definitely commit us and Methodists to keep the Union with Presbyterians and the wider Union definitely in view. <(102)>

Another suggestion that came from the Victorian Congregational Union cut across the main emphasis of Methodist polity that individual churches were bound together in a connexional system in such a way that the stronger churches helped the weaker ones with finance, ministerial oversight and other forms of leadership. The recommendation of the Victorian Congregationalists was reported by Northey in this way:

We recommend that the unit of Church organization should be the Church meeting, that the functions of the Board of Management and Elders be incorporated in one organization for which an appropriate name could be found such as diaconate or church committee. <(103)>

The fact that this suggestion was presented by Victorian Congregationalists in the advanced stages of Union negotiations indicated how far the thinking of some of the Congregationalists was from the Methodists, who considered that one of the unique contributions of the Methodists to the Union was the connexional system, whereby the stronger churches helped the weaker ones.

It is interesting to speculate what Principal Kiek would have said to this Victorian suggestion. His travels in the lonely parts of South Australia had convinced him that the Congregational emphasis on the independence of each individual church was not appropriate to Australian country conditions <(104)>. This conviction was strengthened after his 1935-36 trip in England. He reported that he had:

preached and lectured all over the country...had talks with most of the denominational leaders from Berry and "J.D."

downwards...(and) was particularly interested in having yarns with some of the Moderators.
<(105)>

On his return to Australia Kiek wrote:

My conviction that the Congregational Church polity needs drastic revision has been much deepened by my observations in England...Many of our Churches in the down-town areas and in the country places are having a very bad time. "Grouping" is evidently necessary in many cases, but here again our sacrosanct (!) Independent polity stands in the way. While the denomination is burdened with the support of numerous ancient and spacious sanctuaries which are practically deserted and have no future, Church extension on a large scale in new areas is imperatively called for, but often prevented because our limited resources are so largely engaged in maintaining places which will never do much good. All this naturally increases my zeal for Church Union.
<(106)>

MOVING CLOSER TOWARDS UNION

Many more conferences were held to discuss aspects of Faith and points of Polity. As the time for the culmination of Union drew closer and members in both Churches became aware of this, more attempts were made to preserve the peculiar emphasis in each Church.

Congregationalists wanted to simplify the Statement of Faith while most Methodists thought the amended version of the 1920 Statement was desirable. In addition, the Congregationalists wanted to place administrative authority in the local church while the Methodists insisted that the system should be more connexional which necessitated that authority be placed in a group of churches (circuit), District Meetings (Synod) and State Conferences.

Many saw the dangers of either rushing into compromise or dragging out negotiations too much longer. Principal Kiek expressed the double danger in this terse way:

There is danger in undue precipitation: there

is equal danger in excessive caution. <(107)>

As the suggestions came in from the Committee appointed by the State Annual Conference of the Methodist Church and the State Unions of the Congregational Church, they were all considered by the Joint Committee and decisions reached. The matters raised did not all come directly from the Statement, but from the discussion prompted by it.

Numbers of hidden agenda came to the surface and were expressed in private letters. These were very important, because they revealed more clearly the real dynamics operating in committees and conferences where final decisions were reached. For example, the Rev. L. C. Parkin, a Congregational leader from Adelaide, wrote to Patison on 27 February 1936 in the following frank terms:

I've worked with the Methodists here on the Council of their large girls school and it has had a bad effect on me. They seem to love committees and I don't. I wish we could have scrapped both systems and worked out some sort of a constitutional episcopacy, which would have left the road open to the Anglican Church. That church has become very Congregational in this State.

The main difficulty here is really going to be prejudice. Our people, or many of them, seem to love Methodists less than other branches of the church. But education will overcome that I hope. <(108)>

Again, the Rev. A. P. Campbell, a Congregational leader from N.S.W., wrote to Patison on 15 February 1936, asking:

whether the Methodist folk will agree to a Union leaving the matter of doctrine to be settled after the Union has been consummated. Mr Burton is confident that they will, but Mr Wallace Deane is equally confident that they will not. So there we are. I cannot resist the conviction that there is an absence of real seriousness on the part of Methodists regarding the whole question. <(109)>

The Congregationalists had great difficulties trying to assess the property values of church buildings and funds in various States. Telegrams and letters continued to pass between Patison and various State Officers <(110)> until the task was completed. This exercise proved how difficult it was to administer a Church where the centre of authority and control was based in the local congregation. The Methodists, on the other hand, had all these figures available as they had been prepared, as usual, for the previous Annual Synods. This task of assessing the capital funds of each Church underscored once again the nature of the two different systems of administration that the Joint Committee was trying to marry in the Dual Union.

Because the proposed Union had far reaching significance in the Missionary activities of the two Churches, considerable detailed preliminary work had to be completed by the London Missionary Society and the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia. A copy of this five page typed 'private and confidential' report <(111)>, prepared by H. Leonard Hurst of the London Missionary Society and J. W. Burton of the Methodist Missionary Society, was shared with W. L. Patison. This included facts and figures relative to both L.M.S. and Methodist work in the Pacific. This document revealed that, in the Pacific area alone, Union would affect 33,703 L.M.S. members and adherents and 20,720 Methodists.

REACTIONS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE STATEMENT

The reaction to the Joint Committee Statement was very favourable from the Victorian Congregationalists, who had earlier raised more objections than other States, although they offered suggestions to improve it. After listing these suggestions, J. D. Northey reported to Patison:

For your encouragement I would like to mention that the proposed basis of Union was well received by all our members and we appreciate the fact that the principles of Congregationalism and Methodism have been preserved and well co-ordinated. <(112)>

South Australian Congregationalists complained that the Joint Committee in Sydney had not accepted their suggestions; but they were apparently more satisfied with the Statement than with the previous document. The Rev. H. S. Grimwade, who was Convener of the Committee while Kiek was in England, reported:

Our State Committee has met, and some disappointment was expressed because

apparently no place was found for the S.A. Committee's suggested amendments of the polity, seeking to make Church organization more democratic...Our Committee was much more satisfied with the Statement than with the first one sent out. <(113)>

The Methodist system for dealing with the Statement was quite different. It went from the President-General to the Central Committee and then for their information to all the State Presidents. The Rev. W. H. Jones, in a letter to Patison on 23 April, wrote:

the President-General suggests that the Central Committee might meet in Melbourne but he said that he did not think that we could meet before November. <(114)>

An interesting insight into the human dynamics is revealed in Patison's letter of 11 May 1936 to the Secretary of the Congregational Union in Victoria. The ecclesiastical machinery preparing for Union was moving so slowly that the key Congregational leader, who had shown such patience for twenty years, was prompted by frustration to say:

So far, Victoria alone has given its definite counsel. South Australia awaits Principal Kiek's return !! Tasmania, Queensland and West Australia replies have still to come. We may also be forced to delay till November if the Methodist Central Committee must be called from all over the continent to consider it. At this stage, it will be strange if a simpler and less costly way of coming to some agreement cannot be found than for the Methodist Central Committee to meet in Melbourne to say "yes, go ahead with the printing and circulating of the Statement". If it is delayed till November, I shall be tempted to leave the issue to be decided by another generation. <(115)>

Patison expressed the same wish when he wrote to the Rev. Harry Crawford of Western Australia, Rev. John Boners of Queensland and Rev. H. Watts Grimmett of Tasmania, requesting their reports on the proposed Statement on Union. After outlining the procedure

that the Methodists would have to follow, a procedure which would not make a final decision possible before November, Patison added:

This would greatly endanger the movement in my judgement, and leave us insufficient time for educational work before the vote is taken. With these very unnecessary delays I am inclined to think that it may be well to leave the whole question to a future generation. <(116)>

When the replies came in from the three States, it was clear that there was not as much enthusiasm in these States as there was in N.S.W. the Rev. H. Watts Grimmett explained that, although he had mailed copies of the Statement to each member of his Committee, he had received no replies <(117)>. The Rev. John Bongers wrote:

Our Sectional Committee will be meeting in a few days to consider the statement re Church Union...I understand that the Methodists here have not yet received copies of the Statement, and are feeling somewhat sore: so they do not appear to be in any hurry over the matter. The Presbyterians are evidently inclined to seek a place in the negotiations; and that fact may kindle more enthusiasm for Union than what seems to exist for the dual negotiations, at any rate, in Queensland. <(118)>

The most despondent report came from Western Australia. After explaining why it had been impossible to arrange for a meeting of the Committee on Church Union during the previous three months, Rev. Harry Crawford commented:

I would like to let you know that as far as I am able to judge there does not appear to be any great enthusiasm being displayed either among ourselves or the Methodists, and this in spite of a rally of Congregational and Methodist laymen addressed by Prof. Fox on the question some two or three months ago, and publicity given by the Press. I have discussed the matter with prominent Methodist

ministers and laymen and they have thought the proposed Union desirable, but never showed any enthusiasm. If I am right in my conclusion I doubt if anything is to be gained by urging matters...Personally I am beginning to think as you do, that until considerably more enthusiasm, divine fervour is shown it may be well to leave the next generation to deal with the question. <(119)>

A month later the General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Western Australia, the Rev. Lincoln Sullivan, wrote to Patison in much the same pessimistic terms:

By what I have been able to gather from personal conversations there is anything but satisfaction with the present proposals. However, it will be much safer to await a meeting of the Committee before venturing any further. <(120)>

APATHY TOWARDS UNION INCREASED

The actual situation concerning the Union across Australia was obviously deteriorating as the negotiations dragged on and on. The most honest appraisal of the real attitudes was reflected in this letter of the Rev. Percival Watson, Minister of City Congregational Church, Brisbane, to Patison:

I was glad to receive your two recent letters, but very sorry to know that the Union cause is dragging so badly down your way. That you should be feeling so dubious about the outcome is in itself an ominous sign, for I am sure if a man of your magnificent enthusiasm and genuine devotion feels depressed there must be grave reason for it.

There is no opposition here, but no very great enthusiasm. On the whole the Methodists seem to be much more eager than our people are. We seem to be smothered under a dead weight of lethargy. It is difficult even to get a meeting called. <(121)>

By the same mail Patison received a letter from J. D. Northey, Minister of the Canterbury Congregational Church, who had been one of the strongest stalwarts for Union in Victoria. As one who was always keen to express hope in the vision of Union, these words have in them an ominous note of doom:

I have not had any word from Prof. Albiston re church Union matters. I have not broached the question with him because in some quarters there is the idea that we are interested in church Union to save ourselves from a languishing death - our denominational weakness is cited as an evidence of that. Hence I do not want to compromise our position, nor chase shadows. <(122)>

New impetus was given Union discussions when the Methodist President-General arranged for the Central Committee to meet before November so that the Joint Statement could be published earlier. This change made it possible for Patison to report progress to the State Sectional Conveners in the following terms:

It may now be regarded as fairly certain that steady progress will be made in the movement until the vote is taken. <(123)>

Letters were sent out to conveners of Fraternal Associations on 22 July 1936. Every effort was made to bring together City Fraternal Associations and district meetings of Ministers and members in order to deepen the sense of fellowship and to cultivate a wider vision.

At the same time as Methodists and Congregationalists were considering the draft of the Joint Statement, Patison wrote to Dr Ronald G. Macintyre, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in N.S.W., in the following way:

I was hoping that it would have been possible to advise you, officially, of the progress made in connection with the proposed Union of Methodists and Congregationalists. Unexpected delay has arisen in connection with the publication of a Statement which has been prepared by the Joint Committee, and until that is completed, any official communication

cannot be made...Our Congregational Federal Assembly meets in Adelaide in September next year...The Methodist General Conference meets in May 1938...I thought you would like to have this information so that you would be in a position to take such action as you consider to be wise when dealing with the question in the General Assembly. <(124)>

Macintyre answered in the following interesting way:

Thanks for your letter of 9th September which I have read with interest. It is not possible for us to make any approach to the Methodist Church with any hope of a corporate Union at present. Some people have urged me towards Union with the Congregational Church, but I have replied that it would not be decent of us even if your folk would agree to negotiations which would ignore the Methodists. Meantime we have just to mark time. <(125)>

Enthusiasm increased as the months passed. J. D. Northey reported to Patison on 7 October 1936 that he had presented the Church Union Report and 'received sanction for our Union to order 4000 copies of the printed Statement'. <(126)> He also expressed the hope that the special Union Committee of the Methodist General Conference would endorse the arguments reached in the Joint Statement. In closing his letter, he said:

I think they are so reasonable and fair that notwithstanding some vigorous opposition we ought to secure a good vote for them. <(126)>

In retrospect, it is clear that this optimism of Northey was misplaced. There were many areas of Australia where the indifference among Church members can be best described in these expressive words Principal Kiek penned in a frank letter to Patison:

the chariot wheels are driving heavily. <(127)>

THE JOINT STATEMENT ON CHURCH UNION

At a meeting of the Joint Committee on Church Union on 1 December 1936, it was finally agreed to print 10,000 copies of the Joint Statement, as a first instalment <(128)>. These were to be circulated amongst ministers and other leaders in the various local churches.

After reporting on the activities of the various State Committees this meeting made specific plans for the months ahead. The hope was expressed by the Joint Committee that the vote on Union would be taken in July or early in August <(129)>. The exact time and manner of taking the vote was left to the Methodist State Conferences and Congregational State Conference Committees on Church Union. <(130)>

The most unique feature about the Statement as a basis upon which a vote was to be made is the brevity of the section on the Faith of the Church. It is clear that the Congregational members of the Joint Committee must have been most persuasive. For the outcome was what Principal Kiek and other Congregational leaders had argued for since the 1920 vote.

The simple statement of Faith agreed upon by the Joint Committee and printed in the Church Union Statement was as wide and open as it possibly could be. It read as follows:

Whereas in the teaching of the two Communions there is essential agreement, we propose to unite in the common Christian Faith which is proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures, generally expressed in the historic creeds of the Church, and continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of Christian people, leaving the formal statement of that Faith to be expressed later, if desired, by the United Church. <(131)>

This was theological shorthand in its most extreme form. It successfully dissolved the Wesleyan or Methodist theological contribution to the United Church and made no reference to the theological heritages of either of the two Churches that were to form the Union.

