

Ecumenical Dynamic

Living in More than One Place at Once

Keith Clements



**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

ECUMENICAL DYNAMIC

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World Council of Churches
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*In grateful remembrance
of Morris West, Elizabeth Salter and Ion Bria,
guides ahead of me on the ecumenical way*

Preface

These days a book on ecumenism is likely to encounter three types of potential reader. First, there are the ecumenical enthusiasts who will eagerly seize upon any treatment of a subject so dear to their heart and will not ask for any explanation or justification for another book on the subject. Indeed, in the current “ecumenical winter,” they will warmly welcome any positive presentation from any quarter. Second, there are the diehard opponents, who see the ecumenical movement of the last hundred years or so as the great distraction or indeed betrayal of the Christian cause, whether that cause be identified with “evangelism” narrowly understood or the maintenance of the unchanging tradition of their own particular church as the only true version of the gospel. Third, and probably in the great majority, there are those who claim to be no longer interested, if ever they were, in a movement which for better or worse has now run its course: classic, institutional, organized, or however else they wish to disparage the ecumenism of the recent past.

I hope this book will make all three types of reader think again, not least the third category. The dismissal of the modern ecumenical story as a story of organizations and structures or one of attempts at organic union—all of which, according to the story, have been misguided or had their day—carries with it valid points of criticism. But one can too easily dismiss the story by ignoring the inner dynamic which impelled it from the beginning. It is a vital element of that dynamic, which I identify as “living in more than one place at once,” which I attempt to highlight as *not* over and done with.

As for the second category of readers, I scarcely dare hope to make any converts from among them, but I will be satisfied if they can at least recognize the seriousness of the claim I make: that this ecumenical dynamic, far from being peripheral to the gospel, expresses its heart—love which goes out of itself and its own place and lives where the other lives, as God in Jesus Christ did for us all. Ecumenism involves deep conviction, not the suspension of convictions under compromise.

And the first category, the enthusiasts who need no persuading? They too need to ponder more deeply what it is they wish to promote as ecumenism. In particular, they need to reconsider just what *is* the ecumenical story; they need to consider the dynamic that has been at the heart of the ecumenical journey and that will need to be carried into its future. As the reader will soon see, this leads me to query some of the conventional wisdom about modern ecumenical history, for example that it all began at Edinburgh in 1910.

The book is structured in three parts. In Part I, *The Dynamic Encountered*, the ecumenical dynamic is treated in a general survey of the recent and contemporary scene, then in terms of my own ecumenical formation, and thirdly as a major biblical theme which underlies all else that I say about “living in more than one place at once.” Part II, *The Dynamic Illustrated*, looks at five episodes and one key figure in the modern ecumenical story. The fact that the focus here is largely upon Europe does not mean that I think only Europe matters in the story. Far from it: while my own most intense involvement has certainly been in Europe, over the years ecumenical activity has taken me to the Middle East, Africa, Australasia, North America, Central and Latin America, and East Asia, including the land of my birth, China. It is simply that Europe is where my studies have most closely focused or (in the case of chapter 9) where I have been most directly involved, and rather than lapse into generalities I feel more confident in using these European stories as particular illustrations of the ecumenical dynamic. Of course there are other stories to be told, and readers in other parts of the world may well wish to draw comparisons and find resonances in their own contexts, which will be all to the good. Finally, in Part III, *The Dynamic Continues*, I look at three contemporary areas where the dynamic still needs to be applied, both drawing from the past story and engaging with the new challenges before us.

Four of the chapters are adaptations of papers that have previously appeared: chapter 4, as “The Anglo-German Churches’ Exchange Visits of 1908-09” in *The Ecumenical Review* 59, no. 2-3 (April-July 2007); chapter 6, as “Barmen and the Ecumenical Movement” in *The Ecumenical Review* 61, no. 1 (March 2009); chapter 7, as “George Bell: An Apostle for Unity” in *Crucible* (April-June 2010); and chapter 9 as “Two Decades of Ecumenism in Europe: A Promising Past with an Uncertain Future” in Anna M. Robbins, ed., *Ecumenical and Eclectic: The Unity of the Church in the Contemporary World; Essays in Honour of Alan P.F. Sell* (Paternoster, 2007). To the editors of each of these publications grateful acknowledgment is made for their permission to use the material.

My special thanks go to Michael West, World Council of Churches publisher, for his ready encouragement and advice in preparing the text for publication. There

are many others to whom I owe gratitude, from all over the world, whose thoughts and experiences have found their way into these pages, whether they are aware of it or not. Finally, I hope that the three names found on the dedication page—Baptist, Quaker, and Russian Orthodox respectively—testify how “living in more than one place at once” has been personally exemplified to me by friends from widely differing traditions who have gone ahead on the ecumenical path. It is my hope that in turn this book will help keep that way open for the coming generation.

Keith Clements

Portishead, England

Abbreviations

ACTS	Action of Churches Together in Scotland
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCC	British Council of Churches
BCE	Before Christian Era
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CCBI	Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland
CCEE	Council of Catholic Episcopal Conferences in Europe
CE	Christian Era
CEC	Conference of European Churches
CICCU	Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union
CIMADE	Comité inter-mouvement auprès des évacués
COMECE	Commission of Episcopal Conferences in the European Union
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CTBI	Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
CTE	Churches Together in England
Cytun	Churches Together in Wales
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IMC	International Missionary Council
IRM	International Review of Missions
JPIC	Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
LEP	Local Ecumenical Project
MCFC	Metropolitan Free Church Federation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SCM	Student Christian Movement
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCC	World Council of Churches
WSCF	World Student Christian Federation
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Part One

