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Bonn Agreement Golden Jubilee Celebrations

Lecture by the Bishop of Chichester

We meet today on the exact fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Statement agreed between the representatives of the Old Catholic Churches and the Churches of the Anglican Communion at a Conference held at Bonn on the 2nd July 1931. That statement did not itself bring about intercommunion. Such was achieved on the Old Catholic side by the letter of the Archbishop of Utrecht to the Archbishop of Canterbury in September of that year conveying the resolution adopted by the Episcopal Synod of the Old Catholic Churches on the 7th September at Vienna. On the Anglican side the Church of England entered into communion with the Old Catholics by resolutions of the Convocations in January 1932, and other Provinces of the Anglican Communion by similar resolutions as their synods met in the course of the next few years. Intercommunion between the Polish National Catholic Church and the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America was established in 1947 and extended to some other parts of the Anglican Communion in the following years. In England intercommunion with the Old Catholic Churches was given visible and public expression on the 24th June, 1932 when the Bishop of Haarlem took part in the consecration of the Reverend G. F. Graham-Brown to be Bishop in Jerusalem and Dr B. F. Simpson to be Bishop of Kensington. It was a specially appropriate occasion as Mr Graham-Brown had been one of the Anglican participants in the Bonn Conference and had in conjunction with Dr N. P. Williams worked out the important Clause 3 which read: "Intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith."

I assume that the attention of members of the Church of England was first drawn to the Old Catholic Churches by the publication in 1858 of J. M. Neale's book "A History of the so-called Jansenist Church of Holland" which is still the most complete account in English of the events leading up to the separation of the Dutch Church by the consecration of Archbishop Steenoven in 1723 and of the attempts at reunion made in the following hundred years. During that period it seems that the main issue was one of authority but in two somewhat

distinct forms, both of which lead up to the two principal elements in the Decrees of the First Vatican Council.

One of these concerns the papal claim to immediate and ordinary jurisdiction over the whole Church. However much that claim may be qualified in Roman Catholic teaching today, it was held by the representatives of Rome in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries to include the power to suppress the hierarchies and structures of national Churches such as the Church of Holland and convert their territory into missionary areas administered under the direction of the Curia. This doctrine was used to obstruct the election and consecration of an archbishop during the 13-year vacancy in the See of Utrecht between 1710 and 1723. Opposition to it lies at the heart of the Dutch protest in the election and consecration of Steenoven, done only after careful consultation with theologians and canonists of Paris and Louvain. That same opposition is expressed also in the Old Catholic Bishops' Declaration on The Primacy in the Church made in July 1970, where the universal episcopate of the Pope is rejected and it is stated that according to the teaching of Pope Gregory I the holder of the Primacy is not universal bishop over all, but to be the servant of the servants of God.

It remains a major question in the relations between Rome and other Churches to clarify the Roman teaching on this matter and establish whether the Papacy can be the servant of unity without being lord over it.

The other problem about authority raised in the early stages of the Dutch conflict with Rome concerns more the Magisterium of the Papacy and so papal infallibility. It is noticeable how in comparatively modern works of the period preceding Vatican II such as Cardinal Gaspari's Catholic Catechism, the doctrine of papal infallibility extends its shadow over a large area of teaching which is not strictly speaking the subject of infallible pronouncements. Thus, it is intolerably rash to maintain that the fire of hell is not a real fire, and penitents who after instruction obstinately refuse to accept that, are to be refused absolution. This is of a piece with the notorious interview between Archbishop van Santen and the Nuncio Mgr. Capaccini in 1827. The question then was not of the truth or otherwise of the five so-called Jansenist Propositions condemned in the Bull *Cum occasione* of 1653 and the better known *Unigenitus* of 1713, but whether these Propositions were to be found in Cornelius Jansen's book *Augustinus* stated in the sense in which they were condemned. As the price of

unity the Archbishop was asked to sign a statement that this was so. He said that he had read the book more than once and knew that the Propositions as condemned were not to be found in it. Capaccini argued that the *Augustinus* had been condemned by Pope Urban VIII, that any knowledge of its contents could therefore only have been obtained by disobedience, and that because the Archbishop was acting presumptuously God did not give him the clear light of understanding. "All you have to do" he said "is to sign the Formulary, and you will receive the blessing which will come from giving up your own will, and thus restoring the peace of the Church... The Holy Father only requires what lies within the province of his authority. When the Church instructs you what to believe, you are bound to silence all trifling scruples."

