

**Zeitschrift:** Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie  
**Band:** 102 (2012)  
**Heft:** 1-2  
  
**Artikel:** Mission accomplished? : Challenges of the Bonn Agreement (1931) for today  
**Autor:** Berlis, Angela  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-405097>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 09.07.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

---

## **Mission Accomplished? Challenges of the Bonn Agreement (1931) for today**

*Angela Berlis*

This article aims to be an introduction to the topic of the International Old Catholic–Anglican Theologians’ Conference. At first, it will answer the question why the topic of the conference is focussed on Europe, followed by a brief discussion on how the relationship between Anglicans and Old Catholics has matured theologically and how the collaboration between the churches has developed practically in the past 80 years. The Bonn Agreement of 2 July 1931 marks the beginning of the formal relationship, the full communion of the two church communions.<sup>1</sup> Prior to that time, there had been multifaceted encounters and agreements, of which I shall provide a brief overview. I shall then proceed with a close look at the Bonn Agreement – the expectations it raised upon its creation, the limitations inherent in the context of its origins, and the possibilities for collaborating and coalescing that have developed in the eight decades since 1931. Where do we stand today, what steps can we take to strengthen our common witness and our common responsibility and thereby deepen our bond of communion?

### **1. Why Europe?**

The title of the conference puts the focus on ‘Europe’. Why only Europe, given that the communion between Anglicans and Old Catholics is not restricted to Europe alone? It is not easy to describe Europe:<sup>2</sup> first of all,

---

<sup>1</sup> A note on terminology: The Bonn Agreement of 1931 speaks of ‘intercommunion’. After the third World Conference of Faith and Order in Lund in 1952, the term ‘full communion’ came into use due to the ecumenical development, and it was officially adopted by both Anglicans and Old Catholics. Today, Old Catholics normally speak of ‘full communion’ (they use the English term sometimes even in German texts), whereas Church of England Anglicans just speak of ‘communion’ with the Old Catholic Churches (and also with the so-called Porvoo Churches). – With thanks to Paul Avis, 7 January 2012, for his comments on an earlier version of this paper. I thank Martin della Valle for his translation of this article.

<sup>2</sup> See GUNNAR FOLKE SCHUPPERT ET AL. (eds), *Europawissenschaft* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005).

it is more or less a geographical reality, but it is also a *kultureller Bedeutungszusammenhang*,<sup>3</sup> a fairly coherent construct of cultural identity and shared history. We could speak about Europe as a political entity for more than 1,000 years, or as a rhetorical identity marker which expresses a certain *Weltanschauung*. For a long time it was common to speak about a *Christian Europe* (as the philosopher Voltaire called it); Romantic poets such as Novalis propagated that view, especially in the nineteenth century. Until fairly recently, due to the politics of colonization of other continents, the world was Europeanized, with the implication that European values were considered superior and more civilized.<sup>4</sup>

The Dutch historians Willem Frijhoff and Leo Wessels argue that ‘assumed similarities, shared fortunes and common roots’ justify reference to a common European history ‘as an experienced reality’.<sup>5</sup> This history includes a political, social, economic, cultural and mental collectivity which is characterized by ‘unity, difference and pluriformity and, what is more, an ongoing interaction of tradition and renewal, a process of fundamental changes and gradual transformations’.<sup>6</sup> Some years ago, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk wrote an essay entitled ‘Wenn Europa erwacht’ [‘If Europe awakes’], a plea that Europe should reassume – after a period of political absence since 1945 – its political and cultural–intellectual responsibility and its passion for science, democracy, human rights and art: ‘The name “Europe” designates a part of the world which has been enquiring in a distinctively peculiar way into the truth and the good-

---

<sup>3</sup> See for this term the homepage of the *Institut für Europäische Geschichte Mainz*: <http://www.ieg-mainz.de/forschungsbereiche> [01.07.2011].

<sup>4</sup> See PETER RIETBERGEN, *Europe: A Cultural History* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2006; 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1999), p. 484.

<sup>5</sup> WILLEM FRIJHOFF and LEO WESSELS, ‘Ter inleiding, Europa, 1450–1800. Traditie en vernieuwing, eenheid en verscheidenheid’, in WILLEM FRIJHOFF and LEO WESSELS (eds), *Veelvormige dynamiek. Europa in het ancien régime 1450–1800* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Sun, 2006), pp. 10–32, at p. 11. Translation of this quote by Willem van Asselt.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Het roept een samenhangend beeld op van een gezamenlijke geschiedenis en een gemeenschappelijke cultuur. Politiek, social, economisch, cultureel en mental: in alle opzichten kent Europa een rijk verleden, een geschiedenis van eenheid en vooral ook van verscheidenheid en pluriformiteit, van de voortdurende interactie van traditie en vernieuwing, van grote en ingrijpende, maar ook van geleidelijke veranderingen.’ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18. Translation of this quote by Willem van Asselt.

ness of life.’<sup>7</sup> Part of this ‘goodness of life’ is that people live in relationships – including with respect to their religion (although the religious aspect is not Sloterdijk’s primary focus).

Why did I start with those thoughts on Europe? If it is indeed a collective construct of culture and history (*kultureller Bedeutungszusammenhang*), we need to specify the distinction between the European continent and some European isles.<sup>8</sup> If Old Catholics and Anglicans speak with each other, different perspectives emerge on what ‘Europe’ contains. Therefore, it seems necessary to me to clarify that when we are talking about Europe we mean not only the continental part of it but the whole of Europe.

Europe is the focus of this conference because – to begin with – it is here that both the Old Catholic and the Anglican communions are present: be it as church provinces (Canterbury, York, Utrecht), as national churches, as minority or diaspora churches<sup>9</sup> or as missionary groups; be it in some countries together (in parallel or overlapping jurisdictions)<sup>10</sup> or in others without a direct counterpart. Secondly, it is here in Europe that they share an extended common history. Thirdly, today’s religious situation in

---

<sup>7</sup> ‘Der Name Europas nennt eine Weltgegend, in der auf unverkennbar eigentümliche Weise nach der Wahrheit und nach der Güte des Lebens gefragt worden ist.’ PETER SLOTERDIJK, *Falls Europa erwacht. Gedanken zum Programm einer Weltmacht am Ende des Zeitalters ihrer politischen Absence* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1994), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> In German, for example, it is not common to speak about ‘continental Europe’. This terminology reflects a position from somehow ‘outside’ Europe, whereas the term ‘Europa’ (in German) already implies that there are several countries, several historical, linguistic and cultural identities subsumed under it.

<sup>9</sup> See the paper by DAVID HAMID in this issue of *IKZ*. See also footnote 76 below.

<sup>10</sup> The topic of this paper is not the four parallel Anglican jurisdictions on the European continent or overlapping jurisdictions of Anglicans with other churches in communion. COLIN PODMORE makes a helpful distinction when he speaks of ‘parallel’ Anglican jurisdictions, because ‘they exist side by side in the same territory’. These Anglican jurisdictions are not ‘overlapping’ but ‘parallel’, ‘since the Diocese in Europe claims jurisdiction only over the chaplaincies that comprise it and not over the territory in general’. COLIN PODMORE, *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), pp. 82–83, at p. 83. The Diocese in Europe came into being out of a ‘colonial diocese for Anglicans’ in the nineteenth century. The diocese is – according to The Diocese in Europe Constitution 1995, p. 2 – ‘deemed to be part of the Province of Canterbury’, quoted after PODMORE, *Aspects*, p. 82.



Europe is a specific one<sup>11</sup>, due in significant part to the aforementioned facts: Europe is not simply secularized, it is also a realm of religion, spiritual agency and transmission; a lot of recent developments in contemporary Christianity are comparable throughout Europe.<sup>12</sup> Thus the focus on Europe is not in the service of Eurocentrism but serves as a starting point for contextual theological reflections which is evident in some of the articles in this issue of IKZ – reflections, which will refer to the common mission of the European churches. The *Charta Oecumenica*, subscribed to by most of these churches, has this to say on the topic: ‘The most important task of the churches in Europe is the common proclamation of the Gospel, in both word and deed, for the salvation of all.’<sup>13</sup> The *Charta Oecumenica* describes the ecumenical movement as a communication of faith, as a space for common witness. Our two church communions are part of this larger missionary mandate as well. And much is at stake. A few years ago, the now-retired German Methodist Bishop Wolfgang Klaiber pointed out a problem specifically with regard to common witness: churches that are not (or not yet) in communion with other churches limit this common witness. He found this ambivalence in documents and statements of *various* churches and denominations, specifically not just in statements of, for example, the Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches. According to Klaiber, even within Protestantism there are denominations and circles which view the doctrine and shape given the biblical Gospel by the Orthodox churches or the Roman Catholic church in such an obscured, if not outright distorted, way that they struggle to perceive them as places where people can experience true salvation.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Comparison with, e.g., the American situation is evidence of this. See PETER BERGER, GRACE DAVIE and EFFIE FOKAS, *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> See for example on contemporary Christianity in the United Kingdom of Great Britain: PETER CRUCHLEY-JONES (ed.), *God at Ground Level* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2008). See also the article by KEITH CLEMENTS in this issue of IKZ.

