

# Intercommunion between the Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church : a survey of its development

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## **Intercommunion between the Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church: A Survey of its Development**

The Lambeth Conference of 1930, responding to the increasing contact and discussion between Anglicans and Old Catholics, called for the establishment of a Joint Doctrinal Commission to examine the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches. This commission, appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of Utrecht, met in Bonn, Germany, on July 2, 1931, and there issued a statement enunciating the terms upon which intercommunion might be established between the two communions. This succinct statement, known as the Bonn Agreement, consisted of three points:

- (1) Each Communion recognizes the catholicity and independence of the other and maintains its own.
- (2) Each Communion agrees to admit members of the other Communion to participate in the Sacraments.
- (3) 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.<sup>1</sup>

On September 7 of that same year, the International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops, meeting in Synod in Vienna, "discussed the Report of the Conference of the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches held at Bonn on Thursday July 2, 1931," with particular attention to the three resolutions pertaining to intercommunion. The following resolutions were adopted by the Synod:

- (1) The Synod assembled in Vienna on September 7, 1931, of the Old Catholic Bishops united in the Union of Utrecht, on the basis of the recognition of the validity of Anglican Ordinations, agrees to intercommunion with the Anglican Communion.
- (2) Intercommunion consists in the reciprocal admittance of the members of the two Communions to the Sacraments.
- (3) Intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical

<sup>1</sup> G. K. A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity*, third series, 1930–48 (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 60.

practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.<sup>2</sup>

While these two statements are similar in many respects, there are some notable differences in expression. The Vienna Statement does not repeat point one of the Bonn Agreement, but simply acknowledges Old Catholic recognition of the validity of Anglican orders (formally accepted by the Dutch Old Catholics only in 1925) and, upon that basis, ratifies intercommunion with the Anglicans. In addition, the Bonn Agreement only states what intercommunion is not, while the Vienna Statement (in its point two) provides a limited definition of intercommunion.

While the Polish National Catholic Church was not represented at the Bonn Conference (nor, indeed, was the Episcopal Church), two of its bishops (Bishop Vladimir Gawrychowski of Chicopee, Massachusetts, and Bishop John Jasinski of Buffalo) did attend the Old Catholic Episcopal Synod in 1931 which approved intercommunion with the Anglicans. Indeed, the 1943 General Convention of the Episcopal Church noted that these two bishops were present at the Vienna Synod and that they cast "their votes unanimously with the rest of that Synod in approval of the terms of intercommunion with the Anglican Church."<sup>3</sup>

While the Vienna Statement is understood as expressing formal ratification of intercommunion by the Old Catholics, this new relationship needed ratification by the Church of England to become effective. On January 20–22, 1932, the Convocations of Canterbury and York approved intercommunion between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Churches on the basis of the Bonn Agreement.<sup>4</sup> As a result of the approval of the Bonn Agreement by the Church of England, intercommunion between that body and the Old Catholic Churches became a reality. Anglicans and Old Catholics communicated at each other's altars, and this was complemented by mutual assistance in the consecration of bishops. In addition, Old Catholic

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.61. For the German text see "Dokumente zu den Unionsverhandlungen der anglikanischen und altkatholischen Kirche," *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 21 (July-September, 1931); 161–162.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Held in Cleveland, Ohio, From October Second to October Eleventh, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1943*, p.25.

<sup>4</sup> Bell, p.61. See also H. Riley and R.J. Graham, eds., *Acts of the Convocations of Canterbury and York* (London: S.P.C.K., 1971), p.176.

priests celebrated Mass in Anglican churches using Anglican liturgies while Anglican priests, employing an Old Catholic rite, celebrated the Eucharist in Old Catholic parishes. Similarly, priests celebrated the Eucharist, using their own rites, in parishes of the other communion.<sup>5</sup>

Other provinces of the Anglican Communion, following the example of the Church of England, also established intercommunion with the Old Catholic Churches, generally employing the terms of the Bonn Agreement. The first to do so was the Episcopal Church in Scotland which established intercommunion with the Old Catholics in 1932.<sup>6</sup>

Our particular focus, of course, is the North American situation and the response of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada to intercommunion with the Old Catholics. On April 28, 1932, at a special meeting of the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, That the House of Bishops receives with great satisfaction the communication to the Presiding Bishop from the Archbishop of Canterbury informing us of the establishment of Intercommunion between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Churches.

Resolved, That the House approves fully the terms of Intercommunion as agreed upon between the representatives of the Old Catholic Churches and the Churches of the Anglican Communion at a Conference held at Bonn on July 2, 1931.

Resolved, That this matter be presented to the next meeting of the General Convention for its consideration and action.<sup>7</sup>

The 1934 General Convention of the Episcopal Church acted upon this mandate and adopted the following resolution:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the terms of Intercommunion drawn up by the Joint Commission of Anglicans and Old Catholics we hereby accept and ratify them. Furthermore, we agree to the establishment of Intercommunion between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Old Catholics of the Utrecht Convention on these terms.<sup>8</sup>

The 1940 General Convention of the Episcopal Church reiterated that church's approbation of the Bonn Agreement. The following resolution was proposed to that convention:

<sup>5</sup> C. B. Moss, *The Old Catholic Movement: Its Origins and History* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), pp. 348–351.

<sup>6</sup> Bell, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, From October Tenth to October Twenty-third, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1934*, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.