We recognise thankfully that that belongs in its form of expression to a bygone age as does the passage I quoted from Cardinal Gaspari, but a problem remains for us not only of the definition of infallibility itself but of the way that that doctrine, whatever it may mean, overshadows in practice a large area of other matters, and raises the question how far papal and curial statements are allowed to be the subject of historical examination and of revision in the light of such examination. For Anglicans this is of special significance in relation to the Bull *Apostolicae Curae* which presents an obstacle to closer relations between us and Rome which does not exist between Old Catholics and Rome.

It is customary to distinguish the history of the Old Catholic Churches in two phases, that of the original Dutch separation from Rome, and that of the establishment of other Churches following the first Vatican Council and leading to the making of the Union of Utrecht. This distinction is a real one, but as we have seen the basic principles against which those who refused to accept the Vatican decrees protested were present a century and a half or two centuries earlier in the Roman attitude which led to the excommunication of the Church of Holland.

Later this year we shall see the completion of the work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and the expansion of the Statement on Authority already issued. In the light of what I have said this will be of great importance for the Old Catholics as well as Anglicans, because the view taken of the papal primacy, the papal magisterium and the activity of the Roman Curia is a crucial matter for both of us.

In our Theological Conference at Trier last year we spent some time on the subject of Authority, but it was only a beginning. I hope that in our next Conference we shall be able to take this matter further, and as it is for both of us a vital issue in our relations with Rome it may be that the ARCIC final report will provide us with a valuable text on which to work, to be studied alongside the Old Catholic Bishops Declaration of 1970 to which I have already referred.

This leads me to a point that I have frequently tried to make in Anglican discussions about our relations with the Old Catholics and which I think can never be too frequently emphasised. The Bonn Agreement speaks of Intercommunion and the Convocation Resolutions of 1932 refer to the establishment of Intercommunion between the Church of England and the Old Catholics. Dr C.B. Moss refers to the debate in the Upper House of Canterbury when in answer to a bishop who had said that what was proposed was intercommunion not union, the Bishop of Lincoln (Dr Swayne) said that intercommunion was union, the only sort of union that they wanted, the only sort of union that was possible. Since 1932 there have been many changes in the vocabulary of Church Relations. I remember an extraordinary episode in the Revision of the Canon Law when Archbishop Fisher tried to have the single Canon on Church Relations expanded into an elaborate framework of definitions of various degrees of relationship. The Lund Conference and our more domestic Intercommunion Commission made similar attempts, but all without lasting success. The fact is that Church relations, so called, are an anomaly and fortunately defy tidy definition. What was called Intercommunion in 1931 is the equivalent of what has tended to be called Full Communion in recent years.

The principle which emerges from all this welter of terminology is however, as it seems to me, a clear one – namely that a sacramental relationship carries implications which go much beyond that of simply receiving Holy Communion together.

One of the achievements of the Liturgical Movement has been to bring again to the fore of Christian consciousness the fact that the Eucharist is a common meal and that to share in it together has implications for a sharing of life and of common concerns. Similarly to be in communion with another Church must be more than just sharing the same altar. It must imply a community of life, an exchange and a commitment to one another in respect of major decisions on questions of faith and morals, a recognition of the fact that to share sacramentally

with others imposes some limitation on one's own freedom of independent, selfish action.