It is interesting to speculate what practices would have developed in the United Church if Union had been consummated on the meagre theological basis stated above. Theological training in Congregational Colleges at the time was weak in the area of the Sacraments. For example this was clear from the letter the Rev. Harry Crawford, Minister of the North Perth Congregational

Church, wrote Patison on 10 August 1936. Among other pertinent comments on the administration of the sacraments, he said:

I doubt if our Colleges give adequate teaching regarding historical attitude and present day thought on the Sacraments. We have an unfortunate habit of taking too much for granted. To be quite honest I have been perfectly amazed whenever the question of Sacraments has come up for discussion at many of our Ministers' Fraternal at the lack of any well thought out opinions regarding them, and also about worship. God forbid that I should ever become sacerdotal, but I do think, at least, our ministers and deacons ought to know where they stand in these things and be able to give a reason for the opinions they hold. It would be too much to ask for a rigid uniformity, but we can demand intelligence. <(132)>

In spite of this deficiency in a sacramental approach to worship, the statement made no reference to the sacraments of the Church. Some Methodists were disturbed at this lack.

The second feature about the Statement was that, in matters of polity, the Methodist procedures were followed very closely. Although the basic unit of organization was the local Church or group of Churches (circuit), the Synod (district court), Conference (state court) and General Conference (national court) had considerable powers as in the Methodist polity. <(133)>

The United Church of Australasia (Methodist-Congregational) was chosen as a name for the new Church, as this body was 'to include the Mission Churches of the South Seas within the sphere of its operations and influence'. Unlike the later Union to form the Uniting Church, it was the clear expectation of the negotiators of this Union that the resulting Church would include those Pacific Churches which had been formed by either Methodist or Congregational Missions from Australia. This concern was clearly stated in the following terms:

Careful attention is being given by the officers of the London Missionary Society and the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia to the effect of the proposed Union on the Missionary work of the two Communion and on the necessary adjustments which Union will demand.

It appears safe to assume that the present work of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia will become part of the Missionary work of the United Church. The Missionary work of the Congregational Churches, which is now carried on through the L.M.S., will need special consideration. <(134)>

A matter which led to great frustration and unnecessary complexity in the early stages of the later Union was decided much more simply and satisfactorily by the negotiators of this Union. This concerned the settlement of Ministers of the Word. In addition, they stated the procedure without the elaborate regulations that were found necessary at the time of the later Union. The matter was dealt with in this one sentence:

While the right of appointment shall rest with the Settlement Committee, it shall comply, as far as possible, with the expressed wishes of the ministers, pastorate and circuit councils. <(135)>

Following the procedures which had been proved most effective in Australian conditions in the Methodist Church for over a century, considerable control was placed within each State Conference which was composed of an equal number of ministerial and lay representatives <(136)>. This same representation was set down for the General Conference which was to be the supreme court of the Church. The functions of this General Conference were:

- (a) to determine the number and boundaries of Conferences.
- (b) To legislate on matters representing the doctrine, worship, membership, and government of the Church...
- (c) To prescribe and regulate the course of study of candidates for the Ministry...
- (d) To determine the Missionary Policy of the Church...
- (e) To appoint Committees or Boards
- (f) And in general to adopt such measures as may tend to promote true Godliness, and

advance the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world. <(137)>

The Statement clearly set out the purpose for which the members of the Methodist and Congregational Churches were prepared to lose their identity as Methodists and Congregationalists and become part of a new ecclesiastical body. It was:

that Union is desirable only as the members of our Churches are convinced that it is God's will for them to unite. Moved by a vision of the wider fellowship and greater service of the Kingdom which the Union of these two Communion would make possible members of the Joint Committee, in all their deliberations, have experienced a growing conviction that Union is for them the will of God. <(138)>

That the current proposals were linked with those of earlier years was made clear in the Statement in these words:

the proposals now being made for the Union of the Methodist and Congregational Churches are directly and definitely associated with that wider movement which was inaugurated more than a third of a century ago, and which aimed at the Union of the whole of the Protestant Churches of the Commonwealth, but which, ultimately, was restricted, as in Canada, to Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. <(139)>

At the time the Statement was published, it was anticipated that voting on the basis of this document would take place within the next year. Patison reported in his 'Progress Statement of Committee' on 30 September 1936:

If all goes as the Committee expects, it should be possible for the vote of Church members to be taken by Methodists and Congregationalists simultaneously about the middle of July next year. <(140)>

The negotiators were well aware that entrenched prejudice and ignorance of the basis, upon which members of the two Churches would vote, should as far as possible be minimized. A circular letter was therefore sent out to ministers over the signatures of the joint conveners of the Joint Committee for Union, the Revs. W. H. Jones and W. L. Patison. This letter stressed the necessity to prepare congregations for the forthcoming vote by supplying the necessary information and inculcating an appropriate spirit of fellowship. A two page document, this read in part:

In the judgement of the Joint Committee, no greater service could be given to the movement than for the ministers and members of these two Communion to unite in prayer, service and worship, whenever possible, in the assurance that as they are moved by a vision of the wider fellowship and greater service of the Kingdom which their Union would make possible, they, too, as in the case of the Committee, will experience a growing conviction that Union is, for them, the will of God. <(141)>

The Joint Committee launched an educational programme aimed at making the members of the two Churches more aware of the issues involved in the proposed Union. An all-day conference was planned for ministers within the metropolitan area on 28 June 1937. Patison explained the reason for convening this in the following terms:

The main purpose of the conference was to remove misunderstanding respecting the faith and polity, and to take steps for the promotion of fellowship between the members of both communions. <(142)>

In accordance with the views expressed at this meeting several other conferences were arranged. The poor attendance and low interest shown in these prompted the Joint Committee to discontinue further plans until the State Methodist Conferences early in 1938, when it was understood that the whole matter of Union was going to be debated afresh.

METHODISTS REVIEW DUAL UNION

Both the N.S.W. and the Victorian Conferences decided to ask the General Conference to discontinue negotiations between the Methodists and Congregationalists alone. The writing was on the wall for all to read.

Notwithstanding the resolutions of the N.S.W. and Victorian Methodist Conferences, the Methodist General Conference adopted unanimously the following resolution:

That we continue negotiations with the Congregational Church, and that the Committee continue its efforts to find a basis of doctrine and polity that will be mutually acceptable to the Churches concerned; to investigate the obstacles which stand in the way of Union; to take steps to commend the advantages of Union to our people; and that the Presbyterian Church be invited to share in the negotiations with a view to the Union of the three Churches concerned. <(143)>

It was clear from the minutes of this General Conference, that the Methodists had grown lukewarm on the Methodist-Congregational Union because many of them held out for a triple Union with the Presbyterians. There were many still living who had been deeply involved in the 1920 vote and who were convinced that the majority of Presbyterians, as they had indicated in 1920, still wanted Union and therefore they thought nothing less than triple Union should be accepted.

The fact that the Methodists wanted to slow down their Methodist-Congregational negotiations in order to allow the Presbyterians to enter Church Union debates once again had the effect of bringing the former negotiations to a close as far as active participation was concerned. The vote that was planned within Methodist and Congregational Churches was never taken. Instead, attention was centred on the Prebyterian General Assembly that was to meet in September 1939.

Following the General Conference, a meeting of the Joint Committee was convened to discuss what steps should be taken to give effect to the resolution it had passed. The matter of top priority was how to secure the cooperation of the Presbyterian Church Union Committee in any action that might be taken, particularly in relation to the preparation of a simple statement of faith prior to the time the General Assembly was to meet.

It was decided to invite the Presbyterian Committee on Church Union to meet in conference with the other two Committees. The invitation was extended by the Methodists through their Secretary General. As a result, an unofficial conference was held in October 1938.

The agenda of this conference included a review of the movement for dual Union and the possibility of united action by the three committees <(144)>. Members of the Presbyterian Church Union Committee explained that they would be unable to join in such united action, even non-officially, until the attitude of the Presbyterian General Assembly to Union was made known the following September.

In his report to the Biennial Assembly of the Congregational Union at Brisbane in May 1939, Patison, as convener of the Congregational Committee on Church Union, summed up the situation of Union discussions at that time as follows:

The committee reports that no further action has been taken, and that the movement would seem to have been brought to a pause, chiefly due to the indifference referred to. Yet it would be a grave responsibility, in the judgement of the committee, to accept this as final. <(145)>

In another document, Patison explained the pause in the movement for Union between the Methodist and Congregational Churches as resulting from the 'lack of enthusiasm manifested in both Communion by ministers and members alike, and that further action was not likely until the attitude of the Presbyterian General Assembly became known towards the close of the following year'. <(146)>

PRESBYTERIANS IN FAVOUR OF TRIPLE UNION AGAIN

When the Presbyterian General Assembly met in September 1939 it reiterated 'its repeated declaration that the call of God to the Churches is to closer unity'. <(147)>

Again, as it had done many times before, it expressed 'readiness to cooperate to the fullest extent with other Churches'. <(148)>

Still again the conviction of the Assembly was declared in the words:

the ultimate aim of the Churches concerned in the movement towards closer relationship should be the uniting of all the forces of these Churches under the Headship of Christ in the service of His Kingdom. <(149)>

CHAPTER SEVEN

FEDERAL UNION

It then gave general approval to the procedure indicated in the report and instructed the Committee:

to pursue an active policy with a view to establishing closer relationships with the Congregational and/or Methodist and other Churches and report to the next Assembly.
<(150)>

Exactly what these resolutions really meant was not clear at the time to members of the Union Committees of the Methodist and Congregational Churches, as it was found impossible to bring together the three Committees on Church Union during the following eighteen months.

It has been suggested that the difficulty was created by the fact that the 1939 Presbyterian General Assembly did not give its Committee the power to discuss specifically the organic Union of the Churches. Whether this was so or not, the renewed interest within the Presbyterian Church for dialogue with the Methodist and Congregational Churches successfully killed any further negotiations for dual Union between these two Churches for the time being. The focus of attention and interest once again became triple Union.

During the debates on Methodist-Congregational Union at the 1933 Methodist General Conference, the Rev. T. G. Knicker, from Victoria, argued:

that the Conference should proceed slowly. Instead of fusion, there should be a federal relationship, which would bring the Churches together, but enable them to retain individual peculiarities. (12)

The Rev. F. Lade, from South Australia, reacted immediately to this proposal of a federal relationship in the following way:

CHAPTER SEVEN

FEDERAL UNION

Federal Union between the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches was considered by several churchmen a decade after the collapse of triple Union negotiations in 1924. It was first suggested by Presbyterians as a form of Union that would be more acceptable to those Presbyterians who constantly voted against Union because of their unwillingness to see the Presbyterian Church changed in any way. This was pointed out when leaders were reviewing the drama of Federal Union in retrospect. Dr Wood, and others who were involved in it, recalled the beginning of Federal Union in this way:

We recall that, when at the General Conference of 1933 reports were given concerning negotiations for organic union between Congregational and Methodist Churches, an invitation was extended to the Presbyterian Church to join in these negotiations to explore the possibilities of a union of the three communions; and thereupon the suggestion for a scheme of Federal Union as made by the Presbyterian members of the Joint Committee, it being stated that this would probably be more acceptable to the Presbyterians than organic Union. <(1)>

During the debates on Methodist-Congregational Union at the 1935 Methodist General Conference, the Rev. T. C. Rentoul, from Victoria, argued:

that the Conference should proceed slowly...Instead of fusion, there should be a Federal relationship, which would bring the Churches together, but enable them to retain individual peculiarities. <(2)>

The Rev. F. Lade, from South Australia, reacted immediately to this proposal of a Federal relationship in the following way:

One of the greatest difficulties of the "Federal" scheme proposed would be the need and control of a common purse. <(3)>

In spite of some obvious disadvantages such as the 'common purse' and the fact that it was not as effective as organic Union, there were those Methodists who continued to think that Federal Union was viable even if it was a second best. This conviction was reflected in the action taken at the 1941 Methodist General Conference. Here it was resolved:

That this Conference affirms its belief in the necessity and urgency for church union, either of a federal or organic character and resolves with all resources to press towards that goal. <(4)>

It further resolved to cooperate as fully as possible with other Christians. It was particularly anxious to develop negotiations with the two Churches with which dialogue had been continuing for forty years.

IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II

Australia was feeling the effects of the war with an increasing number of service personnel overseas, an increasing death toll among them in the European and Pacific theatres of war, and growing shortages at home. World events and the orientation of Australian society towards a stronger war effort diminished the importance of denominational differences and increased the importance and urgency of a combined Christian witness throughout the Commonwealth.

The Master of Wesley College, within the University of Sydney, the Rev. L. E. Bennett, had expressed the conviction of many Australians the previous year when he stressed that contemporary world events should have a crucial impact upon the Australian Churches in regard to Church Union. Writing in the Australian Christian World during August 1940, Bennett argued:

Today the speed of momentous events keeps us in round-eyed astonishment. France collapses in a fortnight. World renowned leaders disappear overnight or suffer such swift and

incredible change as no longer to be recognizable. The Citadel of Liberty capitulates in a few days to the forces of tyranny which it has proudly defied for a century. Treachery and intrigue appear from underground completing the downfall of a classic edifice built by free men in the heart of a great Republic. Great constructive changes also are precipitated in a day. Britain changes her Prime Minister and her War Cabinet at the point of the bayonet. The House of Commons in a few hours, overriding the Magna Charta of a people's liberty, delivers their persons and their property into the hands of a nation at a stroke.

In this day of swift decision, when courageous action suddenly turns the course of history, what is the Church doing? What is it doing on the grand scale to match the heroism of the times and to answer the implacable determination and bold achievements of the Totalitarian forces?...These drastic military and political achievements, some of which indeed are disgraceful exhibitions of power, are at the same time a sign of the energy and determination of the human will, and they form a lurid background against which the passivity of the Church stands in clear relief...

The hour is ripe to throw caution and convention to the winds and achieve Church union with decent courage and credible faith.
<(5)>

The Master of Wesley College called his colleagues in the Australian Churches to courageous action. Looking back across forty years, his words sound like the ravings of a radical University student leading a student demonstration in the early seventies. In fact, Bennett was one of the best educated and most honoured senior leaders in the Methodist Church, a man who had served with distinction as President of the N.S.W. Conference and the Methodist representative at Sydney University. He had, in addition, been a member of almost every important committee in the Methodist Church both at the State and Federal level. His words must therefore be taken as an honest reflection of the thinking of some of the most thoughtful members in the Australian Church. He expressed the thinking of many people when he said:

I venture to suggest that, as a beginning, we

should be large-moulded and courageous enough to precipitate some kind of Church union, born not only in the peril of the hour, but in fierce illumination of it. I do not mean that we should "re-open negotiations" in this matter - that is to say, that we should set up the usual ecclesiastical committees, with their courteous approaches, their acute caution and their well-known rate of progress. Life at the moment is too short and perilous for this. Why cannot the Churches which are not seriously divided by doctrine or bound by some obdurate theory of the ministry, for example, the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches in Australia, be large-minded and courageous enough to make history in this new land and in a fateful hour, by deciding forthwith to unite, leaving contentious matters, too numerous to mention, to be settled later on at the Church's pleasure ? If this should seem to be flying in the face of our time-honoured caution or doctrinal exactness, it might be toned down a little to mean that, on the briefest basis of doctrine and polity agreed upon, we should promptly decide to unite trusting to the faith and common sense of one another to compose our differences in committees ad libitum later on...<(6)>

L. E. Bennett, who had served on Methodist Union Committees from the time of the first Union vote, knew better than most the frustrations involved in the calculating, cautious and circumspect procedures of Church committees. He was therefore very well aware of the impact of his comments. Also, as a preacher and church administrator of considerable ability and influence, he chose his words carefully and with precision.

