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Grussworte und Predigt des Erzbischofs von Canterbury

**anlässlich der Feierlichkeiten in Utrecht 6./7. November 1981
zum 50jährigen Bestehen der anglikanisch-alkatholischen
Interkommunion**

Redaktionelle Vorbemerkung. So sehr es uns freut, nachstehend den Text sowohl der Grussadresse des Oberhauptes der anglikanischen Kirche, Most Rev. Robert Runcie, als auch von dessen Predigt anlässlich der Feierlichkeiten vom 6./7. November 1981 in Utrecht veröffentlichten zu können, so sehr bedauern wir, dass dies aus terminlichen Gründen nicht mehr in Heft 4/81, das ausschliesslich diesem Ereignis gewidmet war, möglich gewesen ist, da die Texte leider erst nach Drucklegung der betreffenden Nummer bei der Redaktion eintrafen. Wir hoffen aber, dass die beiden Texte auch nachträglich das Interesse unserer Leser finden werden, und danken für das Verständnis.

Hans A. Frei.

Speech at the Hotel des Pays Bas, November 6th

*After warmly thanking Archbishop Kok for the dinner and Bishop Majewski for his gifts the Archbishop of Canterbury recalled the presence of the Old Catholic bishops at the Nikaeen Dinner at Lambeth Palace on the night before the Bonn Agreement Celebrations in Westminster Abbey on the exact 50th anniversary last July.
He went on to say:*

You will know that at this point in a meal an Englishman always wants to say something serious in a light-hearted way. I want to begin by saying that I think I can hear the echo of some words spoken by the leader of the Anglican delegation to the Bonn Conference, Bishop Headlam of Gloucester. In 1937 he came to Utrecht with a predecessor of Bishop John Satterthwaite and took part in Archbishop Rinkel's consecration as Archbishop of Utrecht – it was, by the way, the first time Headlam had worn a mitre, what he was not prepared to do for

Anglo-Catholics he was prepared to do for Old Catholics. At a great Dinner in this same hotel, with many speeches and toasts, it at last came to the turn of the Anglican Chaplain in Utrecht to speak. He had hardly begun before Headlam shouted down the table: "Say it in Dutch, man, say it in Dutch, all the Old Catholics speak a lot of English for our sake, *someone* must do something about it – not least for the prestige of the Church of England."

Headlam was in Utrecht again on the 6th and 7th of November 1939 – after war had already begun for the commemoration of the 12th centenary of St. Willibrord when I am told the statue of St. Willibrord outside this hotel was erected by all the Churches. He was greatly impressed by the ecumenical commemoration at which there were three addresses: Roman Catholic, Old Catholic and Reformed.

Rather than have three lectures tonight you have wisely decided on only one; but with real ecumenical humility and sensitivity, in a country where the Reformed tradition has great significance, you have invited a Swiss Reformed Professor to address us on the relationship between our Churches! It savours of what a fellow Scotsman of mine, the poet Robert Burns once called the gift, "to see ourselves as others see us". Burns was not a very good son of the Reformed Kirk of Scotland. Lukas Vischer *is* a good son of the Reformed Church; he is furthermore a brother we are all greatly indebted to for his years of scholarship in the service of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. We are glad that in his new role, where he teaches rather than drafts ecumenical theology, he still puts himself at the service of all the Churches.

Mention of the WCC reminds me that it was here in Utrecht that the World Council was born in the coming together of the Life and Work, and Faith and Order movements in 1938. And twenty years later this Hotel witnessed the agreement between the Russian Orthodox Church which resulted in Orthodox participation in the World Council – an event which has importance to me because of my long love for the Orthodox and my past responsibility for Anglican dialogue with them. This has often reminded me of the Old Catholic Churches because whenever the question of the *filioque* has arisen – and that is often – I have admired the courage of the Old Catholics in restoring the Nicene Creed to its original form. I have yet to persuade the Church of England to do this, but I am still trying!

To come to Utrecht is, then, to come to an ecumenical city – even an ecumenical hotel – and to come at the Feast of St. Willibrord is clearly

the right time of year (despite the weather/even the weather shows this during the first part of the day at least)! Though I come here to celebrate the Bonn Agreement between the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Churches of the Union of Utrecht, I do not do so to the exclusion of other Christian traditions for the Bonn Agreement gives hope to all ecumenical discussions as a kind of first-fruits of the ecumenical harvest. Not that it is a perfect model, or that Anglicans, at least, have always considered its full implications. But it has brought the two traditions together without the absorption of the one into the other. We share the same faith, the same ministry, the same sacraments – and the challenge of a mission to a largely post-Christian secular society.

