

Belonging together in Europe

A joint statement on aspects of ecclesiology and mission

By the
Anglican Old Catholic International Coordinating Council
(AOCICC)

Preface

The present paper is the fruit of six years work by the Anglican Old Catholic International Coordinating Council (AOCICC) in fulfilment of two aspects of the mandate given to the Council by the Archbishops of Canterbury and Utrecht:

- To promote the drafting of a common statement of ecclesiological understanding to assist in exploring the shape of the future relationship between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Union of Utrecht, and to advise the Anglican Consultative Council and the International Bishops' Conference on the future development of that relationship.
- To assist the Council of Anglican Bishops in Continental Europe and the International Bishops' Conference to develop a common definition and understanding of shared mission in their work in Europe.

The relationship of communion between Anglicans and Old Catholics, signified by the Bonn Agreement of 1931, is a global one. However, this paper focusses specifically on aspects of ecclesiology and mission which arise from the life and experiences of the churches of our Communion in continental Europe. It is intended to be a theological foundation on which to base future concrete practical expressions. Furthermore, while it is a study of ecclesiology and mission, it is not intended to be a complete exposition of our agreement in faith, which is assumed in the Bonn Agreement of 1931.

At key moments in the development of the text there was consultation with bishops and theologians of both communions who provided valuable suggestions and critique.

It is now submitted to the Archbishops of Canterbury and Utrecht with our proposal that it is a confident platform upon which the churches of our Communion can develop more

practical initiatives towards full visible unity. We make the following suggestions for the content of a mandate for a new phase of the Council:

1. To continue to explore the nature and meaning of our communion.
2. To promote knowledge of our churches and their relationship.
3. To assist the Old Catholic and Anglican Bishops in Europe, especially at their annual meeting, to develop a common definition and understanding of shared mission and coordinated oversight for their work.
4. To explore the possibility of establishing a representative body to oversee relationships in Europe.
5. To advise on the establishment of appropriate instruments and concrete proposals for joint initiatives in mission work in continental Europe.
6. To review the consistency of ecumenical agreements and dialogues of the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Union of Utrecht.

We also offer this joint statement to Anglicans and Old Catholics in general as a tool to enable reflection on the nature of our common life together and to encourage even greater cooperation in the one mission entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Feast of St Willibrord, 7 November 2011, York, England

Belonging together in Europe

A joint statement on aspects of ecclesiology and mission

1. This statement is intended to clarify the basis and scope of the relationship now existing between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Union of Utrecht, in order to explore and chart the possibility of further development in co-operation and common life, especially on the continent of Europe.¹ It is written jointly by representatives of both churches in the Anglican Old Catholic International Coordinating Council (AOCICC), presuming a relationship of communion as declared in the Bonn Agreement of 1931:
 - ‘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.’²
2. This statement’s guiding concern is not ‘What can we do to establish unity?’ but ‘How can we make our unity more manifest?’ It seeks to describe ecclesologically the basis on which closer cooperation in institutional features and in mission could be articulated. We hope that it will stimulate further reflection on practical ways in which this could be achieved.³

¹ The term ‘church’, non-capitalized, has been used here to mean the churches of the Anglican Communion, on the one hand, and the Old Catholic churches of the Union of Utrecht, on the other, in preference to the term ‘communion’. It is used only as shorthand, in order to attempt to minimize misunderstandings that might otherwise arise from the multiple senses of the term ‘communion’. Though the term ‘Anglican’ refers to all churches of the Anglican Communion, in this document reference is mostly made to the Church of England’s Diocese in Europe and the Convocation of American Churches in Europe of the Episcopal Church. It should also be noted that the subject of this document is the relationship of these churches and the Old Catholic churches of the Union of Utrecht on the continent of Europe.

² C.B. Moss, *The Old Catholic Movement, its Origins and History*, London, 1964 (2nd edition), 347 (1st edition 1948).

³ This statement draws on the following sources from the meeting of the AOCICC in Madrid, in 2007: Angela Berlis, ‘Reflections on the collaboration between Old Catholics and Anglicans on a local church level, with the Netherlands as model’; Jeremy Morris, ‘Statement on ecclesiology and mission’; Dick Schoon, ‘Old Catholic Ecclesiological Self-understanding and its Relevance for Closer Collaboration with the Anglican Church in Europe’.