<sup>13</sup> *Charta Oecumenica. Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe*, II.2, p. 2. Quoted from: [http://www.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/cec/CEC\\_Documents/Charta\\_Oecumenica.pdf](http://www.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/cec/CEC_Documents/Charta_Oecumenica.pdf) (last viewed 10 December 2011).

<sup>14</sup> WALTER KLAIBER, ‘Gemeinsam gesandt – Ökumene in der Perspektive des gemeinsamen Zeugnisses’, *Missionarische Ökumene. Eine Zwischenbilanz. Erfahrungen und Perspektiven*, ed. by EMW, ACK and missio (Hamburg: Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, 2002), pp. 112–126, at p. 114. In German: ‘... kirchliche Gemeinschaften und Kreise, die das biblische Evangelium in Lehre und Gestalt

In light of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches, Klaiber argues for a return to the values of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and finds a criterion in the statement ‘to ceaselessly orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ’.<sup>15</sup> Based on that, the concern whether the others truly teach the Gospel and allow people to witness the message of grace can basically be laid to rest. In Klaiber’s view, the focus should now be on recognizing and deepening the missionary dimension of the Doctrine of Justification, which in essence is based on the Pauline testimony about the Gospel’s transboundary or universal power for all people.<sup>16</sup>

As Old Catholics and Anglicans, we distinguish ourselves from the aforementioned churches by the fact that we already are in communion with each other. So it should be easy for us to develop the *missio Dei* as our common missionary mandate. The existing eucharistic communion serves as its basis: the Eucharist is the central place for congress with the salvation of God in Christ, where we become one body in Christ.

What basis does being in communion offer for thinking about our common witness and common responsibility? Does the Bonn Agreement offer a foundation at all, or is it maybe simply too short? In what follows, I will describe in broad strokes the development towards the Bonn Agreement in 1931, the expectations that contemporaries associated with it and, finally, how our church communions have developed on the basis of the Bonn Agreement in the past eighty years.

---

der Orthodoxen Kirchen oder der Römisch-katholischen Kirche so verdunkelt, wenn nicht gar verfälscht sehen, dass es ihnen schwer fällt, in ihnen Orte zu sehen, an denen Menschen wirklich Heil erfahren können’.

<sup>15</sup> Gemeinsame Erklärung [= Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification], No. 18: ‘... das die gesamte Lehre und Praxis der Kirche unablässig auf Christus hin orientieren will’. Quoted after KLAIBER, ‘Gemeinsam gesandt’, p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Die Rechtfertigungsbotschaft ist Zeugnis der grenzüberschreitenden Kraft des Evangeliums und will immer wieder neu unter der Perspektive formuliert werden, wie wir über alle ekklesiologischen, religiösen, sozialen, ethnischen oder kulturellen Grenzen hinweg Menschen sagen können, dass Gottes Treue und Liebe ihnen ebenso gilt.’ KLAIBER, ‘Gemeinsam gesandt’, p. 115.

## 2. Encounters and expectations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

The task of describing and classifying the Bonn Agreement is not an easy one. It is akin to preparing a sermon on a well-known biblical narrative, for example the story about the Good Samaritan in Luke 10: everybody thinks that either they know exactly what the story is about or everything worth saying about it has already been said.

The ‘Bonn Agreement’ is a *theological* foundation for a relationship of communion between two churches. It was the first time since the Reformation that the Church of England had entered into a ‘full and formal relationship’ with a church on the continent.<sup>17</sup>

Putting the Bonn Agreement into a historical framework would require us to embed it in the historical context of its origins – a task beyond the scope of this article.<sup>18</sup> Suffice it to say that its prehistory brings to mind a number of encounters, such as the case of John Mason Neale (1818–1866), who came to Utrecht in the mid-nineteenth century to study the history of the Church of Utrecht<sup>19</sup> on the basis of original documents and in 1858 published the book *A History of the so-called Jansenist Church of Holland*, which became the foundation for all further accounts (Neale also was very interested in, and wrote about, Orthodoxy).<sup>20</sup> Shortly after Neale’s publi-

---

<sup>17</sup> JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), p. 365.

<sup>18</sup> For the history of the relationship between Anglicans and Old Catholics, I point to the lecture by URS VON ARX, ‘The Historical Background to the Bonn Agreement’, given at the Anglican Old Catholic International Theologians’ Conference in Leeds (England), 2005 (unpublished). His lecture focussed on the relationship from 1871 onwards.

<sup>19</sup> The earliest account of the Church of Utrecht from an Anglican perspective originates from 1838, from William Palmer (1803–1885), a celebrated tractarian and liturgist. To be found in appendix 1, ‘On Jansenism’: William Palmer, *A Treatise on the Church of Christ*, 2 vols (London: Rivington, 1838), vol. 1, pp. 324 and 339–340. Moss states that Palmer’s report is ‘by no means accurate’. See C. B. MOSS, *The Old Catholic Churches in Christendom (Faith and Order Pamphlets, 3)* (London: Westminster Church Assembly, 1929), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Neale came to know Archbishop Johannes van Santen (1772–1858) during a stay in Utrecht in 1851. He returned in 1854 to Utrecht to study the original documents of the history of the ‘Roman Catholic Church of the Episcopal Cleresie’ (known today as the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands). See Neale, 1858. Cf. CASPARUS JOHANNES RINKEL, *Kroniek van gebeurtenissen betreffende de oud-katholieken inzonderheid in Nederland* (1845–1894), ingeleid en geannoteerd door [= introduced with a

cation, in 1859 Frederick Meyrick (1827–1906), founder of the Anglo-Continental Society (ACS) in 1853 and its secretary until 1898, paid a visit to the Church of Utrecht and to Archbishop Henricus Loos (1813–1873).<sup>21</sup>

We also remember that following the First Vatican Council, English interest in the opponents of infallibility grew.<sup>22</sup> Some important rapprochements and encounters took place at the time. We remember such names as the bishops Joseph Hubert Reinkens (1821–1896) and Eduard Herzog (1841–1924) on the Old Catholic side, or Edward Harold Browne (1811–1891), Bishop of Ely, later Winchester, and Christopher Wordsworth (1807–1885), Bishop of Lincoln, on the Anglican side. Wordsworth, a member of the ACS, convinced the Convocation of Canterbury in 1871 to pass a resolution of protest against the Vatican Council's decrees and to send it to the Orthodox Churches, the German Old Catholics and the Dutch Church.<sup>23</sup>

We may tend to regard these men in some respects as lone wolves. The actions of the Old Catholic exponents were based on the ecumenical objectives as developed during the early (German-speaking) Old Catholicism by Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890), among others, and at official meetings.<sup>24</sup> Recent research has shown that the Anglican bishops who participated in the first Old Catholics' congresses after 1871 made sure

---

commentary by] Dick Schoon (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2006), p. 51. About John Mason Neale, see GEOFFREY ROWELL, *The Vision Glorious. Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 98–115. Rowell describes Neale's big interest in Orthodoxy but not his interest and his book about the 'Roman Catholic Church of the Episcopal Cleresie', which Rowell in another part in the book calls 'the old Jansenist Church of Holland' (p. 200).

<sup>21</sup> See FREDERICK MEYRICK, *Memories of Life at Oxford and Experiences in Italy, Greece, Turkey, Germany, Spain, and Elsewhere* (London: John Murray, 1905), especially pp. 176–184, 200–201. Cf. D. J. SCHOON, *Van bisschoppelijke Cleresie tot Oud-Katholieke kerk. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Nederland in de 19e eeuw* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers 2004), p. 671, note 14.

<sup>22</sup> ROBERT FITZSIMONS, 'The Church of England and the First Vatican Council', *The Journal of Religious History* 27 (2003), pp. 29–46.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 40–42.

