

## **A non-political stance as an ecclesial *via media* in war time? The correspondence between archbishop Andreas Rinkel of Utrecht and bishop Erwin Kreuzer of the German Old Catholic Church from 1937 until the invasion of the Netherlands\***

### **1. Introduction**

One of the more persistent issues in the field of canon law and the (broader) field of law and religion is that of the relationship between church and state or church and politics. In his many publications, Jan Hallebeek has addressed this subject a number of times<sup>1</sup>, and it also plays a significant role in his introduction to “canon

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\* The files that have been used in this study are kept in the archives of the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, Amersfoort, in box N.1 (O.K.K.-Duitsland, 1938–1966), factually also including correspondence from 1937. – The sources are reproduced uncorrected, i.e. the German of one of the protagonists, Andreas Rinkel, has retained its Dutch accent. – I am grateful to Mr. Edward Jacobson, MA of Vuurtoren Editing for his linguistic assistance. Excerpts of this essay were presented at the conference of the Societas Oecumenica (Ludwigshafen/Heidelberg, 23–28 August 2018), particularly insightful comments were received from Dr. Jutta Koslowski (PH Ludwigshafen) concerning the role of censorship and the need to attempt to read between the lines for (veiled) comments on the political state of the world. Attempts to engage in such a kind of reading have been included into footnotes mainly, given their hermeneutically challenging character.

1 A few examples include: J. HALLEBEEK/M.A.H.P. VAN STIPHOUT, De verhouding tussen canoniek recht en wereldlijk recht in Europees perspectief: een historische verkenning, in: L.C. VAN DRIMMELEN/T.J. VAN DER PLOEG (eds.), Geloofsgemeenschappen er recht, Den Haag 2014, 197–218; J. HALLEBEEK, Godsdienst(on)vrijheid in de Gouden Eeuw? Het proces tegen Johan Wachtelaer (1583–1652), *Trajecta* 23 (2014) 123–144; *IBID.*, Church Asylum in Late Antiquity, Concession by the Emperor or Competence of the Church?, in: E.C. COPPENS (ed.), *Secundum Ius. Opstellen aangeboden aan prof. mr. P.L. Nève*, Nijmegen 2005, 163–182; J. HALLEBEEK/H. DONDORP, The Church as Promotor of the Law: The Emergence of Canon Law as a Separate Discipline in the Middle Ages, in: J. WOLFF (ed.), *Kultur- und rechtshistorische Wurzeln Europas*, Mönchengladbach 2005, 43–62; J. HALLEBEEK, The Roman Pontiff as direct judge of appeal and the identity of the Latin Church, in: J. FRISHMAN/W. OTTEN/G. ROUWHORST (eds.), *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation; The Foundational Character of Authoritative Sources in the History of Christianity and Judaism*, Leiden 2004, 387–404; J. HALLEBEEK, *Recursus ad principem*, Zegers Bernard van Espen on the rôle of secular courts in preventing the abuse of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, in: J. HALLEBEEK/B. WIRIX (eds.), *Met het oog op morgen, Ecclesiologische beschouwingen aangeboden aan Jan Visser, Zoetermeer* 1996, 64–71; J. HALLEBEEK: *Verbondenheid van Kerk en Staat in het vroegmoderne regalisme. Over het ius placiti en de recursus ad principem*, NTKR.

law in ecclesiological context<sup>2</sup>, the crowning achievement of his service as lecturer in canon law at the Old Catholic Seminary, as it is affiliated with Utrecht University. At this institution, Jan Hallebeek also served as extraordinary professor of Ancient Catholic Church Structures from 1997–2006. He continues to serve as an associate researcher at the Old Catholic Seminary.

In the history of the Old Catholic Churches (of the Union of Utrecht)<sup>3</sup>, the topic of church-state relationships has played a role of considerable significance. Here, particular attention will be given to the role of church-state relationships – or, more precisely, the relation between church and both party politics and the politics pursued by states at large – in the correspondence between the Archbishop of Utrecht, Andreas Rinkel (1889–1979, in office: 1937–1970) and the bishop of the Old Catholic Church of Germany (*Katholisches Bistum der Alt-Katholiken*), Erwin Kreuzer (1878–1953, in office: 1935–1953) just prior to the Second World War and up until the invasion of the Netherlands by German (National Socialist) troops in 1940. In doing so, this essay offers insight into the concrete ways in which these two key protagonists of European Old Catholicism negotiated the relation between the ecclesial and political sphere at a time when their respective countries existed in an antagonistic relationship. Prior to doing so, we will first outline aspects of the relationship between church and state and church and politics in the broader history of the Old Catholic Churches, before introducing both the structure of the Union of Utrecht and the two main protagonists, Rinkel and Kreuzer.