The Dynamic Encountered

Chapter 1

Living in More than One Place at Once

What Does It Mean to Be “Ecumenical”? A Parable

It is the autumn of 1940. On the French plateau of Gurs close to the northern slopes of the Pyrenees, enclosed in barbed wire stands a rather shabby collection of huts. It is “home” to some 16,000 thousand men, women, and children of various nationalities, all of them refugees either from the part of France to the north that has fallen to occupation by the forces of Nazi Germany, or from Germany itself. With the onset of the winter rains, cold and mud are adding to the misery of hunger, sickness, and fear for the future. A young French woman is calling at the camp, bringing as many supplies of medicines and toiletries as she can carry. The French police eye her warily. The large number of so many people who are escapees from the Germans makes the camp’s presence in Vichy France, that part of France which has made its humiliating peace with Nazi Germany, a sensitive issue. The French do not wish to give the Nazi authorities any grounds for suspecting that they are harbouring actual enemies—especially Germans—of the regime, still less allowing support for them from outside the camp. But the young woman has been to the camp several times before and is allowed in. Once she is inside, her supplies are gratefully received. On this day, however—a Sunday—she causes surprise by announcing that she would also like to hold a worship service. A member of the French Reformed Church, she is neither a pastor nor a professional theologian, but certainly theologically aware, and her long experience of Christian youth work means she is no stranger to leading prayer services and Bible studies. The authorities give her permission and offer her the use of the shower block, which is not used on Sundays. They expect about 50 people to come. In fact 600 turn up, crowding to the doors. So the service begins, the only light a candle by which the young woman reads. She is reading a psalm when suddenly a loud cry erupts from the darkness at the back of the room, and a tall bearded man wrapped in a blanket rushes down the aisle towards her shouting “Madeleine! Madeleine!” Others grab him, and he is hustled away and out through the door in some distress. Madeleine Barot, for that is her name, is puzzled: although she does not for the moment recognize the man, he clearly thought he knew her. But what would happen if the authorities suspected she was visiting the camp in order to find someone?

Afterwards, she asks about this man. He is German, Herbert Jehle by name, and because of his outburst they have put him in solitary, a barbed wire enclosure in a field to which they now take her. On seeing her, evidently realising the possible danger in which they both find themselves, he turns his back and simply writes with his finger in the sand: *Amsterdam*. The penny begins to drop. A week later Jehle is released for good behaviour, Barot meets him again, and they feel able to talk freely. Amsterdam was where in July 1939, just weeks before war broke out, the World Conference of Christian Youth was held. Both Madeleine Barot and Herbert Jehle were among the 1500 delegates who gathered there to pray, study, and celebrate together their fellowship in the gospel. Those young people knew what, humanly speaking, the future held (some would soon die), but declared in their conference message: "The nations and peoples of the world are drifting apart. The Churches are coming together. There is a growing conviction of the essential togetherness of all Christians. In war, conflict and persecution we must strengthen one another and preserve our Christian unity unbroken."¹ A physicist by training and a Quaker pacifist, Herbert Jehle had had to flee his native Germany, but at Amsterdam had found himself in the wider family of the household of faith. Interned at Gurs and suddenly recognising Madeleine Barot at the service, he could not contain his surprise and joy, which for a moment flung all inhibiting sense of danger to the winds. Together Barot and Jehle were now to incarnate the Amsterdam conference message, as with others they formed a prayer cell in the camp. In due course, Madeleine Barot, with several friends, organised Herbert Jehle's escape from Gurs and his flight to permanent and safer refuge in the USA.

For her part, Madeleine Barot, nurtured in the World Student Christian Federation, had been working in fascist Italy when the war broke out, but at once returned to France to work for refugees. She was a founding member and general secretary of CIMADE, the French Protestant churches' agency for refugee and relief work, and when Vichy France too was occupied in 1942, she became active in the resistance network helping Jews and others escape into Spain and Switzerland. In all this, she worked closely with equally committed Catholic priests. After the war she was to work devotedly for the new World Council of Churches in the areas of youth and women. Meanwhile, in the safety of the USA, Herbert Jehle had not forgotten her, and once France was liberated he organised the sending of food parcels to Barot and her CIMADE colleagues.²

1. See Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neil, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948* (London: SPCK, 1986), 708 and W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 101.

2. For the biography of Barot, including this story, see André Jacques, *Madeleine Barot* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

This particular story of encounter and re-encounter in very changed circumstances will not of itself feature prominently in official histories of what we call “the ecumenical movement.” But nothing expresses more clearly what that history, the big story, is all about: encounters that generate relationships—relationships that can suddenly assume a new significance in unexpected ways, where they are tested and put to further use in yet deeper trust and commitment, to the point where people realise that they no longer hope for but *are* a new community of shared belief, acceptance, endeavour, and mutual service. Again and again, the initial encounter is one which opens eyes to a wider and very different world than known before, seen through the eyes of the other, a world which in turn prompts the newcomer to a new kind of self-awareness too.

This was so for many at Amsterdam in 1939. Among the British delegates was a young Scottish Baptist, David Russell. It was the first time he had been any distance from his native Glasgow, let alone abroad, and it provided his first encounter with everything from American hot-gospellers to Eastern Orthodox: “I had lived in such a confined environment. I began to realise that my God—my God—my Scottish Baptist God—was too small and that Scotland itself, for all its worth, was not after all the centre of the earth.”³ Russell, in later life, was to be not only a noted biblical scholar and general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, but a tireless international ecumenical worker for human rights and religious freedom. He habitually ascribed his later commitments to the transformative effect of that first experience at Amsterdam and the friendships which he began to make there.

