

WHO ARE THE OLD CATHOLICS?

Their history, organization and ecumenical relations

1931 The Bonn Agreement: a path to fuller communion

July 2nd 1931 a statement was agreed upon between representatives of the Old Catholic Churches and the Churches of the Anglican Communion at a conference held at Bonn. In it they proposed the terms which had to lead to full communion between both communions.

The so-called *Bonn agreement* reads as follows:

1. *Each communion recognises 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 characteristics of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian faith.*

This unanimously accepted agreement has since been ratified by the various Old Catholic Churches, by both Convocations of the Church of England and by the other Churches of the Anglican Communion as the basis for intercommunion between the churches involved.

The Lambeth Conference 1958 changed the term “intercommunion” into “full communion”. This meant to express that there exists an unrestricted “*communio in sacris*” between the Anglicans and Old Catholics. Since, this term has also been accepted by the Old Catholics.

Since 1931 closer relations have grown between Anglicans and Old Catholics. This does not only mean that bishops of both churches participate in each other’s consecrations and meet each other regular at many levels of consultations. It also provides for opportunities for Anglicans and Episcopalians, staying on the European continent, to share in the sacramental, pastoral and congregational life of Old Catholic parishes. On the other hand Old Catholics moving to countries where there is no Old Catholic Church can join an Anglican Church. On a different but also important level it gives the opportunity to theologians for an exchange of ideas, which is especially important for talks on the wider ecumenical level. This counts particularly for those ecclesiological subjects, which are important for churches with a catholic tradition.

For the Old Catholic Churches the Bonn Agreement became also the basis for a co-operation in the missions.

In 1998 the (then) Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and the (then) Archbishop of Utrecht, Antonius Jan Glazemaker, inaugurated the *Anglican/Old Catholic International Co-ordinating Council* (AOCICC). One of the tasks of this commission is to find practical forms of collaboration between Anglican congregations and Old Catholic parishes on mainland Europe. The commission is also asked to give attention to the ecclesiological problems, which involve the anomaly of the existence of overlapping Anglican jurisdictions in those areas where Old Catholic dioceses exist. But also the implications of wider ecumenical relationships (particularly with the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran Churches) and the importance of working together in issues of mission and common witness are on the agenda of the AOCICC.

One of the first issues the AOCICC was confronted with is the fact that for many Anglicans the Old Catholics, even after 70 years of full communion, are unknown. It therefore invited two Old Catholic

theologians to produce a book with some basic information on the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, their history, present-day situation, ideals and way of living.

The Old Catholics are a federation of several independent Churches in Europe (and North America) united in the Union of Utrecht (1889) on the basis of the faith of the undivided Church of the first ten centuries. These churches are definitely Catholic in faith, order and worship but reject the papal claims of supremacy and infallibility.

Old Catholicism results from the fusion of three separate and distinct movements, which in the end caused their breach with the Roman Catholic Church.

It is not so easy to present “the” history and life of the Old Catholic Churches. All of them are Catholic Churches, not only with different histories, but also with their own more or less different outlooks. Therefore not only an effort is made to describe each single Old Catholic Church, but also to give a description of those elements in worship, spiritual life, church government and ideals which the Churches united in the Union of Utrecht have in common.

A. THE CHURCHES OF THE UNION OF UTRECHT

International organisation

In various countries national catholic churches exist who are independent from the See of Rome. A number of those churches are tied in what is called the Union of Utrecht. This Union’s foundation is an agreement on co-operation, the *Utrecht Convention*, which was agreed upon on September 24th 1889 by the three Dutch Old Catholic bishops and their German and Swiss colleagues.

To the Union of Utrecht nowadays belong: the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, the Catholic diocese of the Old Catholics in Germany, the Christkatholische Kirche of Switzerland, the Old Catholic Church of Austria, the Old Catholic Church of Czechia, the Polish Catholic Church in Poland, , the Croat National Old Catholic Church. Furthermore joined with the Union are some small church communities without a bishop of their own in France, Scandinavia, Italy and Canada. For these communities a bishop is assigned for supervision and for any episcopal task, e.g. ordinations and confirmations.

The Episcopal Declaration of 1889

As mentioned, the basis of the Union of Utrecht is the *Utrecht Convention*. This convention exists of three documents of which the *Episcopal Declaration* is the most important one.

In this declaration the common theological views are formulated. The first article mentions that the bishops keep to the faith of the primitive church, as expressed in the ecumenical creeds and the commonly agreed doctrines of the undivided church of the first ten centuries.

As contrary to the beliefs of the primitive church, the decree of the first Vatican council of 1870, concerning the infallibility and the universal episcopate of the Bishop of Rome or supreme power of the Pope of Rome is rejected. Yet the bishops hold on to the historical primacy of the Bishop of Rome, whom they acknowledge to be the *primus inter pares*, the first among his peers.

Except for the decree of 1870, a number of other decisions of the Roman Catholic Church concerning faith and church order were dismissed as being contrary to the teachings of the church of the first centuries. This concerns for instance the promulgation as a dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary in 1854 and that of her bodily assumption in 1950, as well as those doctrinal resolutions to which the Dutch Old Catholics offered resistance since the seventeenth century.

A lengthy article professes the belief in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine and gives a biblical founded explanation of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.

The task of the Church, while maintaining the faith of the undivided Church, to heal the historically developed disputes and divisions, is positively emphasized.

The second document of the *Utrecht Convention* is the “*Vereinbarung*” (the Agreement). Here the rules of conduct between the associated churches are described. The last document is the *Regulations*, like by-laws for the Union’s episcopal meetings.

These last two documents were amended in 1952 and in 1974 and in the year 2000 they were updated once again. The *Declaration of Utrecht* yet remains the Union’s constitution, although now preceded by a *Preamble*, in which the present motivational standpoint of the churches of the Union of Utrecht is stated.

The main instrument all along of the Union has been the International Bishop’s Conference (IBC). Every important issue concerning the Union is discussed in the IBC. Chairman has ex officio always been the Archbishop of Utrecht. A Bureau consisting of four bishops prepares the meetings and takes care of the execution of resolutions and decisions.

The Union does not constitute a super-church, but is an alliance of independent catholic churches. Consequently the IBC is not a kind of general synod of the Union. Member churches are not directly bound by its resolutions. In first instance they are binding for the bishops only. The bishops’ task is to bring their churches, through their churches’ respective proper procedures and bodies, to acceptance of the various resolutions of the IBC. In this respect is to be considered that in all churches both clergy and laity are represented in synods, but be it with varying proportionality and authority. Because of this there is a certain built-in tension between the independence of national churches and their worldwide mutual solidarity. This asks much state- and steersmanship of the bishops.

The Union of Utrecht’s member churches stem from very different historic, social and cultural backgrounds. Three main movements are to be discerned. The first of them is that of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands. This church always has stressed the fact of never having separated herself from the Roman Catholic Church, but having gotten outside that community against her own will. The Dutch church considers herself the uninterrupted continuation of the church that St. Willibrord had founded at the end of the seventh century in the Northern Netherlands.

Those churches protesting against the papal dogmas of 1870 stem form the second movement. These are the churches of Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Czechia, Slovakia and France.

At the end of the nineteenth and during the first half of the twentieth centuries the third movement arose, mainly from nationalistic sentiments, sometimes mixed with socio-economic motives. This movement is represented by the churches in the United States, Canada, Poland and in former Yugoslavia. Apart from these three main movements, there are the church communities in Scandinavia and Italy, having their own origins.

Understandably this diversity then and again causes tension, for instance when the IBC takes decisions which due to these divers backgrounds can not be expected to be warmly welcomed by every tradition. Current in this respect are the differing reactions to the fact that the IBC in 1997, lacking consensus between the bishops, de facto accepted the ordination of women to the apostolic ministry in a number of member churches. More about this and other items later.

Ecumenical dialogue

The IBC is also the body, which nominates theologians from one of the member churches for certain committees of the *World Council of Churches* or in any other ecumenical council in which a seat is reserved for an Old Catholic delegate.

As the fruit of years of study inside the World Council of Churches the 1982 Lima Report was published. In it a convergence was attained between churches belonging to both the catholic and the reformed traditions, about baptism, eucharist and ministry. The churches of the Union of Utrecht greeted this as a major step towards the aspired reunion of the Church of Christ.

For the benefit of talks with other churches aiming towards reunion, then and again committees are installed by the IBC. This for instance for talks which in 1931 led to the *Bonn Agreement* with the Anglican Churches.

Regarding national circumstances, the dialogue with the **Roman Catholic Church**, starting after the second Vatican council, was held on a national level. From these discussions the so called *Zürich Note* (*Züricher Nota*) resulted. In this note the Roman Catholic participants suggested to their church that, under certain conditions, members from both churches could receive the sacraments in the other church. To this Rome as yet did not concede. The taking effect of this note just for certain Old Catholic Churches was dismissed from the Old Catholic side for reasons of mutual solidarity.