I know that this is not the usual approved procedure. Most ecclesiastics want to see round the next corner, and probably the next but one, before taking it...

This honourable and protracted negotiation may be the normal procedure, but these times are abnormal and loud with challenge. Are we big enough in mind and heart to signalize them by doing something unusual and irrevocable ? Are we wide visioned enough to take the first step in the rebuilding of our distraught society by forming ourselves promptly into one coherent corporate body and

thus strengthening greatly our spiritual leadership in the commonwealth. <(7)>

REACTION TO BENNETT PROPOSAL

W. L. Patison, the highly respected convener of the Congregational Church Union Committee, affirmed Bennett in his desire for courageous action by the Churches in regard to Church Union:

I am glad, personally, that the Master of Wesley College has written in this strain. All who know him well acknowledge the consistent sincerity of his advocacy of the movement for union, and many will share in his regret and justifiable impatience at the absence of leadership in these times, which are not only times of peril to the Church, but of unparalleled opportunity to all that it really means to men of vision and of faith. <(8)>

However, Patison argued that Bennett's prescription was too drastic for the sick, divided Church. He agreed that the second alternative given by Bennett was the best way ahead:

The course he first suggests - as he seems to fear - would certainly be found to be too drastic, but not so the second, where union is to be effective upon the briefest basis of doctrine and polity, trusting to the faith and common-sense of one another to compose differences later on. <(9)>

Writing in the Australian Christian World several weeks later on the theme of 'Intercommunion and Reunion', Patison made complimentary reference to the influence of Bennett's article and indirectly indicated that negotiations for triple union were being revived as a result of it. He wrote:

Steps are being taken, as a result of the recent article by the Master of Wesley College, to revive the movement for the union of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches. <(10)>

Patison, however, made clear that this triple Union was not the final goal of Church Union negotiations in Australia. The vision must always be greater than this. It must be all encompassing as far as Christians are concerned.

Whatever may be done in this direction would continue to have in view what is called Reunion, or the ultimate union of all sections of the Christian Church. <(11)>

The anxiety and tension in the western world in 1941, resulting from the world political situation, was not dissimilar to that in 1916. The national psychology in Australia in the second year of the war was similar in many respects to the situation obtaining in the second year of the First World War when the Presbyterian Church had revived Church Union negotiations.

It was almost inevitable that the General Conference, prompted by the urgings of L. E. Bennett, should attempt again to unify Christian forces in Australia. To this end it affirmed the above mentioned action to proceed with either Federal or Organic Union with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches.

The General Conference also affirmed:

its desire to cooperate fully with all the branches of Christ's Church in every movement for the evangelisation of the world, and for the Christianising of all human relationships. <(12)>

Members of the General Conference went on to say:

that with a view to an ultimately wider union we now offer to re-open negotiations with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches and to avail ourselves of every means of attaining that end. <(13)>

The same sense of urgency to develop a united Christian witness

in Australia was felt among the Congregationalists. This was translated into action when the 1941 Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand adopted the report of the Church Union Committee and then reappointed this Committee. This final court of the Congregational Church in Australia went on to resolve:

that the Committee be instructed to continue negotiations for the closer union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches and to deal with such matters as may arise in connection with Reunion; and that the Committee be asked to treat the matter as one of increasing urgency, and to keep under observation the movement in England arising from the war situation. <(14)>

Aware of the urgency for more united, concerted Christian witness in Australia, the Assembly gave its Committee authority to relate to State courts of other Churches as well as Federal bodies. This was no doubt in response to the movement in the N.S.W. Presbyterian Assembly to strengthen Christian Unity on a State basis if such Federal action seemed impossible.

To meet this new situation the Congregationalists resolved:

that the Committee be authorized to confer not only with the Committees on Church Unity which have been appointed on a Federal basis, but with such Committees as may be appointed for the same purpose by the State Assemblies and Conferences. <(15)>

It further encouraged its Committee to pursue vigorously an educational programme among Congregationalists by resolving:

that the Committee be empowered to commend to Church members the advantages of closer union and, with the approval of State Union, to ascertain their mind regarding proposals which may result from such conferences. <(16)>

In order to make this Committee more flexible to do its work

effectively, the Assembly reappointed the Rev. L. H. Purnell as General Convener of the Committee, with the power to alter the Executive to some other State in consultation with the Convener of that State if the necessity to make such a change should arise. <(17)>

UNION DISCUSSIONS REOPENED WITHIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

World events were also having their inevitable effect in the thinking of Australian Presbyterians. Stirrings were first obvious in the N.S.W. Assembly. The Convener of the Christian Unity Committee of the General Assembly of Australia, the Rev. Dr John Mackenzie, was anxious to have State Assemblies in May 1941 answer the following question:

Is your Assembly in favour of the Presbyterian Church of Australia re-opening negotiations for an incorporating union with the Methodist, Congregational and/or other Churches ? <(18)>

The N.S.W. Presbyterian, of 2 April 1941, carried an interesting editorial which reflected clearly the stirrings of interest for Church Union among Presbyterians in N.S.W. in these words:

It is many a long year since an Australian Assembly has been seriously confronted with that question, but these days are bringing us face to face with realities. As Dr Mackenzie himself says, there is a growing conviction that the present condition of the world demands from the Christian Churches a new and more resolute effort to unite their forces for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. <(19)>

This N.S.W. Presbyterian article went on to analyse with clarity the difficulty that had been evident for at least two decades within the Presbyterian Church where, in an effort to avoid the division that had occurred in the Canadian Presbyterian Church, Australian Presbyterians had committed the equally great mistake of doing nothing. We quote this at some length as it explains succinctly some of the dynamics operating within the Presbyterian Church at the time as seen through the eyes of a Presbyterian.

It is salutary to remember the unhappy experience of our Church in Canada, which went forward to union with the Methodists and Congregationalists, leaving a considerable minority of dissentient Presbyterians outside. With this in mind, wise Presbyterians in this country are not to be rushed into over-hasty commitments. On the other hand, an ostrich-like policy of procrastination and refusal to examine the situation can only bring discredit on our Church. Other communions are moving in this matter. The N.S.W. Methodist Conference a few weeks ago passed a very wholehearted resolution calling for the re-opening of negotiations. In New Zealand, where Presbyterianism is much stronger than it is in any part of Australia, "conversations" with other Churches have been in progress for some time, and the Assembly was asked to sanction definite "negotiations". An amendment "That it is not expedient to enter on so highly controversial a matter when the Empire is fighting for its very life," was defeated by 147 votes to 11, and the motion in favour of definite negotiations was carried on the voices. <(20)>

The editor of the N.S.W. Presbyterian put his finger on one cause of continual difficulty in the Presbyterian Church in Church Union negotiations. That was the question where initiatives for Church Union should originate. The N.S.W. Presbyterian states the case this way:

For years now our Federal and State Assemblies have waited politely for each other to give a lead. The G.A.A. Committee has said in effect, "There is no demand from the States," and the States have said, "there is no leadership from the responsible Federal body,"

"The Earl of Chatham, with his sword drawn, stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan; Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em, stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham." <(21)>

It then drew attention to the new development in the Church Union drama. One of the State Assemblies wanted to take the initiative rather than wait for the General Assembly because Presbyterians in that State were seized with the urgency of the need for action. The N.S.W. Presbyterian saw the situation as follows:

Finally, the N.S.W. Assembly, weary of waiting, appointed a new and energetic committee of its own under the leadership of Rev. A. D. Marchant, with instructions "to discuss and suggest a possible basis of union in consultation with the Congregational and/or Methodist Churches and to present a report to the Commission of Assembly". The report, presented last November, will be considered next May, in the light of communications from an awakening Federal Executive in Victoria.

Mr Marchant and his Committee found representatives of the other Churches eager to discuss in a fraternal way our common problems. Some practical suggestions for immediate co-operation were made and then the questions of doctrine and polity were tackled. <(22)>

The editorial entitled 'The Present Position with Regard to Church Union' closed with a criticism of the G.A.A. and a plea that future Church Union negotiations should take place at the State level. Only those Presbyterians who were involved in the discussions on Church Union at the time can assess whether this is a correct and fair appraisal of the General Assembly of Australia:

Though this vital matter can only be finalised in the Federal sphere, it is being increasingly recognised that the spade work must be done in state committees and assemblies. The creaking machinery of the G.A.A. so badly in need of a thorough overhaul is utterly inadequate for any but the simplest and most formal tasks. The mere fact that most G.A.A. committees hardly ever meet at all is sufficient evidence of this. <(23)>

If this is a correct analysis, it provides one explanation why the General Assembly over so many years passed so many fine resolutions favouring Church Union but proved unable to carry the intent of these resolutions into successful Union negotiations.

It also points to an important difference in the Methodist and Congregational Churches where the executive of Federal committees for Church Union was generally based in one State, either Victoria or N.S.W. This procedure made it much more simple for resolutions of either the General Conference of the Methodist Church or the Congregational Union to be carried into effect. It was not always essential to bring members of committees from across Australia in order to initiate action or reach decisions. Authority was given to executive committees in one or other State to act in consultation with members of their committees in other States.

FEDERAL UNION SUGGESTED AGAIN

As a result of renewed interest in triple Church Union, a Joint Conference on Christian Unity was held at Sydney in December 1942. The resolutions coming out of this dialogue between the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches reflected a desire for Federal Union. The main proposal was:

That the Conference recommend to the Supreme Courts of the three Churches here represented to reopen negotiations with a view to ultimate union, and to enter into engagement to continue such negotiations until that end has been secured, it being understood that the consummation of Union shall be reached only by agreement which will preserve within such union the continuity and historic witness of the contracting Churches. <(24)>

The reasons presented for this scheme of Federal Union were:

1. Federal Union would point the way to Corporate Union.
2. It would not plunge the three Churches into discussion of different controversial questions concerned with doctrine, polity and property.
3. It would avoid the necessity to pass several validating Acts of Parliament.

4. It would provide an immediate basis for effective cooperation in all the States.
5. It would be a test of the ability of the three Churches to live and work together.
6. It would make possible the entrance of other Churches into fellowship with those already in the Federation.
7. The Federal Churches would face more effectively the problems of the post-war period.

This proposal for Federal union arose in Victoria. Dr A. Harold Wood, the Convener of the Church Union Committee of the General Conference, reviewed events in the following way:

It was because we had reached a stalemate in Union negotiations that I brought forward this idea of a Federal Union. I talked to some of my friends and then got in touch with J. D. Northey, the Congregational Convener, a man of beautiful character, deeply spiritual and fully ecumenical. He was Principal of the Theological College in Victoria for his Church. I also got in touch with Chris Goy who had been in Darwin during the war and worked in a very friendly fashion with the Methodist padres in Darwin. He was the Presbyterian Convener. Northey, Goy and I met a number of times and drew up a scheme of Federal Union. We took the analogy of the Commonwealth and State system in Australia where certain powers are given to the Commonwealth while other powers remain with the States. <(25)>

Wood, whose memory of the events was very clear, continued in this interview:

We said we would give certain definite powers to a Federal body and leave the rest to the denominations. We were following a good pattern and we would be doing something that would be a half-way house towards Organic Union. We felt, and Northey and Goy fully agreed with me on this, that we should not wait longer, that we could not see over the

hill and discern whether Presbyterians might repent and support Organic Union, but if we could do something in the meantime we would be leading up to it, and it was partly a substitute for the Organic Union, partly a scheme worked out almost like a genealogical tree with the different departments. We thought, for instance, overseas missions, home missions, inland missions, education of the ministry, youth work, Sunday School work, public questions and Christian citizenship, all these things in which all should be expected to work together, we would give to a Federal body and then all matters of finance and property, all matters of reception of members, reception of ministers and appointment of ministers should be left to the denominations. <(26)>

The Conference of the three Federal Committees on Christian Unity meeting at Sydney in December, 1942, produced the details of the new proposal for the three Churches to move into Federal Union. The Presbyterian members considered that this plan would bring the Churches together without interfering with the polity, property and separate existence of each of the contracting Churches. It looked as though the stalemate might be broken. It was expected that this compromise Union would appeal particularly to those Presbyterians who wanted to preserve intact the institution of Presbyterianism.

Another conference of the Committee was held in November 1943. Here, after considerable discussion, it was unanimously agreed:

to constitute a federal authority to which departments of our work shall be committed with the consent of the constituent denominations. <(27)>

This plan was based on three principles. These were:

That, as soon as the federal authority is constituted it shall function actively in every sphere in which work is committed to it.

That, as soon as possible, steps be taken in each State to inaugurate work on a federal or co-operative basis, especially where new

churches are needed, or where existing congregations overlap.

That other spheres where united action might be taken would be, e.g.

1. training for the Ministry,
2. youth work and Christian education,
3. men's and women's work,
4. inland mission,
5. aboriginal missions,
6. public questions,
7. social and post-war problems,
8. home missions, overseas missions and evangelism. <(28)>

A carefully prepared six page document was printed on the details of the Federal Union plan to be 'presented to the 1947 Assemblies and Conferences' <(29)>. This outlined the history of the negotiations as far back as 1924 and then explained how the machinery of the 'Australian Federated Churches' <(30)> would work in practical terms.

Boards were to be set up for the six Departments. These were Training for the Ministry, Christian Education and Youth Work, Home Missions, Overseas Missions, Men's and Women's Organisations, and Life, Work and Evangelism. These boards were to be appointed by the denominational Assemblies and Conferences in each State. Each Board was to consist of ten representatives, four from the Methodist, four from the Presbyterian and two from the Congregational Churches respectively. Each Board was to administer the joint policy of the Australian Federated Churches in the sphere of action committed to it.

