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## Anglican Evangelicals, Old Catholics and the Bonn Agreement\*

Andrew Atherstone

The 1920s and 1930s were decades of unprecedented ecumenical endeavour for the Anglican Communion.<sup>1</sup> Following the horrors of the First World War, the 1920 Lambeth Conference caught the wave of a new spirit of reconciliation between nations and churches. Its bold ‘Appeal to all Christian People’ – soon translated into Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian, Russian, Chinese and Esperanto – threw the Church of England into a heady spate of dialogue with other denominations.<sup>2</sup> The first to respond was the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, leading to a series of conferences between Anglicans and Nonconformists (Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Primitive Methodists, United Methodists and Wesleyans). These ran out of steam in 1925 but not before the Anglican representatives had acknowledged Free Church ministries to be ‘real ministries of Christ’s Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church’<sup>3</sup> – a statement described by one leading Presbyterian as ‘the most significant declaration which the Church of England has made to English nonconformity since the time when Archbishop Bancroft maintained, as his predecessors had not done, an exclusive doctrine of

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\* I am grateful to Professor Angela Berlis, Professor Urs von Arx and Dr Charlotte Methuen for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of ecumenical discussions at this period, across all denominations, see Ruth Rouse, Stephen C. Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948* (third edition, Geneva: WCC, 1986); G.K.A. Bell, *Documents on Christian Unity* (4 vols., London: OUP, 1924–58).

<sup>2</sup> For the Lambeth Conferences of 1920 and 1930, see especially Alan M.G. Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London: SPCK, 1978), pp. 128–177; G.K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson: Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: OUP, 1952), pp. 1003–1015; J.G. Lockhart, *Cosmo Gordon Lang* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), pp. 264–284, 343–371; H.H. Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life* (3 vols., London: OUP, 1942–50), ii. pp. 1–23, 258–279.

<sup>3</sup> *Reunion: The Lambeth Conference Report and the Free Churches* (London: SPCK, 1924), p. 15.

episcopal ordination.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians held conversations at Malines in Belgium in the early 1920s, until Pope Pius XI's encyclical, *Mortalium Animos*, banned Roman Catholics from taking further part in the reunion movement. At the same period the Church of England and the Church of Sweden entered into informal intercommunion, and far away in South India the scheme for one united church began to gather pace. The first world conferences on Life and Work (held at Stockholm in 1925) and on Faith and Order (held at Lausanne in 1927) continued the momentum.

At the 1930 Lambeth Conference the unity question was once again high on the agenda, not least in discussion of the South India proposals.<sup>5</sup> There were two reunion sub-committees, one headed by William Temple (1881–1944), Archbishop of York and later of Canterbury, which studied relations with non-episcopal churches but gave the Nonconformist delegations a frosty reception.<sup>6</sup> The other sub-committee, headed by Arthur Cayley Headlam (1862–1947), Bishop of Gloucester, studied relations with episcopal churches and received delegations from the Armenians, the Moravians, the Church of Sweden, the Eastern Orthodox and the Old Catholics.<sup>7</sup> It was the growing rapprochement with these last two churches which generated feverish excitement. During the 1920s the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference and some of the Eastern Orthodox (Constantinople, Jerusalem and Cyprus) had for the first time acknowledged Anglican orders to be valid. Both churches sent prominent delegations to the Lambeth Conference, one led by the Patriarch of Alexandria and the other by the Archbishop of Utrecht, and in contrast to the English Nonconformists they were warmly embraced by the Anglican

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<sup>4</sup> P. Carnegie Simpson, 'Lambeth 1920 – A Free Church Presentation' in: V.F. Storr, G.H. Harris (eds.), *The Call for Christian Unity: The Challenge of a World Situation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930), p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> See the official report on 'The Unity of the Church' in *The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1930), pp. 109–151.

<sup>6</sup> For Temple's response to the Nonconformist disappointment, see 'Reunion and Validity' in: William Temple, *Thoughts on Some Problems of the Day: A Charge Delivered at His Primary Visitation* (London: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 88–132. See also F.A. Iremonger, *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury: His Life and Letters* (London: OUP, 1948), pp. 454–473.

<sup>7</sup> For Headlam's wide-ranging ecumenical endeavours, see Ronald Jasper, *Arthur Cayley Headlam: Life and Letters of a Bishop* (London: Faith Press, 1960).

bishops.<sup>8</sup> As a result of these encouraging encounters, the conference asked Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864–1945), Archbishop of Canterbury, to appoint two doctrinal commissions to begin formal negotiations with the Eastern Orthodox and the Old Catholics.<sup>9</sup>

This paper focuses upon the Anglican Evangelical response to the 1930 Lambeth proposals concerning the Old Catholic Church. It examines the widespread resistance to reunion between Anglicans and Old Catholics, the evangelical contribution to the Bonn Conference in July 1931, and the effect upon the relationship between the Church of England and evangelical Nonconformity.<sup>10</sup>

### The Resistance

The Lambeth proposals stimulated a renewed interest in the Old Catholic movement, about which comparatively little was known in England. The links forged between Anglicans and Old Catholics during the reunion conferences at Bonn in 1874 and 1875 had largely been forgotten, so the Society of St Willibrord (revived in 1928) sought to educate Anglicans about Old Catholic history, doctrine and worship.<sup>11</sup> This was not just an Anglo-Catholic fascination. Many evangelicals were also intrigued by this small European church, which had boldly stood against the extravagant claims of the papacy and the mighty Church of Rome, and they undertook some investigations of their own. For example, F.W. Gilpin, a ‘stalwart Protestant’ and leading lay member of the Church Assembly, visited the Old

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<sup>8</sup> For a précis of discussion between the Old Catholic delegates and Headlam’s reunion sub-committee, see *Report of the Meeting of the Commission of the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches held at Bonn on Thursday, July 2, 1931* (London: SPCK, 1931), appendix 2, pp. 30–36.

<sup>9</sup> Resolutions 33b and 35b, *Lambeth Conference 1930*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>10</sup> For an earlier exploration of these themes, see M.F.G. Parmentier, ‘Evangelical Anglicans and Old Catholics in 1931’ in: C. van Kasteel, P.J. Maan, M.F.G. Parmentier (eds.), *Kracht in zwakheid van een kleine wereldkerk: de Oud-Katholieke Unie van Utrecht* (Amersfoort, Stichting Centraal Oud-Katholiek Boekhuis, 1982), pp. 125–144. See also Harald Rein, *Kirchengemeinschaft: Die anglikanisch-altkatholisch-orthodoxen Beziehungen von 1870 bis 1990 und ihre ökumenische Relevanz* (2 vols., Bern: P. Lang, 1993–94), i. pp. 215–252.

<sup>11</sup> See Gordon Huelin, *Saint Willibrord and his Society* (London: Faith Press, 1960); John Burley, Jack Witten, ‘The Society of St Willibrord’ in: Gordon Huelin (ed.), *Old Catholics and Anglicans 1931–1981. To Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Intercommunion* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), pp. 62–85.



