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# The Challenges of Shared Mission: Anglican and Old Catholic Churches in the Netherlands

Hector M. Patmore

## 1. Introduction

The Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht are in full communion. The practical implementation of this relationship is, however, not without its challenges. It is these challenges that are the focus of this article.<sup>1</sup> My own interest in this ecumenical relationship developed when I lived in the Netherlands and, though Anglican, worshipped regularly with the local Old Catholic congregation. The analysis that follows is therefore offered in gratitude for the existence of this relationship, in hope of a richer and closer communion, and with enormous fondness for the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands.

## 2. Relations between the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches

Relations between Anglicans and the Old Catholic movement began in the aftermath of the First Vatican Council (1870), with senior Anglicans attending the first gatherings of Old Catholics (1871–1873) as guests and observers. There was a natural affinity: both churches shared a common opposition to the jurisdiction of Rome.<sup>2</sup> A significant step towards com-

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<sup>1</sup> I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Society of St Willibrord (United Kingdom), which provided a travel grant that enabled me to attend the Summer School in Old Catholic Theology in its Ecumenical Context at Utrecht University (2015). I also take this opportunity to thank Mark Chapman, Peter-Ben Smit, and Louis Runhaar, for their comments on earlier drafts, and David Hamid, Joris Vercammen, and Mattijs Ploeger, who provided access to resources and answers to many of my questions. Unforeseen circumstances have delayed publication since this article was submitted in 2018. A thoroughgoing update has not been possible, though some modifications to the text have been made to take into account changes in personnel or circumstances in the intervening years.

<sup>2</sup> The most comprehensive study of the historical background of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands is Dick J. Schoon, *Van bisschoppelijke Cleresie tot Oud-Katholieke Kerk. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Nederland in de 19de eeuw* (Nijmegen: Valkhof, 2004). For an overview of the Dutch church see Wietse van der Velde, 'De Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland: Geschiedenis', in: Angela Berlis et al., *De Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland: Leer en Leven* (Zoe-

munion was made in 1925 with the acceptance of the validity of Anglican Orders by the Dutch Church, which opened the way to the Bonn Agreement (1931).<sup>3</sup> This agreement remains the basis of the relationship between the two churches.

The brevity of the Bonn Agreement planted the seeds of many of the issues that currently dog Anglican-Old Catholic relations: nothing is said about implementing practical steps for collaboration; no common understanding of Catholicity is given; and nothing is said as to how a catholic ecclesiology might be realised in ecclesial polity.<sup>4</sup> Lukas Vischer, for one, pointed out that the Bonn Agreement did not establish “communion” as such, but rather “intercommunion” – “Das Abkommen stellt nicht ‘Kommunion’, sondern ‘Interkommunion’ her” – for it does not lead the two churches to behave as “one communion of local churches.”<sup>5</sup>

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termeer: Boekencentrum, 2000), 13–88; for the Union of Utrecht see Peter-Ben Smit, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History: The Catholic Church in Every Place* (Church History and Religious Culture 52; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 50–97; Wietse van der Velde, ‘De Unie van Utrecht van de Oud-Katholieke Kerken’, in: Angela Berlis et al., *De Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland: Leer en Leven* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2000), 89–108; On the relationship of the Old Catholic Church to the Roman Catholic Church see Internationale Römisch-Katholisch – Altkatholische Dialogkommission, *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft. Erster und Zweiter Bericht ... 2009 und 2016* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> The Bonn Agreement is cited in Harding Meyer/Lukas Vischer (eds), *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level* (New York: Paulist Press – Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 37. For a brief overview of the history of Anglican – Old Catholic relations see Angela Berlis, ‘Aneinander wachsen – zusammenwachsen. Alt-Katholische und anglikanische Zusammenarbeit in den Niederlanden’, in: Angela Berlis/Matthias Ring (eds), *Im Himmel Anker werfen. Vermutungen über Kirche in der Zukunft. Festschrift für Bischof Joachim Vobbe* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2nd ed., 2008), 171–187: 174–178. On the early contacts between Anglicans and Old Catholics in the Netherlands see Schoon, *Van bisschoppelijke Cleresie tot Oud-Katholieke Kerk* (as note 2), 671–78.

<sup>4</sup> See Angela Berlis, ‘Mission Accomplished? Challenges of the Bonn Agreement (1931) for today’, *IKZ* 103 (2012), 18–44: 33–34.

<sup>5</sup> In German: “eine Gemeinschaft von örtlichen Kirchen”. My translation. Lukas Vischer, ‘Das Bonner Abkommen von 1931 im Lichte der ökumenischen Bewegung’, *IKZ* 71 (1981) 237–253: 248–249. The same criticism is made by Berlis, ‘Aneinander wachsen’ (as note 3), 173. See also 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) 1–22: 11–13.

In 1998, the Archbishops of Canterbury and Utrecht founded the Anglican–Old Catholic International Coordinating Council (hereafter: AOCICC), which is now the primary formal mechanism by which the communion is fostered. In 2005, the AOCICC stated its belief that “the time is right to move towards a new level of common life and witness including deeper consideration of full visible unity.”<sup>6</sup> The 2005 communiqué directed the focus of collaborative endeavours towards the local congregations:

This common life and witness must be founded on the local life of our congregations, and so the Council wishes to give especial attention in its future work to developing ways in which Anglican and Old Catholic congregations may work more closely.<sup>7</sup>

This set the agenda for the subsequent work of that phase of the AOCICC, which culminated in ‘Belonging Together in Europe’ (2011), a joint statement articulating the points on which Anglicans and Old Catholics are in agreement. This was intended to serve as “a theological foundation on which to base future concrete practical expressions”.<sup>8</sup> A key proposal was that the AOCICC should “assist the Old Catholic and Anglican Bishops in Europe (...) to develop a common definition and understanding of shared mission and coordinated oversight for their work”. This was to be worked out in the development of “practical initiatives” in mission in continental Europe that would lead “towards full visible unity”.<sup>9</sup> The aim of this paper is to draw attention to some of the challenges that the Anglican chaplaincies of the Church of England in the Netherlands and the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands face as they work towards these goals.

### 3. Local initiatives

‘Belonging Together in Europe’ reiterated the aim of moving “towards full visible unity” and stated the AOCICC’s view that change must begin at the local level: “We see a closer relationship on the local level as a necessary

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<sup>6</sup> AOCICC, ‘Communiqué 2005’, [https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102915/AOCICC\\_Communique\\_2005.pdf](https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102915/AOCICC_Communique_2005.pdf) (accessed 31.07.2015).