Resolved, The House of Deputies concurring, that this General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church approves the following statements agreed on between the representatives of the Old Catholic Churches and the Churches of the Anglican Communion at a Conference held at Bonn, on July 2, 1931:

[here follow the three points of the Bonn Agreement]

And on these terms the General Convention agrees to the establishment of intercommunion between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Old Catholic Churches in Europe which are in communion with the See of Utrecht.<sup>9</sup>

However, the Rev. Dr. Davidson of Los Angeles, a member of the House of Deputies, offered to amend this resolution by deleting the words "in Europe" in the last sentence. This amendment was accepted by the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies, and the resolution, as amended, was adopted by Convention.<sup>10</sup>

In 1943 the General Convention of the Episcopal Church again addressed the issue of that church's relationship with the Old Catholic Churches. The Episcopal Church's "Advisory Committee on Ecclesiastical Relations on the Polish National Catholic Church" reported to the 1943 General Convention that the Polish National Catholic Church was the only church in the United States in communion with the See of Utrecht and the only Old Catholic body in the United States recognized by the Old Catholic Synod of Europe.<sup>11</sup> The committee also noted that the resolutions adopted by the General Conventions of 1934 and 1940 "have definitely approved of intercommunion between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church."<sup>12</sup> The committee report then elucidated the difficulties remaining to a formalization of this new relationship.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Held in Kansas City, Missouri, From October Ninth to October Nineteenth, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1940*, pp. 278–279.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279–280.

<sup>11</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church 1943*, p. 25. This committee was established by action of the House of Bishops at their special meeting in February, 1942, in Jacksonville, Florida. The committee consisted of the bishops who were members of the Commission on Ecclesiastical Relations.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

The next step to complete formal intercommunion would be action by the Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church similar to that already taken by the Episcopal Church. It appears that this was intended but has not yet been done due to postponement of such a Synod. ...

Formal ratification of intercommunion between our two Churches now waits on the action of the Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church.<sup>13</sup>

However, a favorable response on intercommunion with the Episcopal Church was issued by the Polish National Catholic Church three years later. The Seventh General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church, meeting in Scranton in October, 1946, voted unanimously in favor of intercommunion with the Church of England and the Episcopal Church. In his letter to Bishop Henry Tucker, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Bishop Francis Hodur, Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church, delineated the Synod's actions in this area.

...the Synod Body accepted unanimously and with great enthusiasm the principle of intercommunion between the Polish National Catholic Church of America and Poland with the Anglican and Episcopal Churches, based on the foundation on intercommunion between the Anglican, Episcopal, and Old Catholic Churches in 1931 at Bonn, Germany. The foundation of this intercommunion is based on the three cardinal points found in *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Dogmatic Theology* by Claude Beaufort Moss, D.D., and are as follows:

[Here follow the three points of the Bonn Agreement]

These three principles and conditions were read to the Synod Body by the secretary, the Rev. T. Zielinski, and were explained fully by the Bishops. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously accepted by the 350 clergy and lay delegates as binding both the clergy men and faithful of the Polish National Catholic Church.<sup>14</sup>

With ratification of intercommunion – and that based upon the three points of the Bonn Agreement – by the Polish National Catholic Church, that body and the Episcopal Church formulated strategies and plans to bring the two churches into a closer relationship whose foundation and buttress would be the sharing of the sacramental life. Both churches appointed intercommunion committees whose purpose was to meet together on a regular basis in order to promote Christian fellowship between the two churches, to guide the new relationship,

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Polish Catholics: Intercommunion Voted by Unanimous Agreement," *The Living Church* 113 (November 3, 1946); 7.

and to answer questions arising from this new arrangement. The first joint meeting of the two committees was held in Albany, New York, on June 27, 1947, and it was agreed that the report of this initial meeting was to be in Polish and English. This meeting, like the ones which followed it, discussed theological, pastoral, and administrative matters issuing from this new fellowship. The participants in this meeting agreed that the Bonn Agreement was "the basis on which both Churches have entered into the new relationship."<sup>15</sup> The participants also subscribed to the following:

The relationship between the Churches, it was agreed, is one of intercommunion; that is, sacramental communion between two autonomous Churches, each respecting the independence and jurisdiction of the other, and avoiding any actions that would tend to weaken the faith or loyalty of those in its sister Church, while seeking to cultivate all suitable means for increasing mutual acquaintance and fellowship.<sup>16</sup>

This joint meeting also reviewed the statement prepared by the Intercommunion Commission of the Polish National Catholic Church, accepted it as expressing the mind of both committees, and appended it to its own report. This statement lauded the closer relation between the two churches but, employing a note of restraint, advocated caution in its full implementation and realization.

In this closer relationship of the Polish National Catholic Church to the Episcopal Church and vice versa, we feel that it is necessary to proceed gradually and slowly, and that the clergy of both Churches should strive for a full understanding of the principles and rules of intercommunion, and through this understanding bring to both Churches a positive benefit and a firm faith in the Christian Church.<sup>17</sup>

The second joint meeting of the two intercommunion committees, held in Buffalo in January, 1948, addressed practical questions arising from the new relationship and clarified an ambiguous point from the

<sup>15</sup> Protestant Episcopal Church, Advisory Council on Ecclesiastical Relations, *Intercommunion between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church: Being the Report of the Joint Meeting between the Committees Appointed by the Presiding Bishops of the Two Churches, Held in the Diocesan House, Albany, New York, on June 27, 1947* (New York: Advisory Council on Ecclesiastical Relations, 1947), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 7. See also "Interchurch: Episcopal and Polish Catholic Delegation on Intercommunion," *The Living Church* 115 (August 10, 1947); 7-8.

statement of the Intercommunion Commission of the Polish National Catholic Church which, as already indicated, had been accepted at the initial meeting: at this second meeting it was agreed that occasional receiving of Holy Communion in either church by a member in good standing of the other church might be permitted as a token of intercommunion.<sup>18</sup> This same joint meeting also considered the issue of the two churches' different criteria for reception of Holy Communion. It was noted that Polish National Catholics ordinarily attended a special service of confession prior to receiving Holy Communion. Would this prove to be an impediment to members of that church who desired to communicate at an Anglican celebration of the Holy Eucharist?