In each State or Region, there were to be State or Regional Councils consisting of thirty five members in each, fourteen from the Methodist, fourteen from the Presbyterian and seven from the Congregational Churches. These State or Regional Councils were to give effect to the policy as outlined by the Australian Council.

The Australian Council was to consist of sixty three members. Twenty four of these were elected from the Methodist, twenty four from the Presbyterian and twelve from the Congregational Churches. The remaining three were to be presiding officer of each of these Churches, that is, the President-General of the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the President of the

Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand. Each of the elected representatives to this Australian Council was to be elected by the method chosen by each denomination.

In 1945 the Methodist General Conference unanimously declared:

willingness to enter into a Federal Union with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches on terms to be agreed upon by the three Churches. <(31)>

In the likelihood of the other two Churches agreeing to press ahead with Federal Union, General Conference made it possible for the Methodist Church to move ahead with them. Authority for this action was given in the following resolution:

Should the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Congregational Union of Australia approve of the principle of Federal Union, the Central Committee on Church Union of this General Conference be empowered to negotiate with the Committees of the other Churches, and recommend to the General Conference Standing Committee to set up such authorities as Federal Union may require in the sphere of work in which it shall be agreed to operate. <(32)>

Although it was willing to move into Federal Union, General Conference was careful to make sure that nothing should be done in the name of Federal Union to contravene Methodist Laws. This was made clear in this resolution:

Any authority that may be appointed by and with the approval of the General Conference Standing Committee, and upon the recommendation of the General Conference Central Union Committee, shall possess only such powers as are contained in the constitution and laws of the Methodist Church of Australasia. Should any extension or modification of the constitution and laws be deemed to be desirable or necessary the proposals relating thereto shall be submitted to the General Conference for determination. <(33)>

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia met in Melbourne during September 1945. Its decision concerning Federal Union was more guarded than that of the General Conference. It:

Agreed to enter into Federal Union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches on terms to be agreed upon by the three Churches;

Affirmed Federal Union as a step towards corporate union with the Congregational and Methodist Churches.

Appointed representatives to a Joint Committee of the three Churches for the purpose of preparing a plan of Federal Union approved by those representatives (the plan to be forwarded with any suggested amendments) to State Assemblies and Presbyteries for report to the next Assembly. <(34)>

A further resolution made it clear that the Presbyterian Church would not move in the direction of Federal Union until the whole plan was much more detailed and was approved by all levels of the Church's administration. In other words, there was little room left for experimentation as was done in the case of the General Conference which gave permission for the structure to be set up provided the essential fabric of the Methodist Church was not changed. The General Assembly affirmed:

The resolution anent Federal Union to be interpreted to mean that the Presbyterian Church of Australia is committed to such union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches only when a plan of union agreed upon by the representatives of the three Churches, has after due process in accordance with the Church's law and practice, been accepted by the Church. <(35)>

The 1946 Biennial Assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand resolved:

that it is prepared to endorse any well considered proposals for federal union in the sense of cooperation for specific purposes under a central authority representative of the three denominations on the definite understanding that such cooperation is regarded as a step towards organic union. <(36)>

Realising that there should be full consideration of this Plan by all members of the Assemblies and Conferences of the three denominations throughout the Commonwealth, the Joint Committee of the three denominations recommended that:

The State denominational Assemblies and Conferences meeting in 1947 be asked to authorise the holding of conventions in all States to consist of all members of these Assemblies and Conferences.

The Conventions should meet as soon as practicable after June 1947 and report back findings to their denomination courts.

The Conventions should last a full day of three sessions unless a State prefers more than one day.

The Agenda suggested for State Conventions should include the following:

- (i) the nature of Federal Union
- (ii) the proposals submitted in the Plan
- (iii) how we visualise the scheme working
- (iv) special points at issue. <(37)>

The document outlining these plans was signed by C. T. F. Goy, J. D. Northey and A. H. Wood, the Conveners of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Union Committees at Melbourne on 31 December 1946.

Unfortunately, the journey into Federal Union was not to be as easy as these three leaders had originally thought. In fact, deep trouble was experienced just six months after this plan of action was published.

In May 1947, two State Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, Queensland and Western Australia, disapproved. Only New South Wales gave approval and this was only in a general fashion. The rest failed to reach a decision for or against <(38)>. In September 1947 The Presbyterian World exhibited an extraordinary display of denominational triumphalism in its front page article entitled:

Setback for Federal Union in State Assemblies

The second part of Resurgence of Presbyterianism.

This article then listed the details of voting from various states together with comments made by different State Assemblies before stating:

This year's State Assemblies were marked by a resurgent Presbyterianism and a corresponding determination to defeat federal union proposals. While the results of the voting were not unexpected in well-informed Presbyterian circles, it would seem on the other hand, that the federal unionists had grievously underestimated the strength of those standing for the preservation and continued existence of the Presbyterian Church. <(39)>

Reviewing these disappointing results, the Rev. C. T. F. Goy, Convener of the G.A.A. Christian Unity Committee, commented:

It is fair to state that some of the opposition came from those, who, while favouring full organic union, were of the opinion that the proposed Federal Union was not the right way to bring this into effect. On the other hand, it was obvious that no small minority were opposed to Union in any form at all. <(40)>

Goy's Christian Unity Committee met in November 1947 to discuss what action should be taken in the light of these unfavourable reactions. The decision was made to defer any further action on Federal Union until the next meeting of the General Assembly of Australia in 1948.

The Assembly, when it met, followed the advice of its Christian Unity Committee and directed the Code Committee to arrange a plebiscite of communicants on Federal Union. Each was to be asked two questions. The first was:

Do you agree to enter federal union?

The second went further:

Do you affirm federal union as a step towards corporate union? <(41)>

Further, the General Assembly appointed a committee of four, two unionists and two anti-unionists, to draft a statement outlining the reasons for and against Federal Union <(42)>. State Assemblies were to contribute proportionately to the cost involved. <(43)>

In spite of the 1948 General Assembly resolutions, the statement was never prepared and the plebiscite of Presbyterian communicants was never taken. No official explanation was given why the will of the Assembly was thwarted <(44)>. However, the Blue Book of the N.S.W. General Assembly recorded the following correspondence, dated 14 March 1951, between the Rev. Tom McDougall, convener of the G.A.A.'s Code Committee and the Rev. Dr W. Cumming Thom, convener of the N.S.W. Christian Unity Committee:

The position in regard to the vote on Federal Union ordered by the General Assembly of Australia, is that the Yes case has been prepared and is in my hands. Those charged with the responsibility of preparing the No case wrote to me asking that certain conditions might be observed in the preparation and setting forth of their case. I submitted their letter to the Procurator, who said that most of the stipulations were fair enough but one or two needed further consideration...The matter was then remitted to the Law Agent for his opinion. Mr Proudfoot died about a month or two after the matter had been referred to him, and before he had advised us as to his opinion on the matter.

At the Federal Advisory Committee meeting in Melbourne last September, the acting Law Agent...Mr J. P. Adam, was present. Mr Adam said that he would endeavour to secure any papers that Mr Proudfoot had left, and if these documents were amongst them he would send them to me. I have had no word from him.

The Advisory Committee decided that those preparing the No case should be asked to submit their material so that the pamphlet might be prepared and sent down to all congregations. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the matter should be considered by the Finance Committee of the General Assembly because of the expense involved. The Finance Committee has charged me to make an estimate of the probable cost of taking the vote, and that is as far as we have got. I am writing again to Mr Adam about the matter.

My judgement is that in view of the large expenditure involved and the somewhat indefinite proposals made by the G.A.A. ... the Finance Committee may decide to remit the matter again to the General Assembly. <(45)>

The 1951 Presbyterian General Assembly took an unequivocal position. It resolved to inform the other two Churches as follows:

owing to the lack of a clear definition on the matter it is considered impossible at this stage to continue negotiations. <(46)>

This decision ended discussions on Federal Union and brought to an abrupt close another chapter in Church Union in Australia.

In retrospect, it is clear that there were those in each of the three Churches who were unhappy about this plan of Federal Union. Dr Wood admitted:

People were saying that this is only half a loaf. You may say that half a loaf is better than no bread; but it was a pretty poor half

loaf at that stage. <(47)>

The feeling among some anti-unionists in the Presbyterian Church is clear from this personal reminiscence of Harold Wood:

In our anxiety to push forward Federal Union I proposed that we should have a general meeting of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist ministers of the metropolitan area to discuss the whole question of Federal Union. I further suggested that we should meet in Scots Church, Melbourne, and that we should hold a Communion Service before we discussed the matter. I thought that this was the spirit in which we should move together - surely we men of three denominations could meet around our Lord's Table and surely this would be the right spirit in which we should discuss the practical question of Federal Union.

To my horror Wallace Archer published a pamphlet opposing Federal Union in which he said:

"I'm aghast at the thought of the most sacred rights of the Holy Church being prostituted to the cause of Federal Union and that Holy Communion should be regarded as an element in the advocacy of Federal Union. This is prostituting the most sacred rights of our Church." <(48)>

Dr Wood recorded this memory with all the love and generosity of spirit he could summon and, referring to those sensitive, broadminded Presbyterians with whom he had worked so closely over the years, followed the account with the comment:

I wouldn't like to say that there were too many like Wallace Archer, but he was stirring up trouble. <(49)>

Although he supported strongly what he termed the 'half a loaf of bread' basis for triple union, Dr Wood made clear that the enthusiasm for it was only short lived within the Methodist Church.

It came before our 1948 General Conference meeting in Sydney and I think general approval was given to it; but by the 1951 General Conference in Adelaide, even before this, it had died, I am afraid, a natural death. We could not get it off the ground...So I reported to the 1951 General Conference in rather doleful terms that it had failed...I was trying to do my utmost to make it accepted at that time although I felt the whole time that it was only a half-way stage. <(50)>

Although there were those in the Presbyterian Church who supported Federal Union for the same reasons as Wood, the attitude of some of the most thoughtful leaders in that denomination was expressed by the Rev. Professor John Alexander:

I was present at the G.A.A. in 1951 when that Federal Union was voted out. It was voted out because it had - well, the Basis of Union that was presented then had been created in one day by three men. And its inadequacy was so patent and obvious that there could be no enthusiasm for it. <(51)>

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE UNITED CHURCH IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

Personal friendships and team ministries have often done more to dissolve denominational differences in Australia than theological discussion and ecclesiastical conferences. This was demonstrated most clearly in the formation of the United Church in North Australia.

The beginning of this story <(1)> of ecumenical cooperation between the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in North Australia began as far back as 16 August 1873, when the Rev. Archibald James Bogle arrived in Darwin from Adelaide to found a Wesleyan Mission in the Northern Territory. Soon after disembarking from the steamer Tararua, he bought from the Congregationalists the material for the chapel that had been supplied by the Congregational Chapel Building Society of South Australia, but which still remained on Darwin beach where it had been dumped after unloading. This had been supplied through the interest and enthusiasm of the newly appointed finance secretary of the Congregational Union of South Australia, Mr A. Gore. In noting the sale of this chapel to the Methodists, the official Congregational record stated:

It was in our hearts to have done it, but the Providence of God seems to have put it into other hands. <(2)>

METHODIST AND PRESBYTERIAN WITNESS AT DARWIN

The Methodist Church maintained an unbroken ministry in the Territory, although in so doing it faced many problems. The administration of the work in Darwin came under the South Australian Methodist Conference until 1900, when it was transferred to the Queensland Conference. Twentyfour years later, it was placed under the control of the Methodist Overseas Missions where it remained until Union with the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. This action clearly demonstrated that until the time of World War II, most Australians regarded the Northern Territory more like a foreign country than an integral part of the Australian mainland. Ministers appointed to Darwin faced a lonely term of service. They experienced little interference from the Church down South that had sent them; but they were also given as little encouragement.

After the Methodist Overseas Missions assumed administrative control of Methodist witness in the Territory, great emphasis was focussed on establishing new mission stations along the northern

coast and on nearby islands. As the Darwin minister spent more time and energy on these developments, the cause at Darwin itself had a precarious existence, particularly in those years when the white population decreased there and business ventures failed.

The Presbyterian Church developed an interest in Central and Northern Australia following the historic visit of the Rev. John Flynn in 1912. He visited Presbyterian families in widely scattered areas, but concluded that there was no reason for the Presbyterian Church to establish a separate cause in Darwin. The next General Assembly of Australia endorsed this view and made fraternal overtures to the Methodist Church by offering a subsidy of 50 pounds per annum to assist in the pastoral oversight of Presbyterian families. Although this financial aid was not accepted, the Inlander of 1914 reported:

Our relations however are likely to be much more cordial because of this and ministers of the Presbyterian Church have a practically standing invitation to occupy the Methodist pulpit in Darwin. <(3)>

The Rev. J. C. Gibson was the first Presbyterian minister to take advantage of this cooperative arrangement. He was appointed in 1914 to the A.I.M. Patrol at Pine Creek; but he often acted as a locum while the Methodist minister was on furlough and on one occasion filled a longer vacancy between Methodist appointments. As in most cases of ecumenical cooperation, lay persons followed the example of their ministers. Presbyterians and members of other Protestant denominations participated fully in the Darwin congregation, frequently taking office in its management committee.

In 1936, the General Assembly of Australia authorised the A.I.M. Board to investigate the possibility of establishing a school on a cooperative basis with other Churches. The Rev. Chris Goy, as the recently appointed padre to the North Australia Patrol, was the Presbyterian agent in this investigation. Quickly Goy developed a firm friendship with the Rev. Len Kentish, the Methodist minister stationed in Darwin, and was invited by Kentish to celebrate Holy Communion according to the order of the Presbyterian Church whenever he stayed in Darwin over a Sunday.

In June 1937, the Secretary of the A.I.M., C.P. Hughes, informed Goy that the Government intended to remodel Darwin and it therefore seemed propitious to make an application for land sites for a church or school or both. He then made the following request:

You could quietly investigate the position

and let us have your opinion as soon as possible so that if necessary we could consult the authorities in Canberra. <(4)>

The result was a well documented nine page report summarizing every aspect of life in Darwin and attempting to forecast future needs for Church witness there. He made clear that, in his opinion, there was probably no more difficult town in the Commonwealth for the Church to witness in. His recommendation that the Presbyterian Church should continue to cooperate closely with the Methodist Church was stated clearly in the following comment:

Having regard to these circumstances I feel I must report against any idea of establishing a Presbyterian cause in Darwin. We have not sufficient members of our Church to warrant doing this. Again, those of ours who are really loyal to the work of the Kingdom have already established themselves with our sister Church. At the very least it would show ingratitude to the Methodists for a fine work done, and would mean the disintegrating of their cause here. Instead of one cause just holding its own, there would be two struggling causes neither of which at the present time would be very effective in the main cause for which we labour. <(5)>

Having stated unequivocally that the Presbyterian Church should work closely with the Methodist Church in Darwin, Goy proceeded to purchase a property at the corner of Peel and Smith Streets. While on furlough in the South several months later, he began an unofficial fund raising programme. Within a short time, he had in hand over 1,000 pounds towards the cost of a Welfare Club. When the Sydney Press announced that the A.I.M. intended to commence work in Darwin, representatives of the Methodist Church requested a conference with representatives of the Presbyterian Church to discuss plans so that there would be no opposition services in Darwin where cooperative ministry had worked so well for so long.