<sup>24</sup> See ANGELA BERLIS, *Frauen im Prozess der Kirchwerdung. Eine historisch-theologische Studie zur Anfangsphase des deutschen Altkatholizismus (1850–1890)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), pp. 124–131; CHRISTIAN OEYEN, *Die Bonner Unionskonferenzen 1874–1875, vol. 1: Die Entstehung bis zum Beginn der ersten Konferenz* (Bern: unpublished habilitation dissertation, 1972).

they were acting in the interest of the Church of England (that is, of the Archbishop of Canterbury).<sup>25</sup> Similarly, it has recently been found that the relationship with the Old Catholics was evaluated quite differently in the Church of England than in the American church. This was due, in the case of the former, to the British church's status as an established church, while the Americans focussed on being an independent church for the nation. Anglicans from both sides of the Atlantic found Catholic alliances in the Old Catholic movement.<sup>26</sup> This political aspect of the relationship is also evident in the fact that the Anglicans' initial great interest cooled down considerably after 1880, when the waning of the *Kulturkampf* made it obvious that the Old Catholic churches were not turning into a mass movement but remained fairly small in size. None of this closer reading of history diminishes our heroic pioneers' significance: on the contrary, it is exactly because they were not disconnected lone wolves but displayed great ecumenical far-sightedness that they are so deserving of our respect.

In discussing one communion's expectations of another, we will continue to encounter many an instance that is likely to astonish us in hindsight. Thus, throughout time, Old Catholics' views of the Anglicans (and vice versa) varied greatly.

Delving any further into the history of the relationship between the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands and the Church of England would be outside the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that the Dutch Old Catholics<sup>27</sup> – in contrast to the Germans and the Swiss – for a long while remained reticent towards forging closer relations.<sup>28</sup> The resolution of the

---

<sup>25</sup> See ANGELA BERLIS, 'Ignaz von Döllinger and the Anglicans', in: STEWART J. BROWN and PETER NOCKLES (eds), *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World, c. 1830–c. 1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 236–248.

<sup>26</sup> See MARK CHAPMAN, 'Eduard Herzog and the "Anglo-American" Church, c. 1870–1882', *IKZ* 100 (2011), pp. 243–283.

<sup>27</sup> For a longer survey, especially on the Dutch situation, see: ANGELA BERLIS, 'Aneinander wachsen – zusammenwachsen. Alt-Katholische und anglikanische Zusammenarbeit in den Niederlanden', in: ANGELA BERLIS and MATTHIAS RING (eds), with collaboration of HUBERT HUPPERTZ, *Im Himmel Anker werfen. Vermutungen über Kirche in der Zukunft. Festschrift für Bischof Joachim Vobbe* (Bonn: Alt-Katholischer Bistumsverlag, 2007), pp. 171–187.

<sup>28</sup> Anglicans living in the Netherlands were seen by Old Catholics – and indeed experienced themselves – more as reformed than as catholic. See KEITH L. SPRUNGER, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1982). From the seventeenth



Lambeth Conference of 1888 (one year ahead of the founding of the Utrecht Union) should be noted in this context as well: the Lambeth Conference mentioned the 'amicable relations' with the Old Catholic Churches in Germany and Switzerland. The Lambeth Conference also declared the admittance of Old Catholic clergy and laity to Holy Communion in the Anglican Communion, a reaction to similar resolutions on the Old Catholic side. With regard to the Church in the Netherlands, it was recorded that the Lambeth Conference 'recognises with thankfulness the dignified and independent position of the Old Catholic Church of Holland, and looks to more frequent brotherly intercourse to remove many of the barriers which at present separate us.'<sup>29</sup>

But far from being removed, at first the barriers continued to mount: despite mutual visits between Anglican and (Dutch) Old Catholic bishops, the Dutch initially held on to their distrust of the Anglicans and to their view that the Anglican Church was not really catholic.<sup>30</sup> In 1896 Leo XIII declared Anglican ordinations invalid; rumour had it that he had used the material assembled in the seventeenth century by Johannes Baptista van Neercassel (1626–1686), Apostolic vicar and – as Bishop of Castoria – acting as Archbishop of Utrecht, for that purpose.<sup>31</sup> In 1908, Archbishop Gerardus Gul (1847–1920) consecrated Arnold Harris Mathew (1852–1919) as Bishop for Old Catholics in England. But the latter was soon revealed to be an impostor and was expelled from the Utrecht

---

century onwards, the English communities in the Low Countries 'had known a strong Low Church element'. John Pinnington considers this as being 'probably endemic to expatriate Anglicanism and not directly dependent on stimulus from the Evangelical party in England'. JOHN E. PINNINGTON, 'Anglican Chaplaincies in Post-Napoleonic Europe: A Strange Variation on the Pax Britannica', *Church History* 39 (1970), pp. 327–344, at 333. Even after the Bonn Agreement, during the Second World War, the Anglican chaplaincy in Utrecht asked for pastoral help from a reformed minister, not one of the Old Catholic parish priests. See ARNOLD RIETVELD, 'De Engelse kerk in Utrecht. De stichting en geschiedenis van Holy Trinity Church Utrecht', *Oud-Utrecht. Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis van stad en provincies* 76 (2003), no. 7, pp. 182–186, at p. 182.

<sup>29</sup> Lambeth Conference, Resolution 15, here 15a, quoted after: <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1888/1888-15.cfm> (last viewed 1 March 2007).

<sup>30</sup> See PETER J. MAAN, 'Wat aan de intercommunie voorafging', in: PETER J. MAAN and JAN VISSER, 1931–1981. *Vijftig jaren full communion tussen de anglikaanse en oud-katholieke kerken* (Amersfoort: Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 1982), pp. 3–15. For additional sources, see BERLIS, 'Aneinander wachsen', pp. 175–176.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. MAAN, 'Wat aan de intercommunie voorafging', p. 10.

Union.<sup>32</sup> Such a move as well as the founding by the Anglicans of new chaplaincies in continental Europe – in places where there already was an Old Catholic Church – were cause for tension between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Churches. Thus Bishop Eduard Herzog wrote to Bishop Johannes van Thiel (1843–1912) of Haarlem on 16 April 1908 that he was expecting a harsh rebuke from the Anglicans due to the consecration of said Bishop Mathew. But Herzog added, ‘On the other hand, I suspect the three Dutch bishops have scarcely been consulted whenever an Anglican chaplaincy was erected in Holland. I have experienced deeply shameful things here in Bern.’<sup>33</sup>

It was only in 1925 that the Dutch bishops were able to acknowledge the validity of Anglican orders – this step stood in the greater context of a new ecclesial and theological orientation within the Dutch Old Catholic Church which had been emerging since the end of the nineteenth century. Not only was openness towards the Anglicans part of this, but so was openness towards Orthodoxy. In the same year, 1925, the International Old Catholic Bishops’ Conference decided formally to recognize the validity of Anglican consecrations. The path towards the Bonn Agreement was cleared.

### 3. Expectations connected with the Bonn Agreement

What did the two churches expect from each other through the signing of the Bonn Agreement? Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864–1945), Archbishop of York from 1908 to 1928 and, at the time of the Bonn Agreement, Archbishop of Canterbury (1928–1942), did not expect a ‘sudden and spectacular reconciliation’, but rather – as described in his biography – a ‘growing together in understanding and purpose, slow, and sure because it was slow’.<sup>34</sup> In 1953, some twenty years after the signing of the Bonn Agree-

---

<sup>32</sup> See CHRISTOPH SCHULER, *The Mathew Affair. The failure to establish an Old Catholic Church in England in the context of Anglican Old Catholic relations between 1902 and 1925* (Amersfoort: Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> ‘Allein ich stelle mir vor, dass [die] drei holländischen Bischöfe noch selten nach ihrer Meinung gefragt worden seien, wenn in Holland eine anglikanische Gemeinde errichtet wurde. Hier in Bern habe ich Dinge erlebt, die mich tief beschämten.’ Diocesan Archive, Bern, Herzog Papers, AH 88, quoted after SCHULER, *The Mathew Affair*, p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> LOCKHART, *Cosmo Gordon Lang*, p. 365. Lockhart continues, ‘Only less heinous than the sin of doing nothing was the blunder of trying to do too much too



ment, Andreas Rinkel (1889–1979), Archbishop of Utrecht (1937–1970), did not consider an organic ‘unio’ to be the aim and purpose of the agreement, for he considered the deeper ‘unio’ to be found in catholicity. Therein lay the conviction that ‘*the* other [church] contains the “holon”, the entire church, in doctrine, office and sacrament.’<sup>35</sup> For Rinkel, the full communion achieved in 1931 signifies that ‘the Old Catholic Church regards the Anglican Church as the catholic church of England and that the Anglican Church regards the Old Catholic Church as *the* catholic church of the Netherlands (or of Germany, Switzerland, etc.).’ This would indicate ‘their unity, as well as their independence and autonomy’. Rinkel stated, ‘There will always remain historical and regional boundaries, which, however, are not dividing lines, but rather logical marks of historical and regional autonomy.’ Lang’s and Rinkel’s statements speak volumes about the fact that little had changed in the general perception before the 1950s: this was a matter of a contract between two churches in different territories.<sup>36</sup>