<sup>7</sup> AOCICC, ‘Communiqué 2005’ (as note 6).

<sup>8</sup> AOCICC, ‘Belonging together in Europe. A Joint Statement on Aspects of Ecclesiology and Mission’, *IKZ* 102 (2012) 140–158: Preface.

<sup>9</sup> AOCICC, ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (as note 8), 140–141.



precondition for the development of more organizational structures on a higher level”.<sup>10</sup> It seems pertinent therefore to begin by sketching out what collaborations are already taking place.

The interchange of ministers is now a familiar reality. The current Archbishop of Utrecht, Bernd Wallet, was ordained deacon by the Archbishop of York, served a curacy in the Diocese of York, and was subsequently priested by the Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht. Likewise, the Anglican priest Joop Albers, was vicar (*pastoor*) of the Old Catholic parish of Enkhuizen until 2023. Such cases are a welcome effect of the Bonn Agreement, but they concern ministerial exchanges, rather than *congregations* working more closely together, as ‘Belonging Together in Europe’ envisages.

Currently there are few *formal* collaborations between Anglican and Old Catholic congregations in the Netherlands. The shared chaplaincy ministry at Schiphol Airport has been one example. The chaplaincy’s board of governors is made up of Anglicans and Old Catholics in equal numbers, and both the Bishop of Gibraltar and the Old Catholic Bishop of Haarlem agreed its governing statutes.<sup>11</sup> Anglicans and Old Catholics also work together formally in the National Council of Churches in the Netherlands (*Raad van Kerken in Nederland*), where they are represented by a single spokesperson for the Episcopal-Synodical churches (Anglicans, Old Catholics, Russian, Greek, and Middle-Eastern Orthodox Churches).

Beyond such cases, contacts are mostly informal. As part of its ongoing work, AOCICC makes use of surveys in order to achieve an overview of existing contacts;<sup>12</sup> their results echo my own informal correspondence and conversations during 2016 with thirteen clergy – nine Old Catholics, four Church of England – who work or have previously worked in the Netherlands. Although anecdotal, this adds some additional colour to the picture. Taken together, these show many signs of positive local collaborations: occasional shared services (e.g., Christmas, Maundy Thursday,

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<sup>10</sup> AOCICC, ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (as note 8), 158.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://airportchaplaincy.nl/en/stichting-old-catholic-and-anglican-airport-ministry/> (accessed 30.06.2022).

<sup>12</sup> I base what follows on the survey that was commissioned by AOCICC in 2015, the results of which were received at its 2017 meeting in Königswinter (Germany). I am grateful to Jennifer Knudsen and Michael Burrows, Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe, for providing me with copies of the survey results. The results are consistent with earlier research, see Berlis, ‘Aneinander wachsen’ (as note 3), 180–182.

Pentecost), the shared use of buildings, or the presence of ministers at significant events (e.g., the installation of new clergy) are common. Priests act as principal celebrant in each other's congregations when needed, provide mutual support in pastoral emergencies, and help out during interregna. There is much here for which we can give thanks, but these relationships are fragile: much depends on the individuals involved, and good relationships between congregations have often faltered when a priest has relocated.

The responses also give us anecdotal evidence for the challenges that Anglicans and Old Catholics face at a local level. Some are obvious: language presents a barrier because dual-language worship requires extra work and limits the possibilities of spontaneous collaboration. The language barrier probably accounts for the total absence of joint social activities. Closely related to language is the cultural orientation of congregations. The 'Britishness' of Anglican chaplaincies appeals to some ex-pats and contributes to their feeling 'at home,' but, as one Old Catholic respondent to the AOCICC survey put it, "naturally we cannot and do not want to offer that."<sup>13</sup> It is quite possible for two congregations to use the same building whilst remaining two completely separate communities with their own management and activities. In such cases, there may be some form of 'visible' unity, yet the communities are not unified in any meaningful way.

Above all else, the sustainability of the relationship between any two local churches is at the mercy of the chemistry of the local members. Respondents to the AOCICC survey spoke of differences in liturgy and tradition (as well as theology).<sup>14</sup> In one instance, I managed to speak to both parties in the case of a local Anglican-Old Catholic relationship that had ended acrimoniously. The churchmanship of an Anglican chaplaincy changed following the appointment of a new minister. The new Anglican

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<sup>13</sup> My translation. Original (with context): "het is wel zo dat in de Anglicaanse parochie ook een stuk 'Britishness' wordt gezocht en geboden, dat kunnen en willen wij natuurlijk niet bieden."

<sup>14</sup> See note 12. To the question "When you think about your parish's contact with those from the tradition, what challenges and impediments do you observe?" one respondent wrote, "nogaal verschillende theologische en liturgische ligging" ("rather different theological and liturgical positions"), another, "moeizame interactie wegens grote verschillen in traditie en taal" ("difficult interaction because of big differences in tradition and language"). My translations.

minister could not stomach the Old Catholic's "rigid and seemingly limited approach to liturgy" and the Old Catholic found the Anglican congregation's evolution towards "approachable evangelical services"<sup>15</sup> unpalatable.<sup>16</sup>

Issues relating to sexuality can also prove an impediment, though, for obvious reasons, clergy are reluctant to share these views in writing. At least one Anglican priest, speaking to me off the record, felt unable to establish collaborative relations because the local Old Catholic priest was in an openly homosexual partnership, a situation that he believed would be unacceptable to his church's council and wider membership.

As noted above, 'Belonging Together in Europe' regards closer collaborations at the local level as a necessary precondition for closer collaboration at the structural level. The sample of reactions from clergy in the Netherlands, echoing themes in the AOCICC survey, suggest that this may be overly optimistic. Local initiatives will only flourish and be sustainable *if they are reinforced structurally*. Unless some key issues are clarified at the highest level, promoting local collaborations will be like scattering seeds without first tilling the soil: some will fall on the rocks or among the weeds; where collaborations do spring up, they may not last or bear much fruit. I explore some of these issues in what follows.

AOCICC is, of course, not insensitive to this. An appendix to 'Belonging together in Europe' was produced that "outlined the questions that would have to be faced if the issue of parallel jurisdictions were decisively addressed". This was never published.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the more recent report *Anglicans and Old Catholics Serving in Europe* (2019) comments: "Anglicans and Old Catholics have much to do together 'to give a soul'

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<sup>15</sup> "laagdrempelig evangelicaalse diensten". My translation.

