

## ***THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH: WHAT CAN WE REALISTICALLY ACHIEVE NOW?***

**(Keynote address by the Rev'd Professor James Haire to the Annual Meeting of the  
Tasmanian Council of Churches - Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2005).**

I pose for myself the question:

*The unity of the Church: What can we realistically achieve now?*

and I want to look at it from a number of aspects. But I want to begin with two personal experiences of my own which relate to my own experience of ecumenism.

The first occurred when I was a student. At that time, I was studying in Oxford, but for some strange reason I ended up as chairperson of the youth committee of the Irish Churches, the Youth Department of the Irish Council of Churches in the heady days of the student movement. A friend of mine, a young woman who was studying in Cambridge, an Anglican, was appointed as the secretary. She, incidentally, when the Church of England is inspired by the Spirit to consecrate women as bishops, will become one of the first. One summer, we had a conference at a country house in the middle of Ireland. It was the beginnings of the troubles in the North, and the two of us produced a paper for this conference. All the church leaders from around Ireland were there. We were in a difficult situation in Ireland. Willem Visser 't Hooft, the first General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, had referred to Ireland as "an ecumenical wasteland", a place where anything ecumenical would die before it was planted. In our speech which we put together, we suggested that it was not sufficient for what was mainly a Protestant organisation to gather together; we also needed the Roman Catholic Church as a full member, and we also needed representatives of those young Irish people who were being caught up in the para-military organisations, both Protestant and Catholic, so that we could have some interaction for peace with them. And we gave this speech just as the civil rights movement was beginning. The church leaders applauded our stance. We were photographed by the press, both North and South, and by the television, the two of us, surrounded by the church leaders, and our faces appeared in the *Irish Times* and in the various regional papers the subsequent day under the headline of "Young Christians set a new advance for peace in Ireland". We had a good conference, but what we had suggested, that we needed representatives of the para-militaries there and also of the Catholic Church if we were to have any real dialogue, raised a number of questions. We held our conference, and the two of us went back to university, I to Oxford and she to Cambridge.

About six months later, while we were far away, the church leaders met in Dublin. In public, until three weeks before they met, they had hailed our move to involve even the paramilitaries in our discussions of ecumenism, they had hailed it with great aplomb, and strongly supported it. But they met in Dublin behind closed doors, and quietly arranged for both of us to be sacked. They succeeded in doing this in a most interesting and exquisite manner. They wrote letters to us informing us, with the greatest of Christian love, that we had both been sacked. They then engaged in a form of ecclesiastical scholasticism to explain their decision which was quite exquisite by the way in which it managed to make untruth appear as truth. The idea that we should engage with young people who were on the edge of violence, although it seemed to us essential to speak to them of the way of peace, was simply too much for the church leaders. Both of us felt highly alienated from the Christian Church as a result of their action. We felt that ecumenism was the height of modern hypocrisy. Both of us, for quite a period of time, were totally alienated from Christianity, and especially from the word ecumenism, not because we were evangelicals, although we would have used that word as well, for it is the word of all Christians, but because we felt that we had been the unfortunate victims of an exquisite trap.

Eventually, we both came back into the life of the church, and my friend, who is now a very eminent leader of the Church of England, I think will become the first candidate for consecration as a woman bishop within the Church of England when that happens.

So my first experience of ecumenism was fairly negative. But my second, which occurred twenty years later, was very positive. One Saturday afternoon, while I was back in Ireland from Indonesia on leave, I was watching a television program in Belfast, a rugby match, and the news flashed on the screen that a bank had been robbed. By that time, in the midst of violence, it was very unremarkable to stop a television show to announce that a bank had been robbed, because it was a fairly common practice. In fact, a pistol used to be referred to in Northern Ireland as a universal credit card: you didn't even need to put it into a slot, the money just came out. More importantly, you didn't even need to count the money, there was so much of it. But, during the car chase which followed the robbery, the car in which the terrorists were involved, and the car following, the police car chasing them, were engaged in an accident. A mother was pushing a pram along the road, holding her toddler in her hand, with her baby in the pram. The terrorists' car, followed by the police car, slammed into them, and the two children were killed instantly, the baby and the toddler.