Catholics during a trip to Holland so that he could report back to evangelical friends in England.<sup>12</sup> At the cathedral in Utrecht he interviewed Pastoor Engelbert Lagerwey (1880–1959), later Bishop of Deventer, who was keen to emphasise the common ground between Old Catholics and Anglican Evangelicals. Lagerwey told his visitor that Old Catholics, in contrast to Roman Catholics, stood for ‘the evangelical doctrine of salvation by faith’ and that ‘Our people would laugh ... at any thought of adoration being extended to images.’ He observed that the rosary and confessional were unknown in Old Catholic circles, that services were held in the vernacular and that the clergy were permitted to marry. Gilpin was particularly pleased by Lagerwey’s comments on holy communion:

‘The pastor [*sic*] considered that his teaching in regard to the Holy Communion was nearer that of the old-fashioned high churchman in England than that of the modern Anglo-Catholic. Anglo-Catholics, he said, are more papal than the Pope; they are not Catholics but Romans.’<sup>13</sup>

When Gilpin attended Sunday eucharist at the cathedral, he was again impressed. There were over five hundred in the congregation, mostly young men and women, and the hymns were ‘sung most heartily’. Although Pastoor Lagerwey was robed in a chasuble, his preaching was encouraging:

‘The sermon lasted for nearly thirty minutes, and was listened to with marked attention. The preacher was most earnest and appealed for an every-day-life devotion to Jesus Christ.’

Despite these signs of hope, however, Gilpin still remained suspicious of relationship with Old Catholics. Another leading lay member of the Church Assembly, Albert Mitchell (1870–1950), carried out his own investigations. He visited the Old Catholic Church at Bern in Switzerland, but was shocked by what he found:

‘When I entered I feared, for a moment, that I had lost my way, and strayed into a Roman Catholic church ... except that the decorations were less gaudy, the fittings were not distinguishable from those of a Roman Catholic church.

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<sup>12</sup> ‘The Old Catholics of Holland’, *Record*, 14 August 1931, p. 527. See also *Record*, 25 September 1931, p. 607.

<sup>13</sup> Lagerwey was forced to explain that he was referring only to ‘extreme’ Anglo-Catholics, not ‘moderate’ ones; *Record*, 28 August 1931, p. 556.

There were three great pseudo-altars, each with three painted life-size images. It is hard to imagine, in any extension of “economy”, a devout English Churchman worshipping or communicating in such surroundings.’<sup>14</sup>

Many other evangelicals were horrified and saw the Lambeth proposals as ‘fraught with peril’<sup>15</sup> and a ‘very grave danger’.<sup>16</sup>

One major concern was that reunion with the Old Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox would damage hopes of reunion with evangelical Nonconformists. The contrasting reception given to Nonconformity at the Lambeth Conferences in 1920 and 1930 seemed to betray a worrying shift in official policy, and the *Record* (the chief Anglican Evangelical mouth-piece) knew who to blame:

‘In 1920 the memories of the common action of Churchmen and Nonconformists in the war zones were still fresh. Barriers had been broken down, duties had been shared and interchanged, mutual understanding and good will had sprung up. As the years went on the vision faded, and old prejudices reasserted themselves. An impasse was reached in 1925. Meanwhile, more and still more Anglo-Catholics were being raised to the episcopate, both at home and in the Dominions. As a result, 1930 showed a distinct swing of the pendulum towards the Eastern Churches and the Old Catholics, and away from the British Free Churches.’<sup>17</sup>

Although the stalled conversations between Anglicans and Nonconformists were re-launched at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury in November 1931, they took place in a chillier atmosphere than ten years before. Gone was the excitement following the ‘Appeal to all Christian People’ when ‘the air was expectant and the temperature was warm’.<sup>18</sup> There were widespread fears that the Church of England wanted to back-track on its previous declarations about the validity of Free Church ministries. Anglican Evangelicals were therefore distressed that efforts were

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<sup>14</sup> ‘The Old Catholics’, *Record*, 12 September 1930, p. 580. See further Albert Mitchell’s papers and letters concerning the Old Catholics, Latimer Trust Archives, London.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas J. Pulvertaft, ‘Canterbury, Utrecht and Alexandria’, *Churchman*, vol. 45 (April 1931), p. 97.

<sup>16</sup> ‘The Lambeth Conference and Reunion’, *Record*, 23 January 1931, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Home Reunion’, *Record*, 4 December 1931, p. 769.

<sup>18</sup> P. Carnegie Simpson, ‘The Resumption of the Lambeth Joint-Conference’, *Guardian*, 27 November 1931, p. 827.

being made to unite with foreign churches which were ‘unreformed, unprogressive and unmissionary’, while their evangelical friends at home were being left out in the cold.<sup>19</sup>

The critics of Old Catholicism focused their attacks upon the Declaration of Utrecht, the Old Catholic doctrinal basis drawn up in 1889.<sup>20</sup> Several recent pronouncements emanating from Anglican officialdom had praised this document. For example, one report on reunion submitted to the 1930 Lambeth Conference included the claim that the Declaration of Utrecht was ‘so entirely in accordance with the teaching and spirit of the Prayer Book that it is difficult to see how anyone loyal to that teaching and that spirit could refuse to accept it.’<sup>21</sup> At Lambeth the sub-committee which met with the Old Catholic delegation affirmed that there was nothing in the Declaration ‘which might be an impediment to union between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Church’.<sup>22</sup> Likewise the full conference resolved that it contained nothing ‘inconsistent with the teaching of the Church of England’.<sup>23</sup> Bishop Headlam was so provocative as to describe the Declaration as ‘the most Protestant document to which the Lambeth Conference has ever given its assent’.<sup>24</sup> Yet Anglican Evangelicals had a different perspective. They scrutinized the Declaration of Utrecht and discovered four significant areas of doctrinal divergence with the Church of England.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> ‘The Thirty-Nine Articles’, *Record*, 9 January 1931, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> For an English translation of the Declaration of Utrecht, see *Lambeth Conference 1930*, pp. 142–144. [For a new English translation see Urs von Arx, Maja Weyermann (eds.) *Statut der Internationalen Altkatholischen Bischofskonferenz (IBK). Offizielle Ausgabe in fünf Sprachen*, Beiheft zu IKZ 91 (2001), pp. 40–42 – editor’s note].

<sup>21</sup> C.B. Moss, ‘Reunion with the Old Catholic Churches’ in: *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to Consider the Findings of the Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order* (London, 1930), appendix 13, p. 147. This committee had earlier commissioned Moss’ pamphlet, *The Old Catholic Churches in Christendom* (London: Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly, 1929).

<sup>22</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1930*, p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> Resolution 35c, *Lambeth Conference 1930*, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup> A.C. Headlam, ‘The Lambeth Conference and Reunion’, *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. 111 (January 1931), p. 218.

<sup>25</sup> For a summary of these objections, see *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, p. 165.

*Objection 1: Tradition*

The Declaration of Utrecht begins: ‘We adhere faithfully to the Rule of Faith laid down by St Vincent of Lerins in these terms: “Id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est; hoc est etenim vere proprieque catholicum.” For this reason we persevere in professing the faith of the primitive Church ...’ Evangelicals, however, rejected the Vincentian Canon as a ‘rule of faith’, maintaining that the Bible alone is the rule of faith. The Declaration of Utrecht is silent on the authority of Scripture and the Old Catholics seemed to give tradition an equal weight.

