

# Unity and communion, mystical and visible

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# Unity and Communion, Mystical and Visible

*Urs von Arx*

## 1. Introduction

Let me begin by briefly commenting on the terms that appear in the title of my paper. They deal with the Church: Unity and Communion of the Church. The term 'mystical' points to the belief that the Church as a Communion, whose unity is one of its characteristics, has its origin and life and goal in the Triune God. The term 'visible' points to the belief that the Church manifests its unity and its life in various forms of human action or interaction in *martyria*, *leitourgia* and *diakonia*.<sup>1</sup> This inherent and irreducible duality of the Church – Orthodox tradition would speak of its theandric nature, Roman Catholics of the *mysterium* of the Church (LG 1), Luther of its hiddenness (*ecclesia abscondita*)<sup>2</sup> – is the hallmark of the Church as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Such a duality implies a certain correlation between the mystical and the visible: the visible of the Church is considered to be somehow the manifestation of the mystical, i.e. of its God-centeredness. Thus it is 'secondary', dependent on something given.

The visible Communion of the Church does not encompass the mystical Communion. The only partial identity of the visible and the mystical Church is no theological problem as long as we think of the difference

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<sup>1</sup> This *trias* is a sort of shorthand for the life of the Church (primarily the local Church, see below) according to its nature and purpose: *martyria* includes the proclamation of the Gospel mission, evangelization, catechesis, theology, apologetics, interreligious dialogue etc; *leitourgia* includes all forms of worship eucharistic or non-eucharistic; *diakonia* includes the witness to God's love for his creation and thus for humans in need not only within, but also beyond the 'official' or canonical borders of the Church. This nowadays widely used *trias* seems to originate in the German Evangelical *Berneuchener* movement of the 1930s.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, c. 1 'De Ecclesiae Mysterio' and the preliminary definition: 'Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with *God* and of the unity of the whole *human race* ...' (my italics); Ulrich Kühn, 'Deus absconditus – ecclesia abscondita', in: Johannes Brosseder (ed.), *Verborgener Gott – verborgene Kirche? Die kenotische Theologie und ihre ekklesiologischen Implikationen*, Forum Systematik 14 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001), pp. 81–98.

between *ecclesia militans* (the pilgrim Church) and *ecclesia triumphans* or of any such differentiations between angels and humans or between the living members of the Church and those who have passed away. It is not this differentiation, however, that seems to lie at the root of the specific duality of the visible and the mystical (or invisible, as it was often called), but rather the evidence that the Christian community includes fully initiated (baptized etc.) members who are obviously sinners or unbelievers; this somehow required the distinction between the actual composition of the (visible) Church as a *corpus permixtum* and the eschatological composition of the (as yet invisible) Church as *coetus sanctorum* or *electorum* or whatever it was called.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of a duality of the visible and the mystical seems relevant for another ecclesiological issue, namely whenever various groups or denominations (to use neutral terms) claim to be the Church (with its otherwise inherent mystical-visible duality), but are not in visible communion with one another. Does there exist a mystical communion and unity between these groups that is not or only imperfectly manifested in the sphere of the visible? How can we know? It is this issue and thus the correlation of the mystical and the visible reality of the Church, which this paper is asked to address, the assumption being that the said correlation can offer help in finding appropriate ways of ecumenical strategies for visibly separate Churches gradually growing together to become a full visible Church.

I mentioned the four *notae ecclesiae*: the Church is one, holy, catholic, apostolic. Unity and holiness are attributes or properties which classical theology would apply to God: the one God in his irreducible tri-unity, the holy God. The same is not true for catholicity and apostolicity; I do not think we speak of a catholic or apostolic God. This difference in the series of the four *notae* is possibly an explanation for the fact that in the course of history, issues of unity and holiness were the driving forces of a tendency to separate the mystical and the visible aspect of the Church, i.e. either to speak of two Churches (the mystical or eschatological or heavenly on the one hand and the visible, sacramental-institutional on the other) or to de-theologize the visible (the Church is a religious society or institution like any other and union with God or the Divine Reality is not really dependent on being a believing and sacramentally initiated member of the Church).

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wilfried Härle, art. 'Kirche VII. Dogmatisch', *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 18 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 277–317, at pp. 286–293.

Later on I will attempt to throw some light on such problems. But first I would like to dwell on the divine origin of the unity and the communion of the Church.

## 2. The Divine Origin of the Visible Church

2.1 I said the oneness of the Church and thus the unity and communion of its members is one of its characteristics. This is a theological statement, taken from the one ecumenical Symbol of Faith. The four *notae ecclesiae* are a literary amplification of the pneumatological section, or of the trinitarian structure of the Symbol, and are as such (also) an ‘object’ of belief. The Church owes its existence to the correlated missions of the Word incarnate in Jesus the Messiah and the Spirit given at Pentecost, which are theologically to be understood as the self-revelation of God.<sup>4</sup> Thus the beginning of the existence of the Church cannot be precisely determined: the calling of the disciples in Israel by the Anointed Son of God, his sacrificial death and his resurrection which is anticipated in his action with the Twelve at the Last Supper, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the community of disciples gathered around the (reconstituted) Twelve at Pentecost or the post-Easter mission of the (Jerusalem and Galilean) Jesus community in general – they are all factors of the visible ecclesio-genesis.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For this trinitarian approach, following the famous metaphor of God the Father’s two hands by Irenaeus of Lyon, see Yves Congar, *La Parole et le Souffle, Jésus et Jésus-Christ 20* (Paris: Desclée, 1984); English: *The Word and the Spirit* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> One might even argue that the Church is already in existence in all the righteous who have lived before God’s self-revelation in his Word and his Spirit (Augustine’s *ecclesia ab Abel*), but this would lead us too far in the present context: We would have to focus on how this self-revelation of the universal God in the mission of Christ with all its particularity (the life and message of Jesus, a Jew of the first century), which does not disappear in the Spirit-led process of inculturation(s) through the centuries, can attain a universal significance and impact. The christological-soteriological concentration of God’s life-giving and transforming love towards humanity and the entire creation in the mission of the Word Incarnate and the Pentecostal Spirit constitutes sort of an ‘eye of a needle’, through which all humans have to pass in order to be in (eschatological) communion with God; this may be seen as an obstacle to the alleged universality of the Gospel.

2.2 The constitutive relationship of the Church, being a community of humans, to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit and the unifying, community building dimension of this relationship is best seen in Pauline texts on the ‘body’ (*sōma*), which the believers constitute or into which they are integrated. I simply point to the relevant passages.

2.2.1 1 Cor 12(–14): The one Spirit grants various charismata to each baptized to be used for the building up of a community, which is compared to an organism. ‘For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ... and all were made to drink of the one Spirit.’ The entire argumentation is preceded by the statement that there is one common sign of being touched by the Spirit irrespective of the different charismata: the confession of faith ‘Jesus is Lord’. So we perceive elements of unity: baptism, confession of faith, and elements of differentiation: varieties of ministrations (including the primary ones such as the apostolate<sup>6</sup>) according to the given charismata. And both categories have their source in the (Triune<sup>7</sup>) God and their goal in the life of the one Body, i.e. the local Church, the *ekklēsia*. Unity is clearly a unity in diversity. But equally clear is the prescriptive intention of the argumentation, which at face value is descriptive: in whatever you do you are to build up the community of the Church. The divine gift is as it were placed into the responsibility of the members of the Body.

2.2.2 1 Cor 10:16–17: ‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not communion with Christ through participation in his blood? The bread which we break, is it not communion with Christ through participation

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<sup>6</sup> The Pauline term ‘charisma’ must not be interpreted in the light of Max Weber’s theory of the various forms of legitimate domination. Cf. Ulrich Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt. Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktionen* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus 1975). Paul traces his apostolate back to an encounter with the risen Lord (1 Cor 15:3–11; cf. 9:1) or God’s action revealing his Son to him (Gal 1:15–16), but this does not preclude the possibility to count the apostolate among the charismata and thus situate it within the Body. Nor is its primary and even foundational character denied by this.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 12:4.5.6: the same Spirit – the same Lord – the same God who activates all (i.e. the charismata) in all (i.e. the baptized). This is not far from the trinitarian dimension of baptism in Matt 28:19–20. – Another text showing the ecclesiological significance of baptism is Acts 2:41.

in his body? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.’ The somewhat clumsy translation ‘is it not communion with Christ through participation in his blood/body’ tries to highlight the meaning of the Greek term *koinōnia*: communion of people constituted through their participation in something, in an entity or reality, which they are not themselves. I emphasize this point over against a hyperbolic and thus loose use of the term *koinōnia* in the modern ecumenical debate.<sup>8</sup> Participation in the sacramental body, which is the representation of the crucified and risen Christ, of the one mediator between God and humans (1 Cor 8:6), constitutes the ecclesial body, which in other contexts is called the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) or simply Christ (1 Cor 1:13; 12:13). In other words: Participation in Christ (his blood, his body) is logically prior to the communion or fellowship among the communicants; for this reason it may be called Body of Christ. Patristic exegesis of 1 Cor 10:16–17 highlighted the close correlation between eucharistic sharing and structured ecclesial unity.<sup>9</sup>

2.2.3 1 Cor 11:17–34: To become and to be the ecclesial Body in the eucharist implies a response in terms of social and ethical behaviour to each other and to those outside, i.e. a sort of orthopraxis guided by love (*agapē*) – so much can be said when dealing with Paul’s censures at the way the Lord’s Supper was being practiced at Corinth. What they exactly did and what he wanted them to do instead is not quite clear; probably the portions of food and wine brought along (by those who could afford it) were not shared in such a way that a certain brotherly equality among the partakers became manifest.<sup>10</sup> The phrase ‘For any one who eats and drinks

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. the important study by Josef Hainz, *Koinonia. ‘Kirche’ als Gemeinschaft bei Paulus*, Biblische Untersuchungen 16 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982). See also recently Thomas Söding, ‘Ekklesia und Koinonia. Grundbegriffe paulinischer Theologie’, *Catholica* 57 (2003), pp. 107–123.

<sup>9</sup> Werner Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsächlich des Ostens* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954; reprint: Fürth 1985), pp. 23–38.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g. Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist. The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Michael Theobald, ‘Das Herrenmahl im Neuen Testament’, *Theologische Quartalschrift* 183 (2003), pp. 257–280. The eucharist included a dinner. About the liturgical words spoken at the handling of bread and cup, we know nothing for sure; cf. Paul Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, Alcuin Club Collections 80 (London: SPCK, 2004).