I. What does the Bonn Agreement presuppose?

A. The content of the Bonn Agreement

3. The Bonn Agreement implies three elements on which ‘intercommunion’⁴ rests: agreement on the sacraments, corresponding agreement on the ordained ministry, and agreement on ‘all the essentials of the Christian faith’. This view is consonant with the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (1888), the Anglican formula of Scripture, Creeds, Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and the Historic Episcopate.⁵ It is also consonant with the ecclesiological principles embedded in the Declaration of the Old Catholic bishops united in the Union of Utrecht (1889), and later the Statute.⁶
4. By providing for a shared sacramental life – *communio in sacris* – premised on basic agreement in faith, the Bonn Agreement supplied a foundation on which a real and substantial convergence of faith and practice between Anglicans and Old Catholics became possible. This had already been anticipated in the 14 points of agreement produced by the first Bonn reunion conference in 1874, in which disputed points on Scripture and its authority, liturgy, doctrine, the sacraments, Marian dogmas, commemoration of the dead, and in particular the eucharist, were resolved unanimously in agreement.⁷ It rested in part on a shared conviction of the

⁴ On the terminology of ‘intercommunion’ and ‘full-communion’ see: J. Robert Wright, ‘Intercommunion and Full Communion. The meanings of these terms for Anglicans and for their relations with Old Catholics’, in Angela Berlis and Klaus-Dieter Gerth (eds), *Christus Spes. Liturgie und Glaube im ökumenischen Kontext. Festschrift für Bischof Sigisbert Kraft* (Frankfurt, 1994), 335-345. Cf. Urs von Arx, ‘The Historical Background to the Bonn Agreement,’ unpublished paper for the Anglican-Old Catholic Theologians’ Conference in Leeds 2005, footnote 204.

⁵ ‘That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God’s blessing made towards Home Reunion:

(a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation,’ and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(b) The Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.’

See: http://anglicanonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html (1 April 2011).

⁶ The Utrecht Declaration of 1889 is published as an appendix in Urs von Arx and Maja Weyermann (eds), ‘Statut der in der Utrechter Union vereinigten altkatholischen Bischöfe’, *Beiheft zur Internationalen Kirchlichen Zeitschrift [= IKZ]* 91 (2001), 25-27 (German); 40-42 (English).

See: http://www.utrechter-Union.org/pagina/152/appendix:_the_declaration_of_utr (1 April 2011).

The preamble to the Statute (ibid. 12-15 [German] resp. 28-31 [English]) contains the ecclesiological principles of the Old Catholic Churches. See also: <http://www.utrechter-union.org/pagina/147/statute> (1 April 2011).

⁷ *Bericht über die 1874 und 1875 zu Bonn gehaltenen Unions-Conferenzen. Herausgegeben von Heinrich Reusch. Neudruck der Ausgabe in zwei Bänden von 1874 und 1875 mit einer Einführung von Günther Esser* [Schriftenreihe des Alt-Katholischen Seminars der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn herausgegeben von Angela Berlis, Günther Esser und Matthias Ring, Reihe A (Quellen), Band 2] (Bonn, 2002). English edition: *Report of the proceedings of the Reunion Conference held at Bonn on September*

- authority of the Primitive Church – a conviction renewed in Anglicanism particularly under the influence of the Oxford Movement. It required only actual sacramental sharing to give it effect. The history of sharing in the eucharist amongst Anglican and Old Catholic congregations, the sharing and exchange of ministers on occasions, the participation of bishops in consecrations and the mutual delegation of confirmations, the presence of representatives at the Lambeth Conferences and the International Bishops' Conference (IBC), have all filled out the relationship of 'full communion' (the term increasingly used from the 1950s on in place of 'intercommunion') since 1931.
5. The agreement has been praised and criticized for its verbal economy, or 'minimalism'. The Lambeth Conference of 1948, noting the provisions of the agreement with approval, hoped that 'the precedent set by the terms of the agreement with the Old Catholics' would be valuable 'for similar agreements with other independent Churches'.⁸ It thus envisaged the possible application of the 'Bonn model' in other ecumenical contexts. It also implied that the agreement would be merely the beginning of a rapprochement between the two communions, noting 'how well the intercommunion is working out from the pastoral point of view in the different countries affected'.⁹ In 1958 the Lambeth Conference noted 'with satisfaction' that the Bonn Agreement had been adopted by nearly all the provinces of the Anglican Communion.¹⁰
 6. In 1953 Andreas Rinkel, the then Archbishop of Utrecht, did not consider an organic *unio* to be the aim and purpose of the agreement, for he considered the deeper *unio* to be found in both churches' catholicity – hence the conviction that 'the other [church] contains the 'holon', the entire church, in doctrine, office, and sacrament.'¹¹
 7. Anglicans – in the emphasis on common witness – see both churches as 'reconciled', whereas the Old Catholics give greater emphasis to the *local churches* becoming sister churches.¹²