Interestingly, those rare occasions in which the IBC made an official statement about some point of doctrine, it had always to do with dogmatic differences with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1950 this was about the rejection based on Scripture and tradition of the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Twenty years later, on the occasion of the commemoration of the first Vatican council, the IBC presented its view on primacy in the church, also with respect “to present ecumenical relations”.

2004 saw the start of an official International Roman-Catholic – Old-Catholic Dialogue. The commission presented in 2009 a text on the Church and on communion between churches. In 2012 a (partly) new commission started to work on remaining questions.

The IBC was also directly involved in resuming the dialogue with the **Orthodox churches**, which more or less ended in 1931 after a promising start at the beginning of the twentieth century. The contacts were resumed in the sixties. As a result from 1975 until 1987 seven theological conferences were held which eventually resulted in a common text *Koinonia* (which means: community) *on the basis of the primitive church*. In this text the mixed committee formulated an agreement on doctrine. It was offered to the Orthodox and Old Catholic churches to be accepted. By now all Old Catholic churches have accepted this text. On the Orthodox side acceptance is much more complicated as only a pan-orthodox synod can do this. It is however unclear when this synod will be able to convene. Besides this there are two more problems. Already during the dialogue it became clear that on the Orthodox side great objections exist against the full communion between the churches belonging to the Union of Utrecht and the Anglican Communion, the latter of which is very often qualified by them as being non catholic churches. A further impediment arose when, after the final agreement of the *Koinonia* text four churches of the Union of Utrecht proceeded to the ordination of women to the apostolic ministry. In most Orthodox churches this is a rather delicate issue, because they perceive this as a deserting of the apostolic practice. However, the official visit from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, to the Archbishop of Utrecht in 1996 showed the will to continue the dialogue. This becomes clear for instance in the fact that after the visit a committee of theologians from both communions held a consultation about the position of women in the church and about the ordination of women as an ecumenical problem in itself.

Also the IBC is active regarding the contacts with the Anglican churches. After the visit in 1998 of George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Archbishop of Utrecht, Antonius Jan Glazemaker, the institution of the *Anglican – Old Catholic Co-ordinating Council* was speeded up. Among others the task of this Council is making propositions for co-operation between both church communions on the European continent.

The only permanent IBC committee at this moment is the *International Liturgical Committee* (IALK). Its duty is to draw up joint liturgical forms. The main results to this moment are the eucharistic prayer of the Union of Utrecht and the forms for the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops.

Furthermore the IBC stimulates international Old Catholic youth work. In the year 2000 the bishops decided to set up a permanent secretariat of the IBC, which among other things will be commissioned to optimise communication between the various member churches.

To the effect of bringing Old Catholics of different backgrounds into contact with each other and to cement relations, since 1894 - when the Congress in Rotterdam took place - every four years *International Old Catholic Congresses* are held. These congresses were, in a way, a continuation of those held regularly in the German Old Catholic Church since 1871 and which were of crucial importance to the institution and development of that very church. An 1888 congress resolution stimulated the coming into being of the Union of Utrecht in the following year. The most recent congresses were those held in Delft, The Netherlands and Graz, Austria and Freiburg, Germany. During these congresses church members of all ranks meet and together look into a certain subject, like for instance the churches' task and mission in the world. Besides it is of great importance to hear about church life of the other member churches in the various presentations. Also by way of the varying locations there is the possibility of really getting in touch with the life and work of the hosting church.

The congress in Freiburg in 2007 was especially dedicated to the celebration of 75 years Bonn Agreement. Both the Archbishop of Utrecht, dr. Joris Vercammen, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, dr. Rowan Williams, held a lecture on the challenges for both churches in present day Europe and the way in which Anglicans and Old-Catholics together can contribute to it. A festive Eucharist with both archbishops was the lively sign of the communion of both churches.

In the years that no congresses are held, theologians from the Old Catholic churches can meet during the *International Old Catholic Theologians' Conferences*, during which certain issues are dealt with in more detail. In 1997 for instance the preaching of the Gospel in our time and in 1999 the significance of the Porvo-agreement between Anglican churches and the Lutheran churches of Scandinavia.

Lay people from the Old Catholic churches meet as well, during years that no congress is taking place, on the International Old Catholic Lay Forum.

In the *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* (IKZ) (i.e. the *International Church Journal*) not only congress lectures and reports are published, but also articles that are important to the history and identity of the churches of the Union of Utrecht.

B. The member churches of the Union of Utrecht

The Old Catholic Church in The Netherlands

The first of the Churches of the Union of Utrecht which against her will had been caused into separation from the See of Rome was the Dutch Old Catholic Church in the early eighteenth century. Because the Church of Utrecht, as she was known in that period, has a longer and more complicated history and in a way became the mother church of the Union of Utrecht, her history will get a little more attention than that of her younger sisters.

For a better understanding of the origins of her separation from the See of Rome we have to go back in time. Christianity was brought to The Netherlands by Anglo-Saxon monks in around the year 700 AD. Their leader was Willibrord (658-739), a missionary from Northumbria, who became Archbishop of the

Frisians in 695 and is looked at as the first (Arch)bishop of Utrecht. Another well-known missionary from England who not only worked in present-day Germany but also in the Utrecht diocese was Boniface (675-754), who suffered martyrdom at Dokkum in the north of the low countries.

In the Middle-Ages the bishopric of Utrecht had a history which can be compared with that of other dioceses in the Holy Roman Empire. In time the bishops became not only shepherds of their Christian people, but also their temporal princes. Some of them were saints and eminent scholars, others more or less worldly persons with their main interest in political affairs. In this period the Church of Utrecht, in communion with the See of Rome, more or less successfully tried to maintain her old rights against the centralising aspirations of the Popes of Rome. In Utrecht the bishop was elected by the members of the chapters of the Cathedral and four other collegiate chapters in the city of Utrecht. In 1529 the bishop ceased to be a temporal prince, but the right to elect a new bishop stayed with the chapters.

Of importance for the future spiritual life of the Catholic Church in the Netherlands was the movement of the *Devotia Moderna*, the Modern Devotion, in the 14th and 15th century. This religious revival aimed at a practical and personal sanctification of the life of a Christian. An important role in bringing these ideas to the people was played by the Brothers of the Common Life. A well-known name attached to the Modern Devotion is that of Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471), the writer of the spiritual classic “The Imitation of Christ”. Traces of the biblical and personal piety of the Modern Devotion can still be found in the piety of the Dutch Old Catholic Church.

In 1559 the ecclesiastical structure of the Dutch Catholic Church changed. The See of Utrecht was raised to an Archbishopric and the largest part of the huge diocese was divided into five suffragan dioceses. The reasons for this change lay among others in the necessity for internal church reform and in the hope of Philip II, King of Spain and Lord of the Netherlands, that it would stop the growing influence of the protestant reformation.

During the next decade the political and social problems in the Netherlands caused an uprising against King Philip (the Eighty Years War 1568-1648). The leadership of this national uprising soon came into the hands of a small but determined Calvinistic group. The cause of political events led around 1580 to a ban on the exercise of the Catholic Religion and the recognition of the Reformed Church as the public church. Unique for this period in history was that no one was forced to change religion. But in time about half of the Dutch population became a member of the Calvinistic Church, 40% stayed Catholics, the others belonged to different protestant denominations.

The ban on the exercise of Catholic religion also meant that bishops and priests had to flee or go into hiding. In spite of persecution and threats of heavy penalties Catholics celebrated the Eucharist in private houses and barns. In the second half of the 17th century the religious climate in Holland became more tolerant. Catholics were allowed – in return for a payment – to build churches hidden from view behind house-fronts. Some of them – with sometimes a magnificent interior – are still in use by our church.

After 1580 deceased bishops could not be replaced by new diocesans. To cope with this new and difficult situation Rome in 1592 appointed a Vicar Apostolic for the Church in the Netherlands. For political reasons this prelate Sasbout Vosmeer (1548-1614) could not bear the title of Archbishop of Utrecht. He and his successors were consecrated bishop on a foreign title, but in spite of that they were considered by their clergy as the ordinary of the diocese. These bishops managed in this new situation to uphold or restore the parochial system of the Church and to govern her on a traditional basis.

1723: Schism between Utrecht and Rome

Unhappily enough difficulties for the Church arose not only from the side of the Calvinistic government but also from inside the Catholic Church itself. Some regular priests, mainly Jesuits and Franciscans, came from abroad to assist the Dutch clergy and in the hope to bring Protestants back to the Catholic Church. The mentality of the majority of them proved quite different from that of their Dutch colleagues.