*without discerning the body (mē diakrinōn to sōma) eats and drinks judgement upon himself*’ does not refer to the sacramental, but to the ecclesial Body, the Church of God which is despised in the have-nots.

2.2.4 Gal 3:28: Here the unity bestowed upon those who are baptized is a unity of identity, they have put on Christ, they are one (*heis* – masculine) in Christ Jesus. Thus the emphasis is different from 1 Cor 12.

2.2.5 The Deutero-Pauline letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians take up the Pauline term of body, but use it in a different context: It is the cosmic universal Church which is growing to become finally coextensive with creation, and Christ is seen as its energizing head. I insist that it is not entirely, but only partially identical with the ‘universal Church’ (*Gesamtkirche*), in the way as this term is customarily being used in modern ecclesiology, e.g. in the polarity of local – universal Church.<sup>11</sup> Now Eph 4:3–6 mentions seven elements of unity: ‘... bear with one another in love, make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.’ The seven given elements of unity are either God, the Lord, the Spirit, or something that is a human response or a human action relating humans to God, and yet initiated by God (hope, faith, baptism), or the entire divine-human reality (body). The list of these elements is preceded by an imperative that makes it clear that the unity given and initiated by God must be maintained by the baptized – by living in peace with one another. A little later in the same chapter, the author of Ephesians mentions ‘apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers’, given by Christ, with whose help the baptized are expected ‘to attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.’ The whole text could be read as an amplification and *relecture* of 1 Cor 12.

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<sup>11</sup> The usage I have in mind is knowingly or unknowingly influenced by Roman Catholic ecclesiology; in the polarity local/particular Church – universal Church as articulated e.g. in *Lumen Gentium*, c. 22–23, the ‘universal Church’ is defined as an entity whose visible principle and foundation of unity is the Pope as head of the College of Bishops, forming an analogy and continuation of the supposed *collegium* of the Apostles around St. Peter; cf. also *Lumen Gentium*, c. 8 (*hoc in mundo*); canon 331 CIC 1983 = canon 43 CCEO 1990 (*his in terris*); canon 330 CIC 1983 = canon 42 CCEO 1990.

2.2.6 In all the passages I selected, unity of the Church, the community of the baptized believers, is not considered to be the result of their joining together because they share a set of common religious convictions and interests.<sup>12</sup> Rather it is the fruit of God's action in Christ and the Spirit, somehow mediated by an apostolic agency. To put it a little provocatively, the Church is the manifestation, even the proof of the justification and reconciliation in Christ, with the reservation of the eschatological judgement (*eschatologischer Vorbehalt*). The christological and soteriological dimensions of this approach, which are reflected in the sacramental realities of baptism (and eucharist), is evident.<sup>13</sup> But equally evident is the response character of faith with all its differentiation in witness, ethics, love etc.

2.2.7 I used the term 'mediation by an apostolic agency'. In the Pauline corpus the model of this agency<sup>14</sup> is Paul, in his own letters and in the letters ascribed to him. In the latter (esp. in the Pastoral letters) his collaborators are seen to be the prototype of what will become the one *episkopos* in a given local Church, who together with the presbytery, deacons and other ministries more or less shares in the responsibility for the inner unity, who presides at the communal liturgical actions and is the prime personal link to other local Churches. But the figures of Timothy and Titus are construed as clearly being dependent on the teaching and example of Paul (who by the way appears as the only Apostle). Thus what comes from Paul is as it were split: on the one hand his Gospel message, which is now seen as a fundamental deposit of faith, on the other hand his care for the Church or Churches, which is partially continued in the ordained officers of later times.

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<sup>12</sup> This view was the basis of Schleiermacher's definition of the Church (Glaubenslehre § 115: 'Die christliche Kirche bildet sich durch das Zusammentreten der einzelnen Wiedergeborenen zu einem geordneten Aufeinanderwirken und Miteinanderwirken.' The Church is a fellowship, 'welche nur durch freie menschliche Handlungen entsteht und nur durch solche fortbestehen kann'). See also Elert, *Abendmahl*, pp. 1ff.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also Jürgen Roloff, *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament*, Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), p. 245.

<sup>14</sup> The term somehow renders the general meaning of *diakonia*, cf. John N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).



2.3 Outside the Pauline corpus, the Johannine writings offer a somewhat comparable vision of the unity of the faithful. Unity is grounded in their participation in the relationship of love that unites God and Jesus. The best known example is to be found in the prayer of Jesus: ‘I ask you ... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that the world may know ...’ (John 17:21–22). Between the Father and the Son there is either a reciprocity of immanence, into which the believers are integrated, or there is an immanence between God and the believers that is mediated by the Son. A similar constellation can be seen in the metaphor of the True Vine (John 15:1–11), but unlike Paul’s metaphor of the Body, the Vine metaphor is silent about an interaction of the believers; cf. also John 6:48–58 (with eucharistic and non-eucharistic overtones). So much is clear, however: love of one’s brother (cf. the sequel in 15:12–17) and the true confession of Christ (cf. 1 John 2:22–25; 2 John 9) are the requirements of remaining in God. Thus the Johannine conception of the Church is far more rudimentary than the Pauline.

2.4 What we can perceive in the texts quoted and referred to above is this: Mystical unity between God and the believers does not exist without the unity of the baptized among them, which at the same time is mystical (what unites the believers is something divine in which each participates) and visible (the life of the Body, the Church, i.e. proclamation of the Gospel, mission, worship, caring for others, as well as aspects of institutionalisation of the Church in various forms of ministry, etc.). This seems to be true when the various statements about the community of the believers are seen in the light of a concrete local Church (1 Cor) or are to be understood in a generic way (Gal, Eph). Respecting the unity and community among different local Churches, i.e. on a supra-local level, an explicit ecclesiological reflection comes much later. The fact that believers who were baptized in one specific local community were given hospitality<sup>15</sup> and – as far as we know – were fully accepted (possibly showing a

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8 (requirements for the *episkopos*); Rom 12:13; Hebr 13:2 (general exhortation).

letter of recommendation<sup>16</sup>) in another is a sign of the factual existence of supra-local communion.

I think that from the Pauline and Johannine elements for ecclesiological reflection to which I referred, it is fully justified to see the visible and structured unity and communion of the Church as an essential aspect, as it is articulated in the Nicene Symbol of Faith and in many other versions of such symbols in the ancient Church.<sup>17</sup> In these symbols baptism (and/or remission of sins) is practically always mentioned. And according to scholars such as Werner Elert, the phrase *communio sanctorum*, in the Apostolic Creed, which is usually rendered as ‘communion of saints’, should be understood as a reference to the eucharist: ‘communion by participation in the holy things (*ta hagia*)’.<sup>18</sup> Such a reference is not frequent. This may be explained by the fact that the *Sitz im Leben* of the genre of Symbols of Faith was baptism, and that for a long time Christian initiation included in one liturgical action what we today see as temporally separated acts of (infant) baptism, confirmation and first eucharist.<sup>19</sup>

The unity of the local Church required unity of faith and love, manifested in the liturgy and after, and a common ethos and discipline (cf. the modern *trias* of *martyria* – *leitourgia* – *diakonia* as an abbreviation of the communal life of the Church, which, of course, varies in different

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Elert, *Abendmahl*, pp. 108–109: *grammata sustatika* (cf. Rom 16,1; Acts 18,27), *literae pacis* or *communicatoriae*.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Heinrich Denzinger, Peter Hünermann (eds.), *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum / Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 402005), nos. 2ff.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Elert, *Abendmahl*, pp. 9–16; Stephen Benko, *The Meaning of Sanctorum Communio* (London: SCM, 1964).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. e.g. Justin, *1 Apol.* 65; the *Traditio apostolica* (probably a composite text of the third and fourth centuries, ascribed to Hippolytus, and mostly consulted in the form of the modern reconstruction by B. Botte), c.21; Reinhard Messner, ‘Der Gottesdienst in der vornizänischen Kirche’, in: Jean-Marie Mayeur et al. (eds.), *Die Geschichte des Christentums. Religion – Politik – Kultur. Vol. 1: Die Zeit des Anfangs (bis 250)* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), pp. 340–441, at 400–418. Incidentally, long before the (Nicene or Apostolic) Symbol of Faith had become a regular feature of the eucharist, the faith of the Church was confessed in the eucharistic prayers; cf. the important monograph by Hans-Joachim Schulz, *Ökumenische Glaubenseinheit aus eucharistischer Überlieferung*, *Konfessionskundliche und kontroverstheologische Studien* 39 (Paderborn: Bonifacius, 1976).

cultural contexts).<sup>20</sup> The eucharist was the place, where the reconciling and purifying power of the Gospel was to be manifested. Therefore baptized persons considered to be sinners or heretics were excluded (see below).

2.5 What remains to be seen is how this oneness and unity of the visible Church as a manifestation of the mystical origin of unity in God is realized as unity and communion of a plurality of *local* Churches (with baptism and eucharist being the visible manifestation of the oneness and unity of the Church) on its pilgrim way to the eschatological *doxa*. Time prevents me from doing more than simply mention some of the elements which assured the consciousness of the Pre-Constantine Church to be a communion and a unity of local communities and which were – more or less successfully – used to maintain the supra-local unity of the Church: the synodical network of the bishops corresponding with one another and meeting one another, the so called *regula fidei*, the emerging Canon of Scripture, a growing complex of clarified doctrine. Later the development

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<sup>20</sup> I cannot go into any details in showing why Old Catholic ecclesiology defines the local Church as a ‘fellowship and communion of people, which by the reconciliation in Jesus Christ and by the outpouring and the continuous work of the Holy Spirit is constituted as a unity in a given place around a *bishop* with the *eucharist* as its center’ (my italics), i.e. as a diocese, cf. Urs von Arx, Maja Weyermann (eds.), *Statut der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz (IBK). Offizielle Ausgabe in fünf Sprachen* [also in English], Beiheft zu IKZ 91 (2001), p. 28 (= English text of the Preamble). In this respect, there is no difference between Anglican and Old Catholic usage. There may be a difference, however, in considering the local Church as the one fundamental ecclesiological unit of the visible Church: Old Catholic ecclesiology is reluctant to speak of the visible universal Church as if it were a reality of its own right and nature, but prefers to speak of supra-local communions of local Churches up to the universal extension (and, on the other hand, should not neglect to reflect on the ‘infra-local’ aspects of the Church in parish or other communities). So there is a bottom-up perspective from the local to the universal. The coming One visible Church (with a primatial agency for the collegial maintenance of the universal communion of local Churches) must not be experienced as a global bureaucracy – Heaven forbid!