I fear it has to be said that both sides have been somewhat slow to recognise this. The Old Catholics have indeed been consistently happy to invite Anglican participation in the International Congresses, and Anglicans to invite Old Catholics attendance at the Lambeth Conferences. There has been the series of Anglican-Old Catholic Theological Conferences, though on the Anglican side it has to be admitted that these have come about for the most part through the prompting of private individuals and the generosity of the Society of St Willibrord. There have been occasional consultations by Anglicans and Old Catholics when major schemes of Christian Unity were under discussion, but again these have usually taken place as a result of questions being asked by individuals. The Anglican Consultative Council has singularly failed to recognise that to be in communion with another Church carries implications for the sharing of life which should be the outcome of the sharing of a common Eucharist. It has I think also to be said that Old Catholics have not been very quick to involve Anglicans in their own Conferences of Theologians, or to keep Anglicans fully informed of their own discussions with the Orthodox. It has been said more than once that it is high time that the Anglican-Orthodox and the Old Catholic-Orthodox dialogues were brought into closer relation with one another. But nothing happens. We must hope and indeed press for a reconsideration of all this on the occasion of this fiftieth anniversary.

It would be foolish to try to conceal the fact that fifty years after the making of the Bonn Agreement the relationship established between the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Union of Utrecht has suffered serious strain and damage. I well remember the resentment among Old Catholic participants in the Theological Conference at Rheinfelden in the early fifties that there had been no consultation with their bishops over the matter of the Church of South India. There was consultation over the Anglican-Methodist Unity Scheme and there has been over the ordination of women to the priesthood, but here it has to be recognised that there are very different views about the right of a particular Church to make major innovations in what is the common property of all Catholic Christendom. The Old Catholic Churches hold, as do many Anglicans, that a major change in the Christian ministry, such as would be represented by the ordination of women to the priesthood, should be made only by the general agree-

ment of those Churches which have retained the historic three-fold ministry. For this reason the Polish National Catholic Church in the USA has suspended its intercommunion with the Episcopal Church of the USA and the Bishops of the Union of Utrecht have said that they would no longer be able to take part in the consecration of Bishops of a Church which proposes to ordain women to the priesthood. In England this presumably means that if the Covenant proposals go through the Old Catholic Bishops would no longer take part in our consecrations. It would mean also that a number of those authorised to celebrate the Eucharist in the Church of England would not be acceptable as ministers of the Eucharist by Old Catholics.

The question has to be asked therefore whether on this fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Bonn Agreement ambiguities contained especially in its third clause are now coming home to roost, and whether indeed there were from the outset different interpretations of it. The letter of Archbishop Kenninck of September 1931 contains a phrase which with hindsight may have been more significant than it appeared at the time. It says that the Old Catholic Bishops meeting at Vienna had adopted three Resolutions. The third of them is identical with the third clause of the Bonn Agreement already quoted. The second is equivalent in substance, though not in precise wording, to the second clause of the Agreement. But whereas the first clause of the Agreement reads: "Each Communion recognises the catholicity and independence of the other and maintains its own" the Archbishop's letter says: "The Synod ... on the basis of the recognition of the validity of Anglican Ordinations, agrees to intercommunion with the Anglican Communion." The formal recognition of the validity of Anglican Ordinations had in fact taken place six years earlier, in 1925, but its inclusion in the letter of 1931 must be regarded as significant. From the Anglican point of view the only question that could possibly be raised about the Old Catholic ministry was the fact that several times from 1723 onwards the episcopal succession had depended on consecration by one bishop only, as against the Nicene rule of three. In 1723 however the Dutch had been careful to fortify themselves with an army of theological and canonical opinions and no Anglican seems to have questioned the validity of the ordinations dependent on this succession. About Anglican ordinations questions had however been raised – notably by Leo XIII and the Old Catholic recognition in 1925 was a necessary prelude to the subsequent discussions. The important point is that the Bonn Agreement rested implicitly on the fact that there was

no difference of opinion between the Churches about their respective ministries such as exists between the Anglican Communion and Rome and the Anglican Communion and the Free Churches. Whatever opinion may be held by some Roman Catholics, Old Catholic participation in Anglican consecrations has never been viewed by them or by official Anglicanism as a process of validating the Anglican ministry, nor has it ever been felt necessary to have any rite of recognition of ministries between the two Churches.