It was pointed out that in the Anglican rite the confession forms an integral part of every celebration, being placed just before the Sanctus and Prayer of Consecration, rather than in a separate service preceding the celebration. The members of the Polish National Catholic Committee agreed that this sufficiently met their Church's requirement.<sup>19</sup>

The third joint meeting of the two intercommunion committees (held in Pittsburgh on October 27, 1948) provided instruction on the reception of holy communion at those celebrations of the Eucharist in which the faithful of one body were to communicate as a group at the rite of the other. (It was understood in the instruction that these celebrations were to be of an occasional nature, arranged for increasing mutual acquaintance or for celebrating a special commemoration in either church.) This instruction stressed that Polish National Catholics, when communicating at an Episcopal parish, were to be informed that confession is an integral part of the Eucharistic liturgy and that communion was administered in both kinds. However, Polish National Catholics were instructed to receive communion on the tongue, thereby conforming to the practice and discipline of their own church. When receiving as a group in the Polish National Catholic Church, members of the Episcopal Church were to be instructed that confession and fasting were prerequisites to reception of Holy Communion

<sup>18</sup> Protestant Episcopal Church, Advisory Council on Ecclesiastical Relations, *Second Joint Meeting: Intercommunion Committees of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.*, Buffalo, New York, Polish National Catholic Cathedral, January 14, 1948 (New York: Advisory Council on Ecclesiastical Relations, 1948), pp. 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

in the Polish National Catholic Church. It was noted that this confession could be performed in a private or general fashion with English as the language. Finally, Episcopalians were reminded that Holy Communion would be administered to them under one kind only.<sup>20</sup>

While reception of holy communion by members of one church at the altars of the other was somewhat circumscribed by these regulations, the new relationship of intercommunion proceeded with great vigor on other levels. Clergy of the Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church engaged in the mutual consecration of bishops. Bishop John Jasinski, for example, participated in the consecration of the Rt. Rev. Lauriston Scaife as the Episcopal Bishop of Western New York in 1948. On September 2, 1954, Bishop Scaife and Archbishop Rinkel joined Prime Bishop Leon Grochowski of the Polish National Catholic Church in the consecration of Bishops Kardas and Zielinski at the Polish National Catholic Cathedral in Buffalo. At this service the words of consecration were pronounced in Polish by Bishop Grochowski, and then repeated in English and Latin by Bishop Scaife and Archbishop Rinkel respectively.<sup>21</sup> In addition to these important contacts, each church commissioned official representatives to the other's synods or conventions (both national and diocesan); priests of one church spoke at clergy conferences or parishes of the other church; bishops of one church assisted in the ordination of priests in the other; and Episcopal college chaplains were authorized to provide pastoral care for Polish National Catholic students in their academic communities. Also, the early 1950s witnessed the publication of an English translation of the Ordinary of the Mass according to the Polish National Catholic rite, a book whose purpose, among others, was to assist Episcopalians in following the Polish National Catholic liturgy which, at that time, was celebrated solely in the Polish tongue.

The fifth joint meeting of the two intercommunion committees (held in Greenwich, Connecticut, on November 14–15, 1951) defined "intercelebration" as "a celebration of Mass or Holy Communion by a

<sup>20</sup> Committees on Intercommunion of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Third Joint Meeting, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 27, 1948, Appendix: Instruction to Mixed Congregations, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Committees on Intercommunion of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Seventh Joint Meeting, Buffalo, New York, June 7, 1955, p.2.



bishop or priest of one Church, according to his Church's rite, at an altar of and before a congregation of the other Church."<sup>22</sup> A notable example of this was the Mass celebrated according to the Polish National Catholic rite by Bishop Joseph Soltysiak at Emmanuel Church in Boston when the General Convention of the Episcopal Church met in that city in 1952. The sixth joint meeting of the intercommunion committees (held in Scranton on November 20, 1952) praised this celebration but recommended that such inter-celebration be limited to important official occasions; it further advised that "in local parishes a priest of one Church might be invited to serve as deacon or sub-deacon at a Mass celebrated in a parish of the other Church according to its rite."<sup>23</sup>

However, the seventh joint meeting of the intercommunion committees (held on June 7, 1955, in Buffalo) reversed the recommendations of the previous meeting and ruled that the definition of inter-celebration proposed earlier was, in fact, erroneous. This meeting noted that inter-celebration really meant "the celebration by a priest of one Church at the altar of the other Church and using the liturgy of the other Church."<sup>24</sup> This same meeting also indicated that approval of such a practice had not been given, or even considered, by any of the joint meetings. The following regulations were then adopted as defining permitted practices:

Celebrations of Holy Communion or Holy Mass in any parish church must be, as canon law provides, according to the liturgy of that Church and by a priest or Bishop of that Church.

A priest of either Church may invite a priest of the other Church to assist at a celebration.

On special occasions, a Bishop may authorize a celebration at an altar in his diocese by a Bishop or priest of the other Church according to the liturgy of the other Church.<sup>25</sup>

The eighth joint meeting of the intercommunion committees (held in Scranton on November 20, 1956) expanded these regulations to include all sacramental ministrations. In addition, it also significantly

<sup>22</sup> Committees on Intercommunion of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Fifth Joint Meeting, Greenwich, Connecticut, November 14-15, 1951, p.3.

<sup>23</sup> Committees on Intercommunion of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Sixth Joint Meeting, Scranton, Pennsylvania, November 20, 1952, p.2.

