

# Preface

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## Preface

*Urs von Arx*

The *Bonn Agreement* of 1931 is the formal basis of ecclesial communion between the Old Catholic and the Anglican Communion of Churches. The wish to mark its 75th anniversary with a scholarly symposium was manifest among various Old Catholic bodies. It was the Most Revd Dr Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht, who as President of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference invited the Revd Prebendary Dr Paul Avis, General Secretary of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity, and the Revd Mattijs Ploeger, doctoral student at the Old Catholic Seminary in Utrecht, to co-ordinate the preparations for an Anglican – Old Catholic theological conference. The Archbishop suggested a number of ecclesiological themes to be treated, the main purpose of the symposium being to investigate to what extent Anglicans and Old Catholics share a common ecclesiological identity. On the basis of these suggestions, the editors of this volume prepared the outline of the conference. Four speakers from each side were invited to present a paper on one of four selected ecclesiological topics. In addition a main paper on the historical background to the Bonn Agreement and an Anglican response should establish the link to the past event that we are commemorating.

The two Archbishops of Canterbury and Utrecht agreed to be the joint patrons of the conference, which was to be held under the auspices of the Old Catholic Theologians' Conference and the Centre for the Study of the Christian Church at Exeter. The Centre's Director, Dr Paul Avis, suggested holding the conference in England and in preparing it he was assisted by his secretary Mrs Louise Walton. The symposium was held at Hinsley Hall in Leeds, a conference and pastoral centre owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds.

It was originally planned to publish the papers in two separate editions in English and in German. As this proved to be impossible, the *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift (IKZ)* offered to produce a supplementary issue (*Beiheft*) and publish the texts in English. The two introductory historical papers are not included: the first (by Urs von Arx), which showed that in an Old Catholic perspective the Bonn Agreement had been, to some extent, an element of a larger tri-partite Anglican – Old Catholic – Orthodox union scheme, is forthcoming as a monograph; the second (by Charlotte

Methuen) will be published in an extended version in a forthcoming issue of *IKZ*<sup>1</sup>.

As can be seen from the program, the nearly 70 participants were expected to formulate the conference results. While no agreed statement was drafted, submitted and voted upon, some of the convictions shared by all or at least many are recorded in a summary of the plenary discussions written by the Very Revd Dr Dick J. Schoon, which is included in this collection of papers. The last section of his report takes up an earlier summary of conference results prepared by Paul Avis for the Council for Christian Unity.

It remains for the reader to assess the degree of convergence in ecclesiology – theoretical and practical – between the two traditions Anglican and Old Catholic. A certain difference in approaching ecclesiological issues may be found in the fact that for Old Catholics ecclesial communion of the Union of Utrecht with the worldwide Anglican Communion is still seen as something unique<sup>2</sup>, since they have no similar bilateral commitments in the European context<sup>3</sup>. This, of course, is different for the churches of the Anglican Communion, which in recent decades have developed a network of ecclesial fellowship and consultation of various degrees with churches shaped by the Reformation. Regarding the ordained ministry of these Protestant churches, the Old Catholics with their different historical background still show reserve or uncertainty.

Apart from such considerations, it will be noticed that the speakers did not consistently refer to texts stemming from the partner tradition. Is this no more than an effect of delivering ‘twin papers’ by contributors confining themselves to their own tradition, and is it also an indication of a weak

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Charlotte Methuen, ‘The Bonn Agreement and the Catholicization of Anglicanism: Anglicans and Old Catholics in the Lang Papers and the Douglas Papers 1920–1939’, *IKZ* 97 (2007), pp. 1–22. The same issue includes a paper submitted to *IKZ* after the Leeds Conference: Andrew Atherstone, ‘Anglican Evangelicals, Old Catholics and the Bonn Agreement’, *IKZ* 97 (2007), pp. 23–47.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘intercommunion’ is sometimes still, albeit in an obsolete way, used among Old Catholics to refer to the Anglican – Old Catholic ecclesial fellowship.

<sup>3</sup> The *Bonn Agreement* (or *Concordat*) served as a reference text for Old Catholic ‘intercommunion’ with the Independent Philippine Church as well as with the Lusitanian Church and the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church in 1965; since 1980 the latter two Churches have been extra-provincial dioceses under the metropolitan authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

theological exchange in the past? Or is the apparent convergence a sign that the two theologies are securely rooted in a common tradition?

To conclude I have to extend my thanks to all those who contributed to the release of this issue: the authors, the Revd Prebendary Paul Avis for going over the papers written by the non native English speakers, the Revd Mattijs Ploeger for putting the texts in a unified digitalized form, the Revd Canon Peter Hawker (Murten CH) for proof-reading, the ‘Eugène-et-Louis-Michaud-Fonds of the Department of Old Catholic Theology, University of Berne’ for bearing the costs of this *Beiheft*.

The Leeds Conference was part of a series of international or national events to celebrate the Bonn Agreement. I only mention the 29<sup>th</sup> International Old Catholic Congress held at Freiburg (D) in August 2006, which included a common Eucharist and an ecumenical gathering in the presence of the two Archbishops, Dr Joris Vercammen and Dr Rowan Williams, who both addressed the audience<sup>4</sup>. The common Eucharist, the two Archbishops presiding and preaching respectively, stood in the line of the two services in London (Westminster Abbey, July 2) and Utrecht (Ste Gertrudis, November 7), which joined the two Archbishops Robert Runcie and Marinus Kok in 1981 when marking the semi-centenary of the Bonn Concordat<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. ‘XXIX. Internationaler Altkatholikenkongress, 7.–11. August 2006 in Freiburg im Breisgau (Deutschland)’, *IKZ* 96 (2006), pp. 169–244; ‘Bonner Abkommen’, *Ökumenische Rundschau* 55 (2006), pp. 526–555. See also *IKZ* 96 (2006), pp. 154 f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Alt-Katholische Kirchenzeitung* [Bonn] 25 (1981), pp. 51, 67 f., 75; *IKZ* 72 (1982), pp. 55–59. See also the three publications: Gordon Huelin (ed.), *Old Catholics and Anglicans 1931–1981. To Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Intercommunion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Peter J. Maan / Jan Visser, *1931–1981. Vijftig jaren full communion tussen de anglikaanse en oud-katholieke kerken*, Publicatieserie Stichting Oud-Katholieke Seminarie 11 (Amersfoort: Stichting Centraal Oud-Katholiek Boekhuis, 1982); ‘Fünfzig Jahre altkatholisch-anglikanische Interkommunion’, *IKZ* 71 (1981) 203–268. Nothing comparable happened in 1956; a year later, however, began the series of the (International) Anglican – Old Catholic Theological Conferences, which ended in 1993. The Bonn Agreement and its actual implications as well as other ecclesiological issues were repeatedly the subject of these conferences, but most of the papers given were never published and thus remained unknown. The ‘Anglican – Old Catholic Co-ordination Council (AOCICC)’, which replaced those Conferences, is of a more administrative nature.