It seems to follow, therefore, that the third clause of the Agreement with its cautious words about not accepting all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice of the other Church, cannot legitimately be held to cover serious differences of theology and practice in the matter of ordination. If a Church of the Anglican Communion departs from the position as it was in 1931 by such changes as the ordination of women to the priesthood, or the admission as celebrants of the Eucharist of persons who have not received episcopal ordination, the Old Catholic Churches are entitled to say that the terms of the Bonn Agreement have been changed unilaterally, and to reconsider their commitment to intercommunion. The present Archbishop of Utrecht has said more than once "We must not make any more schisms" and I believe that in so saying he has been maintaining the position of his predecessor Archbishop Rinkel whom we all remember with veneration and affection. Anglicans must not however assume that this means that the Old Catholic Bishops will accept anything that an Anglican Church decides to do, and they must be prepared for the fact that some of their decisions may limit the extent of the intercommunion enjoyed for the past fifty years, and indeed some have already done so.

There are several causes of this situation of which I will mention only a few. One is the failure to develop adequately in sharing of life and thought the sacramental bond of intercommunion, the failure to provide adequate regular and official organs of consultation, the failure to share sufficiently in theological discussion. There has been no adequate consultation together about the deep issues concerning the ministry today, about the fundamental question whether the ministry is in essence something given by the Lord to his Church through the Apostles, with a continuity of commission and authority passing down to the episcopate of the present day, or whether it is simply a convenient way of organising under God's guidance the whole ministry of the Church in the world, able to be changed and adjusted as the Christian community in any one place decides is best.

Involved in all that are the questions of authority with which this paper started and which themselves are closely linked with questions about the nature of episcopacy concerning which I spoke to the Society of St Willibrord last year. Is there an apostolic college of which episcopal consecration makes a man a member, and if so what is the relationship of that college to the local churches in the various regions? These are all matters which require urgent and lengthy consultation between us if the fiftieth birthday is to be one of hope and not of gloom.

We require also something that I fear we have not had in these fifty years, and that is a real sense of partnership in the mission of the Church in the world, a sense of facing together the challenges to the Gospel today, and the need to show how the message of Christ relates to the life of our time. I hope American friends will forgive me if I say that the Anglican-Old Catholic intercommunion has been very much within a mainly European setting.

I believe that together we have an important contribution and witness to make in Europe, in the realm of peace and justice, in the realm of family stability and married life. We are different and yet we are one. I pray that the celebrations of this year may strengthen our wills to cope with the strains that seem to be pulling us apart, and increase our determination by God's help to show that the right kind of diversity in unity can be a true witness to the Gospel and true service to our fellows.

Chichester

Eric Kemp

Zusammenfassung

In seinem anlässlich der Gedenkfeier in London am 2. Juli 1981 gehaltenen Vortrag streifte der Bischof von Chichester, Dr. Eric Kemp, zunächst die historischen Zusammenhänge und Entwicklungen, welche schliesslich zur Vereinbarung von Bonn anfangs Juli 1931 geführt haben. Er erinnerte einleitend an die Tatsache, dass es J. M. Neale war, der mit seinem 1858 erschienenen Buch «A History of the so-called Jansenistic Church of Holland» erstmals in der Kirche von England auf das Bestehen dieser altkatholischen Kirche aufmerksam machte, und wies nach, dass es schon 1723 der Konflikt um die Autorität des Bischofs von Rom war, welcher schliesslich zum Bruch zwischen Utrecht und Rom führte. Nach seiner Überzeugung waren die strittigen