*Objection 2: Images*

The Declaration of Utrecht welcomes ‘the unanimously accepted decisions of the Ecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church of the first thousand years.’ Evangelicals, however, pointed out that this would include the Second Council of Nicaea, held in 787 during the iconoclastic controversy. That Council famously encouraged the veneration of images, which to evangelicals was abhorrent.

*Objection 3: Tridentine Dogma*

The Declaration of Utrecht states: ‘We refuse to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent in matters of discipline, and as for the dogmatic decisions of that Council, we accept them only so far as they are in harmony with the teaching of the primitive Church.’ Nevertheless the Old Catholics retained certain Tridentine doctrines and practices which evangelicals rejected, namely: that seven sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ; administration of communion in one kind; description of communion given to the dying as ‘the viaticum’; invocation and comprecation of the Virgin Mary and other saints; prayers for the dead.

*Objection 4: Eucharist*

The Declaration of Utrecht states: ‘we maintain with perfect fidelity the ancient Catholic doctrine concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, by believing that we receive the Body and the Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ under the species of bread and wine.’ This phrase seemed to evangelicals to imply a doctrine of the real presence, confirmed by various Old Catho-

lic practices such as exposition of the elements for meditation and worship; reservation of the sacrament; the service of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; observance of the Feast of Corpus Christi. The Declaration of Utrecht also explains that holy communion ‘is the act by which we represent upon earth and appropriate to ourselves the one offering which Jesus Christ makes in Heaven ... for the salvation of redeemed humanity, by appearing for us in the presence of God.’ This idea that Christ is continually offering himself in heaven or pleading his sacrifice was rejected by evangelicals. They also opposed the Old Catholic practice of offering mass for the souls of the departed.

Faced with such an analysis, the *Record* newspaper concluded that there were ‘grave doctrinal difficulties’ standing in the way of union between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Church.<sup>26</sup> It was alarmed at what it saw as a conspiracy to demolish these doctrinal barriers by undermining the authority of the Thirty-Nine Articles as the recognised statement of Anglican belief. For example, the recent Lambeth Conference had invented a new definition of the Anglican Communion which made no reference to the Articles.<sup>27</sup> Likewise the Orthodox delegates to the conference were reassured with the statement that ‘if there were any ambiguity in the Thirty-Nine Articles, they should be interpreted by what the Prayer Book itself said’.<sup>28</sup> The *Record* considered this to be part of a widespread effort ‘to belittle the Articles’ in support of a misguided ecumenism,<sup>29</sup> which would lead to ‘the sacrifice of our Protestant position’.<sup>30</sup>

These fears were proclaimed most passionately at the Oxford Conference of Evangelical Churchmen in April 1931. The conference was a high profile annual gathering of Anglican Evangelicals, held under the chairmanship of Christopher Chavasse (1884–1962) at Oxford’s new evangelical college, St Peter’s Hall.<sup>31</sup> Reunion had often been a major confer-

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Union with the Old Catholic and Orthodox Eastern Churches’, *Record*, 1 May 1931, p. 277.

<sup>27</sup> Resolution 49, *Lambeth Conference 1930*, p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> *Lambeth Conference 1930*, p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Union with the Old Catholic and Orthodox Eastern Churches’, *Record*, 1 May 1931, p. 276.

<sup>30</sup> ‘The Lambeth Conference and Reunion’, *Record*, 23 January 1931, p. 52.

<sup>31</sup> Originally the Cheltenham Conference of Evangelical Churchmen, held under the chairmanship of the rector of Cheltenham, the conference moved to Oxford in 1929.

ence theme and this year was no exception. William Herbert Mackean (1877–1960), a canon and later Vice-Dean of Rochester Cathedral, was given the task of critiquing the Lambeth proposals concerning the Old Catholic Church and proceeded to lay bare its doctrinal clash with Anglicanism. Quoting frequently from the Thirty-Nine Articles, the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Reformers and the Caroline Divines, he explained why Anglican Evangelicals should find the Declaration of Utrecht objectionable. Although he was glad to acknowledge ‘a Protestant element’ in the Declaration, the points of difference between the two denominations were too numerous and too serious to be brushed aside.<sup>32</sup> Mackean insisted that union between Anglicans and Old Catholics would compromise both denominations. It could only be achieved by ‘regarding one section of our Church [Anglo-Catholicism] as if it were the whole’, to the detriment of all other Anglicans. He concluded:

‘We admire this gallant little Church for its courageous stand against the powerful and ecclesiastical organization of Rome. We appreciate its Protestant aspects. We are impressed by the determination which has inspired Old Catholics in the face of opposition, difficulty and disappointment. We readily acknowledge their high-mindedness, their love of religious liberty, their evangelical piety. We value the friendly relations which exist between us, and are ready to meet them and other Christians at the Lord’s Table on the understanding that intercommunion does not imply uniformity of doctrine or practice. But it is rendering no real service to the cause of Christian unity to disguise the position of the two Churches. With all goodwill and friendliness we must acknowledge that their standpoint is not ours. The *ēthos* of the two Churches is different. The Old Catholic Churches stand midway between the Church of Rome and the Church of England. They are in our eyes semi-reformed churches. ... We stand resolutely by our position as a Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed and Protestant Church; we cannot sacrifice that for the sake of union with a Church great or small ...’<sup>33</sup>

After hearing this speech and others like it, the conference agreed that the Lambeth proposals for unity with the Old Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox ‘will jeopardize the Reformed and Scriptural Basis of our own communion and will seriously retard the movement towards Union between the Church of England and the Free Churches.’ Instead of joining with foreign episcopal Churches, they pleaded that the first steps towards

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<sup>32</sup> W.H. Mackean, ‘In Relation to the Old Catholic Churches’, *Churchman*, vol. 45 (July 1931), p. 203.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.



reunion should be ‘with those great non-episcopal Churches which are akin to us racially, historically and spiritually.’<sup>34</sup>

These concerns were reiterated in late April 1931 by an important memorandum, drawn up by Vernon Storr (1869–1940), archdeacon of Westminster and president of the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, and signed by forty leading Anglicans.<sup>35</sup> The vast majority were evangelicals, while some such as Henry Major (1871–1961), principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, were part of the modernist movement.<sup>36</sup> They included seven archdeacons and the principals of five evangelical theological colleges, as well as other evangelical spokesmen. They warned that the 1930 Lambeth Conference report raised serious questions about the doctrinal position of the Church of England and had deliberately minimised Anglican disagreement with the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches. Some of the statements in the report were ‘ambiguous’ and ‘misleading’, slanted towards the Anglo-Catholic party’s interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the *Book of Common Prayer*. While praising the ‘brave and consistent stand’ of the Old Catholics against Roman error, the memorandum nonetheless cautioned that to accept the Declaration of Utrecht would be ‘a denial of our position’. It protested:

‘We are in favour of all movements towards union, communion and closer intercourse among Christian Churches, where broad general agreement renders it possible; and hold that there should be no rigid insistence upon uniformity in doctrine, organisation or details of worship. We should therefore not seek to impose our own position upon other Churches; but on the other hand we ought not, in order to win their favour, to abandon our own position or, still less, represent it in a one-sided manner.’

Bishop Headlam was stung into a bristling defence of his work at the Lambeth Conference. He rebutted these ‘untrue accusations’ and insisted that his reunion sub-committee had not been ‘in any way a party body’.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Conference Findings, nos 3–4, *Churchman*, vol. 45 (July 1931), p. 166.

