

# Old Catholic-Anglican cooperation in mission

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## Old Catholic-Anglican Cooperation in Mission

### The Oud-Katholieke Missie "Sint Paulus"

*Holland*

*Motive.* It was during the International Old Catholic Congress at Rheinfelden (Switzerland) in 1957 that Professor M. A. Zwart spoke on the missionary calling of the Church. Bishop Dr. U. Küry made an enthusiastic speech with regard to the desirability of the Old Catholic Churches becoming aware of their missionary responsibilities which until then had been more or less neglected. This made such an impression on the Dutch Old Catholics that they very soon contacted the Rev. Dewi Morgan, Press Officer of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), in order that he might come to the Netherlands to advise the Old Catholics on the best way to cooperate in the mission field. This happened in autumn 1958. A small committee with Mrs. M. van Vliet of the Society of Saint Willibrord and Mr. B. W. Verhey had arranged for him to visit various parishes, make contacts and friends amongst the Old Catholics and give lectures on this subject. Rev. D. Morgan encouraged the organizers to continue in building up a missionary consciousness among the people in the Church. When the bishops agreed that the committee should start "from the bottom" it began to ask for support. But things developed rather slowly. Only when the then Bishop of Deventer, Mgr. P. J. Jans, helped them to get over this hurdle by suggesting: "Why not begin? You have a shop full of wares and you are waiting until the crowds come – open your doors and let your customers in!", they went into action.

*Foundation.* On Friday June 26, 1959 a meeting took place at Hilversum. Clergy as well as laity were present together with Prof. Dr. P. J. Maan as personal representative of the then Archbishop Dr. Andreas Rinkel. The meeting was a success and the Old Catholic Mission "St. Paulus" was founded! The motto "Come over and help us" was chosen. A committee was set up to do the necessary work. B. W. Verhey having taken the initiative to give the idea a concrete shape wanted to retire but was persuaded to serve as chairman of the committee which after 22 years he still does! Together with him were elected Mrs. M. van Vliet as English secretary, the Rev. (now Rt. Rev.) A. J. Glazemaker as Dutch secretary and Mr. F. J. Parmentier as treasurer.

*Development and Aim.* Right from the beginning “St. Paulus” decided that priority should be given to the proclamation of the gospel overseas. This was and remains the main purpose. In support of this aim help is given for social assistance. With the approval and moral support by the episcopate the committee began to work immediately. It decided to make the mission-call as wide as possible, i. e. not only among Old Catholics in the Netherlands but to include the sister-churches in Switzerland, Germany and Austria. In October 1959 the bishops of these churches were informed about the foundation of the “Missie Sint Paulus”. It was suggested that similar organisations should be set up in these churches. If this could be realised it was proposed that all should cooperate with St. Paulus.

It was clear from the very outset that Old Catholics could not and would not open up a missionary enterprise and a mission-field of their own. Therefore it was of utmost importance to find the right place, i. e. a mission-field which would appeal to the people in the church. So it was decided to look for a possibility within the Anglican Church. After some consultations with SPG in London it was proposed that the Anglican Church in the Province of South Africa should be the place where Old Catholic missionary effort could engage. The historical alliance between the Netherlands and South Africa played a part in this but also the great need of that area. Through the Archbishop of Utrecht the committee received a request from the synod of the Church of the Province of South Africa for help. The diocese of St. John’s in the Transkei was finally chosen and St. Paulus is still involved in this work today. The first gift was sent to the diocese for an altar in a school. It was a modest beginning! Then help was given to All Saints’ Hospital in the same diocese. Medical equipment was supplied and financial assistance towards the furnishing of a new maternity ward. The Society of Old Catholic Women became very enthusiastic on all this and began to produce a great deal of bed-linen, layettes, etc.

While this was going on members of the committee visited various parishes to raise interest and to find material assistance for the work that had to be done. At first progress was slow, but after some time interest was apparent and finances grew.

When the bishop of St. John’s asked for help to build a new church at Nkondlo this project at first sight was considered rather too big. Fortunately at that time the Swiss Old Catholic Church had decided to cooperate by introducing an annual mission-collection on Trinity Sunday beginning in 1962. This common effort made it possible that on

December 27, 1964, the feast of St. John the Evangelist, the new church which seats about 500 people could be inaugurated by the bishop of St. John's, Rt. Rev. James Schuster.

While our missionary efforts increased St. Paulus had the privilege to receive from time to time guests from South Africa. The first was Rev. Philip M. Wood who came to the Netherlands together with his family and visited several Old Catholic parishes, addressing the congregations and showing them slides. Later Dr. Ingle and his wife came and informed about their work in the hospital in Africa. The enthusiasm of the supporters of St. Paulus was renewed. In 1968 it was possible for the first time to send a doctor to the missionfield, Dr. Te Velde who had offered to serve a couple of years at All Saints' together with his wife. In 1969 another doctor, Dr. and Mrs. Smeenk, left for South Africa. Together with their friends Dr. Ingle and Dr. Te Velde they organised a scheme to combat diseases caused by malnutrition. This was the so-called "Project B" of Dr. Ingle for which St. Paulus raised a substantial sum. This became possible owing to two Dutch Interchurch campaigns for missionary work overseas, the so-called action "kom over de brug". The first effort in 1968 provided St. Paulus with the enormous amount of £18,000.- whilst the second in 1974 again provided £14,000.-. This enabled St. Paulus to increase its support in South Africa.

