NEW ZEALAND METHODISTS AND CHURCH UNION:
AN HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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University of Canterbury
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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses Church Union, or ecumenicalism, with special reference to the Methodist Church of New Zealand. It approaches the subject from two different viewpoints. First, by means of an historical survey of both the reunion of Methodism and the Church's subsequent involvement in wider union negotiations. Second, by an analysis of a sociological survey, in which Methodist participants in the 1972 referendum on the "Plan for Union" were asked to respond to questions relating to their referendum vote.

Central to the thesis is a critical evaluation of conclusions made by Robert Currie in *Methodism Divided*, which is an historical survey of the causes of Methodist division and reunion in England. Because Currie sees English Methodism as a "microcosm of Christianity", he believes his conclusions have "considerable general relevance" for ecumenicalism. The thesis argues that if Currie is correct, then, given the heritage, history, and general social environment, of New Zealand Methodism, the validity of his conclusions ought to be confirmed in this instance.

New Zealand Methodist history appears to give some, albeit qualified, support to Currie's conclusions. But how does the ordinary Church Member view these conclusions? The respondents to the survey (the survey was processed at the University of Canterbury Computer Centre) indicate that his conclusions have limited relevance for New Zealand Methodists. In particular, his emphases on numerical decline, and conflict between the ministry and the laity, in relation to ecumenicalism, appear to be relatively unimportant for the majority of respondents. Consequently, it may be that the historical method, necessarily employed by Currie in dealing with events in the past, is unable to reflect accurately the views of ordinary Church Members. If so, then Currie's belief that his
conclusions have "considerable general relevance" for ecumenicalism needs reappraisal.
The subject of Methodism and Church Union is one in which I have a special interest. First, because of my own participation in the life of the Methodist Church, formerly as a lay person and latterly as a minister. In the latter role I have had the privilege of sharing in the negotiations leading to the formation of two Union Parishes, at Woolston, and at Lyttelton. I also shared in discussions with members of my present congregation, at St. Albans, on the "Plan for Union" 1971, during the period leading up to the national referendum on that Plan.

It was a review of Methodism Divided in "Mini-mag", the Methodist Ministers' magazine, which first turned my attention to Robert Currie and the possibility of making an evaluation of his conclusions in the New Zealand Methodist situation. The thesis developed from that point.

I am indebted to the following people for their encouragement and assistance. Dr. Kevin Clements of the Sociology Department at the University of Canterbury; my thesis supervisor, Mr. Colin Brown of the Religious Studies Department; Mr. David Evans who organized the computer programme; Mrs Wendy Paris who typed the manuscript; and Mr S. A. Roberts who proof-read the draft copy.

My thanks is also due to Margaret, my wife, for her support and assistance; and also to the staff of the Connexional Office of the Methodist Church of New Zealand for access to historical records; and, last but not least, to those other Methodists who took the trouble to answer and return a rather lengthy questionnaire.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

I. THE FACT OF CHURCH UNION

Church Union has been, and continues to be, a major concern of the Christian Churches during the twentieth century. This is true whether consideration be given to the life of the Churches in England or India, the United States or Australia. It is none the less true of the Churches in New Zealand. It is, however, possible in each situation to find some major denominations not involved in Church Union negotiations or ventures. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church in New Zealand has had a tentative involvement to date. This is the exception rather than the rule. On the whole there is widespread involvement by the major denominations. Of these, probably no denomination exhibits more enthusiasm for the cause of Church Union than the Methodist Church.

(I) Motivation for Church Union

Given the fact of Church Union, a relatively modern development in a hitherto often divisive religion, it is not surprising that attempts should be made to explain the phenomenon.¹

To understand the motivation behind an event is to take a major step towards understanding the event itself. To date there is no agreed interpretation of the causes of Church Union. The Christian proponents of union tend to see it as theologically inspired. For them it is a response to the "will of God", the answer to Christ's prayer that "they all may be one", and a movement towards "renewal" and "mission".\(^2\)

Those Christians who oppose union tend to see it as based on "compromise", as a denial of the way God has worked in the past, and as leading to a quite undesirable uniformity of worship and practice. For them Church Union is often seen as associated with liberal theology and is sometimes led by people with hierarchical aspirations.\(^3\) Others, particularly sociologists, such as Robert Currie and Bryan Wilson, tend to see Church Union as a response to the decline of religion.\(^4\) They also see the ministers as its chief advocates, the laity as providing its main opponents.\(^5\) These then are some of the views of those who have tried to account for the phenomenon, but what views do ordinary Church members have of Church Union?

\(^2\) "Union provides the opportunity for a radical renewal of the Church in mission, and a new awareness of Christ's purpose in the world . . . ." "The New Zealand Methodist", June 17, 1972.

\(^3\) See for example: "Freedom for Convictions". P. E. Sutton. I97I. Selwyn Publication.

"Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church", especially p. 57-63.


\(^5\) Currie, op. cit., p. 314.
(2) Purpose of this Thesis

The chief purpose of this thesis is to investigate the question of motivation particularly in relation to the ordinary Methodist Church Member in New Zealand. More specifically, it is to examine the extent to which New Zealand Methodists, both lay and ministerial, see themselves as being motivated by the kind of considerations which Robert Currie has concluded were significant with respect to the union of English Methodism. The thesis seeks to do this by analysing the results of a survey carried out amongst Methodists who participated in the 1972 referendum on Church Union.

(3) Methodology of the Thesis

The approach adopted in the thesis is both historical and sociological. It is historical in that Currie's book, Methodism Divided, is largely a historical survey relating to English Methodism, and there is therefore a need to show the New Zealand Methodist situation from this perspective to indicate the reasonableness of engaging in comparisons. Consequently, the first two chapters of the thesis outline, from a Methodist perspective, the present situation regarding Church Union in New Zealand. This is then placed in the context of the earlier Methodist unions in New Zealand and these in turn are related to the Methodist unions in both England and Australia. Chapters three and four seek to elucidate, in some detail, the conclusions which Currie has arrived at in respect to the union of English Methodism. At the same time, grounds for arriving at similar conclusions with respect to the union of New Zealand Methodism, and the Church's present commitment to a wider union, will be indicated. Chapter five notes some of the limitations involved in making a direct

6 Currie's conclusions will be discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4.
comparison between English and New Zealand Methodism, and between a union of branches of the same denomination and a union of major historic denominations. The same chapter also leads in to the discussion of the findings of the survey. Chapters six, seven and eight discuss the findings of the survey in detail. Finally, in chapter nine, some conclusions will be stated along with some suggestions for further investigation.

II. CHURCH UNION IN NEW ZEALAND — THE PRESENT SITUATION

This year, 1976, promises to be highly significant as far as Church Union developments in New Zealand are concerned. In May the Anglican General Synod will meet and will vote, for the second time as a General Synod, on the question of Union with the Associated Churches of Christ, the Congregational Union of New Zealand, the Methodist Church of New Zealand, and the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, on the basis of the 1971 "Plan for Union". If each of the three 'houses' of the General Synod finds the mandatory two thirds majority in favour of the proposed union, then this will clear the way for all five denominations to proceed towards the consummation of that union.

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7 The Anglican General Synod follows a practice of voting in three houses, laity, clergy, and bishops.

8 The other four Churches have already indicated their position and are each prepared, to a greater or lesser extent, to be a party to the proposed united Church.
In that event there will probably be a continuing Anglican Church, and a continuing Presbyterian Church, each supported by a proportion of their respective present members who are opposed to union on the basis of the agreed Plan. As will become evident, it is highly unlikely that there will be a continuing Methodist Church.

(I) Results of Anglican Rejection of Plan

If the General Synod finds itself unable to adopt the present proposals for union, as seems possible in the light of the voting in the Diocesan Synods during 1975, then it would appear, if the 1972 Anglican referendum returns can be taken as a guide (see TABLE I), that more than half the active membership of that Church will have to accept a decision that runs contrary to their expressed wish. At the same time it would seem most unlikely that the General Synod would for a second time consider it reasonable to ask the other Churches for "forbearance and patience" while Anglicans consider the matter for a further two years. That would be a severe test of the Christian charity of the other denominations. It would also probably in effect

9 Some Anglicans, for instance the Bishop of Nelson and fellow supporters of the Selwyn Society, and some Presbyterians, mainly supporters of the Westminster Fellowship, have stated that they will form continuing churches if their respective denominations enter into union on the basis of the present Plan. In an article in the "Christchurch Star", following the 1974 Anglican General Synod's rejection of the Church Union proposal, the Bishop of Nelson and the Bishop of Wellington were reported as having,"told the synod they would have to leave the main body of the church if it went into union".

10 Joint Commission on Church Union, May 1975. "Background", Wellington. (Primary Source: Minutes of the Anglican General Synod).
put a very considerable damper on enthusiasm for the ecumenical cause in the other Churches.

If the General Synod fails to achieve the necessary vote then the remaining four Churches will have to decide whether or not they wish to consummate union without the Anglicans. They will also have to decide whether this will mean a union on the basis of such parts of the 1971 Plan for Union as could reasonably be operated without Anglican participation, thus keeping the door open to the Anglicans; or whether perhaps to facilitate union by means of some kind of temporary or transitional structure again keeping the door open to future Anglican participation; or whether the new situation demands a new or modified 'Plan'. Whatever the outcome of the Anglican vote at the General Synod, it is extremely unlikely that the other four Churches will be content to accept the status quo.

(2) Implications for Methodism

In particular, the Methodist Church, the third largest of the five denominations involved, and the denomination which has most decisively committed itself to the Church Union cause, (see TABLE I) will be unlikely to rest content with the status quo. Already the Methodist Church has membership and property involved in sixtyfour Union Parishes, including 14.78 per cent of its members and 16 per cent of its ministers. In summing up what this means as far as the denomination is concerned, the Rev. Barry Jones, Superintendent of the Development Division of the Methodist Church, states in a recent report, that, "Through its deep ecumenical involvement [the Methodist Church] has deliberately placed its denominational identity at risk.

TABLE I
Voting Returns in the Five Churches as a Result of the 1972 Referendum on Church Union on the Basis of the 1971 "Plan for Union"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Valid Votes</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parishioners</td>
<td>61,438</td>
<td>58.06%</td>
<td>41.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy in active ministry</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>53.98%</td>
<td>46.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other clergy</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>47.52%</td>
<td>52.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishops</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired bishops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Churches of Christ</td>
<td>2,647</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Union</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Church</td>
<td>23,012</td>
<td>86%*</td>
<td>14%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicants</td>
<td>74,423</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherents</td>
<td>5,078</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ecumenically speaking, it has reached the point of no return.\textsuperscript{12}

III. BACKGROUND TO THE CURRENT CHURCH UNION PROPOSALS

In 1950 the Methodist Conference meeting in Dunedin passed the following resolution: "That Conference request the Church Union Committee to approach the Church Union Committees of the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches with a view to re-opening negotiations in regard to organic union." \textsuperscript{13} This resolution apparently struck a responsive note with the other two Churches because the following year the Joint Standing Committee of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches came into being. Four years later the Associated Churches of Christ became a party to the work of this Committee. By 1956 the Joint Standing Committee had published a study booklet "Shall We Unite?"; had produced the first draft of a Common Declaration of Faith; and was recommending to the participating Churches that a vote on the principle of union be held in the form of a referendum during the month of June 1957. The results of this referendum are set out in TABLE 2. In the period that followed the Joint Standing Committee, at the request of the Churches, and in the light of the favourable response to the referendum, began work on a Draft Basis of Union. The hope was expressed, by the Methodist Church at least, that early in the 1960's the final agreed Basis of Union would be the basis of a second referendum which, if the response was favourable, would lead to the union of the four Churches.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} ibid., p.6.

\textsuperscript{13} Methodist Church of New Zealand. 1950. Minutes of the Annual Conference. p. 151.

\textsuperscript{14} Methodist Church of New Zealand. 1958. Minutes of the Annual Conference. p. 182.
In retrospect, the first indication that this union might not eventuate came early in 1959 when the Joint Standing Committee received a letter from the General Synod of the Anglican Church by way of a reply to the original invitation issued by that Committee in 1954. This letter indicated that the Anglican Church, "had set up a Commission under the Chairmanship of Bishop Lesser, of Waiapu, to meet the Joint Standing Committee and open exploratory conversations on the subject". The subject referred to was the possibility of entering into the Church Union negotiations. This request was to have a far reaching effect. The first exploratory meeting of the Anglican representatives with the members of the Joint Standing Committee took place in February 1960.

TABLE 2

Percentage Voting For and Against the Principle of Union in the four Denominations during 1957

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Valid Votes</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associated Churches of Christ</td>
<td>3,536</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Union</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Church</td>
<td>28,139</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>48,633</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Minutes of the Annual Conference. 1957.

The year 1964 was a significant one for Church Union developments in New Zealand. In April that year the Anglican General Synod agreed, "That this Synod now seeks to enter into negotiation with the said Standing Committee in the hope that a basis of union may be found." In November, the newly inducted President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev. G. H. Goodman, posed the following question in his Inaugural Address: "Can it be that in the will of God, He is now asking for a fragment of His Church, like the grain of wheat, to fall into the ground and die in order that it might bear a rich harvest? Can it be that this Church which was born of the Spirit at a time of great need, and for a specific purpose, is now being asked to yield up her life at another time of need and for a further fulfilment of His purpose?". The Conference responded enthusiastically to the theme of the President's address by unanimously endorsing the resolution "That negotiations now proceed with a view to a union of the five Churches". At the same time the Conference expressed its "deep pleasure" at the decision of the Anglican Church to accept the invitation to enter into the negotiations. The Conference subsequently agreed that the members of its own Church Union Committee and its representatives on the proposed Joint Commission, "give high priority to these matters in the planning of their work and that this be communicated to the Quarterly Meetings".


18 Minutes. 1964. op. cit., p. 188.

19 ibid., p. 189.
The Formation of the Joint Commission on Church Union

Before 1964 came to an end, the Joint Standing Committee had recommended to its member Churches that the Committee be re-constituted as "The Joint Commission on Church Union" with the following order of reference: "To seek God's will for His Church in New Zealand by studying the issues involved in union, by preparing the basis required for such a union, and by advising the Churches on any steps to be taken to this end". A new era thus commenced in the round of Church Union negotiations, and, at least from the Methodist standpoint, this was coupled with a new sense of urgency.

Formulation and Revision of the "Plan for Union"

In the period that followed, up till 1971, the chief objective of the Joint Commission on Church Union was the formulation of a Plan for Union which would prove acceptable to each of the negotiating Churches. However, to underline the seriousness of the intentions of member Churches, the Joint Commission also arranged an Act of Commitment. This was held in May 1967, in St Paul's Cathedral, Wellington. The Churches on that occasion stated that: "we commit ourselves in common obedience to Christ to the use of our best endeavours to achieve that unity which is according to His will".

How seriously the Churches as such took this Act of Commitment can only be assessed in terms of what has happened since. By 1969 the Joint Commission had prepared a draft Plan for submission to the Church courts of each denomination. Each Church was asked to make comments and submissions with respect to the details contained

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21 Ibid.
therein. The Methodist Church made eight such submissions and five of these were eventually incorporated in the final draft which became "The Plan for Union 1971". The three Methodist submissions which were rejected by the Joint Commission were: (a) the request that bishops be appointed for a ten year term; (b) the request that the National Assembly vote as one house; (c) the request that candidates be ordained together at diocesan ordination services – though this latter possibility is not specifically excluded in "The Plan for Union 1971". The amendments accepted by the Joint Commission were: (1) that there be adequate lay representation on the electoral commission which will appoint the first bishops; (2) that candidates for the ministry must come forward with the recommendation of their parish council; (3) that the Apostles' and Nicene creeds be no longer described as 'safeguarding' the faith of the Church; (4) that the office of a bishop be no longer described as 'essentially' a teaching office; (5) that the Plan include a statement on the purpose of union.22

Naturally, other Churches also made submissions and these were likewise considered, some finding their way into the 1971 Plan, others being rejected. Perhaps the most significant alteration in the revised Plan was the expansion of the section headed 'The Principles' to include sections on the Mission of the Church; the Multi-racial Nature of the Church; and the Proclamation of God's Word. The revised Plan also sought to highlight 'The Principles' by placing that section first.23


In the 1969 Plan the section on 'The Structure' had pride of place. This new order of contents was a deliberate attempt to emphasise theology and mission rather than structure and organisation. In the end each denomination agreed to commend "The Plan for Union 1971" to its people both for study and as the basis on which each Church would carry out a referendum amongst its members in August 1972.

(4) The Referendum and Subsequent Denominational Decisions

The 1972 referendum showed (TABLE I) that in each of the five Churches a majority of members favoured the proposed union. The two denominations with a specifically congregational polity, the Associated Churches of Christ and the Congregational Union, subsequently indicated that each local congregation would be ultimately responsible for deciding whether or not that congregation would enter, and become part of, the United Church. The Methodist Church indicated "That Conference in the light of the voting of Members, Quarterly Meetings and Synods declares its readiness to unite on the basis of the Plan for Union. . . ." The Presbyterian Church likewise indicated, "That the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand enter into union on the basis of the Plan for Union 1971". The Anglicans had to wait until 1974, when their General Synod was scheduled to meet, before deciding whether or not to unite. In the event the resolution that this synod "resolves that the Church of the Province enter into union . . .", was lost. The bishops and the laity found the mandatory two-thirds

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25 Joint Commission on Church Union. May 1975. "Background". (Primary Source: Minutes of the Presbyterian General Assembly.)
26 ibid. (Primary Source: Minutes of the Anglican General Synod 1974—).
majority in their houses but the clergy failed to do so by two votes.\textsuperscript{27} The Synod subsequently resolved to "re-adopt the Plan for Union 1971", and to ask the other negotiating Churches to give the Anglican Church more time to make up its mind.\textsuperscript{28} The other Churches have agreed to this latter request and now await the outcome of the next General Synod vote on Church Union, due to take place in May 1976.

(5) Methodist Support for Church Union

To return to the 1972 vote: the results clearly showed that the members of the five denominations were led by the Methodist Church members who most strongly supported the formation of the proposed United Church. On a percentage basis the Methodist vote against the proposed union was less than half the Presbyterian anti-union vote, and the Presbyterians themselves recorded the second lowest vote against union. It was the two smallest denominations that recorded the largest percentage of votes against the union. The trend of the Methodist referendum was confirmed later in the various Church courts. The percentage voting at each level was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly Meetings</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Synods</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The New Zealand Methodist" of November 16, 1972, in reporting on the Conference vote on Church Union, records that the Rev. A. K. Petch, in seconding the motion that Conference endorse the proposed Union, spoke of the 'remarkable mandate' for union given in votes of synods, quarterly meetings and members". Mr Petch concluded, "This is not union imposed from above, but a groundswell in the life of the Church". The Conference vote was certainly remarkable in that of the 304 people who voted only seven indicated that they were opposed to the union.

\textsuperscript{27} ibid. \textsuperscript{28} ibid.
At the corresponding meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly members voted 213 to 101 to proceed to union, a majority in favour of 68 per cent. 29

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The relationship of the Methodist Church to the current Church Union proposals can then be summarized, as follows: (a) that the Methodist Church has been involved in the negotiations for Church Union from the point of their inception in 1951 and, indeed, appears to have been the instigator of the negotiations; (b) that the Methodist Church was clearly in favour of widening the negotiations to include the Anglicans in 1964 and, as a consequence, was behind the establishment of the Joint Commission on Church Union; (c) that from the ordinary Methodist Church Member to the Conference itself, the Methodist Church has on two occasions delivered a remarkable mandate in favour of Church Union, in the first place as a principle, in the second place by way of response to a definite Plan. Furthermore; (d) in the area of practical involvement, the Methodist Church has committed resources of membership, ministry and property to the extent that, as far as ecumenicalism is concerned, the Church has reached the point of no return. The Methodist Church of New Zealand then appears to have given its answer to the question that its President posed in 1964. It is a Church prepared to die for the sake of Church Union. This much is clear. What remains unanswered is the question "why?".

CHAPTER II
THE WIDER CONTEXT

I. THE FOUNDATIONS AND UNION OF NEW ZEALAND METHODISM

The Conference vote in favour of union in 1972 was a landslide but it was not unique in the history of New Zealand Methodism. That history records that long before 1972 New Zealand Methodism had had considerable experience in Church Union voting and had in fact consummated several unions. It also records some earlier, and equally remarkable, mandates in favour of Church Union.

The history of Methodism in New Zealand commences with the arrival in the Bay of Islands on February 22nd, 1822, of the Rev. Samuel Leigh, a missionary of the largest branch of British Methodism, the Wesleyan Church. \(^1\) Leigh was forced to withdraw because of bad health in 1823 and not long afterwards the Rev. Nathaniel Turner and the Rev. John Hobbs who had taken over from Mr. Leigh, were forced to leave the Whangaroa Mission Station for fear of the Maoris. They returned to Sydney but Mr. Hobbs was not to be beaten and later in 1827 he returned to set up a new Mission in Mangungu. This work made slow but steady progress and ultimately assured the Wesleyans of a foothold in New Zealand.

In 1844 a second branch of English Methodism, the Primitive Methodist Church, arrived in New Zealand with the coming of the Rev. Robert Ward to New Plymouth. A number of Bible Christian

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\(^1\) An account of the English background to the Methodist denominations appears on page 21.
Methodists, who were among the settlers, and without a minister, soon joined ranks with him and became the nucleus of the first Primitive Methodist Church in New Zealand. Four years later a Primitive Methodist mission station was opened in Wellington, and in 1850 Mr. Ward moved to Auckland to commence work there. In this way Primitive Methodism also established itself in New Zealand.

The next branch of English Methodism to establish itself in the colony was the United Methodist Free Churches. This happened in 1868 with the arrival of the Rev. Matthew Baxter in Christchurch. In due course two churches were built in the city and mission stations set up in Rangiora and on the West Coast. In 1871 services were commenced in Napier, and two years later the Rev. G. H. Turner established a cause in Auckland. W. J. Williams in his Centenary Sketches of N.Z. Methodism records with respect to the Free Churches that, "A great deal of useful work was done, but from various causes the progress made in New Zealand was not what was expected." However, the Free Churches did manage to maintain a somewhat tenuous hold.

As previously mentioned Bible Christians (Methodists) had established themselves in New Plymouth in the 1840's only to become the nucleus of the Primitive Methodist Church with the arrival of the Rev. Robert Ward in Taranaki. In 1877 a second attempt to establish the Bible Christian Church in New Zealand was made with the arrival in Christchurch of Mr. Edward Reed, a Bible Christian local preacher who had a commission from the English Bible Christian

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N.B. I am indebted to this particular book for much of the background to New Zealand Methodism.
Conference to open a 'cause' in New Zealand. Shortly afterwards the first church was built in High Street, Christchurch, and within five years five ministers had arrived from England, two from Victoria, and two New Zealand men had also entered the ministry of that Church. The most successful Bible Christian venture was the establishment of the Dunedin Central Mission under the leadership of the Rev. W. Ready. This was the last branch of English Methodism to establish itself in New Zealand.

(I) Initial Moves towards Methodist Union

Shortly after the arrival of the Bible Christians in New Zealand the first serious moves to bring about Methodist unity in the colony commenced. In 1883 the Wesleyan Conference agreed that Methodist Union was desirable and subsequently appointed a committee of four ministers and four laymen to confer with representatives of the other three Churches and to establish on what basis Union might be achieved. The other Churches responded by also appointing committees and together these representatives formed the General committee which subsequently drew up a "plan of Union." This plan was submitted to the District courts of all four Churches in 1883, and to the Wesleyan Conference in 1884. W. J. Williams records with respect to this that, "The voting throughout ... showed that the proposal was supported by a strong majority." In the light of this the three smaller Churches applied to their respective English Conferences for permission to unite and each received a

3 'Cause' is a technical term the equivalent of 'local church'.
4 The question of motivation will be discussed in chapter III.
5 Williams, op. cit., p. 198.
favourable reply.