In the end, this essay contributes to the history of the Old Catholic Churches in the twentieth century, building on research by Ring and Smit<sup>4</sup> while also pre-

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- Tijdschrift voor Recht en Religie 2017:1, 21–36. See also studies such as: J. HALLEBEEK, Questions of canon law concerning the election and consecration of a bishop for the Church of Utrecht: The casus resolutio of 1722, *Bijdragen: International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 61 (2000) 17–50; *IBID.*, Die Autonomie der Ortskirche im Denken von Zeger Bernard van Espen, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 92 (2002) 76–99; *IBID.*, Alonso “El Tostado” (c. 1410–1455). His doctrine on jurisdiction and its influence in the Church of Utrecht, Amersfoort 1996; *IBID.*, “Omnis jurisdictionis fons ecclesia, An eighteenth-century debate on the origin of jurisdiction”, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 85 (1995) 114–133.
- 2 See J. HALLEBEEK, *Canoniek recht in ecclesiologische context*, Amersfoort 2011, 21–55 (on the church in the world from a legal perspective) and 57–105 (on the ecclesiological basis of canon law, with particular reference to traditions such as Gallicanism, in which church-state relations played a critical role). On the occasion of 25 years of service as lecturer in canon law, Jan Hallebeek was presented with a *Festschrift*: Peter-Ben Smit and Lidwien van Buuren, *Meester in Kerk en Recht*, Sliedrecht 2013.
- 3 On which, see, e.g., the outlines in: P.B. SMIT, *Old Catholic and Philippine Independent Ecclesiologies in History. The Catholic Church in Every Place* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), see also J. HALLEBEEK *Canon Law Aspects of the Utrecht Union*, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 84 (1994) 114–27.
- 4 The most complete study of the history of the Old Catholic Church of Germany during the Third Reich is M. RING, “Katholisch und Deutsch.” *Die alt-katholische Kirche Deutschlands*

senting a case study that concerns the relationship between ecclesiology and ecclesiological ideals (including “apolitical Catholicism”) and (public and state) politics. As we shall see, the “apolitical” stance seemed to serve as an alternative to the political order, however naïve or unsatisfactory one may judge it to be in retrospect. Particular attention will be given to Rinkel’s perspective, as part of an ongoing research project on him<sup>5</sup>.

## 2. The Union of Utrecht

The Union of Utrecht is the international communion of Old Catholic Churches that was first established in 1889 (Convention of Utrecht). Since its establishment, it has brought together (1) the Catholic Church of the Netherlands as it had existed since the schism with Rome in 1723; (2) the Catholics that continued the catholic faith following the First Vatican Council (1870), who, having been excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church due to their refusal to comply with the new teaching of papal infallibility and universal jurisdiction, had established themselves as national catholic churches in Germany, Switzerland and Austria (out of which the Czechoslovakian, since 1993: Czech, Old Catholic Church also emerged); and (3) the so-called Polish National Catholic Churches, which emerged in the early twentieth century in North America, where groups of Polish Catholic immigrants felt compelled to establish their own church structures, which subsequently led to the founding of a daughter church back in Poland. Among the churches that were only temporarily a member of this union, the Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites is of particular significance; this church, having grown out of a Marian revival in Poland/Lithuania in the late nineteenth century, was unable to continue its existence within the Roman Catholic Church and joined the Old Catholic communion. Its special teachings, devotions and disciplinary practices led to its removal from the union in the 1920s, but ties remained close. The central organ of the Union of Utrecht is the International Bishops’ Conference (IBC), which, as its name indicates, is a conference of bishops that seeks to discern a common way forward in matters of

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und der Nationalsozialismus (Bonn: Alt-Katholischer Bistumsverlag, 2008). For a study of the life and work of Andreas Rinkel, including his ministry during the Second World War, see F. SMIT, Andreas Rinkel (1889–1979), in: W.B. VAN DER VELDE/F. SMIT/P.J.J. VISSER (eds.), *Adjutorio Redemptoris. Dr. Andreas Rinkel. Aartsbisschop van Utrecht 1889–1979*, Amersfoort 1987, 3–197.