<sup>24</sup> Committees on Intercommunion, Seventh Joint Meeting, p.4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



modified the third regulation: "On special occasions, or in emergencies, a Bishop may authorize in his diocese a Bishop or priest of the other Church to administer any Sacrament according to the rite and liturgy of either Church."<sup>26</sup> This modification (which approved, in retrospect, Bishop Soltysiak's celebration at the 1952 General Convention) received practical application on June 29, 1958, when Bishop Thaddeus Zielinski, acting for Bishop Scaife who was attending the Lambeth Conference in London, ordained a priest and five deacons for the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York employing the ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church.<sup>27</sup>

While the Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church were expanding their relationship and defining problematic elements in it, the Anglican Church of Canada initiated contact with the Polish National Catholic Church in the expectation of establishing intercommunion with it and, thereby, expanding its ecumenical outreach to other Christian bodies in the Dominion of Canada. As early as 1934, the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada had adopted a resolution listing the three points of the Bonn Agreement and approving the same. This resolution concluded that the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada agreed to the establishment of intercommunion between that church and the Old Catholics on the terms of the Bonn Agreement.<sup>28</sup> On September 6, 1955, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada resolved unanimously:

That this General Synod agrees to the establishment of intercommunion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Polish National Catholic Church of America, and that this General Synod appoint a Committee on Intercommunion to confer with a similar committee of the Polish National Catholic Church on questions arising from this new relationship as soon as it is formally acknowledged by the Polish National Catholic Church of America.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Committees on Intercommunion of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Eighth Joint Meeting, Scranton, Pennsylvania, November 20, 1956, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Committees on Intercommunion of the Polish National Catholic Church and of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Minutes of the Tenth Joint Meeting, Toronto, Ontario, November 9-10, 1958, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *The General Synod of the Church of England in Canada, Journal of Proceedings of the Thirteenth Session Held in the City of Montreal, from September 12th to September 21st, inclusive, in the Year of our Lord 1934*, p. 164.

<sup>29</sup> *The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, Journal of Proceedings of the Nineteenth Session Held in the City of Edmonton, Alberta, from August 30th to September 8th, in the Year of our Lord 1955*, p. 61.

The Polish National Catholic Church responded favorably to this initiative from the Anglican Church of Canada. On December 14, 1955, the Supreme Council of the Polish National Catholic Church agreed to intercommunion with the Canadian church. This was duly ratified by the Tenth General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church meeting in Chicago in July, 1958, which unanimously declared that the mind and will of that church was to enter into intercommunion with the Anglican Church of Canada. At the service commemorating the Public Recognition of the State of Intercommunion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Polish National Catholic Church (held in the Anglican Cathedral of St. James in Toronto on November 9, 1958), the Primate of both churches issued official proclamations formally establishing intercommunion between the two churches. While these statements share a fundamental unity of purpose and spirit and a basic similarity in intent, there are salient differences worth noting. The Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada proclaimed (in part):

We are persuaded that no impediment to such a state of intercommunion exists, either in respect of matters of faith or order and that in agreeing to the establishment of such a state, we are persuaded of a like desire and will on the part of the Polish National Catholic Church of America.

In particular we are fully persuaded that each of our Churches is an integral portion of the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ; holds the one faith revealed in Holy writ and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church in the undisputed ecumenical councils; receives the same Canonical scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation; teaches the same word of God; partakes of the same divinely ordained sacraments ministered through the same Apostolic Orders.

We being persuaded of these things as touching matters of faith and order and fervently desiring communion and fellowship with our Brethren of the Polish National Catholic Church of America and believing this to be the divine will for our churches are nevertheless determined to maintain our own independence and to respect the independence of the Polish National Catholic Church and agree that neither Church is bound to accept all doctrinal opinions, liturgical practices or sacramental devotions of the other.

These provisions notwithstanding we thank and praise Almighty God that by His Holy Spirit we have been led into such communion and fellowship as will enable us mutually to approach each others' altars and to receive the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ and that each church thus recognizes the catholicity of the other.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *A Service Commemorating the Public Recognition of the State of Intercommunion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Polish National Catholic Church of America in the Cathedral Church of St. James in the City of To-*

The Prime Bishop of the Polish National Catholic Church issued a similar pronouncement of which the following is the part relevant to our discussion:

We are persuaded that no impediment to such a state of intercommunion exist, either in regard to matters of Faith or Order. Furthermore, in agreeing to the establishment of such a state, we trust in a like desire and will on the part of the Anglican Church of Canada.

In particular we are persuaded that each of our Churches is an integral segment of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ; holds the one faith revealed in the Holy Gospels and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church in the undisputed Ecumenical Councils; receives the same Canonical Scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation; teaches the same Word of God; partakes of the same divinely instituted Sacraments ministered through the same Apostolic Orders.

We, being persuaded of these things relating to matters of Faith and Order and desiring communion and fellowship with our Brethren of the Anglican Church of Canada and believing this to be the Divine Will for our Churches are nevertheless determined that:

- (a) Each communion shall recognize the catholicity and independence of the other, and maintain its own;
- (b) Intercommunion shall not require from either communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but shall imply that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.

These provisions notwithstanding, we thankfully praise Almighty God, by Whose Holy Spirit we have been guided into such communion and fellowship as will enable us mutually to approach each others' altars and to partake of the Sacrament of the Mystical Body of Christ and that each Church thus recognizes the Apostolic Catholicity of the other.<sup>31</sup>

The Anglican statement paraphrased the Bonn Agreement while the Polish statement explicitly incorporated the first and third resolutions of the Bonn Agreement and paraphrased the second. On the latter matter, the Polish statement speaks of the partaking of the Sacrament of the Mystical Body of Christ, while the Anglican statement refers to the reception of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. It should be noted that the Anglican Church of Canada did not establish its own intercommunion committee but, instead, began to participate in the Joint Meetings of the Intercommunion Committees of the Polish National Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church (and, indeed,

*ronto on Sunday, November 9th at Four O'Clock in the afternoon in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty Eight, no pagination.*

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

had sent its first representative to the eighth joint meeting held in November, 1956).