<sup>16</sup> Issues of churchmanship are also a factor in other places where Church of England and Old Catholic churches are geographically close, see e.g., Charlotte Methuen, 'A View from Without: Reflections on the Old Catholic Church from an Anglican Perspective', *IKZ* 108 (2018) 136–159: 148–150. Evangelical Anglicans' suspicion of the Old Catholic Church has long historical roots, see Andrew Atherstone, 'Anglican Evangelicals, Old Catholics and the Bonn Agreement,' *IKZ* 97 (2007) 23–47; Methuen, 'The Bonn Agreement' (as note 5), 3–11.

<sup>17</sup> See AOCICC, *Anglicans and Old Catholics Serving in Europe. A Report of the Anglican–Old Catholic International Coordinating Council 2013–2019 to the Anglican Consultative Council 17 Hong Kong April/May 2019 and the International Bishops' Conference, Lublin June 2019*, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/345555/aocicc-report.pdf> (accessed 05.07.2023), 31.

(a famous phrase of Jacques Delors) to today's Europe, *and they should not be hindered in their mission by unnecessary anomalies in their own well-established and generally confident relationship*".<sup>18</sup> The discussion that follows is therefore offered in the modest hope of contributing something to the task of unpicking some of the underlying problems. In order to prepare the ground, Anglicans and Old Catholics first need to reach an agreement on what each understands by the terms 'mission' and 'visible unity', and secondly on how these are going to be organised.

#### 4. Impediments to further progress

Let us begin with the question of 'visible unity'. 'Visible unity' is now widely accepted within the ecumenical movement as the goal towards which churches are called to work.<sup>19</sup> Anglicans and Old Catholics would accept this. Yet, such a goal raises the question of what exactly 'full visible unity' might look like in organisational terms. Does 'full visible unity' entail a single institution (the 'maximalist' understanding of communion)<sup>20</sup> or could other non-unified forms of organisation still count as 'full' and 'visible' (a 'minimalist' understanding)? On this, there is as yet no consensus and 'Belonging together in Europe' recognised the need for further reflection.<sup>21</sup>

In the context of Anglican-Old Catholic relations, the lack of a common understanding of 'visible unity' finds its concrete expression in the unresolved issues of 'overlapping jurisdictions'. Briefly, the issue is as follows. The Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands consists according to the ecclesial restructuring of 1559 of six dioceses: the diocese of Haarlem is under the jurisdiction of one bishop; the dioceses of Utrecht, Deventer, Middelburg, Leeuwarden and Groningen are currently under the jurisdic-

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<sup>18</sup> AOCICC, *Anglicans and Old Catholics Serving in Europe* (as note 17), 20. My italics.

<sup>19</sup> See World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper No. 214; Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), Foreword; The Conference of European Churches, *Charta Oecumenica*, 2001, <http://www.ceceurope.org/introduction/charta-oecumenica/> (accessed 03.08.2015).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the comments of Paul Avis, 'A Pathway to Deeper Unity in Mission for Old Catholics and Anglicans in Continental Europe', *IKZ* 103 (2012) 111–124: 120–123.

<sup>21</sup> AOCICC, 'Belonging together in Europe' (as note 8), 147.

tion of the archbishop of Utrecht.<sup>22</sup> In the same geographical territory there are chaplaincies under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, forming part of the Church of England's Diocese in Europe, created in its present form in 1980, when the Diocese of Gibraltar (formed in 1842) was amalgamated with the Church of England's Jurisdiction of North and Central Europe. Since the two churches are in 'full communion', this situation is problematic both in terms of theology and ecclesial polity.

We will examine these underlying reasons below; for now, it is important to stress that overlapping jurisdictions form an impediment to the strengthening of ecumenical collaboration at the local level, as the results of the AOCICC's survey suggest.<sup>23</sup> This creates a hindrance to further collaboration in mission, as the former Archbishop of Utrecht pointed out.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, speaking informally with serving clergy, an Old Catholic priest noted the unresolved question of overlapping jurisdictions as a challenge to the realisation of a plan (in co-operation with Anglican clergy) to provide regular Anglican services in his (Old Catholic) parish church: where does the responsibility ultimately lie? Another recalled the case of

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<sup>22</sup> Bisschoppelijk Bureau Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland, *Statuut voor de Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland* (Amersfoort: Bisschoppelijk Bureau Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2016), § 89.

<sup>23</sup> To the question "What could help you to build new local contacts or strengthen existing ones in the future?" one Old Catholic responded: "Het zou kunnen helpen als de Anglicanen in Nederland 'gewoon' deel uitmaakten van een van de twee bisdommen alhier." ("It would help if the Anglicans in the Netherlands were 'just' part of one of the two dioceses here.") A Church of England respondent wrote: "Common jurisdiction, common church council, common treasurer, theological consultations, analysis of differences in culture, discussion of Anglican bias against clergy and lay ministers with local roots." Under further comments, one Old Catholic added: "Wat ik van de Anglicaanse kerk in Nederland weet, gaat over ruzies en onenigheid. Het heeft te maken met een strijd over wie de baas is: de conservatieven of de anderen. Vrouwelijke priesters van ons worden totaal genegeerd. Full communion blijkt dus een papieren zaak." ("What I know of the Anglican church in the Netherlands concerns quarrels and discord. It's a matter of who's in charge: the conservatives or the others. Our female priests are totally ignored. So full communion seems to be purely theoretical.")

<sup>24</sup> Joris Vercammen, 'Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken op het Europese Vasteland: Is een 'oecumenisch kerkrecht' noodzakelijk?', in: Lidwien van Buuren/Peter-Ben Smit (eds), *Meester in Kerk en Recht. Vriendenbundel voor Jan Hallebeek bij zijn 25 jarig jubileum als docent kerkelijk recht* (Sliedrecht: Merweboek, 2013), 66–78: 68.



a priest who wanted to be licensed both by the Anglican bishop *and* an Old Catholic bishop. This was a nice idea in theory, but if something were to go wrong, to whom would he be answerable?

Whilst ambiguity remains over who is ‘in charge’, to put it crudely, that is, under which jurisdiction one is acting at any given time, it is not hard to imagine scenarios in which those wishing to engage in local initiatives could easily find themselves in sticky pastoral situations. In recent years, issues of human sexuality have been an obvious fissure between the two communions. Imagine that a Church of England priest had built up strong links with a local Old Catholic parish to the extent that it had become normal for some of the Old Catholic parishioners to seek her pastoral care. One day, a same-sex couple comes to see her. They already have a strong pastoral relationship – she has already blessed their new home – so they would like her to bless their same-sex partnership. Prior to any changes resulting from the 2023 General Synod vote on this matter,<sup>25</sup> a service of this kind would have contravened the pastoral guidance of the House of Bishops of the Church of England but would have been permitted in the Old Catholic Church.<sup>26</sup> The priest would therefore have found herself between Scylla and Charybdis: she would either have had to precipitate a pastoral rupture (“You blessed our house, but you won’t bless us!”) or dishonour her oath of canonical obedience and face possible Church of England disciplinary measures.

