contemporary Islamic movements that are addicted to violence. In the modern world, seeking to deliver or deny 'a Catholic vote' or 'an Anglican vote', forming Christian political parties or attempting to dominate secular ones, putting priests and bishops into political power, operating secret religious pressure groups: all provide examples of the same phenomenon. The persistence of such impulses needs to give place, as it has in many believers, to a principled commitment to the ideals of liberal democracy. Only then can religious people put to rest the partial truth in W.H. Auden's cynical comment: 'The only reason the Protestants and Catholics have given up the idea of universal domination is because they've realised they can't get away with it'.

TONY COADY

ECUMENICAL AND MULTIFAITH AUSTRALIA

The word, 'ecumenical', derived from the Greek word eukome, and implying 'the whole of the inhabited world', came in the 20th century to refer to the seeking of unity between the Christian churches. Prior to that, there had been some small, sporadic but still-born efforts in the 17th and 18th centuries about the need to unify the Christian churches in Pietist and Evangelical circles, with their sense of international fellowship and their wish to overcome the prohibition on liturgical sharing. However, it was during the colonial era of globalization that serious thought began to be given to the Christian ecumenical agenda.

During the 19th century, the colonial era of globalisation had given birth to the missionary activities within the Protestant and Catholic churches in the colonies of Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Usually, they were in competition with each other. Particularly in Anglican circles during the 1860s, this rivalry led to more serious thinking about overcoming the scandal of Christian division. Another important element was the foundation in the United Kingdom of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1844 and of its female counterpart in 1855. These two student organisations from their beginnings crossed denominational barriers, and, in their international conferences, even reached beyond Christian circles.

Towards the end of this same century, with the greater contact between the nations and as the sense of global consciousness grew, so did the aspiration for interreligious contact and co-operation. In 1893 in Chicago, United States, the Parliament of the World's Religions was held, the first time in world history that religious leaders from East and West had ever met in formal dialogue. But this splendid event did not foreshadow immediate further success, as it would be exactly 100 years before another Parliament would be organised, again in Chicago. In between, there would be some sporadic achievements, but it was not until 1970 that the other major international interfaith organisation, the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), would hold its First World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan.

THE EARLY PERIOD OF ECUMENISM

Ecumenism in its early stages was based on the Anglican and broader Protestant commitment, which led to some useful initiatives such as the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Council, often regarded as the birth of 20th-century ecumenism. During these early stages, Catholicism had given some thought to global realities, but only in the context of missionary triumphalism and the ideology of ultramontanism while it was sorting out its relationship with the new Italian state. In Australia, at the time of federation in 1901, the mainstream churches had expanded into every new suburban and rural area. There were still some intradenominational schisms; for example, the Lutherans were not to unite until 1963. But the interreligious heritage from the colonial period was one of secularism and sectarianism. The secularist age would last until the 1970s, as would the sectarianism, which in particular pitted British Protestantism against Irish Catholicism. The Protestants were in the ascendancy but the interdenominational relationships were characterised by hostility, suspicion or apathy, with some local personal interconnectedness. This cultural and religious fermentation would eventually lay the foundations for a tolerant and multicultural Australia, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s.
However, the earlier overseas ecumenical thinking had already revedered in Australia with the formation of the Australian Student Christian Movement in 1896 and of the National Missionary Council in 1926. Overseas, in 1937, religious leaders agreed to unite the Faith and Order Movement and the Life and Work Movement to form the World Council of Churches, which took place on 23 August 1948 as Europe continued to recover from the Second World War. The pre-Second World War activity would also lead to the formation of the Church of South India in 1946, from the Anglican, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches, and in 1957 of the United Church of Christ in the United States, from the Congregational, Reformed and Lutheran Churches.

THE CONTEMPORARY ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA
This international activity was being closely monitored in Australia through the various denominational link organisations. The Australian Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1946 to develop the ecumenical movement in Australia and to build the international fellowship of the Christian churches. Its achievements were commensurate with these aims. This Committee, with people such as John Garrett in the lead, also took upon itself to free itself from any colonialist leanings, by reaching out to Christian Asia, especially through participation in the First East Asian Christian Conference in 1957 in Indonesia and at the Second Conference at Bangkok in 1964. The Protestant churches were very much minorities in Asia, and were keen to establish relationships with Christian Australia. The Committee played a central role in changing the Australian perspective of Asia from 'Asia of the Far East' to 'Asia of the Near North' and in gradually breaking down the White Australian Policy from 1956 to 1973. Because of their interaction with Asia and Asian Christian leaders beginning in the 1950s, religious leaders would be at the forefront of these developments in shifting Australian public opinion.