5 A first study of Rinkel’s (somewhat cautious, if not wavering) style of leadership can be found in SMIT, Rinkel (note 4) 66–107.124–125, on the latter pages, it is also noted that there was intra-Old Catholic criticism of the rather circumspect *modus operandi* of the church as a whole and of its leadership in particular.

faith and order<sup>6</sup>. The IBC has no jurisdiction over any churches; rather, decisions reached by the IBC should be understood to express the minds of these churches so that they can be easily received by them. Though the Archbishop of Utrecht acts as the president of the IBC, that does not make him the Archbishop of the Old Catholic Churches; the archiepiscopal title only applies to the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands as the continuation of the ecclesiastical province of Utrecht, established in 1559.

### 3. Church, Politics and the State in the History of the Old Catholic Churches

In brief – and therefore in broad strokes – the relationship between church and state (and, more generally, church and politics) in the history of the Old Catholic Churches up to the Second World War can be primarily understood in three ways.

First, in the experience of what is now the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands, church-state and ecclesial-political relationships played a role in five ways. (1) To begin with, this church is the historical continuation of the pre-Reformation catholic church in the Northern Low Countries and as such bears the marks of the “medieval” establishment and the sixteenth-century attempts at reform. For example, the territorial organization of the church has its roots in a 1559 restructuring of the church (bull *Super universas*, with the pope appointing bishops and the king, Philipp II, proposing candidates)<sup>7</sup>. (2) This heritage became problematic following the Protestant Reformation in the Netherlands and the introduction of a (factually) Protestant government, and thus the once self-explanatory coalition between church and state had to be renegotiated: catholics could worship only in hidden churches<sup>8</sup>; they needed to redefine their place in the public sphere<sup>9</sup>, to revise the manner in which they were organized,<sup>10</sup> and also to find ways to manage issues at the interface of church as state, such issues

6 Cf. HALLEBEEK, Canon Law (note 3). On the Union of Utrecht and its history in general, see SMIT, Ecclesiologies (note 3 and the literature referenced there).

7 Cf. in general: F. POSTMA, Nieuw licht op een oude zaak: de oprichting van de nieuwe bisdommen in 1559, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 103 (1990) 10–27. See also HALLEBEEK, Recht (note 2) 180–182.

8 Cf. on a process against a cleric providing for such a church: HALLEBEEK, *Godsdienst(on)-vrijheid* (note 1).

9 G. YASUHIRA, Confessional Coexistence and Perceptions of the ‘Public’: Catholics’ Agency in Negotiations on Poverty and Charity in Utrecht, 1620s–1670s, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132 (2017), 3–24.

10 Cf. the broad account of this period by: C.H. PARKER, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age*, Cambridge 2008.

concerning marriage law<sup>11</sup>. In practice these renegotiations led to an existence more independent from and less reliant on the state than had previously been the case, though at the same time, the “Augustinianist” controversies prior to and following the Council of Trent<sup>12</sup> were causing troubles for the Archbishop of Utrecht (who was at this time serving in the guise of an “apostolic vicar” for political reasons: the use of the title Archbishop of Utrecht, certainly *ad extra*, would have given the impression of subversive intentions – *ad intra* was quite another matter). (3) These controversies concerned the Roman (curial) attempts to influence the life of the church in the Netherlands – issues such as the regulation of regular clergy in the Netherlands (Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, etc.) and the appointment of new archbishops – which forced the Dutch Catholic Church to develop a policy of invoking the protection of the “secular” (i.e. Protestant) government against the abuse of power and the unjust application of canon law by Vatican authorities, using the so-called *recursus ad principem* in some cases and the *ius placet* in others<sup>13</sup>. (4) Following the formal separation of church and state in the Netherlands in 1795, the disestablishment of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, and the (for the Dutch Catholic Church) traumatic introduction of both an additional episcopal hierarchy for Roman Catholics in 1853 and the novel dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in 1854<sup>14</sup>, the Dutch Catholic Church, until then usually referred to as the *Cleresie*, began to transform into the kind of church it is today, the *Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland*. Its new name derived from the *Altkatholische Bewegung* in (especially) Germany, the Habsburg Monarchy and Switzerland. (5) It also came with a commitment to a certain separation between church and state and a “non-political” stance of the catholic church. This non-political stance should be understood as “non-partisan”, as many of the proponents of the *Altkatholische Bewegung* had a strong affinity for the liberal politics of that time. It should also be understood to mean that the faithful were referred to their own (Christian) conscience and not to the “party-line” of the church when it came to voting and other forms of political action. It is this tradition that will become particularly relevant in the correspondence between Rinkel and Kreuzer, as it was dominant in the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands at the time and certainly in