<sup>35</sup> *Record*, 1 May 1931, p. 277.

<sup>36</sup> Some signatories, of course, spanned both the evangelical and the modernist movements. For example, Vernon Storr was president of the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement (AEGM) and a member of the council of the Modern Churchmen’s Union. On Storr, see G.H. Harris, *Vernon Faithfull Storr: A Memoir* (London: SPCK, 1943).

<sup>37</sup> Arthur C. Headlam, *The Anglicans, the Orthodox, and the Old Catholics: Notes on the Lambeth Report on Unity* (London: SPCK, 1931), pp. 2, 11.



He rebuked the evangelical opposition to ‘real unity’ with the Old Catholics and the Orthodox since in his view ‘nothing could be more wholesome or better for the Church of England, and for the cause of Christianity’.<sup>38</sup> Storr’s memorandum had concluded with an affirmation that the Thirty-Nine Articles, interpreted ‘in their plain and obvious sense’, must remain the standard of Anglican doctrine, but for Headlam this was quite the wrong emphasis. He proclaimed:

‘The Thirty-Nine Articles are the most important historical document in relation to the Anglican Communion, and have very great authority, but they cannot be placed on the same level as the Prayer Book, which has become the basis of our Communion.’<sup>39</sup>

Not in a conciliatory mood towards his evangelical opponents, Headlam went even further and described the Articles as a ‘stumbling block’ and ‘completely out of touch with the thought of the day’.<sup>40</sup> He dismissed his critics with a reminder that the Lambeth rapprochement with the Old Catholics and the Orthodox was favoured by ‘a very large majority’ of the three hundred bishops present, who had ‘a very real authority in defining the teaching of the Church of England’.<sup>41</sup> Such statements only provoked further outcry from evangelicals that Lambeth Conferences had no right to define doctrine.<sup>42</sup> One octogenarian evangelical bishop, Edmund Arbuthnott Knox (1847–1937), entered the fray with a protest that the Lambeth bishops had made unauthorized statements on doctrine which were ‘confessedly the views of a party’. He lambasted this attempt by an Anglo-Catholic majority to put an end to the ‘comprehensiveness’ of the Church of England, and asked: ‘Are we to purchase reunion abroad at the price of exclusiveness at home?’<sup>43</sup>

So the controversy rumbled on. *The Times* newspaper mocked Anglican Evangelicals as

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Lambeth and the Orthodox’, *Record*, 29 May 1931, p. 360.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 20 May 1931, p. 10. E.A. Knox, former Bishop of Manchester, was one of those Hensley Henson had in mind when he famously described Anglican Evangelicals as ‘an army of illiterates generalled by octogenarians’; see E.A. Knox *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (London: Hutchinson, 1934).

‘the party most stoutly opposed to Roman Catholic tenets and most alert to discern the menace of Papal aggression. Accordingly they should be the first to welcome what must prove the strongest bulwark against such aggression – the definite reunion of three Churches, each of which stands on an anti-Papal basis.’<sup>44</sup>

To this the *Record* retorted that, of course,

‘Purity of faith is the surest safeguard in any conflict with error, and we frankly feel that we cannot have confidence of victory if we rely on the aid of those who are not fully with us in all that we must regard as essential.’<sup>45</sup>

Just weeks before the Bonn Conference, the newspaper could still declare that the Lambeth proposals for closer union with the Old Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox

‘continue to excite much opposition amongst all sections of Evangelicals. And the more the proposals are examined, and the details explained, the greater is the suspicion and the antagonism aroused in many different quarters.’<sup>46</sup>

## The Agreement

Of the nine Anglican delegates chosen by Archbishop Lang to meet the Old Catholics in Bonn in July 1931, only one was an evangelical. He was George F. Graham Brown (1891–1942), the principal of Wycliffe Hall theological college in Oxford.<sup>47</sup> Graham Brown was the youngest principal in the Hall’s history, appointed in 1925 at the age of 34, only three years after ordination and with no parish experience. Yet he soon began to attract attention by his passion for ecumenism. For example, he initiated a bold experiment of taking his ordinands *en masse* to Palestine during the summer vacations, where their primary aim was to build friendships with the Eastern Churches.<sup>48</sup> Graham Brown was also one of the first members

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Problems of Church Reunion’, *The Times*, 18 May 1931, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Lambeth and the Orthodox’, *Record*, 29 May 1931, p. 360.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> For Wycliffe Hall’s evangelical origins, see Andrew Atherstone, ‘The Founding of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford’, *Anglican and Episcopal History*, vol. 73 (March 2004), pp. 78–102.

<sup>48</sup> See Andrew Atherstone, ‘Evangelical Pilgrims to the Holy Land: Wycliffe Hall’s Encounter with the Eastern Churches, 1927–37’ (forthcoming).

in the late 1920s of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, which encouraged links between Anglicans and Orthodox.<sup>49</sup> These were unusual interests for an evangelical and brought him to the attention of the archbishop, who later applauded his ‘burning zeal for the unity of Christ’s Church’.<sup>50</sup> Likewise Canon John Albert Douglas (1868–1956), who served with Graham Brown at Bonn, acknowledged that despite his evangelical convictions ‘there is nothing narrow in him ... he has a big heart’.<sup>51</sup> Bishop Headlam, who chaired the Bonn Conference, praised him as a man of ‘imagination, enterprise and sympathy’ who took part ‘with wisdom and charity in the difficult work of the reconciliation of Churches’.<sup>52</sup>

Graham Brown approached his responsibilities on the Anglican delegation with typical thoroughness.<sup>53</sup> In preparation for the conference he visited the Dutch Old Catholics at Utrecht and the Hague, and their seminary at Amersfoort. He spent the Easter Vacation of 1931 with the Old Catholics at Bonn, learning German and engaging in almost daily dialogue with Bishop Georg Moog (1863–1934).<sup>54</sup> Graham Brown collected together evangelical objections to the Lambeth proposals and made a particular study of the Declaration of Utrecht, comparing it with various Old Catholic liturgies and catechisms.<sup>55</sup> He also sought advice from an array

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<sup>49</sup> Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius Archives, list of senior members and friends, June 1929 & July 1930 (held at St Gregory and St Macrina House, Oxford). See Nicolas Zernov, *The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius: A Historical Memoir* (Oxford, 1979).

<sup>50</sup> Memorial Service at St Paul’s Cathedral, 10 December 1942, in: *Bible Lands*, vol. 10 (January 1943), p. 1331.

<sup>51</sup> J.A. Douglas, ‘Articles on the Consecration’, *Bible Lands*, vol. 8 (July 1932), p. 256. Canon Douglas was general secretary of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations 1933–45.

<sup>52</sup> A.C. Headlam, ‘Sermon at the Consecration’, *Bible Lands*, vol. 8 (July 1932), p. 255.

<sup>53</sup> For Graham Brown’s papers and correspondence, see Lambeth Palace Library [LPL], Council on Foreign Relations [CFR], Churches in Full Communion [CFC], Old Catholic Church [OCC], files 1–6.