While intercommunion between the Polish National Catholic Church and the Anglican bodies of North America had been established by the late 1950s, the very concept and meaning of the term "intercommunion" was undergoing reevaluation in Anglican theological circles. The Lambeth Conference of 1948, for example, employed the term "intercommunion" to describe the relation between Old Catholic Churches and the Anglican Communion; it also noted "with satisfaction and approval that in line with the Bonn Agreement, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. by action of its General Convention in 1940, and the Polish National Catholic Church by similar action of its General Synod in 1946, have thereby achieved full intercommunion with each other."<sup>32</sup>

However, the Lambeth Conference of 1958 endorsed the Report of its Committee on Church Unity and the Church Universal which recommended that the term "full communion" be employed to describe the relation between two churches not of the same denominational or confessional family wherein there is unrestricted *communio in sacris*, including mutual recognition and acceptance of ministries; the term "intercommunion" was to be reserved to denote the varying degrees of relation other than full communion.<sup>33</sup> Since various provinces of the Anglican Communion engaged in unrestricted *communio in sacris* with the Old Catholic Churches, the Committee on Church Unity and the Church Universal concluded that the relation between these provinces of the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches was truly that of full communion.<sup>34</sup> Most parts of the Anglican Communion accepted this recommendation and initiated the employment of the term "full communion" to describe their relation with other churches when this included mutual recognition of ministries and unrestricted *communio in sacris*. The term was also eventually employed by the International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops (discussed below).

However, the tenth joint meeting of the two intercommunion committees of the Polish National Catholic Church, the Episcopal

<sup>32</sup> *The Lambeth Conference, 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops: together with Resolutions and Reports* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), part 1, p.43.

<sup>33</sup> *The Lambeth Conference, 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), part 1, p.35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, part 2, pp.23–24. See also part 2, pp.52–53.

Church, and the Anglican Church of Canada (meeting in Toronto on November 9–10, 1958) adopted a conservative posture on this change in terminology.

It was explained that the recommendation [of the Lambeth Conference of 1958] was to use the term “full communion” for the relationship of unrestricted *communio in sacris*, including mutual recognition and acceptance of ministries, between two self-governing Churches, and the term “intercommunion” for less complete relationships. Thus the relationship between the Anglican Churches and the Polish National Catholic Church would be called “full communion,” and that with the Church of South India (for example) would be called partial or limited “intercommunion.” It was pointed out in the discussion which followed that this distinction need not change our use of the term “intercommunion” to describe P.N.C.-Anglican relations, since that is the term used in the Bonn Agreement of 1931 between representatives of the Anglican and the Old Catholic Churches, acceptance of which is the basis of our new relationship. It was also noted that the prefix “inter” gives emphasis to the fact that the two Churches retain their independent jurisdictions although in the same territory.<sup>35</sup>

This ambivalent position, however, was not reflected in the proceedings of the 1961 General Convention of the Episcopal Church whose Joint Commission on Approaches to Unity approved the substitution of “full communion” for “intercommunion” and noted that the proposed concordat of full communion between the Episcopal Church and the Philippine Independent Church would create a relation between these two bodies “precisely like that now existing between the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Polish National Catholic Church of America or any other of the Old Catholic Churches.”<sup>36</sup> That same convention adopted a resolution establishing full communion with the Philippine Independent Church on the basis of a concordat similar to the Bonn Agreement. This concordat retained all three provisions of the Bonn Agreement but modified the third by substituting the term “full communion” for “intercommunion.”<sup>37</sup> The 1961 General Convention of the Episcopal Church also adopted a similar resolution establishing full communion between the Episcopal Church and the Spanish Reformed and Lusitanian

<sup>35</sup> Committees on Intercommunion, Tenth Joint Meeting, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Held in Detroit, Michigan, from September Eighteenth to Twenty-Ninth, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1961*, p. 751.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 412–413.



Churches.<sup>38</sup> In ratifying their concordats with the Philippine Independent Church, other Anglican bodies also employed the term “full communion” to signify the nature and purpose of their new relation with this indigenous church. Examples include the Anglican Church in the Province of the West Indies (1962), Nippon Sei Ko Kai (1963), the Church of Ireland (1963), the Church of England (1963), the Episcopal Church in Scotland (1964), and the Church of the Province of South Africa (1964).<sup>39</sup> The use of the term “full communion” received further support in 1973 when the General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted a resolution inviting the Church of North India, the Church of Pakistan, and the Church of Bangladesh to enter into full communion with the Episcopal Church on the basis of the Bonn Agreement. (This resolution substituted the term “full communion” for “intercommunion” in point three of the Bonn Agreement.)<sup>40</sup>

In addition, the Old Catholic Churches conformed to the use of the term “full communion.” The International Old Catholic Bishops Conference, meeting in Vienna on September 22, 1965, issued a joint declaration with the Philippine Independent Church, proclaiming the establishment of full communion between the two bodies. This new resolution was predicated on the three points of the Bonn Agreement, substituting, however, the term “full communion” for “intercommunion” in the last point.<sup>41</sup> That same day a similar declaration establishing full communion with the Lusitanian and Spanish Reformed Churches was also proclaimed by the Old Catholic Episcopal Synod.<sup>42</sup> These agreements, binding on all Old Catholic bodies (including the Polish National Catholic Church), appeared to signal acceptance by the Old Catholics of the term “full communion” to describe their relation with other churches when this involved mutual acceptance of ministry.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 447–448.