14, 15, and 16, 1874. Translated from the German of Professor Reusch by E.M.B. With a preface by H.P. Liddon (London, 1875), and *Report of the proceedings of the Reunion Conference held at Bonn (...) August 1875. Translated from the German of Professor Reusch [by A Plummer]. With a preface by H.P. Liddon* (London, 1876). Cf. Moss, *The Old Catholic Movement*, 263-4; Frederick Meyrick, *Correspondence between members of the Anglo-Continental Society and (1) Old Catholics, (2) Oriental Churchmen. With an Appendix, containing articles agreed to at the Conference of Bonn, held September 14, 1874*, (London, 1874).

⁸ *Lambeth Conference 1948. The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Reports* (London, 1948), 73.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Lambeth Conference 1958. The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Reports* (London, 1958), Resolution 46, p. I.40.

¹¹ Andreas Rinkel, 'Interkommunion. Ihre Grundlage, ihr Inhalt, ihre Folgerungen', in *IKZ* 43 (1953), 209-230, here 212.

¹² See Mary Tanner, 'A Theology for Europe: the *raison d'être* of the Church', in James Barnett (ed.), *A Theology for Europe. The Churches and the European Institutions* (Bern, 2005), 237-247.

8. The brevity and apparent simplicity of the Bonn Agreement inevitably left much undefined or ill defined, however. To what extent did the *communio in sacris* announced there leave room for *differences* in the manner in which local churches express their ‘being’ (*Gestalt*)? What is the precise dogmatic scope of the phrase ‘all essentials of the Christian Faith’? What difference would the agreement make to the churches’ other ecumenical relationships, and in particular those with the churches of Eastern Orthodoxy? Would the agreement presume or facilitate further convergence? The Bonn Agreement left unclear whether it would in time encourage an organizational development, adding churches together to form a single church (a quantitative view), or only presuppose a mutual concern on the part of each church to enhance the other church’s inner growth and flourishing (a qualitative view).

B. Developments and challenges since 1931

9. Since the conclusion of the Bonn Agreement in 1931 there has been a perceptible growth in relations of common action and affection between the churches of the Anglican Communion and of the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht, especially in Europe.
10. Apart from the sacramental sharing implied in the *communio in sacris* there has been a notable development of closer contacts at the local level on the European Continent.¹³ These include meetings of the Society of St Willibrord¹⁴ and instances of sharing church buildings, joint services and projects, meetings, conferences of theologians and students, and joint pilgrimages. Organizationally, through representation at the Lambeth Conference and the IBC, through meetings of Anglican and Old Catholic bishops, and through the work of the Anglican-Old Catholic International Coordinating Council (AOCICC), as well as through some ministerial and student exchanges, the two churches have got to know each other better, and there has been, we trust, a real growth in mutual appreciation and fellowship.
11. Since 1931 the political and religious landscape has changed considerably. Not only have political relations been changed by the creation of the European Union, which still struggles with the question of political unity in diversity, but there have also been significant developments in both churches. Anglican congregations have been established on the continent of Europe in ever greater numbers in the last forty years. Not only has the expatriate English-speaking community grown and become, in many places, a permanent one, but the congregations also include growing numbers of members who though nationals of the local country wish to worship in English. Attention has been drawn to the implicit development of the Anglican congregations in the Diocese in Europe from ‘Club to Church’:

¹³ As the intercommunion between the Polish National Catholic Church in the USA and Canada and the Episcopal Church, ratified in 1958, came to an end in 1978, we confine our comments to the European situation.

¹⁴ The Society of St Willibrord which was founded in 1908 has branches in several countries.

the Anglican presence on the European continent is developing away from a state of transience and rapid change to a more regular and regulated form of ‘parish’.¹⁵ This process has gone hand in hand with a clearer understanding of the Diocese in Europe’s place within the Church of England. Relevant too is the post-war growth of the congregations of the Episcopal Church (TEC, formerly ECUSA) in Europe, forming the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. On the Old Catholic side, too, there have been substantial demographic and social changes. Rooted historically in the countries in which they are found today, they are situated in contexts of rapid social change, with a declining popular interest in institutional religion and a quest for new forms of spiritual expression. Even when Old Catholic parishes are small, there is a growing sense of their mission as local Catholic (but not Roman Catholic) churches and of their societal responsibility for evangelism.