To speak of the local Church as the ecclesiological unit does not at all imply that it is or should be an isolated reality. On the contrary, it is absolutely essential that it is an entity in communion with other local Churches (which ‘soteriologically’, not culturally or otherwise, are identical), may these form a province or a national Church or whatever. Nor does it preclude further considerations about the appropriate extent or number of baptized members of a diocese; many are far too big, witness the establishment of auxiliary or area bishops and the like.

of a metropolitan structure along the lines of political and administrative delimitations of the State provided a further platform of supra-local communion and interdependence, which could be taken as a visible manifestation of the mystical unity of the Church. As far as we know, this was initially done in a practical way, without any deeper ecclesiological reflection on the correlation of mystical and visible unity of the Church in its local and supra-local context.

### **3. Problems of the Correlation between the Mystical and Visible Aspect of the Church**

3.1 The correlation of the mystical and the visible aspect of the Church could become a problem. We see instances very early, at first not so much concerning the unity of the Church,<sup>21</sup> but – as intimated above – concerning its holiness or purity. For Paul, the narrow correlation must be maintained; thus he urged the Corinthian local Church to exclude the ‘man who is living with his father’s wife’ (1 Cor 5). On the other hand, the Parable of the Tares among the Wheat (Matt 13:24–30, cf. 36–42) or of the Fishnet (Matt 13:46–47) seems to loosen this correlation, but an ecclesiological reflection of this hiatus appears much later, as the phrase *corpus permixtum* testifies.

3.2 It is well known that in the third century and especially in the wake of the first Empire-wide persecution after 250 a controversy broke out about the question whether people who were baptized in heretic or schismatic Christian communities were to be considered as unbaptized and thus had to be baptized in the first place (not re-baptized) in order to be counted as Christians. This was the practice of the East and of North Africa, the argumentation being that the Holy Spirit is given to the Church, that there is only one Church (as a communion of local Churches whose unity can be ascertained by certain criteria), and that outside the Church baptism and laying on of hands are of no avail and effect. Respecting living humans, mystical unity and visible unity of the Church are totally

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<sup>21</sup> It would be interesting to know, whether the Church of Jerusalem, as long as it stayed in an obviously strained relationship to Paul (cf. Gal 2:11ff.; Rom 15:31b), considered to be in communion with him and the Churches founded by his proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Cf. also 3 John. The question is, of course, anachronistic if we were to expect a sophisticated ecclesiological reflection.

overlapping – a perspective which is linked with the name of Cyprian of Carthage.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand the Roman practice (advocated by Stephen of Rome) accepted such a baptism provided a trinitarian formula was used; but converts were to be received into the one visible Church by an additional liturgical act, namely laying on of hands (interpreted either as a penitential act or as the giving of the Spirit), thus ‘valid’ baptism (outside the visible Church) becomes ‘efficacious’ (within the visible Church). In this case, the mystical reality of the Church is somewhat wider than the one visible (Catholic) Church. In any case, the duality of the visible and the mystical was to become linked with the issue of rival claims as to the ecclesiality of separated Christian bodies.

3.3 This latter perspective was shared by Augustine.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand there is the Church as an empirical phenomenon, which can be described in sociological terms with sacraments and ministry, the *communio sacramentorum*, which is also a *corpus permixtum* (cf. Augustine’s phrase of the sinners belonging to the Church *numero, non merito*). On the other there is the Church of those who in truth form the *congregatio* or *societas sanctorum*, those who are chosen by God’s predestination; they will be only known in the final judgement.<sup>24</sup> This differentiation was not solely

<sup>22</sup> It is in this context that Cyprian made his famous statement: ‘quia salus extra ecclesiam non est’, Ep. 73,21. On the rebaptism controversy (*Ketzertaufstreit*) cf. Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation. Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville MI: Liturgical Press, 1989), pp. 69–71; Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Lehrbuch der Dogmen- und Kirchengeschichte. Band 1: Alte Kirche und Mittelalter* (Gütersloh: Kaiser/GVH, 1995), pp. 92–93.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bapt. 1,15,23: It is the Church that gives birth to her children, whether within her or outside her. The real administrator of baptism is Christ. Thus there is a certain ecclesial reality outside the ‘canonical’ borders of the one visible Church. Cf. e.g. Johnson, *Rites*, 149–153; Alfred Schindler, art. ‘Baptismo (De-)', in: Cornelius Mayer (ed.) *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 2 (Basel: Schwabe, 1986–2002), pp. 573–582.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Walter Simonis, *Ecclesia visibilis et invisibilis. Untersuchungen zur Ekklesiologie und Sakramentenlehre in der afrikanischen Tradition von Cyprian bis Augustinus*, Frankfurter Theologische Studien 5 (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1970); Yves Congar, *Die Lehre von der Kirche. Von Augustinus bis zum Abendländischen Schisma*, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte 3/3c (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), pp. 3–6; Emilien Lami-rande, art. ‘Ecclesia’, in: Cornelius Mayer (ed.) *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 2, (Basel: Schwabe, 1986–2002), pp. 687–720. Cf. also Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l’Église*, Foi Vivante 60 (Paris: Aubier 1968), pp. 64–96.

caused by the Donatist crisis; it was in a general way the consequence of his dualistic conception of reality. He distinguishes between the outer, visible/sensorial and the inner, mental and then spiritual aspects of human existence. And this had its analogy in Augustine's conception of the sacrament as a reality consisting of the visible *signum* and the invisible *res*, the spiritual effect (e.g. for Christian initiation: the washing with water, anointing, laying on of hands and the forgiveness of sin, giving of the Spirit and integration as a member into the Body of Christ respectively).

The spiritual effect of a sacrament originates in Christ and the Spirit; they are the source of life, of holiness and unity. For this reason the sacraments are a spiritual or mystical reality *ex opere operato*, not *ex opere operantis*, i.e. it is not decisive whether the human minister is a sinner, a heretic or not. Outside the one visible Church, however, the given sacraments (i.e. in point of fact only baptism which is mentioned in this connection) are in need of something additional to become a living reality of God's love which sanctifies and integrates humans into the communion of the visible-mystical Church.

3.4 As result of this differentiation the communion with the legitimate bishop became an ever more constitutive element of the unity of the visible Church, in addition to the communion with Christ, who was somehow also present outside the one visible Church.

3.5 In general, converts from what the (Catholic) Church considered to be a sect were accepted in a relatively easy way: provided their baptism was linked with a trinitarian profession of faith, they had to recant their religious past, they received a laying on of hands and were admitted to the eucharist and thus fully integrated into the Church. Without that, however, admittance of a member of another 'Church' to the Eucharist was strictly ruled out. There was no eucharistic hospitality for members of other Christian groups, who were outside what various 'Christian groups' took to be the one visible Church, probably because participation in the same eucharist was seen as the manifestation of the highest degree of visible unity among those who shared it. In this case the correlation between the mystical and the visible aspect of the Church and its unity was closer than in the case of baptism administered in different 'denominations'.

Consequently there was nothing like official mutual eucharistic sharing between the Catholic Church and sects, or put in neutral terms, be-

tween communities which were not at one in their belief, which did not share the same orthodoxy, which were not structurally interdependent. There was complete ecclesial communion or none at all.<sup>25</sup> Whether this attitude was theologically inconsequential, given the recognition of some ecclesial reality in another 'denomination' in a baptismal context, seems to be a question without contemporary answer.

3.6 I cannot discuss other illustrations of the problem of the correlation between the Church as a mystical communion of baptized humans in God and its manifestation as a visible Communion, between the empirical Church and the believed Church. I just mention one or two other instances. One is the perception of a growing estrangement between the East and the West in the course of history. In the centuries before the catastrophe of the sack of Constantinople (1204), there were incompatible Greek and Latin judgements on the other church: dominant was the conviction that the one and only Church still exists albeit in a state of disunion. Statements to the contrary, however, also exist: the others are outside the Church. For Congar, this is clear evidence that an explicit ecclesiological reflection on the Church and its unity was missing.<sup>26</sup>

A further problem was the Great Schism in the West (1378–1417/31) with two or even three Popes at the same time. Christ (no longer the Holy Spirit as the giver of charismata and principle of Life for the Body) is as head of the Church the source of its unity in a mystical perspective, but the question could be raised: how can this unity be manifested in the visible Church? For the conciliarists this was no problem, since Christ is the invisible head of the ecclesia as universal *congregatio fidelium*, and the *corpus christianum* is no longer represented by the bishops in their capacity as representatives of a supra-local communion of local Churches, but by the various estates of the Christian society, and this along national lines.

For Luther the Church is a spiritual invisible reality (the *ecclesia abscondita*) which is present and visible wherever the Word of God is proclaimed in purity and the Sacraments are administered in the right way (CA 7), i.e. where faith and confession is. Thus the idea of the visible Church in the historic continuity and intra-ecclesial networking (apart

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Elert, *Abendmahl*, pp. 136, 143, 159.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Congar, *Lehre*, 52.

from the quasi-episcopal function of the respective sovereigns) becomes less important; in this tradition the distinction between the two aspects could become a separation. On the other hand the Catholic Reformation underlined the relevance of the visible unity of the Church. Influential was Cardinal Robert Bellarmine with his insistence on the three criteria which constitute membership in the visible Church, which is as it were the door to the eternal Church: the profession of the Faith, the Sacraments and submission to the Pope (*vinculum symbolicum, liturgicum, hierarchicum*); cf. *Lumen Gentium*, c.14. Both sides appealed to Augustine as their main authority.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. The Relationship of the Visible Communion of the Church (i.e. a Specific Denomination) to the One Church Professed in the Symbol of Faith in the Ecumenical Era – A Selective Attempt at a Typology**

I can offer only a selective bunch of observations and short reflections, with a certain focus on positions which are held in our two Communion. I deal with two questions: (a) How does one particular Church, or as I will call it in a phenomenological neutrality, how does one particular denomination, see itself in relation to the One Church of the Symbol? (b) How does it see other denominations (all or some) in relation to the One Church of the Symbol? One element to an answer is the way baptized converts from another denomination are received in the own denomination. Another element is the attitude to eucharistic sharing without visible ecclesial communion or to eucharistic hospitality as an official church policy.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ulrich Valeske, *Votum Ecclesiae* (München: Claudius, 1962); Karlheinz Diez, 'Ecclesia – non est Civitas Platonica'. *Antworten katholischer Kontroverstheologen des 16. Jahrhunderts auf Martin Luthers Anfrage an die 'Sichtbarkeit' der Kirche*, Fuldaer Studien 8 (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1997). Also Hans Friedrich Geisser, 'Über die Schwierigkeiten evangelischer Theologie mit der Sichtbarkeit ihrer Kirche, unter Berücksichtigung ökumenischer Reflexe', in: Martin Hauser (ed.), *Unsichtbare oder sichtbare Kirche? Beiträge zur Ekklesiologie*, Ökumenische Beihefte zur Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 20 (Freiburg CH: Universitätsverlag, 1992), pp. 35–57; Gudrun Neebe, *Apostolische Kirche. Grundunterscheidungen an Luthers Kirchenbegriff unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Lehre von den notae ecclesiae*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 82 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 182–268. See also Gottfried Wilhelm Locher, *Sign of the Advent: A Study in Protestant Ecclesiology*, Ökumenische Beihefte zur Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 45 (Freiburg Schweiz: Akademie Press, 2004).