<sup>54</sup> See Graham Brown’s report to the Wycliffe Hall Council about his Easter vacation visit (no date), and Bishop Moog’s complaints at its inaccuracy and breaking of confidences, Moog to Graham Brown, 30 October 1931, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 5, no. 17. See also *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, p. 166; George F. Graham Brown to Colin Graham Brown, 2 March 1931, Wycliffe Hall Archives, Graham Brown Papers.

<sup>55</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, p. 164.

of leading evangelical churchmen, sounding them out on possible terms of intercommunion.<sup>56</sup> Some wanted nothing to do with the enterprise, such as Sydney Carter (1876–1963), principal of the Bible Churchmen’s Missionary and Training College at Clifton, Bristol, who warned Graham Brown that an attempt at official intercommunion with the Old Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox was

‘one of the most serious and dangerous attacks on the Reformed Faith and position of our Church that we have ever had to encounter. Our victory over the Prayer Book [in the famous Parliamentary debates of 1927–28] is more than lost if any such attempt really materialises. It would definitely range us on the side of the Unreformed Churches which “have erred not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies but also in *matters of Faith*”. It would at once reverse the historic and traditional position of our Reformed Church, as naturally allied with other orthodox Reformed Churches with which we have complete doctrinal harmony. It would register the fact that we regard non-essential matters of Order and Discipline as superior to essential questions of Faith. It would in effect repudiate the deliberate attitude and policy of our Reformers. In these circumstances I find it practically impossible even to consider possible “Terms of Intercommunion” with the “Old Catholic Church”.’<sup>57</sup>

Later Sydney Carter added: “Peace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness” by all means but it must be in “uncorruptness”.<sup>58</sup> Other correspondents, however, offered Graham Brown practical wisdom and pledged their support for his endeavours.

The Old Catholics were perplexed by the controversy in England, which came as a surprise after the warm welcome they had received from the bishops at Lambeth and it naturally raised questions in their minds about the place of evangelicals in the Church of England.<sup>59</sup> Did the Lambeth Conference or its evangelical critics represent the true mind of the Anglican Church? Lest there be any misunderstanding, Headlam answered that ‘it must be clearly understood that the Evangelical element is a permanent and valued element in the Church of England, and that intercom-

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<sup>56</sup> For this correspondence, see LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 4.

<sup>57</sup> Sydney Carter to Graham Brown, 3 June 1931, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 4.

<sup>58</sup> Sydney Carter to Graham Brown, 28 June 1931, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 4. For copies of this correspondence, see Sydney Carter papers, Trinity College, Bristol (on long-term loan to Roger Beckwith, Oxford).

<sup>59</sup> Headlam to Lang, 18 July 1931, in *Report of the Meeting of the Commission*, p. 8.

munion must be with the whole Church.’<sup>60</sup> Therefore Graham Brown would have a vital role to play in the negotiations. Indeed, although evangelicals felt themselves ‘very inadequately represented’ at the conference,<sup>61</sup> in a sense they held all the cards. Another of the Anglican delegates, Claude Beaufort Moss (1888–1964), later explained:

‘It was clear from the first that the only serious difficulty was the reconciliation of the Old Catholics and the Evangelical party in the Church of England. But for the Evangelicals, the proceedings could have been finished in half an hour or less; for there were no real differences at all. But the Evangelicals had misunderstood what the Old Catholics stood for, and were opposing reunion with them ... It was therefore absolutely necessary that whatever the conference at Bonn agreed to should be accepted by the Evangelicals; and the greatest credit is due to Mr Graham Brown (as he was then), who was the only representative of that party in the conference, for bringing about this result.’<sup>62</sup>

The biographers of Lang and Headlam both describe Graham Brown as the evangelical ‘watchdog’, charged with protecting the interests of his constituency.<sup>63</sup>

The Anglican and Old Catholic representatives met together at the Königshof Hotel in Bonn for just one day, Thursday, 2 July 1931. At the start of the conference Graham Brown laid out his own position and presented the Old Catholics with a statement of evangelical concerns,<sup>64</sup> described by Headlam as a useful ‘*advocatus diaboli*’.<sup>65</sup> Douglas recalled:

‘he made it plain that he had come to Bonn, set and eager to find, if possible, a formula of Anglican and Old Catholic dogmatic agreement which he could affirm, but that he could not and would not agree to any formula which, by the use of ambiguous phrases, covered what to him and his fellow Evangelicals were dogmatic conflicts. He was ready, not to turn a blind eye upon, but to

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<sup>60</sup> *Report of the Meeting of the Commission*, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> *Churchman*, vol. 45 (April 1931), p. 83.

<sup>62</sup> C.B. Moss, *The Old Catholic Movement: Its Origins and History* (London: SPCK, 1948), p. 342. For Moss’ part in the conference, see Leslie William Barnard, *C.B. Moss (1888–1964): Defender of the Faith* (London: Mowbray, 1967), pp. 77–99. Before the conference, Moss recruited Graham Brown for the Society of St Willibrord: see Moss to Graham Brown, 9 February 1931, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 6; Society of St Willibrord Papers, membership book c.1908–51, LPL MS 4493.

<sup>63</sup> Lockhart, *Lang*, p. 364; Jasper, *Headlam*, p. 216.

<sup>64</sup> Graham Brown, ‘Memorandum of Observations on the Declaration of Utrecht as Interpreted by Evangelicals’, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 4, no. 10.

<sup>65</sup> Headlam to Graham Brown, 12 June 1931, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 6.

dismiss as irrelevant, all contrasts of worship, of theological statement and of theological opinion. But by neither a jot nor a tittle would he have part in a dogmatic compromise. In fact, as he let us know, he had accepted membership of the Conference only because he was hopeful, as he was wholeheartedly desirous, of its successful achievement; but he had difficulties, and if they were not removed, nothing would induce him to waive them.<sup>66</sup>

Like most Anglican Evangelicals, Graham Brown had concerns over Old Catholic attitudes to tradition, images and the sacraments. Yet his ‘most grievous difficulty’ was concerning Old Catholic understanding of the eucharist.<sup>67</sup> For example, during his research he had discovered the Old Catholic missal of Bishop Arnold Mathew, who was consecrated at Utrecht in 1908 to minister to the Old Catholic community in England (which turned out to be non-existent).<sup>68</sup> Although the Old Catholics had disassociated themselves from Mathew, his missal bore the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Utrecht, and in its liturgy for the ordination of priests the candidates are blessed by the bishop with the words:

‘The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost come down upon you; that you may be blessed in the Priestly Order, and may offer propitiatory sacrifices for the sins and offences of the people to Almighty God, to Whom belongs glory and honour unto the ages of ages. Amen.’<sup>69</sup>

This prayer seemed to contradict the Declaration of Utrecht and raised serious questions over the Old Catholic attitude to the eucharist.

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<sup>66</sup> J.A Douglas, ‘The Bishop’s Part in the Bonn Conference’, *Bible Lands*, vol. 10 (January 1943), pp. 1340–1341.

<sup>67</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, p. 167.