12. Much remains to be done if the churches of both communions are to continue to move closer together and their different developments are not to obstruct or impede their relationship of communion. There needs to be careful thinking about what kind of relationship the two churches might appropriately seek, beyond the warm relations already established, without compromising the identity and distinctiveness of their different traditions. Currently, there is a discrepancy between the assumed community and unity already existing between the two churches (on the basis of the *Una Sancta Catholica*, as specified in the Bonn Agreement), and talk of ‘collaboration’ which implies the two churches are still actually separated from each other. This finds expression at the level of local parish collaboration. This is an even more pressing question at the level of episcopal consecrations, because the laying on of hands is normally understood to be a sign of unity and not of collaboration only.¹⁶

C. Common ecclesiological considerations

13. Anglican-Old Catholic relations stand, then, in a curious position: a relationship of communion is premised on a minimalist agreement which originally spoke merely of ‘intercommunion’ and of each church maintaining ‘its own [Catholicity and] independence’. The further goal of full visible unity – by which we could truly call ourselves one church on the continent of Europe – remains a seductive but as yet almost entirely unspecified horizon of possibility. Anglicans and Old Catholics might do further work to develop a model of what ‘full visible unity’ could look like. This might be a model which is neither the continuance of completely separate churches nor a uniform institution, but is based upon a vision of a ‘communion of communions’.¹⁷

¹⁵ David Hamid, ‘From Club to Church’, in *The European Anglican*, 30 (2006), 4-5.

¹⁶ See Declaration of the International Old-Catholic Bishops Conference on the participation at the consecration of Anglican Bishops, Prague November 2003.

At: www.utrechter-union.org/english/ibc_documents004a.htm (10 February 2010).

¹⁷ In this work of developing a model, the AOCICC could play a role.

14. The basis of the relationship between the two churches is what the Bonn Agreement describes as agreement on ‘all the essentials of the Christian faith’. This is an agreement which is not so closely defined or circumscribed that it seeks to eliminate legitimate differences over doctrinal interpretation both between and within the two churches. Rather, it emphasizes that both churches stand together, as part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, in affirming a common faith, rooted in worship of the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁸ Together they profess the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and expressed in the Catholic Creeds. In their own distinct traditions, their formularies or fundamental documents and their historic witness, and above all in the conviction of their leadership by the Holy Spirit, both churches have sought to proclaim this common faith afresh in each generation.¹⁹
15. Six particular doctrinal points are relevant, though these are proposed here as a sufficient but not as a comprehensive or complete basis of agreement. The aim of this text is not to produce an equivalent to an ecumenical dialogue report, since the relationship that already exists under the Bonn Agreement goes further than that.
16. First, in both churches there is a basic understanding that local ecclesial life is constitutive of the very being of the Church. Thus Anglicans can agree in essence with the description in the Statute of the IBC: ‘It [the specific Old Catholic ecclesiology] presupposes that each fellowship and communion of people, which by the reconciliation in Jesus Christ and by the outpouring and the continuous work of the Holy Spirit is constituted as a unity in a given place around a bishop with the eucharist as its centre, is *a complete church* that carries out its tasks autonomously in that given place.’²⁰ This does not mean that local ecclesial life is self-

¹⁸ Cf. ‘Statute’ (as in footnote 6), Preamble 3.2, p. 29: ‘Thus the catholicity of each local church becomes manifest in the unity and communion with other local churches perceived in faith as being identical in their foundation in the redemptive work of the triune God. The unity and communion of local churches in their supra-diocesan link – i.e. usually in national churches, ecclesiastical provinces, patriarchates – is a representation of the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’ as well – however, not as a kind of super-diocese of supra-regional or even universal dimensions, but as a communion of episcopally and synodically organized local churches.’ For the wholeness of the church in its local and universal dimension, see also: *Kirche und Kirchengemeinschaft. Bericht der Internationalen Römisch-Katholisch – Altkatholischen Dialogkommission* (Paderborn – Frankfurt, 2009), nr. 17: ‘Die Einheit und Gemeinschaft der Ortskirchen in ihren unterschiedlichen überörtlichen Ausdehnungen bis hin zur universalen Dimension ist jeweils auch eine Vergegenwärtigung der *Una Sancta*, und zwar als Gemeinschaft von Ortskirchen, als *communio communionum ecclesiarum*. Dabei eignet in diesen Gemeinschaften von Ortskirchen jeder Ortskirche in gleicher Weise die volle Katholizität. Darum sind die einzelnen Ortskirchen auch für die überörtliche und universale Gemeinschaft mitverantwortlich. Denn die lokale Kirche ist ganz Kirche, aber nicht die ganze Kirche.’