They brought with them another kind of spirituality, that of the counter-reformation of Southern Europe, and they did not recognise the Bishop/Vicar Apostolic as their ordinary but only obeyed the central government of their own orders. An unhappy discord arose between the secular and regular clergy and their congregations. The regulars made all kinds of insinuations of non-orthodoxy against the Vicars Apostolic and their clergy in Rome, without much effect at first. A man like the very pious and ardent Bishop Johannes van Neercassel (1625-1686), was too highly respected in the Catholic Church, even in Rome, that those attacks could harm him. But the clouds broke during the period of office of his successor Petrus Codde (1648-1710). He was accused of promoting and permitting all kinds of non-orthodox teaching and liturgical practice. The name with which his enemies summarised all their accusations was “Jansenism”.

The term Jansenism derives its name from Bishop Cornelius Jansenius from Yper in Belgium (1585-1638). Jansenius was an adherent of the traditional teachings on divine grace as expressed by Saint Augustine of Hippo (353-430). He stressed especially the inner condition in the heart of man, while the Jesuits laid much more emphasis on the significance of the sacraments and of devotions as the foundation of the assurance of salvation.

The Jesuits opposed the interpretation of Augustine’s doctrine by Jansenius and had some theses, claimed to be found in Jansenius’ magnum opus *Augustinus*, condemned by the Pope. It has never been proved that these theses could be found in this book! Jansenius’ ideas on grace found a large following, especially in France among theologians, clergy and lay-people. They combined their theological convictions with an earnest way of life and a strong Christ-centred spirituality. This “Jansenist” spirituality became especially well known and admired by the group of people (e.g. Blaise Pascal, Antoine Arnauld) who were connected with the abbey of Port Royal of Cistercian nuns.

Later that century Jansenism became connected with the so-called Gallicanism, a movement within the French Catholic Church, which stressed the independence of the national Catholic Churches. Although the Gallican theologians accepted and honoured the primacy of the See of Rome, they rejected the papal claims to supreme power in the Church. Many of them even thought an ecumenical council to have the supreme decisive authority in matters of faith and order.

This Jansenist controversy poisoned the Catholic Church during the second half of the 17th up to the 18th century and became mixed up with the difficulties in the Dutch Catholic Church.

Following the accusations by the Jesuits, Codde was summoned to Rome and finally in 1704 deposed as Vicar Apostolic. At first the majority of the Dutch clergy refused to accept the deposition of their bishop and the appointment of his most bitter enemy as his successor. The Metropolitan Chapter of Utrecht played the leading part in the protests against this.

The period between 1704 and 1723 was a difficult one for the Church of Utrecht. The Curia of Rome, in combination with the Jesuits, refused to give in. The spiritual pressure on clergy and people was intense (threats of excommunications etc.). As a result the majority of the Catholics in the course of these years changed sides to Rome. The fact that the Dutch Church did not have a bishop for the administration of ordinations and confirmations made her position very precarious. The moral support of many French bishops and famous Belgian canonists alone would not have helped her to survive.

After many endeavours to come to terms with Rome, the Chapter of Utrecht - supported by French and Belgian friends - decided that it should exercise its old canonical right to elect a new Archbishop for the vacant See of Utrecht. On April 27th 1723 Cornelis Steenoven (1659-1725) was elected Archbishop by the Chapter. The following year he was consecrated a bishop by the Frenchman Dominicus Maria Varlet, Bishop of Babylon. This bishop, suspended by Rome on accusations of Jansenism, lived in those years in Amsterdam.

The Pope did not recognise Steenoven’s consecration and excommunicated him and all the clergy and people who adhered to him. The breach between Rome and Utrecht had become a fact.

The Catholics who kept loyal to Steenoven called themselves Roman Catholics of the Old Episcopal Clergy. This name shows that they saw themselves as Catholics adhering to the old ways of governing the

Church as a national Catholic Church. They also opposed the growing tendency - within the Catholic Church - to believe in the infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith and morals and the idea of the Pope of Rome being the “world” bishop. They were convinced this to be contrary to the witness of Scriptures and the tradition of the Church of the first centuries. Later on after the coming about of the Union of Utrecht the name was changed into the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands.

To secure the episcopal succession in the course of the 18th century there were also bishops consecrated for the vacant sees of Haarlem (1742) and Deventer (1758).

During the 18th century several attempts were made for reconciliation with Rome. But the Dutch Church refused to give in to the condition of complete submission, which she could not accept as contrary to justice and truth. A striking thing in this period is the accent put in the Dutch Church on the active participation of lay people in the (still) Latin liturgy. Many books were published which gave them the liturgy in Latin and Dutch and often accompanied by explanations of the texts and ceremonial. Also very important was the appearance in 1732 of a complete translation of the Bible in Dutch for the use of the faithful. In 1725 a Seminary for the training of clergy was opened at Amersfoort.

As a result of the invasion by the French revolutionary troops, the end of the 18th century brought official freedom of worship for the Catholic Church. But the first half of the next century saw a very difficult period for the Old Catholics. The traditional allies in the Roman Catholic Church – the Gallican and Episcopalian movements – had disappeared in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and in the rise of ultramontane convictions in the Roman Church. The Dutch Church not only felt alone but also had to face a period of decline in membership and parishes.

In 1851 the famous English hymn writer John Mason Neale visited Utrecht and got acquainted with the Church of Utrecht and her archbishop. A result of this was the first major publication of a rather bulky book on the history of the “so called Jansenist Church of Holland”.

The Roman Catholics in the Netherlands asked Pope Pius IX for bishops of their own. And so he did in 1853, when appointing a Roman Catholic hierarchy, including an Archbishop of Utrecht and a Bishop of Haarlem. So from that time on there are two archbishops in Utrecht and two bishops in Haarlem. The last hope on reconciliation had vanished.

The proclamation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a dogma in 1854 by Pius IX was rejected by the Dutch Church in an official statement. She considered this dogma as contrary to the inherited faith as shown in the Scriptures and the teachings of the first centuries of the Catholic Church.

The Dutch Church had always appealed from the decisions of “a wrongly informed” Pope to a future ecumenical council. But her bishops were not invited to the Vatican Council in 1869. This fact forced her to reconsider her ecclesiological basis.

The proclamation by the Vatican Council of the infallibility and universal primacy of the Pope in 1870 was not accepted by many Catholics in the German speaking countries. In the end this resulted in their excommunication. The priests and laity, who hold to the “Old Catholic” faith from before the Vatican Council, found themselves without a bishop.

Their attention was led to the Dutch Catholic Church who also adhered to that same Old Catholic faith and church order. The Archbishop of Utrecht, Henricus Loos (1813-1873), was invited to administer the sacrament of confirmation in German parishes. He also ordained some clergy for the German Old Catholics. The day he died, June 4th 1873, the German Synod elected Hubert Reinkens Bishop of the Old Catholics. Reinkens, together with the elect of Haarlem, Casparus Johannes Rinkel, was consecrated a bishop in Rotterdam by the Bishop of Deventer, Hermannus Heykamp, on August 10th 1873.

The Old Episcopal Clergy becomes the Old Catholic Church

In the following period the contacts with the Old Catholic Churches in Germany and Switzerland got in a low tide. The innovations in liturgy and church order they introduced were too rash and too much for the more conservative style of the Dutch Church. Many Dutch Old Catholics were afraid that such radical changes as the introduction of a Synod with a decisive vote, the abolishing of the compulsory clerical celibacy and the introduction of the vernacular in the liturgy of the Mass, meant a breach with the Catholic tradition. On the other hand younger Dutch theologians were looking at these changes as ways that could help to revitalise their Church. They and some lay persons in this period kept visiting the Old Catholic Congresses in Germany and Switzerland. After some years the necessity of unity and co-operation made it self felt again in the Dutch Church.

The tactful ways of the Swiss and German bishops helped to make it possible for the Archbishop of Utrecht to invite them in 1889 for a Conference. This Conference resulted in the establishing of the Union of Utrecht. The Archbishop of Utrecht became the president ex officio of the International Bishop's Conference of the Union.

Changes in liturgy and church order were, at a slower pace than in the other Old Catholic Churches, also introduced into the Dutch Church. This period saw the building of new churches and the establishing of divers societies for church work on different levels. After a long period of preparation and experimenting, in 1910 the vernacular was introduced into the liturgy of the Eucharist. 1920 saw the introduction of a Synod and 1922 the abolition of the compulsory celibacy for the clergy.

In 1925 the Dutch Church, which contrary to her sister churches had some historically destined problems with accepting the validity of the Anglican orders, after a new investigation declared to recognise them as valid. This decision was followed by a rather short but intensive period in which the Old Catholic and Anglican commissions worked with the aim to come to intercommunion between their churches. As already mentioned 1931 brought the realisation of this.

During the episcopate of Andreas Rinkel as Archbishop of Utrecht (1937-1970) the Dutch Church gave her best to the promotion of Christian Unity. Together with Bishop Kury of Switzerland, Rinkel was involved in a renewal of the Old Catholic theology, trying to make it a helpful instrument in the ecumenical dialogue.