The mother's name was Betty Williams. Her husband was a seafarer, he rarely was at home. She was assigned a social worker to help her fix up her financial affairs. The social worker's name was Mairead Corrigan, a Catholic. After sorting out her immediate financial woes, the two of them, the Protestant Betty Williams and the Catholic Mairead Corrigan, formed a group called "The Peace People". They had got fed up with the politicians; they had got tired of discussions, and wanted to activate the population. And, in the best Irish tradition, they were into theatrics. They formed "The Peace People", and, subsequently, both of them, as you probably know, went on to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. I was on leave and got caught up with this group. When a Catholic was killed, Protestant clergy would carry that Catholic's coffin into the Catholic church for the funeral service. When a Protestant was killed, Catholic clergy, suitably dressed, would carry the person's coffin into the Protestant church, and then, in the Irish tradition, they would walk up the road through the community to the graveyard. One Saturday afternoon, we were engaged in the regular marches which became the pattern of those times walking through Catholic or Protestant areas trying to cover the divide which we felt the politicians were incapable, and certainly unwilling, to do. I had a friend who had taught scholastic philosophy in the university in Belfast where I was doing an occasional bit of teaching and had recently become a bishop. His name was Cahal Daly. He was not a natural hero, by any stretch of the imagination, a small, scholarly, introverted man who had been teaching Catholic theology in the university for thirty-five years—an overgrown leprechaun, he used to refer to himself as. He was subsequently to become Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of the Catholic Church in Ireland. On this particular Saturday afternoon, we locked arms and we walked at the head of a procession through a joint Protestant-Catholic area. It was very painful for us. Protestant young people, some of whom I had prepared as assistant minister for confirmation, were jeering at me, hurling abuse, and stones, which fortunately missed, because I dared to walk along the road with a friend, locking arms with a Catholic bishop. A woman came charging out of a Catholic church, flailing a massive crucifix over her head, with which she hit Cahal on the back of the head, at the same time questioning whether his parents had been married at the time of his birth. This idea she was able to express with a single word repeated constantly. Cahal fell to the ground. I asked him if he would like to sit in a shop doorway for a moment or two while we sorted him out. He looked at me with steely eyes which I shall never forget, and he said to me, 'James, put your hand into my pocket, get out the handkerchief which you will find there, wipe the back of my head with it, clean me up, and up we get and on we go.' He was over seventy at the time. He went on, 'If at this point we fail, if at this point we do not go on, then all that nonsense that we spout from the pulpit, especially during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, will

be shown up for the hypocrisy that in fact it is.’ This was my positive experience of ecumenism. It was the kind of redeeming experience for the one which had occurred a hundred kilometres to the south twenty years before.

When I think of ecumenical movement, I do not think of the great world missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910 or of the beginnings of the ecumenical movement in Amsterdam in 1948; I see Cahal’s steely eyes looking at me from the road, with the remains of the blood at the back of his head, saying ‘If at this point we fail, then everything that we have done stands for the hypocrisy that in fact it is.’

I want this morning to try to face this question on the unity of the church,

*What can we realistically achieve now?*

and I want, for a moment, to play on that word realistically. In reality, we live in two worlds. In 1942, William Temple, Archbishop of York, became Archbishop of Canterbury. He was dying at the time that he was appointed. He had only two years to go. He was quite a figure within the life of the United Kingdom. He became Archbishop of Canterbury, and in those two years, he produced some of his most remarkable work. His image of the ecumenical movement is particularly powerful. He talks about the vision that we have of the church, and he uses the picture of spectacles, of bifocal spectacles, spectacles that have double lenses. With the lower part of the lens, Temple says, we see the church as it is day by day, all those things that we have to do, one damn thing after another, all those things we have to do. With the upper part of the spectacles, we see, in Temple’s words, and that is why I have taken this word, the church “realistically”, and William Temple uses that word in this theological sense, the church as it should be, as it was intended to be: united, confessing its Lord according to the Scriptures, engaged in its common calling to the glory of God; that’s how we see it in the upper part. We can be realistic in the pragmatic sense of looking through the bottom of our lenses or we can be realistic in the God sense by looking through the top of our lenses – that is, where is realism. For Christians realism is through the top. But you and I have to deal with the day to day world. That is to say, Churches are organisations – they have to pay bills, fix the plumbing, organise heating or cooling – in other words we are forced to look through the bottom as well.