“I had lived in such a confined environment.” Russell found himself *invited now to live*, mentally, in more than one place at once, realising that he belonged to a bigger world and a larger community of faith than he previously reckoned on. Jehle was, as a refugee, *having to live* in more than once place at once (or at any rate in several places in quick succession), his native Germany and wherever else he could find safety. Barot *chose to live* another kind of double life: as well as the anxious life of a citizen of a defeated and occupied country, the strenuous and dangerous life of a relief worker and resistance agent on behalf of people in even greater danger than herself. These people and their experiences, in their different ways, illustrate what being “ecumenical” means: living in more than one place at once, or living with more than one group of people at once, across frontiers of nationality and religious tradition, and thereby witnessing to a new kind of community already in the making, which relativises our other identities and loyalties. Among Jehle’s fellow-German friends was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose last recorded words on the day before his

3. See Keith Clements, “Profile: David Russell,” *Epworth Review* 23, no. 3 (Sept. 1996): 24.

execution in 1945, a message to his English friend George Bell, bishop of Chichester, are a poignant testimony to the ecumenical conviction: "Tell him that ... with him I believe in the principle of our Universal Christian Brotherhood which rises above all national interests, and that our victory is certain."⁴

The popular view is that "being ecumenical" means "to promote Christian unity" in terms of getting churches to relate more closely, if not actually unite, and to work together at national and international levels, through councils of churches or organisations of "churches together." "Being ecumenical" certainly can involve all these, but these are the outcomes of something deeper, an actual way living, thinking and believing. Our English term "ecumenical" is the transliteration of the Greek word *oikoumene*, which derives from the verb *oikein*, "to inhabit" and the noun *oikos*, "household." In the time of the early church *oikoumene* denoted "the [whole] inhabited earth." The first gatherings of the bishops of the whole church were known as "ecumenical councils" because they were representing the churches of what was then the whole known inhabited world: not only from the great centres of Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria but from the furthest borders of the Roman Empire, from northernmost York to southerly Carthage, from Atlantic Spain to the Black Sea. Even within the confines of what was essentially the one empire, being ecumenical meant being prepared to sit with, listen to, speak with, pray with, learn from, and decide with people who might be from far away and of very different context, culture, language and expression of the faith. Being ecumenical means recognising that there is only one *oikoumene*, one inhabited earth, but that it is of diverse habitations. None of us can live in every habitation, every place. But neither do we appreciate the fact of the *oikoumene* if in mind and heart we inhabit *only* one place all the time. Being ecumenical means living in more than one place at once: at home and where we are not at home or not quite at home, with the familiar and with the strange, because we are part of a new community being created which relativises the significance of our particular place. As the unknown writer of the *Letter to Diognetus* said of Christians sometime in the second or third century, "every strange city is their home-town and every home-town is strange to them."⁵

A Great Story

"The ecumenical movement" has generally come to mean the story of how the churches of the world, divided since the Great Schism between East and West in the 11th century, the Reformation of the 16th century and subsequent fragmentations,

4. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 1022 n. 54.

5. See Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, vol. 2 (London: Lutterworth, 1961), 188.

and spread throughout the world by migration, colonial expansion, and missionary enterprise, have since the opening decade of the 20th century been discovering each other across the diversity of traditions, confessions and national and cultural contexts, with the aim of seeking that unity which God wills and enables: as it is most universally expressed, to fulfil the “high priestly” prayer of Jesus “that they may all be one” (John 17:20). At its core is the goal of seeking “visible unity,” however variously that unity may be conceived. For some that goal means organic union between hitherto separated churches, even if for the present the means to that union cannot be envisaged. For others it means a full mutual recognition and acceptance by each church of each other as expressions of the one body of Christ, witnessed above all in communion at the Lord’s table, the eucharist. For others the emphasis on visible unity lies in cooperating as closely as possible in life and mission, in evangelism, prophetic witness for justice and peace, and serving human need. For many, including myself, it means all these emphases drawn together in one vision of God’s purpose in Christ “as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). But at the heart of the story of the ecumenical movement are the stories of how, repeatedly, people of faith have dared to live not only in the here and now of their own tradition, their own place, their own time, but also in the thought-world of the other tradition, in another place and indeed another time yet to come.

This inner aspect is the enlivening current which runs through the main streams normally identified as making up the modern “ecumenical movement.” I choose my words carefully, for it has to be said that a bare recital of the conferences, the assemblies and the founding of organisations—typically beginning with the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910—which are normally listed as “landmarks” in the story hardly makes for an exciting read. It is not surprising that much of the “ecumenical story” resonates less and less with today’s Christian generation for whom that past is just that: past, and irrelevant to present interests and challenges. Even the so-called “River Chart” produced by the World Council of Churches⁶ to portray in graphic form the 100-year story does no more than give some information about the past in terms of dates, places, gatherings and institutions. It portrays these as static buildings on the banks of the river, but gives no clues on what *actually being in the river, caught by the flow*, was like, still less whether that lively current is still running.

In all fairness, though, some main turns and confluences of the flow have to be noted to mark the direction. Depending on the particular standpoint of the observer,

6. Available online at http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/images/wcc-main/programmes/riv-erchart_brochure-web.pdf by way of <http://www.oikoumene.org/programmes/the-wcc-and-the-ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century.html>. See also below, chapter 5.

a whole variety of points in the story at world level compete for attention as highlights. To name but a few:

- The (often disregarded) pioneering letter of appeal from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1920 “unto all the Churches of Christ wheresoever they be” to form a league of the churches for mutual assistance, dialogue and the promotion of peace in the world; and in the same year the “Appeal to All Christian People” for reunion, made by the Lambeth conference.
- The solidarity shown to the Confessing Church of Germany in the 1930s by the churches represented in the “Life and Work” movement, and the declaration of repentance and reconciliation by leaders of that church to the ecumenical delegation at Stuttgart in 1945.
- The inaugural assembly of the WCC in the aftermath of world war, in 1948 at Amsterdam, where the churches resolved: “We intend to stay together.”
- The principle set out in 1952 by the third world conference on Faith and Order at Lund, Sweden, asking the churches “whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?”⁷
- The Second Vatican Council’s groundbreaking Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* (1964), joyfully recognising that “among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day a movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians”⁸ and committing the Roman Catholic Church to serious ecumenical dialogue.
- The steps taken in the 1970s by the WCC Programme to Combat Racism which faced huge controversy, in Europe especially, for the support given by its Special Fund to liberation movements in southern Africa, marking a decisive shift of ecumenical solidarity towards the global south;
- The 1982 Faith and Order “convergence document” *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (the so-called “Lima Text” or “Lima Document”)⁹ which, gathering the fruits of decades of theological dialogue, showed how far, though certainly not completely, the Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic churches had grown in agreement on these central matters of the faith.
- The conciliar process of “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” which, following the WCC Vancouver assembly (1983), brought churches together to face the

7. See Morris West, “Lund Principle,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC 2002), 714 -15.

8. Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, ed. Austin Flannery (Leominster: Fowler Wright, 1980), 452.