The Second World War and the German occupation were just like for all Dutchmen a difficult and severe period for the Old Catholics. Besides the loss of lives, the destruction of two parish churches and the evacuation of the people of the largest parish of Egmond to other parts of the country took place.

The period after the war presented the challenge of reconstructing church life. The first Old Catholic Congress after the war took place in Hilversum in 1948, not by coincidence the year of the founding in Amsterdam of the World Council of Churches of which the Old Catholic Churches were founding members.

The great changes in society in the sixties and the seventies of the twentieth century also influenced the Dutch Old Catholic Church. A sign of this was the transfer of the seminary to the University of Utrecht in 1969. The greater mobility of people was one of the reasons that church members moved to places without an Old Catholic parish. As a consequence new Old Catholic communities grew in places, were formerly there was no Old Catholic presence. But other members of the church lost all contact with her. Secularisation and decline in church membership, which is a special feature of the Dutch society, did not pass the Old Catholic Church. On the other hand protestant Christians in search for a Catholic Church with a rich liturgy but "without the pope" found their way to the Old Catholic Church. A more recent phenomenon is the fact that Roman Catholics join the Old Catholic communion.

Archbishop Marinus Kok (1916-1999), was most meritorious in involving afresh the East European Old Catholic Churches into the Union of Utrecht.

Antonius Jan Glazemaker (1931) succeeded in 1983 as Archbishop of Utrecht. During his episcopate the Church witnessed the achievement of some important changes, some of them already having been prepared during the former episcopate. In 1990 a new hymnal and in 1993 a new book of worship were published. These books were well received and had also a remarkable influence on the liturgical renewal in the Uniting Dutch Reformed Churches (since 2002 the Protestant Churches in the Netherlands). A

process was started of finding new ways to bring the Gospel of Christ to the people with whom the Old Catholics live and work and also to strengthen their own parochial life. In 1998 the Synod voted for the admission of women to the threefold ministry of the Church, a year later the first woman was ordained a priest.

Present-day situation

The present Dutch Old Catholic Church is small in numbers (about 6.000). Most of the members live in the western part of The Netherlands. In almost every important old city in the provinces of North and South Holland and Utrecht there is an Old Catholic parish. The Church is divided into two dioceses: the archdiocese of Utrecht and the diocese of Haarlem. The diocese of Haarlem consists of almost the whole province of North Holland, the rest of the country is under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Utrecht. There are 26 parishes and 4 congregations without the parochial status. The present Archbishop of Utrecht is dr. Joris Vercammen (b. 1952, bishop since 2000), Bishop of Haarlem is dr. Dirk-Jan Schoon (b. 1958, bishop since 2008).

The Church is governed by the two bishops in co-operation with representatives of the clergy and the laity: the so called Collegiate Board consisting of 8 persons. Decisions involving the faith and the liturgy of the church are the sole responsibility of the bishops.

The Synod of the Church consists of representatives of the clergy and the parishes. They advise the bishops and Collegiate Board; the budget of the Church has to be approved by the Synod.

The Archbishop is also advised by the Metropolitan Chapter of Utrecht. The election of a bishop takes place by the clergy of the vacant diocese and representatives of the laity in the proportion of two to one.

A main characteristic of the Dutch Old Catholics is their love for the liturgy. The Sunday Eucharist is the centre of their spiritual life. The singing of traditional and modern hymns forms an important part of the service (their hymnbook is the thickest in Holland!).

Looking for new ways of spreading the gospel in a secularised country and strengthening the church herself, the Dutch Old-Catholic Church - knowing this not to be easy - looks with confidence to the future.

Old Catholic churches in German speaking countries

In the German speaking countries the Roman-Catholic Church's history has partly been determined by the eighteenth-century Episcopalism (already dating back to the late Middle Ages) stressing episcopal rights against Rome, as well as by catholic enlightenment-movements wanting to carry through church reforms in the second half of the eighteenth century.

As a reaction to the French Revolution, the position of the Pope was strengthened throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. However many theologically well-educated bishops, "conservative" historically trained theologians and progressive-liberal laypeople were not inclined to support the dogmatisation of the infallibility and the universal episcopacy of the Pope, the most important goal of the Vatican Council that started in 1869.

Germany

In Germany the critical bishops ultimately all accepted the First Vatican Council's decisions made in 1870. This also applied for the masses of the faithful, who gave their sympathy to the Pope, whom they called "the prisoner of the Vatican".

The chapter on the history of the Dutch Old-Catholic Church tells more about the course taken by the movement against papal dogmas. Therefore it will be just summarized here.

This oppositional movement consisted of both conservative theologians, who for historical-exegetical reasons found no basis for these papal dogmas, and of liberal lay people, who were brought to the limits of their loyalty to the church by the anti-liberal and reactionary course of Pope Pius IX.

Their great leader, Ignaz von Döllinger (1799-1890), professor in Munich, feared schism and advised to persist in respectful protest, until the Pope would have taken away the stone of offence. But professors Johannes Friedrich (1836-1917) from Munich and Heinrich Reusch (1825-1900) from Bonn and most lay people started founding their own parishes. In this way they hoped to provide protesting Catholics, who by excommunication had been excluded from the sacraments, with normal church life within a church organisation.

The second Old Catholic Congress of 1872 decided to set up a “temporary diocese” for as long as the excommunication from the Catholic Church of those protesting against the papal dogmas would last. June 1873 clergy and laity from the by then formed Old Catholic parishes gathered in Cologne chose professor Joseph Hubert Reinkens (1821-1896) as their bishop. He was consecrated as such that same year in Rotterdam by a Dutch Old-Catholic bishop.

After this there was a difficult period with respect to getting church life properly organised. In 1873 Reinkens was recognized by the King of Prussia as “Catholic Bishop of the Old Catholics in Germany”. Through legislation in Prussia, Baden and Hesse it became possible to found Old-Catholic congregations. Also arrangements were made providing for the distribution of church buildings and finances between both catholic groups. In Bavaria, however, the Old Catholic Church was only recognized by the government after the First World War.

In those first years while establishing church organisation, liturgy and church discipline two schools of thought appeared. One was mainly characterized by an anti-Roman standpoint, which for instance effectuated the abolition of divers “abuses”, like the obligation of personal confession, called by them ‘auricular confession’ (1874) and the compulsory celibacy (1878), the abolishing of which did not pass without protest. The other more represented the wish to implement the in the past suppressed catholic wishes for reform, e.g. involvement of lay people in church government, the celebrating of the liturgy in the vernacular and dialogue with the Orthodox, Anglicans and protestants. But in spite of that it lasted until 1885 before the synod gave permission to celebrate the entire Mass in German.

During this initial period the controversy between conservatives and liberals caused inevitable problems. The abolishing of compulsory celibacy caused great unrest in certain congregations. These problems, together with the feeling of isolation experienced by many parishes and small groups scattered all over Germany, caused many of the initial 70,000 members to abandon the Old Catholic Church. The social composition of the church was for some decades also subject to change. In her beginning she was called the ‘professor’s church’, because so many highly educated and well-to-do people were counted among her members. This phenomenon has now totally changed. The members of most parishes belong to the middle classes. Bishop Reinkens deserves the honour to have led his church in such a way during this difficult period, that the catholic faith remained well preserved and that a certain balance between the various groups and a stabilisation of the over-all situation was established.

From the beginning the German Old Catholic Church had her centre in Bonn, where the majority of the university’s catholic theological faculty was against the papal dogmas. Consequently the bishop resides in Bonn. This city’s university has an Old Catholic seminary and since 1887 an episcopal seminary for priests as well. In Bonn there also was the centre for the education of deaconesses, which was however closed down during the second half of the twentieth century.

Reinkens' successors had to guide their church through some spells of heavy weather. The First World War brought great social disorder as well as the loss of the church's almost entire capital. The reconstruction of the church suffered much during the great economic crisis of the twenties. The dark years that followed plus the Second World War confronted the church with national-socialism. Unfortunately a number of church members saw possibilities for churchgrowth in the fanatic nationalism of party and state. The war's aftereffects hit the church hard, especially in the area of the river Rhine and the *Ruhrgebiet*, two of the centres of the church, in which almost all of her buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. The forced migration of large parts of the population caused the loss of several parishes and parishioners lost the ties with their church. Not only had the church to rebuild her battered existence, she also had the task to take in Old Catholics who had been expelled from Czecho-Slovakia and Silesia. For the Old Catholics in that area the founding of the German Democratic Republic caused almost absolute isolation from their fellow believers in the West. A problem with which the church always had to face, was the lack of priests coming from her own ranks. Also because of this most priests were of Roman Catholic origin, which they often had left to elude from compulsory celibacy.