*Ad hoc* solutions might be found in such scenarios, but the very fact one must seek *ad hoc* solutions adds an additional burden to the task of developing local shared missionary initiatives. Such burdens are disincentives (bearing in mind that 40% of Anglican clergy and 19% of Old Catholic clergy cited lack of time as a challenge to further links between congrega-

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<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/prayers-gods-blessing-same-sex-couples-take-step-forward-after-synod> (accessed 03.07.2023).

<sup>26</sup> House of Bishops, *Civil Partnerships — A pastoral statement from the House of Bishops of the Church of England*, 25 July 2005, <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/house-of-bishops-statement-on-civil-partnerships-2005.pdf> (accessed: 10.11.2023), § 17; re-affirmed in House of Bishops, *Pastoral Guidance on Same Sex Marriage*, 15 Feb 2014, <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/house-bishops-pastoral-guidance-same-sex-marriage> (accessed 10.11.2023), § 21 and House of Bishops, *Civil Partnerships – for same sex and opposite sex couples* (<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/civil-partnerships-pastoral-guidance-2019-2.pdf> [accessed 10.11.2023]), § 20.

tions in the 2015 AOCICC survey). Furthermore, while the issue remains unresolved, the potential for a local issue to flare up into a more significant rupture within the Anglican-Old Catholic communion remains (the consecration of Gene Robinson in the Episcopal Church of the United States did exactly that within the Anglican Communion). Differing theological positions on sexuality have certainly inhibited local co-operation in the Netherlands in the past, and the Church of England and the Old Catholic Church have moved – and will doubtless continue to move – at different paces on potentially explosive issues generated by shifting social attitudes, homosexuality being just one example. Consequently, we must accept that the communion relationship itself remains at risk if issues of polity are not clarified before the fuse is lit by some unexpected incident. The case of Gene Robinson was, after all, ultimately a question of polity (hence the proposed Anglican Covenant).

Why has it proved so difficult to resolve the issue of overlapping jurisdictions? At its root, the problem is that the two churches have differing visions of the nature of the Church (ecclesiology). While a range of ecclesiological positions can be found among members of both churches, we focus here on each Church's ecclesiology as it is expressed in formal documents, particularly those that shape polity (statutes, canon law, etc.), since it is these that enable and constrain actual practice.

A state of overlapping jurisdictions is incompatible with Old Catholic ecclesiology, in particular its understanding of local church and its relation to the episcopacy. Ecclesiology finds its realisation in ecclesial polity. In the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands this is organised on the basis of its Statute (that is, the instrument of governance). According to the Statute, Old Catholic ecclesiology regards the dioceses as “autonomous parts of the Church”<sup>27</sup> of which a bishop is the head. In terms of polity, each bishop has the authority – in consultation with his or her clergy and laity – to govern (in Dutch *besturen*) the diocese with which he or she is entrusted; consequently, no bishop may exercise authority in another diocese without the permission of the authority there established (under normal circumstances, the diocesan bishop).<sup>28</sup>

The ecclesiological principles that underpin these provisions are clearly articulated in the preamble to the Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops

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<sup>27</sup> Bisschoppelijk Bureau, *Statuut* (as note 22), § 86.1 (“De bisdommen vormen zelfstandige onderdelen van de kerk”).

<sup>28</sup> Bisschoppelijk Bureau, *Statuut* (as note 22), § 72.1–2.



united in the Union of Utrecht: “(...) each fellowship and communion of people (...) constituted as a unity in a given place around a bishop (...) is a *complete church* that carries out its tasks autonomously in that given place”.<sup>29</sup> In other words, the local church is a single geographical area with a single bishop (mono-episcopacy). The local church (diocese) is the starting point for Old Catholic ecclesiology, and the bishop is the connection between the local church and the communion of local churches that constitutes the Church Catholic.<sup>30</sup>

Mono-episcopacy goes back at least to the time of Ignatius of Antioch<sup>31</sup> and had become widely accepted by the end of the second century,<sup>32</sup> a development predicated on the view that more than one bishop in a single city would threaten the unity of the church in that place and therefore the unity of the whole.<sup>33</sup> In Old Catholic thought, the practice of the early Church is the gold standard against which contemporary ecclesial polity is to be measured: according to the Union of Utrecht’s self-understanding, it is “a union of churches and their bishops governing them who are determined to maintain and pass on the faith, worship, *and essential structure of the undivided Church of the first millennium*.”<sup>34</sup>

The rejection of the papacy’s “primacy of jurisdiction over the whole church of God,”<sup>35</sup> proclaimed in 1870 (decrees of the first Vatican council, session 4, chapter 1.1), is a key element in the 1889 Declaration of Utrecht. The ecclesiological self-definition that eventually finds expression in that declaration is one largely formulated in contradistinction to the newly articulated position of the Roman Catholic Church: “The universal episco-

<sup>29</sup> Urs von Arx/Maja Weyermann (eds), *Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops United in the Union of Utrecht* (Beiheft zu IKZ 91; Bern: Stämpfli, 2001), A 3.1. My italics.

<sup>30</sup> Günter Esser, ‘Episcopacy — Conciliarity — Collegiality — Primacy: The Theology and Task of Episcopacy from an Old Catholic Perspective’, in: Urs von Arx/Paul Avis/Mattijs Ploeger (eds), *Towards Further Convergence: Anglican and Old Catholic Ecclesiologies* (Beiheft zu IKZ 96; Bern: Stämpfli, 2006), 72–84: 72–73.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Philadelphians 2.2, 4, 6.2; Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8.1.

<sup>32</sup> David J. Stagaman, *Authority in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 73–79.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 40.2; On the Unity of the Catholic Church 5.

<sup>34</sup> von Arx/Weyermann (eds), *Statute* (as note 29), A 1. My italics.