<sup>39</sup> *The Iglesia Filipina Independiente in the World* (Manila: 1966), no pagination.

<sup>40</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America – otherwise known as the Episcopal Church, Held in Louisville, Kentucky, from September Thirtieth to October Eleventh, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1973*, p. 409.

<sup>41</sup> *The Iglesia Filipina Independiente in the World*, n.p.

<sup>42</sup> Gordon Huelin, “Old Catholics and Ecumenism,” in Gordon Huelin, ed., *Old Catholics and Anglicans, 1931–1981* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 151–152.



Although its official bodies sanctioned the use of “full communion” in place of “intercommunion,” the Episcopal Church was not consistent in its employment and utilization of this new term. As discussed above, the Episcopal Church did understand its concordats with certain other churches within the context of full communion. However, in its relations with the Polish National Catholic Church the Episcopal Church employed both terms, thereby reflecting the ambivalence on this matter initially expressed at the tenth joint meeting of the intercommunion committees. As noted earlier, the 1961 General Convention of the Episcopal Church characterized that church’s relation with the Polish National Catholic Church as one of full communion.

In 1964 the Joint Commission on Co-operation with the Eastern and Old Catholic Churches reported to General Convention of the Episcopal Church that the Polish National Catholic Church was “the only Church on this continent with which this Church has full communion.”<sup>43</sup> However, in 1976 the Joint Commission on Ecumenical Relations of the Episcopal Church reported to that church’s General Convention that the Episcopal Church had a relation of intercommunion with the Old Catholic Churches, the Philippine Independent Church, and the Iberian Churches. The Commission’s report to General Convention carefully distinguished between full communion and intercommunion and, in effect, discarded the definitions of these terms advanced by the Lambeth Conference of 1958 and accepted by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1961.

*Full communion* is descriptive of the relationship that we have with other churches of the Anglican Communion. In addition to eucharistic fellowship and a mutually acceptable interchange of ministries, this implies some commitment to mutual responsibility and interdependence by which the decisions taken by one church may well influence the life of the other. *Intercommunion* is generally an intermediate stage between churches growing in unity, where each church believes the other to hold all essentials of the Christian Faith, but they do not require from each other the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice. (This is the appropriate description of relationships with churches of the Bonn Concordat model.) Intercommunion implies an ongoing working relationship. (...)

Within these understandings, the Wider Episcopal Fellowship for the Episcopal Church includes two churches in such special proximity to jurisdictions of this Church that our intercommunion relations with them are constant in

<sup>43</sup> *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Held in St. Louis, Missouri, from October Twelfth to Twenty-Third, inclusive, in the Year of Our Lord 1964*, p.465.

nature. These are the Polish National Catholic Church, with four dioceses in the United States, and the Philippine Independent Church.<sup>44</sup>

This document marked the reversion to the term “intercommunion” to signify the Episcopal Church’s understanding of its relation with the Polish National Catholic Church and other Old Catholic bodies.

The year 1976 was a pivotal one in the history of intercommunion between the Episcopal and Polish National Catholic Churches. The intercommunion committees of the two churches had held their last joint meeting (the tenth) in November, 1958. That joint meeting ended with members of both committees resolving to meet again in 1960. However, this meeting never transpired, and the joint meetings were not revived until 1976. In that year the Joint Commission on Ecumenical Relations of the Episcopal Church attempted to explain this hiatus to General Convention.

In recent years, the joint meetings have not taken place because, in general, relations have been understood and accepted, but the guidelines as amended have not been widely publicized.<sup>45</sup>

However, the prospect that the Episcopal Church might authorize ordination of women to its priesthood (a change in ministry unacceptable to many Polish National Catholics and other Old Catholics) required, according to the Joint Commission, “a renewal of mutual consultation, a renewal which also provides an opportunity to renew and strengthen the ties between the two Churches.”<sup>46</sup> As a result of this mandate, Presiding Bishop John M. Allin of the Episcopal Church and Prime Bishop Thaddeus F. Zielinski of the Polish National Catholic Church met in Scranton on January 7, 1976, “to discuss the ordination issue and to renew the consultations which had been so useful in the past.”<sup>47</sup> This led to the eleventh meeting of the Polish National Catholic Church-Episcopal Church Intercommunion Commission (N. B. a single commission thus replaced the two intercommunion committees) held April 8–9, 1976, at Kirby House, near Wilkes-

<sup>44</sup> “The Report of the Joint Commission on Ecumenical Relations to the 65th General Convention of the Episcopal Church,” *The Ecumenical Bulletin*, no. 17 (May–June, 1976), pp. 28–29.

<sup>45</sup> “Supplement to the Report of the Joint Commission on Ecumenical Relations to the 65th General Convention of the Episcopal Church,” *The Ecumenical Bulletin*, no. 18 (July–August, 1976), p. 26.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Barre, Pennsylvania. At this meeting the Polish National Catholic members of the commission proposed the following statement as a means of dealing with the delicate issue of female ordinations. It was accepted by the full commission.

Since each Communion does not require acceptance of all doctrinal opinion or liturgical practice of the other Communion, should a Church of the Anglican Communion by its processes of legislation authorize the ordination of women to the diaconate, priesthood or episcopate and thereby hold a doctrinal opinion different from that of the Polish National Catholic Church, the Polish National Catholics would continue to support the objectives of the Agreement of Intercommunion, with the condition that ordained women would not be permitted in sanctuaries of the Polish National Catholic Church, nor to function in any sacramental acts involving its members or priests.<sup>48</sup>

The twelfth meeting of the Intercommunion Commission was also held at Kirby House on June 1–2, 1976. This meeting passed no resolutions on the question of women's ordination but did address other issues relating to intercommunion.