9. World Council of Churches, Commission on Faith and Order, “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,” Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).

issues of injustice, war, and ecological threats as matters not just of ethics but of confessing the faith, and was especially important to the European churches in a continent still divided by the Cold War.

- The encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* issued by Pope John Paul II (1995), summarising the fruits of three decades of ecumenical dialogue and encouraging further dialogue even on the most testing subjects such as the “petrine ministry” of the Pope.

There is no ground for triumphalism in a movement still so relatively young and still facing so many outstanding challenges, but neither is there cause to blush with shame despite the undoubted disappointments and mistakes along the way. Admittedly the modern ecumenical movement has always had its opponents and critics, not least in Britain, and by no means confined to biblical fundamentalists, anti-Papal zealots, Anglo-ultra-Catholics and theological illiterates. In the 1960s the notable Scottish theologian Ian Henderson delivered his violent polemic *Power Without Glory* against what he perceived to be a misguided attempt to bring about “One Church” through ecclesiastical power politics, in which the Church of England was the chief culprit: “Basically, Anglican diplomatic policy is the extermination of all Protestant (i.e. non-episcopally ordained) ministers.”¹⁰ This is what, claimed Henderson, had happened in the formation of the Church of South India in 1947, with a similar threat now hanging over the Church of Scotland if the Church of England were to have its way. Critics of Professor Henderson, including fellow-Scots, were not slow to allege that his ire was fed by his particular brand of Scottish nationalism as much as by concern for the Reformed faith. By contrast, the English church historian John Kent, a Methodist, was nothing if not dispassionate in his critique of ecumenism as “The Light that Failed,” the title of a chapter in his astrigent survey of the modern church in the eyes of the historian.¹¹ Kent’s main complaint about the ecumenical movement was that it had basically failed in its objectives and, more seriously, habitually glossed over those failures with its own propaganda. Within four years of the formation of the WCC, Kent claims, “the original movement had run out of energy”¹² and by the 1980s “one was left with the impression that the enthusiasm of the churches for unity was about equal to the enthusiasm shown by the Great Powers for the avoidance of a Third World War with nuclear weapons.”¹³

10. Ian Henderson, *Power Without Glory: A Study in Ecumenical Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1967), 100.

11. John H.S. Kent, *The Unacceptable Face: The Modern Church in the Eyes of the Historian* (London: SCM, 1987).

12. *Ibid.*, 203.

13. *Ibid.*, 204.

As the Protestant movement slowed down, ecumenism for a time became fashionable in the Roman Catholic Church, but with no more success. As for the Church of South India, its creation “seems to have been a disaster.” Kent, however, armed with sociological tools, also had penetrating questions to ask about the reasons for the failures of ecumenism, in particular the absence of Christian renewal accompanying schemes of union, and his final warning deserves to be heeded: “Ecumenism has suffered from excessive self-consciousness: its leaders were always telling each other and the world in general what the historical significance of the movement was, and attempting to create a school of historical interpretation by sheer assertion.”¹⁴

Sociologists and historians are paid to be sceptical of stated values, motivations and versions of history and to propose explanations far more mundane for human enterprises than the official self-justifying (not to mention self-glorifying) accounts. That is salutary, and who can deny, for example, that a real factor in moves towards Christian unity may well have been the churches’ destabilising fears for their status and security in a rapidly changing world, a world both secularising and increasingly pluralistic, in which the old Christendom was crumbling? But in dealing with any form of human relationships sheer suspicion, while uncovering all-too-human motivations, may miss what is nevertheless genuinely good and creative in that mix of ambition and aspiration, illusion and idealism. It would be unwarrantably cynical, for example, to assess a marriage *only* in terms of the psychological (and perhaps economic) pay-offs each partner gets out of it (“He’s looking for another mother who will always say what a wonderful boy he is.” “It’s always been her dream to be joined to a powerful man—a cabinet minister or even a bishop would do.”) and fail to recognise that even in all the ambiguities of that relationship there can be genuinely appreciative and self-giving love, each cherishing the other and generating yet more love in a new family. Whatever may be said against it the modern ecumenical movement overall is a great story of ventures into repentance and reconciliation following on from a past in which the Christian churches have not only been divided and antagonistic among themselves, but have often aided and abetted divisions among peoples and nations to the point of shedding blood. Against the immediate backdrop of a century of violence on a world scale, it reads particularly well. Moreover it does not *only* or even mainly comprise schemes, successful or otherwise, of organic union between churches whether in India or elsewhere. It is about entering into creative relationships and wider community.

14. *Ibid.*, 215.

In Britain Too

Nor is the story confined to the somewhat rarefied heights of global ecclesiastical debate and diplomacy. It has found expression at all other levels from the national to the local, and not least in Britain. When one considers the situation of British church relations only a hundred years ago the change has been extraordinary. The years immediately prior to the 1914-18 war saw strident rivalry between the English Free Churches and the Church of England over the basic issue of establishment of the “national church,” a continuing legacy of the slow and fitful removal of the disabilities suffered by non-Anglicans in the Victorian era. In particular there was bitter dispute over the issue of public funding for church schools. “Rome on the rates!” was the Dissenting war-cry of alarm sounded especially by Baptists and Congregationalists, many of whom were prepared to face confiscation of their goods and even imprisonment rather than pay their local taxes in violation of their conscience. In turn, on record are stories of teachers of Free Church allegiance being dismissed from Church of England schools. Sectarianism cut both ways. But as for Rome itself, it was hardly in the picture, let alone on the rates, its church still largely viewed as an alien intrusion into the land of Wycliffe, Cranmer, and Elizabeth I. The rejection by Parliament in 1926 of the proposed Revised Prayer Book on account of even mildly “catholic” elements in it was enough to demonstrate how deeply entrenched in the national psyche such partisan sentiments still lay.