11 Cf. D.J. SCHOON, *Van bisschoppelijke Cleresie tot Oud-Katholieke Kerk. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het katholicisme in Nederland in de 19e eeuw*, Nijmegen 2004, 648–654 – this came with papal permission, cf. the brief *Matrimonia quae* of Benedict XIV [1741].

12 The misnomer “Jansenism” is avoided here on purpose; it is high time to bury this concept as a term of any historiographical usefulness, cf. M. COTTRET, *Histoire du jansénisme*, Paris 2016.

13 Cf. HALLEBEEK, *Recursus* (note 1) and *IBID.*, *Verbondenheid* (note 1).

14 Cf. on this era SCHOON, *Cleresie* (note 11).

Rinkel's own thought<sup>15</sup>. In general, it led the Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands to steer away from political involvement, notwithstanding the political involvement of individual members, both lay and clergy.

Second, the Old Catholic Churches emerging out of the *Altkatholische Bewegung* – i. e. those of Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Czechoslovakia) – were characterized by an apolitical Catholicism that can be best summarized by quoting from Ring's dissertation; in brief, it was the outcome of liberal catholic reflection on the essence of religion and the church and their relationship to the public sphere, politics and (individual) morality and personal responsibility. Ring underlines two aspects:

An erster Stelle steht ein Religionsbegriff, der Religion von der persönlichen Gottesbeziehung her definiert und deshalb stark individualistisch geprägt ist, der Zwang ausschließt und Religion auf den Bereich der Innerlichkeit beschränkt. Politik hingegen betrifft den Bereich der Außenwelt; es ist dies die Welt des Zwanges und des Scheins. Wegen dieses Unterschiedes dürfen Religion und Politik nicht miteinander vermischt werden; die Religion darf sich nicht in die Politik einmischen und die Politik nicht in die Religion. Zwischen beiden gibt es trotzdem eine Beziehung, insofern die sittliche Persönlichkeit beide miteinander verknüpfen muss; so tritt im Tun des Christen die Religion nach außen hervor. Diese Verbindung muss jedes Individuum für sich leisten, weshalb es unmöglich ist, ein allgemeinverbindliches politisches Programm zu formulieren, das mit dem Anspruch des Christlichen auftreten kann. Dieser individualistische Ansatz macht es möglich, dass die Gläubigen aller politischen Richtungen in der alt-katholischen Kirche Heimat finden können.

Es ist zudem deutlich geworden, dass der unpolitische Katholizismus ein Gegenkonzept zum politischen darstellt, wobei die römisch-katholische Kirche und der politische Katholizismus als miteinander identische betrachtet werden<sup>16</sup>.

This “unpolitical” catholicism would, as Ring has shown extensively, be interpreted by Kreuzer and others (notably theologians such as Hütwohl, Keussen and Küppers)<sup>17</sup> in a way that allowed its representatives to discern a “natural” affinity for National Socialism in terms of principles and ethics.

Third, a word should be said about church, state and politics in the third Old

15 E. g. in A. RINKEL, *Dogmatische Theologie I–IV* (typescript; Amersfoort 1956), the topic of church-state relationships is not addressed.

16 RING, *Katholisch* (note 4) 25–26.

17 R. KEUSSEN (1877–1944), an Old Catholic priest and theologian, served from 1936 at the Old Catholic theological institute in Bonn and from 1942 onwards as professor of Old Catholic theology at Bonn University. H. HÜTWOHL (1893–1973), was one of the key clergypersons pushing a more *völkisch* agenda, for instance by leading the so-called *Kirchlich-Nationale Bewegung* (see RING, *Katholisch*, 211). On W. KÜPPERS (1905–1980), from 1938 onwards a key figure at the Old Catholic theological training institute in Bonn, see: A. HENSMANN-EßER (ed.), “Abenteuer in Rom”. *Texte aus dem Nachlass Werner Küppers im Alt-Katholischen Seminar der Universität Bonn*, Bonn 2017. More detail can be found in RING, *Katholisch* (note 4).