---

quickly; and results which seemed meagre enough to the contemporary eye might well be found to have genuine value for the future.’ Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> ANDREAS RINKEL, ‘Interkommunion. Ihre Grundlage, ihr Inhalt, ihre Folgerungen’, *IKZ* 43 (1953), pp. 209–230, at p. 212 (italics in the original). The following quotes are also from page 212. It would certainly be beneficial, albeit beyond the focus of this paper, to compare Rinkel’s statements on catholicity with those made by Archbishop MICHAEL RAMSEY, which he developed, among others, in his important work *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936; multiple new editions).

<sup>36</sup> Apparently, the question of overlapping jurisdictions was not addressed at the time, although there are earlier testimonies in this respect, from the turn of the century, on the Anglican as well as on the Old Catholic side. The fourth Lambeth Conference in 1897 noted an ‘Anglican abhorrence of the idea of parallel episcopal jurisdictions in the same area’. MARTIN REARDON, ‘Unity in Legitimate Diversity. An Anglican Standpoint’, in *One in Christ* 37 (2002), no. 3, pp. 39–54, at p. 46. Resolution 22 of the 1908 Lambeth Conference stated, ‘... the principle of one Bishop for one area is the ideal to be aimed at as the best means of securing the unity of all races and nations in the Holy Catholic Church.’ The Lambeth Conference 1968 ‘maintained the ideal, but noted that it was not always easy to carry out in modern pluralistic societies’ (quoted *ibid.*). Overlapping episcopal jurisdictions ‘might be necessary for a time’ (*ibid.*). Since 1968, bishops for different ethnic groups living in the same area have been appointed in several provinces, as have been so-called ‘flying bishops’ after the introduction of women’s ordination. The most recent developments in the Anglican communion following the consecration of Gene Robinson opened up a new dimension of the problem. Cf. *Church Times*, 25 August 2006, p. 3 (interview with Rowan Williams). As far as testimonies by Old Catholic authors on overlapping jurisdictions

The hopes on each side that were connected with the Bonn Agreement varied during the course of the century: at times Anglican hopes concerned the question of the validity, according to Rome, of Anglican orders (which – so went the thinking from the 1930s onwards – was now established, given the participation at Anglican consecrations of Old Catholic bishops)<sup>37</sup>; at other times Anglican hopes concerned a closer relationship with Eastern Orthodoxy (which, around 1930, was seen as one of the possible consequences of the intercommunion with the Old Catholics); sometimes it was about becoming a ‘worldwide’ church through the partner church (a hope on both sides!), and at other times it was about the union of catholic western churches which were not in communion with Rome. These are hopes *ad externum*. The critical question must then be raised: to what extent are they linked to an apologetically tinged concept of catholicity, which, moreover and quite ironically, gives preference to a *quantitative* catholicity (and thus a geographical universality)? In conformity with our ecclesiology, should not the *qualitative* catholicity (understood as

---

are concerned, and with an eye on Orthodox Churches in the diaspora, Old Catholic Bishop Eduard Herzog in 1904 saw overlapping jurisdictions as a consequence of the commingling of confessions and nationalities. In Herzog’s view, this was a necessary measure ‘to protect the new settlers from faithlessness and churchlessness, and to provide them access to the blessings of Christianity and the Christian church in the shape of the church life they are accustomed to’ [in German: ‘... die neuen Ansiedler vor Unglauben und Unkirchlichkeit zu bewahren und denselben unter den Formen des kirchlichen Lebens, an die sie gewöhnt sind, die Segnungen des Christentums und der christlichen Kirche zugänglich zu machen’].’ EDUARD HERZOG, ‘Bedeutung der territorialen Grenzen der kirchlichen Jurisdiktion’, in *Revue Internationale de Théologie* 12 (1904), pp. 680–690.

<sup>37</sup> See BRIAN TAYLOR, *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum. Historical Essays on the Agreements of Bonn and Meissen* (Guildford: St Thomas’s Trust, 1995), pp. 1–33. The author speaks about ‘the Old Catholic infusion’ on Anglican Orders. See also the following theological paper, which appeared some years ago in a German ecumenical journal: ‘Seither [sc. since 1931] hat an fast jeder Bischofsweihe in der Kirche von England ein altkatholischer Bischof teilgenommen. Das bedeutet heutzutage, dass die Weihe eines Bischofs in der Kirche von England genauso gültig ist wie diejenige eines Bischofs der altkatholischen Kirche. Und zwar deshalb, weil die Weihen der altkatholischen Kirche von der römisch-katholischen Kirche als gültig anerkannt werden.’ ANDREW LENOX-CONYNGHAM, ‘Kirchengemeinschaft oder Kircheneinheit? Ökumenische Zielvorstellungen aus anglikanischer Perspektive’, *Materialdienst* (2003), no. 2, pp. 28–31.

a theological identity borne out of being catholic) be emphasized?<sup>38</sup> The question then would be: What hopes and expectations *ad internum* did (and do) Anglicans and Old Catholics have?<sup>39</sup> In other words: What does one church expect of the other church, to enhance its own inner growth, its inner (spiritual and theological) wealth, its catholicity? Which ‘more’ arises from the relationship of communion; in which way does the bond of communion strengthen and deepen this qualitative catholicity of each of the two communions separately as well as jointly?<sup>40</sup>

From a historical perspective it is important to read with a critical eye the source material on the encounters and exchanges. Above all, this means that we do not just read them from the perspective of what has been achieved today but see them as steps on a journey that was uncertain and open for a long time (until about 1925) – full of hope as well as disappointment, but which had not yet led to the pledge of a bond of communion.

A critical perception, which takes into account the political and the ecclesiopolitical as well as the universal–historical context, will firstly value what was achieved with the Bonn Agreement: it materialized in a situation and constellation which can indeed be labelled *kairos* – just a few years later the universal–historical situation had changed to an extent that would likely have made a Bonn Agreement impossible.<sup>41</sup> It was also *kairos*

---

<sup>38</sup> Old Catholic theology gives precedence to qualitative catholicity over quantitative catholicity. Cf. URS VON ARX, ‘Was macht die Kirche katholisch? Perspektiven einer christkatholischen Antwort’, in WOLFGANG W. MÜLLER (ed.), *Katholizität – eine ökumenische Chance* (Schriften Ökumenisches Institut Luzern, 4; Zürich: TVZ, 2006), pp. 147–186.

<sup>39</sup> See CHARLOTTE METHUEN, ‘The Bonn Agreement and the Catholicization of Anglicanism: Anglicans and Old Catholics in the Lang Papers and the Douglas Papers 1920–1939’, *IKZ* 97 (2007), pp. 1–22.

<sup>40</sup> ‘The catholicity of the Church – its “kath’ holos” – enables and requires each member of the people of God to look beyond their particular expression of church, and to allow their own particular expression to deepen and be deepened by others.’ CHARLOTTE METHUEN, ‘“From All Nations and Languages”: Reflections on Church, Catholicity and Culture,’ in: MARK D. CHAPMAN (ed.), *The Anglican Covenant: Unity and Diversity in the Anglican Communion* (Mowbray: London 2008), 123–142, at p. 142. An earlier draft of this article has been published in German (see note 71 for precise reference).

<sup>41</sup> According to Matthias Ring, intercommunion faced a litmus test in the face of the war. See MATTHIAS RING, ‘*Katholisch und deutsch*’. *Die alt-katholische Kirche Deutschlands und der Nationalsozialismus* (Bonn: Alt-Katholischer Bistumsverlag, 2008), pp. 723–727, at p. 724. Starting in May 1940, the German Bishop Erwin Kreuzer was presented with several requests to sever the ‘union’ with the Anglican Church.

that its wording reflected not only an Anglo-Catholic but also an Evangelical presence.<sup>42</sup> This made it obvious that the agreement indeed included all the movements within Anglicanism. On the other hand, a critical evaluation will also reveal the limitations of the Bonn Agreement owing to the historical context of its origins as well as the *Verstehenshorizont* (framework of understanding) at the time.