After a decline during the first decades after the Second World War, the number of members nowadays takes a turn for the better. One cause of this is a more profiled identity. German Old Catholics put emphasis on the fact that their church is a synodically organised church, on the equal rights of women and men - as the German Old Catholic Church was the first to ordain women as priests in 1996 - and on their ecumenical character. The latter concerning it can be pointed out that there is an agreement between the German Old Catholic Church and the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (German Evangelical Church), admitting members of each church to Holy Communion. After the Second World War many relations were entered into with Anglican parishes situated at British and American army bases. This is one of the reasons for the obvious wish to strengthen the relations with Anglican churches. Presently the German Old Catholic Church counts up to around 15,000 members in about fifty parishes, while in many different places church services are held regularly as well.

Dr. Sigisbert Kraft was succeeded as bishop by Joachim Vobbe in 1996. Bishop Vobbe has published several pastoral letters on church life and spirituality. In 2010 he in turn was succeeded by Dr. Matthias Ring (b. 1963), who wrote a dissertation on the history of the German Old-Catholic Church during the Nazi-regime.

Switzerland

In Switzerland resistance against the papal dogmas passed in about the same way as it did in Germany, on the understanding that resistance did not originate in university and higher circles, but from groups of lay-people who were mostly inspired by political motivations. During the first half of the nineteenth century in a number of cantons there had been anti-ultramontane movements.

In 1870 many liberty loving Swiss felt threatened in their political independence, as the Pope in their opinion by the new dogma got the final word on all life's domains. During a meeting of "liberal catholics" in 1872 the decision was made of establishing congregations of their own and the organising of a separate church structure, which happened foremost in the cantons of Aargau and Solothurn. In the first half of the nineteenth century their liberal governments had already tried to limit the Roman Catholic influence on society.

Part of the Aargau is also the Fricktal (Frick Valley), which had formerly been under Austrian rule. In this region most of the parishes later switched over to the Christkatholische Kirche. Until 1815 the Frick Valley belonged to the diocese of Constance, which in this period was administered by Ignaz Heinrich von Wessenberg (1774-1860). This prelate can be considered to be the last representative of eighteenth-century Episcopatism and of the catholic Enlightenment. Still clearly marked was for instance his influence on liturgy and devotional life. "Christkatholisch", the name adopted by the protest movement of

1870, was already in use in those parts of Switzerland. The hymnal edited by Von Wessenberg also appeared under that name.

The mainly political starting-point of the initial phase of the protest was not exactly propitious for a religious movement. Many lay people being in favour of a national church, had only very unclear ideas about the organisation of the church. Some aspired to abolish episcopacy, which in their eyes had a monarchical character and others wanted to elect a bishop only for a certain period of time. In this first, politically predominated period, a trial was given in the canton of Bern to enforce an anti-Vatican state church upon the catholic parishes. In the end this artificial movement totally decayed, with the result that nowadays in this canton only four Old Catholic parishes exist.

Religious leadership was taken up by Eduard Herzog (1841-1924), whose personality and effort made sure that the protest movement did not slide to become a liberal association. In 1875 a *Verfassung* (constitution) was adopted in which the parishes' independence was firmly emphasized. The synod became the main legislative and decision making organisation in the church. The bishop however kept his authority concerning doctrine and the administering of ordinations; in cases of disciplinary nature he would share authority with the synod. 1876 was the year in which Herzog was elected bishop and was consecrated by the German Old Catholic bishop. The Dutch bishops kept distance, because they considered the Swiss *Verfassung* to be a minimizing of a bishop's position and thought that the synod's great power caused the office of a bishop to lose its traditional catholic meaning and position. The fact also of abolishing the compulsory celibacy was not considered as entirely favourably by them.

Herzog was responsible for the building up of church life in the catholic sense. In his numerous published works and pastoral letters he appeared to be an advocate of an evangelical catholicity; to him the Holy Scriptures were the main foundation of the church and of church life. He can be considered the main author of the *Gebetbuch* (Prayer Book) which appeared in 1880, an adapted version of the Roman Missal for his church.

Due to him as well the Christkatholische Kirche got her own theological faculty at the University of Bern. During the hundred years of its existence this faculty has been of great importance for the theological prestige of the Old Catholic churches as well as for its contributions to ecumenical dialogue. Many foreign students, mainly from Orthodox churches study at this faculty. The new-testament scholar Kurt Stalder (1912-1996) has been of great importance in the development of Old Catholic ecclesiology and pastoral theology. The faculty's structure has been altered in 2001. Because of a government decision it was joined with the protestant theological faculty to become the Christkatholische und Evangelische Fakultät. Old Catholic theology will be guaranteed in this new structure.

Herzog was succeeded, in 1924 by Adolf Kury (1870-1956), who was able to consolidate his work. Kury's son and successor Urs (1901-1976) gained his reputation, among others by his extensive work: *Die Altkatholische Kirche*, which still is being used to this day as a work of reference on the history, doctrine and aims of the Old Catholic churches. Bishop Hans Gerny in 1984 succeeded Léon Gauthier (bishop from 1976, d. 2003). He retired in November 2001 and was succeeded by Fritz-René Müller (b. 1939), who held office till 2009, when he was succeeded by the German-born Dr. Harald Rein (b. 1957).

The Swiss church's position considerably varies in each canton. In three of them it is recognised as a *Landeskirche* (National Church), while in other cantons every congregation has to be recognised separately by the government. The number of believers, which has been mentioned during the initial years (73.000 in 1876) can not be considered to be realistic, because those figures were politically influenced. Soon this number came to some 30.000. For a long period of time the Swiss church has been able to maintain her number of members, but secularisation has not left it untouched in this very prosperous country. Nowadays it runs to circa 14.000 members. The spreading of the approximate forty parishes

differs considerably throughout the country. In certain areas, for instance in parts of the Aargau, one can find a parish in every village, often also having the disposal of a church building from before 1870, but in other regions there is a considerable diaspora situation. Towards the end of 1999 a year of study started to reflect upon the future of the church. Already for several years female deacons functioned in the Swiss church; February 2000 the first woman was ordained a priest.

Austria

In Austria the Old Catholic movement had a very difficult start. Although 51 out of 60 bishops of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy opposed the papal dogmas, they all eventually submitted themselves. The Old Catholic movement went from an initially strong to a small one, the causes of which among others were the lack of clergy and Emperor Franz Joseph's opposition. In every possible way the government obstructed the development and upkeep of parishes. In 1877 three of them were eventually recognised by the state, whilst only in 1880 a synod could be held for the first time. The Old Catholics were mainly to be found in Vienna and in North-Bohemia around Warnsdorf. They were, however, not allowed to have a bishop of their own. Under certain restrictive conditions just a diocesan administrator, Amandus Czech (1855-1922), was permitted by the state in 1888. In 1889 Czech announced that he could accept the Declaration of Utrecht. Upon this, although not being a bishop, he was accepted as a member of the IBC. He transferred his see in 1896 from Vienna to Warnsdorf in Bohemia, in the environs of which a number of thriving parishes had developed. Around the year 1900 mainly in Vienna new parishes arose, because of the mainly nationalistically motivated, so-called "Los von Rom" (Away from Rome) movement. The problem with these new Old Catholics was that many of them not only were critical towards Rome, but often showed a rather un-churchlike mentality.

From the beginning the Austrian church had suffered by the fact that the majority of her members lives in Vienna. In the other confederate states parishes are to be found often just in their capitals, which then have to carry responsibility for the whole region. Another disadvantage is the fact that this rather bureaucratically structured church does not have a faculty of her own for the training of priests. The number of members runs to about 11.000 and is in the last years after a decline increasing. The level of non-committance which many members traditionally show remains a problem however. The Austrian church is the first of the churches in the Union of Utrecht who opened the possibility of the blessing of same-sex unions. Bernhard Heitz (b. 1949, bishop since 1996) was in 2007 succeeded by the Nigerian-born Johannes Okoro (b. 1949).

Czechia

In 1918 the end of the First World War brought about the fall of the Danubian Monarchy as well as Czechoslovakia's independence. The Old Catholic Church of Austria was divided into two independent dioceses. Austria, having been much reduced, got a diocese with its see in Vienna and the new republic a diocese with Warnsdorf as see. Alois Paschek (1869-1949) was in 1924 consecrated bishop of the Old Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. In this new state a nationalist feeling came up, which was rather hostile towards the German speaking minority. The in all thirteen Old Catholic parishes in North Bohemia consisted just of people from this background and therefore they were regarded with a certain mistrust by the Czech speaking part of the population. This was also the reason that people who were critical about the developments in the Roman Catholic Church, rather became members of the in 1920 among others, for nationalistic reasons founded Czech National Church, than of the Old Catholic Church. Only in Prague there was an autonomous Czech parish, which did have relations with the bishop, but not with the other parishes.