But let’s try to look at this bottom pragmatic realism with the top part still clearly in our minds. In this country we are actually in a remarkable situation. If you take the globe from Afghanistan in the west and you move across the Indian sub-continent down to South East Asia up into North East Asia as far as Korea and on down through to Australia and New Zealand and out through the Pacific as far as Tahiti – that’s about a third at least of the world’s globe. In that area only 2 countries have the Roman Catholic church as a full member of the National Council of Churches, that is Australia and Taiwan. Taiwan is a special case because the Government has forced the churches to unite in a Council of Churches. They are less than 2% of the population and in that situation they are compelled to be together simply because the Government wants it that way. So Australia is the only country where we have really the vast majority of Christians (about 87-88%) involved and of course through the National Heads of Churches we also have membership of a number of churches who are not part of the National Council of Churches – Assemblies of God, Adventists, Presbyterians who did not come into the Uniting Church, Baptist and one or two more. So we actually have a dialogue. It is true that in our forums we are a bit scrappy. I personally, although it concerns me at times, do not worry about that scrappiness because it is a very Australian thing. At least it is being done within the community. At least we are not dealing with each other only at long distance – at least we are in the same room.

But I want now to look under four headings at the calling to Christian unity, and this was the calling originally put out at the time of the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. And I then want look at some practical things we might do so as to develop this.

According to the World Council of Churches, the WCC is a fellowship which does four things:

1. First, it first confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.
2. Second, according to the Scriptures.
3. Third, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling.
4. Fourth, to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This is the real world. This is the real world of Scripture. This is the world into which we are called and, in theological terms, this is the fundamental world out of which we have to deal with this question. Let me just for a moment look at these four.

**Firstly**, the unity of the church is primarily a response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. It is not what we do; it is what has happened to us, what has been given to us. God in Christ takes the remarkable step of choosing to be God for us and with us. This inexplicable act of God to identify with us is the foundation of what being the church is. God calls us to God's very self, God chooses to be in solidarity with us, God does not wish to be alone in celebrating the wonder of God's inexpressible love for humanity. God in Christ calls into existence an earthly Body of his Son in order that humanity may rejoice with God in harmony and peace, that harmony and peace which God has given. And therefore we are called to a life of praise, not simply something that comes from our mouths or from our hands, but something that comes from our entire personal and social life, whether that's practical or ethical, religious or political or intellectual. Our intellectual life is an expression of praise; our political life is an expression of praise, our religious life, our practical life, our ethical life. If that is how we are called to respond to God, then how do we carry out these four—first, to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. Fundamental to the ecumenical movement is the centrality, the finality and the decisiveness of Jesus Christ. This utterly simple statement overcomes everything else. It is not so much about what we want to do but about what is possible for us under God to achieve. If we look at the concept of denomination, denomination primarily developed in the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a franchising system, a franchising system by which certain individual traits of particular movements had a commonality. It was anti-ecumenical or ecumenical only in the sense that it created commonality of faith or commonality of faith and practice in a franchised system. It did not itself speak of the wholeness of the people of God. It spoke only in a partial way. As the United States expanded, it was highly successful. It also replicated itself back to the old world and strengthened denominationalism as it existed in Europe. But it was not part of the whole church but a way of expressing particular interests. The problem was that, instead of special interest groups, as in the case of Catholic orders existing within the whole church, it defined the whole church by its particular charisms. Its charisms, its gifts, may have been in evangelism, or in social justice, or in styles of worship, or in relationship of a society, but they were self-defined. It was successful. And here the World Council of Churches is very strong; its statement of faith calls not just for faith but also for faithfulness in seeing the partiality of each Christian expression, each denomination, within the totality. So it begins there.

**Secondly**, the phrase goes on, 'according to the Scriptures', according to the Scriptures. We are not free to define faith, we do not just talk to each other and compare our experiences. We cannot just gather together and engage in comparative ecclesiologies. The experience of the Uniting Church was that it would not have come about had it continued in convergence ecclesiology, that is, comparing one with another. It had to go back and see how it could found itself again according to the Scriptures.