#### 4. The Bonn Agreement: a guide rather than a directive

Formulas such as the Bonn Agreement are ‘road signs of the trust that churches grant each other as they venture towards communion with each other’. They do so, ‘trusting in the Lord, who guides and leads them.’<sup>43</sup> The statement that the Bonn Agreement *presupposes* a ‘foundation of common faith’ between Old Catholic and Anglican churches distinguishes it from many later bilateral dialogues, where the effort is made to ‘*explain* a correspondence in the same faith’.<sup>44</sup>

---

But Kreuzer and theologian Rudolf Keussen rejected a termination of the relationship, arguing that it wasn’t really a union but merely an intercommunion and, therefore, ‘a strictly theological question’ [‘eine rein theologische Frage’]. ‘A revocation of a theological statement for political reasons is preposterous’ [‘Eine Zurücknahme einer theologischen Stellungnahme aus politischen Gründen ist ein Unding.’], according to Kreuzer on 22 May 1940, quoted after Ring, p. 726. The Willibrordbund was nevertheless suspended in summer of 1940. According to Ring, a 22 July 1944 pastoral letter by Kreuzer effectively drew a separating line without a formal suspension of the Bonn Agreement of 1931 having taken place (*ibid.*, p. 727). Shortly after the end of World War Two, the intercommunion came alive in renewed contacts, for example in Heidelberg between Old Catholics and Episcopalians. Together with 15–20 American women, Dr Ilse Brinkhues celebrated the Women’s World Day of Prayer in Heidelberg for the first time in 1951. See ANGELA BERLIS and ANNICK YAICHE (eds), *Holprige Wege, beharrliche Schritte. Dr. Ilse Brinkhues zum 80. Geburtstag* (Bonn: Alt-Katholischer Bistumsverlag, 2003), p. 59. Dr Brinkhues (1923–2012), the wife of Joseph Brinkhues, the vicar of the Old Catholic parish of Heidelberg (and later Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of the Old Catholics in Germany), later became president of the German Old Catholic Women’s organisation (now baf).

<sup>42</sup> See ANDREW ATHERSTONE, ‘Anglican Evangelicals, Old Catholics and the Bonn Agreement’, *IKZ* 97 (2007), pp. 23–47.

<sup>43</sup> Sigisbert Kraft, ‘Anglican–Old Catholic Full Communion as a Vision for the Unity We Seek’, *IKZ* 84 (1994), pp. 181–192, at p. 188 (the article is in German; I have in my possession an unpublished English translation).

<sup>44</sup> ‘Statement of the 14<sup>th</sup> International Anglican/Old Catholic Theologians’ Conference (1993) in Guildford’, *IKZ* 84 (1994), pp. 71–76, at p. 72 (in German).

From today's point of view this mutual trust is the basic approach. This positive assessment of the other can be found primarily in the first and third sentences of the Bonn Agreement: each communion recognizes the 'independence of the other [communion], and maintains its own' (1) and from either communion 'the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other' is not required (3). This demonstrates the trust placed in qualitative catholicity. The points mentioned (especially the *ius liturgicum*) are marks of an autonomous local catholic church. However, this guarantee of independence could be given a less positive interpretation in that – to put it somewhat casually – the churches wished to be left in peace. We must not forget that, at the time that this agreement was made (1931), the churches in question had their centres in different European countries.

It could not be predicted at that time that, due to globalization, the world would become ever smaller, the ecumenical movement would gain greater influence and that a political and economic process of unification would take place in Europe, which would raise the issue of common religious heritage and a common Christian witness of the churches as never before.

Reading the Bonn Agreement from today's perspective, we might not let such terms as 'catholicity' and 'independence' stand side by side like this. This is due to ecumenical developments as well as developments within our own churches – recall, on the Old Catholic side, the discussion about the statute of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference in the Old Catholic Churches, which specifically describes catholicity as fellowship (or bonds!) among churches (and not as 'independence').<sup>45</sup> The fact that this fellowship is emphasized so strongly here is not just a matter of theology but is due to contemporary historical circumstances.<sup>46</sup>

With the Bonn Agreement, the relationship of (intercommunion, later renamed) full communion was declared, which simultaneously emphasizes the limits to the relationship. The counterpart remains 'the other', which, additionally, lives far away – I will return to the meaning of 'otherness' later on.

---

<sup>45</sup> See 'Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops United in the Union of Utrecht', *Beilage zu IKZ* 91 (2001), ed. URS VON ARX and MAJA WEYERMANN, pp. 28–42, here nr. 4 (p. 30).

<sup>46</sup> In this case, it coincided with the discussion about the question of who has the right to decide on the question of women's ordination.



The following critical remarks can be made of the Bonn Agreement – from a contemporary perspective and taking into account decades of experiences in the Anglican/Old Catholic relationship and in the ecumenical movement in general.

First, no directives were given as to how the agreement should be implemented in the life of the two church communions. Based on the short formula of the Bonn Agreement, forms of collaboration have gradually developed, allowing it to take deeper root and grow in the life of the two church communions.<sup>47</sup> Common structures of communication and consultation have developed only in the course of time, following some rather tense experiences.<sup>48</sup> The Bonn Agreement is, therefore, more of a ‘guide’ than a precise directive with practical orders for implementation, as is the case in later ecumenical declarations.<sup>49</sup>

Secondly, no consideration is given to non-theological factors, which in practice nevertheless play an important role (for example linguistic-cultural differences). Some of today’s questions would have been unthinkable in the 1930s, for example, the divergent weighing of such contemporary issues as the ordination of clergy living in same-sex relationships, or the ordination of divorced priests as bishops. These are issues not just of theology – political context and cultural experiences form an important backdrop to the questions with which a church has to grapple.<sup>50</sup> These types of questions bear ecumenical implications, too. There has been an increasing tendency in recent decades to carry questions like these from within one of our communions into the other, especially with regard to ethical issues. This raises the question whether such topics truly touch the ‘essentials of faith’.

---

<sup>47</sup> The same point is made by REARDON, ‘Unity in Legitimate Diversity’, p. 47: ‘it is significant that this [sc. regular conciliar and collegial consultation] was not built into the Anglican–Old Catholic Agreement of 1931, with the result that progress towards full unity in this field was hindered for many years.’

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., ERIC KEMP, ‘Personal memories’, in Coen van Kasteel, PETER J. MAAN and MARTIEN F. G. PARMENTIER (eds), *Kracht in zwakheid van een kleine wereldkerk. De oud-katholieke Unie van Utrecht* (Amersfoort: Boekencentrum, 1982), pp. 205–206; idem, *Shy But Not Retiring. The Memoirs of the Right Reverend Eric Waldram Kemp*, ed. by Jeremy Matthew Haselock (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> KRAFT, ‘Anglican–Old Catholic Full Communion’, p. 188.

<sup>50</sup> The relationship between church and state, which is regulated differently in different European countries, also plays a significant role.

Thirdly, while the Bonn Agreement may be an explanation of mutual acknowledgement (of the idiosyncrasy or the status quo of the other church), it does not formulate any demands for the formation of a common life or witness of the two churches. Or, as Lukas Vischer (1926–2008), reformed professor of ecumenical theology at Bern University, put it in a lecture on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bonn Agreement in 1981: the Bonn Agreement does not really give the vision of the church a push. Vischer observed critically that since the agreement, the two churches have not behaved ‘as *one* community of local churches’.<sup>51</sup>

Today we have indeed made significant steps since 1931, and even since 1981.<sup>52</sup> The declarations and developments of the past 30 years,<sup>53</sup> as well as the speeches by the archbishops of Canterbury and of Utrecht and the communiqué of the 29<sup>th</sup> International Old Catholics’ Congress of 2006, demonstrate that Old Catholics and Anglicans are interested in intensifying their collaboration and growing together.<sup>54</sup>

Practical collaborative steps went hand in hand with theological exchanges.<sup>55</sup> The establishment of the Anglican Old Catholic International

---

<sup>51</sup> ‘...jedenfalls betrachten und benehmen sich die beiden Kirchen seit dem Abschluss der Vereinbarung nicht als *eine* Gemeinschaft von örtlichen Kirchen.’ LUKAS VISCHER, ‘Das Bonner Abkommen von 1931 im Lichte der ökumenischen Bewegung’, *IKZ* 71 (1981), pp. 237–253, at p. 249. This critical remark by Lukas Vischer should be placed within his own ecclesiological and ecumenical thinking, which cannot be done here.