The closing of the Second World War caused an almost total ruin of the Czech church. Those people known as *Südetendeutscher* were no longer tolerated in the country and were put across the German border. Among them were thousands of Old Catholics. Afterwards only in Prague and its surroundings some Czech-speaking parishes existed, under the administration of the *Bistumsverweser* Vaclav Rab (1878-1956). Soon the situation of the church in this since 1948 communist country became disordered and chaotic. Thanks to the 'Prague Spring' in 1968 the church could breathe somewhat more freely and Augustin Podolak (1912-1991), who already administered the diocese, was elected bishop and consecrated that same year in Utrecht. The military invasion of the Warsaw Pact put the clock back and Podolak was forced by the government to resign. The priest Milos Pulec took over the leadership of the church, which was mainly limited to Prague and its surroundings. The fall of communism in 1989 brought a whole new situation. Bishop Podolak wanted to reclaim his office, while Pulec did not want to step down. This caused quite a confusion. In the end both died in 1991. Dusan Hejbal (b. 1951) was elected bishop in 1991, and received consecration in Prague in 1997. He is especially active in working with youth and is trying to infuse new life into his small community of about 3,500 members. For instance there is pastoral care once again in since long abandoned parishes in North Bohemia.

After the falling apart of Czechoslovakia into the two states of Czechia and *Slovakia*, the latter as well came an independent Old Catholic Church, with Bratislava as its main centre. This church, counting circa 900 members, was acknowledged in 2000 by the IBC as a member of the Union of Utrecht. Considering the small number of the Slovak Church, the IBC decided that she for the time being, would not have a bishop of her own. Unhappy enough the bishop-elect sought and found consecration by an episcopus vagans and in consequence thereof he was expelled from the Union of Utrecht.

20th century Old-Catholic Churches in Europe

Croatia

Another part of the former Danubian Monarchy is Croatia. Resistance against Roman centralism had some old roots here; Bishop Josip Strossmayer (1815-1905) of Zagreb was the last Roman-Catholic bishop who in 1872 submitted to the Vatican dogmas. The Old Catholic Church which had arisen there joined the Union of Utrecht in 1923. However, already in 1928 it had become necessary for the IBC to endorse the deposition of Bishop Marko Kalogjera (1869-1956) by his own synod and to break off relations with him. As his successor Ante Donkovic was elected. Kalogjera refused to acquiesce in this decision and the consequence of all of this was a schism in which a third of the church followed him. Because the government refused a visa out of his country, it never came to the consecration of Donkovic.

During the Second World War thousands of Old Catholics were killed in the concentration camps, including the Bishop-elect Donkovic. After the war there was not much left of the church, who numbered about 42.000 in 1941. The state of Yugoslavia, which had become communist, demanded the formation of independent old catholic churches in each of the federal republics. The IBC however wanted to hold on to just one episcopal see in Yugoslavia and therefore objected to the consecration of separate bishops for Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. This resulted into a very confused situation, in which the state tried to force its will in many ways. At last the IBC only accepted the small church of Croatia, with its centre in Zagreb, as a union member. For this church Vilim Huzjak (1894-1974) was consecrated bishop, after whose death till now the see remained vacant. When necessary one of the IBC's bishops is assigned to perform episcopal acts. In the present-day state of Bosnia-Herzegovina there are also small Old Catholic communities with Croat backgrounds.

Poland

In 1918 Poland once again became an independent state, after having been divided up between Russia, Germany and Austria for more than a century. Some Poles returned from the United States to their native country to help build it up. Among them there were a number of people belonging to the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC, see below). The PNCC bishop Hodur decided that there should be an independent catholic church in Poland as well. To help to achieve this he sent the priest Bronislaw Krupski to Poland. In 1920 Hodur himself visited his native country. Legalisation however of the National Polish Catholic Church in Poland itself was refused by the government. Upon this Hodur sent Franciscus Bonczak to Poland as leader of a mission, the centre of which was set up in Krakow. Bonczak was consecrated a bishop in Scranton in 1924. Notwithstanding fierce opposition of the government, which was under strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church, many thousands joined the national church. It is even said that in 1939 there were some 400.000 Old Catholics in Poland. Since 1931 they were headed by Josef Padewski (1894-1951), who had also come from the United States. The church was however decimated during the Second World War. After the war she was officially recognised, but her bishop had been arrested by the new communist government being accused of espionage for the United States and he died in prison in 1951.

That same year, 1951, the synod of the Polish-Catholic Church by express wishes of the government declared itself independent from the American-Polish mother church. Julian Pekala (1905-1977) was consecrated bishop in 1952 by the principal bishop of the Mariavites (this church is discussed hereafter). This consecration was not accepted by the Union of Utrecht because she took place without the IBC's consent, by a bishop with whom relations were no longer kept. The political situation relaxed somewhat after 1956. In 1959 Maksymilian Rode was elected bishop and consecrated in Utrecht by Leon Grochowski (1886-1969), the American Prime Bishop. Somewhere during the sixties the deposed Bishop Pekala appeared on the scene again and in 1965 - among others by state pressure - switched parts with Rode. The PNCC's influence contributed to the fact that Pekala was gradually replaced by Tadeusz Majewski, who became the leading bishop.

During his presidency of the IBC, Archbishop Marinus Kok (1916-1999) successfully worked hard to improve relations between the Polish Catholic Church and the Union. Also the relationship of that church with the state had been notably improved after 1970. To counter the large political and social influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the Polish-Catholic Church, as were the other non-Roman Catholic churches, was helped in a number of ways by the government. The situation changed after the fall of the communist regime in that sense that the church had to be financially self-sufficient. In 1996 Majewski withdrew as leading bishop and was succeeded by his coadjutor Dr. Wiktor Wysoczanski (b. 1939). The National Synod will in June 2013 elect Bishops for the Dioceses of Cracow and Wroclaw, who are vacant at the moment.

There are three dioceses in the Polish-Catholic Church: Warsaw, Wroclaw (the former Breslau) and Cracow with circa 23.000 members (in 2009 there were 80 parishes and 111 priests). The synod convenes on a regular basis. Parishes vary greatly in size, diverging from a few tens up to hundreds of members. The latter for instance counts for parishes that followed their priest who left the Roman-Catholic Church. Something to be expected in Poland, but notable nonetheless, is the intense veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Although the Polish church does not consider the ordination of women, she nevertheless has declared to respect this decision of her sister churches. Together with some other churches the Polish church runs a seminary at the Christian Theological Academy at Warsaw.

Jurisdictions of the IBC

In some countries there exist Old-Catholic churches who are too small to form an independent national church with a bishop of her own etc. Old-Catholic congregations in these countries are looked after by the International Bishop's Conference, who appoints one of its members for the episcopal oversight of a particular country.

France

In France, the country of Gallican tradition and memories of "Jansenist" movements, in 1870 also came into being an Old Catholic movement. Only the fall of the Second Empire and the succeeding revolt, the Paris Commune, caused it to get nipped in the bud. A small parish developed in Paris in 1879, guided by Hyacinthe Loyson (1827-1912), a charismatic personality and a famous preacher who had been attached to the cathedral of Notre Dame. Already earlier he had gotten married and after some years put his community under the jurisdiction of the Episcopalian bishop of Western New York. Neither one of both these acts made him acceptable to the Dutch Old Catholic bishops, when he was nominated to be consecrated bishop of the Gallican church. Loyson withdrew in 1893 and George Volet (1864-1915) who was a big advocate of celibacy, became head of the congregation in Paris. Hereupon the parish of Saint Denis came under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Utrecht. After Volet died, from 1919 on pastoral care was in the hands of X.E.J. Gouard, parish priest of Rotterdam (1877-1940), a Frenchman by birth.

In a number of places in France during the course of years there have been Old Catholic parishes or communities. In the end however their existence appeared not to be viable. Often the reason for this was the personality of the priests who lead the parish. Often enough they were charismatic people who after their departure turned out to be as good as irreplaceable, so that the life of the community, which almost only had been carried by them, came to a standstill.

At the moment the Old-Catholics in France are looked after by the Archbishop of Utrecht. Except for a group in Paris there are some other places (especially in the Alsace) where Old Catholics meet on a regular basis. In the northern part of France there is a regular parish in Prisches.

Scandinavia

In the Scandinavian countries small Old Catholic churches developed because a number of Lutherans became having problems with the extreme influence of the state within the church, with liberal theology being tolerated in the state church and with the admittance of women to the ministries of priest and bishop. For certain members a problem has arisen because of the fact that now also in the Union of Utrecht ordinations of women are accepted in some of the member churches. The IBC delegate at the moment is the Bishop of Haarlem who maintains contacts with the Old Catholic parishes in Sweden and Denmark.

At the moment the Old Catholic churches have a dialogue with the Lutheran Church of Sweden, which has preserved the apostolic succession of her ministry. This dialogue came to a conclusion in 2013. A report with recommendations for further steps will be presented to the official organs of both churches before it will be published.