Tonight we celebrate the Bonn Agreement and also look for the day when there can be a wider unity in which the many different traditions, without losing their God-given distinctiveness, can by their unity and diversity serve one Church and one World.

**Sermon in St. Gertrude's Cathedral, Utrecht, on the Occasion of the
Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Bonn Agreement**

Ephesians 1.17–19

*May Our Lord Jesus Christ... open the
eyes of your understanding that you may
know what is the hope to which he has
called you, what are the riches of his
glorious inheritance in the saints and
what is the immeasurable greatness of
his power in us who believe in him.*

The Netherlands holds many memories for me and so it is a real joy to be here in Utrecht with its many ecumenical associations to celebrate the second part of the Jubilee of the Bonn Agreement. Archbishop Kok has spoken of the many links between England and the Low Countries in the past and I join with him in thanking God profoundly for our contemporary links so vividly demonstrated in our celebration of the Eucharist together this morning on the Feast of St. Willibrord. Such early missionaries following apostolic example, often went in pairs: as did Willibrord's fellow workers Willibald and Winnebald – perhaps that is why you are getting two sermons this morning instead of one. Be that as it may Archbishop Kok has spoken with gratitude of the past: I will try and speak with hope of the future.

Last night Professor Lukas Vischer in a distinguished lecture spoke with appreciation but also as a friendly critic of the Bonn Agreement: he too was looking to the future and asking questions. This is not the place to try to answer them, but I do want to record my agreement with him that mere mutual recognition is a thin ecumenism which does not do justice to the depth and richness of the mutual sharing in the common life of the Body of Christ which 'being in communion' must surely mean: and how greatly we need to recapture this vision. Indeed there is a sense in which the Bonn Agreement's stress on the independence of each Church is a denial rather than an affirmation of catholicity. It is put inimitably by the English priest and poet John Donne: "No man is an island, entire of itself."

Yet in spite of the shortcomings of the Bonn Agreement it did achieve communion. And with less paper and in less time than less successful unity discussions. And any achievement of communion gives us hope: not the professional hope of an ecumenist who is merely interested in ecclesiastical mergers, but the more profound Christian hope for what the Church could signal to a fragmented and disorientated society.

St. Willibrord was a man from Northumbria – where I too was ordained – who laboured for fifty years in Utrecht to preach the Gospel, build up the Church, and establish a Christian and civilized culture. It was precisely because he offered a vision of unity – and more than just a vision – that Pepin and Charlemagne, the principalities and powers of the day, gave Willibrord his missionary mandate. Willibrord saw in his mission the duty to give meaning to a broken and purposeless society. The unity of the Church served the unity of mankind. The fact that an Englishman stands here today in this Cathedral and that Archbishop Kok stood with me in Westminster Abbey last July similarly points to that wider unity of the human household God intends.

During the last week I have visited Christians in Belgium and Holland. I have also called on those who serve the European Community. That the two were done together is no accident. I want the Churches to seek and celebrate their unity so that they can offer a vision of a human society in which each man and women can find compassion for the poor and underprivileged, reconciliation with their neighbours, and a personal meaning and fulfilment in their lives. Such a unity the Christian faith once offered to the peoples of Europe. It was expressed in men like Willibrord and Boniface. It was put no more clearly than by Sir Thomas More, who spent part of his formative

years in the house where I live in London – Lambeth Palace. He was a page boy to my predecessor, Cardinal Moreton, and in the 1490s learnt how to conduct himself in public by watching the visitors come and go in the Cardinal's audience chamber under which some of you will have entered through the gates of Lambeth. Many years later, at his trial just across the River Thames in Westminster Hall, Thomas More made a comment which captures my meaning: "And for the Kingdom, I have all other Christian realms". Communities, like individuals, only prosper if they are loved – so we are not ashamed as Christians to be patriots, loving our country, just as Jesus wept for Jerusalem. But our membership of the Body of Christ and our deep expression of that unity gives us the power to change the world.

Our Bonn Agreement seems modest when set against this standard. But its stress on catholicity, diversity and communion point the way towards a wider Christian unity and that unity can give us the vision all the societies in which we live so urgently need.

May Our Lord Jesus Christ... open the eyes of your understanding that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe in him.

Sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury
7th November 1981