There have been many movements within the ecumenical movement, many different experiences of the ecumenical movement. In the forties and fifties, when the European churches were battling for their lives against the totalitarianism of the Nazis and the subsequent totalitarianism of the communists, ecumenists were happy to don the strong armour of Barthian theology; that kept them going. In the fifties and in the sixties, the years of European and North American affluence, theologies were developed which celebrated the secular and tried to see the secular as a vehicle of expressing Christian theology. Then, in the seventies and eighties and nineties, new voices came; they were the voices of the Third World, the voices of those whose exploitation was the underside of North American and European affluence, theologies of liberation, and they spoke powerfully to the consciences of people everywhere. Yet, none of these—Barthian theology, secular theology, liberation theology, political theology—are of themselves the whole truth. They are glimpses of the truth, just as in the nineteenth century, denominational experiences were also only partial expressions of the truth. So, back to our second point, according to the Scriptures. We are called to hear those understandings of the Scriptures, expressed from a great variety of voices, but those Scriptures, those expressions of the Scriptures, are not ours to be used when we have a problem. So, we have a problem, we think, and we go scurrying round the Bible to find evidence that we are right. We go scurrying round the Bible to find out whether we are right. In that case, it's better not to buy a Bible, but to buy a concordance. It's said, people used to say, 'Why do people take an instant dislike to Margaret Thatcher?' and the answer was, 'It saves time.' Equally, why buy a Bible when you can buy a concordance; it saves time. If that's what you want to do, if you want to find out a justification of your own particular position, you're much better to have a concordance at your elbow. According to the Scriptures speaks for us and against us. It calls us out of the particularity of denominationalism or the particularity of a particular theological trend and forces us to see the totality of it all. So, confession of Jesus Christ, secondly, according to the Scriptures.

**Thirdly**, then, to use the World Council of Churches' next statement, that they should fulfill their common calling. We are called to fulfill something. Discipleship is both believing and acting. It's not enough to act, to engage in social activity, and then sit around and theologise about it. Why would we do that, why would we do that? Because if we do that, our motivation is primarily secular. We look at the culture around us, see what sells, and act accordingly, and then theologise about it later so as to find theological justification for what we have decided to do anyway. That's not difficult to do. Ask Reichsbishop Müller, the Reichsbishop appointed by the Nazis, who was an expert and able to justify anything that the Nazis got up to, and the first critique of this kind of action and reflection on theology comes from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who unmasked what Reichsbishop Müller was up to in the 1930s. Discipleship is both believing and acting. It will always have as its distinctive mark that quality of confidence in Christ despite everything. Many things have come on the ecumenical movement since 1948—the polemics, the attacks, its own stupidity, but in all of that, this discipleship of both acting in faithfulness and reflecting on that has continued. Fulfill their common calling.

**Finally**, to the glory of God. The Orthodox in the World Council of Churches have been an immense help. Often they are accused of their intransigence, of their ability to hold everybody else to ransom, but in the early years of the World Council of Churches, they brought in a Trinitarian theology—the worship of God, Father, Son, and Spirit—against what I would call an unacknowledged unitarianism which has at times influenced the World Council of Churches, a kind of bland belief in God, without any particularity of creation, and redeeming, and guidance. To speak of the ecumenical movement as having the end of the glory of God is not just simply to repeat a platitude; it is to affirm that, without its Trinitarian centre, the churches and the ecumenical movement are no more than a tiresome irrelevance. It is that which makes them different. And so, in reality, we live in these two worlds. I spoke earlier of William Temple, Archbishop of York, who became Archbishop of Canterbury. He used the picture of

spectacles, of bifocal spectacles, spectacles that have double lenses, as we noted. With the lower part of the lens, Temple says, we see the church as it is day by day, all those things that we have to do, one thing after another. With the upper part of the spectacles, we see, in Temple's words, and that is why I have taken this word, the church "realistically". He turned them round the other way when he said, 'We have to behave as if the church already is united, we have to behave in that way.' His successor, Geoffrey Fisher, was a much more pragmatic character; he had been headmaster of Repton, and ran the Anglican Communion as if it was a big boarding school. But Geoffrey Fisher pulled out of Temple's theology a number of very pragmatic and important points which are worth our hearing again today. He said the ecumenical era has arrived when church leaders, whether at parish, regional, diocesan, presbytery, synodal or national levels, or international levels abandon their denominational meetings to attend the ecumenical ones because the ecumenical ones are where it is really happening and the denominational ones are the area of unreality. At the beginning of the World Council of Churches in 1948, where Geoffrey Fisher was elected as one of the Presidents, he made this point: When church leaders will go to ecumenical occasions rather than to denominational ones, then the ecumenical world has arisen. Then the upper part of William Temple's vision, in fact, is indeed reality. But when they go the other way, then they in fact are still caught in that old world. They live in the world of illusion.