In 1946 and thereafter, state counterparts of the Australian Committee of WCC were gradually formed. In the late 1950s, with the election of the reformist Pope John XXIII, the Roman Catholic entry into the ecumenical field transformed the whole scene. Much earlier, some of the Orthodox Churches had also shown their enthusiasm for the ecumenical agenda. The Australian Council of Churches was the result in 1964, with 15 churches entering into a covenant of commitment and the Catholic Church having observer status.

In 1994, the formation of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) marked a further evolution, with the Roman Catholic Church becoming a full member, along with 15 other churches. The NCCA aims are:

- ... in confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, for the churches and Christian communities (1) to deepen their relationship with each other in order to express more visibly the unity willed by Christ for his Church and (2) to work together towards the fulfillment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Apart from the many ecumenical meetings and dialogue sessions, including at local level, the formation of Ministers' Fraternities, some early achievements were the formation of the Joint Theological Library, now called the Dalton McCaughey Library, in deference to its Jesuit and Presbyterian (and other Protestant) beginnings, to serve the United Faculty of Theology within the Melbourne College of Divinity. Another outcome has been the development of ecumenical schools, especially in country towns where the Protestant communities have collaborated in establishing such schools. Initial Catholic enthusiasm for such ventures quickly waned.

In 1977, the ecumenical movement produced a major achievement with the formation of the Uniting Church of Australia from the Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australia and a good proportion of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It remains, however, an ambivalent achievement, given that the number of Uniting Church members has been in near free-fall since the 1990s, more so than the other churches. In 1991, the high-water mark of Australian ecumenism occurred with the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Canberra.

The ecumenical movement has certainly seen the end to religious sectarianism. It has led to regular gatherings of the national heads of churches since 1985, and such gatherings have been replicated at state and territory level, though with differences in form, structure and regularity of meetings. Ecumenical entities have been formed in the local dioceses, and they combine in theological dialogue and in making statements on public issues. Formal dialogue, especially where the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches is one of the partners, has taken broad perspectives in addressing issues, rather than focusing on a contentious theological, Scriptural or historical point.

At the state and territory level, state bodies have been in existence under various titles since the late 1940s. They are presently the New South Wales Ecumenical Council, the Victorian Council of Churches, Queensland Churches Together, the South Australian Council of Churches, the Council of Churches in Western Australia, the Tasmanian Council of Churches and the Northern Territory Council of Churches. Over time, there has been growing co-operation across these bodies, leading in 2007 to the Australian Ecumenical Officers' Network. These bodies have been conspicuous in allowing leading church women, such as Jean Goodwin, Jane Hume, Mary Lou Moorehead, to exercise leadership roles when their aspirations may have been stopped by the refusal to ordain women by many churches.

Aside from the organisational framework, at the local level, in suburbs and regional cities and rural towns, relationships between the different Christian parties have generally been very positive since the enthusiasm of the 1960s and the 1970s, when the Roman Catholics became part of the ecumenical endeavour. This has been particularly so in rural communities, where religious leaders, isolated from their denominational confrères, found support through prayer meetings, spiritual reflections etc. and Protestant pastors often sent their children to the local Catholic school. In the cities, the meetings of the local Christian leaders have spawned and continue to spawn many activities, such as joint prayer meetings, ecumenical Christmas card services, the Way of the Cross on Good Friday and various world peace initiatives. There have been various educational initiatives, such as the Action for World Development, across the churches in the early 1970s.

INTERFAITH ACTIVITY IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT
After the 1891 triumph in Chicago with the first Parliament, little would happen at a global level until the first WCRP in Kyoto in October 1970, after several years of preparatory work. Founding WCRP is generally credited to Dana Gareley, but he was assisted by a Japanese Shinshin, an Indian Catholic archbishop, a Japanese Buddhist, an Indian Hindu, a United States Unitarian, a German Christian (the only female) and a United States Jewish rabbi. The two official Australian delegates were Dr Max Charlesworth, a Catholic academic at the University of Melbourne, and Rev. Arthur Preston, head of the Wesley Central Mission in Melbourne.

WCRP developed its own vision that focused on a raft of issues, but by now often woven together with development and poverty, human rights, religious freedom, refugees, the environment and regional conflict. The World Assemblies have been held every 4 or 5 years since, including the one held at Morah University in Melbourne in 1989, in which the Anglican Archbishop David Penman and the future bishop, Philip Huggins, together with Rev. John Radburn, as well as numerous delegates as Ramon Marar, Abdul Kazi, John Davidson and Elizabeth Bell as delegates, played leading roles.
INTERFAITH ACTIVITY IN AUSTRALIA FROM THE 1970s TO 2000

Interfaith activity in Australia did not exist organisationally until the early 1970s, and has since been associated with the work of the Australian chapter of the WCRP, now called Religious for Peace Australia. Historically, it has been centred in Melbourne. However, it now has associate state-based branches in Sydney, Brisbane and Tasmania, and there are cognate organisations in Adelaide and Canberra. Perth has not had a longstanding interfaith organisation.