Hauptpunkte der vatikanischen Dogmen vom 18. Juli 1870 – Universalpiskopat und Lehrunfehlbarkeit des Papstes – schon damals der Hauptgrund für die Kirchenspaltung. Was die Infallibilität betrifft, bemerkte Dr. Kemp, für die Anglikaner sei nicht nur die Frage wichtig, wie diese interpretiert werde, sondern inwieweit sie sich als Hindernis erweise, päpstliche und kuriale Verlautbarungen der Vergangenheit kritisch zu überprüfen und je nach Ergebnis auch zu revidieren. Dabei dachte er speziell an die Bulle «*Apostolicae Curae*» – d. h. an jenen kirchenamtlichen Erlass von 1896, in welchem Papst Leo XIII. die Frage der Gültigkeit anglikanischer Weihen negativ entschied –, welche bis heute das Verhältnis zwischen Canterbury und Rom massgeblich belastet. Deshalb erwarte man gespannt, wie sich die internationale anglikanisch-römisch-katholische Dialogkommission zur Frage der Autorität in der Kirche und speziell zur Stellung des Papstes demnächst abschliessend äussern werde. Im weiteren erinnerte der Referent an die anglikanisch-alkatholische Theologenkonzferenz von 1980 in Trier, welche u. a. gerade auch mit dem Problem der Autorität sich zu befassen begann, und sprach die Hoffnung aus, auf einer kommenden Tagung möchte es möglich werden, auf Grund der 1970 von der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz veröffentlichten Erklärung zur Papstfrage und der gemeinsamen anglikanisch-römisch-katholischen Stellungnahme 1981 zu weiteren gemeinsamen Überlegungen zu diesem wichtigen Problem zu gelangen.

Dr. Kemp kam dann auf die Frage zu sprechen, was «Interkommunion» praktisch eigentlich impliziere. Dass es faktisch weit mehr bedeute als nur gegenseitige Zulassung zum Abendmahl, bestätige die Tatsache, dass man im Zeitalter zunehmender Beziehungen unter den verschiedenen Kirchen das Spezifische des Verhältnisses zwischen Altkatholiken und Anglikanern mit der Bezeichnung «full communion» charakterisiere. Daraus gehe klar hervor, dass eine «sacramental relationship» (*communio in sacris*. D. Red.) Konsequenzen habe, die weit über den blossen Kommunionempfang hinausgehen. Gerade die Liturgische Bewegung habe uns wieder bewusst gemacht, dass Teilhabe am selben Mahl (Eucharistie) auch Teilhabe am Leben und seinen Problemen impliziert. Das bedeute, dass die Partner sich gegenseitig auch konsultieren, wenn es um wichtige Entscheidungen in Fragen des Glaubens und der Sitten geht, und sich bewusst sind, dass Sakramentsgemeinschaft auch die eigene Freiheit zu unabhängigem selbständigem Handeln einschränke – eine Tatsache, die nach Meinung des Referenten bisher von beiden Partnern noch zu wenig beachtet

werde. Zwar habe es in der jüngsten Vergangenheit immer wieder Kontakte und Gespräche auf kirchenamtlicher und theologischer Ebene gegeben, aber meistens seien diese auf Initiative einzelner zustande gekommen. Hüben und drüben habe man es bis jetzt auch nicht für nötig gefunden, sich gegenseitig über den Verlauf bilateraler Dialoge (z. B. denjenigen mit Rom oder mit den Orthodoxen) offiziell zu informieren. Dieses 50jährige Gedenken könnte und sollte Anlass sein, dies zu bedenken!

