

Conference report

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Conference Report

International Anglican – Old Catholic Theologians' Conference 2011

The International Anglican – Old Catholic Theologians' Conference met at the Herz-Jesu-Kloster in Neustadt an der Weinstrasse from 29 August to 2 September 2011. Some fifty theologians and church people mainly from the Old Catholic churches of the Union of Utrecht and the worldwide Anglican Communion gathered together to pray together, hear papers and discuss common preoccupations. The conference enjoyed the excellent hospitality of the monastery, and experienced daily worship in both traditions in the chapel.

Under the auspices of the Bonn Agreement, which was concluded in 1931 and which established communion between the two families of churches, theologians have met regularly. The previous meeting took place in Leeds in 2005 on the theme *Towards further convergence in ecclesiology*. The present conference was held against a background of a sense of urgency about the common mission of the churches of the Anglican Communion and of the Union of Utrecht, especially on the continent of Europe.

The theme of the conference, covered in plenary papers and group discussion, was *Ecclesiology and Mission in Today's Europe*, which reflected a draft document produced by the Anglican Old Catholic International Coordinating Council (AOCICC) entitled *Belonging together in Europe: A Statement on Ecclesiology and Mission*. The document attempts to clarify the foundations, scope and boundaries of relations between both families of churches. The AOCICC took the opportunity to consult the conference about the document, and to gather impressions. It will revise the paper at its next meeting in November in light of these comments and then publish it.

Opening addresses were given by the Most Revd Dr Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht, and the Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of the Church of England's Diocese in Europe. Speakers from the Old Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Baptist traditions addressed a range of subjects, including the relevance of the Bonn Agreement, the European context of mission today, secularization, the contribution of ecumenical dialogue to mission and unity, and the theological basis of mission and unity. The speakers were Paul Avis (London and Exeter/

United Kingdom), Angela Berlis (Bern/Switzerland), Keith Clements (Bristol/United Kingdom), Peter De Mey (Louvain/Belgium), Michael Jackson (Dublin/Ireland), Daniel Munteanu (Bamberg/Germany) and Matthias Ring (Bonn/Germany). The proceedings will be published in the *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift*.

There was a growing sense of commitment to one another throughout the conference. The conference strongly encouraged the AOCICC, the bishops of the two Communion, and clergy and lay people to deepen the communion established in the Bonn Agreement and support unity in mission in today's Europe. It also commended the topics addressed to members of both churches for study.

A halfday excursion to Speyer enabled participants to visit the Roman Catholic cathedral during its 950th anniversary this year. They were hosted by the bishop's secretary Dr Georg Müller. Bishop Dr Matthias Ring, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Old Catholics in Germany, presided at a celebration of the eucharist in the Protestant Dreifaltigkeitskirche, welcomed by its pastor, the Revd Christine Gölzer.

The next International Anglican – Old Catholic Theologians' Conference will take place 1–5 September 2015 in England.

The participants at the International Anglican – Old Catholic Theologians' Conference Neustadt / Weinstrasse (Germany), 2 September 2011

Papers given

Revd Professor Dr Angela Berlis, 'Mission Accomplished? Challenges of the Bonn Agreement for today's reflection'

Dr Keith Clements, 'Believing and belonging: Perspectives on contemporary European Christian identities'

Professor Dr Peter De Mey, 'Keeping Mission and Unity together: Impulses from multilateral and bilateral dialogue processes'

The Rt Revd Matthias Ring, 'Belonging together in a secularized society'

The Most Revd Michael Jackson, 'Secularization – an Irish perspective'

PD Dr. habil. Daniel Munteanu, 'Ecclesiology and Mission from an Orthodox Perspective'

The Revd Canon Professor Dr Paul Avis, 'Towards a missiological ecclesiology'

The Revd Canon Professor Dr Paul Avis, 'A pathway to deeper unity in mission for Old Catholics and Anglicans in continental Europe'