Sixty years later, the climate was very different. The historian Adrian Hastings, concluding his account of the way the relationships between Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Free Churches had developed, and referring to the “great change” in the attitude to Christian unity since the end of the First World War, observed that by the mid-1980s,

this “great change” had not only affected Anglicans and Free churchmen vastly more than it had in 1920 or 1940, but it now also included Catholics. A sense of one Christian community with a common mission and a common faith had become central to the experience of all the main churches in England in a way that it had never been previously. And that was a very great achievement.¹⁵

It was on this wave of gratitude and optimism that there was launched in 1985 a new ecumenical initiative, the Not Strangers but Pilgrims Inter-Church Process, involving study and discussion at every level, from national to local, and embracing just about all the church traditions in the British Isles—including the

15. Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (London: Collins, 1986), 629.

Roman Catholics and the Black-led Pentecostal and Holiness Churches as well as those which had hitherto been members of the British Council of Churches (BCC), formed in 1942. Out of this was born a set of proposals for new “ecumenical instruments” to replace the BCC. The new bodies—one at four-nation level for the whole of the British Isles and four national bodies for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales—would be more inclusive in their membership with Roman Catholic involvement a chief prize.¹⁶ Equally significant, they would work in a new way, not as agencies “doing ecumenical work for the churches” but rather enabling the churches themselves to work closely together on the tasks which they identified as essential. The “churches together” model had arrived. This embodied the spirit of the Inter-Church Conference at Swanwick in September 1987 which gathered up the Not Strangers But Pilgrims process and set out the proposals to be put to the churches. The Swanwick Declaration rang with new hope and confidence:

We now declare together our readiness to commit ourselves to each other under God. Our earnest desire is to become more fully, in his own time, the One Church of Christ, united in faith, communion, pastoral care and mission. . .

It is our conviction that, as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our churches must now move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other, in search of the unity for which Christ prayed and in common evangelism and service of the world.¹⁷

Ecumenism not as an “extra,” but as a dimension of all we do, was the watchword of the hour. The new instruments were launched in the autumn of 1990 in a spirit of great expectancy, although in some quarters there were fears that the desire for inclusivity and especially Roman Catholic participation might prove to be at the expense of the more prophetic voice that had been heard from the BCC. As one who was appointed to the staff of the four-nation body the Council of Churches for Britain

16. The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI) replaced the British Council of Churches. In due course it was renamed Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). As well as being the overall coordinating body, it was designed to enable the churches at four-nation level to deal with international and public affairs and church life issues. New national bodies were set up for England (Churches Together in England—CTE), Scotland (Action of Churches Together in Scotland—ACTS) and Wales (Cytun), while in Ireland the Irish Council of Churches continued together with the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.

17. *Churches Together in Pilgrimage: Including Definitive Proposals for Ecumenical Instruments* [“The Marigold Book”] (London: British Council of Churches and Catholic Truth Society, 1989),

7. See also http://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/320032/Churches_Together_in/Local_Ecumenism/Resources/Revision/Churches_Together_in.aspx.

and Ireland (CCBI), I for one have no doubt that in the early days of the “new instruments,” there was a real and sincere attempt by all concerned to make them embody and implement the new vision of ecumenism.

Decline—and Why?

All that was over twenty years ago. Today there is a wide consensus that, to put it variously, we are in an “ecumenical winter” both internationally and nationally, that the ecumenical movement has “run out of steam,” that “ecumenism as we have known it has failed,” that ecumenism is quite simply dead. It is not quite the case, yet, that relations have reverted outright to the antagonisms of the past, although at the global level the 1990s saw an outbreak of suspicion and verbal hostility between some parts of Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Christianity in both its Roman Catholic and Protestant forms, a hostility which is not yet fully healed despite conciliatory overtures from the Vatican and strenuous efforts by the WCC. In Britain it is already the case that—at least as far as England is concerned—we cannot speak as confidently as did Adrian Hastings in the 1980s of “one Christian community with a common mission and a common faith.” Both the vision and the energy have gone. The death in 1999 of Cardinal Basil Hume, probably the most widely loved and respected Christian leader in Britain since the mid-1970s and a chief inspiration of the Inter-Church Process, symbolized if not marked the decline. The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Britain in 2011 had many positive features but neither received nor generated anything like the universal excitement of John Paul II’s pilgrimage in 1982. Everyone is anxious to say “there can be no going back,” but no-one seems eager to move forward or to plot the future path. There being little interest in carrying the story onwards with anything like the energy of the former days, the danger is of the relations that have been built up over the past century unravelling through indifference and brooding suspicions.

Readers from a context other than the British Isles may wish to compare their situation with what I am now describing. Today, what is euphemistically called “a sober realism” prevails, illustrated by the remarks of five English church leaders—Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Free Church—who at the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 2009 were invited by the religious press to offer their visions and understandings of Christian unity. The result,¹⁸ to anyone hoping for a fresh injection of energy into the ecumenical movement, was not exactly encouraging. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, was alone in asking that the

18. As seen in, e.g., the *Baptist Times*, 22 January 2009. The interviewees were: the then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams; the then Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Murphy O’Connor; and the General Secretaries of the Baptist Union (Jonathan Edwards), the Methodist Church (Martin Atkins), and the United Reformed Church (Roberta Rominger).

goal of visible unity be kept in view and prayed for. Otherwise the “visions” largely consisted of incontrovertible generalisations about “the unity of the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God” or “to put Jesus first and to be the Church that he has called us to be,” while the overall impression was that “we have to work with [denominational] situations as they are” together with an unexpectedly complacent comment (as far as ecumenical history is concerned) that “previous generations saw structural unity as the expression of this faithfulness—an inward focus. Today we are more apt to focus outward, on the work, sharing our resources and working together.” The overall impression left by these views from the top is that for the time being, the churches are felt to have done all that could be expected of them in mutual rapprochement and ways of “working together.” Further steps may become clearer with time, but the inference is that for most church leaders ecumenism has been left at the bottom of the in-tray while more pressing matters arrive on the desk. This is not primarily their own fault. They are the reflection, rather than the cause, of the braking system being applied to the movement. The slow-down results from a failure of nerve going far wider and deeper than the stance of any one leading figure. John Kent’s dour description of a “post-ecumenical phase” from the 1980s onwards may well now indeed be true: “a renewed series of diplomatic negotiations between separate churches, in which each was to bargain as firmly as possible for the protection of its own fundamental identity. The rhetoric of ecumenism continued, but the reality of ecclesiastical politics was much less concealed.”¹⁹