It was decided to modify or revise some of the decisions of the earlier joint meetings of the two intercommunion committees. Concerning reception of holy communion by members of one church in a parish of the other, the commission recommended the following:

Members in good standing in either Church are welcomed to receive the sacraments of Holy Communion in the other Church when visiting and on special occasions.<sup>49</sup>

This was, in effect, a liberalization of the earlier guideline which anticipated such reception of holy communion only in limited circumstances. The commission also made the following recommendations:

When, however, regular attendance at one's own parish church is difficult or impossible, there should be no question as to the welcome at any parish of the other Church of this Intercommunion Agreement. One may continue to be a member of the church of his Baptism and, by mutual agreement between the pastors, be commended to the pastoral and sacramental care of the other for an indefinite period.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the energy and dedication of the members of the Intercommunion Commission, they were unable to transcend the difficulties

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> The Polish National Catholic Church – Episcopal Church Intercommunion Commission, Minutes of the Twelfth Meeting, Kirby Episcopal House, near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, June 1–2, 1976, Attachment, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Attachment, p. 4.

which arose in late 1976 when the Episcopal Church, at its General Convention, voted to ordain women to the priesthood and episcopate. Despite the compromise accord accepted at the eleventh meeting of the Intercommunion Commission, Prime Bishop Thaddeus Zielinski of the Polish National Catholic Church suspended "sacramental intercommunion" with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada (which had also decided to ordain women) pending a final decision to be made by the Polish National Catholic Church Synod scheduled to meet in 1978. Bishop Zielinski indicated that the commission's decision was an opinion, not an official or binding Church statement.<sup>51</sup>

On September 17, 1976, the International Old Catholic Bishops Conference issued a declaration rejecting ordination of women to the major orders of the church. While this statement did not directly address the issue of intercommunion with the Anglicans, it did include this sombre warning.

The churches which have preserved continuity with the ancient undivided Church and its sacramental ministerial order, should jointly discuss this question of sacramental ordination of women, being fully aware of eventual consequences resulting from unilateral decisions.<sup>52</sup>

As a result of the Episcopal Church's decision to ordain women and the subsequent consternation within the Polish National Catholic Church, the work of the Polish National Catholic Church-Episcopal Church Intercommunion Commission terminated on October 27, 1976, since that commission recognized that its mandate could not continue pending the response of the Polish Church to the Episcopal Church's action in this area. The Old Catholic Churches issued another response to this situation at their International Bishops Conference (May 7-9, 1978) when it was agreed that "Bishops of the Union of Utrecht will in future not take part in consecrations in those churches or dioceses of the Anglican Communion, which accept the ordination of women."<sup>53</sup> Finally, the Fifteenth General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church (meeting in Chicago on October 3-6,

<sup>51</sup> Thaddeus F. Zielinski, *Intercommunion: A Knotty Problem* (Scranton: 1978), p. 3, (published pamphlet).

<sup>52</sup> "Declaration of the International Old Catholic Bishops Conference," *The Ecumenical Bulletin*, no. 21 (January-February, 1977), p. 23.

<sup>53</sup> Marinus Kok, Letter to the Most Rev. John Maury Allin, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, July 10, 1978.

1978) voted to terminate sacramental intercommunion with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada, thus upholding their Prime Bishop's decision to suspend intercommunion with these churches in 1976. At this Synod Bishop Zielinski defined sacramental intercommunion as having "sacramental approach and function at each other's altars," while intercommunion, in itself, was "only a cordial relationship."<sup>54</sup>

The distinction between "intercommunion" and "sacramental intercommunion" puzzled some of the delegates to this synod, and Bishop Zielinski, in an effort to distinguish between the two, enumerated the consequences of terminating sacramental intercommunion with the two Anglican bodies in North America. These consequences included the following: no Anglican priest could perform sacramental functions in a Polish National Catholic Church; no Polish National Catholic priest could administer a sacrament in an Anglican parish; and no member of the Polish National Catholic Church ought to receive Holy Communion in an Anglican parish.<sup>55</sup> Since the 1978 Synod formal intercommunion between the Polish National Catholic Church and the two Anglican bodies in North America has ceased. However, the Episcopal Church reserves hope that this relation may one day be restored. The Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations of the Episcopal Church reported the following to that church's General Convention in 1979.

During the past triennium, the [Wider Episcopal Fellowship] Committee has had special concern with the termination of intercommunion on the part of the Polish National Catholic Church, which came as a result of the 1976 General Convention decision to permit the ordination of women to the priesthood. The Committee looks hopefully to the day when that relationship may be restored, since the essentials of Christian faith and order are still shared by our two churches.<sup>56</sup>

While modest progress has been made to restoring this relationship, the Episcopal Church has revived the use of the term "full communion" to describe its relation with the Old Catholic Churches. The Episcopal Church's Handbook for Ecumenism (1983-1985 edition) states

<sup>54</sup> *Fifteenth General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church, Chicago, Illinois, October 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1978*, p. 186.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>56</sup> "Report of the Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, 1979," *The Ecumenical Bulletin*, no. 35 (May-June, 1979), p. 18.



that "full communion was first reached by provinces of the Anglican Communion with the Old Catholic Churches on the basis of the statement known as the Bonn Agreement of 1931."<sup>57</sup> Although this document does not refer to the question of women's ordination, it does address the problem of diversity of doctrine.