<sup>35</sup> “*primatum iurisdictionis in universam Dei ecclesiam*”. Text and translation from Norman P. Tanner et al. (eds), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (London/Washington: Sheed & Ward/Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2 vols: vol. 2 (1990), 812.

pate”, that is, “the ecclesiastical plenitude of power of the Roman Pope” (“der Universal-Episkopat oder die kirchliche Allgewalt des römischen Papstes”) is rejected as contrary to the faith of the ancient Church (“Als mit dem Glauben der alten Kirche in Widerspruch stehend und die altkirchliche Verfassung zerstörend”), since this would create a situation in which both pope and diocesan bishop could exercise coterminous jurisdiction.<sup>36</sup>

In short, overlapping jurisdictions are problematic precisely because of the centrality of mono-episcopacy to Old Catholic ecclesiology. The Church of England maintains its full episcopal jurisdiction in the same geographical territories as Old Catholic bishops. From the Old Catholic point of view, this represents a failure to work out *in organisational terms* the reality of recognising the *catholicity* of the Old Catholic Church, something to which the Anglican Church committed itself in the Bonn Agreement. The former Archbishop of Utrecht, Andreas Rinkel (r. 1937–1970), offered an understanding of the implications of the Bonn Agreement in a way that remains normative for Old Catholic thought: in his view it stated “that the Old Catholic Church considered the Anglican Church as the catholic church of England and that the Anglican Church considered the Old Catholic Church as *the* catholic church of the Netherlands”.<sup>37</sup> For Old Catholics, catholicity is expressed through the communion of local churches,<sup>38</sup> and communion must mean “a community of equal local churches,”<sup>39</sup> both points upon which the Old Catholics find themselves in accord with influential trends in Orthodox thinking.<sup>40</sup>

One must recognise the difficulty – perhaps even the impossibility – for the Old Catholics of shifting from a position that upholds mono-episcopacy as the only theologically justifiable structure for the Church. Such

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Die Utrechter Erklärung’, <https://www.utrechter-union.org/uber-uns/was-ist-die-utrechter-union/die-utrechter-erklarung/> (accessed 13.11.2023), § 2.

<sup>37</sup> “Die 1931 zustande gekommene Interkommunion besagte, dass die Altkatholische Kirche die Anglikanische Kirche als ‘*die* katholische Kirche von England’ und dass die Anglikanische Kirche die Altkatholische als ‘die katholische Kirche der Niederlande’ (Deutschlands, der Schweiz usw.) betrachtet.” My translation. Andreas Rinkel, ‘Interkommunion. Ihre Grundlage, ihr Inhalt, ihre Folgerungen’, *IKZ* 43 (1953) 209–230: 212.

<sup>38</sup> Urs von Arx, ‘Der ekklesiologische Charakter der Utrechter Union’, *IKZ* 84 (1994) 20–37: 33–34.

<sup>39</sup> Esser, ‘Episcopacy’ (as note 30), 73.

<sup>40</sup> See John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1985), 247–260.

a position is not only historically foundational, it is also embedded in the governing instruments of the Union of Utrecht: under threat of suspension from the International Bishops Conference, no consecration may be performed unless the person elected bishop has given their assent to the Declaration of Utrecht.<sup>41</sup>

Tensions surrounding ‘overlapping jurisdictions’ arise because the Church of England approaches episcopacy quite differently. Historically, while the three-fold ordering of ministers has been understood as divinely appointed and therefore to be preserved, the emphasis in the Elizabethan period lay on the fact that bishops exercised authority delegated to them by the divinely appointed sovereign to ensure good order in the Church.<sup>42</sup> There is no real theological reflection on the nature of episcopate and its place within the Church of England’s ecclesiology in the Thirty-Nine articles, which instead are concerned only with ensuring that bishops are “rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordered” according to the prescribed rite (Article XXXVI); similarly, order is a central theme in the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer, which stresses the bishop’s role in the “government” of the Church, in administering “godly discipline”, in banishing “all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God’s Word”, and so on.

Old Catholic ecclesiology is shaped by the belief that sacramental and jurisdictional authority are distinct, yet inherently linked, but no such link is made in the Church of England, the current structures and legislation of which articulate a theology of episcopacy in essentially corporate terms. There are several different episcopal offices within the Church of England. The functions of the diocesan bishops in both the Church of England and the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands are comparable, namely to act as guardian of the faith, to govern (including exercising jurisdiction as ordinary), and to act as principal minister.<sup>43</sup> But, in distinction to the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands in which the Archbishop of

<sup>41</sup> von Arx/Weyermann (eds), *Statute* (as note 29), B 9e-g.

<sup>42</sup> Mark D. Chapman, ‘Anglo-Catholics and the Myths of Episcopacy’, in James Rigney with Mark D. Chapman (eds), *Women as Bishops* (Affirming Catholicism; London: Mowbray, 2008), 103–120: 101–102.

<sup>43</sup> See ‘Canons of the Church of England’, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/canons-church-england/canons-website-edition> (accessed 05.07.2023), § C18; ‘Bisschoppelijk Bureau, *Statuut* (as note 22), § 79.3. Cf. Paul Avis, *Becoming a Bishop: A Theological Handbook of Episcopal Ministry* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Utrecht has no authority in the bishopric of Haarlem except in the case of neglect in respect of a matter specified in the Statute,<sup>44</sup> the archbishop of a province of the Church of England, as “superintendent of all ecclesiastical matters therein,” has “throughout his province at all times metropolitan jurisdiction,” including the possibility of acting as Ordinary.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, “strictly speaking all the bishops of a province are suffragans or helpers to the archbishop.”<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, the diocesan may delegate episcopal powers ‘horizontally’ to a suffragan bishop, who exercises specified forms of jurisdiction, either separately or jointly (likewise ‘assistant’ and ‘auxiliary’ bishops). Where the diocese is divided into ‘episcopal areas,’ the functions that the suffragan is to discharge are defined in a way that binds the diocesan and his or her successors. Nonetheless, delegation does not divest the diocesan of the right to perform any of the delegated episcopal functions. The Church of England also operates forms of supra-diocesan episcopal offices in the form of regional bishops and provincial episcopal visitors (so-called ‘flying bishops’). In both cases, the episcopal functions are delegated by the relevant diocesans.<sup>47</sup> Several factors brought about these delegated forms of episcopal oversight: the increasing burden of office, the fear that smaller dioceses would multiply bureaucracy, and debates surrounding the ordination of women to the priesthood (and subsequently the episcopate).<sup>48</sup>

One might argue as David Hamid, the suffragan to the Diocese in Europe, has done, that suffragan bishops do not violate the mono-episcopacy

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<sup>44</sup> Bisschoppelijk Bureau, *Statuut* (as note 22), § 77.3.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Canons of the Church of England’ (as note 43), § C17.1. See further Colin Podmore, ‘Collegiality, Conciliarity and Primacy: An Anglican Perspective’, in: von Arx/Avis/Ploeger (eds), *Towards Further Convergence* (as note 30), 64–66; Norman Doe, *The Legal Framework of the Church of England: A Critical Study in a Comparative Context* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 122 (on visitations).