The latter agreed that no action would be taken until the General Secretary of Methodist Overseas Missions, the Rev. J. W. Burton, could discuss on the spot plans with representatives of both Churches.

CONFERENCE UNDER THE BANYAN TREE

The Conference held in Darwin several months later was attended by Presbyterian representatives led by the Rev. John Flynn and Methodist representatives led by the Rev. John Burton. Though numerically small, this group brought together not only local representatives of the two cooperating Churches but also the two principal bodies responsible for the mission of the two Churches in the Northern Territory, the Presbyterian Australian Inland Mission and the Methodist Overseas Mission Board. Margaret Ford described this significant conference in the following dramatic way:

So it was that between August 25 and 27, 1939, while the rest of the world was setting itself the task of blowing itself apart, five men sat under a banyan tree in dusty, steamy, torrid Darwin and made simple plans to join hands in a common task. Those present were the two big Johns, plus others from both Churches, and in the atmosphere of friendly but serious informality all possible aspects of how the Christian witness could be more effective in this important outpost were discussed. <(6)>

Speaking about this conference many years later, John Burton said with excitement, even a little pride:

Let this be made clear. We were thinking of nothing but the situation confronting us in Darwin. No one should glamorise it into the beginning of a great vision of united work throughout Australia because it wasn't like that. That these followed from this first seed we know but that was something that developed by the grace of God. We did not plan it. Flynn and I were concerned with Darwin and Darwin only at that stage. And the other important point is this. Flynn and I were practical men dealing with a practical situation and we wanted no complication with theological and doctrinal issues. We absolutely insisted there was to be no defined statement of beliefs or government, for we believed they would only complicate it all unnecessarily. Furthermore, there was no need for them. We were of one mind on these things and we trusted one another. If we

trusted one another we saw no reason why everyone else should not do the same. This was to be the basis on which we would work. <(7)>

This trust between two people holding significant positions in the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches formed the basis on which the United Church in North Australia developed its future direction and policies.

Reviewing these events Margaret Ford commented appropriately:

The United Church in North Australia had its origins in a gentleman's agreement par excellence. <(8)>

There have been those who have argued that a more clearly defined basis of Union was required and should have been worked out; but others involved in the negotiations have affirmed that the movement towards Union would not have been as effective at the time if clearer limits had been set by a carefully prepared constitution.

Later Principles of Cooperation were drawn up. But these simply attempted to express the nature of the cooperative relationship that existed rather than shaping something new. It is significant that these Principles bear a striking similarity to the recommendations made by Chris Goy in 1937.

During the week following the historic conference under the banyan tree, John Flynn was installed as Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and Chris Goy became his Chaplain. Between sessions of the Assembly both men found time to meet with representatives of the Methodist Church in order to work out proposals for the combined work in Darwin. Eventually a Basis of Agreement <(9)> was drawn up and accepted by both the Board of the Australian Inland Mission and the Methodist Overseas Missions Board.

THE DARWIN INTER-CHURCH CLUB

On this basis of Agreement the Darwin Inter-Church Management Committee was formed to build and administer the Darwin Inter-Church Club on the Presbyterian land previously bought at the instigation of Goy. Presbyterian A. S. McCook was elected the first Chairman of this Committee and Methodist John Burton the first Secretary.

Plans for the Club were soon prepared by Flynn and Goy. These were endorsed by the A.I.M. Board which also made arrangements for the purchase of prefabricated buildings even though no funds were yet available to pay for them. Under the administrative skill and enthusiasm of Goy, who had been appointed Welfare Officer for the Club, the building was ready for the official dedication and opening on 26 June, 1940. Over the smoke room was a small unobtrusive plaque which read:

Darwin Inter-Church Club. Opened June 26, 1940. This building is the property of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and has been made available for Inter-Church activities by the Australian Inland Mission <(10)>

However, more important than this denominational reference was the fact that the building, which had been sponsored by the A.I.M., was handed over to the President General of the Methodist Church the Rev. A. E. Albiston and the Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev. John Flynn, as the leaders of these two Churches in Australia.

The ecumenical dimension of this Inter-Church Club was most clearly stated by this prayer of dedication sensitively prepared and strongly delivered by the Rev. Kingsley Partridge, the A.I.M. Padre stationed at Daly Waters:

O, Thou in Whom we live and move and have our being, give us the radiance of Thy presence as we dedicate this building, its equipment and the consecrated talents of men to Thy service which is the service of our fellow men.

Create by Thy goodness and the efforts of men, within this place today and throughout the days to come, the atmosphere which was native to Jesus of Galilee.

Here may the loneliness of men be lost in the spirit of Christian fellowship.

Here may the weakness of men be made into strength by the happiness of the environment.

Here may the duplicity of men be overcome by that simplicity which was ever apparent in the Friend, Saviour and Servant, Jesus of Nazareth. Here may man made creeds and selfish barriers be broken down and lost for

ever in the width, depth and reality of that vision of service which Christ alone has given.

Here in this far flung corner of the Empire may men be helped to courage, faith and a firmer grip upon the things that are essential.

This is the desire of our hearts and the prayer of our lips as we in sincerity throw open the doors of this building and dedicate in the name of Thy Son this evidence of men's thought and care for the welfare of their fellowmen. <(11)>

In the official address, the Rev. A. E. Albiston expressed the significant step forward in ecumenical relations which the opening of the Inter-Church Club represented in the following way:

We are making history, for in this enterprise we see two Churches happily united in genuine Christian service. It is evidence that even in spite of denominational distinctiveness real Christian unity is definitely possible. <(12)>

The Club rapidly expanded its activities as servicemen poured into Darwin. Its facilities were stretched to the limit as it attempted to meet the increasing needs of the rapidly growing Darwin population. During 1941, when the town mushroomed in all directions, as servicemen flooded the north, the Club played a significant role in the life of the community.

CONGREGATIONALISTS JOIN PRESBYTERIANS AND METHODISTS

The question of whether the Congregationalists would like to join the Presbyterians and Methodists in administering this highly successful venture was raised at the meeting of the Darwin Inter-Church Management Committee convened in Sydney on 11 March, 1941. It is not clear from the records why Flynn did this. It may have been his deep appreciation for the vision the Congregational Church had displayed in developing Christian witness in the north, first at Palmerston and later at Carnarvon. Concerning the Congregational witness at the latter centre, which was handed over to the A.I.M., Flynn had written as early as 1917 in the Inlander :

I venture to suggest that when the history of Church Union is written mention of this as a step in the process will be made. <(13)>

It was suggested humorously at the time that Flynn considered that, because Presbyterians and Methodists were working so closely together, the Congregationalists were necessary to provide a healthy buffer between them.

The suggestion of Flynn was received with enthusiasm; but it was agreed that any decision on accepting the Congregationalists into the Union venture at the Top End <(14)> should wait until the Congregational Assembly later in the year. Eventually on 24 September, the Rev. W. Allieston, the Secretary of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, wrote to C. P. Hughes expressing willingness to join with the other two Churches in the Darwin ministry. On receiving this news the Inter-Church Management Committee at its meeting on 7 November resolved:

1. That the Congregational Church should take its share in the joint efforts that will be made to raise money for the current expenses of the Club. A formal liability of 5% of the current expenses, and not to exceed 50 pounds was suggested as the responsibility of the Congregational Church.

2. That in the event of the Congregational Church agreeing to join in the united enterprise it would be given two representatives on the Management Committee, and that the privilege of occupying the Darwin pulpit when opportunity arises and arrangements can be made would be offered the Congregational brethren. <(15)>

A letter formally accepting this arrangement was sent from Allieston to Hughes on 14 January 1942. The two representatives of the Congregational Church appointed to the Management Committee were the Revs. Bernard Cockett and R. C. Turner. When he heard this good news, Goy reflected the feelings of many in Darwin in his comment:

The name Inter-Church Club will now carry new significance for us. <(16)>

WAR CHANGES DARWIN

The first Japanese attack on Darwin on 19 February 1942 heralded a change in the nature of the Inter-Church Club. The town was shattered, 243 people were killed and between three and four hundred injured. After this raid, all civilians were evacuated and Darwin became a battle zone. Over the next nineteen months, that is until 12 November 1943, Darwin was bombed 59 times.

The Club was first made available to the Navy for medical purposes. Later, it was handed over to the Y.M.C.A. for the remainder of the war to be utilized for the use of the large number of troops stationed at or passing through Darwin. It was not returned to the Inter-Church Committees until 1 April 1946.

As the whole area was under military control during the war years, no further steps could be taken by the Inter-Church Management Committee for developing the combined ministry in Darwin. The Committee was not even called together until two days after the capitulation of Japan in August 1945. At this informal meeting, John Burton announced that the Methodist General Conference had agreed to allocate 5,000 pounds to build a church in Darwin and further that conference members wished to retain the cooperative arrangement previously developed with the A.I.M.

The Darwin Lands Acquisition Act came into force on 17 January 1946. This legal measure, which seemed a necessary step prior to the planning of a new Darwin, made the Commonwealth the owner of all privately owned lands including the improvements on them. It directly affected the Inter-Church Club which was subsequently bought by the Government for 6,686 pounds, 7 shillings and 9 pence. <(17)>

Ten representatives from the three cooperating Churches met on 4 January 1946, under the chairmanship of the Rev. A. S. McCook. They reaffirmed their desire to work together, agreed that the time had come for a constitution for the Inter-Church Committee and decided to approach the Y.M.C.A. about administering the Club again. The latter action was taken on 1 April at which time two new ministers, the Rev. Cyril Alcorn (Methodist) and the Rev. Arch W. Grant (Presbyterian) and a Welfare Officer were appointed.

BIRTH OF THE UNITED CHURCH IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

On 5 August 1946, the Sydney committee accepted the recommendation of those servicing the Top End and changed the name of the cooperative movement to 'The United Church in North Australia (Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian)'. Within

several months services were being conducted regularly at five centres outside Darwin. These were Nightcliff, Camp 88, Pine Creek, Adelaide River and Katherine.

By the end of 1946, the Darwin Committee had prepared a policy paper indicating the way ahead for the Darwin Cooperative witness. This covered seven broad divisions of work - Church and Sunday Schools, Club, Men's Hostel, Children's Hostel, Chinese Church and School, Women's Hostel and Half Caste Work. It then recommended to the Sydney Committee the land requirements that would be necessary to bring these objectives into reality. However, implementing these decisions was delayed for three years by the slowness of the Lands and Survey Branch of the Department of Works and Housing to make a final decision on leasing to the three Churches, as joint owners, the desired five acres of land at the corner of Daly and Smith Streets. The Darwin Committee chafed under the apparent inability of the Government and the Sydney Committee to act.

In the midst of this frustrating experience, the Darwin Committee arranged for the lease of another five acre lot at Lee Point with a sea frontage for use as a permanent camp site. This action was endorsed by the Sydney Committee and the Dedication Service took place on 4 May 1949. Unity recorded the event in this way:

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in May, when the Boys' Club had been in camp for the first time on the United Church's own land at Lee Point, a simple but impressive service of dedication was conducted in the presence of the campers and about forty visitors including the Administrator. <(18)>

In September 1949 Ted Roberts was replaced with the Rev. Arthur Ellemore, who was the Chairman of the North Australia District of the Methodist Overseas Mission. This breaking of the team ministry, which Roberts and Grant had conducted, prompted the following comment in Unity :

As an experiment in unity, we in Darwin have shown we can work together and worship together as one Christian people despite different traditions of Church Government and so on. Visitors from the South have been surprised and impressed by what they have seen and shared here, and have gone back to their homes with a new vision of what Christian unity could be. <(19)>

The Rev. Ted Roberts commented:

The experiment in unity being tried in the United Church was one of the factors that stimulated my interest in coming to Darwin. I can now record it as my view that the experiment is a success <(20)>

FRUSTRATIONS WITHIN THE UNITED CHURCH

The departure of Ted Roberts prompted Arch Grant to express more strongly his frustration with the crippling effect of the long delay in finalising the property negotiations which, he argued, could have been avoided if the Sydney Committee had been more alert. Grant expressed his disappointment to the Rev. J. Gray Robertson, Chairman of the A.I.M., in the following way on 15 October:

I came to Darwin with the hope of remaining long enough to see the United Church a reality with a new church in token of this, but I now reluctantly confess I am doubtful that this hope will be achieved...