(2) The Union of 1896

The Wesleyans however proved to be the stumbling block. One of the conditions laid down in the Plan of Union was the separation of the New Zealand Wesleyan Methodist Conference, which had been established in 1874, from its parent body, the Australasian General Conference. The 1884 Australasian General Conference meeting in Christchurch rejected the New Zealand plea for a separate Conference, which would have facilitated Union in New Zealand, by 58 votes to 23. Four years later, in Melbourne, the Australasian General Conference again defeated a move to bring in a separate autonomous Conference for New Zealand. However, in 1894 at the General Conference, meeting in Adelaide, approval was given to a plan of Union and permission was granted to each Annual Conference (the Australian State Conference plus the New Zealand Conference) to secure union with the other Methodist Churches on that basis. In New Zealand this led to the Wesleyan Methodists extending an invitation to the Free Methodists and the Bible Christians to again consider the question of Union. In 1895 the Wesleyan Conference voted in favour of Union by 54 to 11 and during the same year the other two Churches received permission from their parent bodies, in England, to unite. The Union was consummated on the 15th of April, 1896. The United Church which resulted from this union had, in 1896, some 11,790 members and 119 ministers, the two smaller Churches having contributed 1623 members to these totals, together with 22 ministers.

6 Williams, op. cit., pp. 232-233.
In 1894 the Primitive Methodist Church in New Zealand celebrated its Jubilee. Regarding this, W. J. Williams records that the statistical returns for that year showed that the Church had 1411 members and 27 ministers. The Primitives did not join in the Union of 1896 because of the setback of 1884 which had strengthened the conviction of the Primitives that separation from Australia, by the Wesleyans, was essential for the consummation of full Methodist unity in New Zealand. The firmness of the Primitives in this conviction meant that further union moves had to wait until the Australasian General Conference was prepared to change its position.\(^7\)

At last, in 1910, the Australasian General Conference meeting in Adelaide agreed to support the principle of an autonomous New Zealand Conference. This immediately cleared the way for progress towards complete Methodist Union in New Zealand. Consequently, in 1912 the Conference of the New Zealand Primitive Methodist Church voted with a majority of over 78 per cent to adopt the Basis of Union with the Methodist Church.\(^8\) In the following year the Methodist Quarterly Meeting members showed their overwhelming support for the union proposal, 1358 members voting in favour, 11 against, with 42 being neutral. District Synods returned a similar landslide majority in favour, and the Methodist Conference vote was unanimously in favour. The result was that on Thursday, February 6th, 1913, some three hundred ministers and laymen marched from Wellington Town Hall.

\(^7\) According to a 'Rough Record' of the Minutes of the 1911 Primitive Methodist Conference a resolution was passed which included the words"... we are of the opinion that to endeavour at the present time to formulate a basis that would meet with acceptance and consummate a full and happy union would be futile until the day arrives when it shall be possible for the churches to discuss the matter untrammeled by Australian influences..."

\(^8\) Primitive Conference, January 13, 1912, recorded in the Primitive Methodist Church Minute Book.
to Wesley Church, Taranaki St., singing "Onward Christian Soldiers Marching as to War". In fact, as W. J. Williams points out, the celebration that followed was not one of war but of peace for it marked the consummation of Methodist Union in New Zealand and the establishment of the Methodist Church as it is today.

At the point of union in 1913 the Methodist Church records show 19,753 members, 86 ministers and 6 probationary ministers, while the Primitive records show 3,291 members, 36 ministers, and 1 probationary minister.9

II METHODOIST UNIONS IN ENGLAND

The Methodist Church of New Zealand as it is today is then the product of the amalgamation of four branches of English Methodism which had established themselves in New Zealand. Each of these branches was an offshoot of a considerably larger parent branch centred in England. Each had its roots in English Methodist history. Each, whatever differences there may have been, was known by its members to be part of the same family. Maybe that is why, given relatively small size and the limited resources of a colonial situation, it seemed quite natural for the four branches of Methodism in New Zealand to turn to each other, and to eventually consummate union. In this the colonial experience may have acted as a catalyst but it was a sense of a common heritage, of shared origins, in spite of differences, that indicated to Bible Christian, Free Methodist, Primitive or Wesleyan, to whom they should turn in their desire to carry out their particular mission more effectively. Full Methodist Union in New Zealand pre-dated its British counterpart by almost two decades.

9 Methodist Church of New Zealand. 1913. Minutes of the First United Conference, pp. lxvi, lxix.
(I) First major Union 1907

In Great Britain, as can be seen from the following PROFILE, there were up to eight separate branches of Methodism in existence during part of last century. The reasons for these divisions were both complex and various, sometimes related to 'revivalist' aspirations, sometimes to 'constitutional-ecclesiastical' disagreements, sometimes to geographical location. Unions started as early as 1856 when the Protestant Methodists and the Arminian Methodists came together to form the Wesleyan Methodist Association. There was another union in 1857 when the Wesleyan Reformers, recently split from the Wesleyan Methodist Church, decided to unite with the Wesleyan Methodist Association. One wonders if it was the same reformers who left that body a mere two years later to form the Wesleyan Reform Union. It was not, however, until 1904 that a really significant union began to firm up. In that year three fairly major branches of Methodism, the Bible Christians and the Methodist New Connexion (both with a membership of approximately 50,000) and the United Methodist Free Churches (with a membership of over 72,000) voted to unite with each other. The Conferences of the three Churches each returned a vote that was over 90 per cent in favour of the proposed union. The result was that in 1907 the United Methodist Church came into being. In 1911 that Church had over 140,000 members.

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See also R. Currie. 1968. Methodist Divided. p. 54.


12 ibid., p. 103.
A PROFILE OF BRITISH METHODISM - DIVISIONS and REUNIONS

1744
- Wesleyan Methodists

1791
- death of John Wesley

1797
- Methodist New Connexion

1806
- Independent Methodists

1819
- Bible Christians

1820
- Primitive Methodists

1822
- Tent Methodists

1829
- Protestant Methodists

1833
- Arminian Methodists

1836
- Wesleyan Methodists Association

1850
- Wesleyan Reformers

1857
- Wesleyan Reform Union

1859
- U.M.F.C.

1907
- U.M.C.

1932
- METHODIST CHURCH

1975
- Anglican-Methodist Union?

U.M.F.C. = United Methodist Free Churches
U.M.C. = United Methodist Church
Independent Methodists and the Wesleyan Reform Union are small denominations still in existence.

NOTE: The basic data has been obtained from R. Currie, Methodism Divided, p. 54.
The formation of the United Methodist Church meant that after 1907 there were three major branches of Methodism in Great Britain, the other two being the Primitive Methodist Church, which in 1911 had 205,000 members, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which in 1911 had some 485,000 members. In 1913 the Wesleyans established a committee whose brief was to collect information with respect to possible union with the other two Methodist Churches and, "on the 9th of January 1918 representatives of the three branches met for the first time to discuss the re-union of Methodism". This meeting, and those that followed bore fruit, with the result that in 1924 a crucial vote was taken in each of the three Churches. The result of the voting was: Wesleyan Quarterly Meetings 85.2 per cent in favour; Primitive Methodists 71.2 per cent in favour; and the united Methodists 66.1 per cent in favour. It is relevant to note that the 90 per cent vote which had led to the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1907 was now replaced by a 66 per cent vote in 1924 and this in the Church which had suffered the most significant decline during the period, a decline of 5.4 per cent. In this case the decline seems to have led to a corresponding decline in support for Church Union. This may be due to the fact that the earlier union apparently did not live up to expectations, and that in turn may have been due to the impact of the first World War. In relation to this it can be noted that during the war period all three denominations suffered decline. By the end of the 1920's each Church was again showing an increase in membership figures. Be it as it may, the 1924 Church Union vote was considered by all three Churches to be a sufficient mandate on which to proceed to Union. The end result was the

14 ibid., pp. 102-103.
consummation of the whole process of Methodist union with the formation of the Methodist Church in 1932.

Since 1932 the Methodist Church in England, as in New Zealand, has given strong support for further moves towards Church Union, though in England the presently proposed union is with one other Church, the Church of England, whereas in New Zealand the proposed union is with four other Churches. With respect to English Methodism's support for Anglican-Methodist Union, the Agenda for the 1939 Methodist Conference in Birmingham records that 86 per cent of Methodist District Synods voted in favour of the proposed union. The actual Synod members voted 87 per cent in favour. The vote at the 1939 Methodist Conference was 77 per cent in favour. By way of contrast the voting at the 1972 Anglican General Synod was in favour: laity 65 per cent; clergy 66 per cent; bishops 85 per cent.

III. Methodists and Union in Australia

As in New Zealand, Methodism initially penetrated Australia as a number of separate churches each related to a parent branch of Methodism in England. In Australia, however, union came earlier than it did in either England or New Zealand, union being consummated in 1932 with the Formation of the Methodist Church of Australia. Since that time, as in New Zealand, Methodism has given strong support for the proposed union of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches. And here again, as in New Zealand, the Methodist vote favouring union was stronger than the vote in the other denominations.

15 Methodist Church of Great Britain. 1939. Conference Agenda, p. 593.
17 Ibid., May 18, 1972.
The figures pertaining to the June 1972 vote are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DENOMINATION</th>
<th>FOR</th>
<th>AGAINST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Union</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Church</td>
<td>85% *</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** 59 per cent of the Presbyterians also answered "yes" when asked if they wished to remain in a continuing Presbyterian Church.

The Methodist General Conference meeting in 1974 voted on the resolution "... this Conference agrees to unite ..." the result being 160 for and 11 against. Prior to this, in 1972, the Rev. Dr. Norman Young, the Convener of the General Conference Church Union Committee said, referring to the proposed union of the three Churches in Australia, that this "is only one aspect of the continuing commitment of the Methodist Church to the widest possible unity between Christians of all denominations."  

**IV. SUMMARY**

New Zealand Methodism has then during a period of at least fifty-five years been actively engaged in negotiating definite Church Union proposals. Initially these negotiations had to do with the unification of Methodism; latterly the negotiations have sought to cross more ancient denominational boundaries. This has not been some kind of odd

colonial experience. Methodism both in Great Britain and in Australia has shared in a similar process. What emerges from this is that it does not matter whether the Methodist Church is in England, Australia or New Zealand, or with what other Church or Churches union is envisaged, or what the respective size of the Methodist Church is vis-a-vis the other denomination or denominations. The Methodist Church consistently, in the recent voting figures, emerges as the most staunch supporter of the unions proposed. TABLE 4 provides the evidence in support of this.

The conclusion that this would lead to is that there is something about the history and ethos of Methodism as such that makes it particularly responsive, in a positive sense, to the concept of Church Union. This is not to say that Methodism is without opponents of Union. Opponents, both clerical and lay, can be found throughout the whole history of Methodist involvement in Church Union negotiations. But rather it is to affirm that while recognising such opposition, it is nevertheless clear from the voting patterns which emerge, in New Zealand at least, that this opposition is much less substantial than that in the other Churches. This again raises the question 'why?'

V. PRELIMINARY COMMENTS CONCERNING MOTIVATION

In the following two chapters a detailed outline will be given of one major attempt to answer this question in relation to Methodist ecumenicalism in Great Britain. However, before the details of that particular set of explanations are examined, the following possible alternatives answering the question 'why?'

21 see Currie. p. 268-277. The 'Other Side'. Latterly the Methodist Revival Fellowship has expressed concern about aspects of the proposed Anglican-Methodist Scheme.
TABLE 4
Referenda Participants and Percentage
Voting Returns in Australia
and New Zealand *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>In Favour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Congregational Union</td>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodist Church</td>
<td>126,204</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>100,329</td>
<td>72% +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Churches of Christ</td>
<td>2,647</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Congregational Union</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anglican Church</td>
<td>61,438</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodist Church</td>
<td>25,012</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>74,425</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Note: The Church of England, and the Methodist Church in England, figures available are on a different basis. As indicated in the text (p. 25), the laity at the Anglican General Synod voted 65 per cent in favour of union; Methodist Synod members voted 67 per cent in favour. The English Methodist Church appears to have approximately one third the "active membership" of the Church of England.

This figure refers to the result of a second referendum amongst members of the Presbyterian Church of Australia; hence the figure differs slightly from that in TABLE 5.
ought to be noted.

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, lived and died an Anglican. It was not his intention to form a separate Church. Rupert E. Davies in his book Methodism notes that after Wesley's death, "The preachers forbore for thirty years to call themselves 'ministers'; they were just 'preachers of the Gospel'. Marriages, funerals, and often baptisms of Methodists still took place in the Parish Church". Wesley had preached a now famous (among Methodists) sermon on 'The Catholic Spirit' and Davies records that as late as 1820 Wesleyan Methodists were wanting clearly to affirm what their founder had said on this matter. To this effect the 1820 Conference at Liverpool passed the following resolution: "... we as a Body do not exist for the purpose of party; and ... we are especially bound by the example of our Founder, ... to avoid a narrow, bigoted, and sectarian spirit .... Let us therefore maintain towards all denominations of Christians, who 'hold the Head', the kind and catholic spirit of primitive Methodism". This catholicity of spirit was, of course, not always maintained, but it was nonetheless a legacy which, may have at least reminded Methodist leaders from time to time that separation and division were far from being of the essence of Methodism.

A second factor relates to the nature of Methodist divisions.


23 Davies, op. cit., p. 133.


25 Davies, op. cit., p. 140.
As previously indicated these were primarily due to 'revivalist tendencies' or to 'constitutional-ecclesiastical' disagreements. In either case the issue at stake tended to be in the nature of 'order' rather than 'doctrine' as it was in the case of the Protestant Reformation. To state this is not to deny the close relationship of 'order' to 'doctrine' but simply to indicate that the emphasis was on the former. This meant that the reasons for division, while real to the people involved, were often less profound, less theological, less essential to the truth of Christianity as such, than were the reasons behind, for instance, the Protestant Reformation. This in turn facilitated the eventual reunion of Methodism. Differences there were but they were less about the nature of Christianity than about the mission and functioning of the Church. As such they yielded to relatively easy solutions.

Thirdly, Methodism is essentially pragmatic, mission orientated, and socially concerned. It did rediscover some important theological truths, such as the doctrine of sanctification, but it has never affirmed that it has 'the truth' any more than it has affirmed that it is 'The Church'. It arose in response to observed human need. It sought to meet that need by bringing the Christian message to ordinary men and women whom the Church of the day often was failing to touch. For this reason Methodism has always been somewhat sensitive to the mood of society. As a consequence when it became apparent that even

26 Davies, p. 137. See also B. Wilson, Religion in Secular Society. p. 143.

27 Hark op. cit., p. 18, quotes Wesley as saying: "What is the end of all ecclesiastical order? Is it not to bring souls from the power of Satan to God, and to build them up in His fear and love? Order, then, is so far valuable as it answers these ends; and if it answers them not, it is nothing worth".

28 Davies, op. cit., p. 137.
the most spectacular growth of divided Methodism was not going to meet the needs observed, then it was quite logical for Methodists to seek, and ultimately to find their own unity. For the task that was as yet unaccomplished the Church needed to be strengthened through unity. Union came earlier in Australia and New Zealand because the colonial experience served to high-light the need for unity.

Finally, in relation to the currently proposed unions in England, Australia and New Zealand, Methodists in the light of their own experience of union, feel able to approach further union with some confidence. This is not because of spectacular success in terms of growth as a result of previous unions, for that has not been the case, but because Methodists know from practical experience that many branches can become 'one Church'.

There are, however, those who hold that Methodists and others move into union less out of hope than out of weakness and decline. Robert Currie, whose conclusions form the subject matter of the next two chapters, is clearly one of these.
CHAPTER III
INTRODUCTION TO CURRIE’S THESSES

In the first chapter an attempt was made to outline, from a Methodist viewpoint, the background with respect to the present situation regarding Church Union in New Zealand. In the second chapter the chief concern was to relate this to both the previous unions experienced by Methodists in New Zealand and also to the Methodist experience of union in England and in Australia. It is clear from this analysis that Methodists in all three countries have had considerable experience of Church Union, in terms of the unification of Methodism. In each country the Methodist Church has also agreed to become involved in wider, inter-denominational, unions. Furthermore, it is evident that in terms of voting the Methodist Church almost invariably returns the highest pro-union vote, whether this be a vote at the annual Conferences of the Church, or, the result of a nation-wide referendum amongst members of the Methodist Church. These facts call for some explanation. To date, Robert Currie’s book, Methodism Divided, is the most significant attempt to provide the explanations.

Currie’s book is a study of English Methodism. It approaches the issue of Church Union by means of an historical analysis of the re-unification of Methodism in England. In his introduction Currie summarises the chief areas of concern, stating:

“This book examines a number of problems. It studies the conflict between lay and ministerial elements in both division and union; and interprets the former as basically a lay, the latter as basically a ministerial activity. It seeks to show how patterns of growth are related to the development of union policies, and suggests that ecumenicalism is always partly a response to adversity- more specifically
in this case, a response to numerical decline. It illustrates the replacement of older ideas and practices by liberal theology, culture and churchmanship, a development of the greatest significance in forwarding the union of churches. It considers how far a group of divided and antagonistic denominations converge in organisation and in their doctrine of the ministry before they finally unite. It discusses different types of 'polemical ecumenicalism', and the 'ecumenicalism of mission', and shows that high policy often clashed with commitments to chapel, denomination or class. It shows how a series of united churches comes into being, and critically examines their record in fulfilling the promises made by ecumenicalists. 

It is important to realise that Currie sees Methodism as "an accelerated microcosm of Christianity". As a consequence he affirms that, "Although conclusions from the Methodist experience of ecumenicalism do not inevitably apply everywhere else, the Methodist case has considerable general relevance." For this reason, given certain qualifications, it would seem legitimate exercise to test the conclusions Currie arrives at against the views of those who participated in the Methodist referendum on Church Union held in New Zealand in 1972. This in fact is the chief aim of the latter part of this thesis but, first, it is necessary to look in some detail at the kind of evidence which Currie adduces in support of his conclusions. In so doing, as a means of drawing out the correspondences between the English and the New Zealand situation, wherever possible, parallel evidence from the New Zealand setting will be introduced.

2 ibid., p. 12.
3 ibid., p. 13.
I. ECUMENICALISM AND NUMERICAL DECLINE

Currie has no difficulty in finding figures which back up his contention that English Methodism was facing decline by the early 1900's. He indicates, for instance, that the Primitive Methodist Church had "suffered thirteen annual decreases of membership" by 1909, the year of its centenary. In the period 1907 to 1920, the largest Methodist denomination, the Wesleyan Church, also experienced "fourteen consecutive years of absolute loss, a net decrease of 22,000." In the 1907-1924 period, as has been mentioned, the United Methodists lost 8,000 members, which in percentage terms (5.4%) was the most significant denominational decrease. It was in the middle of this period, in 1918, that "representatives of the three denominations met for the first time to discuss the reunion of Methodism." Currie produces similar evidence with respect to the state of the Bible Christians, the New Connexion, and the Free Churches, during the period leading up to the union of these denominations in 1907.

(1) The Statistics a Basis of Concern

Did the statistics give rise to concern regarding the growth of the denomination? Currie indicates that some at least were very concerned about the picture revealed by the statistics. He mentions the Primitive Methodist who wrote in 1892 lamenting that "we have today in the Home Districts some hundreds of members fewer than we had eight years ago. Eight years of stagnation and worse!"

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4 Note: Currie states that "Methodist Statistics are unusually reliable". See p. 86f Methodism Divided.

5 ibid., p. 102.

6 ibid., p. 102.

7 ibid., p. 255.

8 ibid., p. 95.

9 ibid., p. 97.
Then he quotes the Wesleyan who, in 1903, commented, "that the net result in members of a year's work should be only 1.04 per cent cannot be regarded with complacency. . . . What is the Methodism that halts and crawls at this poor dying rate?" 10 Some thought that the reason behind the decline revealed in the statistics was obvious. Hugh Price Hughes, perhaps the outstanding Methodist leader of his time, spoke of, "Division . . . as the curse of Methodism." 11 In 1895 the incoming President of the Wesleyan Church observed that, "Nothing has more effectively hindered the progress of Christianity than the absence of that oneness for which the Saviour prayed." 12

(2) Reunion as a Solution to Decline

It was but one step from the recognition of division as the cause of decline to the suggestion that reunion would bring about renewed growth. Currie quotes a Wesleyan, in 1897, as stating that, "Perhaps recent decreases in the various Methodist bodies point to the desirability of Methodist reunion." 13 He points out that in 1909 John Scott Lidgett, a leading Wesleyan, declared that, "only a re-united Church can evangelize the world. . . . We cannot afford in these days the narrowness of outlook, the friction, or the isolation which weakens the influence of the Christian Churches." 14 Already a union, wider than Methodism, was envisaged by some. However, with Methodist reunion the Primitive Methodist Leader was prepared to predict

10 ibid., p. 97.
11 ibid., p. 99.
12 ibid., p. 97.
13 ibid., p. 98.
14 ibid., pp. 187-188.
in 1924, that "The whole Methodist Church will enter upon a new era of extension which will rival the early days". From these and similar statements Currie concludes that, "Union meant more preaching and prophecy. It also meant more members. Evangelism means recruitment, to one denomination or another . . . . This was the underlying hope of ecumenicalism".

II DECLINE IN THE NEW ZEALAND SETTING

The period leading up to the union of the New Zealand (Wesleyan) Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church in 1913 was not marked by the significant decline apparent in England. Up to the point of union, both churches, possibly due as much to immigration as to the winning of new converts, continued to show increases in membership (see TABLE 5).

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15 ibid., p. 188.
16 ibid., p. 188.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primitive Membership</th>
<th>Percentage Growth Rate</th>
<th>Methodist Membership</th>
<th>Percentage Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>10,168</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>12,201</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>12,987</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>13,670</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>14,675</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15,723</td>
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<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>2,822</td>
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<td>16,809</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,976</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>17,731</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3,264</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>19,194</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>3,358</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>19,753</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Minutes of the Annual Conference.*
In 1907 the Primitive Conference recorded its, "thanks to almighty God for the large measure of his favour which has rested upon our Church during the past year, as indicated by an increase of 172 members, the total number being now 2,822 members". However, this was not the whole story and one notes that the same Conference also stated that, "considering the small increase in the roll of our Sabbath Schools, and the decrease in our average attendance . . . something should be done during the coming year to improve this state of affairs". The 1907 Conference did not suggest Church Union as one possible way of improving the state of affairs. However, the following Conference, in 1908, did affirm its desire for union with the Methodist Church. Within five years that union was a reality.

Writing in 1911, in the New Zealand Methodist Times, the Rev. C. H. Laws, a leading Methodist spokesman, can be seen as reflecting some of the English hopes concerning union. He stated, "Should union be accomplished in the near future it would issue in a strong New Zealand Church, and coming generations would commend the sagacity of those who brought about the union". Mr Law's remark was clearly intended to be prophetic, and undoubtedly a strong New Zealand Church meant a Church with more members.

(I) Decline and Church Union 1972

The first thing to note regarding the situation leading up to the 1972 referendum on Church Union is the fact that Methodist membership in New Zealand peaked in 1965 with a figure of 52,749.

17 Minutes of Primitive Conference, New Plymouth, 1907.
18 ibid.
19 Minutes of Primitive Conference, Dunedin, 1908.
20 "New Zealand Methodist Times", March II, 1911.
This represented an increase of over 5,000 members, or approximately 18 per cent for the decade 1955-65. Even so with an annual average growth rate of less than 2 per cent Methodism was not keeping pace with the growth rate of the nation as a whole.\footnote{New Zealand Population. New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1969. p. 1036. New Zealand population growth 2.3 per cent per annum during period.} Worse was to follow.

In the period 1966-72 the Church suffered seven consecutive years of absolute loss, the membership declining by almost 3,000, or slightly over 9 per cent in the seven years. This was, on a percentage basis, a more significant decline in membership than that suffered by any of the three English Methodist denominations during the 1910-25 period which, Currie suggests, was a stimulus to their eventual union. In New Zealand, in happier days, the Church had already responded decisively in favour of the principle of union (92.7 per cent in the 1957 referendum.) In 1972 the pro-union vote was 86 per cent.

