
This substantial and handsomely bound volume is part of Brill’s series in church history, but its main focus is not on history for its own sake. It is principally concerned with reflection on what it means to be a church. As the opening chapter explains, this book compares the emerging self-understanding of two groups of Christians that separated from Roman Catholicism in sharply contrasting contexts: the Old Catholics in the global north and the Philippine Independent Church in the global south. In each of these case-studies those who found themselves at odds with Roman Catholicism, whether for theological, political or cultural reasons, quickly needed to articulate what they believed about the nature of the church and to organise themselves accordingly. These were practical responses to pressing existential realities, not abstract theorising.

The author analyses data drawn from the life of these two traditions, mostly in the form of official documents such as constitutions, canons and liturgies. He maps the path of each tradition between the late nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth century, providing enough historical background to locate the developing principles of ecclesiology within their *Sitz im Leben*. He evaluates the role of key leaders and the influence of ecumenical contacts, and identifies the differences and similarities between the churches in question. He shows what light they shed on each other, and how far they are mutually compatible. This material is of particular interest, since little of it has previously been published.

Chapter 2 starts by defining ‘local church’ and ‘national church’. From a spectrum of four ways of understanding ‘local’ the author identifies his own the standpoint as that shared by Anglicans, Orthodox and Old Catholics, who are alike in seeing the diocese as the church’s foundational unit. He illustrates how ‘national church’ may be diversely construed in a civic sense or a territorial one, sometimes even in an ethnic sense amounting almost to racism. In the context of inculturation and emancipation the notion of a national church can mean very different things. For example, in Holland the first Old Catholics resisted the ‘foreign’ Roman Catholic hierarchy introduced in 1853; in Germany during the 1870s a significant minority defended the Germanic character of Christianity over against French and Italian influences; in the USA at the turn of the nineteenth century part of the Polish diaspora sought to withstand ultramontane German and Irish
bishops; in the Philippines during the same period the nationalism of indigenous clergy and people was orientated against Spanish colonial rule; whereas in Switzerland a political dimension was largely absent. The two chosen case-studies do not compare like with like, the Union of Utrecht (UU) being a union of national churches and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) a single national church with several dioceses. In each case, though, ecclesiological reflection is shown to occur at a level higher than the diocese, and seeks to do justice to the catholic and national credentials of the group concerned. The author goes on to define the four distinct phases studied in ensuing chapters.

Chapter 3 deals with the founding period of the UU (established in 1889) and the IFI (proclaimed in 1902). First, the constituent strands of Old Catholicism are identified against the background of the nineteenth-century Kulturkampf and the papal decrees of Vatican I. The ecumenical legacy of Döllinger is acknowledged, and the interplay of political and theological factors differentiated country by country. The author outlines the road that led to the Convention of Utrecht, and examines the three foundational documents it produced – the Declaration, the Vereinbarung (agreement) and the Reglement (regulations) – which enunciated clear ecclesiological principles.

The author then sketches the church’s catalytic role in the struggle for Filipino independence, and the violent transition from Spanish colonialism to American neo-colonisation – events not widely known to European readers. He describes the idiosyncratic leadership of Gregorio Aglipay, who moved by stages from guerrilla general to Obispo Maximo (supreme bishop) of a national church – consecrated presbyterally in a situation of crisis. Though independent of Rome, his initial doctrinal stance was unreformed but soon veered sharply towards liberalism. His Fundamental Epistles (1902-3) and ‘Doctrine and Constitutional Rules’ (1903) are examined, the latter having remained in force until his death four decades later. All this was worlds away from Old Catholicism, with which there was little contact.

Chapter 4 traces the story of both bodies through the tumultuous period until after World War II. The Old Catholics consolidated and the UU expanded to include new members from countries redefined after World War I. It continued to grapple with such issues as relations with Rome, compulsory celibacy, the authority of national churches in matters of discipline, the role of synods and use of the vernacular. From the 1890s onward Old Catholics developed dialogue with Anglican and Orthodox