With the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of civilian life in Darwin the vision of a truly united church in Darwin was before some of us and the hopes of its fulfilment were high. These hopes were shared by ministers and laymen alike, but with the delays and disappointments occasioned by the apparent neglect of our Sydney brethren to implement the recommendations of the Darwin people or to originate plans for us, these hopes have been replaced by disillusionment and despair. <(21)>

Grant's request for a more clearly defined constitution and statement of authority brought the following surprising reply from Gray Robertson:

The term "United Church" is a misnomer. What exists is a delicately balanced cooperative movement between the MOM and the AIM. Our respective Churches certainly do not regard

it as a Union and consequently the members of the Sydney committee keep their ears to the ground lest the axe of official displeasure falls on them. To embark on any large scheme of development is premature because in the mind of the MOM and the AIM Darwin is definitely only an experiment. <(22)>

Grant's reply sharpened up the different attitudes between those in Darwin, who saw the urgency of the mission to be accomplished, and more conservative Sydney committee members, who saw the work in the Territory simply as an experiment by the departments of two denominations which were trying to face the many challenges to Christian witness presented by post war Australia. He wrote bluntly:

It need not be a misnomer if those responsible for the direction of the cooperative movement bearing this name have the vision to see the possibilities and the enterprise to capitalise on opportunities as they arise. What is needed in my opinion is a courageous step forward to give the movement substance. Is Darwin an experiment? For how long? When do we commence "production"? We have been experimenting for ten years and I am convinced the experiment has been a success except in our realisation of the fact. <(23)>

Feeling that the Inter-Church Committee could not or would not move forward as quickly as he thought they should, Grant resigned. His frustration and impatience were clearly expressed in the letter indicating this:

I cannot remain in a position where the work to which I have been called of God is neglected while opportunity is before me ...It is my considered opinion that the Sydney Board of the United Church has failed miserably to deal with the Darwin problem, showing neither enthusiasm nor vision with the result that the work is stagnating. <(24)>

This is certainly not the first time in the history of Christian

missions when those working on the mission field were thoroughly frustrated with those making decisions at the home base. In fact, this situation occurred repeatedly throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, as illustrated many times in the author's Attitudes of the West towards the Propagation of the Gospel in the East. <(25)>

COOPERATION MORE DIFFICULT IN ALICE SPRINGS

It is significant to note that many more difficulties and frustrations developed in connection with the cooperative Christian witness in Alice Springs than in Darwin. Margaret Ford described the differences in this way:

In Darwin the United church movement was conceived, was born and was nurtured in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. In Alice Springs, by contrast, the birth was preceded by a long drawn out and agonising labour which even then issued in a rather frail offspring who looked ill-equipped to withstand the rigour of growth and development under the conditions of tension which surrounded it. <(26)>

The reason for this difference was not so much the individual personalities of the leaders involved, but the different group dynamics operating at the Top End. At the Centre, both the Presbyterians and the Methodists had developed strong causes before discussions of cooperation were begun. There was even a feeling of competition that developed between the Australian Inland Mission that the Presbyterian Church created in 1912 and the Methodist Inland Mission founded by the Methodist Church in 1926. Although an understanding had been reached that the former would concentrate on the patrol work serving the distant stations of the inland while the latter would develop the work in the town of Alice Springs, it was inevitable that there would be considerable overlapping and that this would in turn create some difficulties.

At the Top End, however, there had been no overlapping between the work of the Presbyterian Australian Inland Mission and the Methodist Overseas Missions Board, which administered the witness of the Methodist Church at Darwin. There were no vested interests to protect but an exciting missionary task to be accomplished.

At the Centre, both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches had equally capable, committed and confident ministerial representatives in the Rev. Harry Griffiths and the Rev.

Partridge. But their style and scope of Christian witness, though equally valuable to those they served, were different. Margaret Ford described this difference in the following way:

So it was that while Griffiths was developing the property and establishing work on a firm basis in Alice Springs, AIM "Skipper" Partridge was mooching in and out of station properties, mining camps and remote settlements all over the tremendous area of his pastoral concern. Yet each was making his mark and by the very quality of the dedication applied indirectly creating a situation which was not going to be easy to resolve later.

Without doubt Partridge was one of the "greats" of AIM history, with a way of identifying with the bushman's outlook which has seldom been equalled. Just as indelibly was Griffiths becoming an integral part of the life of the Centre, so that within a few years his name was synonymous with all the achievements of Methodism's witness in the bush. So each man sank deep roots and their personalities clashed increasingly as the years went on. This was the background against which later negotiations had to be held. <(27)>

CHANGES IN THE CENTRE

The Inter-Church Service Club and Hostel for which Griffiths, supported by the Rev. T. C. Rentoul as Director of the Federal Methodist Inland Mission from 1932 to 1945, had worked so hard was opened in Alice Springs. This created disquiet among some members of the A.I.M. as they felt they had not been informed officially about Methodist plans. Chris Goy wrote from Darwin objecting to the use of the term 'Inter-Church Club' as this had in the Top End become associated with the very successful cooperative Presbyterian-Methodist enterprise whereas in Alice Springs it only denoted an activity of the Methodist Church.

Both the A.I.M. and M.I.M. Boards met in Melbourne on 10 November 1940 in an attempt to work out the differences that were developing in Alice Springs; but no agreement was reached on a way of developing a cooperative ministry there. The Methodists set up a sub-committee to meet with the A.I.M. at any time the latter decided to arrange a consultation; but no invitation to further discussion was ever issued. Negotiations were therefore suspended for ten years as the demands of the war stopped any developments as the A.I.M. Hostel was taken for the use of army nurses and the M.I.M. Inter-Church Club (Griffiths House) became a servicemen's club.

The continued use of the Methodist buildings for religious purposes during the war years is best described in this report given to the 1945 General Conference by the M.I.M. Board:

Far beyond anything we had hoped has been the success at Alice Springs. Griffiths House will be a fragrant memory in the minds of thousands of Australian men down the years. A highlight in bright array of social, spiritual activity has been the Sunday evening service in the Hall with crowded attendances, an inspiring choir, wonderful congregational singing, a devout atmosphere and happy fellowship. Griffiths House has been Methodism's outstanding individual contribution to the war effort. <(28)>

During the war both Partridge and Griffiths continued to serve inland families through their patrol work. The former visited station homesteads in all states except Victoria while the latter often went into Western Australia and Queensland. On the death of T. C. Rentoul in 1945, Griffiths agreed to become Director of the M.I.M. if he could continue to live in Alice Springs. Griffiths House was developed as a hostel for bush children. Within five years, it housed over fifty children from station families.

CHANGES IN THE CENTRE

Radical changes took place in the relationship between the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in the Centre during the 1950s. By the end of this decade, an entirely new cooperative pattern of mission had developed. At the 1951 Methodist General Conference, the M.I.M. reported the new challenge facing the inland in the following words:

At no time in the history of the Mission have we been called on to face such gigantic developments as those about to take place in the north. New townships are likely to spring up overnight, existing settlements may grow far beyond our inadequate resources. The presence within 20 miles of Alice Springs of uranium and coal laid further emphasis that the pattern of outback life is changing from a primarily pastoral one to one in which many small scattered communities would exist. <(29)>

John Flynn, who had done so much to develop the Christian witness throughout the inland, died on 5 May 1951. This forced the A.I.M. to review its policies. Out of this reappraisal the decision to commence a Presbyterian cause at Alice Springs emerged. To prepare the way for this a Deaconess was sent to survey the position. Further, a nationwide appeal was launched to build in Alice Springs a church in memory of Flynn. This would then become the base for the Presbyterian minister at the centre.

Alarmed by the unilateral action of the Presbyterian Church in an area which up until now had been regarded as the pastoral responsibility of the Methodists, the Rev. Alex Pederick in his capacity of the M.I.M. Secretary wrote to the A.I.M. Secretary, C. P. Hughes making the following suggestion:

further consideration be given to the fuller cooperation of our respective missions in the inland. Although the Methodist Church is firmly established in Alice Springs, we would be glad to explore the polity of cooperation in the Centre, if it would provide a stronger witness for the Christian Church in the whole inland area. <(30)>

The sequel to this letter is best told by Margaret Ford, who with her husband served the A.I.M. in the inland and knew at first hand both the personalities and principles involved in this drama of ecumenical courtship. She reported:

The letter C. P. Hughes wrote in reply was hardly encouraging stating erroneously that 'up to the present all approaches for a cooperative effort have emanated from us'. He then called on Pederick to be specific in any proposals that the Methodist Church wanted to discuss before committing the AIM even as far as holding a meeting. In contrast Pederick's reply was gracious and generous and he would not buy into any debate as to which side had been the initiator of discussions about working together. Rather he passed it off by saying 'it seems that any suggestions of united work in the past have been made in private conversation between individuals seeing that no proposals have come officially from either side'. He then assured Hughes the Methodists had no specific proposals in mind when suggesting a meeting, and in fact

preferred not to have any. 'We would be happy to discuss the general principle of united work' he concluded. But the AIM went no further at this stage, preferring to give itself over at the time to domestic affairs of the Mission. <(31)>

Hughes resigned as Secretary in August 1951 and the following month the Rev. J. F. McKay was appointed A.I.M. Superintendent as Flynn's successor by the Presbyterian General Assembly. About the same time, the Methodist General Conference appointed Alex Pederick Honorary Director of M.I.M.

UNITY AT ALICE SPRINGS

Both Fred McKay and Alex Pederick knew the life and problems of the inland. Both were men of broad vision, keen mind and generous spirit; both believed with equal conviction that the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches could witness most effectively to the people of the inland if they worked together in a cooperative ministry.

Because of financial difficulties, the A.I.M. Board decided to close the Hostel for Bush Mothers and the Central Patrol and halt further developments at the Old Timers' Settlement. These actions created considerable problems in the Centre which, in turn, delayed the convening of the conference between A.I.M. and M.I.M. representatives until 28 November 1952.

This meeting held in the A.I.M. Superintendent's office, drew up a nine point agreement for working together. This argument, which was endorsed by both organisations with only minor amendments, established a cooperative ministry in the Centre similar to that operating successfully at the Top End. As in Darwin the work would be administered by an Inter-Church Committee and two ministers, mutually approved, would be appointed, one from each denomination. However, unlike Darwin, it was agreed that the participating Churches would retain their own property rather than vest it all in a joint trust. The work of the Methodist Children's Hostel came into the scheme but the Presbyterian Hostel and the Old Timer's Settlement were exempted for the time being.

On 29 April 1954, the first sod for the John Flynn Memorial Church was turned. The ceremony was brief and simple. There were only a few present. But Fred McKay expressed the significance of the event as he uttered this short prayer:

As we recall the vision of Thy Servant, John

Flynn, who first pegged out this block of land for the use of the Australian Inland Mission, we believe a generation later Thou art enabling us by Thy Spirit to witness the consummation of that man's hope and dream that one day an inland sanctuary should be built on this spot to the glory of God.
<(32)>

Several months later, hundreds of people gathered at the same site when the foundation stone of the John Flynn Memorial Church was laid on 26 June by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Rt Hon. R. G. Menzies. On this occasion, too, it was Fred McKay who best expressed the meaning of the occasion. He first referred to Flynn's dream of 1920:

We can already see a central AIM Cathedral with full services every Sabbath. <(33)>

Then he closed with these simple words:

Now that Flynn has gone his countless friends have felt it a moral challenge to consummate Flynn's hope and build in Central Australia a visible symbol of the faith which spurred him into action. Consequently with a sense of devoted compulsion...and with the utmost care, this enterprise has been entered upon.
<(34)>

Fred McKay put added meaning into these words during 1954, when representatives of the A.I.M. and the M.I.M. discussed together ways in which a united ministry could be further developed in the Centre. In spite of strains and tensions between the two Boards, perhaps because of these, McKay argued that if representatives from both Boards were really serious about working together the ministry in both Alice Springs and Darwin should be placed under one administrative body which should coordinate all aspects of the work whether patrol work, settled pastoral ministry, hostels or welfare centres.

This plan constituted the desired breakthrough. It was endorsed by both the A.I.M. and the M.I.M. Boards. In order to bring the work at Top End and the Centre into the one administrative unit, it was necessary for the Methodists to transfer their ministry at Darwin from the M.O.M. to the M.I.M. This was successfully

effected at the end of 1954.

There were many problems to be solved before the vision of South Australian architect of the John Flynn Memorial Church, Arthur Philpot, became a reality and was officially opened on 5 May 1956. Costs rose sharply and technical building difficulties were legion. Without doubt the most agonizing issue during the construction was the death of builder Jimmy Richards, who accidentally fell from the scaffolding.

Before the close of 1955 a draft constitution, known as the Principles of Cooperation, had been adopted to guide the cooperative venture. According to this, one parish minister was to be stationed in Darwin, two in Alice Springs, one patrol centred on Katherine and another patrol based on Tennant Creek.

In order to make it possible for the new scheme of cooperation to come into operation immediately after the official Opening and Dedication of the John Flynn Church on 5 May 1956, all appointments were filled early in the year. The Rev. Arch Grant (Presbyterian) and the Rev. Aubrey Quick (Methodist) took up residence in Alice Springs. The Rev. Norman Pearce, who had been serving at the Centre, became the first M.I.M. minister to go to Darwin as the United Church representative, the Rev. Stewart Lang (Presbyterian), who had been the A.I.M. Representative in Darwin, was transferred to the Uranium Fields Patrol based in Katherine and the Rev. W. J. Bates (Presbyterian) went to Tennant Creek.

OPENING THE JOHN FLYNN MEMORIAL CHURCH

The great weekend of celebration eventually arrived. Thousands of inlanders and visitors from across Australia participated in the various activities. The dedication of special gifts and the unveiling of the plaque in memory of builder Jim Richards took place on Friday night. Then on Saturday the new church was opened and dedicated. Greetings on this historic occasion included a message from Her Majesty, the Queen. The first service was held in the new church the following Sunday morning. The central act of the weekend, however, for those interested in the existing drama of the birth of the United Church in North Australia took place during the service in the John Flynn Memorial Church on Sunday evening. Following the lesson, read by the Governor General, the Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Rt. Rev. Sir Francis Rolland, said:

It was a great privilege yesterday to open and dedicate this church as a memorial to a great Presbyterian leader and servant, and an equal joy to me this morning to conduct the first service of worship in it according to the rites of the Presbyterian Church. But I count it a great honour now to say that I

hand it over for the use of the United Church congregation. <(35)>

The President-General of the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Rev. Dr Calvert Barber, then declared that the Methodist congregation would leave the building, where they had worshipped for many years, in order to become a part of the United Church, which would worship in the new John Flynn Memorial Church. The President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Rev. C. Denis Ryan, then brought a greeting from the third participating Church in the United Church, which would forthwith provide a united ministry to an area of Australia six times the size of the State of Victoria.

Dr Barber reflected the feelings and thoughts of most members of the overflow congregation that Sunday night, when in the sermon he focussed on the deep sense of thanksgiving and joy 'as we take a further step along the road to which God is calling us in these days in order that we may manifest to the world the essential unity of the church'. <(36)>

Barber expressed the conviction, which had brought Flynn and Burton into a cooperative ministry seventeen years earlier, when he said:

As denominations we must eventually be prepared to die that His Church may stand clearly revealed and equipped for her mission. <(37)>

The sequel demonstrated how well equipped for mission the United Church in North Australia was for mission. The previous M.I.M. cause at Katherine was renamed the Uranium Fields Patrol and the Rev. Stewart Lang began a significant ministry both at Katherine and on patrol work that left a deep impression on the Top End.