(2) The Relevance of the Statistics

In England, as has been noted, the statistics showing numerical decline did cause concern. Some even suggested that they indicated the need for Church Union. In New Zealand in the period leading up to 1972 a different approach was taken. The Statistical Secretary and the Welfare of the Church Committee were given the task of agonising over the trend revealed in the membership returns, and, in 1971, a "Special Report on the Use of Statistics in the Church" was presented to Conference. This report stated, as a result of consultation with various Boards and Departments of the Church, that "many are yearning for a positive picture at a time when the present
statistics shew (sic) forth a somewhat negative picture". 22 In the following year the Welfare of the Church Committee proceeded to argue that, "Quantitative statistics are recognised to have inherent limitations as an index of the quality and character of church life", and further, that, "over-attention to numerical statistics is felt to distort a church's apprehension of its mission". 23 Whatever the truth in these remarks they certainly indicate a reversal of the traditional Methodist way of assessing the state of the Church. One wonders if the statistics would have been so seriously questioned if they had indicated an increasing membership.

(3) Reunion the Viable Option

In spite of the fact that the period from 1966 to 1972 was a period of substantial numerical decline for the Methodist Church of New Zealand this decline was not directly related to the question of Church Union as was the case in England. A survey of the Church press, "The New Zealand Methodist", reveals that, while the paper was strongly pro-union under the editorship of I. M. Harris, it nevertheless did not draw on the membership statistics of the period as providing an argument in favour of union. Nor is there any explicit suggestion that union would bring about renewed growth in terms of membership. Typical of the kind of statement which does appear are the words of the editor written virtually on the eve of the national referendum. He posed the question, "Will union fulfil all the high hopes of its proponents?" To this he replied, "That depends on the mood, vision and commitment of the people. Certainly union holds the greater promise of more effective mission and service . . .

23 Minutes of the Annual Conference, 1972, p. 117.
than is possible on a denominational basis. There is then a hope that union will do something positive for the Church, but it is a qualified hope as the words "that depends" clearly indicate. What that positive outcome might be can be interpreted variously depending on the meaning one attaches to the terms "mission" and "service". What is clear is that the editor believed that the prospects for the future would be better with union than without it. Whether this was prompted by the decline of Methodism or the hope of renewed numerical growth with union, it is impossible to say.

III CONCLUSIONS IN RELATION TO DECLINE

Currie maintains that ecumenicalism is partly a response to numerical decline, a "lateral growth" substitute for the "frontal growth" which the separate denomination is failing to achieve. He finds, in the English setting, that numerical decline was a real issue and that it at least raised in the minds of some the question of the desirability of the reunion of Methodism. He holds, as the next chapter will indicate, that numerical decline had a greater impact on the ministers than the laity, but he does not indicate how widespread this influence was, or, how significant, relatively speaking, it was in terms of providing motivation for Methodist reunion even amongst the members of the ministry.

In New Zealand, while the issue would appear to be irrelevant as far as the period leading up to the union of 1913 was concerned, the period leading up to the 1972 referendum shows a similar pattern to that which pertained prior to the unions of English Methodism. However, the serious decline in membership experienced in New Zealand

rather than being used as a ground on which to justify union, led to
the questioning of the value of the membership statistics. That this
was the case at a time when the Church was involved in the preparation
of a national referendum, and when official Church policy was to support
union, is itself significant. It would appear that Church leaders
have learnt the dangers of prophesying numerical growth on the basis
of Church Union. This issue will be looked at in greater detail in
the following chapter.

The extent to which New Zealand Methodists, ministers and lay
people, see their Church in decline will be assessed later in this
thesis. So too, will be the extent to which views concerning decline
can be seen as significant in relation to the vote on Church Union.

IV SECULARIZATION AND CHURCH UNION

An aspect which is, according to Currie, closely related to
the question of numerical decline, is the process of secularization.
Currie nowhere provides a concise definition of his understanding
of this variously interpreted process though the impression is given
that he holds a somewhat similar position to that held by Bryan Wilson
the English sociologist. Wilson defines secularization as,"the
process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose
social significance".25 Certainly it is on the basis of some such
definition that Currie speaks of,"the super-denomination [resulting
from Church Union] as an attempt to gain power in an increasingly

of criticisms of Wilson and Currie. See especially, Barry Till,
The Churches Search for Unity, pp.20-31., and also Robert Towler,
Homo Religious: Sociological problems in the study of religion,
pp.164-168.
Currie sees the secularization process as facilitating union in at least two different but complementary ways. First, in so far as denominational beliefs and practices lose social significance so people tend to desert the denomination and numerical decline sets in. This, in due course, as mentioned earlier, results in the voicing of pleas for union. Second, Currie sees the denominations not only as losing members due to the impact of secularization, but also as being themselves influenced considerably by the secularization process. This means that in an effort to hold members the denominations can be seen as responding to the secularization process by adopting certain aspects of that process. Consequently, Currie speaks of "the replacement of older ideas and practices by liberal theology, culture and churchmanship." This too, in its turn acts to facilitate union in that the denominations in facing the same problems tend to respond in the same way.

Currie supports his contention that the theology of the denominations was changing and becoming more liberal by drawing attention to some of the statements made at the time. He points out, for instance, that in 1889 the Wesleyans were told that, "The attitude of the Christian towards scientific and historic criticism is not necessarily hostile . . . . If criticism can assist us to apprehend the human element in the Bible, we welcome it with thankfulness." He points out that Primitive Methodists towards the end of last century noted changes in the doctrine of "hell" which, of all subjects,

26 Currie, p. 86.
28 Ibid., p. 114.
came to be spoken of in "soft and dainty phrases". More significantly the Bible increasingly came to be regarded as "containing" the "word of God" rather than being literally "the word of God". And in 1932 the newly formed Methodist Church based its doctrines on "the Divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scripture". Currie comments with respect to these changes that, "Nineteenth century biblical criticism was the necessary prelude to the general Methodist reunion". 30

(1) Secularisation in the New Zealand Setting

Writing in the New Zealand "Methodist Times" in March 1911 the Rev. C. H. Laws commented on the Methodist (Wesleyan) and the Primitive Churches stating that, "In matters of doctrine, tradition, language and essential ideals the Churches were already one. There was no logic which could justify opposition to the union". 31 The actual "Basis of Union" between the two churches took the same position. It stated that": ... the doctrine held by the two Methodist Churches in New Zealand, and recognised in the Trust Deeds, are the same". 32 This statement must have echoed the sentiments of the vast majority in both churches given the overwhelming support that the Basis of Union received. 33 The writers of the Basis of Union certainly believed their own statement to be true as the remainder of the document was completely given over to an elucidation of organisation and procedure.

29 Currie, p. 119.
30 ibid., p. 112-3.
31 "Methodist Times". March 11, 1911.
32 "Basis of Union". 1912, p. 2.
33 See voting results as indicated p. 20.
The differences between the two denominations were basically related to the status of the ministry and to the general structure of Church organisation. In the early stages the Primitives paid their ministers out of the residue of the Church's income. The Wesleyans valued their ministry more highly and consequently Wesleyan ministers had greater authority and status. This was evident in the special Ministerial Session of Conference and in the power of the Wesleyan ministers to nominate their own Quarterly Meetings. By 1911 this had changed. The Primitives were prepared to place a higher value on their ministers. And in a democratic society, in which even women had the right to vote, the Wesleyan ministers were prepared to be more generous in their recognition of the place of the laity in the total life of the Church. Something of the Wesleyan and the Primitive views of the ministry and laity respectively, were carried over into the new Church. The new Church would have a ministerial President, but as the Primitives occasionally had a lay President, the new Church would have a lay Vice President.

Decline was hardly a factor in the coming together of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches in New Zealand. What secular influences there were on the thinking of the leadership of the two Churches, given the fact that the majority of the ministers were trained in England, originated in England. However, the more egalitarian nature of New Zealand society, and 'frontier' aspects of the colonial situation may have made the Wesleyans somewhat less status conscious, and both Churches more aware of the need to combine for effective ministry.

(2) Secular influences prior to 1972

As previously indicated, the period leading up to the 1972 vote on Church Union was marked by significant decline in membership in the
Methodist Church. The New Zealand Official Yearbook 1975, shows that
This was not confined to Methodism or to official Church membership
statistics. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, along with
Methodists all show a drop in terms of their respective proportion of
the population as a whole between 1966 and 1971.34 This looks like an
increasingly recalcitrant society.

Two trends were apparent in the 1960's which may in part account
for this. First, the sixties were a period of considerable theological
debate, particularly in relation to the question of "God". This was
evident in a popular form in the widespread impact of a book like John
Robinson's Honest to God. At a more intellectual level it was
apparent in such a book as Paul Van Buren's The Secular Meaning of the
Gospel. The impact of the related "God is Dead" debate did not bypass
the New Zealand Churches. In a similar vein, but of even greater
significance as far as New Zealand was concerned, was the impact of
Professor Geering's heresy trial which centred around the nature of
Christ's resurrection. This was followed by the publication of his
book, God in the New World. By these means many New Zealanders were
exposed to a radical questioning of the Gospel. The faith of some was
severely tested. This was the period during which severe numerical
decline in Methodism commenced, but whether this was due to the
theological turmoil, or other causes, is a matter for debate. The
theological turmoil itself had to do with the nature of the "Gospel"
that was to be communicated to the "new world". To that extent it can
be seen as in part a response to an increasingly secular society.

While the newer theological writings were responding in a
variety of ways to the new theological climate, the writings of the
established theologians were providing the kind of inter-denominational
consensus of theology of which Currie speaks. In this way theology can

34 New Zealand Official Yearbook, 1975, p.85.
be seen as acting to facilitate the development of Church Union. Thus in the fifties and early sixties, in New Zealand theological institutions as elsewhere, Barth, Brunner and Bultmann tended to be the dominant figures. This fact, the development of a theological consensus must have helped facilitate the establishment by the negotiating Churches of a Joint Board of Theological Studies and an agreed syllabus for a Licentiate of Theology in 1968. Since then, in 1973, a united Anglican-Methodist theological college has been established. At the same time agreed procedures have been adopted by the negotiating Churches, with respect to the selection of candidates for the ministry.

The second factor is more difficult to substantiate, though, given the 'institutional image' often attributed to the major denominations it probably had some bearing on the declining membership figures. What is in mind here is the 'anti-establishment' mood of the sixties. New Zealand may have escaped the more spectacular aspects of this, such as the student riots in the United States and France, but the mood was felt. The anti-Vietnam marches, the protests against sporting contacts with South Africa and Rhodesia were directed against the policies followed by the government of the day. The 'establishment' was under attack, and the Churches, though officially they often sided with the protesters, could not help but be seen as part of the establishment. Thus, even if one attended Church the tendency was against following the normal procedures. To be Confirmed, to sign on as a Member, was to move against the general trend in society. Thus for some the Church was to be rejected outright as part of the 'establishment', while for others traditionally accepted forms of Church membership were to be rejected, though participation was not necessarily ruled out. This mood, though intangible, may also, in part, account for the decline experienced by Methodism during this period.

35 Minutes of the Annual Conference, 1971, p. 159-60.
"The Plan for Union 1971" itself shows a responsiveness to current trends in society. The best example of this is the statement under the heading 'Organisation for Mission' which speaks of "openness to the future, flexibility, willingness to make fresh approaches and use new methods, and even readiness to see the basic message in new perspective". Such a statement, if it is to be taken seriously, appears to reflect a new relationship to the concept of change on the part of the Churches concerned. This may, in part, be a response to the impact of the accelerating rate of change in society at large.

These factors, though not solely due to secularization, or numerical decline, can be seen, in so far as they are responses to an increasingly secular society, perhaps as some evidence of the influence of secularization on the Churches. If this is so, then it would appear that such influences lend support to, rather than detract from, moves towards the union of the Churches.

As with the issue of numerical decline, the argument that the Churches should unite in the face of secularization does not appear in the Church press leading up to 1972, unless, of course, talk about renewal in mission is a veiled reference to such a consideration. Secularizing influences, as indicated above, may therefore have assisted the move towards union, but that is not the same as saying that it was seen as "the enemy" against which the churches must re-group. Whether or not this consideration had any relevance for Methodist participants in the 1972 referendum on Church Union remains to be seen.

36 'The Plan for Union', 1971, p. 35/
CHAPTER IV
CURRIE'S THESIS - SECONDARY FACTORS

If secularisation is in part responsible for the numerical decline of the Churches, and if this in turn leads to moves towards union then, according to Currie, it is equally clear that it is the ministers who are the prime promoters of this move. Currie states it this way: "The Ecumenical option is hierarchical in origin. Its perspective is that of the denomination rather than the chapel, of ministerial rather than lay concerns". 1 Conversely, it is the laymen who, in particular, are concerned about the future of their local chapel, who voice the strongest opposition to union. Currie argues therefore that there was substantial conflict between the ministry and the laity in relation to Church Union. This conflict was not in itself a motivating factor as far as Church Union was concerned, but it does serve to highlight what Currie believes is a major issue in relation to Church Union.

I MINISTRY AND LAITY IN CONFLICT

Currie argues that there was substantial conflict between the ministry and the laity in relation to the question of Church Union. He sees this as due to the fact that the ministers tended to think in denominational terms whereas the laity tended

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1 Currie, pp. 314-315.
to be primarily concerned with their local chapel. Consequently he
draws attention to the high pro-union voting in the Conferences which
tended to be dominated by the ministers, in spite of, at times, extensive
criticisms in the church courts closer to the grass roots of the
denominations.\footnote{ibid., p. 198, also p. 288.} He points out that this conflict was heightened by the
fact that the ministers not only wanted union but also rationalization
along with it. This was what the laity feared most. Rationalization
meant the closure of those chapels which were numerically weak. It is
not surprising therefore that many lay people began to demand assurance
regarding the continuance of their local chapel in return for support
for Church Union.\footnote{Ibid., p. 199.}

Such assurances were often given. Typical, was the statement
made prior to the union of 1907 that, "it was not contemplated to
close any chapel over the heads of the local trustees and authorities".\footnote{Ibid., p. 198.}
Nevertheless, in 1924, when union was put to the vote it was evident
that the areas of strongest resistance were those areas with over-
lapping circuits and competing chapels.\footnote{Currie, p. 198.} These were the areas where
the laity had most to lose if the assurances were not adhered to.
Consequently, in many instances the minister's dream of rationalization
had to be postponed, if not abandoned. That this happened, is evident
in the report of the Committee on the Closure of Redundant Churches
presented to the 1971 Methodist Conference at Harrogate. That report
states that as late as 1960, "there was a formidable redundancy
problem, largely the result of inadequate measures taken to consummate
Methodist Union in the local areas. Such then was the legacy of lay opposition to Church Union in those areas where the life of the local chapel was believed to be under threat in the event of union.

Currie does recognise that there were exceptions on both sides of the debate. There were laymen who supported Church Union. There were ministers who opposed it. He speaks, for instance, of the Wesleyan district laymen who indicated, in 1921, that they found the proposed union scheme "acceptable". He speaks of the influence of the pro-union editor of the "Methodist Recorder" (J. B. Watson) during whose twenty-eight years as lay editor, "the Recorder joined and even surpassed the Methodist Times in its ecumenicalism". With respect to this Currie even goes so far as to say that, "The accession of Watson changed the face of Methodism". Currie points also to the "younger members", "all who are indifferent to the past and to denominational tradition, and those who inhabit 'new' socially expansive regions" as the enthusiastic supporters of the ecumenical option. Here he is speaking chiefly about the laity. On the other hand he can speak of some of the ministers as being "extremely hostile to union". However, as far as Currie is concerned, these are the exceptions. In general the ministers can be said to support Church Union and the laity to oppose it. The latter is true particularly of those areas where the closure of some chapels seemed likely.


7 Currie, op. cit., p. 262.

8 ibid., p. 249.

9 ibid., p. 110-111.

10 ibid., p. 269.
Who were these lay people who opposed Church Union? Currie identifies them as those who lived in the areas where the denominations were weak, such as Cornwall, for it was in these areas that the threat of closure was most real. But, regardless of where they lived, he sees the, "Rank and file, the old, the pessimistic, those who are worst hit by decline, [as being the people who] tend to reject it".

(1) Ministry and Laity in New Zealand

As will be shown later on in this essay, it is doubtful whether there is a fundamental conflict between the ministry and the laity as such, over the issue of Church Union, in the New Zealand Methodist context. Nevertheless, some of the factors mentioned by Currie can certainly be found within New Zealand Methodism. For example, it would be true to say that in New Zealand the ecumenical option is hierarchical in origin. The pro-union spokesmen of the Church, whether in the period leading up to the union of 1943 or, in the period leading up to 1972, were normally members of the ministry. Typical is the preponderance of ministers in the negotiations. In the year 1971, for instance, of the eight Methodist members of the Joint Commission on Church Union, only one was a layman. (But then, it needs to be remembered, the ministers tend to be the spokesmen of the Church regardless of the subject.) Similarly, the membership of the Joint Commission hardly reflects a conflict between ministers and laity, for by and large, lay people have other occupations demanding their time and therefore the ministers are obliged to be those who represent the Church on commissions and other such bodies.

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11 Currie, p. 199.
12 ibid., p. 314.
In New Zealand then the ministers may have initiated the moves, they may have provided the chief spokesmen, and they may have been to the forefront of the continuing discussions, but the extent to which this represents an area of conflict with the laity, remains to be seen.

(2) The issue of Closure in New Zealand

The question of the possible closure of local churches, as part of the quest for rationalization in relation to Church Union, has also been an issue in New Zealand. It was this that led to the statement printed in the August 24, 1912, issue of the "New Zealand Methodist Times", that, "It is not likely that any of the Churches will be closed in the immediate future. No sale of property can take place without the consent of the local officials". It was for this reason that in 1972, in a leaflet entitled "Parishes and Congregations" an attempt was made to provide some assurance to local congregations. The leaflet, which was part of the study material issued prior to the vote on Church Union, stated that, "no decisions affecting the congregation will be imposed from outside". It continued, "If a small unit joins the Parish, the utmost sensitivity is required on the part of the larger group. They may actually unite with another congregation. Large or small, patience will prove a prime virtue in the early stages of union. Should they be close to each other, a lot of time and thoughtful planning will be required before decisions can be made regarding the redundance
of buildings\textsuperscript{13}. While this did not rule out the possibility of closure, it certainly did recognise the sensitivity of the issue. Closure was not a matter to be rushed into and therefore it was something less than an immediate threat.

In New Zealand then, in spite of the fact that the ministers were the initiators in the area of Church Union and the leaders of the on going discussion, and in spite of the fact that closure was also a sensitive issue, Methodist people, both ministers and laity, voted overwhelmingly in favour of Church Union in 1972. Later in this essay, the extent to which the influence of the ministers, and the question of closure, were felt to be significant in terms of Methodist voting in the 1972 referendum, will be examined in the light of responses to the survey. The question of conflict between the ministers and the laity in the relation to Church Union will also be investigated in terms of the findings of the survey.

II SECONDARY MOTIVATING FACTORS

Currie sees the quest for greater efficiency and economy as providing part of the motivation for Church Union. In part this has been noted already in relation to the possible closure of redundant buildings. However, he sees it also as extending to the denominations as such. He notes, for instance, that a Free Church Methodist commented in 1877 that, "if churches did not unite, another solution to the problem of competing units would emerge". He continued, "In all probability it will be on the principle of

\textsuperscript{13} "Parishes and Congregations", Joint Commission on Church Union, March 1972.
'The weakest goes to the wall'\textsuperscript{14} He quotes another Free Methodist as saying, in 1900, "When shall we realize that in these days small Denominations are worked at a great disadvantage, and ... at a heavy cost?\textsuperscript{15}" Conversely, Currie notes the words of the Primitive Methodist minister who commented 'modestly' in 1903 that, "Without laying ourselves open to any accusation of ... 'swelled head' ... our numbers and success do not predispose us to make haste for union\textsuperscript{16}. The small denominations felt the strain of maintaining the work. For them union seemed the more viable option. The larger denominations did not feel the same kind of urgency in this respect.

As far as efficiency was concerned Currie points out that, "the United Methodist example was encouraging. Proportionately, the Free Methodists used 150 per cent, and the New Connexion and the Bible Christians 300 per cent more committee members than the United Methodist Church into which they merged\textsuperscript{17}." In the 1920's, when the Wesleyans and the Primitives were involved in union discussions with the United Methodists, they could take heart from this fact even if the example of the United Methodist Church was discouraging, as far as numerical growth was concerned.

In New Zealand, a survey of the Church press in the periods immediately preceding the union of 1913 and the referendum of 1972, reveals that the argument for union on the basis of present economic difficulties was not explicitly stated. Even in relation to the more

\textsuperscript{14} Currie, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{15} ibid., ('cost', not merely financial).
\textsuperscript{16} ibid., p. 89.
\textsuperscript{17} ibid., p. 193.
general concept of efficiency, clear cut statements are difficult to find. Perhaps the most direct statement was that of the then General Superintendent of the Methodist Home Mission Department who wrote in an article on Church Union in the June 29, 1972, issue of "The New Zealand Methodist", that, "If union will lead the Churches to mobilise their lay and ministerial resources for "mission", then Methodism, which was raised up for mission, will gladly die in order to bring forth much fruit". Clearly, the hope is for a more efficient use of resources. However, it is equally clear that the statement is qualified by the use of the word 'if'. Church Union was not seen by the writer as being, in itself, a guarantee of greater efficiency.

The extent to which questions of efficiency and economy figured in the minds of New Zealand Methodist participants in the 1972 referendum will become clear when dealing with the findings of the survey.

(I) Union as a Weapon in a Conflict

Currie argues that union is often seen as a weapon in a conflict. For example he points out that the English union of 1907 was seen by some, as a bulwark against Wesleyanism which was suspected of having priestly leanings. He argues that H. P. Hughes, a prominent Wesleyan leader, was, "interested in Methodist union as a means of challenging the Church of England". 18

In a foreword to a leaflet entitled "Differ and be Brothers", published in 1967 in the midst of the Anglican-Methodist discussions on Church Union, the Rev. Dr. Norman Snaith commented on this issue,

18 Currie, p. 183.
saying, "there was a time when those Methodists who would lead us into organic union within the Church of England on the present lines, used as a major argument that it is our best bulwark against Rome. I did not believe it then . . . Still less can I see how they can think so now". 19

Obviously the argument has been used to lend support to the cause of union at various times and consequently Currie rightly draws attention to it. However, to what extent this really was considered a persuasive argument, or was widely accepted, Currie does not make clear.

(2) Union as a Weapon in a Conflict in New Zealand

In New Zealand W. J. Williams in his Centenary Sketches of New Zealand Methodism appears to speak of something similar to what Currie has in mind when drawing attention to "the cause of Evangelical Union" which foundered in 1904. 20 This comment related to discussions held during that year with a view to the union of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches in New Zealand. The use of the word "Evangelical" can be interpreted as meaning a grouping of likeminded churches, as opposed to other "non-evangelical" churches. This perhaps hints at the kind of motivation which Currie has drawn attention to. However, this kind of motivation does not seem to be spelt out in relation to the union of Methodism in 1913, or in relation to the current union proposals. Indeed it is very difficult to see how any such motivation, except in terms of the over-all conflict between the churches and secularization influences could be held to apply in the New Zealand setting. Already two of the Churches

19 "Differ and be Brothers". The Voice of Methodism. London.
involved in the present union proposal are stronger numerically than the Roman Catholic Church, the one substantial Church not involved in the discussions. Furthermore, relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the negotiating Churches have probably never been better than they are at the present time.

The importance of Church Union as a "weapon in a conflict" as far as New Zealand Methodists are concerned, in terms of their understanding of what motivated them to vote as they did, will become clear in the study of the survey.

III UNION PROPHECIES NOT Fulfilled

Currie maintains that ecumenicalism is not simply born of adversity, but of hope in adversity. But, according to Currie, the hope is misplaced. He puts it this way, "Ecumenicalism is advocated as the solution of the churches' problems. Official interpretations of the movement suggest youthful enthusiasm and boundless prospects. But close examination of the process of reunion shows that in advanced societies ecumenicalism is the product of an ageing religion. It arises out of decline and secularization, but fails to deal with either". 21 The advocates of union are then mistaken in believing that it will solve the ills of the denomination and bring about renewed growth.