<sup>46</sup> Quintin Hogg et al. (ed.), *Halsbury’s Laws of England*, 14, *Ecclesiastical Law* (London: Butterworths, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1975), § 493.

<sup>47</sup> On the episcopal offices and their legal basis, see Doe, *The Legal Framework of the Church of England* (as note 45), 161–82. On delegation, see David Hay et al. (eds), *Halsbury’s Laws of England*, 34, *Ecclesiastical Law* (London: LexisNexis, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2011), § 195, 447. See also the House of Bishops’ 2014 *Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests*, which envisages their continued operation (see § 30). <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/gs-misc-1076-women-in-the-episcopate.pdf> (accessed 10.11.2023).

<sup>48</sup> See *Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993 (No. 2)*, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1993/2/enacted> (accessed 10.11.2023).

principle of the early Church because the diocesan remains the jurisdictional authority in each diocese.<sup>49</sup> But the roots of the problem go deeper, for an important strand in the Church of England's theology of the episcopate distinguishes the ministry of oversight (*episcopate*) from the office of bishop. In the Church's current thinking, an individual exercises ministry of oversight only "in relation to the community and with the support of the community".<sup>50</sup> The bishop serves as the focal point for the corporate action of the community, who together constitute the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12). Episcopal office is "in no sense a personal *possession*";<sup>51</sup> apostolic succession is therefore not only a matter of a succession of individuals, but "an unbroken continuity of communities".<sup>52</sup> This latter point in particular was key to the successful development of the Porvoo Communion.<sup>53</sup>

This line of thinking stems from the recognition that *episcopate* has and continues to be shared with others (presbyters, deacons, and in some cases, non-ordained ministers). The report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate, *Episcopal Ministry*, makes attempts to ground this theology of the episcopate in a vision of the Church as *koinonia*, reflecting the interrelationship of the Persons of the Trinity (§ 339). Nonetheless, it is hard to escape the feeling that while the window dressing has been changed, inside the shop the same essentially *functional* approach of the Elizabethan period is still to be found. Old Catholics find such an approach hard to accept.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> David Hamid, 'From Anomaly to Opportunity: Diaspora and National Churches with a Common Mission', *IKZ* 102 (2011), 127–39: 134. Cf. canon viii of the council of Nicaea, which envisages the possibility that a bishop who belonged to the so-called Cathari and who comes over to the Catholic and Apostolic Church shall be honoured with the title "bishop", without exercising any episcopal jurisdiction.

<sup>50</sup> Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate, *Episcopal Ministry* (London: Church House, 1990), § 355.

<sup>51</sup> Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate, *Episcopal Ministry* (as note 50), § 357.

<sup>52</sup> Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate, *Episcopal Ministry* (as note 50), § 367.

<sup>53</sup> See The Porvoo Statement, [http://www.porvoocommunion.org/porvoo\\_communion/statement/the-statement-in-english/#4](http://www.porvoocommunion.org/porvoo_communion/statement/the-statement-in-english/#4) (accessed 6.8.2015), chapter IV. Cf. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (s.l.: s.n., Faith and Order Paper No. 214, 1982), § 19–33 (esp. § 26).

<sup>54</sup> See Esser, 'Episcopacy' (as note 30), 76–77.



## 5. Mission

What does disagreement about ecclesiology have to do with mission? Aside from the practical barriers described above, the answer lies in the fact that mission and ecclesiology are intrinsically linked: how one thinks ‘mission’ should be organised will depend in part on how one thinks the Church ought to be organised. In the case of Anglican-Old Catholic relations, one sees this dynamic at work when one critically considers the understanding of ‘mission’ laid out in 2011 in ‘Belonging together in Europe’.

AOCICC’s report articulates a three-fold understanding of mission derived from the description of the Christian community in Acts 2.42–47: “the proclamation of the Gospel occurs not only in specific acts of witness (*martyria*), but also in the worshipping life of the congregation as praise is offered back to God (*leitourgia*), and in the service the Church offers to the world (*diakonia*) in fulfilment of its calling to exemplify the love of Christ”.<sup>55</sup> The three ‘marks’ that define this description of mission (that is, *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*) are also enshrined in the preamble to the Statute of the Old Catholic Bishops United in the Union of Utrecht, which lays out the Union’s ecclesiological foundations. They are very ‘Old Catholic’ marks of mission grounded in Old Catholic ecclesiology, since it is the local church (that is, a diocese) whose members are “called, authorised, and sanctified (...) to live a multifaceted common life in *martyria*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*” (§ A 3.3).

This is not problematic *per se* but does it chime with Anglican understandings of mission? While *martyria* and *diakonia* fit comfortably with *The Five Marks of Mission*, which now largely shape the Church of England’s understanding and approach to mission,<sup>56</sup> how they correspond to *leitourgia* is less evident. The Five Marks are: to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptise and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> AOCICC, ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (as note 8), 147.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Archbishop’s Council and The National Society, *Going for Growth* ([https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2010\\_going\\_for\\_growth\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2010_going_for_growth_web_final.pdf) [accessed 10.11.2023]), § 4.1.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx> (accessed 04.07.2023).

One might argue that collective worship, praise, celebration of the Eucharist, and so on, may be implicit in the first and second marks, but if one examines Church of England documents in which the Five Marks are unpacked,<sup>58</sup> such an understanding is not made explicit. One may well argue that this is a deficiency in the Five Marks,<sup>59</sup> but it is a deficiency that is deeply embedded and will shape the way local Church of England clergy in the Netherlands approach mission.