At least symptomatic of this failure of nerve, and certainly reinforcing it, is the large-scale down-grading of the British ecumenical instruments set up in 1990. In the case of the four-nation CTBI, a virtually complete demolition job has been carried out thanks largely to withdrawal of support and funding from the Roman Catholics and the Church of England, reducing it to a small-scale agency offering its services to the churches—doing important and creative work especially in ecumenical study, but hardly any longer a body through which the churches as such work together. That is a serious reversal of the intentions of twenty years ago. There is now no longer any forum of study and public witness by all the churches at a four-nation level on matters of social and international concern. Churches Together in England (CTE) has fared better (and, some would say, at the expense of CTBI) but it is by no means clear whether CTE is “owned” by the member churches any more than was the former BCC. It would not matter greatly if the churches had felt they could now express the spirit of the Swanwick Declaration *without* such instruments and were seen to be doing so. But largely, they are not. The flesh of the instruments may have

19. Kent, *The Unacceptable Face*, 204.

been weak, but the spirit no longer seems willing, either. “Churches together” has become a somewhat ambiguous slogan which can mean anything or nothing, and certainly little in the way of concerted action. Indeed there is a growing isolationism. Here are some instances of current unecumenical activities:

- The Church of England in 2004 produced the report *Mission-Shaped Church* on church planting and “fresh expressions” of church appropriate for evangelism and growth in contemporary society. But, for all that the issue is one that naturally exercises Christians of all denominations, and that the working group which produced the report included a Methodist, the report is a curiously Anglican-centred document, with little recognition that other churches are in the field too and with only passing references to ecumenical action.²⁰
- The Baptist Assembly in May 2010 took the theme “One World, One Mission” with a multitude of seminars and plenary events, yet without so much as a mention that missiologists and mission agency representatives from all over the world and from all Christian traditions (including the evangelical and Pentecostal) would shortly be gathering at Edinburgh (and again at Cape Town a few months later) to commemorate the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, and to plot a future for world mission.
- In the same year, the Conference of the Methodist Church resolved to close its long-established theological college in Bristol, Wesley College, without apparent regard to the effect this would have on the work of the Baptist and Anglican colleges in Bristol, and without considering the serious possibilities actually under discussion between Wesley College and the Baptist College for joint theological education.
- Relations between Roman Catholics and others have not been made easier by some recent actions of the Vatican. The institution in 2010 of the Anglican Ordinariate²¹ was evidently made without any prior consultation with the Church of England. Of potentially wider ecumenical impact is the arrival of the revised English version of the Mass being issued from Rome. Not only in the eyes of many concerned Catholics

20. The Archbishops’ Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publications, 2004). For further comment on this see below, Chapter 12, The report has been criticized by some Anglicans for allegedly subverting the traditional parish system, but even more strongly by some non-Anglicans for its assumption that the “national church” can view “mission” as its special prerogative without regard to other denominations and faith communities. It is dismissive of Local Ecumenical Partnerships. For an especially trenchant critique by a United Reformed Church theologian, see John Hull, *Mission-Shaped Church: A Theological Response* (London: SCM 2006).

21. This was a scheme promulgated by the Vatican to allow Anglicans to be received into the Roman Catholic Church while continuing, if they wished, Anglican liturgical and spiritual practice.

does this represent a reversion to pre-Vatican II days, but it has been formulated without reference to the International Committee on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) and without consideration of its ecumenical implications. Over the past forty years or so, the growing use of similar prayers and responses in the liturgies of churches Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant has powerfully contributed to the sense of being “one in Christ” despite continuing differences. This now appears to be under threat.

While it would be unjust to say that such actions are typical of *all* the behaviour of these churches, they are not what one would expect from bodies which had solemnly stated that they were moving “from cooperation to clear commitment,” embracing ecumenism as a dimension of all that they do.

There is no shortage of explanations or justifications (the two tend to slide into each other) of the “ecumenical winter.” None of them is wholly satisfactory, nor is the sum total of them. We may consider them briefly:

Declining Churches

With most of the “mainline” churches—those that have chiefly supported ecumenical activity in the past—in steep decline in membership, leadership personnel, and financial resources, it is only to be expected that they would reduce their support for ecumenical organisations and activity. If they are not actually in survival mode, their priorities are now for their own maintenance rather than “extramural” work. This is very odd reasoning on two counts. First, the very fact that churches’ resources are diminishing would logically be expected to make them more eager for pooling and sharing their rations. Indeed, we have already noted a long-standing criticism of the ecumenical movement that basically it was prompted by churches fearing their fragility in an uncertain world—safety in numbers no longer being guaranteed, it was felt necessary to draw the wagons together in a closer circle for the night. Second—and if this is so the implications are bleak indeed—it means that the British churches have forgotten completely their commitment made in 1990 that ecumenism is to be an aspect of all they do and not therefore a matter of size, resources, and financial capacity.

Growth of Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism (with or without charismatic influences) has increasingly become a dominant force in both the Church of England and the Free Churches, as it is already in many of the black-majority churches. Evangelicalism tends to sit loose to any structures, denominational or ecumenical, which do not put evangelism as the main priority, and it promotes alliances primarily between those who share its particular understanding of biblical authority. Ecumenism which aims at drawing

“all churches together” is therefore regarded by evangelicals as a distraction from the “real task” of the church. Evangelical growth *ipso facto* means ecumenical decline. This argument points to a real factor on the church scene at the moment, but as a total rationale (whether in approval or disapproval) for the “death of ecumenism” it is hardly adequate. For one thing, it does not account for the ecumenical inertia in circles *outside* evangelicalism. For another, it does a disservice to those evangelicals who *do* consider themselves ecumenically committed and who demonstrate that commitment, for example by involvement at the local level.