Currie comes to this conclusion by comparing the prophecies made by those in favour of union with the membership statistics of the newly formed Church after union. The words of John Scott Lidgett, the leading Wesleyan, recorded in 1909, are seen as typical of the

21 Currie, p. 316.
prophecies made regarding union. He stated that, "only a re-united Church can evangelize the world". Currie points out that even with the example before them of the United Methodist Church which had lost 7.3 per cent of its membership during the period 1907 to 1921, the supporters of the 1932 union of Methodism could still engage in enthusiastic prophecy. For instance, in the Primitive Methodist Leader in 1924, it was stated that, "With union . . . . The whole Methodist Church will enter upon a new era of extension which will rival the early days". In fact, Methodist membership has declined since 1932. In 1935 the Methodist Church had 847,675 members, in 1945 the figure was 752,659, in 1955 it was 744,659 and in 1965 membership had dropped to 701,306.

(I) Prophecy in the New Zealand setting

In New Zealand the hopes expressed regarding the Union of 1913 were not unlike those expressed in England. Typical was the statement made in the June 17, 1911, issue of the "New Zealand Methodist Times" by the Rev. C. H. Laws. He wrote, "Union on the terms laid down in the basis now adopted for presentation to the Conferences will bring to Methodists a new sense of vigour and responsibility, and will result in a forward movement to make the impact upon the nation's life more telling than ever! In fact the result was hardly a forward movement in the terms of the Rev. Law's prophecy though there was a slow but steady increase. In 1914 the membership was 23,810, by 1920 this was 25,569. This represents

22 Currie, p. 187.

23 ibid., p. 188.


25 Minutes of the Annual Conference, Statistical Returns.
an annual average increase of 1.2 per cent which was a slower growth rate than that enjoyed by the Wesleyans prior to union.26

In the period leading up to the referendum in 1972 what prophecies there were, tended to be expressed in qualified terms. For example, the Convener of the Methodist Church Union Committee, the Rev. W. Morrison, writing in the August 12, 1971, issue of the "New Zealand Methodist" says, "Beyond the changes and realignments of the next few years is, we pray, a Church strengthened and renewed, made more truly one in a common loyalty to Christ". On the eve of the Church Union vote, "The New Zealand Methodist" even went so far as to quote Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, of the Church of South India, saying, "There has been no great new evangelistic advance such as the framers of the Scheme hoped for".27 This was a significant admission for a pro-union paper to indicate to its readers within a week of the Church Union referendum. As indicated earlier, in Chapter III, page 40, even the editor of the paper, though clearly pro-union, was not prepared to make any rash promises about union fulfilling the "high hopes of its proponents".

In the latter period then, what prophecies there were, were made in muted terms. The prophecies were either modest, or else hedged about with qualifications. Hopes for the future tended to centre on 'renewal', 'mission' and 'service', and to sidestep such issues as evangelistic thrust and renewed numerical growth. The question which remains to be answered is, to what extent, if any, did the ordinary Methodist church member feel the hope of renewed growth in terms of membership to be significant in relation to the 1972

26 Minutes of the Annual Conference, Statistical Returns.

referendum and any subsequent union. This too will be examined in dealing with the findings of the survey.

IV SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is now possible to summarize the issues that Currie sees as being of major importance in relation to the union of Methodism in England. These are as follows: (a) Church Union is a response to numerical decline. It is a lateral growth substitute for the frontal growth no longer being achieved by the denomination. (b) Church Union is a response to secularization which is itself closely related to numerical decline. To some extent secularization also facilitates the actual process of Church Union. (c) Church Union is promoted by the ministers who are more aware of the membership statistics of the denomination and of the problems posed by secularization. The laity, on the other hand, because they tend to be much less enthusiastic about the ecumenical option, fear the possible closure of their local church as a result of union. This results in conflict between the ministry and the laity, and leads to assurances regarding closure being granted by the former so as to gain sufficient lay support for Church Union. (d) Considerations concerning the economic and efficient running of the denomination exert some influence in a pro-union direction as does the belief that union will strengthen the denomination in its stance against some other larger denomination with which it sees itself in conflict. (e) Finally, Church Union is based on hope in the face of adversity, but, according to Currie, it is hope misplaced. The statistics show that the prophecies are not fulfilled. Numerical decline continues unabated after union has taken place.
Currie believes that these conclusions have considerable general relevance. In the next chapter it will be argued that if this is the case, then there is good reason for thinking they ought to apply to Methodism in New Zealand. In support of this, attention has already been drawn to a number of parallels in the historical evidence relating to Methodism in England and in New Zealand. But this raises another issue. How adequate is the historical method, followed by Currie, as a means of assessing the views of ordinary Church Members? Clearly the method has some limitations in this respect. It is a method necessarily tied to historical documents. This means, in this case at least, whether these documents be the Church press, the Minutes of Conference, or other written material, that it is the voice of the verbal minority which is heard. Much has to be assumed with respect to the views of the silent majority, in this case the ordinary Church Members. It cannot be otherwise when dealing with a period beyond the scope of living memory. However, given the importance which Currie attaches to minister-laity conflict, for instance, in relation to ecumenicalism, this question needs to be borne in mind. It may be, for example, that the large majority of English Methodist lay people supported the ecumenical moves but that because the ministers said what needed to be said from their point of view, they did not feel the need to go into print. The lay opponents of union, on the other hand, may have been precisely those who felt the need to make their voices heard.

The 1972 referendum on Church Union in New Zealand provided an opportunity to approach the subject of ecumenicalism by an alternative method. The method used in this instance being in the nature of a survey of actual people who had recently considered the issue of Church Union. In particular, this was seen as an opportunity to evaluate Currie's conclusions in the light of responses made by a representative group of New Zealand Methodists.
CHAPTER V

FOUNDATIONS FOR A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

Given the fact that Currie maintains that his findings have considerable general relevance, and that they are the result of an historical analysis of Methodist unions, they ought, at least, to be relevant to another Methodist Church, English in origin, and one which has had a somewhat similar history, as far as union is concerned. Indeed, other factors being equal, one would expect his conclusions to be more likely to be verified in relation to another Methodist situation than in relation to other denominations with a different kind of structure and heritage.

1. A COMPARISON OF ENGLISH AND NEW ZEALAND METHODISM

In seeking then to test conclusions which have been arrived at in relation to English Methodism, in the context of New Zealand Methodism, it is important that an assessment be made of the similarities and differences between the two Churches. If the two Methodist Churches were in fact radically different then obviously any new conclusions made on the basis followed here would be of very limited value. Certainly one could not predict that a similar approach to the one followed in this thesis might yield similar results in the English setting. Furthermore, if there were major differences between the two Churches, it could well be unreasonable to
anticipate that Currie's conclusions might hold true in New Zealand in spite of their stated considerable general relevance. On the other hand the greater the similarity, in heritage and structure, the more reasonable it would be to expect Currie's conclusions to hold true in the New Zealand situation. Naturally, any comparison between the two Churches needs also to include some reference to any major, and relevant, differences between society as such in the two countries.

In the two preceding chapters attention has been drawn to some of the similarities between the two Churches. These may be stated briefly, as follows: (a) both Churches find their origins in the English setting; (b) both Churches were affected by the divisions within Methodism which initially developed in England; (c) both Churches followed a similar pattern of denominational union culminating in complete Methodist union; (d) both Churches are, at present involved in moves toward union with other Churches which have a non-Methodist heritage; (e) both Churches have been affected by numerical decline; (f) both Churches have been influenced by 'liberal' trends in theology; (g) in both Churches the ministers have led the moves towards union; (h) in both Churches support for union, in terms of known voting results, has been stronger than in the other Churches with whom union is proposed. Taken together, these similarities can hardly be viewed as other than substantial.

It is true, as has already been noted,¹ that numerical decline does not appear to bear the same relationship to the union of Methodism in New Zealand as it has in England. However, in the period with which the survey is concerned, numerical decline has been a distinctly marked factor in New Zealand Methodism. Therefore, if decline is a significant factor as far as Church union in New Zealand

¹ See page 40.
is concerned it should appear as such in the period under scrutiny.

The two Methodist Churches share other factors in common as well as those listed above. The structure of the two Churches is virtually the same. Both Churches group their local congregations in Circuits. The Circuits have Quarterly Meetings, and the Circuits, in turn, are grouped in Districts governed by Synods. The Synods are responsible to the annual Conference, and the Conference has final authority in matters of doctrine and polity. ²

In addition to these structural likenesses it is also true to say that New Zealand Methodism has tended to look to English, rather than say American or Australian, Methodism, as the mother Church. The tendency has been, at least up till recently when the American preoccupation with pastoral counselling has been responsible for something of a shift in emphasis in New Zealand Methodism, for Methodist ministers to seek further training in England. Also, while by and large, New Zealand Methodism has become an indigenous Church, it has, nevertheless, continued to receive ministers from England into the Connexion. ³

Thus there has been a continuing, if declining, influence on New Zealand Methodism by its English counterpart. Taken together these factors can be said to amount to very significant similarities between the two Churches in terms of heritage, history, kinship and structure.

This marked similarity of the Churches themselves is to a considerable extent undergirded by the distinctly English heritage of New Zealand. It is no accident that the Anglican Church is nominally,

² Some legal restrictions as contained in The Methodist Model Deed", are binding on Conference. Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand. 1989.

³ "Connexion": technical term for the national Methodist Church.
at least, the largest single Christian denomination in New Zealand. Given the country's English heritage this is what one would expect. It is no accident that the New Zealand parliamentary, and judicial systems, parallel those in England. It is no accident that cricket and rugby are two of the major sports in New Zealand. Each of these reflects our English heritage as do the speech, manners and values of the vast majority of New Zealanders. Furthermore, the two countries are also clearly a part of the "affluent", "Western", bloc of nations.

This is not to say that the two Churches are identical any more than it is to say there are no significant differences between England and New Zealand. As far as the Churches are concerned there are two obvious differences. The first has to do with size. In 1965 the membership of the English Church was in excess of 700,000; in the same year the New Zealand Methodist Church had a membership of 32,749. The second factor has to do with the relative strength of the Methodist Church in both situations. In England the Methodist Church is by far the largest non-conformist denomination. In New Zealand both the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches appear to have approximately three times the active membership of New Zealand Methodism. This suggests that the New Zealand Methodist Church would be more likely to be conscious of its relative weakness vis-a-vis the other denominations than its English counterpart. The widespread involvement of New Zealand Methodism in Union Parish ventures with the Presbyterian Church has probably served to highlight the relative weakness of Methodist resources. This means that if denominational weakness is part of

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4 Wilson, p. 266.

5 New Zealand Methodism is negotiating with two larger Churches, English Methodism with one.

6 The agreed basis of a Union Parish, for example, owes more to Presbyterianism than Methodism.
the motivation towards Church Union than New Zealand Methodism ought
to indicate that this is so in the responses its members make to the
survey.

Apart from the obvious differences with respect to the size of
the population of England and New Zealand, and, of course, geographical
location, the major difference is that New Zealand is a relatively
new country. In 1972 New Zealand Methodism celebrated its 150th
Anniversary. This meant that the arrival of the first Wesleyan
missionaries in New Zealand pre-dated organised efforts to colonize
the country from England. In 1822 New Zealand was a land of Maori
tribes, European whalers, several Anglican and one or two Wesleyan
missionaries. Even in 1838 there were only, "about two thousand
Europeans living in New Zealand".7 England at the same time was in
the midst of the industrial revolution, a very different setting from
the, "savage civil wars", "heavy casualties and cannibal feasts", which
were a part of the New Zealand way of life at the time.8

What this means is that the Churches in New Zealand have
developed in a colonial situation. In this situation no one
denomination, in spite of denominationally sponsored settlements
in Canterbury and Otago, has been granted special privileges. There
has been no 'Established ' Church. All the Churches have had to
grapple with the same problems during the struggles of a colony to
nationhood. Class distinctions, often related to denominational
allegiance in England, have become largely meaningless in the light

8 ibid., p. 42
of what Keith Sinclair describes as, "the 'levelling' attitude . . . characteristic of the New Zealand community."9 In turn this may have acted to facilitate Church Union. It is noticeable, for instance, that Methodist union in New Zealand pre-dated comparable unions in England. It is noticeable too, that the present 'Plan for Union' in New Zealand seeks to bring together Churches which have no common historical heritage in the sense that the Methodist and Anglican Churches in England have. The colonial situation appears to diminish differences. Certainly it means that traditions, links of denominations with classes of society, and feelings about the historic nature, or religious significance of particular Church buildings, are less likely to be as deeply embedded as in England. The findings of the survey will help clarify the significance of some of these issues with respect to Church Union.

As a result of this discussion it would seem fair to conclude that the Methodist Churches in England and in New Zealand can be classified as similar rather than dissimilar. Furthermore, with several important exceptions, New Zealand society can in general be classified as being similar to English society, although the relative size of the population, and of the membership of the Churches, is quite different in the two countries. This however is probably of less significance than the fact that historic roots in New Zealand do not have the same depth as in England, and the fact that the colonial experience has exercised a 'levelling' influence on New Zealand society. Thus, while in general, comparisons made between English and New Zealand Methodists in relation to Church Union can be seen as fair and reasonable comparisons, in some instances notice will have to be taken of the limitations imposed by the existence of certain differences. Where

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9 Sinclair, p. 49.
these limitations are relevant the conclusion arising from the findings of the survey will be interpreted in this light.

II. INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY

How were Currie's conclusions regarding Church Union to be tested to see if they were in fact of 'general relevance' as far as New Zealand Methodism was concerned? The method adopted here was that of a survey, which was carried out, by means of a postal questionnaire, during the early part of 1975. This questionnaire was sent to 780 Methodists throughout New Zealand on the basis of a 'modified' random selection procedure. Of these, 375 Methodists, who had voted in the 1972 referendum on Church Union, returned valid replies. This means that replies were received from approximately one sixtieth of the total membership of the Methodist Church of New Zealand on the basis of the 1972 membership figures. Most significant was the fact that the Church Union vote indicated in the response to the survey was only marginally different from that recorded in the report on the referendum contained in the 1972 Minutes of the Annual Conference. The survey showed an 85.7 per cent vote in favour of Church Union; the Minutes of Conference show a return of 86.0 per cent in favour. Also of considerable significance regarding the overall validity of the survey was the way in which the voting in the various Methodist Districts paralleled the results of the actual referendum. TABLE 6 clarifies this.

10 Appendix C includes a copy of the questionnaire and additional data relating to distribution procedures.
11 Appendix C indicates what is meant by 'modified' in this context.
12 The Referendum result actually was 85.96 per cent in favour.
13 Appendix A is a map showing geographical location of survey responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. Returns</th>
<th>Survey percentage</th>
<th>Referendum percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northland</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato/Bay of Plenty</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki/ Wanganui</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkes Bay/ Manawatu</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Canterbury</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80.4% *</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Canterbury</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago/ Southland</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* one church, which shows a major deviation away from the national response, is responsible for a 4.9 per cent drop in the North Canterbury vote.

1 based on figures in 1972 Minutes of the Annual Conference.
These initial responses pertaining to the vote itself, which was the chief objective fact available against which to test the returns, indicate the reliability of the survey as a guide to the voting on Church Union. Consequently, they give some grounds for hoping that the survey may also be a reliable guide as to the thinking of the Church in other areas. The survey was, of course, not only concerned with checking the vote on Church Union; its more important task was to assess the importance of Currie's conclusions concerning Church Union. The questionnaire therefore included a series of questions designed to elicit responses to the issues which Currie regards as important.\textsuperscript{14} At the same time some possible alternatives to Currie's conclusions were built into the questionnaire and the possibility of the influence of such factors as education, income, occupation, location, age and sex were also taken into account.\textsuperscript{15} The following chapters will deal with these matters in some detail in terms of an analysis of the questionnaire responses, but first attention needs to be drawn to some limitations as far as those same responses are concerned.

III LIMITATIONS REGARDING THE SURVEY RESPONSES

The survey was carried out almost two and a half years after the 1972 referendum on Church Union. This means that some of the reasons that people had for voting as they did at the actual time of the referendum may have been forgotten or, may have become

\textsuperscript{14} Appendix C, eg. questions 27,28,29,32,33,43,44,45,48,49, 52,53,56.

\textsuperscript{15} Appendix C, eg. questions 4-10,36,39,39,40,46,51,54. See also Appendix B for a profile of Methodist Membership.
observed by other events which intervened between the time of the referendum and the filling in of the survey questionnaire. Furthermore, the respondents may subsequently have altered their views in relation to Church Union and therefore the reasons now given may differ from their original reasons. There is no way of guaranteeing that the responses now given were the reasons that they actually had for voting as they did.

A second consideration which needs to be borne in mind, given the fact that a written questionnaire was used as the basis of the survey is that, in effect, the questionnaire asked people to justify the direction of their particular vote and it provided them with options by which they might do so. Two points arise from this: first, that the number of options available in a survey of this type are, of necessity, limited. Some respondents will therefore have found that options which were important to them were not in fact incorporated in the questionnaire. Secondly, for some there may have been the converse problem. Given that the questionnaire had fifty-six questions and the majority of these could be answered in five ways, some respondents may have found themselves considering issues which they did not consider when they actually voted on Church Union. To some extent the 'uncertain' category, which was one possible response to most questions, will have taken care of this. On the other hand some may well have been pleased to be armed with additional reasons in support of their vote decision even though they themselves had not previously considered the type of argument suggested by the question. Some people may therefore have been 'fed' additional reasons. There is no way of detecting this. It must be assumed, therefore, that the majority of the respondents to any one question have in fact indicated, as far as is reasonably possible, their actual reason for voting as they did. As the basic concern is to evaluate Currie's theses no allowance
has been made for handling options not actually contained in the question-naire. As indicated earlier, however, the questionnaire was not itself confined to Currie's theses and alternative suggestions have been included.

One final comment needs to be made regarding limitations on the survey. This has to do with an apparent, but not crucial breakdown in the distribution procedures. An analysis of the returns reveals an over-high proportion of 'Leaders' and 'Elders' amongst the respondents. Over 60 per cent of those attending Methodist local churches indicated that they were Leaders, and 45 per cent of those in Union Parishes indicated that they were Elders. A more representative return would have indicated that approximately 10 to 15 per cent were Leaders, with perhaps slightly fewer indicating that they were Elders. The reason for the very high return of Leaders and Elders appears to be that some ministers, those responsible for the local distribution of the questionnaires, passed them out at Leaders' Meetings instead of following the suggested procedures. Of course, it was expected that Leaders, given their position in the life of the Church and the fact that they are often the more vocal members of the congregation, would be more likely to respond to the questionnaire. This, however, could hardly account for the response actually received. The significance of this, with respect to the over-all value of the survey, appears to be minimal in that, for instance, the Leaders show only a 1 per cent variation from the total survey response, and the Elders only a 3 per cent variation, when voting on Church Union. As one would tend perhaps to expect the Union Parish Elders are more pro-union than the average for the survey.

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16 Leaders are those Members who serve on the local Leaders' Meeting and the Circuit Quarterly Meeting. Elders are those Members who serve on Union Parish Sessions.
IV. CONCLUSION

The survey method followed here is an alternative method by which to test Currie's theses. Its viability is strengthened by the fact that it is related to a Methodist Church, a Church with English origins and a parallel history to the parent body, and it takes place in a country which has marked similarities to England. Moreover, it is clear that the history of Methodism in New Zealand as far as Church Union is concerned can, by means of an historical approach, be interpreted as leading to similar conclusions to those formulated by Currie. The difference between the two Churches and the two countries must not be overlooked, but the similarities are in fact of greater consequence.

The 1972 referendum on Church Union, being relatively recent, permits the one possibility which Currie's methodology and chosen period of study rule out, namely, the possibility of finding out what ordinary Church members consider important in relation to Church Union. The survey takes advantage of this. It seeks to discover what motivated people to vote for or against Church Union. In particular it asks how relevant Currie's theses are, as far as New Zealand Methodists are concerned.
CHAPTER VI
ECUMENICALISM AND DECLINE - THE VIEWPOINT
OF NEW ZEALAND METHODISTS

In this, and the following two chapters, each of Currie's conclusions concerning Church Union will be examined in terms of the responses to the survey. The basic question to be answered will be: to what extent, if any, do Currie's conclusions appear to have significance for New Zealand Methodists in relation to their 1972 vote on Church Union? A second question will be: when seen in relationship to each other, what order of significance emerges in relation to Currie's conclusions? Finally, the question will be asked: are there any alternative, or additional, conclusions which appear to be at least as significant as those suggested by Currie?

In attempting to answer these questions the procedure to be followed will be: (a) to show the basic response to the survey statement; (b) to show any variation between those who voted 'In Favour' of Church Union and those who voted 'Not In Favour'; and (c) to show a further, for example, 'occupational', or 'age', or 'location' breakdown in relation to the Church Union vote and the particular statement being reviewed. The extent to which this kind of breakdown will be followed will depend on the value indicated by applying the Chi-square test and the result of the Cramer's V

1 The Chi-square test is used to determine whether or not a relationship between categories is statistically significant. The smaller the Chi-square value is, the more likely it is that the variation from the expected distribution is of significance.
significance test. The first issue to be dealt with is the question of the relationship of Church Union to decline.

I. A DECLINING CHURCH?

The question of decline was raised both in connection with the local church, with which one could expect all Church members to have some familiarity, and with the denomination, of which impressions could generally be expected to be more vague. The questionnaire included two questions addressed to the former, and one to the latter area.

(1) Decline and the Local Church

The first statement, under this heading, which recipients of the questionnaire were asked to assess was:

In terms of membership your local church is maintaining its position in the community at least as well as the local churches of the other denominations.

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2 The Cramer's V test indicates the strength of a relationship between two (or more) categories and enables results obtained with respect to one comparison to be evaluated against results obtained by means of a different comparison.

3 The two statements relating to the local church asked the respondents to make a comparison of their church with other local churches rather than with the community as such. The reason for adopting this approach was to enable a more meaningful comparison. Communities, especially in cities, are often ill-defined, whereas local churches have clearer definition and thus can be assessed more readily when making a comparison.
The basic response to the statement was:

### TABLE 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL CHURCH MAINTAINING MEMBERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the light of the denominational membership statistics leading up to 1972, which indicate a 9 per cent drop in membership of the denomination between 1966 and 1972, it is perhaps surprising that only 7 per cent of the respondents disagree with this statement. That 80 per cent agree with the statement shows an unexpectedly high degree of confidence in the relative position of the local Methodist Church. But how did these responses relate to the vote on Church Union? Is the local church perceived similarly by both those who vote 'In Favour' and those who vote 'Not In Favour' of Church Union? TABLE 8 shows the breakdown in terms of the Church Union vote:

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4 A question arises here as to whether the statement concerning membership may have put the respondents on the defensive. They were, after all, Methodists and they may therefore have felt some obligation to defend their Church, e.g. by stating that their church is doing as well as any other. No attempt has been made to assess this possibility though it is not irrelevant to note that the vast majority of those who agree with the statement are also favourably disposed to other churches if their position on Church Union can be taken as a guide.
The Chi-square test indicates that no weight can be attached to the variations in TABLE 8 between those who vote for union and those who vote against it. It seems therefore that the statement concerning the local church maintaining its membership is not significant in relation to Church Union.

The second statement, in relation to the local church, that recipients were asked to assess was:

Your church appears to be more vigorous and active than the local churches of the other denominations in the area.

The basic response to this statement was:

| TABLE 9 |
| LOCAL CHURCH MORE VIGOROUS AND ACTIVE |
| AGREE | UNCERTAIN | DISAGREE | TOTAL |
| 139 | 138 | 93 | 370 |
| 38% | 37% | 25% | 100% |

When compared with TABLE 7 this can be seen as a more cautious response to a stronger statement. In TABLE 7 the vast majority see their local church as doing as well as other local churches. In TABLE 9 the number who agree is approximately halved in response to the suggestion that their church is more vigorous and active than other local churches. TABLE 10 shows this result in relation to the Church Union vote:
**Table 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Union Vote</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .15  Cramer's V .103

*Note: A church by church analysis reveals that one church, Opawa in Christchurch, which shows a marked variation from the national Church Union voting pattern according to the survey, also moves somewhat against the trend in response to this statement. Five out of a total of seven respondents from Opawa vote against Church Union. The same five also see their local church as being more vigorous and active and thus augment that cell in the above Table. 70 per cent of Opawa members voted against Church Union according to the 1972 Minutes of the Annual Conference (p. 223).