<sup>52</sup> See for example the proposals of the Dutch Old Catholic Professor Jan Visser, which he made in 1982, which have now been implemented: bishops who attend assemblies of the other communion, observers at bilateral dialogues of the other communion, mutual consultation in important questions, participation of parish priests at pastoral conferences of the other communion. JAN VISSER, ‘Dogmatische belichting van de Intercommunie’, in: PETER J. MAAN and JAN VISSER, *1931–1981. Vijftig jaren full communion tussen de anglikaanse en oud-katholieke kerken* (Amersfoort: Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 1982), pp. 16–33, in particular pp. 27–31.

<sup>53</sup> I am thinking especially of the statement of the 14<sup>th</sup> Anglican/Old Catholic Theologians’ Conference in Guildford (1993), the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference in 1998, the work of the Anglican Old Catholic International Coordinating Council and of the Old Catholic and Anglican bishops in Europe, but also of the Silberberg Statement (1998).

<sup>54</sup> See ‘Communiqué of the 29<sup>th</sup> International Old Catholic [sic] Congress in 2006’. The communiqué and the lectures of this congress are published: *IKZ* 96 (2006), pp. 194–206; 207–216; 236–238.

<sup>55</sup> The following list of examples for this collaboration is not exhaustive. The level of personal encounters and friendships as well as the commitment of the Soci-



Coordinating Council (AOCICC) in 1998 represents a hybrid of practical and theological exchange. In 2011, at the International Old Catholic and Anglican Theologians' Conference, the Anglican and Old Catholic participants had ample opportunity to include the AOCICC paper 'Belonging Together in Europe. A Joint Statement on aspects of Ecclesiology and Mission' in their deliberations.<sup>56</sup> An integral part of theological exchange are the international Old Catholic–Anglican theological conferences, which between 1957 and 1993 have taken up many a theological topic and which demonstrate consensus. A topical overview reads like a palette of the important topics of twentieth-century ecumenical theology: eucharist, ministry, authority, primacy, ecclesiology, the meaning of the Bonn Agreement and of full communion, the essentials of Christian faith, *koinonia*, the Old Church, ecumenism, theological dialogue. They were important meetings of theologians (all of them men, as far as I can see), who theologized with each other on behalf of their respective churches and thus contributed to the further explication of what connects Anglicans and Old Catholics. Unfortunately, not all of the papers have been published, nor have they yet been systematically examined (for example as part of a doctoral dissertation) or theologically analyzed.<sup>57</sup> Which means that, sadly, the theological progress that was achieved by our churches remains tangible and visible only to those who participated. A thorough appraisal

---

eties of St Willibrord in various countries in particular merited a more detailed appraisal. Disagreements and conflicts – some of which I mentioned above – would need to be considered in such an account, too.

<sup>56</sup> A draft version of this joint statement was discussed by the European Anglican and Old Catholic bishops, in conjunction with several AOCICC representatives, in May 2011. In their work on the final draft of the text, the members of the AOCICC examined and included as much as possible the comments of the bishops, the International Theologians' Conference of August 2011, the Anglican Ecumenical Reference Group as well as individual suggestions. The statement has been handed over to the archbishops of Utrecht (and the International Bishops' Conference) and of Canterbury (and the Anglican Consultative Council) for further use.

<sup>57</sup> The Leeds Conference in 2005 is different from these conferences because the participants are no longer official delegates of their churches. Recently Klaus Heinrich Neuhoff presented an overview of the themes and papers of conferences held between 1957 and 1993. Cf. KLAUS HEINRICH NEUHOFF, *Building on the Bonn Agreement. An historical study of Anglican–Old Catholic relations before and after the 1931 Bonn Agreement with special reference to the Anglican–Old Catholic Theologians' Conferences 1957–2005* (Amersfoort–Sliedrecht: Merweboek, 2010; Publicatieserie Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 46), pp. 89–108.

of the consensus achieved by the work of several generations of theologians would be exceedingly helpful for the common theological road ahead.

It is exactly the theological learning from each other that defines how we shape our full communion. This theological exchange is a means to self-assessment: the entire church, including the basis, should be able to take advantage of it. By talking with each other about who we are as churches, we are talking about what our mission towards the world is. It is a theological encounter where we reflect our ecclesiological structures, and at the same time – and this ‘kenotic aspect’ was pointed out by the 1961 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi – we have to transcend them and become church for the others, for the world.<sup>58</sup>

It was beneficial for this shared learning process to pick up the idea of a joint theologians’ conference in Leeds in 2005. Unlike the conferences held prior to 1993, this was not a conference just for official delegates of the two churches but one that was open to all interested theologians. It was initiated by the Archbishop of Utrecht and aimed ‘Towards Further Convergence’ in our ecclesiologies. The proceedings of that conference also demonstrate – similarly to Anglican/Old Catholic theologians’ conferences of years past – exactly where the topics of interest lay: catholicity, unity and communion, conciliarity and primacy. In 2005 all of these topics were presented from both viewpoints. The group discussions laid out the main issues: on the one hand we are proud of the fact that the Bonn Agreement represents a ‘definitive basis for any steps to deeper unity’.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, some issues of practical collaboration on a diocesan, local level have moved to the forefront in a much clearer and more urgent manner.

---

<sup>58</sup> THEO SUNDERMEIER, ‘Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz heute’, in idem, *Konvivenz und Differenz. Studien zu einer verstehenden Missionswissenschaft. Anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstages*, ed. by VOLKER KÜSTER (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1995), pp. 43–75, at p. 51.

<sup>59</sup> *Towards Further Convergence: Anglican and Old Catholic Ecclesiologies. The Papers of the Anglican–Old Catholic Theologians’ Conference, Leeds, 29 August – 2 September 2005*. Edited by URS VON ARX, PAUL AVIS and MATTIJS PLOEGER, *Beiheft zu IKZ 96* (2006), p. 177.

## 5. The Conference on ‘Ecclesiology and Mission in Today’s Europe’ in context

The International Anglican/Old Catholic Theologians’ Conference on ‘Ecclesiology and Mission in Today’s Europe’ in 2011 took up questions from the 2005 Leeds conference and tried to embed our theological explorations in a fourfold way:

- getting impulses from wider ecumenism and ecumenical thought;
- getting insights from sociology about plural Christian identities in contemporary Europe;
- getting information about specific contexts of churches (in Ireland and in Germany)<sup>60</sup> in so-called secularized societies;
- getting inspiration from a different yet similar experience and point of view: the Eastern-Orthodox perspective.<sup>61</sup>

There are several factors contributing to the wish for directing and deepening our reflections towards considerations of a more practical ecclesiological nature: first, the fact that the world has become smaller through globalization and that people more clearly than before recognize and articulate their interdependence and their mission to give a common witness in a secularized culture fraught with religious tension;<sup>62</sup> second, England’s and the Church of England’s turn towards (the continent of) Europe with its opportunities and its readily available allies;<sup>63</sup> third, the fact that Anglicans and Old Catholics on the European continent have become *permanent* neighbours living next door (and no longer only with those on the other side of the Channel or overseas).

---

<sup>60</sup> The paper by Bishop Dr Matthias Ring was not available for publication in this issue.

<sup>61</sup> *Privatdozent* Dr Daniel Munteanu (Bamberg) gave a lecture on ‘Ecclesiology and Mission in our contemporary world from an Orthodox perspective’ at the conference.

<sup>62</sup> See the results of the consultation between the Episcopal Church in the United States, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht: ‘Globalization and Catholicity: Ecumenical Conversations on God’s Abundance and the People’s Need’, ed. MARSHA L. DUTTON with EMILY K. STUCKEY, *Beiheft zu IKZ* 100 (2010).