And then, he said, comes the great test, said Geoffrey Fisher. Then comes the great test. When you apply money to the situation, which meeting will they go to? Most will go to the denominational meeting, because someone will take the money away from them if they don't. But here, in fact, I think the vision of Temple is very powerful, and interestingly enough, it was left in abeyance in the Anglican communion until taken up again by Michael Ramsey. And so, on the basis of this picture of what really is the reality, let me descend to that nether world once again, the world of where we actually are, and let's look at a number of the issues that we face here in this country at this time.

I want to raise **seven** points, which I hope to look at now for a moment or two.

The **first** is the issue of identity. What can we realistically do about identity? One example of identity is the issue of baptism. There is now a common baptismal certificate used by many of the churches, and in the covenant which the church leaders who are members of the National Council of Churches signed together in Adelaide last year, a number of churches which are members of the National Council of Churches agreed to have a common baptismal certificate in that baptism is not a denominational issue. Let me push it a little bit further and take you on a journey about thirty kilometres out of Oxford. There, in the town of Abingdon, there are a number of churches. Some years ago, the churches of Abingdon, and this has now been repeated in Milton Keynes, decided that they would act according to the upper vision of William Temple. So the church noticeboards have "The Christian Church" on them, and then in brackets, "Roman Catholic tradition", or in brackets "Anglican tradition", or in brackets "Methodist tradition", or in brackets "United Reformed tradition", and so on. They carry out baptisms, whether adult or infant—and of course, in all the churches, the number of adult baptisms, in a secular society, is increasing—they carry out their baptisms on the church's baptism day, Pentecost, Whitsunday, together in the market square. In the first phase, the clergy of all the churches baptised the candidates, infant or adult, together. Now, each year, one of the clergy, representing all of them, baptises the children or the adults in one common ceremony. It is the church's expression. All baptisms at other times, for it suits people to have baptisms at other times of the year, are dealt with in common. It is the common church's rite; it is not dealt with by denominations. It has become an ecumenical and evangelical rite. Why? Because to baptise denominationally, to identify oneself denominationally, is of itself idolatrous. How can you relate God's gift of baptism to a particular franchise operator, which is what a denomination is? How can you do it? How can you engage in that kind of issue? And I would challenge us now, in this country, to see if we could do the same. I can see

no reason why it should not be done. We cannot ask any longer, Which church do I belong to? but only the fundamental question of, Whose church do I belong to?

In Canberra we have started a combined ecumenical event on Pentecost Sunday at the National Centre for Christianity and Culture. Last year we took the pulpit Bibles of the denominations (about 18 different national churches there) and Bibles were exchanged by the church leaders and then used in other people's Parish churches for a week before being returned. Here was a kind of way that unity was expressed. There is no doubt that a pragmatic identity has come about in our churches. And to be blunt, when things go wrong in our churches there is in the media a very rapid negative ecumenism. We all get tarred with the same brush. So therefore it seems to be important to develop this unity.

**Secondly**, I want to look at the existence of mission. We use different words: Protestants, on the whole, use the word "evangelism"; Catholics, on the whole, use the word "evangelisation"; and the spread of the different theologies of the ecumenical movement since the formation of the World Council of Churches has changed the way we look at it. When we got to the high point of the scepticism of the seventies and eighties (the World Mission Conference held at Bangkok in 1972 is often seen as the symbol of that) evangelism was replaced by activity for social justice, and there was the famous occasion when the delegates to that conference in Bangkok in 1972 wanted to fly off to North Vietnam and throw their solidarity behind the Government of North Vietnam in its push south, so that was the high point of the Gospel being seen in terms of political liberation.