The Chi-square test indicates that little weight can be attached to the variations in this Table between those who vote for union and those who vote against union. If the responses from Opawa were spread in proportion to the other responses of those who voted against Church Union the bottom line of the Table would then read:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Union Vote</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Against</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This would then weaken the value of Chi-square to .2 and further weaken the significance of the response to the statement.

The following conclusions can then be made regarding decline and the local church. First, that the majority of Methodists see their local church as maintaining its membership. Second, that more than one third are prepared to state that their local church is more vigorous and active than other local churches in their area.
Consequently, it can be concluded, in spite of the denominational membership statistics, that there does not appear to be a high degree of concern about decline in relation to the local church. Third, that whatever the view held by the respondent, whether he sees his church declining in membership or not declining in membership, or whether he sees his church as more vigorous or not more vigorous, his vote on Church Union is unlikely to be significantly affected by such considerations. But given the fact that this is the case regarding decline and the local church, is it also the case with respect to the denomination as a whole?

(2) Decline and the Denomination

When Currie speaks about the significance of decline he is chiefly concerned with the denomination as a whole rather than the local church. The survey took up this issue by asking respondents to evaluate the following statement:

Methodism by comparison with the other major denominations in New Zealand is in a state of serious decline.

The basic response to this statement was:

| TABLE II |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHODISM IN SERIOUS DECLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When this TABLE is compared with TABLES 7 and 9 the following points can be made: (a) that in spite of the insertion of the word "serious" which could reasonably be expected to preclude some from agreeing with this statement, the percentage who see the denomination as declining is considerably greater than the percentage who see their local church as failing to maintain its membership (i.e. 20 per cent
in TABLE II as compared with 7 per cent in TABLE 7); (b) that, in comparison with TABLE 9, those who reject the statement that the denomination is in serious decline are a considerably greater percentage of the total than those who view their local church as being more vigorous than other local churches (i.e. 52 per cent in TABLE II as compared with 58 per cent in TABLE 9). Consequently, while Methodists are more likely to see their denomination as declining than their local church as declining, they are, at the same time, more likely to reject the view that the denomination is declining than to affirm that their local church is more vigorous than other local churches.

But how does the statement concerning serious decline relate to the question of Church Union?

**TABLE 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>METHODISM IN SERIOUS DECLINE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>55 (71%)</td>
<td>89 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>22 (29%)</td>
<td>15 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001  Cramer's V .219

*NOTE: Bracketed percentages indicate voting pattern of the three response groups.*

The Chi-square test shows that this result is highly likely to be statistically significant, and the Cramer's V value shows that the variations in the table are of considerable significance. The result establishes that an optimistic view of the denomination tends to correlate with support for Church Union whereas a pessimistic view of the denomination tends, though to a lesser degree, to correlate with opposition to Church Union. This means that while viewpoints concerning the decline or otherwise of the local church do not relate significantly to Church Union the same is not true of similar viewpoints in relation to the denomination. But who are the people who perceive the denomination either optimistically or
pessimistically?

(3) People and Denominational Decline

Currie maintains that the ministers, who are more aware of the state of the denomination are, in part, motivated to seek Church Union because of a decline in the denominational membership.\(^5\) He also states that it is the younger rather than the older members who tend to give support for Church Union.\(^6\) Three questions arise from these statements. First, do the ministers in fact view the denomination as declining? Second, if so, do they indicate a greater awareness of this decline than other occupational groups? Third, to what extent, if any, does one's view of the denomination correlate with the age of the respondent?

To enable an examination of the first two questions an occupational analysis of the respondents in relation to the question of denominational decline was carried out.

\(^5\) Currie, p.314.

\(^6\) Currie, p.110
This analysis is shown in TABLE 13.

**TABLE 13**

DECLINE VIEWED BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>100% 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>100% 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man'g/Prof.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>100% 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>100% 197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>100% 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>100% 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sk'ld Craft</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>100% 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>100% 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>100% 23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .03  Cramer's V .094

*NOTE: Respondents were asked simply to indicate their occupation; the categories were selected later on the basis of the replies received.

This result has to be treated with considerable caution as the tests indicate. All that can be said is that it looks as if the ministers, teachers, and those in the management-professional group may have a tendency to be more optimistic in their view of the denomination, while the housewives, farmers, and the retired group, may tend to be more pessimistic. One of the problems associated with this TABLE is the large number of categories and the relatively small number of respondents in many of the categories. To overcome this and to obtain a more significant result the ministers, teachers and management-professional people have been coalesced into one group, and the housewives, farmers, and retired people into another group, in the following TABLE:
TABLE 14
DECLINE VIEWED BY COALESCED GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONS</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100% 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man's/Prof.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>100% 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001 Cramer's V .287

This shows that there is in fact a considerable difference in the way in which these two groups view the denomination and it confirms the trends which seemed to be apparent in the previous TABLE. The ministers, teachers and management-professional people show as those most likely to reject the suggestion that the denomination is in a state of serious decline. It is, of course, not surprising that the ministers, teachers and management-professional people should form a distinct group; they have certain common characteristics as occupational groups. Ministers and teachers, for instance, have a somewhat similar type of academic training, often including work for a University Degree. Ministers are also engaged to a considerable extent in the management of the Church organisation, a job which has parallels with business management. People in all three groups tend to be in leadership, decision making roles. The common areas involved in being a farmer, a housewife, or a retired person, are not as clear. Perhaps, while recognizing that there would be many exceptions, the people in these three categories can be seen as slightly more isolated, particularly in terms of responsibility for groups of people outside the home, than those in the other three categories. Consequently some of the group pressures on ministers, teachers and professional people, to keep with new trends in terms of their occupation, may be somewhat absent, or in any case less significant, in the case of the
latter occupational groups. This could mean that, generally speaking, one might expect persons in the latter groups to adopt a more conservative outlook.

Taking the findings of TABLES 13 and 14 together it is clear that the ministers are amongst those least likely to view the denomination as in a state of serious decline. Certainly, they do not show a greater awareness of decline than other groups. But then, perhaps it could be argued that the ministers have obvious psychological reasons for not wanting to admit that the denomination is in a state of decline. But, if this is the case, why then do the two occupational groups most akin to the ministry, but who could not be held responsible for the decline of the denomination as the ministers might be, so closely parallel the ministers' response to this statement? The fact that there is this parallel suggests that the ministers' response has an occupational rather than a psychological basis. If this is the case then Currie's argument that the ministry is motivated to seek Church Union due to the fact of denominational decline does not seem to hold true of the ministry in New Zealand. This conclusion also appears to be supported by the fact, noted earlier, that in the period leading up to the 1972 referendum on Church Union, the argument that union was necessary in the face of Methodist decline as evidenced by the membership statistics, was not one of the arguments stated by those ministers who wrote in support of Church Union.7

The ministers are amongst those who have a more optimistic view of the denomination; they are, also, as the following TABLE appears to indicate, the group that gives the strongest support for Church Union.

7 See Chapter 3, p. 40.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>IN FAVOUR</th>
<th>NOT IN FAVOUR</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man's/Prof.</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewives</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ski'd Craft.</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cramer's V</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This result has to be treated with considerable caution. However, given the fact that the voting on Church Union at the 1972 Conference of the Methodist Church was over 97 per cent in favour of Church Union, and that approximately half of the more than three hundred representatives at the Conference would have been ministers, it seems reasonable to assume that TABLE 15 presents a true indication of the voting of New Zealand Methodist ministers. It is interesting also to note, when TABLE 15 is compared with TABLE 13, that the ministers and teachers, and to a lesser extent the management-professional group, again show a somewhat similar response pattern. This is true

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9 The law of the Church is that every Circuit is entitled to have lay representation equal to the number of Ministerial representatives. Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church, p.58.
also of farmers and the retired people; again they show the most marked divergence from the ministers and teachers. These considerations may suggest that more weight can be put on the findings in TABLE 15 than the Chi-square test would indicate. If so, it can then be stated that an optimistic view of the denomination tends to correlate with strong support for Church Union, whereas a pessimistic view tends to correlate with less strong support for Church Union. In that case, however, the housewives who form a very significant proportion of the total sample, obviously provide an exception to this general conclusion.

Currie also maintains that age is an important factor both in relation to Church Union and to decline. The young tend to be optimistic and to support Church Union. The old tend to be pessimistic and to reject Church Union. As the following two TABLE 3 show, the findings of the survey do not support either a correlation of age with an optimistic or pessimistic view of the denomination, nor do they support the view that age correlates in any significant way with support or rejection of Church Union.

TABLE 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 21</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 50</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 plus</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .75  Cramer's V .098

10 Currie, p. 314, p. 110.
The Chi-square value indicates that there is no statistical significance in this result.

TABLE 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>IN FAVOUR</th>
<th>NOT IN FAVOUR</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNDER 21</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 30</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 50</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 plus</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .7  Cramer's V .075

Again the Chi-square value indicates that there is no statistical significance that can be attached to this result. It therefore appears that, in New Zealand at least, age is not a significant factor either in relation to one's view of the denomination or to one's support for Church Union. It is thus not possible to say, with Currie, that the young and optimistic support Church Union while the old and pessimistic do not.

II SECULARIZATION OF BELIEF

Currie sees the development of a 'liberal theology' as being closely related to the question of Church Union. To assess this in relation to ordinary Church members the questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate a statement designed to place people in 'liberal' or 'conservative' theological positions.11

11 It is relevant to note that the interpretation of the Resurrection was the central issue during the heresy trial of Professor Goring which made headlines in New Zealand in the late sixties.
The statement was:

To be a Christian one has to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead in bodily form.

The basic response to the statement was:

TABLE 18
CHRISTIANS MUST BELIEVE IN BODILY RESURRECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Church is obviously divided on this issue with the 'conservatives' having a 12 per cent overall majority. When related to the Church Union vote the statement showed:

TABLE 19
CHURCH UNION VOTE RELATED TO BODILY RESURRECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .005  Cramer's V .184

The Chi-square test indicates that this result is most likely of statistical significance, and the Cramer's V value shows that the variations in the TABLE are of some significance. Clearly, the chief significance lies in the 77 per cent who both agree with the statement and vote against Church Union. This shows that those who vote against Church Union are much more likely to hold a 'conservative' rather than a 'liberal' interpretation of the
resurrection. It also shows, however, that a large number of 'conservatives', 80 per cent in fact (i.e. 167 is 80 per cent of those in the 'agree' column) vote in favour of Church Union. On this basis even the Methodists with a 'conservative' view of the resurrection would have returned a higher percentage vote in favour of union than that returned by any of the other denominations involved in the 1972 referendum. It may be concluded then that a 'liberal' interpretation of the resurrection is not an essential factor as far as strong Methodist support for Church Union is concerned.

(1) Theological 'Liberalism' in Relation to Location

Currie maintains that enthusiasm for Church Union comes from, "those who inhabit 'new', socially expansive regions where denominational tradition is feeble". 12 Perhaps New Zealand as a whole can be looked at as being such a region, and, if so, this may account in part at least for the strong support for Church Union in the 1972 referendum. Be that as it may, it is clear as the following TABLE3 indicate, that within New Zealand location does bear a relationship both to one's theological position and also to one's support or otherwise for Church Union.

12 Currie, p. 110.
TABLE 20
LOCATION AND VIEWS ON BODILY RESURRECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner City</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. Suburb</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Housing</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Town</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Town</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Area</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramer's V</td>
<td>.311</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not much weight can be put on the return from the new housing area because of the smallness of the sample but otherwise the result is significant. Clearly, those in the inner city churches, followed by those in the large towns, are the most likely to hold a liberal interpretation of the resurrection. Those attending churches in established suburbs, small towns, and rural areas, are the most likely to hold a conservative interpretation of the resurrection. There is then a definite relationship between location and the impact of secularizing trends in so far as these relate to a liberal view on the resurrection. But does location also relate in a significant way to the vote on Church Union?
While the results are not as significant as those for the previous TABLE it is nevertheless clear that there are some interesting parallels between the two TABLES. The two areas, for instance, where a liberal view of the resurrection is most likely to be endorsed, are also the areas where the vote in support of union is highest. On the other hand the established suburbs and the small towns, where a conservative view of the resurrection finds strong support, are two of the areas where support for union is at its lowest. The rural area perhaps shows the pragmatism of the farming community in that it is conservative in relation to the resurrection and yet above average in support for union.

In New Zealand the central city churches, and those in the large towns, would generally be those with the longest, and perhaps most distinctive, Methodist heritage. These churches certainly are not in the new regions where denominational tradition is feeble. Consequently it is not any feebleness in terms of heritage that results in their theological liberalism or their high support for Church Union. It is more likely that they are responding with some sensitivity to the changing demands and pressures of city life. Furthermore, such churches as Pitt Street in Auckland, and Durham Street in Christchurch
usually have pulpits occupied by leading spokesmen of the denomination. Given the extent to which the Conference, the Church press, and Methodists as a whole have endorsed Church Union, it would be very unlikely that ministers in these preaching appointments would be antagonistic to Church Union. Their lead must have had some impact.

(2) Church Union and Historic Denominational Differences

Another aspect of secularization relates to the changes taking place within society. Currie speaks of this in terms of, "the replacement of older ideas and practices", which he sees as having great significance in relation to moves towards Church Union.

The questionnaire also sought to raise this issue by asking for an evaluation of the following statement:

The differences between the denominations are now of historical interest only and their continued emphasis is a hindrance to the Church's mission in the 1970's.

The basic response to this statement was:

<p>| TABLE 22 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES NOW OF HISTORICAL INTEREST ONLY |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicates that almost two-thirds of the respondents see denominational differences as something relating to the past, and, if


emphasized, as a hindrance to the mission of the Church in the 1970's. This is perhaps surprising given the 'conservative image' which society often appears to associate with the Church. But how does this relate to the question of Church Union?

TABLE 23
DIFFERENCES OF HISTORICAL INTEREST ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>227 (95%)</td>
<td>47 (84%)</td>
<td>43 (57%)</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>12 (5%)</td>
<td>9 (16%)</td>
<td>35 (43%)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001 Cramer's V .432

This is the most significant relationship so far assessed. The supporters of Church Union and the opponents of union show a definite tendency to polarize in response to this statement.

Currie's remark that support for Church Union comes from, "all who are indifferent to the past and to denominational tradition" is strongly supported, with 72 per cent of the respondents both agreeing with the statement that the differences are now of historical interest only, and voting in favour of Church Union. Those who vote against Church Union, on the other hand, show themselves as wanting to affirm, though to a lesser extent, the continuing significance of denominational differences. This too is as Currie would lead one to expect. The supporters of Church Union then are those who, in general, do not see themselves as bound by the past

---

15 Currie, p. 110
and consequently they are more open to the possibility of change. The opponents of Church Union tend to hold the opposite point of view. Consequently, if diminished allegiance to denominational heritage can be seen as a mark of secularization, then the supporters of Church Union are the group most clearly affected by that process. The opponents of Church Union are more likely to be the defenders of the denominational tradition which they see as threatened by change, one such change being Church Union itself.

(3) Church Union and the Recalcitrant Society

Currie maintains that the 'super-denomination' is a way of regaining a foothold in an increasingly recalcitrant and presumably, thereby secular, society. This raises the issue of the decline of the whole Christian Church in relation to society, and, hopes that Church Union might stem that decline. The questionnaire sought to examine this issue by asking respondents to evaluate the following statement:

Church Union will bring about renewal and stop the decline of the churches in relation to the whole of society.

---

16 Diminished allegiance to denominational heritage does not have to be interpreted as Currie and Wilson tend to interpret it, i.e. as a mark of secularization. It could be due to the grasping of new insights about the nature of the church. As far as secularization is concerned it is perhaps significant to note that 83 per cent, or 325, of the respondents indicate that they attend their local church on a weekly basis. Only 3.45 per cent, or 13, attend less than once a month.

17 Currie, p. 86.
This resulted in the following basic response:

**TABLE 24**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION WILL BRING RENEWAL AND STOP THE DECLINE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents are clearly divided on this question, and, given the extent of the vote in favour of Church Union, the number of those who agree with the statement appears as perhaps surprisingly low. The following **TABLE** shows this response in relation to Church Union:

**TABLE 25**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION WILL BRING RENEWAL AND STOP DECLINE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTE</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001 Cramer's V .519

This **TABLE** indicates a very significant relationship. This is particularly true in the case of those who vote against Church Union. They display very little hesitation in rejecting the argument that Church Union will bring about renewal and stop the decline of the churches in relation to the whole of society. But, of course, this is really as one would expect. Why oppose union if it is believed that it will be of benefit to the total Christian Church? What is more surprising is that even those who vote in favour of Church Union are more likely than not to reject, or at least be uncertain, with respect to the suggestion that it will bring about renewal. Only
37 per cent of those supporting union are prepared to state that they see Church Union in such optimistic terms. In other words, there is a very significant reluctance, even on the part of those supporting union, to see it as some kind of answer to the increasingly secularistic trend of society. This means that Currie's statement that, "Ecumenicalism is not simply born of adversity, but of hope in adversity" is of limited significance as far as New Zealand Methodist supporters of Church Union are concerned. It also means that in New Zealand the majority of Methodists do not see the 'super denomination' as a means of regaining a foothold in a recalcitrant society.

III. CHURCH UNION VOTING - SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The most obvious fact to emerge from the analysis of the survey thus far, is that the move from the local church, to the denomination, and thence to the areas of belief, heritage and renewal, results in an increasing divergence of viewpoint between the supporters and opponents of Church Union. The variation of views on the statements concerning the local church is slight. It shows that there is no relationship between decline in the local church, a view which in any case is rejected by the majority, and the voting on Church Union. The variation on the statement concerning Church Union stopping the decline of the churches in relation to society is, however, very marked. It shows that there is a strong relationship between this statement and the voting on Church Union. As a result of the overall analysis a profile begins to develop in relation to both those who support Church Union, and those who oppose it.

Speaking then in general terms the supporter of Church Union

18 Currie, p. 111.
can be said to be: (a) similar to those who oppose union in terms of age group, and view of local church; (b) more likely to reject the view that the denomination is in a state of serious decline; (c) more likely to endorse a liberal theological viewpoint, though a large proportion of those holding a conservative theological viewpoint also support Church Union; (d) much more likely to agree that continued emphasis on denominational differences is a hindrance to the work of the Church in the I970's; (e) much more likely to agree that Church Union will bring about renewal, even though less than 40 per cent of the pro-union voters in fact endorse this view; (f) more likely to be a minister, teacher, or management-professional person, than belong to any other occupational group; (g) more likely to belong to a church in the inner city, or in a large town, than to a church in any other type of location.

In general those who vote against Church Union hold converse positions to those expressed above. Often their position is less divided in that a larger proportion tend to group themselves in only one of the possible response categories. This is certainly the case with respect to their responses in relation to theology, denominational differences, and renewal. In each case over 60 per cent of those who oppose Church Union group themselves under only one of the three response headings. In general those who oppose Church Union can be said to be: (a) more likely to see the denomination in pessimistic terms; (b) much more likely to endorse a conservative theological position; (c) much more likely to disagree with the suggestion that differences between the denominations are now a hindrance to the Church's mission; (d) almost unanimous in disagreeing with the suggestion that Church Union will stop the decline of the churches in relation to society; (e) more likely to be farmers, skilled craftsmen, or retired people, than to belong to any other occupational group; (f) more likely to belong to a church in an
established suburb, or in a small town, than to a church in any other type of location.

The ministers show up as the group which gives the strongest support for Church Union. They are the least likely to agree that Methodism is in a state of serious decline. They tend to occupy one extreme position, as farmers tend to occupy the other, when the occupational groups are analysed. The further question is: does this mean that there is a major conflict between the ministers and the laity with respect to Church Union?
CHAPTER VII

CHURCH UNION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MINISTRY AND LAITY

Currie interprets ecumenicalism as basically a ministerial activity and at the same time he sees it as an area of conflict between the ministry and the laity. The survey raised this question of conflict for New Zealand Methodists from three distinct but related points of view. In the first place the survey tried to establish how, in fact, members of local congregations see their own minister. What is the 'normal' relationship between the minister and his people? This clearly needs to be known before it can be decided whether or not the issue of Church Union adds in any significant way to possible conflict between minister and people. Otherwise, apparent conflict over the question of Church Union may, in fact, be simply conflict of a general nature, some of which is probably there in most congregations. In the second place the survey tried to assess the significance of certain statements which could reflect conflict between the minister and his congregation over the issue of Church Union. These statements raised the possibility of ministerial influence in terms of preaching on Church Union, and in terms of personal comments made by the minister to members of his congregation regarding Church Union. Finally, the survey also tried to assess the significance of certain statements in relation to Church Union and the ministry as such. The possibilities that the ministers might have ulterior motives for seeking union, or that they might be imposing union 'from the top', or that they might aspire to become bishops, were raised.

Two further issues which Currie clearly relates to conflict
between the ministry and the laity, namely, the possibility of 'closure' and the question of 'assurances' are also dealt with in this chapter.

I. THE LAITY AND THE LOCAL MINISTER

How do Methodists see their minister? To establish the answer four questions were asked. The first two were in the area of the personal relationship of the respondent to their own minister. The second pair of statements related more specifically to the question of the local minister's influence with respect to the Church Union vote. The first statement was: 1

My minister and I are in general agreement on most matters.

The basic response to this was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH LOCAL MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly a considerable majority see themselves in general agreement with their minister, though not as many as are in fact in agreement with their minister on the issue of Church Union. When this statement was related to the Church Union vote the following result was obtained:

1 The ministers did not assess the statements relating to the local minister.
This result is not statistically significant. It therefore shows that there is no significant relationship between this statement and the Church Union vote. The second statement in the area of personal relationship was:

My friendship with my minister is one of the most valuable friendships that I have.

The basic response to this statement was:

This is a more specific statement than the previous one and so it is not surprising that fewer agree with it. Nevertheless, it confirms that the majority see themselves as having a valuable friendship with their local minister. However, as the value of Chi-square and the Cramer's V is virtually the same as that in relation to TABLE 27, when this statement is related to the Church Union vote, there is no point in setting the TABLE out in full. Together these two TABLES indicate that the majority of Methodists

\[ \text{Chi-square} \quad .075 \quad \text{Cramer's V} \quad .095 \]
both generally agree with, and value the friendship of their local minister, though in itself, this is not significant in relation to the voting on Church Union.

(I) The Local Minister and Church Union

The second pair of statements, in relation to the local minister, were more specifically related to the issue of Church Union. In particular they raised the question of the influence of the local minister on the Church Union vote of members of his congregation. The first of these was:

The preaching of my minister clarified the Church Union issue for me and enabled me to vote the way I did with confidence and understanding.