¹⁹ This paragraph draws, for convenience’s sake, on the Preface to the Church of England’s Declaration of Assent: ‘The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the Catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.’

²⁰ From the ‘Statute’, Preamble 3.1. [italics not original].

- sufficient: its catholicity is manifest in its unity and communion with other local churches.
17. Second, both churches recognize the bishop as serving this unity and communion, emphasizing the bishop as the principal minister, who presides over each worshipping congregation of the diocese. In the absence of the bishop the priest functions as his or her delegate, as is reflected in the canon law of both churches. The episcopate operates in both churches in a synodical context: in both churches the authority of the bishop is exercised in a personal, collegial, and communal/synodal form.²¹
 18. Third, both churches understand the nature of authority within the Church in a similar way. The threefold ministry, in historic succession, is exercised out of, on behalf of and for the whole people of God. Thus it is an authority *within* the Church, exercised under the supreme authority of Scripture. It derives its authenticity from its faithfulness to the deposit of faith.
 19. Fourth, both churches agree that the Church is an apostolic community, which seeks to live faithfully to the early Christian witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his Gospel of redemption for the whole world. Their understanding of mission flows from this. Again, here Anglicans can note agreement in essence with the Preamble of the Statute of the IBC: ‘In continuity with its soteriological-trinitarian foundation, the catholicity of the Church is expressed by those elements and processes which are signified by the comprehensive term ‘apostolic succession’. This means that whatever the Church is doing in word and sacrament, doctrine and ministry, has and must have its origin, in space and time, in the mission of Jesus Christ and the apostles, operated by the Spirit.’²²
 20. Fifth, both churches agree that the Church is a historical and visible community as well as mystical body, founded on the life, death and resurrection of our incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ. The Church is sacramental, to the extent that its visible institutions point to the incarnation of Jesus Christ and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, seek to protect and carry the Church through history.
 21. Sixth, both churches agree that the Church is an eschatological community, facing forwards in expectation of the coming reign of Christ in justice and truth. The Church of Christ as the whole body can be said to be indefectible, but as a pilgrim people its decisions in history are provisional, and require constant reassessment in the light of history.
 22. Thus the two churches, having substantial agreement on the essentials of the faith, acknowledge a shared history and understanding of the main features of church

²¹ See World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, (Faith and Order Paper 111, Geneva 1982), paras. 26-7; and also World Council of Churches, *The Nature and the Mission of the Church. A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, (Faith and Order Paper 198, Geneva, 2005), paras 90-8.

²² From the Statute, Preamble 3.4.

order, reflected in a dynamic convergence between them. They share a similar, common context as two Western church families, with similar roots in Western Christendom.

23. Fundamental agreement in faith and order neither precludes further development, nor implies uniformity. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and faithful to its apostolic mission, the Church – as Anglicans and Old Catholics agree – must be able to respond to the changing contexts in which Christians find themselves.

II. Diversity within our ecclesial unity

24. The minimalism of the Bonn Agreement, founded as it was on a relatively spare statement of doctrinal agreement, certainly leaves latitude for continuing diversity. Whilst this diversity does not encompass fundamental differences – as otherwise the *communio in sacris* would not be possible – nevertheless these differences are not altogether negligible either. They need to be factored into any proposals for making our unity more manifest. Thus, Anglicans and Old Catholics have an opportunity, if they can find the right formula, to exhibit a true ‘diversity in unity’, corresponding to a ‘unity in diversity’. This may be their common gift to the *Una Catholica* as its members in all Christian churches seek to gather together its scattered and fragmented institutional forms.
25. What are these differences? They are to varying degrees cultural, linguistic, doctrinal, historical, and devotional. They arise from the different histories and identities of both churches, and carry the imprint of both churches’ different origins. At the same time as greeting each other in mutual, ecclesial recognition, Anglicans and Old Catholics need also to attend to and respect each other’s otherness and difference. Anglicans need to remember the emphasis the Old Catholic churches lay on the continuity of the true or unbroken Catholic tradition, manifested in fidelity to the historic structure of the Church, to the liturgy and to the devotional life – a continuity sustained through successive epochs of resistance to an innovating and centralizing strand of the Roman Catholic Church. Old Catholics need to remember, conversely, that although Anglicans consciously retain their continuity with the Catholic Church of the patristic and medieval periods, this church also embodies Protestant insights from the time of the Reformation in its theology and practice. Thus it is often expressed that the churches of the Anglican Communion are both Catholic and Reformed.
26. Differences can be noted briefly under a variety of headings. Cultural and linguistic differences are striking, but may have been blurred or eroded partially in recent years. The rise of English as a *lingua franca* for business, politics and culture may have eased communication in some respects, but it has surely also on the local level brought a certain one-sidedness into inter-church relations, and perhaps – understandably – provoked a certain resistance or suspicion on the part of non-English speakers amongst the Old Catholics. At times Old Catholics have felt alienated by the apparent importing of British and American cultural forms into a