Catholic tradition that was part of the Union of Utrecht: the Polish National Catholic tradition. As indicated above, this tradition grew out of communities of catholic Polish immigrants in North America, who established themselves ecclesially in an autonomous catholic church under the liberal and nationalist leadership of personalities such as Franciszek Hodur; the political involvement of this church, therefore, developed along lines similar to those in Germanophone Europe and the Netherlands.

#### 4. Andreas Rinkel and Erwin Kreuzer: Biographical Backgrounds

Prior to addressing their correspondence, Andreas Rinkel and Erwin Kreuzer need to be introduced, though due to space limits only the briefest contours of their life can be given here.

Rinkel was born in 1889 in an Old Catholic family in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel<sup>18</sup> but grew up in Amsterdam. After attending the Old Catholic seminary in Amersfoort, he was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood, serving as parish priest in Enkhuizen and Amersfoort. Beginning in 1921, he taught dogmatic theology (and liturgical studies) at the Old Catholic Seminary, making a name for himself as a person who put Old Catholic systematic theology on a new academic footing, drawing on a broad array of ecumenical sources. In 1937 he was elected to the See of Utrecht, a ministry that he would fulfill until 1970. He died in 1979. He must be regarded as one of the most influential Old Catholic theologians of the twentieth century, who, as president of the Union of Utrecht, faced and successfully managed challenges in international cooperation posed by the Second World War, the Iron Curtain, and the ecumenical movement (the former two being divisive, the latter unifying in nature).

Erwin Kreuzer was born in Berlin in 1878 and, following studies in theology at Bonn University, was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood in 1900. He then served in pastoral positions in Cologne, Passau and Kempten, where he became parish priest in 1903, serving until 1915, when he was elected parish priest in Freiburg in Breisgau. In 1934, he was elected as bishop of the German Old

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18 For this and the following, see in particular: SMIT, RINKEL, and PETER-BEN SMIT, Ecumenical and International. Anglican – Old Catholic Relationships in the Correspondence Between Andreas Rinkel and Urs Küry (1955–1970), in: P.B. SMIT (ed.), *One Small Village? Church History in International Perspective*, Trajecta 26 (2017), 133–168, IDEM, *Recht doen aan jezelf en de ander: Aartsbisschop Andreas Rinkel en oecumenische theologische vernieuwing binnen de Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland*, Trajecta 23 (2014), 201–218., and IDEM, *Vrienden in het bisschopsambt. De correspondentie tussen Andreas Rinkel en Urs Küry (1955–1970)*, in: *Publicatieserie Oud-Katholiek Seminarie 56*, Sliedrecht/Amersfoort 2016.

Catholic Church, with his see in Bonn. He served in this capacity until his death in 1953. Politically, Kreuzer was active in the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (1919–1922) and had strong affinities for *völkisch* ideas and, accordingly, with the ideals of National Socialism, as has been researched by Ring<sup>19</sup>. Following the war, he distanced himself from his close proximity to National Socialism, into which he had also led his church.

## 5. The Correspondence Leading up to the Second World War

The correspondence between the two bishops begins at the time of Rinkel's election and consecration in 1937, with Kreuzer congratulating him and stating his intention to participate in the consecration<sup>20</sup>. In this context, Rinkel asks Kreuzer whether he can provide a German translation of the rite of consecration for the participating Anglican bishops of Gloucester (Arthur Headlam) and Fulham (Basil Batty)<sup>21</sup>. The focus then shifts, as far as international relations are concerned, to further internal matters of the Union of Utrecht (notably the consecrations of other bishops and the problematic relationship with the second Old Catholic Church in Poland, i. e. the Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites) and to ecumenical contacts. For our purposes here, we cannot provide not a full survey of their correspondence, as the focus will be confined to those instances in which the interfaces of church-state or church-politics play a role.

The first ecumenical conference that is mentioned and that seems to pass without significant issues is the Faith and Order Conference of 1937 (Edinburgh) – one of the two main ecumenical bodies of the era – in which Kreuzer participated personally; Old Catholics had been particularly involved in this part of the ecumenical movement<sup>22</sup>. This, however, was only one of two important ecumenical conferences of that year; the other one took place in Oxford and was part of the “Life and Work” movement, which focused on practical cooperation as a means for furthering ecclesial unity. The German theologian Rudolf Keussen (1877–1944) took part in this conference, and his participation is mentioned first

19 Cf. RING, *Katholisch* (note 4) passim, esp. 367–707.

20 See Kreuzer-Rinkel 20 April 1937, expressing his intention to participate in the consecration and brief notes dates 9 and 16 April 1937 wishing Rinkel much strength first and congratulating him subsequently.