Dr. Kemp verhehlte nicht, dass die gegenseitigen Beziehungen, welche 1931 mit der Vereinbarung von Bonn hergestellt wurden, in der Vergangenheit wiederholt starken Belastungen ausgesetzt waren. So etwa durch die Tatsache, dass die altkatholische Bischofskonferenz im Zusammenhang mit der Konstituierung der Kirche von Südindien (1947) und besonders der damit verbundenen Frage des apostolischen Amtes überhaupt nicht konsultiert wurde. Hingegen geschah dies dann im Zusammenhang mit dem anglikanisch-methodistischen Unionsplan für England und der Frage der Frauenordination. Dabei zeigte sich allerdings, dass die Auffassungen, inwieweit eine Partikularkirche das Recht habe, im Bereiche dessen, was gemeinsames Gut der katholischen Christenheit ist, grundlegende Erneuerungen durchzuführen, weit auseinandergehen. Dies hatte einerseits zur Folge, dass die Polnisch-nationale katholische Kirche in den USA die Interkommunion mit der Bischöflichen Kirche der USA suspendierte, nachdem diese der Zulassung von Frauen zum Priesteramt grundsätzlich zugestimmt hatte, und andererseits, dass die Bischöfe der Utrechter Union erklärten, sie würden künftig sich nicht mehr an Bischofsweihen einer Kirche beteiligen können, welche dem Antrag auf Frauenordination zustimme. Im Zusammenhang mit diesem letztgenannten Punkt wies der Referent hin auf einen Satz in jenem Brief, mit dem Erzbischof Kenninck im September 1931 den Erzbischof von Canterbury und die Kirche von England offiziell davon in Kenntnis setzte, dass die Internationale Altkatholische Bischofskonferenz anlässlich ihrer Sitzung in Wien das Abkommen von Bonn ratifiziert habe. Während die Sätze 2 und 3 jenes Abkommens entweder wörtlich (3) oder doch dem Inhalt nach (2) unverändert übernommen wurden, weiche die Formulierung für Punkt 1 («Jede Kirchengemeinschaft anerkennt die Katholizität und Selbständigkeit der andern und hält ihre eigene aufrecht») vom Bonner Wortlaut ab, indem es im Brief heisst: «Die Bischofssynode ... stimmt auf der Grundlage der Anerkennung der Gültigkeit der anglikanischen Weihen der Interkommunion mit der anglikanischen Kir-

chengemeinschaft zu.» Der ausdrücklichen Erwähnung dieser Anerkennung, welche ja bereits sechs Jahre früher vonseiten der Altkatholiken erfolgt war, kommt nach Dr. Kemps Überzeugung besonderes Gewicht zu, indem er darin ein Indiz sieht, dass die in Punkt 3 des Bonner Abkommens gegenseitig zugestandene Freiheit hinsichtlich Lehrmeinungen, sakramentaler Frömmigkeit oder liturgische Praxis keinesfalls auf Theologie und Praxis des kirchlichen Amtes bezogen werden dürfe. Das bedeute nicht weniger, als dass die Frauenordination oder die Zulassung von nicht-bischöflich ordinierten Zelebranten innerhalb der anglikanischen Kirchen die altkatholischen Kirchen berechtige, zu erklären, die in der Bonner Erklärung niedergelegten Grundsätze seien einseitig geändert worden, so dass sie ihre Haltung hinsichtlich Interkommunion überprüfen müssten. Dr. Kemp erinnerte daran, dass der gegenwärtige Erzbischof von Utrecht wiederholt davor gewarnt habe, neue Schismen zu verursachen, warnte jedoch zugleich seine anglikanischen Mitbrüder, zu meinen, dies bedeute, dass die Altkatholiken alles akzeptieren, was eine anglikanische Kirche zu tun sich entschliesse.

Abschliessend wies der Referent auf die seiner Meinung nach wichtigsten Punkte hin, denen es im weiteren Vollzug der bestehenden Gemeinschaft zwischen beiden Kirchengemeinschaften in Zukunft besondere Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken gelte: Schaffung offizieller Organe für gegenseitige Konsultation, vermehrter theologischer Dialog, besonders auch hinsichtlich eines gemeinsamen Amtsverständnisses. Im Zusammenhang damit steht die Frage nach der bischöflichen Autorität und Kollegialität, und nicht zuletzt diejenige nach dem gemeinsamen Auftrag und der Sendung beider Kirchengemeinschaften in der Welt von heute und morgen.

Hans A. Frei