continental setting. So there are complex questions around the issue of language and culture that do not run simply along church lines. Language intersects with devotional culture, and naturally with social demography: the growth of Anglican congregations on the European continent has brought all the existing diversity and divisions of Anglicanism into relations between Anglicans and Old Catholics.²³

27. There are some differing emphases in theology. These arise particularly when comparing two aspects of Anglicanism with the theology of the Old Catholic churches. First, there is the continuing relevance of the Reformation formularies that influenced not only the Church of England, but also (directly or indirectly) the churches of the Anglican Communion, such as the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal. Old Catholics, on the other hand, emphasized the Ancient Church as an ideal and norm for church reform in opposition to the new teachings of the Roman Catholic Church during the nineteenth century. They still call upon the rule of St Vincent of Lérins, ‘We hold that which has been believed everywhere, always and by everyone’ [Id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est], which many Anglicans also acknowledge. Second, there is the distinctive theological emphasis associated with Anglican Evangelicalism as it emerged in the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Just as it is possible to find Anglicans who disagree strongly over soteriology, ecclesiology and sacramental theology, so it is possible to find Anglicans who disagree strongly with Old Catholics on the same matters. The breadth and intensity of Anglican theological disagreement raises questions for many Old Catholics about a perceived lack of Anglican unity in faith, despite the readiness of some Anglicans to defend Anglican diversity as a contribution to what they claim to be the ‘comprehensiveness’ of faith. Any further development towards the manifestation of the unity between the two churches would need to be able to accommodate these differences, which to some extent are underpinned by the variety of cultural contexts of the wider Anglican Communion. Anglican Evangelicals would not favour a scheme that compromised their position, or that could be seen to exclude their understanding of the nature and identity of the Church. This may not be as serious an obstacle as it seems at first sight, because both Anglicans and Old Catholics affirm the need of the Church to revisit its sources (*ressourcement*). As a consequence, the Church is always open to its susceptibility to sin and its need for renewal (*semper reformanda*). This is the case even in the contemporary context as the Church remains true to its origins and strives for its final and enduring fulfilment.

28. There are some differences in the question of moral teaching. The large majority of Anglican churches affirm the standard of teaching of the Anglican Communion and do not accept the authorisation of public rites for same-gender blessings or

²³ Consideration of our churches’ various understandings of different modes of belonging in the local congregation may provide insights into these questions but the complexities of applying categories such as *Territorial-* and *Personalgemeinden* across Europe is beyond the scope of this study. By *Territorialgemeinden* one may understand notions such as parochial congregations and by *Personalgemeinden* congregations that are associational or in some sense self-selecting.

the consecration as bishops of persons living in same gender unions.²⁴ The Church of England officially adheres to this standard teaching while the Episcopal Church has consecrated bishops in same-gender relationships. The Old Catholic Churches handle these questions differently. While the Old Catholic churches confine the sacrament of marriage to the traditional union of male and female, some have found scope to practise the blessing of same-gender relationships. In this way, despite different practices, the Old Catholic ecclesiological emphasis on the relative independence of their churches offers them the possibility of staying together.²⁵ These differences of teaching and practice among the churches may well constitute an obstacle to closer institutional relations.

29. There are some differences in the interpretation of sacraments. Regarding the sacraments, Anglicans and Old Catholics affirm the sacraments of baptism and eucharist as means of God's salvation. Whereas all Old Catholics further acknowledge the traditional five sacraments of the Church, Anglicans disagree about the status of the five 'commonly called sacraments'.²⁶
30. There are some differences in the matter of church order. Although Anglicans and Old Catholics adhere to the principle of the bishop as 'chief pastor' of his or her diocese, Old Catholics emphasize more strongly than Anglicans the principle of one bishop in one diocese: this is at variance with the Anglican practice of appointing suffragan and 'area' bishops, though in Anglican polity one bishop is the Ordinary in each diocese.
31. Some differences arise from contrasting positions in the relationship between Church and State. Anglican bishops are currently appointed by a variety of means, including (in the Church of England) the authority of the Crown. Following Early Church tradition, Old Catholic bishops are elected by the clergy and laity of the diocese. Since this latter practice is also widespread in Anglicanism outside the Church of England, however, it cannot be said to constitute a significant theologi-

²⁴ See the Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report* (London, 2004), paras 134 and 144.