The Priority of Interfaith Relations

In the early 1990s, Hans Küng stated the formula: “There can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There can be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.”²² Interreligious dialogue has now assumed huge significance, with religion being recognised as an undeniable factor in many conflicts, especially with the growth of religious fundamentalism as a motor of political struggle. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 merely underlined the urgency of understanding between the religions, not least Islam and Christianity. Consequently, it has become almost axiomatic that intra-Christian ecumenism is now far surpassed in importance by interfaith relations and interreligious dialogue. One may, however, fully concede the new importance of the interreligious dimension without allowing this to supersede the search for unity between the churches, and for two reasons. First, dialogue with a partner presupposes that one is oneself an identifiable personality. If Christianity is being challenged to dialogue, it must itself become at least a more coherent entity. Second, in addition to this pragmatic consideration, there is an intrinsic theological imperative to Christian ecumenism, which is the attempt to answer how the church may more truly be the church as the body of Christ on earth. Interreligious dialogue and Christian ecumenism are complementary, not interchangeable.

Internal Church Divisions over Interchurch Differences

It is frequently stated that the most serious divisions in Christianity today are not between the different churches and traditions, but within them. In particular, issues relating to gender and sexuality and the associated questions of the authority of Bible and/or tradition form the main dividing lines. There is no point in, say, any church dialoguing with the Church of England unless and until it sorts itself out with respect to women priests and bishops and gay clergy, since these are the matters

22. Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (London: SCM, 1990), xv.

over which it is at odds with itself, and more passionately than over any theological difference with other traditions. This is indeed an intimidating challenge to ecumenism but rarely is the underlying assumption of cause-and-effect questioned. Why is it assumed that it is the intra-church arguments that have made ecumenism irrelevant? May it not equally be the case that it is the diminution of wider ecumenical interest and commitment that has *allowed* such questions to so dominate the internal life of churches? It is isolation and introspection that encourages internal power-struggles in tin-pot states—and in churches too.

The End of Institutions?

These explanations, rationalisations, or justifications for the decline in ecumenism are at least debatable. A much more formidable and wide-ranging challenge, however, stems from the total context in which the churches and ecumenical agencies, along with all social organisations, find themselves today. It is the context broadly described, almost ad nauseam, as “post-modern”: a society and culture which eschews universal uniformity of belief and values in favour of the particular, even the fragmentary, perspectives which each mini-culture, each community, even each person, chooses or is content to live by. Gone is any grand narrative of history, whether political, ideological or religious, which supposedly supplies meaning to life. Instead there are specific stories, none of them claiming to supply a meaning for the whole of humanity but which shape, and are shaped by, the here-and-nowness of life. Claims to absolute or universal truths are deconstructed to reveal how they are in fact tools of particular interests, especially of power. It is not only ideas which are thereby deconstructed, but actual social structures too. It is the age of indifference to, if not disillusion with, institutions, especially in the political sphere. People no longer trust institutions, and those who operate in them, to serve their welfare, to protect their interests or to bring them fulfilment. Nor do they often feel the need of them. They prefer self-help, whether individually or in groups, ad hoc formations, whether campaigning on issues in their local community or on single issues such as climate change—or simply coming together informally for mutual support and interest. In the age of the internet, moreover, who needs to belong to a larger organisation for communication and sharing of ideas? The whole world lies readily at hand on one’s laptop.

If this is the way we live now, it is clearly bad news for any inherited, overarching system of organisation or belief which claims the right and the competence to supply meaning and fulfilment to people’s lives, and that includes the churches and related structures. People choose for themselves where to find their meaning and fulfilment, in matters spiritual or religious as much as anything else, and those are likely to be found in the local, the immediate and (probably) small-scale communities of shared

commitments and enterprises, regardless of whether or not these are affiliated with, or owe loyalty to, larger-scale bodies. This is already affecting church life at every level. A local church, for example, may well feel called and competent to share in “world mission” by developing its own self-chosen partnership with a congregation or clinic in Kenya rather than contributing to the denominational mission agency as in the past. But, more dramatically, the mood is seen in the mushrooming of quite new, experimental forms of church life: emerging church, café church, third-place church, liquid church, fresh expressions, and so forth, to say nothing of the huge Pentecostal phenomenon. People are not just making their own choices from what is available, but are creating quite new possibilities. Obviously the question has then to be faced: if post-modernity is a solvent of inherited church structures, will it prove any less so for ecumenism? If the whole ecumenical project has been about bringing organised churches together, if not to actual union, and if those church structures are now seen to be less and less significant in the post- denominational age of fresh expressions and emerging church, then surely ecumenism as we have known it is irrelevant too. Who needs councils of churches, or even groupings of “churches together”? If the name of the game is now that of relating informally and spontaneously to one another, will not this happen naturally anyway according to our interests?

Matters are not quite so simple, however. For one thing, while it has become widely assumed that so-called mainline churches in the western world are in irreversible and terminal decline, this received wisdom is being challenged by some empirical studies which point to striking examples of renewal, both in numbers and spiritual vitality, in traditional congregations which have not opted either for popular evangelicalism or radical spontaneity.²³ Second, paradoxically there is both a loosening from and a reassertion of confessional identity going on. For one thing, a real factor in the drift of the churches into isolationist habits (or, as I termed them earlier, unecumenical activities) is that the denominations themselves are being caught up into the contemporary culture of anxiety about self-identity, hence the recent focus in just about every Christian tradition on “Who are we? What does it mean to be... Anglican... Baptist... Reformed...?” In such a climate, ecumenism is hardly likely to seem a priority, but theologically the ecumenical question becomes even more pertinent. For their part, too, far from negating ecumenism, the new expressions and developments in “church” do not remove but only call for a re-stating of the question: how may they be one? For if they do not take this question seriously, then their claim

23. See e.g., Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith* (HarperSanFrancisco 2006).

to be expressions of the gospel is in turn under question. Only if ecumenism is seen as primarily to do with structures rather than relationships, with organisation rather than communion, is it rendered obsolete.