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., *The Church of England and Europe. A Report by the Mission and Public Affairs Council and the Council of Christian Unity* (GS 1548), (London: Church House Publishing, 2003); and more general: PHILIP M. COUPLAND, *Britannia, Europa and Christendom. British Christians and European integration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

These developments, which could be merely touched on here, must be viewed not only in the light of political and cultural factors but also in consideration of theological (and especially ecclesiological) questions, following which the issue of a common witness of already connected (synodal–episcopal) churches practically raises itself. On both the Old Catholic and Anglican sides, the awareness of the necessity of playing a role in the new Europe has grown, even though both know that they are minority churches on the European continent. Now and then the focus is placed differently: in the emphasis of *a common witness*, the two are seen as ‘reconciled’ churches by some Anglicans<sup>64</sup>, whereas Old Catholics put more weight on the *local* churches becoming sister churches.<sup>65</sup> These different emphases can be understood in view of the respective theological cultures of both *churches*. They are an important complement to each other, because this thinking about a common witness and about local church theology *is* about mission embedded within ecclesiology.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., MARY TANNER, ‘A Theology for Europe: the *raison d’être* of the Church’, in JAMES BARNETT (ed.), *A Theology for Europe. The Churches and the European Institutions* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 237–247. Tanner emphasizes – against the background of the developments of the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century – the aspect of reconciliation. She therefore deals with the agreements of the Anglican Churches in Great Britain with the Protestant churches in Germany (Meissen), Scandinavia and the Baltic Countries (Porvoo), and also with France (Reuilly): ‘The closer fellowship established through the Meissen, Porvoo and Reuilly Agreements provides churches in Europe with new possibilities for authentic witness to the Christian message of reconciliation and unity’ (p. 247). She mentions the Bonn Agreement in one sentence only (p. 246). But Tanner’s questions concerning the mission of churches in Europe can be applied to the Bonn Agreement as well.

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., JORIS VERCAMMEN, ‘Common Witness of Anglicans and Old Catholics on the European Continent. Address to the open meeting of Affirming Catholicism at the General Synod, 9 July 2006’. See also his lecture given at the 29<sup>th</sup> International Old Catholics’ Congress in 2006: IDEM, ‘Die Hoffnung unserer Berufung (Eph 4,4)’, *Ökumenische Rundschau* 55 (2006), pp. 545–555; also in: *IKZ* 96 (2006), pp. 194–206.

<sup>66</sup> Concerning mission, it should not be forgotten that since the 1960s Anglicans and Old Catholics have practised collaboration on missionary projects outside Europe. This was a consequence of the full communion: See B. W. VERHEY, ‘Old Catholic–Anglican Cooperation in Mission’, *IKZ* 71 (1981), pp. 254–260; ILSE BRINKHUES, ‘Interkommunion führt zur Partnerschaft in Mission und Entwicklungshilfe. Alt-katholisch-anglikanische Zusammenarbeit in Afrika’, *IKZ* 71 (1981), pp. 261–265. In recent years, joint projects on the European continent, for example at Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam), also were initiated.

It becomes equally evident that opportunities for stronger collaboration are being sought and attempted. It is no surprise, then, that the gaze has recently shifted to the basis. The 29<sup>th</sup> International Old Catholics' Congress, which met from 7 to 11 August 2006 with the topic 'The Hope which lives in us – Old Catholics and Anglicans in Europe', for instance, expressed in its closing statement the need to deepen the concrete local exchange, especially and 'above all on the level of the parishes through the more active involvement of the laity'.<sup>67</sup>

## 6. Ingraining our bond of communion more deeply

Based on the aforementioned, I would like to close with a few fundamental reflections, which I shall formulate from more of an Old Catholic perspective rather than the strictly neutral descriptive one applied up to this point. An important preliminary question for our future collaboration is, how do we know that we need each other? *Do* we need each other? Are the interest in each other and the will to accomplish something together really great enough? What do we perceive as uniting us? Based on the Bonn Agreement, the foundation of our communion has been the catholicity<sup>68</sup> common to both churches. Catholicity implies the idea that we need each other (one cannot be Catholic by oneself!). The other should not be co-opted – much less appropriated – too quickly; he or she must first be acknowledged and taken seriously in his or her otherness, without having to be exactly like us. Maybe this is one way to interpret the word 'independence' in the Bonn Agreement.

The French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) has pointed to the meaning of 'the other' who meets us and touches us in a deep way. For this being touched by the other, Levinas uses the word 'Heimsuchung', the German word for the feast of the Visitation of Mary,

---

<sup>67</sup> For the text of the press release, see: *Beiheft zu IKZ 96* (2006), pp. 237–238, at p. 238.

<sup>68</sup> The concept of 'catholicity' and what it implies must be recognizable in a way that makes it equally acceptable to both high church Old Catholics, high church Anglicans and 'low church' Anglicans. Both churches view the church as *ecclesia semper reformanda* and therefore relate 'catholicity' and 'reform' with each other. Moreover, it is important to clarify that the terms 'catholic' and 'evangelical' belong together: many debates throughout history have dealt with the correct explanation of the Gospel and, therefore, also with the issue of how to follow Christ and how to shape tradition in a way that is true to the proclamation of the Gospel in a given time.



which our churches use(d) to celebrate on 2 July.<sup>69</sup> It is also the day the Bonn Agreement was signed.<sup>70</sup> The meeting with the other creates a new situation, a new awareness of the space needed by the other. It creates a new understanding, it signifies a challenge to change and to learn from the other, maybe even learn the language of the other,<sup>71</sup> but also to help the other and to celebrate together. What I am describing, theologians of intercultural theology such as Theo Sundermeier call the principle of *convivialidad*. This ‘living together’ or ‘symbiosis’ or cohabitation is the experience of life in the Latin American context: living together, helping each other, learning from each other (or teaching each other). This *convivialidad* was later reflected within intercultural theology. In German, Sundermeier and others call it ‘Konvivenz’. Is it going too far to compare the three aspects of *convivialidad* as essentials of being a community of help, of learning and of celebrating with the three basic pillars of being church: ‘diakonia’ (‘social action’), ‘liturgia’ (‘celebrating God as lifegiver and source of life’) and ‘martyria’ (the call to fulfill the call in Matthew and to teach and witness)?<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> The German word ‘Heimsuchung’, however, implies more than a mere visit; it can also signify ‘burden’ or ‘misfortune’. ‘Heimsuchung’, therefore, is an encounter between two people that touches one’s own existence.

<sup>70</sup> See *Report of the Meeting of the Commission of the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches held at Bonn on Thursday, July 2, 1931* (London: SPCK, [1931]). In German published in *IKZ* 21 (1931), pp. 129–162.

<sup>71</sup> Charlotte Methuen connects the aptitude for multilingualism with Catholicism: ‘The Catholicity of the church – its “referencing the whole” – allows and demands that we think outside the box, to meet the other, the stranger, and that we learn to understand and appreciate him or her’ [‘Die Katholizität der Kirche – ihr “auf das Ganze Bezogensein” – befähigt und verlangt, über den eigenen Tellerrand hinaus zu schauen, dem/r Anderen, dem/r Fremden zu begegnen und ihn/sie verstehen und schätzen zu lernen’]. See CHARLOTTE METHUEN, ““Aus allen Nationen und Sprachen”. Überlegungen zu Kirche, Katholizität und Kultur’, in ANGELA BERLIS and MATTHIAS RING (eds), with collaboration of HUBERT HUPPERTZ, *Im Himmel Anker werfen. Vermutungen über Kirche in der Zukunft. FS für Bischof Joachim Vobbe* (Bonn: Alt-Katholischer Bistumsverlag, 2007), pp. 265–275, at p. 272.

<sup>72</sup> Some years ago I conducted several interviews with Anglicans and Old Catholics in the Netherlands. I was surprised by the result: joint celebrations of the liturgy were only welcomed at times, i.e. for certain events. But the Old Catholics estimated highly the efforts of the Anglicans in diaconical work, for example for homeless people. More research should be dedicated to the areas of ‘martyria’ and ‘diakonia’ for common projects.

From this idea of *convivialidad*, the idea of what mission is emerges that ‘a missionary church is not a church *for* others, but church *with* others’.<sup>73</sup> The other is not an object of my mission. The question ‘who is my neighbour’ is the focus of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10, 29–37). Surprisingly the neighbour is not our kin but the stranger, the Samaritan. Jesus shows us this through the eyes of the one who is robbed and lies on the ground.

The development and implementation of a common vision requires inspiration and creativity, for it is necessary to develop full communion under the current conditions and in this exact place, at this exact time and in this exact culture. Context (time, place and culture) is an important factor for proclaiming and bringing alive the Gospel in a particular situation and place.<sup>74</sup>

For this reason it is necessary to include into our future reflections insights from recent research in several fields: intercultural learning and multiculturalism with the aim of acquiring intercultural competence; reflections on the meaning of being neighbours in Europe;<sup>75</sup> insights in reflected experiences about migration and minority situation of churches in

---

<sup>73</sup> SUNDERMEIER, ‘Konvivenz als Grundstruktur’, p. 71.