WCRP Australia grew substantially during the 1970s and 1980s, with many eminent religious leaders and civic and academic figures as members. This culminated in its successful bid to host the Fifth World Assembly in 1989, at Monash University (Clayton campus), attended by 600 delegates from 60 countries. The Assembly’s legacy in Australia was limited, though it led to the establishment of the Greater Dandenong Multifaith Network, which has since become an exemplar for local interfaith activity. Subsequently, the Victorian government funded a full-time secretary for a further 6 years, but by the late 1990s WCRP Australia was struggling. However, all this changed with the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND JEWs

Meanwhile, during the latter part of the 20th century, another important and longstanding relationship developed between Australia’s Christian and Jewish communities. In 1943, while the gas chambers were doing their utter evil work in Nazi Germany and at a time when most Christian leaders had little sympathy for Jews, the first Council for Christians and Jews was formed in Sydney under the chairmanship of the Anglican archbishop, Howard Mowll (1890–1958), assisted by Rabbi Porush. It helped Jewish refugees gain Australian passports, but this initiative lasted only 5 years before petering out. In the early 1970s, under the watchful eye of Rabbi Raymond Apple, a luncheon club drew together the city’s eminent religious leaders and met and continues to meet regularly at the Great Synagogue. This has spawned many initiatives, including television programs because of its closeness to the Australia Broadcasting Corporation’s religious affairs commentators. It also eventually led in 1988 to the formation of the New South Wales Council of Christians and Jews.

Meanwhile, in Melbourne, with its larger Jewish community, special relationships were formed in the post-Second World War period, and this led in 1962 to the possible formation of a council, but it was defeated by divisions within the Jewish community. During this time, individual churches were linking into the Jewish community. The work of leaders such as Rabbi John Levi, Archbishop Sir Frank Woods, Archbishop Sir Frank Little, Professor Robert Anderson, Dr. David McCaughey and the Sisters of St. Joan led to the formation of the Victorian Council for Christians and Jews, which held its first meeting at Temple Beth Israel in February 1985. Its work has been primarily educative, based on the building of trust between its members and involving itself in seminars, lectures, exhibitions etc., and in recent years it has produced a highly informative journal called Bridge (bridge).

Similar councils have developed in most other states. For example, the South Australian Council was formed in late 1994. And across the Tasman, councils have been formed in Auckland (1986) and Wellington (1991). These councils have provided support and encouragement to Australian Jewry in times of crisis in the Middle East and elsewhere, and in reaction to the constant anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish installations. They have formed a key part of the interfaith activity in Australia over the past three decades. In 1991, in a telephone hook-up, the Australian Council of Christians and Jews was formed, and it has produced 70 editions of its very useful newsletter, Christians and Jews News, on national and international developments.

IN THE AFTERMATH OF 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (‘9/11’), and especially the two terrorist attacks in Bali, which killed 88 Australians, focused Australian attention not only on security matters but also on the wisdom of supporting interfaith activity in the interests of social cohesion and as a possible antidote to homegrown terrorism. Governments at state and federal levels, in the name of national security, became involved almost overnight in the support of interfaith activities, especially between Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools. The Australian government commissioned the report Religion, Cultural Diversity and Safeguarding Australia (2004) and the accompanying monographs Islam in Australia (2004) and Constructing a Local Multi-faith Network (2004). As well, it has financially supported many community and educational initiatives through the Living-in-Harmony Program.

In 2001, as the only interfaith organisation with any claim to national coverage, WCRP Australia, supported strongly by the universities in Melbourne through several key academics, was rejuvenated. In particular, among its activities it has supported the formation of interfaith networks in local government areas. The multicultural and interfaith lobby, which had more or less ignored each other till this time, began co-operating, and this led in 2004 to the formation of the Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO), under the aegis of the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia. Funding limitations curtail the work of APRO, but it is, when better structured, the embryo for an Australian Interfaith Council. As well, Australians began linking again into the international interfaith organisations in a major way.

Many other initiatives far too numerous to enumerate have included the JCMA live-in seminars for Jews, Christians and Muslims; the Interfaith
Centre at Griffith University in Brisbane; the UNESCO Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Affairs at Monash University in Melbourne; the Asia-Pacific Centre for Interreligious Dialogue at the Australian Catholic University and its chair for Islamic-Catholic Relations; the Interfaith Women's Network in New South Wales; multifaith iftar dinners during Ramadan; and the Victoria Police Interfaith Council.