4.1 An ‘extreme’ position would be to claim the identity of a denomination with the One Church in such a way that all other denominations are explicitly unchurched: ‘Only we are the Church of the Triune God.’ In the past this position of sweeping exclusiveness was often associated with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, and sometimes contemporary Orthodox statements seem to continue it. But on the whole this position has been replaced by a more nuanced approach.

4.1.1 The Roman Catholic position has been clarified to some extent in the ecclesiological statements of the Second Vatican Council. Roman Catholic theology starts from the notion that the Roman Catholic Church is the visible One Church in the sense of unicity and unity. The Augustinian tradition of the validity of sacraments, especially baptism, outside the canonical limits of the Church – since it is Christ who baptizes – made it necessary to think about the ecclesial character of denominations other than the own. Well known is the modern distinction between Churches on the one hand and Ecclesial Communities on the other, the criterion being the apostolic succession and the number of sacraments as means of grace (interestingly, not the recognition of the Papal claims). The corresponding element to the recognition of an ecclesial status of other Churches is the phraseology that the Church of God, which in the Creed is professed as the One Church, ‘subsists in’ the Roman Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him.<sup>28</sup> Thus there is a gradation of ecclesiality and thus partial unity and communion, which should be expressed in graded manifestations. Converts from other denominations, baptized in the name of the Triune God, are not ‘re-baptized’ (not even *sub conditione*). Eucharistic sharing in terms of a pastoral, mutually covenanted *communicatio in sacris* seems possible with Churches, but (at least officially) not with Ecclesial Communities. The practice of eucharistic hospitality often occurs in European countries with a strong Reformation presence, but it has no official status

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Haec Ecclesia [= unica Christi Ecclesia, quam in Symbolo unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam profiteamur], in hoc mundo ut societas constituta et ordinata, subsistit in Ecclesia catholica, a successore Petri et Episcopis in eius communione gubernata ...’, *Lumen Gentium*, c. 8.

and is viewed critically by the majority of Roman Catholic theologians.<sup>29</sup>

The usual argumentation for eucharistic hospitality (which is a recent phenomenon) claims that it is Christ who invites, so the Church is not entitled to exclude. This presupposes a definition of the relation between Jesus Christ and the Church which does not seem to take into consideration a sacramental view of the Church. So the issue is not between conservative or liberal and the like, but concerns a fundamental theological and ecclesiological option, which touches on the question whether and how the created world can be a bearer of the Spirit before its eschatological transformation into full participation in God's *doxa*.<sup>30</sup>

4.1.2 The Orthodox Churches (and I think the non-Chalcedonian Oriental Churches, too) see themselves to be the One Church of the Symbol of Faith, living in a communion of autocephalous and autonomous Churches. Sometimes this claim is linked with the qualifier 'we only'. But this seems to be either careless speech or (hopefully) a minority position. The intention of the claim is to confess that the visible Church, like the mystical Church, cannot be separated, divided, since this would imply a divided Christ and a denial of God's justifying and reconciling grace. To quote Peter Bouteneff: 'As is well known, we Orthodox identify our church with the one holy, catholic and apostolic church. We further hold that there is but one church of Christ, and that there is no division *within* this body, but only *from* it. And yet there are different extents of

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. e.g. Walter Kasper, 'Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of Baptism', *The Ecumenical Review* 52 (2000), pp. 526–541, esp. pp. 537–538 [German version: 'Ekklesiologische und ökumenische Implikationen der Taufe', in: Albert Raffelt (ed.), *Weg und Weite. Festschrift für Karl Lehmann* (Freiburg: Herder 2001), pp. 581–599, at p. 598]; Karl Lehmann, 'Einheit der Kirche und Gemeinschaft im Herrenmahl. Zur neueren ökumenischen Diskussion um Eucharistie- und Kirchengemeinschaft', in: Thomas Söding (ed.), *Eucharistie. Positionen katholischer Theologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2002), pp. 144–177, at pp. 149–151.

<sup>30</sup> The problem for the Roman Catholic Church is, of course, that many Roman Catholics, e.g. in Switzerland, clearly opt for regular eucharistic sharing with their Reformed brothers and sisters, since they interpret this not so much in terms of the standard ecclesiology (an anticipation of a future united Church), but as a sign of friendly relationship, of Christian solidarity and spiritual fellowship in a society that is increasingly unchurched.

separation. As the dictum goes, we know where the Holy Spirit is, but we do not know where the Holy Spirit is *not* ... the canonical Orthodox Churches acknowledge sacramental reality outside the canonical boundaries of their church. This holds for both baptism and the eucharist, and not by virtue of a simplistic notion of *oikonomia*.<sup>31</sup> Respecting baptism, there was and still is a contradictory practice among the various Orthodox Churches – not least dependent whether ancient conciliar canons of how to deal with ‘heretics and schismatics’ are applied to the modern ecumenical movement or not<sup>32</sup> –, but there is a growing consensus that converts from denominations confessing the Triune God are not treated as unbaptized, but receive a chrismation, whose interpretation may vary.<sup>33</sup> So there is a certain tendency towards the ‘general premises, which have been established by Augustine’ as recommended by Georges Florovsky in what is still deemed to be a standard Orthodox statement on the ‘limits of the Church’. A clear witness is the Agreed Statement on ‘Baptism and

<sup>31</sup> Peter C. Bouteneff, ‘Koinonia and Eucharistic Unity. An Orthodox Response’, *The Ecumenical Review* 52 (2000), 72–80, at 75. The ‘response’ was to Dagmar Heller, ‘Eucharistic Fellowship in the Third Millennium’, *The Ecumenical Review* 51 (1999), pp. 202–208.

<sup>32</sup> This is often the case in anti-ecumenical Orthodox circles in the East and in the West, which are well represented in the Internet. However, the Third Preconciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference, which assembled at Chambésy, Switzerland, 28 October – 6 November 1986, in its statement ‘The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement’ clearly took another position. It sees the Orthodox Church as ‘the bearer of and witness to the faith and tradition of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church’, whose responsibility is to ‘draw the different Christian Churches and Confessions into a joint pilgrimage aiming at searching the lost unity of Christians, so that all might reach the unity of faith.’ Cf. Gennadios Limouris (ed.), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism. Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement 1902–1992* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), pp. 112–114, at p. 112. This position has not been given up in the *Thessaloniki Statement* (1998) defining Orthodox co-operation within the WCC. Cf. also Anastasios Kallis, art. ‘Kirche V. Orthodoxe Kirche’, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 18 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), pp. 252–262, at p. 259.

<sup>33</sup> For the chrismation, see Basil the Great, *ep.* 188,1 (ed. Y. Courtonne, II, 121–124); *ep.* 199, 47 (ibid., 163); John Erickson, ‘The Reception of Non-Orthodox into the Orthodox Church. Contemporary Practice’, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 41 (1997), pp. 1–17.

“Sacramental Economy” by the North American Orthodox – Catholic Theological Consultation of June 1999.<sup>34</sup>

4.2.1 The Anglo-Catholic Branch theory of the Church is the conception that separated Christian bodies (in a neutral perspective: denominations), which are not in communion with each other, are still to be considered as being branches or parts of the one Church, provided they manifest certain criteria of true ecclesiality, such as holding to the faith of the ancient undivided Church and maintaining the apostolic succession of the ministry in its threefold form of episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate. William Palmer (Worcester College, Oxford) is said to have written the classical statement in his ‘Treatise on the Church of Christ’ (31842),<sup>35</sup> seeing the main branches in the Roman, the Eastern and the Anglican Communion. Or to quote a letter from Pusey to the Central Committee, which organized the Old Catholic Congress of Cologne, 1872: ‘We have considered the Roman Church as well as the Orthodox Communion in the East as making

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Georges Florovsky, ‘The Limits of the Church’, *Church Quarterly Review* 11 (1933), pp. 117–131; slightly revised as ‘The Boundaries of the Church’, in: *Ecumenism I: A Doctrinal Approach*. Collected Works, ed. Richard S. Haugh, vol. 13 (Vaduz: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1989), pp. 36–45; ‘Baptism and “Sacramental Economy”’. An Agreed Statement of The North American – Orthodox Theological Consultation’, *The Ecumenical Review* 54 (2002) pp. 197–203. Cf ‘Economy. A Joint Statement’, in: John Borelli and John H. Erickson, *The Quest for Unity. Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue. Documents of the Joint Commission and Official Dialogues in the United States 1965–1995* (Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 86–88. Cf. the earlier contributions by Kallistos Ware, ‘Church and Eucharist, Communion and Intercommunion’, *Sobornost*, series 7, no.7, summer 1978, pp. 550–567, and by Nicolas Afanasiev, Sergius Bulgakov, Anton Kartashev, Lev Zander, in: Michael Plekon (ed.), *Alive Tradition. On the Church and the Christian Life in Our Time. Readings from the Eastern Church* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003). Especially on the debate (within the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius) following Bulgakov’s proposal for eucharistic sharing among Churches that have preserved the apostolic succession before full dogmatic unity has been declared, see Anastassy Callaher, ‘Bulgakov and Intercommunion’, *Sobornost* 24/2 (2002), pp. 9–28.