The importance of this for the future common mission of Anglicans and Old Catholics lies in the intrinsic link between mission and ecclesiology. Whereas arguably any Christian could carry out mission as the Five Marks define it, *leitourgia*, understood as “the coming together of the faithful as a congregation to give praise and glory to God through hearing the Holy Scriptures, through praying to God, and through celebrating the Eucharist,”<sup>60</sup> presupposes a Church rightly ordered. This is a matter of ecclesiology. This becomes problematic when we set Old Catholic ecclesiology against recent thinking on mission in the Church of England: reflecting on what effective mission might look like in a setting in which many people’s primary relationships are no longer determined by geography has led to a more relaxed approach to geographical structures within the Church of England. *Mission-Shaped Church*, a report by the Church of England evaluating church planting and so-called fresh expressions of church, went so far as to suggest that “existing ecclesiastical legal boundaries should be seen as permeable” on the grounds that mission needs to engage with people “in the way they live their lives in a mixture of networks and localities”.<sup>61</sup> Such a position is hard to reconcile with the Old Catholic understanding of the ‘local church’.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, current Anglican practice in the Netherlands suggests that the Diocese in Europe sees the missionary imperative as trumping the (perceived) infringement of territorially-bound jurisdictions.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., Archbishop’s Council and The National Society, *Going for Growth* (as note 56).

<sup>59</sup> See Paul Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), especially his comments on p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> AOCICC, ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (as note 8), 147.

<sup>61</sup> The Church of England, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), 139.

<sup>62</sup> See further the comments of Berlis, ‘Aneinander wachsen’ (as note 3), 181–182.



## 6. Moving towards resolution

Formal collaborations are possible (e.g. Schiphol) and greater involvement of the laity will help ensure the sustainability of local initiatives.<sup>63</sup> Other small initiatives such as the production of bilingual service books may also stimulate local partnerships. But joint mission needs to be supported structurally. For this to happen more work is required at the highest level to reach resolution on the matter of overlapping jurisdictions. Ecclesiology is to mission what fuel is to an engine: unless you put them together, no one goes anywhere.

The Old Catholic Church and the Church of England fundamentally *do not* share the same understanding of what it means to be a local catholic church. The above evidence suggests that, despite its claim to the contrary, the position on ecclesiology articulated in ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (§16, 17) does not do full justice to the ecclesiology of the Church of England *as it is embodied in its legal structures, history, liturgy, and internal discussions*. The Church of England’s ecclesiology does not compel it to seek organisational unity (and neither does the Bonn Agreement for that matter<sup>64</sup>). I would therefore suggest that a clearer statement on where exactly the two churches disagree on this point is needed if confusion is to be avoided.<sup>65</sup>

For the wider perspective of the Anglican Communion, the ‘official’ position is that overlapping jurisdictions are incompatible with the ideal of full visible unity.<sup>66</sup> This is the approach maintained in ecumenical dia-

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<sup>63</sup> See ‘Press Release by the 29th International Old Catholic Congress, Freiburg (Germany)’, *IKZ* 96 (2006), 236–38.

<sup>64</sup> Reflecting on the Bonn Agreement, the former Archbishop of Utrecht, Andreas Rinkel wrote: “Es ist keine organische ‘unio’ zustandegekommen; *sie ist auch nicht bezweckt*.” My italics. Rinkel, ‘Interkommunion’ (as note 37), 212.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, Vercammen, ‘Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken’ (as note 24), takes ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (as note 8) at its word.

<sup>66</sup> *The Vision Before Us*, 44–49; Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1988* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2005), resolution 4; Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1988* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2005), resolutions IV4 and V6. See also the discussion in Vercammen, ‘Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken’ (as note 24) and Methuen, ‘A View from Without’ (as note 16), 150–152.

logues<sup>67</sup> and internal discussions.<sup>68</sup> Yet, as the responses to the Windsor Report (2004) highlighted, overlapping jurisdictions have historically been tolerated on the grounds of differing theology, politics, and racial or national identity.<sup>69</sup> Sometimes these have been divisive – when the Archbishop of Uganda claimed jurisdiction over parishes within the boundaries of The Episcopal Church (USA) following the consecration of Gene Robinson, for example<sup>70</sup> – while others see such overlaps positively as providing for “differing, but not competing, expressions of the church”.<sup>71</sup>

On the other side, Old Catholics might consider whether they really *want* oversight of Church of England churches in the Netherlands, given the differences between the two churches on key issues such as human sexuality and churchmanship. Would the Old Catholic bishops commit to “sustaining diversity” and “making it possible” for those of differing conviction on the ordination of women “to flourish,” as the House of Bishops of the Church of England has done (setting aside the question of how successful or otherwise the Church of England has been at this)?<sup>72</sup> Were

<sup>67</sup> E.g., Anglican-Lutheran International Working Group, *Growth in Communion*, 2002, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/102187/growthincommunion.pdf> (accessed 31.07.2015), § 8, 54, 152.

<sup>68</sup> E.g., Anglican Consultative Council, *Minutes of a Standing Committee meeting held at St Andrew's House, London, 6 to 9 May 2014*, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/104504/Minutes-of-Standing-Committee-Meeting-May-2014.pdf> (accessed 06.08.2015), § 15.1.

<sup>69</sup> See The Bishops of Congo, Rwanda, Central Africa, Kenya and South East Asia, ‘Joint response to the Windsor Report 2004’, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/100351/Windsor-Report-Reception-Process.pdf> (accessed 31.08.2015).

<sup>70</sup> Lambeth Commission, *The Windsor Report 2004: Reception Reference Group, Report on Responses*, Section C, ‘On the Election of Bishops’, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/100351/Windsor-Report-Reception-Process.pdf> (accessed 04.12.2022).

<sup>71</sup> Alyson Barnett-Cowan, written contribution to The Lambeth Conference 2008 Self Select Session on “Full Communion” Agreements: Mutual Accountability and Difference, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/107098/IASCER-Resolutions-arising-from-the-2008-meeting.pdf> (accessed 31.07.2015). This position is hinted at in the 1908 Lambeth Conference’s response to attempts to set up an Old Catholic Church in England; it implies that such a scheme, which would have brought about overlapping jurisdictions in England, might have been admissible had there been “difference of language or nationality”, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1908/resolution-69.aspx> (accessed 31.07.2015).

<sup>72</sup> House of Bishops’ *Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests* (as note 47), § 14.

jurisdiction of Church of England chaplaincies transferred, those opposed to the ordination of women would lose the protections currently afforded to them. Though the ordination of women was clearly not in view at that time, the wording of the third clause of the Bonn Agreement was intended to avoid infringing just these sorts of protections.<sup>73</sup> Again the issue is one of polity. The Old Catholics may well be open in principle to other forms of being Christian,<sup>74</sup> but could they accommodate the kind of diversity that the Church of England accepts without jeopardising the integrity of their own ecclesiology, as Alternative Episcopal Oversight surely would, or precipitating schism?