<sup>74</sup> See, e.g., ROBERT J. SCHREITER, *Constructing Local Theologies* (London: SCM Press, 1985); idem, *The New Catholicity. Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997); HELEN CAMERON, PHILIP RICHTER, DOUGLAS DAVIES and FRANCES WARD (eds), *Studying Local Churches. A Handbook* (London: SCM Press, 2005); ELAINE GRAHAM, HEATHER WALTON and FRANCES WARD, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London 2005), pp. 200–229 (a chapter about ‘Theology in the Vernacular’: Local Theologies). Of interest is also: FLORA WINFIELD, *Growing Together. Working for Unity Locally* (London: SPCK, 2002).

<sup>75</sup> Stimulating thoughts on the topic can be found in the journal *Theologie der Gegenwart* 50 (2007), pp. 161–209. Matthias Müller assumes in his paper that a ‘neighbourly theology of religions’ [‘nachbarliche Theologie der Religionen’] would be situated beyond inclusivism and pluralism. The neighbourly meeting wants to ‘savour the taste of truth as it is being lived in the other’s testimony, and thus become familiar with the other and develop neighbourly respect without having to make – through inclusion or pluralism – the other’s truth a part of one’s own testimony’ [‘den Geschmack der Wahrheit, wie sie in dem anderen Bekenntnis gelebt wird, kosten und sich so einander vertraut machen und nachbarlichen Respekt entwickeln, ohne die Wahrheit des Anderen deshalb – inkludierend oder pluralisierend – zu einem Teil des eigenen Bekenntnisses machen zu müssen’]. MATTHIAS MÜLLER, ‘Nachbarliches Europa? Erkundungen auf den Kulturgrenzen Europas’, in *ibid.*, pp. 196–209, at p. 209. This statement has only limited application for Anglicans and Old Catholics, however.



a diaspora situation;<sup>76</sup> and also recent approaches to inculturated and contextualized mission strategies.<sup>77</sup> This would link questions emerging from the practice with theological perspectives.

Such an approach takes into account the current situation of religion in Europe and, I believe, fits in with both the development of Anglican congregations and their stronger rooting on the European mainland<sup>78</sup> and the ecclesiology of the local church that has long been prominent in Old Catholic theology.

‘We are bound together in mutual care in the service of Christ.’<sup>79</sup> In a recently published article, Paul Avis wrote that Anglicans often speak about ‘bonds of affection’ between Anglicans and other Christians. But affection can cool down when one has to contend with difference or distance. More fundamental are the ‘bonds of communion’: bonds of communion are a ‘profound spiritual and theological concept’. It is a pro-

---

<sup>76</sup> Here we may reflect on our own situation, as is done by DAVID HAMID in this volume. The situation of Polish immigrants to the United States, out of which grew the Polish National Catholic Church, and its development in the U.S. over several generations, also reflects similar experiences of migration and minority situations. In addition to experiences from our own, Anglican and Old Catholic, history and current situation, we should also include the historical and current experiences of other major churches which find themselves in a minority situation in the diaspora. See, e.g., WILL VAN DEN BERCKEN, ‘Russische orthodoxie en Europese christelijke identiteit’, *Kerk en Theologie* 57 (2006), pp. 338–356; ERWIN GATZ (ed.), *Katholiken in der Minderheit. Diaspora – Ökumenische Bewegung. Missionsgedanke (Geschichte des kirchlichen Lebens in den deutschsprachigen Ländern seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts: Die katholische Kirche*, vol. 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994); see the issue ‘Die evangelische Diaspora’, in *Jahrbuch des Gustav-Adolf-Werks* 71 (2002), pp. 10–93. For an illustration of the development of diasporas (plural!) in the bible and on how the diaspora paradigm can be newly, and hermeneutically, comprehended, see RENÉ KRÜGER, *Die Diaspora. Von traumatischer Erfahrung zum ekklesiologischen Paradigma* (Leipzig: Gustav-Adolf-Werk, 2011). The book was first published in Spanish and Portuguese.

<sup>77</sup> Worth reading in this context are the reflections with reference to Europe of MARKUS BÜKER, ‘Europa – ohne Grenzen und ohne Mission? Zur Notwendigkeit und Chance inkultrierter Mission im deutschsprachigen Raum’, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 56 (2000), pp. 230–242; PETER HÜNERMANN, ‘Evangelization of Europe? Observations on a Church in Peril’, in ROBERT J. SCHREITER (ed.), *Mission in the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), pp. 57–80 (and the response by MARÍA CARMELITA DE FREITAS, in *ibid.*, pp. 81–87).

<sup>78</sup> See DAVID HAMID, ‘From Club to Church: A New Approach to Mission’, *The European Anglican* (2006), no. 30, pp. 4–5.

<sup>79</sup> PAUL AVIS, ‘The Ecumenical Consequences of the Anglican Communion’, *One in Christ* 45 (2011), no. 1, pp. 95–110, here p. 104.

gramme for living and belonging together – in Europe and elsewhere. How can these bonds of communion remain and become even more effective and fruitful? Today's Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches of the Utrecht Union are facing the challenge of developing stronger and deeper forms of living together and, therefore, of collaboration and common witness in their close proximity within Europe on the basis of the bonds of communion, which will be a credible and potent theological and practical ecclesiological expression of their communion. Mission accomplished?

*Angela Berlis (geb. 1962 in München D), Prof. Dr. theol., Studium der Theologie in Bonn und Utrecht. 1988–91 Gemeindeführung in St. Engelmundus/IJmuiden, 1991–2000 wiss. Mitarbeiterin am Alt-Katholischen Universitätsseminar Bonn, 1996–2000 Rektorin des Bischöflichen Seminars Bonn, 1998 Promotion an der Katholischen Universität Nijmegen (Niederlande). 2000–2009 Dozentin für Seelsorge und Gemeindeaufbau am Altkatholischen Seminar, Theologische Fakultät, Universität Utrecht; 2002–2009 dessen Rektorin. 2003–2007 kirchenhistorisches Post-Doc-Forschungsprojekt an der Theologischen Fakultät der Universität Tilburg. 2006–2009 Stiftungsprofessur für Alte katholische Kirchenstrukturen einschliesslich der Geschichte und Lehre der Altkatholischen Kirchen an der Fakultät Geisteswissenschaften/Departement Theologie der Universität Utrecht, seit 1. 8. 2009 ao., seit 1. 1. 2012 o. Professorin für Geschichte des Altkatholizismus und Allgemeine Kirchengeschichte am Departement für Christkatholische Theologie, Theologische Fakultät der Universität Bern. Seit 2000 altkatholische Co-Sekretärin des AOCICC.*

*Adresse: Kramgasse 10, CH-3011 Bern, [angela.berlis@theol.unibe.ch](mailto:angela.berlis@theol.unibe.ch)*

### *Deutsche Zusammenfassung*

Der Beitrag führt in die Thematik der Konferenz «Ecclesiology and Mission in Today's Europe» ein, indem er die Beziehungen zwischen Anglikanern und Altkatholiken in Europa seit dem 19. Jahrhundert skizziert und anschliessend darauf eingeht, welche Erwartungen und Wirkungen mit der 1931 geschlossenen «Bonner Vereinbarung» verbunden wurden. Diese stellt die theologische Grundlage für die Beziehung der *full communion* dar. Anders als spätere Abkommen enthält sie weder Ausführungsbestimmungen noch berücksichtigt sie nichttheologische Faktoren. Gleichwohl sind die beiden Kirchengemeinschaften in den letzten 80 Jahren auf dieser Grundlage des Vertrauens in die gegenseitige Katholizität aufeinander zugewachsen und haben viele Formen der Zusammenarbeit entwickelt. Heute stehen die Anglikanische Kirchengemeinschaft und die Altkatholischen Kirchen

der Utrechter Union vor der Herausforderung, auf der Grundlage des Bandes der Gemeinschaft, in naher Nachbarschaft in Europa weiter und tiefer gehende Formen struktureller und strukturierter Zusammenarbeit und des Zusammenlebens zu entwickeln, welche die *full communion* theologisch-ekklesiologisch glaubwürdig und praktisch wirkmächtig zum Ausdruck bringen.

*Keywords:* Bonn Agreement – full communion – catholicity – independence – minority churches – diaspora – convivalidad.