The third article [of the Bonn Agreement] draws the limits and is intended to avoid misconceptions. The goal is not an absorptive union or the fusion of various churches into one, but the bringing about of an ecclesiastical community on the basis of *unitas in necessariis* (unity in necessary things) with the maintenance and respect for those possessions of individual churches which do not belong to the essence of faith.<sup>58</sup>

Does unity in necessary things include the nature and function of the ordained ministry? Can ordination of women be understood as part of the area of diversity permitted by the Bonn Agreement without sacrificing the privilege of intercommunion? Finally, if each communion recognizes the catholicity of the other and maintains its own, how is this to be interpreted if one communion unilaterally changes its ordained ministry in such a way that it does not conform to the understanding of catholicity of the other? And, as Lukas Vischer demonstrates, there is a contradiction fraught with many potential problems in point one of the Bonn Agreement:

But the phrasing also reveals the hidden contradiction: "and maintains its own catholicity." How can churches be catholic if they "maintain" their "own" catholicity? Is it not a contradiction in terms to speak of my "own" catholicity? To have broken new ground, should not the end of that first sentence have read rather: "and joins the other in witnessing to the catholicity of the Church"?<sup>59</sup>

Does the ordination of women in different Anglican provinces violate the intent and meaning of the Bonn Agreement? The Most Rev. Robert Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury, thinks not, claiming that the "Bonn Agreement seems, on the face of it, to allow such

<sup>57</sup> "Handbook for Ecumenism, 1983-1985 Edition", *The Ecumenical Bulletin*, no. 59 (May-June, 1983), p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>59</sup> Lukas Vischer, "The Bonn Agreement in the Light of the Ecumenical Movement: Speech Delivered in Utrecht on November 6th 1981, on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Agreement," typescript, p. 9. The German text of this address may be found in *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 71 (October-December, 1981): 237-253.



a decision.”<sup>60</sup> But others disagree with this benign assessment. The Rt. Rev. Eric Kemp, Bishop of Chichester, provides a less sanguine analysis of Anglican relations with the Old Catholics in the light of women’s ordination to the priesthood in some Anglican provinces.

But here it has to be recognized 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 agreement of those Churches which have retained the historic three-fold ministry. For this reason the Polish National Catholic Church in the U.S.A. has suspended its intercommunion with the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. and the Bishops 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.<sup>61</sup>

Bishop Kemp also correctly noted that the Vienna Statement of September 7, 1931, linked Old Catholic ratification of intercommunion with Anglicans with the former’s recognition of the validity of Anglican Orders.

It seems to follow, therefore, that the third clause of the [Bonn] 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.<sup>62</sup>

Only further consultation and discussion between Anglicans and Old Catholics can resolve the issue of whether the ordination of women is a legitimate variation permitted and tolerated under point three of the Bonn Agreement, or a violation of the catholicity recognized and proclaimed in point one of the Agreement. If the latter, is it

<sup>60</sup> Robert Runcie, “An Assessment of the Bonn Agreement,” in Gordon Huelin, ed., *Old Catholics and Anglicans, 1931–1981* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> Eric Kemp, “Bonn Agreement Golden Jubilee Celebrations: Lecture by the Bishop of Chichester,” *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 71 (October–December, 1981): 227–228.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

a serious enough deviation to warrant the limitation or even termination of intercommunion? A conference of Old Catholics and Anglicans at Chichester in April, 1977, discussed these problems but was unable to reach any agreement on the issues involved. The delegates to the conference stated that they were "divided as to whether it is right for a particular Church in the last resort to take unilateral action in ordaining women."<sup>63</sup> However, the conference's statement did foreshadow the insights of Bishop Kemp on the issue of intercommunion and women's ordination.

It is clear that independent action by any of our Churches in ordaining women to the priesthood leads to a certain limitation of communion, since the ministry of such women will not necessarily be recognised by the other Churches. Recent events in the United States and Canada show that such independent action may provoke reactions leading to a suspension of communion on the part of individual Churches, and this could cause a wider disruption of our relationships and hinder further progress towards Christian unity.<sup>64</sup>

The future of intercommunion between the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches rests on the elasticity of interpretation both are willing to grant to the three resolutions of the Bonn Agreement. But the underlying premise of this agreement has been strained, for it is evident that the intercommunion agreed upon in 1931 was predicated upon mutual recognition of ministry. If this were to exist no longer, then the privileges of intercommunion might become more circumscribed or limited. If female priests become commonplace throughout the Anglican Communion and if the Old Catholics do not eventually approve this new development in the constitution of the ordained ministry, then some limitation (beyond the already established prohibition concerning Old Catholic assistance in certain episcopal consecrations) to intercommunion may emerge.

Within this situation another issue manifests itself. Can an individual Old Catholic body limit intercommunion on its own initiative without specific authorization from the International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops? In 1978 the Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church voted unilaterally to terminate intercommunion with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada despite the fact that there was no authorization for this action from the

<sup>63</sup> "Statement by Old Catholics and Anglicans," *The Ecumenical Bulletin*, no. 27 (January–February, 1978), p. 22.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops. Yet this unilateral action has a parallel in the history of intercommunion between the Polish National Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church. In 1946 the Polish National Catholic Church voted to establish intercommunion with the Episcopal Church and the Church of England although the Old Catholic Churches had already approved intercommunion with the Anglicans at their Episcopal Synod in September, 1931. Since the Polish National Catholic Church is a member of the International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops and, therefore, a party bound to its agreements and decisions, why did it deem it necessary to act independently in this matter fifteen years after it was approved and ratified by the highest authority in the Old Catholic Churches? And, does this imply that any Old Catholic Church has the authority to terminate intercommunion unilaterally as the Polish National Catholic Church did in 1978? These are matters which test the constitutional fabric of the Old Catholic Church and raise questions concerning its locus of authority.

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N. B. The Minutes of the first and second joint meetings of the Intercommunion Committees of the Polish National Catholic and Episcopal Churches were published and are so indicated in the appropriate footnotes. However, all other meetings (beginning with the third joint meeting in October, 1948) lack published minutes; the minutes in question are available only in transcript and may be examined at the Ecumenical Office, Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York.