The basic response to this was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINISTER'S PREACHING CLARIFIED ISSUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared with TABLES 26 and 28 it is immediately noticeable that there is a further drop in the number who see themselves in agreement with this statement which is much more directly related to the Church Union vote. In part this may be explained in two ways. First, there may have been a number of ministers who, whatever their personal feelings about Church Union, felt that they must allow their congregations to make up their own minds. For this reason they may have abstained from preaching on the issue. If so, the minister's preaching obviously did not clarify the Church Union issue. Alternatively, they may have tried to give an objective presentation of both sides of the debate. This may have clarified some points but not the question of the minister's stance in relation to Church Union.
Second, it is probably true that many people, having made a decision, would want to give the impression that it is their own decision, and hence to play down the influence of other people. This possibility is raised even more sharply in connection with the next statement as will be seen. Third, it is also possible, that the preaching of the minister on Church Union may have confused rather than clarified the issue. In any case when the statement on preaching was related to the Church Union vote it revealed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>MINISTER'S PREACHING CLARIFIED ISSUE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>155 (90%)</td>
<td>34 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>18 (10%)</td>
<td>6 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .015  Cramer's V .161

It is likely that there is some significance in this result. It shows a tendency for the supporters and the opponents of union to polarize with respect to the statement. This is what one would expect given the fact that most of the ministers supported Church Union. Those who support Church Union tend to have found the preaching helpful; those who oppose union tend to have found it the reverse. The trend evident in this result is confirmed in the response to the next statement which was designed to bring about a strong reaction. The statement was:

What my minister said to me on Church Union influenced me to vote in the way that I believe he did.
The basic response to this was:

TABLE 31
MINISTER INFLUENCED ME TO VOTE HIS WAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows a very substantial drop in the number who agree when compared with the number agreeing with the previous statements. There may be quite strong psychological reasons for this. On the whole people may want to affirm that their decision was in fact their own decision and not one made for them by the minister or anyone else. 3 However, in this context this does not matter a great deal provided that it can be reasonably assumed that any such psychological reaction would affect both the supporters and the opponents of Church Union similarly. Given the fact that 238 disagree with the statement, and that, at the most, only 51 of these voted against Church Union, this would seem a reasonable initial assumption. When related to Church Union this statement brought the following result:

---

3 See Appendix C question number 31. This raises the possibility of the influence of other lay people on the vote of the respondent. However, the statistical tests (Chi-square .6 and Cramer's V .065 ) indicate that no significance can be attached to the data obtained.
TABLE 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>MINISTER INFLUENCED ME TO VOTE HIS WAY</th>
<th>AGREED</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>69 (97%)</td>
<td>28 (97%)</td>
<td>190 (30%)</td>
<td>287 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>48 (20%)</td>
<td>51 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PERCENTAGE</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001  Cramer's V .217

This is the most significant result obtained in relation to the local minister. Even if allowance is made for the possibility that those who vote against Church Union may in fact be those, who for psychological reasons, tend to move against general trends, or against authority figures such as ministers, this probably does not account for the almost unanimous disagreement with the statement on the part of those who vote against Church Union. A more obvious reason for this very strong rejection of the statement on the part of the opponents of union could be the fact that the ministers, in general, did not exert influence in that direction. Given the high pro-union vote of the ministers, as evidenced in the previous chapter, people who voted against Church Union would, in the vast majority of cases, not be voting in the way in which their minister voted. On the other hand there appears to be some, though not major, influence exercised by the minister with respect to the pro-union vote.

Do people feel that in their local church there was adequate discussion on the question of Church Union? The response to this question could well indicate lay dissatisfaction about how the minister and local leaders handled the situation. To gauge this the following statement was included in the questionnaire:
There was adequate discussion of the issues involved in Church Union by our local congregation prior to the vote.

The basic response to this was:

**TABLE 33**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>303</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicates very substantial agreement with the statement. But how does this relate to Church Union?

**TABLE 34**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>THERE WAS ADEQUATE DISCUSSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>274 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>29 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001  Cramer's V .334

This shows that those who support union are much more likely to agree with the statement, though those who oppose union have a majority who also agree with it. Almost half of those who disagree with the statement (45 per cent) vote against Church Union, whereas only one-tenth (10 per cent) of those who agree, do so. Belief that there was adequate discussion therefore does have a significant bearing on support for Church Union. Indeed, this shows, as the statistical tests confirm, a more significant relationship to the vote on Church Union than any other statement in connection with the local church or local minister.
The following picture thus emerges in relation to the local minister. First, the majority of Methodists, whether they support or oppose Church Union, see themselves as being in general agreement with their minister. Over 60 per cent are prepared to state that they regard his friendship as most valuable. Second, neither general agreement, nor close friendship with the local minister is of significance in relation to the voting of respondents on Church Union. Almost two thirds of those who vote against union still see themselves as being in general agreement with their minister. Third, the preaching of the minister, and the question of his direct personal influence are, however, of significance in relation to the Church Union vote. Those who support union tend to find the minister's preaching on the subject more helpful. They are also more ready to agree that they were personally influenced by their minister. The converse is true as far as the opponents of union were concerned and particularly so in relation to the suggestion that the minister exerted direct personal influence. Finally, more important than any of these issues is the question of adequate discussion. This reflects on the way the minister and leaders handled the situation. Most agree that it was handled satisfactorily, but the minority who disagree show a marked variation from the overall vote on Church Union.

(2) Ministerial influence on Lay Leaders

A Methodist minister is normally chairman of his Leaders' Meeting, and together he and the Leaders are responsible for the general life of the local church. This means that the minister usually would stand in a closer relationship to the Leaders than to

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4 See Appendix D for an outline of the structure of New Zealand Methodism and comments relating to Church courts, e.g., the Leaders' Meeting.
any other members of the local church. Consequently it could be expected that the Leaders would be in a better position than the ordinary Church Member to know the mind of their minister, and also would perhaps be more likely to be influenced by him (or her). To test this the statement concerning direct ministerial influence was related to the question of membership of the Leaders’ meeting. The following TABLE shows the result of this analysis:

TABLE 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADER</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .01  Cramer's V .186

There is probably some significance in this result. It appears to indicate that the Leaders are more certain than the ordinary members that the minister did not influence their vote. Hence, the Leaders move out of the 'uncertain' category into the 'disagree' category. Therefore, either the ministers appear to have had less influence on those who work most closely with them, or else the Leaders want, more strongly than ordinary members, to affirm their own decision making. Given the fact that they are 'Leaders' that is not entirely surprising.

The analysis thus far has concentrated on the question of the influence of the local minister on the Church Union vote of Church Members. It has been shown that his preaching, and his personal advice regarding Church Union did have some influence on some people. But how do the respondents see the ministry as such, and what relationship if any has their view of the ministry to their vote on Church Union?
II. THE LAITY AND THE MINISTRY

The questionnaire included two statements designed to obtain information concerning the attitude of respondents to the ministry as such. It also contained a further question on the related matter of the use of bishops in the proposed United Church. The first statement was:

The ministers stand to gain more from Church Union than the lay people.

The basic response to this was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MINISTERS STAND TO GAIN MORE THAN LAY PEOPLE*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGREED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The ministers have been excluded from this sample.

The percentage of Methodists who agree with this statement is very low indicating that few see this as a point of conflict. But who are they who do see this as a point of conflict? Table 37 clarifies this question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH UNION VOTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This shows that the statement finds considerably more acceptance amongst those who vote against Church Union. Those who vote in favour are highly unlikely to agree with it. Hence they affirm that, in general, they see themselves as gaining at least as much from Church Union as the ministry.

A second statement, and one which returned a similar, but stronger, result was:

Church Union can be fairly described as 'imposed from the top' by the ministers.

The basic response to this was:

| TABLE 33 |
|---|---|---|---|
| MINISTERS IMPOSING CHURCH UNION * | | | |
| AGREE | UNCERTAIN | DISAGREE | TOTALS |
| 70  | 47  | 227  | 344  |
| 20% | 14% | 86% | 100% |

* The ministers have been excluded from this sample.

As with TABLE 33 there is a clear rejection of this statement by the majority of Methodists. However, over twice as many agree with the statement as agreed with the suggestion that the ministers stand to gain more from Church Union. When related to the vote the following picture emerged:

| TABLE 39 |
|---|---|---|---|
| CHURCH UNION VOTE | MINISTERS IMPOSING CHURCH UNION |
| | AGREE | UNCERTAIN | DISAGREE |
| FOR | 37 (53%) | 40 (55%) | 214 (94%) |
| 13% | 14% | 73% |
| AGAINST | 33 (47%) | 7 (15%) | 13 (8%) |
| 62% | 15% | 25% |
| TOTALS | (100%) | (100%) | (100%) |

Chi-square .001 Cramer's V .411
Statistically this is the third most significant result so far assessed in the overall analysis of the survey. The supporters and the opponents of Church Union definitely tend to polarize with respect to this statement. Those who vote for Church Union are most likely to reject the statement; those who vote against show the opposite tendency. When TABLES 38 and 39 are viewed from a slightly different angle it can be stated that while 20 per cent of the sample agreed with the statement, only 10 per cent (33) see it as relating to their vote against Church Union. This means that for Methodists as a whole the statement is not very significant, though it is significant for a large proportion of the minority who vote against Church Union.

The final statement in this section has to do with the provision in the "Plan for Union" for bishops to be included in the United Church. Methodists have elected District Chairmen, who at the time of the vote on Church Union were elected annually, though there was no stipulation that the same person could not be re-elected. These District Chairmen have considerable powers under the Conference but, nevertheless, it is doubtful if Methodist people see their District Chairmen in the same way in which Anglicans for instance, see their bishops. How then do Methodists respond to the suggestion that bishops will be part of the United Church?

To gauge this, respondents were asked to assess the following statement:

The presence of bishops will be an advantage in the United Church when it is formed.

---

5 Only the statements relating to 'historical differences' and 'renewal' (TABLES 23 and 25) show results of greater statistical significance at this point in the analysis of the survey.
The basic response to this was:

**TABLE 40**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ministers included in this response.*

There is obviously a large measure of uncertainty and disagreement in relation to this statement. This may relate to a fear of the unknown, though as has been indicated, Methodists already have ministers designated to positions somewhat akin to that occupied by bishops in the Anglican Church. On the other hand there may be an anti-clerical element coming through here, especially on the part of those who disagree. They may see the move towards Bishops as leading to an unwarranted increase in the power of the ministry. This latter assumption would probably carry more weight amongst those who disagree with the statement. When related to the Church Union vote the results showed:

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6 In England the Methodist Church has 'separated' District Chairmen which means that they are even more like bishops in that they do not have Circuit responsibilities.

7 The ministers are included in TABLE 41. If isolated, they show the following response: AGREE 40 per cent; UNCERTAIN 50 per cent; DISAGREE 10 per cent; total 30 ministers.
While this is not as strong a result as that obtained in relation to the previous two statements, due to the greater diversity of opinion amongst those who vote in favour of Church Union, it does show that the statement has marked significance for those who vote against Church Union. In fact the opponents of union are more united in their attitude to this statement than they are on all other issues analysed thus far, with the exception of the questions concerning the bodily resurrection, and the hope of union bringing renewal and stopping the decline of the churches. 8

The analysis of the three statements in this section leads to the following conclusions. First, that while more than 60 per cent of the respondents reject both the suggestion that Church Union has more to offer the ministers, and the suggestion that the ministers are seeking to impose union, those who vote against Church Union are much more likely than the supporters of union to agree with the statements. They are therefore, to that extent, in conflict with the ministry on the issue of Church Union. Second, this area of conflict in which the opponents of union find themselves, shows itself in more marked form when the possibility of

---

8 See TABLES 19 and 25.
some of the ministers being given increased authority is suggested. If the ministers are already in the business of imposing their will on the Church then certainly they must not be permitted to increase their power because this will be detrimental to the voice of the lay people in the Church. Third, while those who vote in favour of Church Union are more likely to indicate uncertainty regarding the introduction of bishops, the vast majority see Church Union as both something they want, as well as something from which they stand to gain. In general they are not in conflict with the ministry either with regard to Church Union itself or with respect to these related matters. But what about the issue concerning the possible closure of redundant churches which Currie sees as being very significant in the area of ministry-laiety relationships and Church Union in England?

III. CLOSURE AND THE QUESTION OF ASSURANCES

Currie makes the point that the ministers not only wanted Methodist Union in England but also rationalization at the same time. They wanted to amalgamate congregations and close redundant churches. However, in order to obtain sufficient lay support for union they had, in the end, to give assurances that local churches would not be closed against the wishes of the local congregation. In New Zealand

---

9 In point of fact the bishops envisaged in the "Plan for Union" might not have a great deal more power than the present District Chairmen. The Methodist Church did press for a ten year restriction on the tenure of office for a bishop. As indicated in page 12 this was rejected. It is worth noting, however, that in practice Methodist District Chairmen are usually re-elected to office and may remain Chairmen for quite long periods. The Rev. R.F. Clement, for example, was Chairman of the Auckland District from 1965 to 1971.

10 Over 60 per cent in both cases. See TABLES 38 and 39.
somewhat similar assurances were given prior to the vote on Church Union. But were these assurances communicated to the ordinary Church Member and if so, did they make any difference with respect to the voting in those areas where closure was envisaged as a possibility?

The questionnaire raised these issues by asking respondents to evaluate several statements. The first of these statements was:

Did the minister and/or other local church leaders offer any assurances about the continuation of your congregation after Church Union comes into effect?

The response to this statement was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who answered 'yes' to this question were then asked to indicate whether such assurances were 'general' or 'specific'. This brought the following response:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL</th>
<th>SPECIFIC</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was indicated that general assurances meant that the congregation would have some say as to its future, whereas specific assurances meant perhaps the continued use of local church buildings, Lay Preachers and the Methodist Hymn-book. When TABLE 43 was related

---

11 "Parishes and Congregations", the Joint Commission on Church Union, March 1972.
to Church Union the following results were obtained:

**TABLE 44**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>CHURCH UNION AND ASSURANCES</th>
<th>NO ASSURANCES</th>
<th>GENERAL</th>
<th>SPECIFIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>38 (81%)</td>
<td>98 (88%)</td>
<td>87 (94%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>21 (19%)</td>
<td>13 (12%)</td>
<td>8 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>109 (100%)</td>
<td>111 (100%)</td>
<td>93 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .02  Cramer's V .158

This series of TABLES in relation to assurances suggests that; a slight majority of Methodists believe that assurances were given; of those who believe that assurances were given, more than half saw such assurances as being of a general nature; 26 per cent (93) of the total sample, however, believe that specific assurances were given; those who believe that specific assurances were given vote 94 per cent in favour of Church Union whereas the total sample, as recorded in TABLE 42, only vote 88 per cent in favour. The giving of specific assurances then appears to produce a voting result favourable to union. Even the giving of general assurances tips towards greater support for union. Of the 111 respondents (see TABLE 44) who agree that general assurances were given, 83 per cent favour union. Taken together these results certainly appear to support Currie's contention that the giving of assurances helps to allay some of the fears of the laity and to produce greater support for Church Union, but is the closure of the local church building one of those fears?
The questionnaire asked:

In the event of Church Union would your present place of worship be closed due to the fact that there is a more suitable church building for a united congregation nearby?

The response to this was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>WOULD YOUR PRESENT PLACE OF WORSHIP BE CLOSED?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>68 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>12 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>70 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .5  Cramer's V .085

This is not a statistically significant result. However it does indicate that over 20 per cent (78 respondents) of the total sample do see closure as a definite possibility. It may also indicate that those who are uncertain about the future of their local church are perhaps less likely to favour union, whereas those who know that their church would be closed, vote almost in accordance with the national average, and those who believe that their church will not be closed return a slightly higher percentage than the national average. If any weight can be given to the result it appears to mean that closure itself is not a significant factor, but that uncertainty about the future does result in a move away from support for Church Union. Nevertheless it is clear that in New Zealand the fear of the possible closure of the local church does not lead to a major swing against Church Union. It would seem then, that while assurances were given, which did have some effect in increasing the pro-union vote, had assurances regarding closure not been given at all, the pro-union vote would still have been in excess of 80 per cent. Consequently, closure can hardly be regarded as a major
area of conflict between the ministers and the laity. New Zealand
Methodists show a marked degree of willingness to give up their own
church building so as to further the cause of Church Union.

IV. THE MINISTRY AND LAITY IN CONFLICT—CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between the ministry and laity in the
Methodist Church of New Zealand needs to be seen against a background
which indicates that: (a) 75 per cent of Methodist Church members
see themselves as being in general agreement with their minister;
(b) 60 per cent see themselves as having a valuable friendship with
their minister; (c) 52 per cent found his preaching on Church Union
helpful; (d) 63 per cent reject the view that the ministers are
wanting to impose Church Union on the lay people; (e) 32 per cent
reject the view that the ministers stand to gain more from Church
Union; these figures taken together strongly support the view that the
relationship between the ministers and the laity in the Methodist
Church is, in general, a relationship which the majority value
considerably. This relationship is not seriously threatened by
moves in the direction of Church Union. However, there is at the
same time a strong rejection of the suggestion that the minister may
have persuaded respondents to vote as they did (70 per cent disagree
with the suggestion), and there is very little enthusiasm in support
of the introduction of bishops in the United Church. The ministers,
perhaps not surprisingly, are more favourably disposed to the
introduction of bishops than the laity. The Lay Leaders are less
likely than any other group to agree with the suggestion that the
ministers influenced them on Church Union.

The opponents and the supporters of Church Union tend to move
in opposite directions regarding: (a) the minister's preaching
clarifying Church Union; (b) the suggestion that the ministers
stand to gain more from Church Union; (c) the suggestion that
Church Union is being imposed from the top by the ministers. Those who vote against Church Union also disagree much more strongly, than those who support union, with the suggestions that the minister influenced their vote, and, or, that bishops will be an advantage in the United Church. It may be concluded then that those who vote against Church Union tend to see the issue in ways that differ substantially from the views of the majority of Methodists. They are the group most likely to be in conflict with their minister and the ministry as such. At the same time, while the majority strongly support the ministry in general, and in relation to Church Union, they still strongly reject the suggestion that they are simply the sheep following the pastor, and they are probably agreed that the minister's authority ought not to be increased.

The question of "adequate discussion" is much more important in relation to the local church than either the issue of 'assurances' or 'closure'. The strong agreement regarding 'adequate discussion' indicates that the vast majority were happy with steps taken by the local church to prepare people for voting. At the same time, it is clear that had no assurances been given, and were the respondents quite uncertain regarding the future use of their church building, they still would have voted in favour of Church Union by over 80 per cent. 13 In fact, those who were told, or who at least believed, that their building would be closed in the event of union, vote almost on a par with the overall return indicated by the survey. 14 There is then no evidence, except perhaps in relation to the 'adequate discussion issue, that would suggest that these were major areas of

12See TABLE 33, p. 107.
13See TABLES 44, p.117, and 45, p. 118
14See TABLE 45, p. 118.
conflict between the ministry and the laity. But, of course, as indicated, assurances were given, and a strong clear cut policy of rationalization regarding buildings was not built into the Plan for Union.\footnote{See p. 53 - 54.}

New Zealand Methodists, on the whole, strongly support moves towards Church Union. In so doing they agree rather than disagree with the ministry. The areas of conflict then, while significant for some, are usually not significant for the majority. But why do New Zealand Methodists give such strong support for Church Union?
CHAPTER VIII

CHURCH UNION - TOWARDS SOME PRIORITIES FOR NEW
ZEALAND METHODISTS

So far, against a background of earlier Methodist Union in New Zealand, and, latterly, significant numerical decline coupled with signs of secularization, an attempt has been made to assess the significance for New Zealand Methodists, of Currie's two major conclusions concerning the union of Methodism in England.¹ First, as far as the twin issues of decline and secularization are concerned, the analysis of the survey indicates that while there is no great concern over the state of the local church or congregation, there is some evidence of concern in relation to the denomination and in the areas of belief and heritage. This concern is relatively slight amongst the supporters of Church Union on the basis of the 1971 "Plan for Union", but amongst the opponents of the proposed union it can be found to a marked degree. The two groups diverge as the move is made from the local church situation to the denomination, and thence to the areas of belief and heritage. The opponents of union are more likely to be critical of the denomination, and more conservative in terms of belief and heritage, than are the supporters of union. Conversely, the supporters of Church Union are, in general, those who are more optimistic about the state of the denomination, more liberal in their theological position, and less tied to the denominational heritage.

¹ See page 42 for a definition of 'secularization'.
The second major conclusion which Currie arrives at has to do with ministry-laity conflict and the related issues of 'assurances' and 'closure'. Here the analysis of the survey reveals that by and large Methodists in New Zealand see themselves as placing considerable value on their relationship with their local minister. A majority see him both as a personal friend, and as a person with whom they are in general agreement. Against this background the supporters and the opponents tend to diverge in relation to the proposed union. The supporters of union, in general, reject suggestions that the ministers have ulterior motives in relation to Church Union or that they are trying to impose it on the laity. The opponents of union tend to endorse these suggestions. However, both groups react strongly to the suggestion that their local minister significantly influenced their vote on Church Union, and both groups show little enthusiasm for the introduction of bishops into the life of the United Church. But, even in these areas a larger minority of the supporters of union indicate agreement with these two statements than is the case with the opponents of union.\(^2\) The giving of assurances, and the possibility of closure of the local church, appear to be matters of minor significance in relation to union, even though 20 per cent agree that closure is a real possibility in their area. As such these issues have very little bearing on the overall issue of conflict between the ministry and the laity. In conclusion, it can be stated that while the opponents of union certainly see themselves as being in considerable conflict with the ministry as such, their relationship with their local minister does not differ significantly from that of the pro-union voters. The question

of closure is not a sufficiently significant issue to have a real bearing on that relationship.

As indicated in the second part of chapter IV under the heading "Secondary Motivating Factors," Currie's analysis of the reasons for Methodist union in England does not relate solely to numerical decline and the impact of secularization. He also sees the issues of economy and efficiency, and of union as a weapon in a conflict, as being of some relevance. This chapter will seek to evaluate the importance of these issues for New Zealand Methodists and will then proceed to look at how New Zealand Methodists understand the teaching of Jesus in relation to the unity of the Church. Finally, the chapter will present an analysis of question 56 in the survey questionnaire in which respondents were given the opportunity to make their own ranking of statements in terms of importance in relation to their Church Union vote. This will facilitate at least a partial answer to the question why New Zealand Methodists gave such a strong support for Church Union, in the 1972 Referendum.

I. SECONDARY MOTIVATING FACTORS- AN EVALUATION

In the English Methodists situation Currie sees the quest for greater efficiency and economy in the running of the denominations, especially the smaller denominations, as providing part of the motivation towards union. The New Zealand Methodist Church is a small denomination similar in size to the Bible Christians and the Methodist New Connexion, two of the three denominations involved in the English union of 1907. It could therefore be expected that this might be a factor in the New Zealand situation. Given the fact that 20 per cent of the respondents to the survey indicate that
their local church building is likely to be closed in the event of union, it seems that some rationalization is envisaged by at least a minority of Methodists. However, as previously noted, it is also a fact that prior to the referendum in 1972 the argument in support of union on the basis of present denominational economic difficulties was not explicitly stated in the Church press.\(^3\) True, the hope was expressed that union might lead to a more efficient use of resources, but it was not stated that union, in itself, would guarantee this.\(^4\)

What importance then did the respondents to the survey attach to this issue? To gauge this the questionnaire sought evaluation of the following statement:

> Questions of efficiency and economy in the running of the Church should be decisive when considering Church Union.

The basic response to this was:

<p>| TABLE 46 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY DECISIVE</th>
<th>ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY DECISIVE</th>
<th>ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY DECISIVE</th>
<th>ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY DECISIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>TOTALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A considerable number appear to place importance on this issue.

In relation to Church Union the result showed:

\(^3\) See p. 55.

\(^4\) See p. 56.
TABLE 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>181 (88%)</td>
<td>51 (34%)</td>
<td>108 (62%)</td>
<td>320 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>24 (12%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
<td>24 (18%)</td>
<td>54 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .4  Cramer's V .078

Though a considerable number appear to indicate that this is a matter of importance for them, it is not statistically significant when related to Church Union. If any weight can be attached to the result, the 57 per cent who both 'agree' and vote for union appear to be saying that they see the Church Union proposal as a move towards greater efficiency and economy. The 44 per cent who both 'agree' and vote against union appear to be saying that if in fact Church Union meant greater efficiency and economy, then they might support it, but they do not see the present scheme as pointing in that direction. But who are these people that express concern for the efficient and economic running of the Church? An occupational analysis showed:
This result is statistically significant. As noted previously, in relation to TABLES 13 and 15, the ministers, teachers and management-professional people again tend to show a similar response pattern. However, it is the housewives, followed by the labourers, who show the most interesting response with a quite marked swing away from the general pattern. The farmers, as in the previous TABLES again take up an extreme position, but here it is at the opposite extreme to the housewives, whereas in TABLE 13 they were the group which most closely followed the pattern of the housewives' responses. The housewives, of whom 30 indicate agreement with this statement, are in fact more than one third of the total number of respondents in the 'agree' column. It is clear then that

* See TABLE 15 for Occupational analysis of the Church Union vote, p. 93.