²⁵ Notwithstanding this, in 2003 the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) left the Union of Utrecht over various issues including women's ordination. The wider reasons for the rupture cannot be dealt with here.

²⁶ See Article XXV of the Thirty-Nine Articles:

'Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in Him. There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not the like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, have they a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves damnation, as Saint *Paul* saith.'

See also thesis 8 of the first Bonn Union Conference in 1874 [*Bericht 1874* (as in note 7), 17-18].

cal obstacle. In most of the countries where there are Old Catholic Churches, there is a constitutional separation of Church and State, though the actual form this takes differs considerably from country to country, and includes some situations of state support for the church. Anglicans again have a variety of different Church-State contexts, including the Established (but not Erastian) position of the Church of England.

III. Towards a common mission

32. The Bonn Agreement was concluded by members of both churches, keenly aware of common elements of ecclesial identity. Recently it has become evident that both churches face common challenges in Europe, and need each other as they seek to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The search for unity therefore is not or should not be merely an optional extra to ordinary church life, or the preoccupation of a coterie of specialists, but is a condition of the Church's witness to the world. Positively, Christians pray with Jesus to the Father in John 20.22 that 'The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one'. Negatively, they say with Jesus in Matthew 12.25 that 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand'. Thus ecclesiology is intrinsic to missiology, and vice versa – *missio Dei, missio ecclesiae*.
33. This holistic understanding of mission and ecclesiology can be illustrated from the threefold formula *martyria*, *leitourgia* and *diakonia*. This goes back to the ideal-typical description of the Christian community in Jerusalem in Acts 2.42-47. *Martyria* expresses the Church's witness, in and for the world, to God's salvation through his Son Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. The Church fulfils this calling in preaching the Gospel and in proclaiming the need for believers to follow Jesus by living out his message of reconciliation and redemption. *Leiturgia* refers to 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. *Diakonia* is the service of the Church to the needy, following Christ's calling to be servant of all.²⁷ This threefold formula must include all that is conventionally understood as mission: 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 (*leiturgia*), and in the service the Church offers to the world (*diakonia*) in fulfillment of its calling to exemplify the love of Christ.
34. According to this threefold formula, then, Christian faith is intrinsically confessional, sacramental and social. The Church is called as a community of faith to a mission which resists the world's absolutizing of individualism, materialism and

²⁷ See the Preamble of the Statute, 3.3.

injustice. But this vocation is more complex and yet more necessary than ever when Christians can no longer be confident that they are anything other than a minority voice. Secularization, at least as commonly understood, has carried with it many things which have worked to the benefit of Christians, including religious freedom and the ending of intolerance towards various minorities. Yet even in those many situations in Europe where ‘believing without belonging’ is a feature of society and marks a residual, if nevertheless real, substratum of Christian belief, the task of the Church is contested and controversial.²⁸ Anglicans and Old Catholics thus face common challenges in mission arising from a common context.²⁹ It can no longer be assumed that the historic attitudes, assumptions, and certainties which once ensured that our churches fulfilled a significant social role, will enable them to sustain even their recent level of resources and activities.

35. There are three factors above all that have intensified the missionary challenges facing Anglicans and Old Catholics, at least in Europe today. First, the nations and economies had become more connected through globalization. This requires Christians to recognize and articulate more clearly than ever before their interdependency and their mission to give a common witness in a secularized culture fraught with religious tension. In this situation unity cannot be conceived as a static goal, but as an evolving network. This presents the possibility of more immediate and fluid relations between different local contexts and regional, national or international church structures than once was the case.³⁰ Second, there is Britain’s, and the Church of England’s, increasing interest in Europe with its opportunities and its readily available allies.³¹ Third – as noted above – Anglican congregations on the European continent have become more firmly rooted, matched by the more intensive contact that Old Catholic churches have had with their Anglican neighbours.
36. In summary, for both Anglicans and Old Catholics there is a deep awareness of the constraints our churches face today. The changing position of the churches has forced a reassessment of their status within society. The Old Catholic churches are here in a different position from the Church of England, since they have been minority churches since they first came into existence as churches. They are also historic churches, which share many of the characteristics of a *Volkskirche*, like the Church of England, and therefore face the same problems. This changing position indicates that mission, in the ‘narrower’ sense of spiritual conversion, is central to the Church’s very being as servant of Christ in the world. Similarly, mis-

²⁸ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, 1994).