<sup>68</sup> For Mathew’s bizarre career, see Arnold H. Mathew, ‘*An Episcopal Odyssey*’: *An Open Letter to his Grace the Right Hon and Most Rev Randall Thomas Davidson* (Deal, 1915); Bell, *Davidson*, pp. 1016–1023; Moss, *Old Catholic Movement*, pp. 297–311; Henry R.T. Brandreth, *Episcopi Vagantes and the Anglican Church* (second edition, London: SPCK, 1961), pp. 16–46; Peter F. Anson, *Bishops at Large* (London: Faber, 1964), pp. 156–215; Christoph Schuler, *The Mathew Affair: The Failure to Establish an Old Catholic Church in England in the Context of Anglican Old Catholic Relations Between 1902 and 1925*, Publicatieserie Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, vol. 30 (Amersfoort: Stichting Oud-Katholiek Seminarie, 1997).

<sup>69</sup> Arnold H. Mathew (ed.), *The Old Catholic Missal and Ritual: Prepared for the Use of English-Speaking Congregations of Old Catholics, in Communion with the Ancient Catholic Archiepiscopal See of Utrecht* (London: Cope & Fenwick, 1909), p. 316.



In public after the conference, Graham Brown reported that his fellow delegates had listened to the evangelical point of view ‘with the greatest patience’.<sup>70</sup> However, Douglas’s reminiscences show that this was far from the full picture:

‘In those six days [*sic*] at Bonn he was in an agony and with his back to the wall. The Old Catholics’ delegates were chilled and seemed offended by his holding back. Our Anglican colleagues told him that his unreasonableness was wrecking everything. One of them came to bullying him. And, worst of all for his sensitive, eager nature, he was fighting against his own desires. But throughout it all he bore himself like the Happy Warrior. When in the end he declared himself satisfied, we all not only admired and loved him for his courage and charity, but were grateful to him for his statesmanship and wisdom. For the dogmatic agreement which issued from the Conference was not an agreement, as it were, between Old Catholics and Anglo-Catholics which an Evangelical signed complacently, but between the Old Catholics and the whole Church of England.’<sup>71</sup>

During the morning session on 2 July the two delegations spent time trying to remove any misunderstandings between them. Eventually Graham Brown declared himself satisfied by the Old Catholic explanations. He was particularly encouraged by the Old Catholic affirmation that they accepted the sufficiency of Scripture as given in Articles 6 and 20 of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and that they acknowledged the Bible as ‘the primary rule of faith’. The Old Catholics also explained that they considered the first four Ecumenical Councils to be in a different class to the next three and viewed the controversial Second Council of Nicaea as authoritative on discipline but not doctrine, which removed Graham Brown’s objections on that theme. Lastly they insisted that the Declaration of Utrecht was meant to exclude transubstantiation ‘in its medieval sense’. When Bishop Moog observed that the word ‘propitiatory’ in Bishop Mathew’s missal was a mistranslation of *Versöhnung*, which he had misread for *Versöhnung*, Graham Brown’s key objection vanished.<sup>72</sup>

Having begun on the defensive, during the afternoon session Graham Brown seized the initiative and determined the direction of the negotiations by offering a concrete proposal of the way forward. He presented to the conference a paper he had prepared with the help of his evangelical

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<sup>70</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, p. 166.

<sup>71</sup> Douglas, ‘The Bishop’s Part in the Bonn Conference’, p. 1341.

<sup>72</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, pp. 166–167; *Report of the Meeting of the Commission*, pp. 21–23.



advisors (notably Mackean and Mitchell), entitled ‘Suggested conditions on which the Church of England and the Churches now in full communion with it might contemplate formal intercommunion with the Old Catholic Church’.<sup>73</sup> This document was taken as the basis for discussion and was simplified into the famous three-point Bonn Agreement:

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 practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.

Before the day was over this statement had been agreed and signed by all the delegates.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the apparent simplicity of the Bonn Agreement and the rapidity with which consensus was reached, there was some confusion amongst the delegates about what had been decided. As the above quotations from Moss and Douglas show, they thought the conference was proposing ‘reunion’ between Anglicans and Old Catholics and that it had reached ‘dogmatic agreement’. Moss’ views on the subject are clearly expressed in an article he wrote for the *English Catholic* in 1929:

‘The union of Christendom for which we pray is an organic union: one society united in one rule of doctrine and discipline: with intercommunion between the local churches as the outward sign of unity in faith and love. But intercommunion without real unity will settle no questions. A University degree is valued because it has been worked for: but what is the value of a degree without any examination? or of intercommunion without doctrinal unity? ... dogmatic unity must come first.’<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> For the origins and early drafts of these ‘Suggested conditions’, see Graham Brown, ‘Anglicans and Old Catholics: A Note; with Illustrative Documents’, LPL CFR CFC OCC, file 4; and an untitled memorandum, file 5 no. 15. For the contribution of another Bonn delegate, Norman Powell Williams (1883–1943), Lady Margaret, Professor of Divinity at Oxford, see correspondence in file 6; Graham Brown to Williams, 25 & 26 June 1931, LPL N.P. Williams Papers, MS 3545, fos 6–9, 12–13; Eric W. Kemp, *N.P. Williams* (London: SPCK, 1954), pp. 53–57.

<sup>74</sup> *Report of the Meeting of the Commission*, pp. 25–27.

<sup>75</sup> C.B. Moss, ‘Reunion: A Practical Policy’, *English Catholic*, vol. 2 (Spring 1929), pp. 4–5.

Graham Brown, however, saw things differently. His proposal did not speak of ‘union’ or ‘reunion’ but only of ‘intercommunion’. The vital third clause of the Bonn Agreement, with words taken directly from Graham Brown’s draft, deliberately declares that full doctrinal agreement is *not* necessary for intercommunion to take place. This was a radical departure from the principles laid down in previous ecumenical discussions. The 1930 Lambeth Conference had resolved ‘that intercommunion should be the goal of, rather than a means to, the restoration of union’.<sup>76</sup> Likewise the Anglican negotiations with the Orthodox in October 1931 reaffirmed that ‘the basis of Intercommunion should be a union of Faith’.<sup>77</sup> Yet the Bonn Conference found itself agreeing to a new principle, more in keeping with Anglican Evangelical theology, that intercommunion is possible without full doctrinal agreement and before the restoration of unity. Evangelicals had been protesting vociferously about the possible ‘union’ between Anglicans and Old Catholics, because of their doctrinal incompatibility, yet they would happily accept ‘intercommunion’. For example, several months before the Bonn Conference, the *Record* had written:

‘we do not think that any Evangelical Clergyman would refuse to admit a pious Eastern or Old Catholic to Communion. We do not so fence the Table of the Lord and exclude our baptised brethren who wish to share its privileges with us, but this is an entirely different matter from our so describing our doctrinal position as to make it identical with theirs.’<sup>78</sup>

Back at home in England, the Bonn Agreement was warmly received amongst the Anglican Evangelical community. Not all were satisfied, of course. To one elderly layman the agreement appeared ‘only to throw dust in our eyes’. He believed Graham Brown had deliberately used ambiguous theological language at the conference and protested:

‘May I not ask Mr Graham Brown to be a little more explicit for the sake of us poor lay folk, those especially who alike abominate the superstitious Mass, whether celebrated by Anglo-Catholics, Old Catholics or Roman Catholics?’<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Resolution 42, *Lambeth Conference 1930*, p. 52.

<sup>77</sup> *Report of the Joint Doctrinal Commission Appointed by the Oecumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Canterbury for Consultation on the Points of Agreement and Difference between the Anglican and the Eastern Orthodox Churches* (London: SPCK, 1932), pp. 16–19.