5 See TABLES 13, p. 63, and 15, p. 93.
they are very likely to be concerned about the efficient and economic running of the Church. This fact, however, apparently does not motivate them strongly in the direction of support for Church Union as their vote in favour of union is only marginally above the national average. Concern for economy and efficiency may perhaps be a factor in the 95 per cent vote in favour of Church Union returned by the labourers, but as the labourers are a very small proportion of the total sample not much weight can be attached to this apparent correlation. The farmers, the group most likely to reject this emphasis on economy and efficiency are also the group least likely to support Church Union. There may therefore be a correlation between their low vote and their rejection of this suggestion, though a negative response to one suggestion leaves many other options open.

As a result of this analysis in relation to economy and efficiency it may be concluded that while there are factors of relevance to some occupational groups, they are not significant in terms of the Church Union vote.

(I) Church Union as a Weapon in a Conflict

In chapter IV attention was drawn to the fact that Currie argues that some English Methodists were motivated to seek union in the belief that they could then bring pressure on some other larger denomination which was seen to be moving in an undesirable direction. It was pointed out that this could hardly be expected to be the case with the presently proposed union in New Zealand. In New Zealand the proposed union runs across long term denominational divisions and, for Methodists, it includes union with two considerably larger denominations. It also means, should the

6 See p. 56.
United Church come into being, that the only substantial denomination remaining would be the Roman Catholic Church and it would be considerably smaller than the United Church. The relationship between the negotiating churches and the Roman Catholic Church has probably never been better than at the present time.

To try to assess whether Methodists would be happy to see a wider union, including perhaps the Roman Catholics and possibly the Baptists and others, the following statement was posed for evaluation:

Most of the Churches in New Zealand should unite in the near future.

The following was the basic response:

<p>| TABLE 49 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| MOST CHURCHES IN NEW ZEALAND SHOULD UNITE * |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>236</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: This makes an interesting comparison with responses to an identical statement which was part of the 1964 'Survey' carried out by the Christian Education Commission of the National Council of Churches, published 1969, Christchurch. This was a random survey of the Wellington and Lower Hutt areas. With categories adjusted to match those in TABLE 49 the Survey response indicated: Agree 73 per cent; Uncertain 13%; Disagree 14%. On this count Methodist Church Members show themselves to be less enthusiastic about the statement than the general cross section of society in the Wellington Survey.
When related to the Church Union vote this showed:

**Table 50**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>MOST CHURCHES IN NEW ZEALAND SHOULD UNITE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>AGREE (98%) 54 (90%) 35 (44%)</td>
<td>321 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72% 17% 44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>4 (2%) 6 (10%) 44 (53%)</td>
<td>54 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7% 11% 82%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%) (100%) (100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001 Cramer's V .617

Statistically this is the most significant result in the overall analysis of the survey. The polarization of the two groups is very marked. Those who vote in favour of union show clearly that they are open to an even wider union of the churches. Very few of them indicate hesitation about widening the union. This shows that on the part of the supporters of union, the thought of the presently proposed union as some kind of weapon in a conflict with another denomination, is of very little consequence. Not surprisingly, those who vote against the proposal of union also indicate disagreement with the suggestion of a wider union. If they believe that Methodism is in conflict with any other denomination, and the analysis of the survey would perhaps indicate this, then they do not see union as a means of "correcting" the drift of that other denomination.

The response of those who vote in favour of union may have a relationship to the question of secularization and, if so, they may be saying that all the churches have a need to unite if the drift away from the churches is somehow to be stopped.  

---

7 See pp. 95-96.
However, this kind of interpretation of the meaning of their response needs to be assessed against that of those who vote in favour of union, to the statement that: "Church Union will bring about renewal and stop the decline of the churches in relation to the whole of society". 8 Sixty-three per cent of those who support union indicated that they were either uncertain, or that they disagreed with that statement. 9

The present situation of the churches in New Zealand makes it highly unlikely that union is in any sense to be viewed as a weapon in a conflict (except perhaps with the secular society), and the openness of a very considerable proportion of Methodists to the prospect of a wider union, would indicate that most Methodists do not see it as such.

II. CHURCH UNION AND BELIEFS CONCERNING THE CHURCH

Currie is inclined to play down what he calls "formal theological aspects" in relation to Church Union. 10 He says, "Ecumenicalism is assumed to be the will of God, and is less discussed than eulogized". 11 The people who avoid the discussion but do the eulogizing are, of course, members of the hierarchy for they are the spokesmen of ecumenicalism. This implies that the theological understanding of the nature of the Church, at the grass roots level, may be very different from that held by the pro-union members of

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8 See TABLE 25, p. 96.
9 ibid.
10 Currie, p. 11.
11 ibid.
the ministry. The survey took up this issue from two slightly different angles: first, in relation to the teaching of Jesus, and second, in relation to 'spiritual' and 'organisational' unity. Regarding the first the survey asked people to respond to the following statement:

The teaching of Jesus implies that all Christians should be united in one visible Church.

The basic response to this statement was:

TABLE 51

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly a majority of Methodists understand the teaching of Jesus in this way. It is therefore far from being a belief confined to members of the hierarchy, even though the ministers are more likely to endorse the suggestion. But is it significant in relation to Church Union?

TABLE 52

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH UNION VOTE</th>
<th>TEACHING OF JESUS IMPLIES ONE VISIBLE CHURCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGREE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR</td>
<td>238 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAINST</td>
<td>16 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square .001  Cramer's V .373

12 The ministers respond: Agree 83 per cent; Uncertain 4 per cent; Disagree 13 per cent.
The statement is strongly endorsed by the supporters of union and, somewhat less strongly rejected by the opponents of union. The majority therefore hold the statement to be true though not all who support Church Union are prepared to endorse it. A perhaps surprisingly large minority of those who vote against union agree with the statement. These people appear to be saying that they believe that there ought to be one visible Church but that the Church envisaged in the Plan for Union is not what they understand by that Church. The supporters of union who agree with the statement may be saying something similar but their conclusion is different. They see the presently proposed union as a step in the right direction.

It is often claimed that there is an underlying, spiritual unity to the Church, and that this binds Christians together in a real way in spite of denominational differences. Some, particularly amongst those who see themselves as 'evangelicals', would urge that this spiritual unity renders unnecessary any formal or more visible form of organic union. To gauge the strength of this point of view amongst Methodists the questionnaire first posed the statement:

The Christian Church is already united in a spiritual sense.

This brought the following basic response:

13 See All in Each Place, J. I. Packer, Ed. London, 1965, p. 58, although the writer does not draw the conclusion that visible unity is unnecessary.

A very considerable majority endorse the statement, but how do those who are in agreement view the implications of this spiritual unity? To gauge this, those in agreement with the statement were then asked to respond to:

This spiritual unity means that there is no need to bring about an organizational union of denominations (i.e. a visibly united Church).

The basic response to this was:

This indicates that just under half the respondents (177 out of a total of 374) hold to the view that the Church is united spiritually but that this does not rule out the need for organizational union. Thirteen per cent of those who vote for union appear to say that organizational union is not necessary but that they want it any way. Of those who agree with the statement, a majority (54 per cent) indicate that they hold the view that the underlying spiritual unity of the Church rules out the need for organizational union. However, this means that only 9 per cent (35 of a total of 374) of the total sample see spiritual unity as sufficient, whereas,
47 per cent of the total sample see organizational union as being also necessary. The remainder either reject the notion of spiritual union altogether and hence are not included in TABLE 54, or they are uncertain about the relationship of spiritual to organizational unity; or they support union though they do not see it as essential; or they oppose union on the present basis though believing in some form of organizational union.

When TABLES 51 and 53 are viewed together it is clear that a significant majority of Methodists both believe that the teaching of Jesus implies one visible Church and that the Church is already united in a spiritual sense. Only 17 per cent of Methodists see spiritual union as making visible union unnecessary and of these almost half (30 in TABLE 54) vote in favour of union in any case. A substantial proportion are convinced therefore that while the Church is spiritually united this union also needs to be made visible. In terms of statistical significance only, the statement that "Most of the Churches in New Zealand should unite in the near future", shows a stronger relationship to the vote on Church Union. The fact that this statement about the relationship of spiritual to organizational union, and the statement about the teaching of Jesus implying one visible Church, both show statistically significant results may suggest that questions of belief are of greater importance in relation to Church Union than issues such as denominational decline or conflict between the ministry and the laity. But is this true for those who vote in favour of Church Union as it is for those who vote against Church Union?
On the basis of the statistical significance tests the following statements show as those which most sharply divide the supporters and the opponents of Church Union:

(a) Most of the Churches in New Zealand should unite in the near future. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .617)

(b) This spiritual unity means that there is no need to bring about an organizational union of denominations (i.e. a visibly united Church). (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .504)

(c) Church Union will bring about renewal and stop the decline of the churches in relation to the whole of society. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .519)

(d) The differences between the denominations are now of historical interest only and their continued emphasis is a hindrance to the Church's mission in the 1970's. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .452)

(e) Church Union can fairly be described as 'imposed from the top' by the ministers. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .411)

(f) The ministers stand to gain more from Church Union than the lay people. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .387)

(g) The teaching of Jesus implies that all Christians should be united in one visible Church. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .373)

(h) There was adequate discussion of the issues involved in Church Union by our local congregation prior to the vote. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .334)

(i) The presence of bishops will be an advantage in the United Church when it is formed. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .280)

(j) Methodism by comparison with the other major denominations in New Zealand is in a state of serious decline. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .213)

(k) What my minister said to me on Church Union influenced me to vote the way I believe he did. (Chi-square .001, Cramer's V .217)
Every other statement or question which formed part of the survey has been related to the respondents' vote on Church Union and shows a relationship less likely to be statistically significant, or in fact less statistically significant than any in the above list. Several other relationships as, for instance, the location of the church to which the respondent belongs and his interpretation of the resurrection, or, the occupation of the respondent and his view of denominational decline, are as statistically significant as some of the relationships listed above.15 These have an indirect bearing on the Church Union vote and have been mentioned in the course of the thesis. Some other relationships have been deemed important because they clearly relate to the issues which Currie raises, though they were, statistically speaking, neither likely to be important, nor in fact important, except in the negative sense that they indicated that the issue was of no real consequence as far as New Zealand Methodists were concerned. These will be mentioned in the concluding chapter of the thesis. The point at issue here is, how do the issues listed above relate to the ranking the respondents themselves have given in terms of priorities when considering their vote on Church Union? Question 56 in the survey questionnaire asked people to rank eight issues, some of which would obviously have meaning for the supporters of union, while others would have meaning for the opponents of union, while yet others again could be interpreted either way. Both groups were faced with at least three issues which would have little or no significance for them. Therefore in analysing the response to this question only rankings from first place to fourth place in terms of significance have been taken into account.

15 See TABLES 20, p. 91, and 13, p. 83.
The questionnaire asked:

Rank the following (1 = most important, 8 = least important) in terms of their importance with respect to your decision to vote as you did on Church Union:

- Influence of local minister
- Possibility of loss of valued Methodist heritage
- Need for greater efficiency in running the Church
- Influence of theological/biblical factors
- Need for Church to be strengthened through unity
- Influence of local congregation
- Concern for continuing use of local church
- Possibility of creation of minister-dominated structure

When related to the Church Union vote the supporters and opponents of Church Union showed the divergence in their orders of ranking as set out in Table 51. In general, this result confirms the trends apparent in the previous Tables and underlines the largely differing set of priorities held by the supporters as compared with the opponents of Church Union. The first ranking, given by the supporters of union, to the statement that the Church needs to be strengthened through unity endorses their earlier, relatively strong, tendency to agree with the view that "Most of the Churches in New Zealand should unite . . ." and that there is a "... need to bring about an organisational union of denominations". This first ranking of the "Need for Church to be strengthened through unity" can also be seen as relating to the statement that "Church Union will bring about renewal . . .", though the supporters of union were rather divided on that issue.

The high ranking given by the supporters of union to the "Need for greater efficiency in running the Church" is surprising in the light of the fact that they did not strongly endorse the view that "Questions of efficiency and economy in the running of the Church
**TABLE 55**

PRIORITIES CONCERNING CHURCH UNION AS VIEWED BY SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>FOR:</th>
<th></th>
<th>AGAINST:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RANK</td>
<td>NO.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>RANK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength through unity</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater efficiency</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological/biblical</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local congregation</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>(5=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Minister</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister dominated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of local church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5=)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The numbers and percentages are of those who gave each issue a fourth or higher ranking.*
should be decisive".\textsuperscript{16} In terms of statistical significance that issue appeared unimportant. However, there may be a relationship between the high ranking of this statement and the strong statistical significance of the statement about the "organizational union of denominations".

The ranking given by the supporters of union to the "Influence of theological/biblical factors" correlates with the statistical significance of the statement about the "... teaching of Jesus..." and also relates to the statement on the implications of "... spiritual unity...".\textsuperscript{17} In both cases these statements were strongly supported by this group. The ranking given to the "Influence of the local congregation" and "local minister" can be seen as correlating with the tendency for the supporters of union to be more likely than the opponents of union to endorse such statements as: "There was adequate discussion... by our local congregation", and "What my minister said to me on Church Union influenced me to vote in the way that I believe he did".

The priorities indicated, in response to the ranking question by those who vote against union, underline trends apparent in the results of the previous Tables. Their stress on "theological/biblical factors" can be seen in their tendency to reject the view that "The teaching of Jesus implies... one visible Church", and to agree strongly with the statement that "To be a Christian one has to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead in bodily form". It can be seen again in their interpretation of the suggestion that spiritual unity makes organizational unity unnecessary.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} See Table 47, p.126
\textsuperscript{17} See Tables 52, p.132 and 54, p.134.
\textsuperscript{18} See Table 54, p.134.
As expected, given the response of those who vote against union to the statement that "differences between denominations are now of historical interest only . . ."; the importance of "Methodist heritage" is given a high ranking. Similarly their endorsement of the suggestion that "Church Union can fairly be described as 'imposed from the top' by the ministers" relates to their high ranking of the statement "... creation of [a] minister dominated structure".

The general antipathy to the ministry as such, though not to the local minister, on the part of the opponents of the proposed union seen in the statement to which they give second ranking can also be seen in their responses to the statements "That the ministers stand to gain more from Church Union. . .", and that "... bishops will be an advantage in the United Church". In contrast to the supporters of Church Union, half of those who oppose union appear to believe that greater efficiency in the running of the Church will be achieved outside union. While they are more likely to believe that Methodism is in a state of serious decline, than are the supporters of union, they definitely do not see the proposed union as arresting this decline by strengthening the Church.

It is quite clear that the two groups have differing sets of priorities. It also becomes increasingly clear that in New Zealand, the minority who vote against the proposed union are much more readily identified in terms of Currie's theses than are the majority who support union on the basis of the 1971 "Plan for Union".

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19 See Table 23, p. 94.
20 See Table 39, p. 111.
21 See Tables 37, p.110 and 41, p. 114.
CHAPTER IX
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Church Union is an important issue for many members of the major denominations in the 1970's. This is true in New Zealand, as it is in England and in Australia. It is particularly true as far as the members of the Methodist Churches in the three countries are concerned. Methodists in each country have already shared in a process of Methodist re-union. In each country Methodists, during the last decade if not earlier, have shown a more decisive commitment to the cause of Church Union than that shown by other negotiating denominations. In New Zealand this is clearly the case. Methodists in New Zealand have on two occasions in recent years voted overwhelmingly in support of Church Union.

The 1972 referendum results show that not only are a substantial majority in favour of the proposed union but also that this support is widespread in that not one of the ten Districts returned a less than 80 per cent vote in favour of union. This support is also widespread in other ways as the analysis of the survey has revealed. No occupational group gives union less than a 75 per cent majority in favour. Furthermore, the type of local church with the least enthusiasm for union, the church in the established suburb, still manages to return an 81 per cent majority in favour. These figures

1 See Table 6, p.70.
2 See Table 15, p.86.
3 See Table 21, p.92.
are significant, but the significance of the Methodist commitment to Church Union is not confined to verbal affirmations of support. The denomination has also committed itself decisively in terms of membership and property to union at the local level. 4

If the reasons for this overwhelming commitment to union on the part of the Methodist Church are, as Currie's conclusions in relation to English Methodism would suggest they might be, then the following issues should be apparent:

(1) Given actual numerical decline, a clear awareness, at least on the part of the ministry, of that fact.

(2) The presence of statements in the Church press, made by the pro-union ministers in particular, referring to the decline in the membership statistics and drawing the conclusion that this appears to point to the need for Church Union.

(3) Some clear signs of the impact of secularization on the denomination, this also resulting in pleas for union in order that the Church might be better able to arrest developments, seen as detrimental to the Church's future.

(4) Given the fact that New Zealand Methodism is a small denomination, the voicing of pleas for union on the grounds that union would mean greater efficiency and economy.

(5) Arguments in favour of union backed by prophetic utterances to the effect that union will solve the Church's ills and bring about renewed growth.

(6) Significant conflict between the ministry and the laity resulting from the drive towards union by the ministry, this being especially the case in relation to rationalization and the possible closure of local church buildings.

It would be unreasonable, however, to expect the above issues to be significant in New Zealand if the New Zealand Methodist Church was very different from its English counterpart, or if New Zealand society was largely dissimilar. But this is not the case. The Methodist

4See p. 6.
Church in New Zealand owes its existence to the four English Methodist denominations which eventually took root in New Zealand soil. These denominations recognized that they belonged together and by 1913 complete Methodist union was achieved in New Zealand. This pre-dated complete Methodist union in England, though it was evident, before 1913, that significant moves were taking place in that country towards the formation of a united Methodist Church.\textsuperscript{5}

There has therefore been a somewhat parallel movement into Methodist union in both countries. At the same time New Zealand Methodism has, by and large, continued to look to English Methodism as the parent body. More recently, the Methodist Churches in both countries have taken steps towards union with an other larger denomination or denominations.

Furthermore, the backdrop provided by society in England, is probably as similar as can be found anywhere outside of England. The chief difference is, perhaps, the relatively recent colonization and development of New Zealand as a nation.\textsuperscript{6} The New Zealand population is largely drawn from British stock, its historical affinities are chiefly with the British Isles. New Zealand, like England, is a modern Western industrialized nation, with this difference that its industry is principally oriented to dealing with the product of the rural sector.

Given the extent of these similarities; two Methodist Churches, with a shared heritage and a history of Methodist union, both with similar structure and set in comparatively similar

\textsuperscript{5}See p.22.

\textsuperscript{6}See pp.64-69.
environments,\textsuperscript{7} it would seem reasonable to expect that Currie's conclusions would have, as he suggests they might, "considerable general relevance".\textsuperscript{8} Indeed if Currie's conclusions are relevant at all then they ought to apply in the New Zealand Methodist situation. In New Zealand there appears to be no good reason for doubting this, though in another situation less English in character and given a non-Methodist denomination this may not be the case. But do Currie's conclusions actually hold true for New Zealand Methodists?

First, as to the question of denominational decline, the statistics show that substantial numerical decline is a fact of recent Methodist history. It could therefore be expected that this would be related to Church union in New Zealand as Currie indicated it was in England. But, in fact, in New Zealand the value of the statistics was questioned and the claim made that they placed too much emphasis on quantity and not enough on the quality of the life of the Church.\textsuperscript{9} At the same time the argument favouring Church union on the grounds that it would bring a halt to numerical decline was not explicitly mentioned in the denominational press.\textsuperscript{10}

Furthermore, as has been noted, the 1813 union in New Zealand took place at a time when numerical decline can hardly be considered a significant factor, and, more recently, in 1957 Methodists throughout New Zealand decisively committed themselves to the principle of union,

\textsuperscript{7}ibid., also p.45.

\textsuperscript{8}Currie, op.cit., p.15.

\textsuperscript{9}See pp.39-40.

\textsuperscript{10}See pp.40-41.
this during the period before significant numerical decline began to take place.\textsuperscript{11}

The findings of the sociological survey show that the vast majority of respondents do not see their local church as being in a state of numerical, or other, forms of decline. A majority also reject the suggestion that the denomination as a whole is in a state of decline.\textsuperscript{12} In so far as the result can be considered both reliable and significant it is also clear that the ministers appear to be the group least likely to view the denomination as being in serious decline. Therefore the conclusion that Church union is born of adversity, and is, in particular, a response by the ministers to denominational decline, appears to have little relevance in the New Zealand situation.

None the less it has some relevance, not in terms of providing motivation for union, but rather to some extent in terms of providing motivation against union. In this respect Currie is correct when he speaks of the opponents of union as being those "worst hit by decline", though it is not so much those who are in actual fact hit by decline but rather those who think that this is so.\textsuperscript{13} That is, it is those who hold a pessimistic view of the denomination as a whole, rather than of their local church, who are most likely to vote against Church Union. The findings of the survey confirm Currie's view that it is the pessimists who are against union, though the local church does not appear to be

\textsuperscript{11}\textsuperscript{See Table 2 p.9.}

\textsuperscript{12}\textsuperscript{See Table 11 p.80.}

\textsuperscript{13}\textsuperscript{See p.52.}
a cause of that pessimism. Those who view the denomination as being in a state of serious decline are also those most likely to oppose Church Union. But in New Zealand such people are not located in any particular area. Furthermore they are very much in the minority.

Second, regarding the question of secularization, the historical survey of the New Zealand situation suggests that there may perhaps be some relationship between this and Church Union. However, if so, this is definitely an indirect relationship, more in the nature of an aid to, rather than a cause of, ecumenicalism. 14

If the question of secularization is approached in Currie's terms then numerical decline, moves towards a more "liberal" and inter-denominational form of theology, and a re-grouping of Churches "against" a recalcitrant society, would appear to indicate the fact of secularization in New Zealand. 15 The question at issue here is whether in fact these marks of secularization, as understood by Currie, have any significance for the Methodist participants in the 1972 referendum on Church Union. The historical survey indicates that New Zealand Methodists were strongly pro-union in 1957 prior to the numerical decline and theological ferment of the sixties. It also indicates that Methodists were strongly pro-union in 1913, at least as far as Methodist union was concerned, when, in Currie's terms New Zealand society would have been, presumably, less secular than at the present time. The historical survey itself thus raises some questions about Currie's understanding of secularization, the further question is: how do the respondents view these issues?

14 See p.48

15 See p.42, footnote 25. Note: Numerical decline in one denomination may be related to increases in others, e.g. "Pentecostal" churches may benefit at the expense of more traditional denominations. Also "liberal" theology may not indicate capitulation to secularization but rather an attempt by the Church to speak in terms that are more readily understood.
The denomination is clearly significant for the respondents to the survey. Their regularity of attendance at worship indicates that they show a very considerable commitment to the life of the Church. What is more important they show this commitment whether they are 'liberal' or 'conservative' in their theology, or whether they vote in support of the proposed union or oppose that union. Basic commitment to the denomination is therefore not an important aspect in relation to the Church Union vote. However, the nature of belief about the resurrection, the importance attached to denominational differences, and, to a lesser extent, the view of Church Union as bringing about renewal, show considerable importance in relation to the vote. The theological 'liberals' are, as Currie suggests, somewhat more likely to support ecumenicalism than the 'conservatives'. In New Zealand, however, the 'conservatives' Methodists on their own would still have returned a more significant pro-union vote than that returned by any other denomination as a whole. Those who view the differences between the denominations as now a matter of historical interest only, are also as Currie suggests, more favourably disposed towards union than those who see such differences as still important. Those who see Church union as strengthening the Church in relation to the whole of society, and therefore maybe as a weapon in a conflict with secularization, also tend to give greater support to Church Union.

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16 Over 86 per cent attend on a weekly basis, under 4 per cent attend less than once a month.

17 See Table 19 p.89. and cp. with Table 1 p.7.

18 See Table 25 p.94.
However, a considerable proportion of the supporters of union are not sure that Church union will strengthen the Church.