²⁹ See the forthcoming proceedings of the International Anglican Old Catholic Theologians’ Conference in 2011 with the title ‘Belonging Together in Europe. *Ecclesiology and Mission in Today’s Europe*’, published in *IKZ* 2012. At this conference a draft version of this statement was discussed.

³⁰ Here we refer in passing to the influence of what in German is described as *Lokalkirchenekkesiologie*, and which is related to the cluster of insights brought together, for example, in J. Reader & C.R. Baker (eds), *Entering the New Theological Space. Blurred Encounters of Faith, Politics and Community* (Farnham, 2009).

³¹ See, for example, GS 1548, *The Church of England and Europe. A Report by the Mission and Public Affairs Council and the Council of Christian Unity* (London, 2003).

sion in its ‘broader’ sense of the *missio Dei*, the involvement of God in his creation through the redeeming life and work of Jesus Christ, is something in which all members of the Church are called to participate.³² True to the Biblical and sacramental traditions of both Anglicans and Old Catholics, we can affirm the Church as a divinely-grounded community of discipleship, called to proclaim the Gospel in each generation. Both the structure of the Church and her entire missionary activity in *martyria*, *leitourgia* and *diakonia* are intimately related, as complementary (and indeed inseparable) dimensions of ecclesial reality. Anglicans and Old Catholics, for this reason, can fully concur with the summary offered by *The Nature and Mission of the Church*: ‘The Church is the community of people called by God who, through the Holy Spirit, are united with Jesus Christ and sent as disciples to bear witness to God’s reconciliation, healing and transformation of creation’.³³

37. Although the existing unity of Anglicans and Old Catholics has already produced shared mission projects, there is not as yet a common overall programme of mission. There are plenty of suitable resources and much that both churches can do together in mission, and much that would be done better together. In the broader sense this includes representing the love of God for his creation and embodying it in activity for the greater good of all humanity. In the narrower sense (touched on above) it includes bringing new people to faith in Christ. Together, Anglicans and Old Catholics could commit themselves to finding ways of combining and then extending their work of evangelism on the continent of Europe, and elsewhere in the world. In some areas this might involve local churches joining together in specific initiatives. Overall, it might involve regional or continental mission bodies, committed to sharing experience and to developing joint strategies.

4. Conclusion

38. This statement seeks to describe the ecclesiological basis on which closer cooperation in institutional features and in mission between Anglicans and Old Catholics could be articulated. We therefore looked at the Bonn Agreement and the development of the relationship of the two churches since 1931 (nrs. 3-23), we described the existing diversity within the unity of the two churches (nrs. 24-31) and we formulated some programmatical points by which the two churches could manifest their unity in common mission (nrs. 32-36).
39. In our secularized and globalized world we see the need for Anglicans and Old Catholics to develop closer relationships, especially on the local level of congregations and parishes. In this way our churches could manifest more clearly the unity the Bonn Agreement presupposes, complement the already existing collaboration at the level of churchleaders and in ecumenical bodies, and stimulate participation of all their members in common mission, especially in Europe. In doing

³² In the Church of England, the most obvious, recent fruit of this insistence has been the report *Mission-shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of Church in a changing context* (2004).

³³ *The Nature and the Mission of the Church*, para 111.

so we hope to contribute to a model for a political unity in diversity in Europe. We see a closer relationship on the local level as a necessary precondition for the development of more organizational structures on a higher level that would strengthen our existing unity and our common efforts to contribute to the proclamation of the gospel.

40. We therefore first call upon all members of our churches to look for opportunities to come together in prayer and worship, in common witness to the Gospel and in joint service to the world, fulfilling our vocation to *leitourgia*, *martyria* and *diakonia*. In doing so, our churches will grow in mutual trust and understanding, and will strengthen their own existing unity. Thus the unity shared by Anglicans and Old Catholics will contribute to the worldwide unity of all Christians, in accordance with the prayer of Jesus to his heavenly Father: ‘that they may be one, as we are one’ (John 17, 22). We also ask our bishops, together with their clergy and lay leaders and theologians, to commit themselves to find a visible form for the communion which our churches already share. This visible form will serve the mission of the Church, and be in itself an expression of our shared faith in the Triune God and the holiness of his Church.