Similarly, Old Catholics may wish to reflect further on what their own polity implies about their operative – as opposed to espoused – ecclesiology. A bishop of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, for example, may exercise “his jurisdiction over Old Catholic mission areas (*missiegebieden*) and over foreign Old Catholic parishes and groupings that are not organised into a diocese”.<sup>75</sup> The bishop of Haarlem, for example, exercised episcopal oversight of the Old Catholic parishes of Denmark and Sweden, which did not constitute or belong to a diocese. Similarly, one might ask whether the appointment of a bishop to a diocese that had no parishes (namely, Deventer)<sup>76</sup> in order to ensure apostolic succession manifests in organisational terms an ecclesiology that defines the local church as “fellowship and communion of people (...) constituted as a unity in a given place around a bishop”<sup>77</sup> (there must both be a bishop *and a fellowship*). Though both cases may have been regarded as temporary anomalous expedients, in both cases context was nonetheless allowed to shape ecclesial reality.

This raises the question of the extent to which the missionary context should shape ecclesiological thinking. On this point recent thinking in the

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<sup>73</sup> Geoffrey Rowell, ‘Opening Address: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Anglican-Old Catholic Communion’, *IKZ* 103 (2012) 6–15: 10.

<sup>74</sup> Vercammen, ‘Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken’ (as note 24), 74.

<sup>75</sup> Bisschoppelijk Bureau, *Statuut* (as note 22), § 72.4 (“Een bisschop kan zijn jurisdictie tevens uitoefenen over oud-katholieke missiegebieden en over buitenlandse oud-katholieke parochies en groeperingen die niet zijn georganiseerd in een bisdom”). Cf. von Arx/Weyermann (eds), *Statute* (as note 29), B 3i.

<sup>76</sup> See Wietse van der Velde, ‘Hoe werkt de kerk?’, in: Angela Berlis et al., *De Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland: Leer en Leven* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2000), 109–23: 115.

<sup>77</sup> Arx/Weyermann (eds), *Statute* (as note 29), A 3.1.

Church of England on church plants and fresh expressions may be helpful. An ecclesiology wedded to territory seems increasingly *passé* in a European context marked by mobility. While other areas of Old Catholic theology have taken on board the changing cultural context (most evident in the church's stance on homosexuality), it is less evident that this has been the case in respect of its ecclesiology. Joris Vercammen, former Archbishop of Utrecht (r. 2000–2020) has criticised the culturally bound nature of many Anglican chaplaincies – their 'Englishness' – on the grounds that it is incompatible with catholicity.<sup>78</sup> But in a culture of consumerism shaped more by identity than place, from the point of view of mission such culturally marked expression of church may be exactly what the Gospel requires in order to bring in and retain the 'un-churched'. The underlying question here is: when they come into conflict, which should have priority, missionary efficacy or ecclesial ideals? Should the state of overlapping jurisdictions be regarded as a 'bearable anomaly' because it has a missionary value (a position hinted at in David Hamid's comments<sup>79</sup>)?

Two realities impinge on the discussion of what steps might next be taken. First, the Anglican Communion itself has for well over a century failed to resolve the four overlapping Anglican jurisdictions on the Continent (Church of England, Convocation of American Churches, Lusitanian Church in Portugal, Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church), though attempts have been made. Secondly, genuinely *shared* episcopal oversight is problematic. One bishop cannot serve two polities, as became clear in the discussion of a shared appointment to the see of Deventer.<sup>80</sup>

These realities hardly give us cause for optimism that the issue will be resolved in a complete and final way – that is, in a way that will satisfy both parties theologically – any time soon. Indeed, it is hard to see either Church shifting significantly on the fundamental theological issues discussed above, especially those relating to ecclesiology. Certainly, from an Old Catholic perspective the ideal solution would be some sort of transfer of congregations resulting in contiguous but not overlapping jurisdictions. But if that is not going to happen – and given what I have outlined above, I doubt it will –, then we must be pragmatic and ask instead, what workable solutions can be found to make the situation better? If overlapping jurisdictions are here to stay for the foreseeable future, pragmatic ways must

<sup>78</sup> Vercammen, 'Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken' (as note 24), 72–74.

<sup>79</sup> Hamid, 'From Anomaly to Opportunity' (as note 49), 135.

<sup>80</sup> Vercammen, 'Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken' (as note 24), 76–77.

be found to minimise any negative effects arising from this situation. Clarifying jurisdictional ambiguity for local clergy (through the production of a set of guidelines, for example) should be a priority. It may be that a set of shared statutory instruments will need to be introduced to achieve greater jurisdictional clarity, something hinted at in ‘Belonging together in Europe’.<sup>81</sup> I agree entirely with the former Archbishop of Utrecht, Joris Vercammen, that we now need to look to those with the relevant expertise in ecclesiastical law to bring forward a range of possible working solutions for discussion.<sup>82</sup> It is possible that some of these steps were set out in the unpublished appendix to ‘Belonging together in Europe’, mentioned above.<sup>83</sup> It is important to stress, however, that the evaluation of such a proposal must take place in light of the realities of the distinct theological positions, specifically a recognition that overlapping jurisdictions is much more of a problem *theologically* for the Old Catholic Church than it is for the Church of England.

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### *Zusammenfassung*

Die *full communion* zwischen der Anglikanischen Kirchengemeinschaft und den Altkatholischen Kirchen der Utrechter Union ist Anlass zur Freude. Um zu umfassender, sichtbarer Einheit zu gelangen, ist es jedoch erforderlich, die Faktoren,

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<sup>81</sup> AOCICC, ‘Belonging together in Europe’ (as note 8), Preface.

<sup>82</sup> Vercammen, ‘Anglicanen en Oud-Katholieken’ (as note 24), 78.

<sup>83</sup> According to AOCICC, *Anglicans and Old Catholics Serving in Europe* (as note 17), this “outlined the questions that would have to be faced if the issue of parallel jurisdictions were decisively addressed”, 31.

die ihre praktische Umsetzung hemmen, genauer zu bedenken. Im Beitrag wird die These vertreten, dass bedeutsame ekklesiologische Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Kirchengemeinschaften bisher noch nicht ausreichend wahrgenommen wurden. Die jeweilige Ekklesiologie und ihre Umsetzung in der Praxis werden anhand von offiziellen Dokumenten (insbesondere kirchenrechtlicher Art) näher betrachtet. Am Ende werden Vorschläge für die weitere Reflexion gemacht.

*Keywords – Schlüsselwörter*

Bonn Agreement – Church of England – Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands – Overlapping Jurisdictions – Ecclesiology – Mission