C. History and background of some churches who formerly belonged to the Union of Utrecht of Old Catholic Churches

Italy

A jurisdiction of the IBC used to be the Old Catholic Church of Italy. In 1881 Count Enrico di Campello resigned as a canon of Saint Peter's in Rome as a protest against the papal dogmas. He put himself at the head of an Italian Old Catholic movement, which soon included a number of parishes and other communities. Except for the Old Catholics he kept up friendly contacts with the Anglicans. This can be the cause of him never being consecrated, although he had in 1891 been elected bishop by a synod. At the beginning of the twentieth century this movement evaporated. In the sixties a new group developed around a charismatic personality, who put himself under the IBC's jurisdiction.

Till 2011 there was a parish in Milano in communion with the Union of Utrecht. This parish was interestingly enough, founded by mainly a group of Czech people, who live and work there. Furthermore in some other Italian cities and villages, for example Bozen (Bolzano) and Rom, Old Catholics meet on a more or less regular basis.

In 2011 the International Bishop's Conference decided – due to inner problems in the Italian parishes – to withdraw her pastoral oversight. A solution for the remaining Old-Catholics in Italy is sought in cooperation with the Anglican Church.

The United States of America and Canada

At the end of the nineteenth century a church having totally different roots than the other member churches joined the Union of Utrecht. This was an independent catholic church that had been developing among Polish immigrants of the United States of America. In the new world these immigrants came under the jurisdiction mainly of Irish bishops, who showed little or no respect for their culture. Neither were they allowed to control their churches and parish centres which had been financed by themselves, nor did they get Polish priests, who spoke the language of the faithful. For this kind of reasons various parishes around Chicago got into conflict with their bishop. Consequently in 1897 they united in the Polish Catholic Church and chose Anton Stanislaus Kozlowski as their new bishop. He turned to the IBC for consecration, was recognized by it and he accepted the Episcopal Declaration. He was thereupon consecrated in Bern.

In 1904 some parishes developed around Scranton, Pennsylvania, which consisted foremost of miners, formed a second Polish church in the USA. They chose Francis Hodur (1866-1953) as their bishop. He also turned to the IBC for consecration. The IBC did not want there to be two Old Catholic churches in the USA and refused to consecrate him. Kozlowski died in 1907 and the Union's bishops then urged the two churches to unite. This took place and in the same year Hodur was consecrated in Utrecht. A third centre, which already had risen around Buffalo in 1896, joined the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) in 1914.

Hodur had a strong personality and under his leadership the membership of the church rapidly increased. In some respects Hodur's theology was regarded as suspicious by his fellow bishops of the Union. While, for instance, he adhered to the traditional number of seven sacraments, he joined baptism and confirmation into one - in itself not entirely unjustly so - to make room for a new sacrament, the preaching of the Word of God. Concerning the afterlife he rejected the doctrine of eternal punishment and believed in the possibility of a sinner's conversion after his death. After Hodur's death mostly a kind of reverend silence was kept about the latter, as well as nowadays about the fact that he did not have any fundamental objections against the ordination of women. Compulsory celibacy was abolished in 1921. As liturgy was soon celebrated in Polish, in time English has become the main liturgical language.

A characteristic of the PNCC is that she, contrary to the other churches of the Union, hold on to a number of devotional traditions of a 'typically Roman' nature. Besides the strong veneration of the Blessed

Virgin, in many parishes special societies exist for the adoration of the Holy Sacrament and the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The praying the Stations of the Cross is also a known phenomenon. On the other hand it was in fact in the PNCC that the first plea was heard to celebrate the Eucharist standing behind the altar, facing the congregation. It was also in this church that this was brought into practice.

The church is divided into five dioceses, one of which is situated in Canada. At the head of the church is the Prime Bishop, who however does not have his own diocese. Each diocese does have a synod of its own. The church as a whole has also a General Synod, which convenes once in five years. In this synod the majority is formed by laity. During its sessions among others the bishop candidates are chosen. In case of the vacancy of a diocese one of the 'elects' is put into office. In the PNCC there traditionally is a strongly institutionalised form of social care. More so than her sister churches the PNCC feels itself akin to the Church of Rome, which till 2005 was headed by a Pole. Therefore she will try to stand as far as possible in line with the old mother church. In the nineties of the previous century it was decided, although with certain restrictions, to admit mutual members to receive the sacraments.

Until recently many Polish cultural expressions were considered to be an important part of the PNCC's identity. In present day times to many members it is no longer a matter of course to belong to a church with many typically Polish accents. Already for a long period a number of parishes of Latvian or Czech origin belonged to the PNCC, but nowadays also comprises members of totally different than Eastern European backgrounds. Great concern is felt for the lack of affiliation of many young people for the church, as is the want of seminarians.

In 1978 the PNCC ended intercommunion with the Episcopal Church, which she entered into in 1948, as a response to admission of women to ordination. After the ordination to the priesthood of women in the Old-Catholic sister churches of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the PNCC stated that because of this, full communion with those churches was severed. This was not however expressly stated after the first ordination of a woman in the Dutch church.

Following the twentieth General Synod in 1999 it looked as if the PNCC wished to find ways to keep the ties with the Union of Utrecht. But early in 2004 the bishops of the PNCC informed the IBC that they had decided to leave the Union of Utrecht as a consequence of their disagreement with the other churches of the Union on some ethical issues and on the ordination of women.

The PNCC parish of *Toronto* (Canada) had difficulties in accepting the breach with the Union of Utrecht and decided to seek contacts of her own with the Union. In 2005 the Archbishop of Utrecht became responsible for this Polish parish; the episcopal functions he delegated to the Anglican Bishop of Toronto. But in 2009 the PNCC parish of Toronto returned to the PNCC (Scranton).

In 2008 the so-called *Union of Scranton* was founded by the Polish National Catholic Church. It is based on an amended Declaration of Utrecht of 1889 and rejects explicitly the ordination of women and the blessing of same-sex unions. Since then, it has expanded to Europe and includes now the Nordic Catholic Church who broke away from the Lutheran state Church of Norway. It also includes some small groups in Germany.

Poland - the Mariavites

A church that has belonged to the Union of Utrecht from 1909 until 1924, and of which the main remnant tries to establish contact again since a number of years, is the Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites in Poland. Although it does not belong in this text in its strictest sense, for the sakes of history and possibly the future it is imperative to summarize its origins and development.

This church evolved from a religious “revivalist” movement among clergy, nuns and monks at the end of the nineteenth century. In those times the theological and moral levels of Roman-Catholic clergy was not exactly a high one. In 1893 Francisca Maria Kozłowska (1862-1921), who claimed to have had visions of the Blessed Virgin, founded a congregation of priests, after the rule of Saint Francis of Assisi. Mary’s life was to be exemplary for the members, from which they derived the name of Mariavites. “*Mariae Vitae*” literally means: the life of Mary. Another of their characteristics was and is their strong devotion to the Holy Sacrament. The aim was to improve the lives of the Polish Catholics by the exemplary lives of the priests. This movement has been very active in the fields of education, the taking care of the sick and unemployment relief works in Russian-Poland and had a great appeal on thousands of people. Instigated by the Polish bishops, this movement was condemned by Rome in 1904 and in 1906 its members were even excommunicated.

The Mariavites elected Johannes Kowalski as their bishop in reply to this. He was brought into contact with the IBC by the Russian general Alexander Kirejew (d. 1910), who was very committed to the sake of reunion between the Orthodox and Old Catholics. All of this finally resulted in Kowalski’s consecration in Utrecht in 1909. One consecrator was the English Bishop Arnold Mathew. The following year Archbishop Gul and the Bishop of Haarlem, Van Thiel, who even learned Polish for the occasion, travelled to Poland, together with some other Dutch. They had an enthusiastic reception by sometimes large crowds and were enthusiastic themselves about everything they saw and heard.

This was a prosperous period for the Mariavites. The following years many parishes were established and in the city of Plock a large convent was build. As long as the “little mother” Kozłowska lived, relations with the Union remained excellent, but after her death strange theological ideas manifested themselves in and through Bishop Kowalski. He regarded himself, after Adam, the first man, and after Christ, the second Adam, to be the third Adam and introduced mystical marriages between priests and nuns. Children from these marriages would be free from original sin and consequently did not need to be baptized. When rumours about these and suchlike ideas reached the IBC Archbishop Kenninck decided immediately to sever all relations with the Mariavites. In 1929 the Mariavites proceeded to ordain women to the priesthood and some time later also to the episcopate. Some scandals led in 1935 to Kowalski’s deposition by the General Chapter of the Mariavites. He was succeeded by Bishop Philip Feldman, but a schism took place, because a small group remained loyal to Kowalski. This group exists up until today and is designated by the name of Mariavites of Felicianow.