<sup>78</sup> ‘The Realities of Reunion’, *Record*, 27 February 1931, p. 132.

<sup>79</sup> *Record*, 11 September 1931, p. 580. For Graham Brown’s response, see *Record*, 25 September 1931, p. 606. See also *Record*, 2 October 1931, p. 618.

Likewise at the Islington Clerical Conference in January 1932, a high profile annual gathering of evangelical clergy, one speaker warned that the Bonn Conference had not given 'a strictly accurate account' of Old Catholic doctrine nor had it properly addressed Protestant concerns.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, most evangelicals welcomed the agreement because it committed the Church of England to none of the doctrine or practice of the Old Catholic Church. Graham Brown was widely praised in the evangelical press for having acted 'courageously and temperately'.<sup>81</sup> Indeed his success in piloting through the conference a statement which dealt 'a heavy, if not a death blow' to the Anglo-Catholic principle of union before intercommunion was seen as something of a coup.<sup>82</sup>

However, it was not long before divergent interpretations of the Bonn Agreement began to surface. One question surrounded the 'essentials of the Christian Faith'. What are the essentials? The Bonn delegates had made no attempt to provide an answer, but others were quick to do so. One, for example, interpreted the essentials as including not just the Resurrection, the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Virgin Birth but also apostolic succession, baptismal regeneration, the real presence, confession and absolution, and fasting communion.<sup>83</sup> More controversial was the question surrounding the Bonn Agreement's key theological term, 'intercommunion'. This had likewise hardly been discussed by the Bonn delegates and proved equally difficult to define.<sup>84</sup> Although the agreement was accepted unanimously by the Convocations of Canterbury and York in January 1932, amidst jubilant celebration, there was argument amongst the bishops over the difference between 'intercommunion' and 'union'.<sup>85</sup> Bertram Pollock (1863–1943), Bishop of Norwich, protested that his episcopal colleagues were confusing these important concepts, to which came

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<sup>80</sup> A.J.M. MacDonald, 'Protestantism: Its Relation to Other Churches' in: *Islington Clerical Conference, 1932* (London: Thynne, 1932), p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> 'Intercommunion with the Old Catholics', *Record*, 4 September 1931, p. 566.

<sup>82</sup> 'Eastern Churches Joint Commission', *Record*, 1 January 1932, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Church Times*, 29 January 1932, p. 116.

<sup>84</sup> For a recent discussion, see J. Robert Wright, 'Intercommunion and Full Communion: the Meanings of these Terms for Anglicans and for their Relations with Old Catholics' in: Angela Berlis, Klaus Dieter-Gerth (eds.), *Christus Spes: Liturgie und Glaube im ökumenischen Kontext. Festschrift Sigisbert Kraft* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1994), pp. 335–345.

<sup>85</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Upper House, 20 January 1932; Lower House, 22 January 1932, pp. 19–35, 155–170.

the retort that ‘intercommunion was union’.<sup>86</sup> The *Church Times* believed that Convocation had effectively endorsed the Declaration of Utrecht, which was not at all what Graham Brown had in mind when he drafted the Bonn proposals.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps a single day in the Königshof Hotel had been too short after all.

### **The Disappointment**

It was originally feared that Anglican overtures towards the Old Catholic Church would make union with evangelical Nonconformists more difficult. However, it appeared instead that the Bonn Agreement would open up new possibilities and provide an ecumenical breakthrough. For many years evangelicals had appealed for Anglicans and Nonconformists to be allowed to share communion, but this was always resisted on the principle that intercommunion must follow union. Yet now, at least to evangelical interpreters, the Bonn resolutions had turned the situation on its head. As Graham Brown told Convocation, ‘the logic of them was ... that the Church of England would never be able to exclude from intercommunion those who were baptised members of a recognised Church.’ The ‘impassable barrier’ between Anglicans and Nonconformists had been demolished, and they could surely sign a similar agreement.<sup>88</sup> Indeed Bishop Headlam boldly held forth the Bonn approach as ‘an admirable model for what should be aimed at in all attempts at inter-communion’.<sup>89</sup>

These high hopes were instantly dashed. On the same day that the Bonn Agreement came up for debate in the Lower House of Convocation, the gathered clergy were asked to debate proposals which would allow a limited degree of intercommunion between Nonconformists and Anglicans. Following a resolution from the 1930 Lambeth Conference,<sup>90</sup> the English bishops drew up guidelines enabling baptized Nonconformists to receive communion from Anglicans in three special cases – when cut off by distance from their own church, when attending a school or college

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31–35. Arthur Burroughs (1882–1934), the evangelical Bishop of Ripon, similarly emphasized the difference between ‘intercommunion’ and ‘union’ at the York Convocation: see *Record*, 29 January 1932, p. 67.

<sup>87</sup> *Church Times*, 29 January & 5 February 1932, pp. 123, 148.

<sup>88</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 22 January 1932, p. 167.

<sup>89</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Upper House, 20 January 1932, p. 25.

<sup>90</sup> Resolution 42, *Lambeth Conference 1930*, p. 52.

with an Anglican chapel, or when united with Anglicans ‘in some form of Christian endeavour’.<sup>91</sup> Graham Brown spoke up passionately in favour of this initiative, arguing that if they were to welcome the Bonn Agreement they should also ‘stretch forth, under new conditions, the right hand of fellowship to other members of the Church of God.’<sup>92</sup> But it was a lost cause. Convocation unanimously endorsed intercommunion with the Old Catholics, but firmly resisted any concessions towards Nonconformists. The contrast could not have been starker and distressed the evangelicals. Anglicans had entered into cheerful intercommunion with Old Catholics, with no qualifications, despite obvious doctrinal incompatibility, after a conference which lasted only a day. Yet a far more grudging form of intercommunion with the Nonconformists, with whom the Church of England was in close doctrinal agreement, was still rejected after conferences lasting many years!<sup>93</sup>

At this shabby treatment, Nonconformists were incensed. For example, J.C. Carlile (1862–1941), a former president of the Baptist Conference, proclaimed:

‘Nothing in recent times had been more revealing of the parochial sectarian mind. What was the use of discussing questions of reunion if the spirit shown in Convocation indicated the temper of the Church? Nonconformists had not even asked for the Christian courtesy suggested by the Bishops, and after the vote of the clerics they could not, with any self-respect, accept the favour. They were not poor relations asking for charity. At the Lord’s Table all come on an equal footing, or they would not come at all. Free Churchmen were justified in being indignant.’<sup>94</sup>

Likewise Professor Carnegie Simpson (1865–1947), a leading Presbyterian, protested:

‘this is the Lord’s table, not ours – not the Anglicans’, nor the Presbyterians’, nor anyone else’s. ... What I desire to see is the doors of access to the Lord’s

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<sup>91</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Upper House, 3–4 June 1931, pp. 142–170, 213–217.

<sup>92</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 21–22 January 1932, pp. 112–153, 170–175. For Graham Brown’s speech, see pp. 143–144.