But now we see something that is very significant – the expression of evangelization not simply by word but also by action. Let me give you an example. When I was President of the Uniting Church I got off the plane one evening in Brisbane into a cab to go home. The cab driver drove about 300 metres and then stopped and put his hands on my arms and said he wanted to talk to me because I was President of the Uniting Church. He told me of an experience that he'd had. He had been converted in one of the Uniting churches. It wasn't a gutter to glory story - he was a decent man doing a job during the day, moonlighting at night driving a cab, trying to support his wife and three children and pay off a mortgage – nothing spectacular. But he said to me, I heard you on the radio talking about something four or five weeks ago and I thought it was crass nonsense and I wondered what kind of church produces fools like that and so I went along to one of your churches. And I sat down and I listened to a person dressed in white garb standing behind a box but he seemed to be saying interesting and important things to me. There was a fellow sitting next to me on the bench and he said 'listen carefully' and afterwards he took me to lunch. He explained it to me and the next week I went and sat beside him again and the person in the white outfit behind the box also said important things, some of which I understood and some I did not understand. And again I went to lunch. The only advice the fellow who sat next to me gave was that he said we would have coffee after the service. The coffee is good, he said, but it is very important that when you are asked to join a committee you say 'no'. If you say yes without knowing what the whole story is about you will become very disillusioned. And so I avoided them and we sat and we talked. I went along for a number of weeks and finally I was converted. Who converted him? Was it the fool on the radio, was it the man in the white garb behind the box, or was it the decent man who gave him his lunch? Well, the answer is that we don't particularly care who it was, but that the whole process is important. The whole process is part of our common witness. And I think in our age we need to be quite careful about the way in which we engage in this witness. We need to encourage us all to present this other world to our increasingly secular society, to our society which lives in a way of sophisticated despair, a sophisticated unease with human existence which at times has lost its way. The growth of Christian schools, both expensive and low cost, I think is speaking more about a search for meaning than about anything else. And therefore it is something we need to support each other in. The covenant on mission has been part of that covenant.

**Third**, I want to look at the issue of the organic unity of the churches. The fifties and the sixties saw great advances in that area: the union in Ghana, of course before that the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, the Uniting Church in Australia, movements for organic unity. The most recent, of course, is the formation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, which is the union of the two Reformed Churches and the Lutherans in the Netherlands. These are formal, organic unions; they have great significance. No one has ever suggested that this should be abandoned. They are strong and absolute commitments, because they are the transference of not only soul and spirit but also property, and hopes, and history into the continuing movement. They are not easy, they take long periods of time, but they are of great strength and of great hope. They have worked mainly when people have gone back to the roots of their faith, rather than engage in comparative ecclesiology. But, they can have disadvantages: the disadvantages are that people are very interested in the bureaucratic organisation of new structures, fascinated by them, fascinated by the way the engine works rather than that the car goes, and that is quite common in all of them. However, I do believe that it is very important that we still press on with it. After the 1960s and early 1970s, there was a feeling, especially in western societies, that it would be difficult to continue with these sorts of operations, and so the concept of *koinonia*, of fellowship of churches, became very active: *koinonia*, fellowship, that there should be a kind of commonality for intercommunion without full organic union. There have been two remarkable agreements worked out by the Church of England. One has been the Meissen Agreement between the Church of England and the Protestant churches in Germany. Then, there has been the Porboo Agreement between the Church of England and the Baltic Lutheran Churches where, intercommunion now exists between churches in which historic episcopacy is essential and others where it is functional. And that has been a major advance, and therefore we cannot knock the *koinonia* system; it works quite well. But it can be used as a means of silently acknowledging the continuation of denominationalism as legitimate. I would say in this country, that in the next few years, the organic union issue must remain central and, though I cannot speak of all the players, there is no doubt in my mind there must be some arrangement made between the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church, the Uniting Church and the Churches of Christ. It seems to me that that is the next major area in which there needs to be some advance in the area of organic union. And, with the experiences of Porboo and Meissen, where the Church of England has been able to make an arrangement with a functional episcopal church, such as the Lutherans in the Baltic states and with the Evangelical Church in Germany, then I cannot see why this cannot happen in this country between those churches because all of the factors involved in those situations are here. There is nothing significantly different.

However, apart from that, the issue of *koinonia*, of intercommunion, remains very significant, and that is the **fourth** point that I would want to raise, that is the issue of intercommunion. This is a difficult issue, because some churches see intercommunion as the crown and flower of organic union. You cannot share together in the table of the Lord unless you are united. Others see it purely as an evangelical ordinance, an ordinance by which, and through which, the Gospel is expressed. I have to say, as a reformed theologian, I find it very difficult to understand how it is possible for the Christian community, invited by the host that is Christ, to come to the Lord's table and then immediately begin to flagellate itself, in other words, to beat itself over the back, saying, Woe is me, I cannot partake of the Lord's Supper because I am divided. To flagellate oneself before the host seems to me to be very problematic theologically. But we need to work further on ways in which we are able to enter into this, and there have been a number of examples. One is to substitute a liturgy of feet-washing as a way of trying to express communion without the use of the Eucharist. Now many of the churches have in fact opened up their Eucharist in a variety of ways, and I would be the last who would want to suggest that we engage in this activity fraudulently, that is, the celebrant turning a blind eye to how things are