The largest group, with its centre in Plock, renounced all of Kowalski’s excesses and returned to the basis of Old Catholic doctrine. After 1970 these Mariavites and the Union of Utrecht grew closer again. In 1972 the Dutch bishops Kok and Van Kleef took part in Stanislaw Kowalski’s consecration. The fact that there would be two Old Catholic churches in one country did and still does interfere with their return into the Union of Utrecht. Healthy ecclesiology does not allow for this, but it is difficult to unite these two communities with their completely different spirituality and history into one church. In 1985 the IBC decided that every Old Catholic church would be free to enter into intercommunion with this group of Mariavites. In the mean time the church in The Netherlands already has done so. In 2007 an official dialogue committee started talks on existing theological differences, as a step towards possible re-integration into the Union of Utrecht.

D. Relations with the Anglican Communion

The prize the Swiss, and also the German, Old-Catholics had to pay for the realisation of the Union of Utrecht in 1889, was a freezing of the relations with the Churches of the Anglican Communion.

Anglicans had been prominently present at the Reunion Conferences at Bonn under the leadership of Von Döllinger in 1874 and 1875. Since the question of unity repeatedly became an item on the agenda of the Anglican Lambeth Conferences as well as Old-Catholic synods. Since 1879 the Swiss and since 1883 the German Old Catholic Church formally admitted communicant members of Anglican Churches to the Eucharist in their churches. From old the Dutch Church was wavering in her acceptance of the Church of England as a fully catholic church. One of the reasons for this was the memory of the presence of an Anglican bishop as a delegate at the famous National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church at Dordrecht in 1618 and 1619. There were also experiences with Anglican congregations in The Netherlands who presented themselves as being Protestant and there was the lively recollection that the venerated 17th century Bishop Van Neercassel had denied the validity of the Anglican ordinations. The existing contacts of the German and Swiss Old Catholics with Anglican Churches and overtures made from England led to the installation in the Dutch Church of a committee, which had to investigate into the question of the apostolic succession in the Anglican Church. A report published in 1894 showed that there were great hesitations about the validity of the ordinal. As a consequence the rapprochement came to nothing.

The Mathew affair

In 1907 an English clergyman Arnold Harris Mathew came with the request, if the Old-Catholic Churches in Europe would not help him to found an Old-Catholic Church in England. According to him there was a great need of this in that country. This idea was received positively by Archbishop Gul, in this supported by Bishop Herzog. The following year Mathew informed them that he was elected a bishop by a synod of the Old-Catholic Church of England and he requested consecration as a bishop and admission into the Union of Utrecht. And this happened, after first postponing the consecration because the Dutch bishops discovered that Mathew had forgotten to tell them that he was married. Up to this moment none of the bishops of the Union were married!

How intricate the relation between Anglicans and Old-Catholics was at this moment is seen by the following. The same year 1908 saw the foundation of the *Society of Saint Willibrord*, which aimed at the bringing about of “closer intercommunion between the Old Catholic Churches and the Church of England”. The Archbishop of Utrecht became patron and the Bishop of Haarlem president on the Old Catholic side.¹

Soon it became clear that there did not exist an Old Catholic Church in England. Mathew developed in such a way that in 1913 the bishops of the Union terminated intercommunion with him. Harm in the relations with the Anglicans was caused by careless investigation of Gul and his fellow-bishops into the real situation in England. Mathew consecrated a number of new bishops, by doing so he became the ancestor of a group of “*episcopi vagantes*”, wandering bishops of very different religious persuasions. It is understandable that the Anglican Church was not very grateful to the Old Catholics for this mistake. Happily enough the relations by mutual exertion soon improved again.

In 1920 the conservative Archbishop Gul had died and was succeeded by Franciscus Kenninck. The new archbishop not only realised some much needed for reforms in his church, but also worked hard on the improvement of ecumenical relations. 1924 saw the solution of the “English question”. The question of the validity of Anglican orders, on which in 1894 no decision was taken, was once more comprehensively discussed.

The result of this was that Kenninck June 2nd 1925 wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, that his church was convinced that the Anglican Church always had had the intention to retain

¹ For a history of the Society up to 1981 see: John Burley, “The Society of St. Willibrord. Its History” in: Gordon Huelin ed., *Old-Catholics & Anglicans 1931-1981*, Oxford, 1983, pag. 62-74.

the episcopal government of the primitive church and that the ordinal of Edward VI was valid. Therefore he was grateful to declare that the apostolic succession in the Anglican Church was not interrupted.

This decision was ratified by the International Bishop's Conference at Berne in the same year.

Growing contacts

The contacts with the Anglicans soon became intensive. Symbolically for this was the presence of the Bishops of Haarlem and Deventer in 1928 at the installation of Cosmo Gordon Lang as Archbishop of Canterbury. The same year the Society of Saint Willibrord – which owing to the First World War was not active anymore – was revived. All three Dutch bishops visited the 1930 Lambeth Conference. This resulted on that occasion in London in the first talks for the achievement of intercommunion. From Old Catholic side suddenly the Dutch took over the lead. The Lambeth conference made the recommendation to install a committee, which should have the task to discuss the whole matter. On both sides the necessary documents were prepared. July 2nd 1931 saw delegations of a broad composition of both communions gathered in Bonn. It was important that the Anglican delegation did not only consist of “high church”, but also of “evangelical” minded theologians. On account of the thorough preparations the discussions had to last only for one day and the remaining questions could be resolved. In the evening one agreed on the following agreement:

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*

In September this so-called Bonn Agreement was accepted by the bishops of the Union of Utrecht and in January 1932 by the convocations of Canterbury and York. In June of the same year the new relation between the two communions was shown by the participation of the Bishop of Haarlem at the consecration of two bishops in London. In the following years the Bonn Agreement was also accepted by the other churches of the Anglican Communion.

E. Contacts with other catholic churches

Spain and Portugal

Independent catholic churches developed also without direct connection to the First Vatican Council. Around 1870 this happened in Spain and later in Portugal as well. In origin and structure they can be compared to the Old Catholic churches. The leaders of these churches however stood under the influence of the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church. The Bishop-elect of the Spanish church, Juan Cabrera requested the Dutch bishops in 1889 to consecrate him. They refused to do so because his church's religious foundations were the Anglican 39 articles. In the eyes of the Dutch Old Catholics in those days these articles were not being considered fully catholic. Consequently Cabrera in 1894 was consecrated by bishops of the Church of Ireland. The Portuguese church founded in 1880 had the same foundation as the Spanish church.

² For further reading on the negotiations leading to the Bonn Agreement: *Report of the Meeting of the Commission of the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches held at Bonn, on Thursday, July 2, 193, London S.P.C.K. (1931); C.B. Moss, The Old Catholic Movement. Its origins and History, London S.P.C.K. , pag. 340-351.*

The contacts of the Anglicans with both the Old Catholic churches and these Iberic churches were the cause for the request of the latter churches to establish full communion with the churches of the Union of Utrecht. On September 23rd 1965 this was settled during the Old Catholic Congress in Vienna. In those days it was also considered to integrate both churches into the Union of Utrecht. This, however, did not take place and they have entered the Anglican Communion instead.

The Philippines

Also during the Vienna Congress of 1965 it was decided to enter into full communion with the Philippine Independent Catholic Church. This church arose in 1896 in connection with the Philippine struggle for independence. The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines was controlled by clergy from Spain, who had taken sides with the Spanish coloniser. The Iglesia Filipina Independiente's first leader was Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940), who also was elected her bishop. He turned for consecration to the American Episcopal Bishop Charles Henry Brent, who was an ecumenist of the first hour, and also to Bishop Eduard Herzog of Switzerland. Long years of negotiations lead to nothing and so Aglipay was consecrated a bishop by his own priests, which is not in any way in conformity with catholic tradition. By some of his church reforms he also deviated on many points from the faith of the early church.

After his death the tide turned and in 1947 a totally catholic creed was adopted. In 1948 the Philippine bishops were consecrated by Episcopalian bishops from the USA. From 1961 on the Philippine church on the basis of the 1931 *Bonn Agreement* entered into intercommunion with most Anglican churches and in 1965 with the Union of Utrecht as well. Most of the several million members of this church are to be found in the poorest sections of the Philippine population. The succeeding "Obispos maximos" and other bishops were welcome and respected guests at divers Old Catholic gatherings and Old Catholic bishops visited the Philippine Church. Churches of the Union of Utrecht support this church on a regular basis in diaconal projects, theological education and other matters.

India

A new ecumenical contact is with the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, also known as the Mar Thoma Church, a church based in the State of Kerala in south-western India. In 2011 started an official theological consultation with this church. The Mar Thoma Church belongs to the Eastern Oriental (Syriac) tradition and traces its origins back to the mission activities of St. Thomas the Apostle in the 1st century. In the 19th century the church was much influenced through British missionaries by the European reformed tradition. The Mar Thoma Church defines itself as "Apostolic in origin, Universal in nature, Biblical in faith, Evangelical in principle, Ecumenical in outlook, Oriental in worship, Democratic in function, Episcopal in character".

Canon drs. Wietse van der Velde