Clearly, some of the conclusions reached by Currie find support in the above discussion of aspects related to secularization but three significant points ought to be noted. First, that the need to withhold the advance of secularization was not used as an explicit argument in the Church press in support of Church Union.\(^\text{19}\) Second, that theological 'conservatives' in the New Zealand Methodist Church show strong support for Church Union. Third, that the supporters of Church Union show considerable hesitancy about the suggestion that it will stop decline and bring renewal. Some of the distinctions therefore between the supporters and the opponents of Church Union are far from clear cut. Where they are most clear cut, and where Currie's conclusion is strongly endorsed in the New Zealand situation is in relation to the importance or otherwise of denominational heritage. On this question the two groups polarize.\(^\text{20}\) Yet here it is also important to notice that only 35 or 9 per cent of the total number of respondents want to affirm the importance of historic differences to the extent that this figures in their vote against Church Union.

Currie's analysis of the English situation shows that in England the smaller denominations were concerned about the question of efficiency and economy though the larger denominations were not.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{19}\)See p.48.

\(^{20}\)See Table 23 p.94.

\(^{21}\)See p.55.
In spite of the fact that Methodism in New Zealand is a small denomination the argument in favour of union on the grounds of efficiency and economy receives but passing mention in the denominational press during the period leading up to the 1972 referendum. The pro-union leaders of the New Zealand Church do not appear to have seen this as a major issue.

The initial findings of the survey seem to endorse the view that for New Zealand Methodists this issue is relatively unimportant in that both the supporters and the opponents of union are divided regarding efficiency and economy. However, the high ranking given by the supporters of union to the statement concerning efficiency in the final question of the survey shows this issue in a different light. It appears that either they baulked at the word "decisive" in the first statement, or else, in the second statement they were wanting to underline their strong support for an organizational union of denominations. In any case it is clear that while the rankings shown in Table 55 generally draw attention to, and underline, issues already known to be important: as far as the question of efficiency is concerned they draw attention to an issue which previously did not seem very significant in terms of their response in Table 47. This suggests that more weight can be attached to this issue than the results of Table 47 would indicate.

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22 ibid
23 See Table 47 p.126.
24 See Table 55 p.
25 See p.
Consequently, New Zealand Methodists who supported union in the referendum did find some motivation in the hope that the Church might become more efficient as a result though they were not urged by the pro-union Church press to support union for this reason.

The historical survey of the period leading up to the 1972 referendum shows that there were few prophetic utterances pointing to significant gains as a result of union. All such utterances were carefully qualified, and at least one article was published referring to the Church of South India in which it was made clear that there had been no new evangelistic thrust as a result of union.26 This differs from the picture Currie presents in relation to the English unions as it also differs from the period leading up to the 1915 union in New Zealand. It draws attention to the fact that forty years have passed since the completion of Methodist union in England and that there has been time to reflect on the outcome of that union and other such unions. The results appear to have made the advocates of union more guarded in their comments. In New Zealand this fact does not seem to have significantly diminished support for Church Union as far as Methodists are concerned. In fact only 32 per cent of New Zealand Methodists, and 86 per cent support the proposed union, appear to have adopted a prophetically optimistic outlook concerning the results of union.27 The majority, even of the supporters of union, do not hold that outlook. It would seem

26 The New Zealand Methodist, July 27, 1972, report of comments by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of the Church of South India.

27 See Table 24 p.96.
then that as far as most New Zealand Methodists are concerned ecumenicalism is not seen "... as the solution of the churches' problems" or as offering "... boundless prospects." 28

The historical survey of the situation leading up to the vote in 1972 shows that, as in England, it was the ministers in New Zealand who both initiated union moves and were the chief spokesman for union. 29 However, the findings of the survey shows, in contrast to Currie's findings in his historical analysis of the English situation, that the New Zealand ministers in taking this lead are strongly supported by the lay people of the Church. A significant number of New Zealand Methodists, 63 per cent, would in fact support a wider union of churches than that presently envisaged. Most agree that the teaching of Jesus, and the underlying spiritual unity of the Church, demand a visible union of denominations in one Church. In these views they concur with the ministry. 30 Moreover, they see themselves as in general agreement with their local minister, and more than half found his preaching on Church Union helpful. 31 Most reject the notions that the ministers have ulterior motives for advocating union, or that they are, as a group, trying to impose union. The question of adequate discussion in the local Church of the proposed union is a more important issue than either the question of assurances or the

28 Currie, op.cit. p.316.

29 See p.52.


31 See Tables 26, p.101. and 29, p.103.
possibility of closure. Closure is a real issue for some but it does not greatly affect support for Church Union or therefore, presumably, the relationship of these people with the ministry. The majority of New Zealand Methodists do not appear to be those who as Currie suggests "In the long run . . . have acquiesced in leaders' decisions, however unwillingly." 32

A minority, and they are in general those who oppose union, do seem to see themselves as in some conflict with the ministry as such though not with their local minister. These people do see the ministers as imposing their will on the laity, and do suspect that the ministers have ulterior motives in urging the ecumenical option. They are strongly opposed to the introduction of bishops which may mean that they see in this a move to increase ministerial powers, or that they are simply opposed to bishops as such, or that they are against change. 33 They tend to reject the view that there was adequate discussion at the local level, or that specific assurances were given, and to be uncertain as far as the continuing use of their local church is concerned in the event of union. They are in fact much more like the lay opponents of union of whom Currie speaks, but in the context of New Zealand Methodism they are very much in the minority.

It should be noted that both the supporters and the opponents of the proposed union are likely to reject the view that their local minister had a direct influence on their vote.

32 Currie, op.cit. p.314.

33 See Table 41 p.114, see also earlier discussion concerning District Chairman and bishops, pp.112-115.
It should also be noted that the supporters of union, as well as its opponents, express considerable reserve about bishops. Therefore both groups strongly assert that the way they voted on church union resulted from their own personal decision, and both groups are hesitant either about increasing ministerial powers or adopting a new hierarchical form, depending on how they view bishops. These comments need to be seen against the generally supportive attitude of the majority to the ministry and to moves in the direction of Church Union.

CONCLUSION

This assessment of the views of New Zealand Methodists in relation to their 1972 vote on Church Union, insofar as the responses to the survey are a reasonable reflection of those views, would suggest that:

(a) Currie's strong emphasis on the importance of numerical decline in relation to ecumenicalism appears to have little relevance in terms of motivation as far as most New Zealand Methodists, either lay or ministerial, are concerned.

(b) His emphasis on the importance of secularizing trends as helping to facilitate ecumenicalism, while perhaps of some relevance in the New Zealand setting in relation to the convergence of the denominations and consequently in the diminishing importance of denominational differences, is in other respects of only marginal significance.

(c) His emphasis on the importance of lay - ministerial conflict in relation to ecumenicalism has very little significance for the majority of New Zealand Methodists.

(d) His emphasis on pro-union prophecy, of predictions concerning renewal and growth, also needs qualification in that most New Zealand Methodists do not see union as solving the Church's ills.

(e) His emphasis on the quest for efficiency in the running of the Church is however endorsed by a considerable proportion of those who vote in support of union.

A small minority of New Zealand Methodists tend to move in a counter direction to the conclusions suggested here and to lend support to much of what Currie has to say. The vast majority however
support the move towards union on the basis of the Plan for Union 1971, and they appear to do so because they believe that the teaching of Jesus and a true understanding of the nature of the Church imply the need for visible unity. It is not just the Ministers in New Zealand who believe ecumenicalism to be the "will of God"; Methodist lay people also strongly endorse that belief and they vote accordingly in relation to the proposed union.

Given the fact that this analysis of the relationship of New Zealand Methodists to ecumenicalism leads to some differing conclusions from those reached by Currie and the modification of others, then to that extent his view that "Methodism is an accelerated microcosm of Christianity", in terms of its divisions and re-union, is weakened. Consequently, inferences made on that basis concerning ecumenicalism in general may be less reliable than they would at first appear. It may also be the case that his historical analysis of English Methodism has resulted in an over-emphasis on the element of conflict between the ministry and the laity. It may be, that as in New Zealand the ministers said what the majority of the laity felt needed to be said in favour of union and that, therefore, only the lay people opposed to union felt the necessity to express their views

---

34 See Tables 51 and 52, p.132 especially the large number in the latter Table who both "Agree" and vote "for" union, only the question of adequate discussion results in a more unified response on the part of the supporters of the proposed union, but it is also important to note that 31 per cent of those who oppose this particular union nevertheless agree with the statement. See also discussion p.p.131 - 135.

35 See Table 54, p.154, those who "Disagree" with this statement give almost 100 per cent support for the proposed union.

36 See p.62.
in writing. Certainly, if English Methodists are anything like their New Zealand counterparts they may in fact have been more enthusiastic and Methodism less divided regarding the ecumenical option than the evidence on which Currie draws appears to indicate. In any case New Zealand Methodists (and Australian Methodists also if this thesis has any general relevance) with their 86 per cent vote in favour of union in 1972 appear to be keeping Wesley's "Catholic Spirit" very much alive.\(^{37}\) It remains to be seen whether this will ultimately mean the visible union of the Christian Church in New Zealand.

\(^{37}\) See p.29.
Section A below lists, according to the author, (where relevant) books referred to in the text as well as others consulted in the course of the preparation of the thesis.

Section B lists periodicals, pamphlets, and other articles, some in photostated form, which have been quoted or consulted in preparing the thesis.

**SECTION A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILLIAMS, W.J.</td>
<td>(no date) Centenary Sketches of New Zealand</td>
<td>Christchurch, &quot;Lyttelton Times&quot;.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WILLIAMS, W.J. (no date) Centenary Sketches of New Zealand Methodism. Christchurch, "Lyttelton Times".


SECTION B

I. Pamphlets and Periodicals.


MILLER, R.S. (no date) "Is this: 'The Faith we Affirm Together?'" Blenheim.


"Ecumenicalism?" review of Robert Currie's Methodism Divided, in "Mini-Mag" the Methodist Ministerial Magazine. Dunedin. (no date of publication)

"The Bishop and the Diocese". Wellington, Joint Commission on Church Union.


"The Faith of the United Church". Wellington, Joint Commission on Church Union.

"The Ministry of the Church". Wellington, Joint Commission on Church Union.

"One - That the World Might Believe". Wellington, Joint Commission on Church Union.

"Parishes and Congregations". Wellington, Joint Commission on Church Union.

"What Will Worship Be Like?" Wellington, Joint Commission on Church Union.

II. Material consulted serially for relevant data.

Minutes of the Annual Conference, Methodist (Wesleyan) Church of New Zealand, 1896 - 1912.


Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Church Conference, 1900 - 1913. (original hand written documents)

"New Zealand Methodist Times", 1908 - 1913.


III. Material in Photostat form.


Methodist Church of Australia General Conference Minutes, 1972, pp. 195 - 201.

MAP INDICATING GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF RESPONSE GROUPS

NOTE: Gisborne questionnaires were not forwarded to members.
APPENDIX B

A PROFILE OF METHODIST MEMBERSHIP IN NEW ZEALAND

NOTE: the following information is based on the findings of the survey. In each case the category with the most significant percentage of responses is shown in the column on the left of the page.

### I PERSONAL PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>51 plus</th>
<th>31 to 50</th>
<th>21 to 30</th>
<th>UNDER 21</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE (ministers excluded)</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>THEOL/TERNARY</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>POST GRADUATE</td>
<td></td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>HOUSEWIVES</th>
<th>MAN'G/PROF</th>
<th>CLERICAL</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TEACHERS</td>
<td>MINISTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FARMERS</td>
<td>SK’LD CRAFT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RETIRED</td>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOME</th>
<th>$2000-5000</th>
<th>$5000-9000</th>
<th>NON EARNER</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PENSIONER</td>
<td>$8000 plus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UNDER $2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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377
### III. PROFILE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH METHODIST CHURCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Relationship:</th>
<th>Life Long</th>
<th>Not Life Long</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Allegiance:</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Anglican Baptist</th>
<th>Other Rel.</th>
<th>Congregational</th>
<th>Brethren</th>
<th>Church of Christ</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Present Local Church:</th>
<th>Over 10 Years</th>
<th>5-10 Years</th>
<th>Under 5</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regularity of Attendance:</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Less</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On Leading?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On Union Parish Session?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On Methodist Local Trust?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>100%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lay Preachers?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| TOTALS                       | 376    | 105    | 481   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ON SYNOD:</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDED CONFERENCE:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>377%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>377</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHURCH UNION VOTING
BY METHODIST PEOPLE

Instructions: Please CIRCLE the box containing the number which
 correponds to the answer that you want to give or
 IF THE QUESTION IS FOLLOWED BY A ROW OF DOTS write
 the appropriate answer.

1. Name of local church/union parish.............................

2. Name of Circuit...................................................

3. Approx. membership of local church..........................

4. Type of area in which church is placed (Please CIRCLE eg.
 NEAREST description):

1. Inner city 2. Established suburb (In city 20,000*)
   (In city 20,000+)

4. Large town 5. Small town (10,000 to 20,000) (under 10,000)

6. Rural area

5. Age: 1. Under 21 2. 21/30 3. 31/50 4. 51+


7. Highest level of education reached:


4. Theological/ other post secondary 5. Post graduate

8. Occupation..............................................................

9. Income level:

1. Non-earner 2. Under $2,000 3. $2,000-$5,000

4. $5,000-$8,000 5. $8,000+ 6. Pensioner

10. Race:

1. Maori 2. Pakaha 3. Polynesian
   (non-Maori) 4. Other

Relationship to Methodist Church

11. Have you always been a Methodist? 1. Yes 2. No

12a If 'no' indicate any previous religious allegiance..............

12b Father's denomination..............................................

12c Mother's denomination..............................................
13. How long have you been a member of your present local church?

1 Under five years  2 Five to ten years  3 Over ten years

14. How often do you attend your local church?

1 Weekly  2 At least monthly  3 Less than once a month

15. (Answer EITHER (a) or (b) but NOT both)

(a) Were you on the Leaders' Meeting in 1972?  1 Yes  2 No

(b) Were you a Union Parish Elder in 1972?  1 Yes  2 No

16. Were you a Trustee in 1972?  1 Yes  2 No

17. Were you a Lay Preacher in 1972?  1 Yes  2 No

18. Were you a Circuit Steward in 1972?  1 Yes  2 No

19. Were you a member of District Synod in 1972?  1 Yes  2 No

20. Did you attend Conference in 1969?  1 Yes  2 No

21. Did you attend Conference in 1970?  1 Yes  2 No

22. Did you attend Conference in 1971?  1 Yes  2 No

23. Have you served on the Church Union Committee of the Methodist Church of N.Z. (ie. in period up to August 1972)  1 Yes  2 No

In 1972 members of the Methodist Church of New Zealand were given the opportunity to vote on the following statement with respect to union with the Church of Christ, Congregational, Anglican, and Presbyterian, churches in New Zealand:

I AM IN FAVOUR

I AM NOT IN FAVOUR

of the Methodist Church uniting with the other four Churches on the basis of the Plan for Union 1971.

24. Did you exercise your right to vote?  1 Yes  2 No

25. If you did not vote please give reason for not voting:  

........................................................................

........................................................................
25. If you voted on Church Union did you vote: (CIRCLE number in box representing your answer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>I AM IN FAVOUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I AM NOT IN FAVOUR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of the Methodist Church uniting with the other four Churches on the basis of the Plan for Union 1971.

The following questions deal mainly with factors which may have been important in helping you decide how to vote. The questions fall under four headings: Local Church Factors; Personal Faith Factors; Relationship with local Minister; General Considerations.

Local Church Factors  (Please CIRCLE number representing your answer)

26. There was adequate discussion of the issues involved in Church Union by our local congregation prior to the vote.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLEASE READ QUESTION 28(a) and (b) BEFORE ANSWERING QUESTION 27

27. Did the minister and/or other local church leaders offer any assurances about the continuation of your congregation after Church Union comes into effect?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. (Answer EITHER (a) or (b) but NOT both)

MOVE TO Q. 29 UNLESS 'YES' ANSWER TO 27.

(a) If the answer to question 27 was 'Yes' then could such assurances be described as general and vague (eg. that your congregation would have some say with respect to its future)?

EITHER 1 Yes

(b) Or if the answer to question 27 was 'Yes' then could such assurances be described as specific in character (eg. perhaps indicating for instance the continued use of your local church buildings, of Lay Preachers, of Methodist Hymn-book etc)?

Or 2 Yes

29. In the event of Church Union would your present place of worship be closed due to the fact that there is a more suitable church building for a united congregation nearby?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. Do NOT answer if you voted FOR Church Union.

Given the fact that you voted AGAINST Church Union to what extent was this due to the fact that you did not want to see your present church building closed - would you describe this factor as?

1 Very Important  2 Important  3 Unimportant
4 Not applicable

31. Do NOT answer if you voted AGAINST Church Union.

The influence and opinions of other lay people in my church persuaded me that support for Church Union was the way ahead for the Christian Church in New Zealand.

1 Strongly agree  2 Agree  3 Uncertain  4 Disagree  5 Strongly disagree

32. In terms of membership your local church is maintaining its position in the community at least as well as the local churches of the other denominations.

1 Strongly agree  2 Agree  3 Uncertain  4 Disagree  5 Strongly disagree

33. Your church appears to be more vigorous and active than the local churches of the other denominations in the area.

1 Strongly agree  2 Agree  3 Uncertain  4 Disagree  5 Strongly disagree

Personal Faith Factors

34. To be a Christian one has to believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead in bodily form.

1 Strongly agree  2 Agree  3 Uncertain  4 Disagree  5 Strongly disagree

35. If the bones of Jesus were found in Palestine tomorrow this would not affect the reality of my faith.

1 Strongly agree  2 Agree  3 Uncertain  4 Disagree  5 Strongly disagree
36. The teaching of Jesus implies that all Christians should be united in one visible Church.

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

37. The Christian Church is already united in a spiritual sense.

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

38. Do NOT answer unless AGREEING or STRONGLY AGREEING with Q. 37.

This spiritual unity means that there is no need to bring about an organisational union of denominations (ie. a visibly united Church).

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

39. Theological/Biblical factors are of crucial importance when making decisions such as that on Church Union.

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

40. My minister and I are in general agreement on most matters.

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

41. My friendship with my minister is one of the most valuable friendships that I have.

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree

42. I see the minister primarily as an advisor on religious matters.

4. Disagree 5. Strongly disagree
43. What my minister said to me on Church Union influenced me to vote in the way that I believe he did.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

44. The preaching of my minister clarified the Church Union issue for me and enabled me to vote the way I did with confidence and understanding.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

45. General Factors.

Methodism by comparison with the other major denominations in N.Z. is in a state of serious decline.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

46. It is as easy to worship in a church of another denomination as it is in my own local Methodist church.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

47. The presence of bishops will be an advantage in the United Church when it is formed.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

48. Questions of efficiency and economy in the running of the Church should be decisive when considering Church Union.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

49. Church Union can fairly be described as 'imposed from the top' by the ministers.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree
50. The central element in Christian worship is the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

51. The differences between the denominations are now of historical interest only and their continued emphasis is a hindrance to the Church's mission in the 1970's.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

52. Church Union will bring about renewal and stop the decline of the churches in relation to the whole of society.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

53. The ministers stand to gain more from Church Union than the lay people.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

54. Most of the Churches in N.Z. should unite in the near future.

4. Disagree  5. Strongly disagree

55. When you hear the word 'church' which of the following comes most immediately to mind? (Indicate ONE answer only)

1. The Methodist Church of N.Z.  2. Your local congregation
5. The worldwide Christian family  4. Your Circuit and its churches
5. The Ecumenical fellowship of churches in your area.

56. RANK THE FOLLOWING (1 = most important, 3 = least important) in terms of their importance with respect to your decision to vote as you did on Church Union:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Influence of local minister</th>
<th>2. Need for Church to be strengthened through unity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Possibility of loss of valued Methodist heritage</td>
<td>4. Influence of local congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for greater efficiency in running of Church</td>
<td>Concern for continuing use of local church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of theological/biblical factors</td>
<td>Possibility of creation of minister dominated structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Three factors were considered to be of crucial importance with respect to the question of distribution, these were: the need to obtain a random sample; the need for the sample to be representative of the various types of location; the need for the sample to cover all geographical areas in which there was a significant population base.

"Modified" Random Sample

The procedure followed was to first select every fifth name in the alphabetical list of ministers in active Circuit work throughout New Zealand. The Minutes of Conference always contains such a list of ministers. The names selected were then checked against type of location, geographical position, and, when necessary, names of other ministers were substituted to ensure that each consideration was taken into account. Ten, fifteen, or twenty copies of the questionnaire, depending on the estimated size of the local church, were then posted to the selected ministers. More than a quarter of the active Methodist ministers in New Zealand received copies of the questionnaire.

On receiving the questionnaires the ministers were asked to answer a copy, and then to divide the remainder into the number of people on the Church's Electoral Roll (the roll of active Confirmed Members of the local Church), and to post out, for example, one to every tenth Member. On receipt of the questionnaire Members were asked to answer it and to return it direct to the writer.

1 The Minutes of Conference gives Circuit Membership figures not those of the local Church.
Seven hundred and eighty questionnaires were distributed to forty-five ministers. Almost four hundred completed questionnaires were returned, and of these three hundred and seventy-seven were valid replies. The number of valid returns represents 1.65 per cent of the total number of Methodist people who voted in the referendum on the "Plan for Union" in 1972.

The returns cover all Methodist Districts and all major areas of population with the exception of Gisborne.

The Responses Indicated in the Text

The majority of questions in the main body of the questionnaire allow for five possible responses in relation to the given statement. In the body of the text of the thesis however the number of responses have been reduced to three: Agree; Uncertain; Disagree; doing away with the Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree categories. There were two reasons for this. First, to enable the TABLES to be read more easily, and, second, to do away with results that at first sight may have appeared significant but which were in fact due only to a movement from say, Agree to Strongly Agree. Such a movement has a compensating effect which in terms of real significance in relation to the given statement, and for the purpose of the thesis, was not of major importance. The really significant aspect of the results, from the point of view of the thesis, is shown in the three categories rather than in the five. Where this combination of categories has taken place the results of the Chi-square and Cramer's V tests have been amended to take account of this.
APPENDIX D

NEW ZEALAND METHODIST - STRUCTURE

(Chaired by the President of the Church who also represents the Conference during the remainder of his year in office)

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- Development Division
- Overseas Division
- Maori Division
- Education Division
- Administration Division

Note: The Divisions are directly responsible to Conference.

(Conference is made up of laity and ministry on an approx. 50/50 basis but ministers tend to dominate proceedings)

DISTRICT SYNODS
(Chaired by the District Chairman who is responsible for general supervision of the District)

(ten Synods in N.Z. 50/50 lay/minister but again ministers tend to dominate proceedings)

QUARTERLY MEETINGS
(Chaired by the Superintendent minister)

(A meeting of Circuit Leaders, 90 per cent lay membership)

LEADERS' MEETINGS
(Usually chaired by the local minister)

(The Leaders' Meeting is composed of people in key positions in the life of the local congregation, plus one congregational representative for every fifty members or part thereof)
## NEW ZEALAND METHODISM - DIVISIONS AND REUNIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Britain</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Wesleyan Church. (Samuel Leigh)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Withdrawal to Sydney.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>Renewal of Wesleyan Mission. (John Hobbs)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Primitive Methodism convened in Taranaki.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Australasian Wesleyan Conference established - N.Z. Wesleyanism represented as two districts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>United Methodist Free Churches in N.Z.</td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>Australasian General Conference (Wesleyan) establishes a N.Z. Conference, General Conferences held triennially.</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Bible Christians in N.Z.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Voting in four churches on Church Union showed proposed Methodist Union to have support of a sizeable majority.</td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>Australasian General Conference blocks N.Z. Wesleyan moves towards union.</td>
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<td>1888</td>
<td>A.G.C. blocks union for second time.</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Union of U.M.F.C. and Bible Christians with the Wesleyans. (Methodist Church now 19,138 members).</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Complete Methodist Union in Australia.</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>A.G.C. in Adelaide support the principle of N.Z. Conference autonomy thus preparing the way for the Primitive Church to unite with Methodist Church in New Zealand.</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>Complete Methodist Union in New Zealand.</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Vote on Church Union - Methodists 86% in favour.</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>? Church Union in New Zealand.</td>
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A.G.C. Australasian General Conference.  
U.M.F.C. United Methodist Free Churches.