It was with satisfaction that the committee heard that Mrs. van Vliet was invited by a personal friend to visit the Church in South Africa in order that she might report back from her own experience. One of the results of this trip was the help given to Gadra School Feeding Scheme in Grahamstown which feeds all non-European children who are pupils of that school, providing a meal every school day of the year. Apart from this clothes are sent regularly to Grahamstown to help those most in need. When Mrs. van Vliet reported details about this at home response became most encouraging. This journey had yet another effect as it brought in contact St. Paulus with the diocese of Zululand and its bishop whom the committee met in 1972 at Utrecht during the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Since then there has been annual financial help to the diocese for the salary and the equipment of an evangelist.

In 1971 St. Paulus became involved with the Anglican Franciscan Brothers in Zambia. In the previous year during the International Old Catholic Congress at Bonn the committee met Brother Desmond SSF. The German Old Catholic Church provided at that time financial help

for the leper hospital at Fiwila. St. Paulus supported the evangelistic work of the Franciscans there, i.e. religious education, travel-expenses, supply of bibles and other literature. When Brother Desmond left for Tanzania to begin a new Friary at Mtoni (Dar-es-Salaam) St. Paulus went with him supporting his efforts of education and construction. When Br. Desmond had Mtoni in working order he was sent somewhere else and St. Paulus went with him! His next station was Belize in Central America from where he asked for support to build a church in Libertad. Now it was mainly the Old Catholic parish of Haarlem which made the most substantial contributions towards this project. Thanks to the late Rev. J. W. Keij this parish became the most mission-minded in the Dutch Old Catholic Church.

When Br. Desmond moved to the Friary in Trinidad St. Paulus continued to give assistance and added this place to her ever-growing list of missionary areas. Quite recently financial help was given for the building of a new Franciscan center in Trinidad.

In answer to a special appeal St. Paulus gave also help for the training of an ordinand in Zaire – Mr. Oudo who in the meantime has finished his training and was ordained. St. Paulus goes on to help in the same way to train further applicants for the priesthood.

The latest project of St. Paulus is in the diocese of Malawi (Central Africa). Whilst the Archbishop of Utrecht attended the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1978 he met Archbishop Donald Arden of the diocese of Southern Malawi who appealed urgently for financial help towards the building of four convertible churches in the new towns in his diocese. Due to the coming industrialization many people will leave their villages to work in the towns. If the Church wants to be present there must be new churches built as meeting centres as well. A detailed building program was presented to our committee. Together with our bishops it was decided then to finance one of the churches, that at Lilongwe Capital City. Of the £ 16,000.– asked for St. Paulus hoped to raise 5,000.– in three yearly instalments 1978–1980 which in the meantime was done. At the same time St. Paulus asked for help from other Old Catholic Churches and is happy to report that the Swiss Church agreed to contribute through the annual collection of Trinity Sunday Sfr. 20,000.– half of which has been paid already. St. Paulus is very grateful for this enormous support from Switzerland.

*Financial Basis of St. Paulus.* Right from the beginning our work has been supported by individual members of the Old Catholic Churches. Their number grew as time went on but there could be many more.

Furthermore we receive annual donations from the Dutch Old Catholic Supporting Fund (OKOF), from various societies within the Church, e.g. the Union of Old Catholic Women. For special projects we receive substantial contributions from the Regents of the Old Roman Almoners (ORKA) at Utrecht. Moreover some Anglican congregations in the Netherlands contribute regularly, and – as already mentioned – twice we received large sums from the Interchurch campaign “Kom over de Brug” (Come across the bridge). For other particular purposes the societies “De Kinderen Hulp en Steun” and “Kinderbescherming” gave their financial support.

In answer to repeated requests from our part the Episcopate agreed that there should be a Mission Sunday every year within the Octave of St. Willibrord's Day (7. November) and that all parishes should ask for a special collection for the Mission. This materialised in 1972, thirteen years after the foundation of the mission. For many years we received money from the annual collection for mission work from the Swiss Church which had instituted this collection much earlier. Only when they decided to give direct help to the Anglican Church in Moçambique their donations ceased. The Church in Germany gave occasional help, and the Austrian Church sent sometimes large sums due to the enthusiasm of Dr. Elfriede Kreuzeder. One of them came from the Women's World Day of Prayer in Austria. Besides our own November collection we sometimes receive a part of the Lenten offering as it happened in 1979.

*International Contacts.* Cooperation on the international level was sought from the very beginning of St. Paulus. It just does not seem to be possible to have identical organisations in the sister churches with which one could cooperate on the same lines. But – as they report themselves – they work on their own and in their own way although they cooperate with St. Paulus in the training of ordinands in the diocese of St. John's (Transkei) and in supporting the leper hospital at Fiwila (Tanzania).