Tennant Creek Church also took a step forward when Presbyterian Bill Bates was appointed the first United Church Padre. He was followed six years later by Methodist Roy Cosier and later still by the Rev. John O'Reilly. The fact that appointees belonged to different denominations made no difference in the ministry of each to the inland people they served. They were simply accepted as a minister of the United Church. When the new church, built with a lot of volunteer labour, was opened on 12 December 1966 one of the oldest church members in Tennant Creek, Mr. Bill McLean, was able to say:

Come and visit the church you helped us to

build, the church built in love and good fellowship, the church of a thousand hands, the church of the highway - the United Church of Tennant Creek. <(38)>

OUTREACH MINISTRY OF UNITED CHURCH

Two new developments in ministry took place through the United Church that would have been impossible through individual denominations. The first was Woomera, the rocket-firing range in South Australia set up by Britain and Australia to test missiles. The second was in Papua New Guinea.

At Woomera in June 1951 the Commonwealth Government gave 7,000 pounds each for the building of separate churches for the Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants. Spurred on by Chaplain Stuart Calder, the United Protestant Church was officially opened on 14 October 1956. Five years later, the Board of Management of this Woomera Church began discussions with the United Church in North Australia which resulted in the Rev. Fred McKay receiving a letter on 20 June stating:

That the congregation of the United Protestant Church, Woomera, after due and earnest consideration of the policy and aims of the United Church in North Australia make an approach to the Board of that body to become incorporated within the whole Movement. <(39)>

Fred McKay, who had previously visited the congregation on 15 June and discussed the issue with those present, explained that this congregation found itself situated 'in a national, or Australian context with no affiliation to any State Conference or Assembly'. <(40)>

As a result he expressed this conviction:

if the congregation is to have permanent stability, a defined relationship with a movement such as the U.C.N.A. appears to be necessary. <(41)>

With an almost unanimous vote from the local congregation, the approval of the Principal Air Chaplain and the welcome of the

Federal bodies of the three denominations, the Woomera United Protestant Church was incorporated into the United Church in North Australia.

The extension of the U.C.N.A. into Papua New Guinea resulted from the interest of the London Missionary Society, which had close links with the Congregational Church, and its approach to the United Church Board to consider working with the European population of Port Moresby. Correspondence from the Ela Protestant Church (LMS) was presented at the executive meeting held after the opening of the John Flynn Church. Following discussion between the various parties, the United Church Board asked the Ela Protestant Church to apply for the lease of land at Boroko, which could later be taken over by the United Church after the necessary paper work had been completed allowing it to hold land in the Territory of Papua New Guinea. Steps were then taken to find an appropriate minister to send. Eventually the Rev. Paul Parkin, a Congregational minister, was commissioned on 28 January 1958 in St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church for service in Port Moresby.

The new United Church building for worship was officially opened in July 1961. The Administrator, Sir Donald Cleland, attended the service led by the Revs. Fred McKay and Paul Parkin.

With the great emphasis placed on self-determination in the Territory, meetings were held during 1964 to discuss the possibility of Church Union there. The work that had been developed by the London Missionary Society since 1871 became an autonomous body called the Papuan Ekalesia, governed by a Papuan Church Assembly, on 21 November 1962. Later this Church joined with others, including the United Church, to form the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Southern Islands. This important decision was reached at a meeting in February 1964, when it was resolved:

We, the Kwato Extension Association, Papua Ekalesia, the Methodist Church in Melanesia, and the United Church of Port Moresby declare it is our own intention to join together in an organic Union. We regard Union not as a matter of expediency, but of obedience to Christ who is one Head of the Church.

That this Call of Christ demands our response now, and this is confirmed by the national and social situation. We recognise that Christ has led us to this point, so we must not allow any obstacle to prevent Union. We recognise that it is important to establish a strong, united Christian Church against the rising tide of anti-Christian influence in the community. <(42)>

CHAPTER NINE

The representative of the United Church Board expressed the reaction of many United Church members to the inauguration of the new Church when he reported to the Board:

It is with a certain sadness that we see the departure of this member of the United Church in North Australia, but I am confident it will make a worthy contribution in the life of the work of the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. <(43)>

So, once again, in moving towards greater Christian unity, narrower denominational interests were sacrificed. The words used by the Rev. Alex Pederick at the final service of worship in the historic wooden Alice Springs Methodist Church the Sunday before Methodists joined with Presbyterians in the John Flynn Memorial Church were again most appropriate:

Except a grain of wheat falls to the ground and die...<(44)>

RELATIONS BETWEEN METHODISTS AND CONGREGATIONALISTS

As early as 11 September 1948, a historical meeting of representatives of the Congregational and Methodist Churches was held in Albert Junior Church, Brisbane, at which the possibility of union between the two Churches was considered. Principal Kirk, the Rev. A. M. Wheller invited two representatives from both Churches who were present at this meeting and then added:

The following findings were agreed:

CHAPTER NINE

THE METHODIST- CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF AUSTRALASIA

The collapse of negotiations for Federal Union <(1)> increased interest in the possibility of Methodist-Congregational Union. In fact, this dual Union was reconsidered even before the Federal triple approach was officially discontinued. Indeed, discussions between Congregationalists and Methodists were recommenced because it looked as though the triple arrangement of cooperative work was about to collapse, as the Presbyterians, who had suggested the idea, had apparently done nothing for nearly a year. Disappointment at this lack of action by the Presbyterians was expressed in a letter the President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand wrote to the Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church on 10 August 1946. In this the Rev. Principal E. S. Kiek said to the Right Rev. A. Campbell Grieve:

I believe that, at the last meeting of the GAA, held in September 1945, a deliverance was approved by a large majority endorsing the idea of Federal Union with the Methodist and Congregational Churches, with a view to ultimate organic Union...My present object is to inquire, for my own better enlightenment, what steps, if any, have been taken to carry the matter further. Since the Presbyterian Church may firstly be regarded as having brought forth the idea, the initiative rests with it.

Assuring you of our desire to do everything possible to further both the spirit and the practise of Christian Unity and so humbly assisting to fulfil the object of our Lord's own prayer. <(2)>

DISCUSSION BETWEEN METHODISTS AND CONGREGATIONALISTS

As early as 13 September 1946, a fraternal meeting of representatives of the Congregational and Methodist Churches was held in Albert Street Church, Brisbane, to discuss the possibility of Union between the two Churches. In a memorandum to Principal Kiek, the Rev. H. M. Wheller listed the representatives from both Churches who were present at this meeting and then added:

The following findings were agreed to:

(1) We agreed that we ought to explore every possibility and base our investigations and discussions on the plan which was agreed to by the three Churches some twenty years ago.

(2) That we ought to arrange for a gathering of representatives of the two Churches in Melbourne during the November meetings of the Methodist General Conference Committees. The Congregational Church in each State to be represented by two representatives and the Methodist Church by the Central Committee of the General Conference...

The meeting was of a most cordial character and it may well be that after all the years of disappointment we are on the eve of achieving something towards the healing of the Body of Christ. <(3)>

Kiek, who was present at this meeting, wrote a combined letter to the Secretary of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Rev. Walter Albiston, and the Convener of the Church Union Committee, the Rev. Principal Northey, on 10 October 1946 informing them of what was happening. Neither of them was present at the Brisbane meeting. In this important communication he said:

A quite informal meeting took place in Brisbane on September 13, at which a group of Congregational and Methodist ministers canvassed the possibility of Methodist-Congregational Union, without, however, excluding the hope of a still wider Union...

As a result of the Brisbane meeting, Rev. H. M. Wheller communicated with the Methodist President-General (Dr Burton), who has promptly authorised the Methodist Secretary-General (Rev. H. G. Secomb) to invite us to a discussion with the Methodist General Conference Church Union Committee at Wesley Church, Melbourne, on November 21, at 4 p.m., to be continued on November 22 at 10 a.m. <(4)>

Kiek went on to make clear that for him there was no difficulty in the two plans proceeding together. However, it is hard to see how the dual Union talks could be of any value if at this time

Federal Union was a really viable option. He commented:

About the Federal Union business, it is obviously important, as the Methodist Secretary-General observes, that Methodist-Congregational discussions should not hinder the Federal Union scheme: the two projects are in no way inconsistent or competitive. Perhaps you could ascertain when the F.U. discussion is to take place: I understand that it too was meant to occur in Melbourne in November. Could not the two sets of discussions be arranged consecutively?
<(5)>

Kiek then revealed the extent to which those involved in Union negotiations were careful lest their best intentions were misunderstood and misrepresented by those in the Presbyterian Church who were against Union. His letter continued:

Do you think it wise or necessary to acquaint our Presbyterian friends with the Methodist-Congregational negotiations at this preliminary stage? We don't want to give the impression of doing anything "behind the backs" of the Presbyterians and so providing ammunition for the enemies of Church Union in Presbyterianism. Nor have we any idea of regarding the dual Union, as precluding the triple Union, but rather hope and pray that it might be preliminary and preparatory thereto. The question of confiding in the Presbyterians must be jointly considered with the Methodists. Perhaps you will discuss it with Mr. Secomb. <(6)>

Kiek closed with this clear indication of the deep care yet firm determination with which the leaders of the Churches were moving into Union at this time:

Let us pray that in these important matters we may all be divinely guided. We don't want to be timid and we don't want to be rash.
<(7)>

At the same time as Kiek was writing this letter, another communication on the same matter was in the mail to him from the Secretary-General of the Methodist Church. This revealed that the Rev. H. G. Secomb also saw no difficulty in the discussions for dual Union proceeding at the same time as negotiations for the triple federation scheme. After reviewing what had been done by the Methodists following the Brisbane meeting and outlining plans for the meeting in Melbourne between the General Conference Church Union Committee and representatives of the Congregational Union, Secomb said:

I have read Mr. Wheller's letter with very keen interest and I trust that the proposed meeting will go far to promote the Christian unity for which we are longing. We have reached a rather critical but hopeful position here in regard to Federal Union of the three Churches but this new proposal need not in any way prejudice what is being done in that way. <(8)>

Kiek stressed in several letters written at this time that the Melbourne talks could only be informal. But he felt they were essential to keep the Union negotiations moving. For example, in writing to the Secretary of the Congregational Union on 18 October 1946, he said:

I fully agree that the matter of the dual Union is not formulated: It has merely been unofficially talked about. Any preliminary and exploratory work aiming at the production of some kind of draft plan, should be done by our Church Union Committee in Melbourne in conjunction with the appropriate Methodist Church Union Committee. I see no reason why the two committees should not attempt something of this kind on the definite understanding that neither denomination is committed to anything. Before we can have any discussion at all, we must have something to discuss. <(9)>

Principal Northey, the Convener of the Church Union Committee of the Congregational Union, stressed the same point concerning the informality of anything done in Melbourne in his correspondence. For example, in a letter to Kiek dated 29 October 1946, he said:

In conversation with Mr. H. G. Secomb today he agrees that at the November meeting to which you intend coming all that can be done is to have a preliminary talk about the wisdom of reviving the proposal for dual Union. <(10)>

The frustration felt by some of the keen supporters of Union during these years when the world was changing so rapidly and nuclear power posed a new threat to mankind was aptly expressed by Kiek to his good friend Northey. Both were Principals of Colleges training ministers for the Congregational Church. Both were therefore well aware of the frustration of many of their students because the Church seemed to be moving so slowly on the matter of Christian unity, that seemed so obviously necessary in a world which was now able to destroy itself. Kiek knew he was reflecting the feelings of the younger generation of ministers, as well as his own feelings, in the following comments:

So far as I can see, there is no prospect of anything being done to implement Federal Union as a working project before 1949. The mills of ecclesiasticism presumably correspond to the mills of the Deity they all claim to serve! No one would imagine, considering the long and laboured procedure outlines, that we are living in the age of atomic power and that a kind of satanic apocalypse was brooding over mankind. I am not vastly interested in the elaborate machinery under construction but only in whether it will produce any results in, say, coordination of ministerial training, prevention of insane overlapping and real cooperation in evangelistic and missionary activity. Commonsense suggests that these desirable results might be achieved in a less intricate way. <(11)>

The President-General of the Methodist Church, the Rev. J. W. Burton, chaired the joint committee meeting on 21 November in Melbourne. The President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Rev. Principal Kiek, assisted him. Twenty six representatives of the two Churches were present <(12)> at this conference which was termed 'unofficial'.

The Rev. H. M. Wheller, referring to the discussion held in Brisbane, made this suggestion:

the matters to be discussed to be treated in confidence because of the position of Federal Union (Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodists). <(13)>

This point was stressed again in this brief comment at the end of the minutes:

Without resolution, it was considered that the discussions and business of this meeting should not be published. Meeting closed with the Benediction. <(14)>

In supporting Mr Wheller, Principal Kiek expressed the opinion:

that Presbyterian opposition would render Federal Union negotiations ineffective. He suggested the 1936 basis as the starting-point of new discussions. <(15)>

After discussing various phases of dual Union, two resolutions were passed unanimously. The first was:

That this joint meeting of the Church Union Committee of the two denominations expresses the view that the time is opportune to resume negotiations at the point where they were suspended in 1938 (the reason then being the endeavour to bring the Presbyterian Church into harmony, the Presbyterian Church then suggesting Federal Union as the method). <(16)>

The second resolution to be passed unanimously was:

That the executive of the Church Union Committees of the two denominations be requested to formulate a basis upon which

organic Union may be consummated, and that the results of their work be submitted to the federal bodies of the two denominations. <(17)>

THE BASIS OF UNION

The Basis of Union requested was duly prepared and presented to the national bodies of the two Churches. This document followed closely the basis presented in 1936. There was no decision whether the name of the new Church would be the Methodist-Congregational Church of Australasia or The United Church of Australasia (Methodist-Congregational).

The biggest change between this Basis of Union and that prepared in 1936 was in the section on doctrine. In one respect, particularly, this reflected the years of discussion with the Presbyterians and their emphasis on the Westminster Confession being a subordinate standard. For the committee decided that the subordinate standards of the new Church should be the Forty Four Standard Sermons of John Wesley and his Notes on the New Testament. It was suggested that later an appropriate document chosen from the Congregational tradition could be added here.

Dr Wood, the Convener of the Methodist Church Union Committee, made the following suggestions:

(a) this Basis be sent, with recommendation approving in general, to the Annual Conference of 1948 and thence to the General Conference of 1948.