<sup>35</sup> At the suggestion of W.E. Gladstone, Malcolm MacColl planned a new and revised edition of the book, for which he secured the aid of I.v.Döllinger, who appreciated it as highly as J.H. Newman; cf. the correspondence of MacColl with Döllinger (1882–1885), in: *Doellingeriana* II 822.22 – 822.40(27) = transcription Hubert Hupertz, vol. 9, 148–165.

up the One Holy Catholic Church together with our Church.’<sup>36</sup> I do not quite know whether the presupposed unity of the three ecclesial traditions (only) lies in the common past (the trunk of the tree being the undivided ancient Church) or (primarily) in the mystical unity given by God in his various means of grace, a gift which is simultaneous with every generation of the Pilgrim Church.

This conception usually met with stern criticism from Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians. Apart from the issue of the integrity of Anglican Orders, for them to see the visible unity of the Church as having existed only in earlier centuries (and possibly now only in a mystical way) was finally tantamount to a sort of denial of God’s work as unifier and reconciler of humans in the mission of the Word and the Spirit. The nature of the Church as the proleptic haven of grace for humans, even if God’s judgement and the consummation of God’s new creation is still to be expected, required a sort of more visible unity and communion. On the other hand, the Protestant Churches were not really attracted by the theory, since in the last resort they were excluded.

4.2.2 The official Anglican position of considering a Church of the Anglican Communion as being part of or being within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church<sup>37</sup> is a related conception, but not particularly restricted to the denominations of the Catholic type. The *Appeal to All Christian People* of the Lambeth Conference 1920 states: ‘We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is His Body.’<sup>38</sup> And it goes on to say that the united fellowship, willed by God, ‘is not visible in the world to-day’. The visible unity of the Church can ‘be found

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Die Verhandlungen des zweiten Altkatholiken-Congresses zu Köln. Officielle Ausgabe. Erste Abtheilung*, (Köln: Neusser, 1872), p. 78 (my retranslation).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. e.g. ‘The Declaration of Assent’, in: *Common Worship. Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), p. XI.

<sup>38</sup> This view was met with opposition by Darwell Stone and [Frederick William] Puller, *Who are Members of the Church? A statement of evidence in criticism of a sentence in the Appeal to All Christian People made by the Lambeth Conference of 1920 which is fundamental to all the propositions*, Pusey House Occasional Papers 9 (London: Longmans, 1921). Basing their argumentation on patristic and later texts, they considered Christians baptized in other (non-episcopal?) Churches to be only potential members of the *Una Sancta*.

to involve the whole-hearted acceptance of' the Lambeth Quadrilateral (in the 1920 version).<sup>39</sup> So there is a certain dichotomy between the mystical and the visible respecting unity and oneness. To quote Paul Avis, who is an articulate exponent of contemporary Anglican ecclesiology: '... Anglicans readily acknowledge that, like all branches of the Christian Church, without exception, Anglicanism is provisional and incomplete in the light of the Church that is spoken of in the creeds as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Anglicans believe that these credal attributes of the Church will only be fully revealed eschatologically, when God's saving purpose is revealed in the end time.' So Anglicans will say: 'We are the Church. You also are the Church. But none of us is the Church as it should be.'<sup>40</sup>

Thus – if I do not misconstrue the conception – faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity is a (initial) sign or element for recognizing the reality of the universal (i.e. mystical) Church in Christian bodies, with which to live in visible unity is not (yet) possible. Thus the *notae ecclesiae* of the Symbol in their visibility and the *ecclesia* in its mystical reality are somewhat disconnected; oneness or unity of the Church seems to become visible no sooner than when *all* baptized humans or *all* denominations are fully united, and this indeed with the episcopate as a focus of unity and continuity.<sup>41</sup>

I rather tentatively ask some questions: I do not quite understand why the four *notae* (and in this context particularly the oneness) of the Church are so predominantly placed in an eschatological context, i.e. much more related to the mystical aspect than to the visible. In other terms: is the reality of the Church and thus of the four *notae* as a gift of God so much dependent on our ecumenical achievements as to eclipse its visible perception within an already given communion (a denomination)? Moreover, to say that all sacramental acts such as the eucharist or the ministerial order are 'appropriations, applications or extensions of the ecclesial reality brought into being by baptism'<sup>42</sup> does not in my view sufficiently take into account God's foundational soteriological act in

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. George K.A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity 1920–30* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 1–5, at pp. 1, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Avis, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church. An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2000), pp. 61–62.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

the Christ event (cross and resurrection), which is connected with the Lord's Supper.<sup>43</sup>

This baptism-based ecclesiology which draws further-reaching conclusions than many other Churches which also practise the mutual recognition of baptism<sup>44</sup> has led to a remarkable dynamism in ecumenical agreements. It seems to be the right ecumenical strategy for rapprochement with Reformation Churches.<sup>45</sup> But it is here where Old Catholic mainstream ecclesiology would often be more traditional and thus unable to acknowledge a (non-episcopal) church, with which to live in visible unity is not (yet) possible, as a 'true' church, or reluctant in placing mutual eucharistic sharing as the *first* stage in a process of growing together into full ecclesial communion, ministerial sharing coming *later* (what I deem

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<sup>43</sup> On quite another level, I wonder if baptism can play the dominant role which modern ecumenical theology is attributing to it when most baptized Christian can have no personal recollection of it and probably do not even know its date. After all, it is the anniversary of birthday that is celebrated ... Baptism-oriented theology would become more plausible if baptism was more correlated with a life-transforming decision and experience.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. e.g. 'Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism. AJWG Study', in: *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Eighth Report 1999–2005* (Geneva: WCC, 2005), pp. 45–72; cf. also Ola Tjørhom, *Visible Church – Visible Unity. Ecumenical Ecclesiology and 'The Great Tradition of the Church'* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), pp. 73–93.

<sup>45</sup> I simply list the agreements based on the *Porvoo Common Statement* (Europe), *Called to Common Mission* (USA), *Waterloo Declaration: Called to Full Communion* (Canada) on the one hand and on the *Meissen Common Statement*, *Fetter Lane Common Statement*, and *Reuilly Common Statement* (all Europe) on the other. Two things are of interest: Are the strategy and the underlying principles of these regional (!) agreements compatible with each other (a task to find out for the *Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, IAS CER*) and how are they being evaluated by other dialogue partners, such as Roman Catholics and Orthodox? Their evaluation is particularly interesting in view of a statement (stemming from Bishop Eric Kemp as co-chair and drafter) by the International Anglican-Old Catholic Theologians' Conference, Chichester, 1985, on 'Authority and Primacy in the Church': 'It is also clear that as *we [Anglicans and Old Catholics] move towards unity with the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church* account will have to be taken of the special position of the ancient patriarchal sees of which Rome is by long tradition and by definition of two ecumenical councils the first' (my italics). The English original does not appear to have been published; for the German translation see *IKZ* 80 (1990), pp. 5–11.

a reversal of the implied theological hierarchy and spiritual values and a form of latent clericalisation).<sup>46</sup> To my knowledge, these theological developments of the last decades within Anglicanism have never been made an object of common consultation (apart from a passing discussion at the last International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference in the Netherlands, 2003).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> I refer to the following Anglican and Old Catholic statements which are quoted in the Appendix:

a) Paras 35 and 37 of *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity. An occasional paper of the House of Bishops of the Church of England*, GS Misc 632 (London: Church House Publishing, 2001), pp. 16–17; concerning the ecumenical strategy of progressing towards 'unity by stages', cf. e.g. *The Truth Shall Make You Free. The Lambeth Conference 1988. The Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988), pp. 143–144 (referring to ARCIC and 'more particularly' to the conversations between Anglicans and Lutherans); *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998. Transformation and Renewal*. July 18 – August 9, 1998 (Lambeth Palace, Canterbury, England/Harrisburg PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), pp. 223–224.

b) The statement by the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference on 'Eucharistiegemeinschaft und kirchliche Einheit' (1992) does not exactly address the same issue, but may show the different approach, cf. *IKZ 84* (1994), 62–63. The IBC text was a reaction to the eucharistic agreement between the Old Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany (1985), cf. 'Vereinbarung über eine gegenseitige Einladung zur Teilnahme an der Feier der Eucharistie', *Ökumenische Rundschau 34* (1985), pp. 365–367.

c) See also the statement by the 38th International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference, Elspeet NL, 2003 on 'Eucharistiegemeinschaft und Kirchengemeinschaft', *IKZ 93* (2003), pp. 205–207.

See also Urs von Arx, 'Der orthodox-alkatholische Dialog. Anmerkungen zu einer schwierigen Rezeption', *IKZ 87* (1997), pp. 184–224, at pp. 193–194 and 220–221.

Another matter is the long established practice known to all European Old Catholic Churches to *individually* admit or invite members of other Churches to the eucharist. In this ecclesial and ecclesiological 'grey area', pastoral concerns or considerations of *oikonomia* will have to be prevalent. Cf. also Canons 15 and 43 in *The Canons of the Church of England*, Sixth edition 2000 incorporating first supplement 2005 (London: Church House Publishing, 2005). – In this context it may be added that Old Catholics do not (re)baptize converts from other Christian denominations.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *IKZ 93* (2003), pp. 201–265. The theme was 'Eucharistie und Kirchengemeinschaft – bilaterale Abkommen und ihre Auswirkungen auf multilaterale kirchliche Beziehungen', but this was only partially or not at all dealt with in the papers.



4.3.1 There is no early official Old Catholic statement indicating both the ecclesiological evaluation of the Old Catholic Church and of other Churches (denominations). In the past many Old Catholics held a sort of branch theory, usually directed against Roman Catholic claims to be the One and only Church on earth, so that union of Churches could only mean a return to Papal jurisdiction. Due to the specific Old Catholic relations with Anglican and Orthodox Churches, as they developed in the 1870s, a modified version of Palmer's and Pusey's conception could emerge, the Old Catholics (temporally?) taking the place of Rome.