In more recent times, especially after 9/11, leaders of faith, Christian and other than Christian, have convened. In New South Wales, WCRP Australia has sponsored such meetings at Parliament House and in Victoria, they have been convened both by WCRP Australia and the Victorian Council of Churches. As well, governments, such as in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, have now begun to meet regularly with religious leaders in part also of the growing interconnectedness of religion and state, which has been part of the Australian scene since the 1970s.

CONCLUSION

The ecumenical agenda continues to be important, especially at the local level, and inter-church relations are, for the most part, firmly embedded in trust and collaboration which, however, remains limited. The initial enthusiasms of the late 1960s and 1970s are long gone, burdened by the sense of the difficulty of achieving unity, however it might be envisioned. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches have been friendly enough but have given little in negotiation. And new obstacles, led by the issues of women's ordination and homosexuality, have also dampened the way forward. The big steps are yet to be taken, for example, Roman Catholic acceptance of Anglican Holy Orders.

In 1993, Frank Engel, in his book on Christians in Australia, made the appraisal that 'it is disappointing, even discouraging, that after so many years, the ecumenical movement is not larger, more effective and more influential'. Little has changed.

The same might be said of interfaith activity, where the stakes are higher due to the threat of religiously inspired terrorism. But it is too early to say. In 2006, a Monash University survey found there were 86 interfaith organisations in Australia, mostly formed since 2001. The events of 9/11 have thus rejuvenated the interfaith movement in Australia. It has seen many initiatives. WCRP Australia led Melbourne's successful bid to host the Parliament of the World's Religion in December 2009. It remains to be seen how successful the world's largest interfaith gathering will be and what legacy it will generate in Australia whose strong sense of secularism may make it difficult to face up to its multifaith future. - DESMOND CAHILL

FUNDAMENTALISM IN MODERN SOCIETY

The term 'fundamentalism' as applied to Christianity, had its origin in the United States as recently as 1910. The basic principles of this approach were published as The Fundamentals: A testimony of truth. These were essentially that the Bible is absolutely true in every respect; that the world and its human inhabitants were directly created by God without evolution or variations; that the virgin birth, life, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is literally true in all respects; that miracles occur today as in biblical times; and that Christ is the only son of God, who died to save humankind from the consequences of its sins. Many, but not all, fundamentalists believe in the imminent second coming of Christ and the gathering up to heaven of those who have been saved. This belief is usually termed adventism, and sometimes describes the end of the world after the battle of Armageddon. These events are often seen as taking place in Palestine. Many millions of people in the United States subscribe to most or all of these beliefs.

While the United States is constitutionally secular, it is also the most religiously active of developed societies. Its 'great awakenings' and revivals over the past 300 years have created powerful loyalties and organisations based on beliefs that have much less influence in Europe or Australia. These include the argument that, since the Bible is the word of God, every word in it must be literally true. As much of the Bible is essentially historical or prophetic and does not claim to be directly dictated by God, the emphasis of many fundamentalists has been on the Ten Commandments, Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah and Daniel, the teachings of Jesus and St Paul, and the revelation of St John the Divine. However, such Old Testament stories as the creation of the world and humankind in 6 days, the rescue of humanity from the flood or of Jonah from the whale, continue to be accepted by millions, as they were in the Middle Ages. Two centuries of scientific discoveries and biblical scholarship have not dislodged the belief that the Bible is fundamentally true in all respects. In pietistic societies, Bible stories were transmitted orally or painted on church walls or as icons. Today, many are still retold through radio and television. Such stories are a central feature of popular culture in all societies influenced by Protestantism, Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Many are also part of Muslim culture, although the use of images and illustrations is often forbidden as contrary to the second Mosaic commandment.

To these time-honoured accounts have been added many more recent fundamental beliefs in the divine origins of the Book of Mormon; in the immortality of the Second Coming and the 1000-year millennium; the gathering-in of the lost tribes of Israel; faith healing; speaking in tongues unknown to the speaker; and communication with the spirits of the dead. Hundreds of thousands of Australians subscribe to one or other of these beliefs, as do many millions of people in the United States. Yet, this does not prevent them from partaking of all the benefits of modern science and affluence, except for tiny groups on the fringe of society who try to lead lives uncorrupted by the modern world. This compromise with modernity can be a source of tension to many fundamentalists and of incomprehension to many others. In recent years, the distinction between fundamentalists (Bible literalists) and Pentecostalists (possession by the Holy Spirit and ecstatic behaviour) has tended to become obliterated in the eyes of many followers.

Much of the inspiration for United States fundamentalism came from the two Great Awakenings