(b) the General Conference be asked to authorize and direct that a vote be taken upon the Plan of Union, as approved by General Conference by

- (i) all full Church members,
- (ii) Quarterly Meetings and Synods of 1948

(c) the results be sent to Annual Conferences of 1949

(d) subsequent action be as directed by General Conference of 1948. <(18)>

When the Basis of Union was discussed in the Methodist Church

Union Committee, two points emerged. These were shared with Principal J. D. Northey by Principal A. H. Wood in the following way:

Some members desired a doctrinal statement, and others hoped that Methodist organisation would be disturbed as little as possible.
<(19)>

The main concern of the Congregationalists, as during earlier negotiations, was that ministers and members might become chained down by creedal statements. However, the opposition was not as strenuous as it had been during the discussions leading up to the first vote for Union in 1920. For example, Principal Kiek, who had been so strenuously opposed to creedal statements earlier, wrote to Principal Northey on 17 January 1948 in the following accepting way:

I don't think we need object to a general statement of the faith of the united Church, but I am of the opinion that a lengthy and detailed statement is most undesirable. Particularly do we need to guard against the "statement" being regarded as a formal "creed" to which ministers and others must assent or subscribe. <(20)>

In the light of intense litigation which some Presbyterians initiated against the Uniting Church when Union was eventually consummated it is interesting to notice how little concerned Congregational leaders were with their members carrying Church matters into the secular courts. One of the few references in the correspondence of the time was in this letter of Principal Kiek to Principal Northey. The President of the Congregational Union gave his personal comment on this matter in the following way:

I think an 80% vote of our people should be sufficient. One problem to be watched against is the possibility of a small minority of Congregational Churches refusing to join the Union and claiming for themselves all the assets of the denomination, as happened with the "Wee Frees" in Scotland over 40 years ago. The Church Union Committee - our committee, I mean - might think it well to seek legal advice on this matter. <(21)>

In spite of the enthusiasm of some of the leaders in the Methodist and Congregational Churches, there was not a great deal of excitement for the dual Union. Northey reflected this apathy in Congregational circles when he wrote to Kiek on 28 January 1948. He commented:

We can depend upon it that we shall not find as much enthusiasm for a dual Union as the triple - some of our folk fear absorption.
<(22)>

REACTIONS TOWARDS UNION

There were many Methodists who were also lukewarm about dual Union; but for an entirely different reason. They questioned whether the disorganisation involved in changing administrative procedures was worth the comparatively small gains, particularly if some of the larger Congregational churches stayed out of the resulting Union. Methodist leaders constantly stressed that Union with Congregationalists was not being pursued because of practical gains in bigger membership and the like, but because the Union of God's people was God's Will and the expressed prayer of Jesus. The position of many Methodists was correctly reflected by Dr Wood when, years later, he reviewed the events of these years in conversation with the author:

I knew that many Methodists who were in favour of the Union were saying, well, what would it accomplish. Are we going to scrap the whole of our Methodist machinery in order to have Union with a Church which has only about one fifteenth of our members. My reply to that always was, I believe that God called us to go forward and this is the only way we can go forward. If it is a small denomination it is a very worthy one and it would be something that would show the world as well as ourselves that we are moving forward. So on that basis I brought forward this scheme at the 1954 General Conference. <(23)>

A short article entitled 'Australian Methodists and Congregationalists May Unite' appeared in the British Weekly on 22 October 1953. This aroused considerable concern because of the optimism regarding the consummation of Union. It read:

There were other Congregationalists who regretted that the movement towards Union was so slow. They placed the reason for this on the slow moving denominational system of the Methodists. For example, George Wood, a Congregationalist, wrote in the following way:

It is now clear that the Australian Presbyterian Church cannot consider any form of Union for a long time. Consequently, in Australia, Methodist and Congregational Churches have moved for complete unity without tarrying.

A 13 page document containing a proposed basis of Union is now under consideration by authorised committees of the respective denominations. If the basis is approved by the supreme courts of both Churches, it will then be submitted to the members of each Church for their approval.

It is hoped that the Union may be achieved in 1955. <(24)>

The surprised reaction of some Congregationalists in the Congregational Church Union Committee was clearly indicated in a letter from the Rev. A. P. Campbell to the General Secretary of the Congregational Union of N.S.W., the Rev. John Douglas:

The 'British Weekly' report is inaccurate or, to say the least, embarrassingly premature. <(25)>

Campbell was more specific in criticizing the assessment of the Church Union situation by the writer of the article in the British Weekly in the statement he prepared for the Congregationalist. Here in reply to the comment that 'Union may be achieved in 1955' he said:

What concerns us is that the writer of the paragraph (is) swept apparently by a spirit of optimism...Quite apart from the fact that no report as to the nature of the proposals has yet been received, it is obvious that by no possible means could such a hope be so speedily accomplished. It is regrettable that so misleading a statement should have been given publicity. <(26)>

There were other Congregationalists who regretted that the movement towards Union was so slow. They placed the reason for this on the slow moving connexional system of the Methodists. For example, the Secretary of the Congregational Union, George Woolcock, wrote to the General Secretary of the Congregational Union of N.S.W., John Douglas, on 8 March 1954 in the following way:

There has only been one meeting with the Methodists last November. The next meeting is due to take place about the middle of this month.

The Methodists have a large 'Court' of about 25 and due to Synods, Conferences and Mission Boards they are not able to confer with us earlier. The slowness of the negotiations is much regretted but our Committee has really no alternative but to accept the Methodist pace. <(27)>

Several weeks later Woolcock informed Douglas that progress was being made in conversations with the Methodists. This obviously resulted from the second meeting between the Union Committees of the two Churches. The new advance was reported in these words:

A provisional draft plan has now been agreed upon by both parties, and it is hoped that copies of this will be available as from April 8th. These copies will be immediately forwarded by Mr Northey to the respective State Unions. <(28)>

Woolcock wrote to all the States other than N.S.W. on 29 April indicating that copies of the 'Joint Draft' <(29)> of the basis for Union between the two Churches should have been received and requesting reaction to this no later than 4 May. <(30)>

GENERAL CONFERENCE DISCUSSION ON UNION

The attitude of most Methodists at this time was best reflected in the report of the Methodist Church Union Committee to the Methodist General Conference meeting at Brisbane on 26 May 1954. This was presented by the veteran Union negotiator, Dr A. Harold Wood. The report stated in part:

Everyone realises that a larger Union would be preferred to the proposed Union of the Methodist and Congregational Churches. The Presbyterian Church, however, has closed the door to any form of Union after opening it on several occasions; and it seems futile to delay action in the hope that some unpredictable proposal may yet emerge from a denomination which we greatly honour and whose refusal to unite with us we deeply deplore. <(31)>

This sensitive but none the less frank report ends on this firm and timely affirmation:

Therefore the Church Union Committee commends the proposed Union. It does so, recognising especially that a divided world will not heed the preaching of the reconciling gospel of the One Lord and Saviour by a Church which is itself divided. <(32)>

The brilliant debate at the close of this report which was to usher in the most significant chapter of the Church Union movement in Australia was described in The Methodist of 12 June 1954 in this way:

Those who looked forward with keen anticipation to the action of Conference on the question of Union with the Congregationalists were not disappointed. The resolution supported by Dr Wood, who has been foremost in this movement, was to give approval to the basis of Union as printed in the agenda, with, of course, provision of a vote on the part of members of both Churches. There followed THE debate of conference, a combination of brilliance, solidity, and sometimes fanciful imagery, in which some of the ablest and keenest minds took part. <(33)>

It was the firm conviction of Dr Wood, who had worked so hard for

a triple Union for over twenty years, that it was useless approaching the Presbyterians in the matter of Union. Even the limited form of Union in the Federal Union proposals had been unacceptable to them. Although he had always been noted for his gracious and cooperative spirit, Dr Wood had expressed clearly what he considered the reality of the situation only eight months previously in the front page of The Spectator. Here he said:

More than thirty years' effort and failure show beyond doubt that there is no prospect of Union with the Presbyterian Church, certainly not in the foreseeable future. The refusal of the Presbyterian Church to unite with others seems to many friends of Union in that Church and outside, to be one of the greatest tragedies in the religious history of Australia. It is the greatest tragedy because there is no reason in doctrine or polity to justify separation. Nevertheless, the situation is plain and we have to accept it. <(34)>

THE GROVE AMENDMENT

Just before the vote was taken, Mr R. H. Grove, a prominent Sydney solicitor and leading proponent of union for many years, moved an amendment designed to give the Presbyterians another chance to come in. Reflecting on this action twenty years later, when the infant Uniting Church was still struggling with continuing Presbyterians over matters of property Rupert Groves wrote to the author with his typical dry but witty humour:

The amendment in the 1954 General Conference suggesting a last approach to the Presbyterian Church was moved by me after much thought and discussion with friends particularly Rev. Norman Lickiss. I have sometimes wondered whether this was to my credit or debit. <(35)>

The Grove amendment was supported by Mr W. J. Campbell, the Federal Parliamentary Hansard Officer who had done so much for the United Church of Canberra thirty years earlier. He added to the amendment the proviso that, should the third communion not negotiate, the Union movement between the two Churches should be continued.

The overture to the Presbyterians which was to open the last

chapter in our story was simply stated:

Conference defers action for Methodist Congregational Union upon the Basis of Union, now submitted, pending further approaches to the Presbyterian Church for a fuller Union in the interests of the three Churches and the Kingdom of God. <(36)>

This amendment was carried by a considerable majority and when put as a substantial motion was carried 141 to nil.

The General Conference then resolved that the Biennial Assembly of the Congregational Union, then meeting in Melbourne, be approached with the request that a united Congregational-Methodist communication should be sent to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. The Congregationalists readily agreed to this way of proceeding.

The Methodist delegates had stressed the sense of urgency in the matter of Church Union. The General Conference did not wish the Grove-Campbell amendment to result in a long period of waiting similar to the delay which had taken place at the time of the first vote in 1920. It had therefore resolved:

If the Presbyterian Assembly of Australia in September, 1954, does not accept this approach, Conference authorises the voting as outlined in the Basis of Union to be proceeded with on the proposed Basis of Union for the Methodist and Congregational Churches. <(37)>

ACTION OF PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY

The historic letter beginning in the typical Presbyterian fashion:

To the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia <(38)>

was duly sent on 23 June 1954 over the signatures of the Convener of the Methodist Union Committee who was also at this time the Secretary-General of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia, Dr A. Harold Wood, and the Convener of the

Federal Church Union Committee of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Principal J. D. Northey. The draft of this letter was prepared by veteran Presbyterian negotiator the Rev. Dr John Mackenzie <(39)> who had initiated the plan for Federal Union years earlier.

The story of the involvement of Dr Mackenzie is an interesting one which warrants recording here. It points up the importance that friendships between leaders of each Church often had on the story of Church Union in Australia. This memory was shared with the author with enthusiasm in a taped conversation nearly twenty years later.

Immediately after that 1954 General Conference, I got in touch with my dear old friend J. D. Northey in Melbourne and we said, now, we must do something at once. We went across to the Toorak Manse to see Dr John Mackenzie who had been a great protagonist for Church Union for Presbyterians. He had been Moderator-General. He was then a pretty old man. We said we had received support from our Methodist General Conference to reopen negotiations. Northey said the same thing had happened in the Assembly of the Congregational Union in Australia and New Zealand. As we had two Churches willing to open negotiations we asked Dr Mackenzie what we should do. "Well", he said, "I will draft an overture that can be presented to the Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia." He was as good as his word. He drew up an overture in all the regulated fashion of the Presbyterians. We sent it in and it came before the Presbyterian General Assembly. <(40)>

In retrospect, the longhand note from Mackenzie that accompanied the draft has a prophetic ring, particularly this phrase:

May the ecumenical ship have a fairer passage than in the rough seas of other days. <(41)>

The Presbyterians responded positively to this invitation. Dr Wood reported this important ecumenical information to representatives of the other two Churches in this release to Church Union News dated 2 October 1954:

By 201 votes to 47 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia meeting in Sydney in September passed the following significant resolutions:

(1) The overture from the Methodist and Congregational Churches was received "with gratitude".

(2) A vote was directed to be taken in State Assemblies, Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions and Congregations on the desirability of resuming negotiations with a view to corporate Union.

(3) This vote to be taken before 31st December 1955.

(4) If the vote results in approval, the Presbyterian Committee on Christian Unity is empowered to confer with the Methodist and Congregational Committees to prepare a Basis of Union to be submitted to the next Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia.
<(42)>

Professor James F. Peter had argued that one important factor at this time was the resolution passed by the Queensland Presbyterian Assembly in May 1954:

that the time is ripe for the reopening of negotiations with a view to the ultimate Union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches and request the General Assembly of Australia to take appropriate steps towards this end. <(43)>

He even suggested:

this decision was one of the chief factors in leading the Methodist General Conference (which met in Queensland at about that time) to agree that the joint appeal by themselves and the Congregationalists should be issued.
<(44)>

This Queensland action may well have had an effect on the voting in the eventual General Assembly decision. But I can find no link between what was done in the Queensland Presbyterian Assembly and the Methodist General Conference. Neither Wood <(45)>, who moved the motion for dual Union nor Grove <(46)>, who moved the amendment to give the Presbyterians one last chance to come into a tripartite Union knew about it.

The exact question placed before the State Assemblies, Presbyteries, Kirk Sessions and congregations was simple and impossible to misunderstand - so different from the two questions that confused many Presbyterians sixteen years later! <(47)> As contained in the motion of the Rev. Dr Cumming Thom it read:

Are you in favour of the Presbyterian Church of Australia resuming negotiations with the Congregational and Methodist Churches with a view to corporate Union? <(48)>

In his letter to friends overseas, Davis McCaughey wrote that:

The whole handling of the matter by the GAA in 1954 was, of course, ill conceived. In the first place there was no need to refer the matter to the lower courts. The GAA ought to have taken responsibility for answering the Methodist-Congregational approach. <(49)>

Another Presbyterian leader thought quite differently. As a leader in the Student Christian Movement for many years, the Rev. Frank Engel was sensitive to the feelings in the other two Churches when he said:

I think Davis' comment ignores the fact that the Methodists and Congregationalists had endured a long period of rejection by the Presbyterians that went right back to the beginning of this century. They had experienced the Presbyterians proposing Union and then not fulfilling it when it came to the crunch. This happened about 1915-16 and then in 1924 and then again with the proposals for the Federation of Churches in 1951 where the Presbyterians just failed to

take any further action. <(50)>

The Rev. John Alexander, another ecumenically minded Presbyterian, who was present at this taped conversation, summed up the action of the Assembly in taking the vote in the following perceptive fashion:

Yes, the Presbyterians themselves needed to make their bona fides clear not only to themselves but even more to the Methodists and Congregationalists. I think Davis was quite right that technically it wasn't necessary and it was pretty vague; but psychologically, emotionally and sociologically the Presbyterians had to encourage the Methodists and Congregationalists to believe that if the whole business was going to start all over again there was some chance of getting somewhere. <(51)>