In the wake of the nascent Faith and Order movement, other voices appear. I give a few examples. For Ernst Gaugler the One Church is a given reality, since there is Christ, the living Head of the Church, and there are believers. Even the Churches that claim to be Catholic share the presupposition that all baptized belong to the Church Catholic. Thus the reality founded in God is more real than the visible reality. There is a common axiom for the modern reunion movement: 'No particular Church has the whole truth, no particular Church may pride itself on representing the fullness of the Church; rather all together can give an idea of the true Catholic Church.' Later Gaugler was more guarded in his statements.<sup>48</sup>

Or another, even more conspicuous instance, quoted disapprovingly by the Orthodox Prof. Stefan Zankow in 1925: 'The outer unity of the Church is completely lost. The individual Churches are particular

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<sup>48</sup> 'Die erste Voraussetzung für jede Einigungsarbeit ist die Besinnung auf die Tatsache, die von unserem Tun völlig unabhängig ist: *Die Eine Kirche ist da*. In der Tatsache, dass Christus, das Haupt der Kirche, lebt, und in der weitem, dass es solche gibt, die an ihn glauben, ist die Eine Kirche gegeben. Auch für die Kirchen, die das Einheitsprädikat 'katholisch' für ihre Konfessionsgruppe in Anspruch nehmen, gilt allgemein die grundlegende Voraussetzung, dass *alle Getauften zu der* katholischen Kirche gehören. ... Von dieser Tatsache ist auszugehen. Der christliche Realismus weiss, dass die in Gott und den göttlichen Personen verankerte Realität realer ist als die immer wieder anzweifelbare der sichtbaren Realität.' 'Wir kommen, wenn wir nicht papistisch denken können, jetzt noch nicht um diesen Gegensatz von unsichtbarer und sichtbarer Kirche herum.' Cf. Ernst Gaugler, 'Die geistigen Voraussetzungen der kirchlichen Wiedervereinigung', *IKZ* 16 (1926), pp. 85–98, at pp. 86–87, 98.

The implications of somehow similar statements would need further analysis, cf. Joseph Hubert Reinkens' speech at the Congress of Cologne, *Die Verhandlungen des zweiten Altkatholiken-Congresses zu Köln. Offizielle Ausgabe. Erste Abtheilung* (Köln: Neusser, 1872), pp. 73–79, at p. 78; Eduard Herzog, 'Von dem Recht der Kirchen, sich gegenseitig zu exkommunizieren', *RITh* 18 (1910), pp. 18–25, at p. 24; Eduard Herzog, 'Die Kirche als "Leib Christi"', *IKZ* 12 (1922), pp. 78–100, at p. 99.

Churches and each (of them) contains part of what was common to the ancient Church, but none has all the characteristics of the primitive Church unadulterated and free from mingling with later religious sentiment; and no individual (denominational) Church may call itself the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The true Church is in all the Churches. All individual Churches lead to the true Church.’<sup>49</sup>

Andreas Rinkel, later Archbishop, wrote in 1930 that the Church is the access to the Kingdom of God, but not identical with it: ‘Therefore no Church can call itself the Body of Christ excluding the other Churches. For the Body of Christ is one and undivided, and each Church, even the one that thinks it has not deviated from the ancient tradition, is to be equally blamed for every division or separation.’ The multiplicity of Churches, understood as tearing apart the One Church, is sin, but sin does not prevent their being related to the Invisible Church due to the presence of the Holy Spirit and his grace in the concrete Churches. Each denomination, also the Old Catholic Church, is striving to belong to the *Una Sancta*.<sup>50</sup>

Later Rinkel seemed to distance himself from such language. In a paper written in 1949 he sees the Old Catholic Churches in their respective countries to be the representation and the continuation of the Western Catholic Church that originates in the first century and together with the Eastern Catholic Church to be the One, undivided Catholic Church. And quoting from a contemporary Dutch Old Catholic Catechism he adds: A Church (denomination) belongs to the Church of Christ, i.e. the Body of Christ, whenever it manifests in teaching and living that it is a part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. And he lists a number of

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<sup>49</sup> ‘Die äussere Einheit der christlichen Kirche ist vollständig verloren gegangen. Die einzelnen Kirchen sind Teilkirchen und jede (von ihnen) birgt in sich einen Teil des Gutes der alten Kirche, aber keine besitzt alle Eigenschaften der ersten Kirche unverkürzt und ohne Vermengung mit späterem religiösen Sinn; und keine einzelne (“Konfessionskirche”) darf sich der Leib Christi, der Tempel Gottes nennen. Die wahre Kirche ist in allen Kirchen. Alle einzelnen Kirchen führen zu der wahren Kirche.’ Cf. Stefan Zankow, ‘Die Beziehungen des Altkatholizismus zu den orthodoxen Kirchen des Ostens’, *IKZ* 15 (1925), pp. 216–229, at pp. 223–224.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Darum kann keine Kirche sich als den Leib Christi bezeichnen unter Ausschluss der anderen Kirchen. Denn der Leib Christi ist eins und ungeteilt, und an jeder Teilung oder Trennung trägt jede Kirche, auch die, die vom Alten nicht abgewichen zu sein meint, gleiche Schuld.’ Cf. Andreas Rinkel, ‘Christentum – Kirche – Sakrament’, *IKZ* 20 (1930), pp. 103–121, at p. 110; cf. also p. 111.

criteria which help to recognize this belonging, including structural or constitutional elements of Church order such as the ministry of pastors that continues the work of the Apostles.<sup>51</sup>

4.3.2 In 1993 the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference issued a statement on the 'Relations of the Union of Utrecht to other Churches'. Here we find an ecclesiological self-evaluation: 'The Churches of the Union of Utrecht see themselves as Local Churches, in which – regardless of all human imperfection and sin and in spite of divisions, which they try to overcome to the best of their efforts – exists the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The Local Churches united in the Union of Utrecht are autonomous Churches either comprising several dioceses or being autonomous dioceses. Irrespective of their historical origin and differences ensuing from it, they share the common ground of continuing the ancient undivided Church of East and West. They strive for the unity of Christian Churches on the basis of the faith of the ancient undivided Church ...' as it was already expressed in the Declaration of Utrecht in 1889.

It then says respecting the Orthodox Church: 'In the Orthodox Church of the East, the Old Catholic Church recognizes the same basis of the ancient Church as with itself and therefore it has always considered reunion with her as a central concern ...' The next, longer paragraph deals with the Anglican Communion: 'Already in the last century, the Old Catholics recognized in the Anglican Communion a body which was particularly close to them, because it had preserved faith and order during the Reformation in a clearer way than the continental Reformation Churches.' After the recognition of Anglican orders by the Dutch Church in 1925, it was possible 'to establish ecclesial communion on the basis of the mutual recognition as Catholic Churches'. It then refers to the different position concerning the ordination of women (a point which now looks strangely obsolete). Other Churches mentioned are the two now Anglican Iberian Churches and the Philippine Independent Church, with which there is

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Andreas Rinkel, 'Die Lehre von der Kirche nach der Auffassung der altkatholischen Kirche', *IKZ* 39 (1949), pp. 1–15. A certain interpretation of the branch theory was rejected in the agreed Orthodox – Old Catholic statement on 'The Boundaries of the Church'; cf. *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis. Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der gemeinsamen Texte des orthodox-altkatholischen Dialogs 1975–1987 mit französischer und englischer Übersetzung*, ed. Urs von Arx, Beiheft zu *IKZ* 79 (1989), pp. 192–193 (English text).

also full communion, as well as the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran and Reformed Churches.<sup>52</sup>

The impact of this statement was slight, as it was published in a time of complicated tensions within the Bishops' Conference and the Union of Utrecht. But the approach to the question of how Old Catholics see themselves and others emerges in a sufficiently clear way: The ecclesial status of other Churches or denominations is not evaluated from a neutral standpoint or a general theory. It starts with the confession to believe to be (a representation or realization of) the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Symbol of Faith, this statement being a doxological act. Where there is ecclesial communion with another Church or denomination, there is also the One Church; where there is no ecclesial communion, no judgement of this kind is really possible. From a neutral ecclesiological perspective (necessary e.g. in the important theological work of the Commission on Faith and Order) it may be asked whether this approach is not unduly denominational. I hesitate to criticise it, because recognizing two denominations as being identical in their catholicity (witness their faith and order, including the liturgy) – I repeat it – is a confessional or doxological act implying a deep mutual ecclesial commitment that must without delay lead to unrestricted full communion.<sup>53</sup>

The difference between the visible and the mystical (or eschatological) aspect of the One Church may be taken for granted, but is not up to us to define it in the context of a general ecclesiological theory, to the effect that God's saving and unifying presence in the Church – at the very least in one's own Church (denomination) – is factually denied or reduced to something that can be confessed only when the visible unity and communion of all is achieved. I would even venture to suggest that every denomination (claiming to be in continuation with the Church of the Apostles and the Ecumenical Councils) should be able to see itself as a representation of the One Church of the Symbol – with the reservation that it does not tacitly include the theologically dangerous word 'only (*solus, sola*)', because this would explicitly be a statement to the effect of unchurching another

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. *IKZ* 83 (1993), pp. 250–254.

<sup>53</sup> A similar approach can be perceived in the final agreed text of the Orthodox – Old Catholic theological dialogue on 'Ecclesial Communion: Presuppositions and Consequences'. One of the presuppositions would be that Old Catholics and Orthodox would recognize and acknowledge each other as being the same and one Church of the Symbol. Cf. *Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis*, pp. 227–229 (English text).

such denomination. A confessional *epochē*, as long as visible communion is not shared and covenanted, need not be seen as such a negative evaluation, since otherwise all our mutual prayer and search for recognizing the given unity and catholicity of the Triune God's Church in our (formerly separated) Churches would make no sense.

## 5. Conclusion: Towards Further Convergence?

The difference respecting the correlation between the visible and the mystical aspect of the Church, as it becomes apparent in the ecumenical strategy and the corresponding ecclesiological argumentation of Anglicanism on the one hand and – in tendency at least – of Old Catholicism on the other, may be the result of a different approach in understanding the nature of the Church.<sup>54</sup> For Old Catholic mainstream ecclesiology, the starting point is the local Church with its focus and centre in eucharist and bishop. Thus eucharistic sharing is a profoundly ecclesial act, signifying unity and implying commitment to live this (already visible) unity in ever more intensity.<sup>55</sup> The eucharist is not so much a sacrament among others, but (as the fundamental liturgical action including the proclamation of the Gospel and receiving sacramental communion) the central expression and

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<sup>54</sup> Another area of divergence becomes manifest in the fact that the Union of Utrecht is in (full) communion with the Anglican Communion, but not with the so-called Porvoo Churches or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, all of whom are in communion with the British and Irish Anglican Churches, the Episcopal Church in the USA and the Anglican Church of Canada respectively; cf. Sven Oppegaard, Gregory Cameron (eds.), *Anglican-Lutheran Agreements. Regional and International Agreements 1972–2002*, LWF Documentation 49 (Geneva: LWF, 2004). In my view, this state of affairs has nothing to do with the correlation of the visible and the mystical aspect of unity and communion as it is discussed in this paper. For Old Catholic evaluations of the Porvoo Common Statement cf. Martien Parmentier (ed.), *The Ecumenical Consistency of the Porvoo Document. Papers read at a symposium held by the Anglican – Old Catholic Society of St. Willibrord at Amersfoort, Netherlands, on 15 October 1997*, Publicatieserie Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie 35 (Amersfoort: Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 1999); 'The Porvoo-Dokument als Anregung zu altkatholischer Selbstreflektion' [sic], *IKZ* 90 (2000), pp. 1–49 (35th International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference, Wislikofen CH, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> The problem of a mutually covenanted eucharistic sharing between denominations not living in visible unity and communion is not so much the act itself, but its non-consequential character, as becomes apparent the next day.

enactment of what the local Church is. Communion is not only an encounter between Christ and the individual believer (this aspect has shaped much of our eucharistic piety), but more importantly a community building event integrating each believer in the committed fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:29).