Since 1961 the International Old Catholic Congresses gave ample opportunity to inform on the aims and work of the mission. In Haarlem 1961 there was an exhibition of photographs which informed about the work at All Saints' Hospital in St. John's. At Vienna 1965 the mission was given the opportunity to report on its 5 years work and to hand out to all participants a pamphlet. For the first time the Dutch, German, Swiss and Austrian Churches held a meeting to discuss the mission and the ways of action.



At Bonn 1970 contact was made with Brother Desmond SSF which resulted in the expansion of our work as described above.

At Luzern 1974 a meeting of representatives of the Old Catholic Churches was held which decided that in the case of big missionary projects a common appeal for cooperation and mutual assistance should be made to the other Churches. On these grounds St. Paulus has asked in 1979 for support for Malawi.

At Nordwijkerhout 1978 there again an "information market" was held where the various Unions, Societies etc. could show their wares. St. Paulus had its own special display. The Rev. Fr. V. Alan Young SSJE who has become a close friend of our mission was present. Without his name this report would be incomplete. He accepted an invitation to the Congress and became an integrated part of it. He was with us again as our honoured guest on the 9th September 1979 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of St. Paulus.

*Structure of the Committee.* On the 16th April 1967 the official status of Episcopal Commission was granted with its own Statute. Nomination of members of the committee is now made by the bishops. The committee consists at present of Mr. B. W. Verhey (chairman), Mrs. M. Van Vliet (English secretary) who both serve since the beginning in 1959; Rev. W. A. Eman (1971), Mr. N. Lenten, treasurer (1972), Mrs. F. E. Folkers-Schootstra, Dutch secretary (1977).

### **Zusammenfassung und Übersicht**

Der Internationale Altkatholikenkongress 1957 in Rheinfeldern gab den Anstoss dazu, dass die altkatholischen Kirchen sich auf den Missionsauftrag der christlichen Kirche wieder zu besinnen anfangen. Am 26. Juni 1959 erfolgte in Hilversum die Gründung der altkatholischen Mission St. Paulus unter dem Motto «Komm herüber und hilf uns». In Zusammenarbeit mit der anglikanischen Missionsgesellschaft «Society for the Propagation of the Gospel» (SPG) in London schien es sinnvoll, altkatholische Missionshilfe in Zusammenarbeit mit der anglikanischen Schwesterkirche einzusetzen. Ein erster erfolgreicher Beginn wurde dann im südafrikanischen Bistum St. John's in der Transkei gemacht. Von Holland aus gingen dann Impulse auch nach Deutschland und der Schweiz, wo ebenfalls ein missionarisches Bewusstsein erwachte. Zunächst unterstützte man die Projekte der «Missie Sint Paulus», doch entwickelten sich die Dinge dann so, dass beide

Kirchen selbständige Wege gingen, wie deren Berichte hier zeigen. Auch St. Paulus wurde im Laufe der nunmehr 22 Jahre ihres Bestehens – seit 1967 im Status einer bischöflichen Kommission – auch ausserhalb Südafrikas tätig, wie die abschliessende Übersicht zeigt:

1. *Diözese St. John's (Südafrika)*: a) Finanzielle Hilfe der Sonntagschule; Unterstützung der Arbeit von Schwester Monica Mary; b) Clydesdale Mission (Fr. Weaver) religiöse Erziehung, Sozialarbeit und Kirchenbau.

Kap-Provinz: Grahamstown: Schulkinder-Speisung an der Gadra-Schule.

2. *Diözese Zululand*: Religionsunterricht und Sozialarbeit (Bezahlung eines Katecheten).

3. *Tanzania*: Materielle Unterstützung der Tätigkeit der Franziskaner-Brüder in Mtoni (Unterricht und Erziehung).

4. *Zaire*: Finanzierung der Ausbildung eines Priesteramts-Kandidaten.

5. *Belize (Mittelamerika)*: Geldhilfe für Kirchenbau in Libertad.

6. *Trinidad*: Geldspenden für die von den Franziskanern aufgebaute Arbeit unter Jugendlichen (Bibelstudium usw.).

7. *Diözese Lake Malawi (Zentralafrika)*: Finanzierung von Kirchenbau.

8. *Gezielte Hilfe*: Auf Anfrage hilft St. Paulus gelegentlich in Einzelfällen, indem sie diese bestimmten Institutionen innerhalb der altkatholischen Kirche Hollands überträgt, z. B. Schulgebühren für begabte eingeborene Kinder, Ausbildung einer Krankenschwester.

9. Die jüngste Einsatzstelle ist *Springvale Mission* (Südafrika), wohin der unter 1. erwähnte Fr. Weaver kürzlich dislozierte. St. Paulus will ihm helfen, die Mittel für die Ausbesserung verschiedener seiner Kirchen und für den Kauf eines Landrovers zu beschaffen. Letzteren hat er ohne Zweifel nötig in einer über 2800 km<sup>2</sup> sich erstreckenden Gemeinde!

B. W. Verhey

Vorsitzender der Bischöflichen Kommission  
Altkatholische Mission «Sint Paulus».