21 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 26 May 1937.

22 See Kreuzer-Rinkel, 27 June 1937: the department in charge of religious affairs in Berlin wishes that Kreuzer goes himself. Kreuzer doesn't want to: he is too busy, his health is too poor, his knowledge of foreign languages is insufficient and people are telling him to get some rest. Cf. Kreuzer-Rinkel, 8 July 1937, confirming his participation.



in a letter by Rinkel, who comments both on a recent pastoral letter by Kreuzer and on Keussen's speech at the Oxford conference:

Der wird sicher auch im Ausland einen ausgezeichnetsten Eindruck machen und die Überzeugung noch verstärken, dass die Leitung unserer deutschen Schwesterkirche in den besten Händen ist. Auch der Vortrag des Herren Dr. Keussen wird dazu beitragen, sei es auch, dass wir nicht alle seine Ansichten teilen<sup>23</sup>.

In fact, as Ring has described, ecumenical and intra-Old Catholic reactions to Keussen were such that Keussen decided to withdraw from the World Conference on Life and Work as Old Catholic representative. One contributing factor was Keussen's report on this conference's meeting in Oxford, which was dedicated to the politically sensitive topic "Church, Community, and State" and at which he had protested vocally against the critical stance of the conference vis-à-vis the *Reichskirche* and the German political developments of which this church was a result. In his report, submitted to the periodical *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* (at that point the key outlet for Old Catholic theology), Keussen did not only dismiss the conference as a somewhat trivial event but also argued vocally for the acceptance of the fundamental differences between "kulturlosen Rassen und Stämmen und kulturell hochstehenden Rassen"<sup>24</sup>. Churches should not involve themselves with politics, however, but rather align themselves with what he saw as the God-given (racial) order and focus on spiritual care. As the editor of the *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, the Swiss bishop Adolf Kury (1870–1956; in office: 1924–1955) was neither inclined to accept Keussen's view of the Oxford conference's triviality nor willing to align himself with Keussen's racial views. So the report was rejected, causing considerable anger on Keussen's part. In this situation, Rinkel attempts to mediate and argue that Keussen should not be deterred by this refusal:

Es steht nicht an mir zu beurteilen, ob der ihm erbetene Aufsatz für die I.K.Z. geeignet war oder nicht, wir sind hier der festen Meinung, dass er um der Sachen willen sich darüber hinwegsetzen sollte<sup>25</sup>.

He asks whether Kreuzer cannot convince Keussen to reconsider his decision to withdraw and to overcome his hurt pride. In his response Kreuzer refuses, because, as he says:

23 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 10 March 1938.

24 Cf. RING, Katholisch (note 4) 616, quotation from: Rudolf Keussen, Die Weltkirchenkonferenz in Oxford, *Alt-Katholisches Volksblatt* 69 (1938), 292–293.297–299.308–308, 298.

25 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 7 October 1938.

zu stark haben wir Deutschen in Zürich den nachdrücklichen Hinweis auf die Grenzen der Möglichkeit einer internationalen Zusammenarbeit empfunden. Wir wollen die Kirche nicht durch unsere politische Ideologie kompromittieren<sup>26</sup>.