A further consequence of this approach may be the confessional nature of speaking of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in relation to one's own denomination. To confess to be a representation or a realization of the *Una Sancta* of the Symbol of Faith cannot claim to be a phenomenological judgement about the ecclesiality of the Churches with which visible unity and community in whatever organizational form is not (yet) a given reality. But it is a doxological act of thanksgiving to God for what is at least visibly (and mystically) experienced of the One Church in one's own denomination in whatever proleptic and poor way. This doxological act cannot be separated from the commitment of finding and living the One Church in visible communion with other Churches (denominations) the sign of which is the sharing of faith, eucharist and ministry, of *marturia*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*.

## Appendix

(a) *The Eucharist: Sacrament of Unity. An occasional paper of the House of Bishops of the Church of England*, GS Misc 632 (London: Church House Publishing, 2001), pp. 16–17:

(35) While we appreciate the intention to safeguard the integrity of the Eucharist from indiscriminate celebration in inappropriate circumstances (for example, without agreement in the apostolic faith), we do not believe that eucharistic communion should be reserved for the end point of unity already achieved between separated churches. Since the Lambeth Conference of 1968, Anglicans have come to accept that shared eucharistic communion (in various degrees) may be an appropriate anticipation of full visible unity (cf. Canon B 15A). The unity in the Body of Christ brought about by baptism calls for further expression or realization in the Eucharist before this ultimate point is reached. The Eucharist is one of God's greatest gifts to the Church and is given to build up the Body of Christ. We endorse the ecumenical insight that Christ builds up his Church as a eucharistic community. We do not believe that, because the Eucharist is undoubtedly a fundamental expression of the unity of the Church and a means of building it up, eucharistic communion must be reserved for full ecclesial communion, visibly and structurally expressed.

(37) The ecumenical method that has been pursued consistently by the Church of England and is embodied in the Meissen, Fetter Lane and Reuilly Agreements (and which has been repeatedly endorsed by the Lambeth Conferences), is that of seeking full visible unity by clearly defined and mutually agreed stages. This approach suggests that various degrees of real communion, grounded in baptism, may appropriately be expressed by degrees of eucharistic sharing. The degrees of eucharistic sharing that we have in mind are: first, mutual eucharistic hospitality; then the participation of ministers, excluding presidency or concelebration, in each other's churches' eucharistic services (as provided for in our ecumenical canons and ecumenical agreements); finally, full interchangeability of ministries as part of full visible unity.

(b) Statement of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference on 'Eucharistiegemeinschaft und kirchliche Einheit', *IKZ* 84 (1994), pp. 62–63:

1. In der heiligen Eucharistie empfangen wir Anteil an Leib und Blut Christi, an der Versöhnung mit Gott und an dem neuen Leben, das Christus uns durch seinen Tod und seine Auferstehung gebracht hat. Da wir gemeinsam Anteil erhalten an Christus, empfangen wir in ihm Gemeinschaft untereinander. In der Eucharistie macht uns Christus immer wieder zu *einem* Leib, seiner Kirche. Eucharistische Gemeinschaft ist also grundsätzlich kirchliche Gemeinschaft und schafft sie immer wieder neu. Die Eucharistie hat einen persönlichen und einen gemeinschaftlichen Aspekt, die zwar im Einzelfall verschieden stark hervortreten, aber nicht voneinander getrennt werden können.
2. Die Kirche spricht die Einladung zur Eucharistie im Namen ihres Herrn Jesus Christus aus. Er ist der eigentliche Gastgeber, und er ruft seine Kirche zur treuen Verwaltung seines Mahles. Jede Verdunkelung dieser einmütigen Überzeugung der Kirche muss vermieden werden. Manche heute weit verbreiteten Ausdrücke, wie 'eucharistische Gastbereitschaft', 'eucharistische Gastfreundschaft' und ähnliches erwecken den Eindruck, dass beim Sakrament der Eucharistie nicht die Christgläubigen Gäste Christi, sondern die Glieder einer Konfessionskirche Gäste einer anderen Konfessionskirche sind. Solche Gedanken aber sind mit dem Glauben der Kirche nicht vereinbar.
3. Die Einladung zur Eucharistie, die die Kirche im Namen ihres Herrn ausspricht, richtet sich an die Getauften, die in Glauben und Umkehr bereit sind, sich die tiefste Gemeinschaft mit Christus und in ihm mit den Brüdern und Schwestern schenken zu lassen und die entsprechenden Gemeinschaftsverpflichtungen auf sich zu nehmen. Vor einem Eucharistieempfang ohne diese Voraussetzung warnt der Apostel Paulus (1Kor 11,27–34).
4. Die Kirchen der Utrechter Union erstreben die Wiedervereinigung der noch getrennten christlichen Kirchen auf der Grundlage des Glaubens der alten ungeteilten Kirche von Ost und West. Die Wiedervereinigung besteht in der Herstellung der kirchlichen Gemeinschaft, die vor allem in der gemeinsamen Feier der Eucharistie zum Ausdruck kommt, aber auch ein gemeinsames kirchliches Leben einschliesst.

Gegenwärtig ist Kirchengemeinschaft auch mit einigen Kirchen, die mit uns den altkirchlichen Glauben an den dreifältigen Gott und die Menschwerdung Gottes in Jesus Christus teilen, wegen weiterer bestehender wichtiger Differenzen, insbesondere im Verständnis der Kirche und ihres Amtes, leider noch nicht möglich. Diese Fragen hängen mit dem Glauben an Jesus Christus und den dreifältigen Gott eng zusammen. Wir rufen daher alle Gläubigen, Geistlichen und Theologen unserer Kirchen auf, durch ihr Gebet und ihre Arbeit dazu beizutragen, dass im ökumenischen Dialog die gemeinsamen Antworten gefunden werden, die die Verwirklichung der sichtbaren Einheit ermöglichen.

5. Wenn das Sakrament der Eucharistie Christen aus anderen Kirchen gespendet wird, die auf der Basis dieses Glaubens der alten Kirche stehen und an die wirkliche Gegenwart Christi in der Eucharistie glauben, geschieht dies im Hinblick auf die Situation der betroffenen Personen und auf ihre Verantwortung hin. Es soll auf geeignete Weise deutlich gemacht werden, dass es sich dabei nicht um eine Institutionalisierung der Trennung handelt, sondern um eine Anwendung des Grundsatzes der Oikonomia, d.h. ein Verhalten, das ausschliesslich pastoralen Bedürfnissen und geistlicher Hilfe dienen soll.

(c) Statement of the 38th International Old Catholic Theologians' Conference, Elspeet NL, 2003, on 'Eucharistiegemeinschaft und Kirchengemeinschaft', *IKZ* 93 (2003), pp. 205–207:

Die Theologenkonzferenz hat sich an ihrer diesjährigen Tagung mit dem Thema 'Eucharistie und Kirchengemeinschaft' beschäftigt. Dabei befasste sie sich vor allem mit dem Verständnis von Eucharistie und Gemeinschaft in der altkatholischen, der anglikanischen und der schwedisch-lutherischen Tradition. Auf Grund der Referate und der daran anschliessenden Diskussionen hat die Theologenkonzferenz folgende Ergebnisse formuliert:

1. Die Theologenkonzferenz hat keine signifikanten Unterschiede zwischen den drei Auffassungen der Eucharistie festgestellt. Alle drei Traditionen lehren die Realpräsenz Christi und den Opfercharakter des Sakramentes der Eucharistie. Als eine von allen gemeinsam verantwortbare Auffassung kann nach Ansicht der Theologenkonzferenz folgende Umschreibung formuliert werden: 'Die Eucharistie ist einerseits die Vollendung der Eingliederung in die Kirche, die mit der Taufe beginnt, andererseits aber der Vollzug der Anamnese des Christusgeschehens gemäss dem Auftrag Christi. In diesem Vollzug macht der Heilige Geist gegenwärtig, was Gott in Tod und Auferstehung Jesu Christi für das Heil der Menschen und die Erneuerung der Schöpfung erschlossen hat. Insofern ist die Eucharistie *das* Sakrament der pilgernden Kirche. Diese hat selbst sakramentalen Charakter, insofern Jesus Christus ihr als Herr gegenübersteht und in ihr als ihr Leben verleiblicht ist.'

2. Die Theologenkonzferenz ist der Meinung, dass für die Aufnahme von Kirchengemeinschaft ein gemeinsames Verständnis von Taufe, Eucharistie und Amt (dessen Probleme sie nicht eigens thematisierte) als je isolierte Grössen nicht genügt. Vielmehr ist auch ein gemeinsames Grundverständnis der Kirche als einer im dreieinigen Gott gründenden Gemeinschaft vorauszusetzen, denn nur so bekommen



Taufe, Eucharistie und Amt, beziehungsweise die Elemente Schrift und Tradition, die altkirchlichen Glaubensbekenntnisse, die Sakramente und das Bischofsamt in apostolischer Sukzession, ihren Ort im Mysterium der Kirche.

3. Im Blick auf jede Eucharistiefeier ist unbestritten, dass Christus der Einladende ist. Die Einladung zum Mahl impliziert eine verbindliche Gemeinschaft – eben kirchliche Gemeinschaft. Insofern bedingen Eucharistie und Kirchengemeinschaft einander. Anders gesagt: Man kann den einladenden Herrn und die einladende Kirche nicht voneinander trennen.