<sup>93</sup> For this despairing view of events, see Sydney Carter in *Record*, 10 June 1932, p. 370.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in ‘The Free Churches and Intercommunion’, *Record*, 5 February 1932, p. 80.



table unlocked in His name to all who are credibly of His Church on earth. ... this, more almost than anything else, would bring unity into sight.<sup>95</sup>

Others defiantly declared that they would not be patronized by the Church of England and had no intention 'of going "cap in hand" seeking favours'.<sup>96</sup> The action of Convocation had been like a slap in the face to the Nonconformists and threatened the future of their revived Lambeth conversations.

For months this controversy continued to rage. The bishops' proposals were to be debated again by the Lower House of Convocation in June 1932, which allowed six months for agitation. Pressure groups, like the English Church Union and the Modern Churchmen's Union, lobbied on different sides of the question and a vast array of polemical literature flowed from the presses. Particularly vocal in support of intercommunion with Nonconformists were the Anglican Evangelicals. Archdeacon Storr circulated another memorandum appealing for a closer relationship with the evangelical Free Churches 'with whom our own Church has much more in common than it has with the unreformed Churches of the Continent and the East'. The memorandum was signed by numerous evangelical leaders and endorsed a few days before Convocation at a public meeting which declared 'that intercommunion with our non-episcopalian Protestant brethren should be at least as ungrudging and complete as that with our non-Protestant episcopalian brethren.'<sup>97</sup> Identifying the root cause of the problem, one of the speakers lamented, 'Slowly, but surely the terrible truth dawns on us, that in the life of a responsible section of our Church, Order has come to be regarded as of more vital importance than Faith.'<sup>98</sup>

Anglicans remained bitterly divided. The theological committee appointed by Convocation to examine the issue could not agree, and produced no less than four conflicting reports. Once again Graham Brown stood up in the Lower House and declared that having welcomed intercommunion with the Old Catholics, intercommunion with Nonconformists should be the logical and fair consequence. Yet his pleas fell on deaf

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<sup>95</sup> P. Carnegie Simpson, 'Intercommunion and the Free Church Position', *British Weekly*, 28 January 1932, p. 351.

<sup>96</sup> *British Weekly*, 4 February 1932, p. 347.

<sup>97</sup> *Record*, 3 June 1932, p. 360. Compare the resolutions of the National Church League, *The Times*, 9 January 1932, p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> The words of Paul Gibson (1880–1964), principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge; see *Record*, 10 June 1932, p. 369.

ears. After another protracted debate, the clergy effectively asked the bishops to go back to the drawing board.<sup>99</sup> The prospect of officially authorized intercommunion with Nonconformists had once again run into the sand.<sup>100</sup>

Despite these disappointments, the new friendship between Anglicans and Old Catholics was going forward in leaps and bounds. At the end of June 1932 Graham Brown was consecrated at St Paul's Cathedral as the new Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem – a post for which he was ideally suited because he had the backing of the evangelical movement (which funded more than half the bishop's stipend) but also had proven ecumenical credentials (vital in relationship-building with the Eastern churches in Palestine). The consecration service was an extravagant affair with an unusual international and inter-denominational flavour.<sup>101</sup> Indeed Graham Brown hinted to Archbishop Lang that a change of venue from St Paul's might be appropriate, because 'the international character of Westminster Abbey might help in creating the atmosphere of the Church Universal'.<sup>102</sup> He also made the bold suggestion that an Old Catholic bishop be invited to take part, because this symbolic act would 'advance the cause of Reunion' and cement the friendship between the two churches.<sup>103</sup> Graham Brown's evangelical status would be an advantage in dispelling the 'unnecessary fears' of Anglican Evangelicals at such a step and would also help to emphasise 'the non-sectional nature of our reunion work'.<sup>104</sup> Although he hoped for the participation of Bishop Moog from Bonn, whom he had got to know 'quite intimately', Henricus van Vlijmen (1870–1954), Bishop of Haarlem, was sent instead. The Old Catholic bishop took his place alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury and twenty-two Anglican

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<sup>99</sup> *Chronicle of Convocation*, Lower House, 1–2 June 1932, pp. 240–261, 331–347. For Graham Brown's speech, see pp. 258–259.

<sup>100</sup> The bishops revised their guidelines in an even tighter and more restrictive form, but did not send them back to the Lower House where agreement was impossible; *Chronicle of Convocation*, Upper House, 18 January 1933, pp. 26–52.

<sup>101</sup> B.F. Simpson (1883–1971) was consecrated on the same occasion as suffragan Bishop of Kensington. For details of the consecration, see *Bible Lands*, vol. 8 (July 1932), pp. 250–258. See also correspondence at Middle East Centre Archives [MECA], Jerusalem and the East Mission Papers [JEMP], boxes 1/6 & 14/4 (at St Antony's College, Oxford); LPL J.A. Douglas Papers, vol. 75, fos 188–217.

<sup>102</sup> Graham Brown to Lang, 29 April 1932, MECA JEMP, box 1/6.

<sup>103</sup> Graham Brown to Lang, 10 May 1932, MECA JEMP, box 1/6.

<sup>104</sup> Graham Brown – Douglas, 7 & 9 May 1932, LPL J.A. Douglas Papers, vol. 75, fos 195, 197.



co-consecrators, laying his hands upon Graham Brown's head and reciting, *sotto voce*, the Old Catholic formula, 'Accipe Spiritum Sanctum', at the same moment as Lang pronounced the Anglican formula, 'Receive the Holy Ghost ...'. Intercommunion had grown, with little consultation, to encompass inter-consecration; though there was reluctance amongst those involved to reveal the full facts to the public, for fear of further controversy.<sup>105</sup> It was fitting, less than a year after the Bonn Agreement, that its evangelical architect should be the first person in whom the Anglican and Old Catholic lines of succession were reunited.

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### *Deutsche Zusammenfassung*

Die Bonner Vereinbarung begründete die «Interkommunion» zwischen der Kirche von England und den Altkatholischen Kirchen der Utrechter Union und wurde von den Konvokationen von Canterbury und York im Januar 1932 einstimmig anerkannt. Die Verhandlungen zwischen Anglikanern und Altkatholiken provozierten jedoch eine heftige Kontroverse, vor allem innerhalb der «Evangelic community», die ein Schwinden des protestantischen und reformierten Erbes der Kirche von England befürchtete. Der Beitrag untersucht den anglikanisch-evangelikalischen Widerstand gegen die Unionsvorschläge und ihre theologischen Vorbehalte gegen die Utrechter Erklärung. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird dabei dem einflussreichen Beitrag von G. F. Graham Brown geschenkt, dem einzigen evangelikalischen Vertreter bei der Bonner Konferenz im Juli 1931. Behandelt wird ebenfalls die verbreitete Enttäuschung in evangelikalischen Kreisen, dass die in der Bonner Vereinbarung vorliegenden Prinzipien der Interkommunion durch die Kirche von England nicht auf die protestantischen «Nonconformists» ausgeweitet wurden.

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<sup>105</sup> See correspondence and official protocol (drawn up after the event) at LPL MS 3414, fos 1–4; C.G. Lang Papers, vol. 44, fos 176–303; N.P. Williams Papers, MS 3545, fos 23–53; J.A. Douglas Papers, vol. 75, fos 221–261. For an analysis of the secret negotiations, see 'The Consecrations of 1932' in: Brian Taylor, *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum: Historical Essays on the Agreements of Bonn and Meissen* (Guildford: St Thomas's Trust, 1995), pp. 13–29.