Here, Zürich refers to the international Old Catholic Congress of that year, during which a fierce discussion broke out between the Dutch professor C.G. van Riel, the Swiss theologian and priest Urs Küry (son of bishop Adolf Küry) and Kreuzer himself: Van Riel had spoken strongly against NS racial views (and *völkisch* thinking in general) and in favor of a political involvement of churches, while Küry had suggested that churches' alignment with political forces should have its limits if the church were to remain true to itself. Kreuzer had protested vehemently against both of these perspectives in the name of his church<sup>27</sup>. For Kreuzer, this debate was another reason to support withdrawing from close international Old Catholic cooperation because of the (national-socialist) political preferences that he (and many within his church) had. In the same letter, he also comments on the annexation of the *Sudetenland* by NS Germany, which involved the "incorporation" of the largest part of the Old Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, given that this church was largely Germanophone and located in the annexed regions. In this context, Kreuzer remarks the following, indicating that the areas and people involved were indeed German: "Man sieht, daß es doch keine Provokation war, wenn man früher von sudetendeutschen Gemeinden sprach." Continuing in this vein, he notes the challenge that now faces him and others (presumably the Austrian and Czechoslovakian bishops, the latter having his see in Varnsdorf): "Wir stehen jetzt vor der Aufgabe, unsere drei deutschen Bistümer unter eine Dachorganisation zu bringen"<sup>28</sup>. Reacting to this letter, Rinkel pleads once more with Kreuzer to see whether he can get Keussen to return to the Life and Work movement and offers to mediate the conflict between the latter and Adolf Küry<sup>29</sup>. The Old Catholic voice in ecumenism is at stake, and he promises that another Dutch cleric, Engelbertus Lagerwey, will also do his best to assist with such mediation – Lagerwey was a trusted theological adviser to Rinkel and the parish priest of the cathedral church of Utrecht; from 1941 onwards he would serve as [titular] bishop of Deventer. He also makes two comments on the stance of the Dutch Old Catholic Church vis-à-vis developments across the eastern border of the Netherlands. First, he refers to the "case of Niemöller", referring to Martin Niemöller's imprisonment by Adolf Hitler as the latter's "personal prisoner", and states

26 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 8 October 1938.

27 For an account, see RING, *Katholisch* (note 4) 642–653.

28 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 8 October 1938.

29 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1938.

Als vor einigen Monaten der Ökumenische Rat in Nederland [sic] eine Kundgebung in der Sache des Niemöllers äussern wollte, hat unser Vertreter, Kan. Lagerwey, auf meiner Instigation hin, sich dagegen so energisch widersetzt und den geplanten Schritt als ausser der Kompetenz des Rates stehend gekennzeichnet, dass die ganze Geschichte zurückgezogen wurde<sup>30</sup>.

The comment on the church's competence may be regarded as typical for an apolitical attitude. In addition, he states

Wir, in der Utrechter Kirche, die Bischöfe und die international und ökumenisch arbeitende Männer, sind darauf bedacht Verständnis für die Lage ihrer Kirche zu haben und den Band der Einheit zu sichern, auch wenn andere ausser der holl. Kirche schärfer urteilen<sup>31</sup>.

The task of bishops, Rinkel stresses, is to work for unity, and he does not hide the fact, as this quotation indicates, that others in Dutch society are of a different opinion. He does not say that there was also substantial opposition to NS ideals *within* the Dutch Old Catholic Church, in fact; Lagerwey, who, in this case, argued for abstinence from any political involvement, would come to champion a Christian internationalist vision (rather than of a pagan nationalist one<sup>32</sup>), and the outspoken Amsterdam parish priest and seminary professor Van Riel (in the latter function a direct colleague of Rinkel) actively published in the periodical *De Oud-Katholiek*, taking a pacifist and decidedly anti-fascist position<sup>33</sup>. His own vision and hope was outlined by Rinkel in the same letter:

Der Glaube soll doch die Gegensätze, die die Welt zerteilen, überwinden zu können beweisen. Jedenfalls wollen wir das Unserige tun, damit diese Gegensätze nicht in die Kirche sich eindringen. Wenn dasselbe von jeder Seite geschieht, dann soll es sich erwiesen, dass die Grenzen der Zusammenarbeit nicht so eng sind als Sie, Herr Bischof, fürchten<sup>34</sup>.

In the same breath, he also sympathizes with the now marginalized Czechoslovakian bishop Alois Paschek (1869–1946; in office: 1924–1946) and also ex-

30 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1938.

31 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1938. It can also be observed that Rinkel both stresses his own goodwill and efforts and indicates that his stance is certainly not the only one.

32 On which, see WIETSE VAN DER VELDE, Working for Things Eternal: Engelbertus Lagerwey (1880–1959), Bishop of Deventer, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 96 (2016), 153–179, and P.B. SMIT, Literair leiderschap? Helden en heiligen bij pastoor Engelbertus Lagerweij in 1940 en 1941, *TussenRuimte* 2017: 2, 40–44.

33 As was recognized widely, obituaries in newspapers abounded. Cf., representatively, Prof. dr. G.C. van Riel †, *De Telegraaf* (8 September 1939), 7 (evening edition).