carried out. For a number of years, I was the Co-Chair of the Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Uniting Church in this country, and there we made considerable breakthroughs in this area in relation to marriage, where both parties could participate in the Eucharist at the service, pressing the Catholic canons but not breaking them, we were permitted to allow intercommunion in certain circumstances for the members of a mixed marriage, what we call an interchurch family, that is where one was Catholic and one was non-Catholic, that in that instance they should be allowed to engage in intercommunion. We presented our report, which I chaired with John Bathersby, the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, and it was endorsed by both churches. So there is hope!

The **fifth** point that I wish to raise is in relation to pragmatic Christianity. In this country, well over half of the community services in the widest sense of that term, are provided by the churches. Without the churches, the national system of education, community service and many of the other agencies would collapse. And, therefore, of course, we have entered into a kind of pragmatic ecumenism. Anglicare, Centacare, Uniting Care, the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, the Churches of Christ, are constantly engaged in a kind of ecumenism. Or is it an ecumenism? Is it purely a pragmatic playing to someone else's tune without any theological input? What kind of ecumenism is it? There is no other country in the world, including New Zealand, where the churches have such a stranglehold of the provision of much of necessity to the daily life of our fellow citizens. There is thus an enormous opportunity for ecumenical expression in this area. What should we do with our community services? On the one hand, in an age when the church is marginalised, do we hang onto the community services so that it gives us a kind of security blanket? We can look at the top of a hospital or the top of a community service agency and say, Oh yes, the cobwebs are growing up in the sanctuary, but thank God we have still got that piece. Is it a security blanket for our own identity? I am sure in some cases it is. But, in other cases, it may be the most authentic way of expressing ecumenism. During our heads of churches meetings two years ago, we had a serious discussion as to how we could genuinely compete with each other for tenders in the welfare market. But it brought the church to a crisis in this area, and I believe it is a genuine way of expressing ecumenism that we need theologically to work much further as to the ways in which we are engaged in ecumenical activity.

And, **sixth**, I want to look at the question which is often raised: in our time of proliferation of Christian expressions, the growth of the Pentecostal movement, the evangelical churches, charismatic churches. Does the diversity of the way the Christian faith is represented in our time, including the rise of Pentecostalism, mean that the community has decided against any form of organic unity or koinonia – or is it a “new ecumenism”? or has it turned the Christian faith into a consumer paradise? Many in Pentecostal Churches have experienced trauma in their lives. It is a kind of ‘non-organisational ecumenism’ and we need to work together. The thing some Pentecostal leaders are most conscious of is the fragile nature of all that they have that has grown so quickly. And therefore it is a matter of duty and concern that there is some dialogue between us. The dialogue, therefore, with evangelical and Pentecostal churches is something that will need to increase. We must realise that the Pentecostal churches are also our own people, and that God is at work here.

**Finally, seventh**, as I said at the beginning, ecumenism is ultimately about the end – how the end breaks into the present. And the voices of that end, the idealism, has largely gone from the public debate within our times. Where are these voices? Is the community to that extent to be allowed ‘willy nilly’, to allow one dominant voice at any time to permeate everything. Or is it necessary for another voice also to be heard – another voice which speaks from beyond the situation of ourselves day by day. I think that's very important.

In the Old Testament what is primary and what is secondary are clearly delineated. The secondary is fine in and of itself. So the organisation of daily life, the building of community facilities, are secondary – they don't define you. But sin is the taking of the secondary and making it primary. The skills of the Accountant are essential for life, they are practical but they are secondary – that is to say they cannot be primary. We cannot allow the skills of the accountant to define all of life nor can we allow the skills of any other important secondary aspect to define life. But the problem of western society is that a series of secondary skills are placed as primary. And this is the abuse both of the primary and of the secondary skills, investing them with an authority they were never intended to have. It is the totalitarianism of a single system over all of life. And that is what our understanding of faith stands over against. And I believe that in our community there will always be a calling for that primary worship and service of God to be essential in our human life. And I think that we, if we lose our nerve at these times, fail to carry out our fundamental calling to the glory of God.