Retrieving the Story and Renewing the Vision

I shall return in chapter 12 to examine more closely what has been happening in the churches, in Britain at any rate, in their search for “identity” and the dangers of this quest when identity is confused with autonomy as an end in itself. For the moment, suffice it to say that contemporary Christianity is in danger of relapsing into a collection of confessional and denominational or otherwise partisan enclaves, self-contained and autonomous in their supposed distinctive identities, touching each other only tangentially (“churches together” are not necessarily in any real relationship with each other), only fitfully engaging with the society around them and increasingly disconnected from the world church, the church of the *oikoumene*.²⁴ This is the situation addressed by Mary Tanner, Anglican theologian and a president of the WCC, who highlights what seems most lacking in all the churches today, “a passionate commitment to unity” as distinct from a commitment to something vague and undefined “or worse still, ourselves writ large.”²⁵ Instead Tanner calls for an ecumenism grounded in a properly theological understanding of community and communion, which can lead us beyond maintenance of our narrow and self-sufficient denominational identities:

It is about how we are all held in communion—when we agree and when we disagree—so that we refuse to say “I have no need of you.” But, under the Spirit’s guidance, stay together, learning from one another as we seek to discover the mind of Christ for the Church. It is about how local churches are held in communion with all the local churches, in the universal Church—that is the Church through the ages and around the world today.²⁶

“The Church through the ages and around the world today.” Mary Tanner’s language prompts me to return to my own phraseology earlier in this chapter, to the effect that being “ecumenical” means being able to live in more than one place, and indeed at more than one time, at once. The main resistance to ecumenism today

24. See Kenneth Cragg, review of Kirsteen Kim’s book *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission*, *Theology* 114, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 139.

25. Mary Tanner, “Celebrating Edinburgh 1910: Reflections on Visible Unity,” *Theology* (Nov.-Dec. 2010): 403-410.

26. *Ibid.*, 407.

comes from the mindset which assumes that one can and should only inhabit, mentally and spiritually, one's own tradition (and come to that, one particular version of the tradition) and one's own fragment of the *oikoumene* at once. This is not the same as fundamentalism, which goes one step further and insists that one's own tradition, and that alone, is to be imposed on the rest of the world. But by default this mindset can become an ingredient in fundamentalism or vicious sectarianism.²⁷ At any rate, to be true to their vocation the churches must have the capacity to enable their people to live in more than one place at once, that is, to envisage how the world looks from within another tradition or another context. This capacity to live in more than one place at once is fundamental to the ecumenical enterprise; indeed, it is fundamental to being Christian, to being "in Christ," for Christ is the one who stands in the place of the other even to the point of the cross. Without it, the fact of the *oikoumene* as the home of the church can never be appreciated, and correspondingly it is the incapacity to do this which vitiates the enterprise, for then ecumenism indeed becomes an "extra" to all we do, and the wider world itself is then just that—an "extra" to our own bit of world and bit of Christianity instead of that with which we vitally engage and which we allow to affect us. This is the primal heartbeat of being ecumenical, the pulse of living, daring ventures in relationships, in having eyes opened to others, to how others see the world, and to seeing how that world may be served together within the transforming possibilities of God's grace—and to venture towards a new community which is not just a rearrangement of what we have now *but is beyond anything we have at present*. It is the quest for community in Christ for the sake of the community of the world. *That* is what the ecumenical story at heart is about, and why the stories of Madeleine Barot, Herbert Jehle, David Russell, and others of that generation, are parables of it. All else, whether to be praised or castigated, is secondary. Gurs itself, a place of suffering, vulnerable, uprooted people set in a country fearful for its own future, is nothing less than a parable of the whole world, the *oikoumene*, today; and that little cell of people, incarnating through prayer and service a community transcending all divisions for the sake of the whole, is both parable and example of being ecumenical.

If the ecumenical movement is to be renewed, one of the essentials is that the current amnesia about so much of what has happened in the story must be overcome. The inner dimensions of the story need to be retrieved, recognised and affirmed—and taken forward. It is the modest intention of this book to contribute something to that retrieval. Subsequent chapters do not attempt to tell the story as a whole, but simply to uncover what was happening in some of the most creative episodes and

27. See below, Chapter 10, on "sectarianism" in Northern Ireland.

figures of the past and to register their pulse-beat. They are accounts of people and communities who faithfully held to their basic identity in Christ, yet who dared to test their faithfulness by reaching out to other worlds than their own, accepting new challenges both for the churches and for the wider social and international life of their time. They are stories which are inherently interesting in themselves, yet can also be resources for insights of permanent value—or perhaps still awaiting their full exploitation. They supply echoes of hope which still reverberate beyond us into our future. We shall then return to the present in the two concluding chapters.

On purpose, I do *not* begin with the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. It has become a commonplace, indeed a virtual shibboleth in ecumenical circles (which I have myself repeated many times in lectures and sermons), to describe this event as “the birth of the modern ecumenical movement.” The almost universal attribution of such significance to “Edinburgh 1910,” however, betrays a misplaced regard to the formation of *structures, organisations, and ecclesiastical gatherings* as constitutive of the ecumenical movement. It is true that Edinburgh 1910 was the first in the line of large-scale, international multi-church gatherings which formed a permanent organ to further its work (in the case of Edinburgh, its Continuation Committee). But to ascribe to Edinburgh 1910 a generative influence on the movement as a whole is, as we shall see, quite another matter. Its full significance lay in other directions, and the hope it engendered rings with a specific timbre of its own. Nor was it even the first in the field in the modern ecumenical story, for before Edinburgh was conceived certain people, in Britain and Germany in particular, were awakening to the need to live in more than one place at once.

For the moment, however, we shall look further at the motif of “living there as well as here” as the dynamic of being ecumenical, first through the personal lens of my own upbringing and experience which I believe were—long before I realised—decisive in my “ecumenical formation”; second, as a feature which is fundamental in the biblical witness and therefore must be foundational for ecumenical life and thought.