4. Wo zwei bislang getrennte Kirchen auf Grund eines theologischen Dialogs zur Erkenntnis gekommen sind, dass sie miteinander kirchliche Gemeinschaft aufzunehmen gerufen sind, ist die Eucharistiegemeinschaft Ausdruck dieser kirchlichen Gemeinschaft und zugleich Mittel zu deren Vertiefung auf ihrem Weg in die Fülle Gottes. Wo *eucharistic sharing* noch nicht in 'voll sichtbarer Kirchengemeinschaft' gelebt wird, kommt die einheitsstiftende Kraft der Eucharistie nicht erkennbar zum Tragen und hängt die Kirchengemeinschaft von einer anderen Grösse ab (z.B. von der Übereinstimmung in der Amtsfrage). Auf diese Weise wird auch die Einheit als ein grundlegendes Kennzeichen der Kirche in die (vorläufige?) Unsichtbarkeit verlegt. Dies betrachten wir als ein Problem.

5. Theologisch und pastoral gesehen eine etwas andere Situation liegt da vor, wo getaufte Glieder einer Kirche an der Eucharistiefeier einer anderen Kirche teilnehmen – wie es weithin unsere Praxis ist; denn hier treten nicht zwei Kirchen mit ihrer Lehre und ihrem Bekenntnis in eine Beziehung zueinander. Die damit gegebene Gefahr einer Individualisierung mahnt an, das grosse Ziel kirchlicher Einheit und Gemeinschaft umso entschiedener anzugehen. ...

### *Deutsche Zusammenfassung*

Die Unterscheidung eines mystischen (unsichtbaren) und eines sichtbaren Aspektes der Kirche dürfte ihren Ursprung einmal in der Beobachtung haben, dass die sichtbare Kirche auch Sünder und Ungläubige unter ihren getauften Gliedern aufweist, sodann in den Erfahrungen von Konflikten zwischen Gruppen, die je beanspruchen, die wahre Kirche zu sein. Insofern lassen sich gewisse dabei gemachte Überlegungen allenfalls auch für die heutige ökumenische Situation fruchtbar machen.

Die Einheit der Kirche gründet (wie auch ihre Heiligkeit) in Gottes Handeln in der Sendung Jesu Christi und des Heiligen Geistes, das durch die apostolische Verkündigung vermittelt wird und im Geschehen der Entstehung von Gemeinden sein (gegenüber der eschatologischen Vollendung der Schöpfung vorläufiges) Ziel erreicht. Dabei zeigt etwa die paulinische Rede von der (je örtlichen) Kirche als Leib, dass sich der göttliche Ursprung der Einheit in einer Vielzahl von Beziehungen und Charismen zur Geltung bringt. Zugleich aber gilt darüber hinaus, dass die in Gott gründende Einheit der Getauften (die andere neutestamentliche Traditionen ebenfalls kennen) auch in einer (ekklesialen) Lebenspraxis und einem entsprechenden Ethos umzusetzen ist. Der mystische Aspekt der Einheit ist – darauf zielt alle sog. Paränese – stets auf die sichtbare Gemeinschaft der Getauften hin orientiert, die ihrerseits ihren göttlichen Grund

manifestiert. Diese Bewegung führt dann auch zur Bildung weiterer Elemente, die der Manifestation der Gemeinschaft, zumal zwischen räumlich getrennten und sozio-kulturell nicht identischen Ortskirchen dienen (*regula fidei*, Bischofssynoden, Schriftkanon).

Die enge Verbindung des mystischen und des sichtbaren Aspekts der Kirche hinsichtlich ihrer Einheit wurde im Lauf der Zeit zu einem Problem: Konnten Menschen, die in einer als häretisch betrachteten und daher im Schisma lebenden Gruppe getauft worden waren, wirklich als getauft und somit als Glieder der Kirche betrachtet werden? Angesichts des sog. Ketzertaufstreits setzte sich im Westen die Option des Augustinus durch, wonach solche Getaufte bei der Aufnahme in die («eigene», d.h. katholische) Kirche nicht erst getauft werden mussten. Somit gab es eine gewisse Ekklesialität in der getrennten «anderen Kirche», und der Zusammenhang zwischen dem mystischen und dem sichtbaren Aspekt der Kirche in ihrer Einheit wurde dadurch gelockert. Das führte freilich zwischen getrennten Kirchen nie zu Formen irgendwelcher eucharistischer Gastfreundschaft oder dergleichen. Die spätere Entfremdung der West- von der Ostkirche, das Grosse Schisma im Westen mit einer Mehrzahl von Päpsten und schliesslich die Folgen der Reformation warfen immer neu die Frage der Ekklesialität der «anderen» (nicht zur eigenen kirchlichen Gemeinschaft gehörigen) Seite sowie der Manifestation des unsichtbaren Aspekts der Einen Kirche des Glaubenssymbols im Sichtbaren auf.

Im heutigen ökumenischen Kontext stellt sich eine analoge Frage: Wie sieht eine kirchliche Denomination (um diesen ekklesial wertfreien Ausdruck zu gebrauchen) ihr Verhältnis zur Einen Kirche, die im Glaubenssymbol bekannt wird, und wie sieht sie die von ihr getrennten anderen Denominationen? Abgesehen von direkten Erklärungen ergeben sich Hinweise auf eine Antwort auch aus der Art und Weise, wie Konvertiten aus anderen Denominationen in die eigene Denomination aufgenommen werden, oder auch aus der Einstellung gegenüber der Praxis von Abendmahlsgemeinschaft bei fehlender Kirchengemeinschaft.

Galt früher die landläufige Auffassung, dass die römisch-katholische und die orthodoxe Kirche sich – ohne Rest jenseits der kanonischen Grenzen der eigenen Kirche – je als die einzige Kirche betrachte, sodass also der mystische und der sichtbare Aspekt der Kirche hinsichtlich ihrer Einheit zusammenfällt, so wird heute in der römisch-katholischen Kirche mit dem berühmten «Subsistieren» der Einen Kirche in der vom Papst geleiteten Kirche durchaus den «anderen» – unterschieden in «Kirchen» und «Kirchliche Gemeinschaften» – Ekklesialität zuerkannt. Konvertiten aus diesen Denominationen werden nicht (wieder)getauft; *communicatio in sacris* ist in geregelten Fällen möglich.

In der orthodoxen Kirche, wo in teilweise schwer überschaubarer Weise eine voraugustinische, oft mit dem Namen Cyprian verbundene «strenge» Auffassung praktiziert wurde und wird, werden zunehmend (wie schon in den altorientalischen Kirchen) auch andere Stimmen laut, die von einer (Wieder-)Taufe abraten. Die enge Verbindung des mystischen und sichtbaren Aspekts der Kirche hinsichtlich ihrer Einheit wird dennoch stark betont, ebenso sehr aber, dass nicht wirklich erkannt werden kann, wo der Heilige Geist ausserhalb der kanonischen Grenze der (eigenen) Kirche nicht ist.

Die von hochkirchlichen Anglikanern im 19. Jahrhundert entwickelte sog. Zweigkirchentheorie rechnet mit einem derzeitigen Auseinanderfallen der beiden Aspekte der Kirche hinsichtlich ihrer Einheit, denn die kanonisch getrennten Kirchen von Rom, des Ostens und der Anglikaner sind nur unsichtbar eins (bzw. waren vor den Spaltungen eins). Die von der Lambeth-Konferenz 1920 formulierte anglikanische Auffassung sieht die Dinge ähnlich, aber ohne Ausschluss der (meist nicht bischöflichen) Reformationskirchen. Zur Einen Kirche gehören alle, die an den Herrn Jesus Christus glauben und auf den Namen des dreieinigen Gottes getauft sind. Diese Einheit ist nicht sichtbar, sie beginnt dort hervorzutreten, wo auf der Grundlage des Lambeth Quadrilateral sichtbare Kirchengemeinschaft entsteht. Grundsätzlich werden die vier Kennzeichen der Kirche erst eschatologisch voll offenbar. Die Anerkennung von christlichen Denominationen als «wahre Kirche», auch wenn sichtbare Kirchengemeinschaft noch nicht möglich ist, hat in der jüngeren Vergangenheit zu einer bemerkenswerten ökumenischen Dynamik, besonders mit den Reformationskirchen, geführt, wo in einem gestuften Annäherungsprozess Abendmahlsgemeinschaft (*eucharistic sharing*) als erster Schritt vereinbart wird, während weitere Schritte mit zuletzt vollem Austausch der Amtsträger (*ministerial sharing, interchangeability*) eine noch tiefere oder eben volle sichtbare Gemeinschaft ausdrücken. Hier dürften Unterschiede zur altkatholischen *mainstream*-Ekklesiologie zum Vorschein kommen.

In der altkatholischen Kirche ist es erst im Laufe der Zeit zu einer gewissen Klärung der anstehenden Frage gekommen. In der Frühzeit wurde bisweilen eine Art von Zweigkirchentheorie – mit dem Altkatholizismus an der Stelle Roms – vertreten; im Zug der beginnenden «Bewegung für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung» konnte gesagt werden, dass nur alle Kirchen zusammen sich als die Eine Kirche betrachten können. Dies war jeweils zu einem guten Teil aus Opposition gegen römische Ansprüche, exklusiv die Eine Kirche zu repräsentieren, formuliert. In den letzten sechzig Jahren kristallisierte sich die (von der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz vertretene) Auffassung heraus, dass die altkatholische Kirche (in einer Art von doxologischem Akt) sich als eine Vergegenwärtigung der Einen Kirche (in der westlichen Tradition) sieht, ohne ein Urteil über die Ekklesialität derjenigen Kirchen zu fällen, mit denen sie nicht in kirchlicher Gemeinschaft steht (wie mit den Anglikanern) oder stehen könnte (wie mit den Orthodoxen). Der Zusammenhang zwischen dem mystischen und dem sichtbaren Aspekt der Kirche hinsichtlich ihrer Einheit wird betont, was auch eine Zurückhaltung gegenüber der Forderung, bei nicht vorhandener kirchlicher Gemeinschaft Formen von Abendmahlsgemeinschaft zu vereinbaren, erklärt.

So liegt in der Beurteilung des Zusammenhangs des mystischen und des sichtbaren Aspekts der Kirche hinsichtlich ihrer Einheit zwischen anglikanischer und altkatholischer Ekklesiologie (soweit man davon je im Singular reden will) eine Differenz vor. Ob dies ein Indiz einer tiefer liegenden ekklesiologischen Divergenz ist, bleibt offen. Der Ausgangspunkt der altkatholischen *mainstream*-Ekklesiologie ist eine eucharistische Ortskirchenekklesiologie. Das Selbstverständnis der altkatholischen Kirchengemeinschaft – wie auch das Verständnis ihrer Beziehungen zu anderen Kirchen – muss letztlich als ein doxologischer Akt verstanden werden; es ist nicht das Ergebnis einer phänomenologisch neutralen Ekklesiologie.