34 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1938. Rinkel's emphasis on doing 'das Unserige' is clearly intended as an appeal to Kreuzer to do the same, which may well mean that Rinkel seeks to suggest that Kreuzer should tone down his political attitude somewhat – it is difficult to read between the lines like this, however.

presses his understanding for Kreuzer's new challenges, while also indicating that the churches that have now been incorporated into the German Old Catholic Church retain certain rights of their own:

Ich verstehe welche Schwierigkeiten es heute für Sie gibt die geeignete Organisation für die dreigliedrige deutsche Kirche herauszufinden; das historisch Gewachsene hat sein Recht, jedoch wird eine Annäherung nötig sein<sup>35</sup>

Kreuzer's answer to this moves into two directions, it seems. On the one hand, he notes that he had not considered limits to international Old Catholic cooperation, but he also indicates "Aber nachdem man in Zürich so beflissen war, uns auf diese Grenzen aufmerksam zu machen, wollten wir niemanden durch unsere Mitarbeit in Verlegenheit bringen"<sup>36</sup>. He also comments on the situation of Paschek, stating that he will keep his salary and that the three dioceses will be retained, even if the "Bischof von Bonn" will be tasked with representing all of them vis-à-vis government authorities and will also exercise leadership within this communion of Old Catholic dioceses.

Other developments take place in the meantime. Rinkel, for example, is awarded a doctorate *honoris causa* by the Faculty of Catholic Theology (later, Old Catholic) of the University of Bern, for which Kreuzer congratulates him. When Rinkel expresses his thanks for this, he also gives his view of the Bernese faculty, noting that he has his doubts about some professors but is particularly happy with the exegete Ernst Gaugler<sup>37</sup>, who "bringt den Studenten – gleichwie Dr. Keussen in Bonn – den fehlenden dogmatischen Katholizismus bei"<sup>38</sup>. He also returns to what he had expressed earlier already, after stating that "Wir beten und vertrauen", i. e.:

Die verwirrenden Geschehnisse zwischen Völkern und Ländern dürfen uns in keiner Weise auseinander treiben. Unsere Kirche davor zu hüten ist an erster Stelle Aufgabe und Pflicht von uns Bischöfen<sup>39</sup>.

Also, Rinkel has received news concerning bishop Paschek, which he conveys to Kreuzer, noting that Paschek is happy with both Kreuzer and the stance of the German authorities:

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35 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1938.

36 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 23 October 1938.

37 On whom, see now THOMAS SCHEIBLER, *Jüdisch-christliche Hoffnung im Abschied von antijüdischer Apathie: eine Studie zu Ernst Gauglers Auslegung der Israelkapitel im Römerbrief* (Herisau: Scheibler, 2015).

38 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 5 December 1938.

39 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 5 December 1938. Rinkel refrains from judging the historical events, either out of consideration of Kreuzer or of the censor; instead, he stresses the calling and responsibility of bishops.

Es freut mich, dass es ihm gut geht; er ist sehr dankbar, dass Sie sich für ihn ‘als einen wahren Freund und zuverlässigen Berater’ erweisen. Er hat schwere Tage erlebt und nicht jeder Heisskopf weiss ihn nach Würde zu schätzen. Er rühmt das korrekte Benehmen der Reichsregierung<sup>40</sup>.

In his response, Kreuzer is much less enthusiastic about the Bernese faculty than Rinkel (one may suspect that this also has to do with the conflict between Keussen in Bonn and Küry in Bern), noting that “Meine Eindrücke von der Berner Fakultät sind leider nicht so vertrauensvoll wie die Ihren. Ich habe doch das Gefühl, dass hier die Barth’sche Theologie allerhand Verwirrung verursacht hat”<sup>41</sup>. In the same letter, he also reviews his own stance vis-à-vis Paschek:

Bischof Paschek hat bei seinem Alter Manches noch schwerer genommen, als es an sich schon ist; ich habe ihm aber sehr stark zugeredet, seine ganz unnötigen Bedenken von sich zu werfen und seinen ruhigen geraden Weg weiter zu gehen<sup>42</sup>.

In the meantime, another topic begins to play a role: the Polish Catholic Church’s relation to the Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites. Rinkel attempts to inquire through Kreuzer about this church and receives occasional, though hardly detailed, updates, perhaps because Kreuzer himself does not possess much information<sup>43</sup>.

The contentious topic of the “Oxfordausschuss” (i. e. Life and Work) continues to play a role in the correspondence, such as when Rinkel mentions that Adolf Küry has inquired whether a replacement for Keussen in the commission has already been found. He also suggests holding some sort of event or at least a meeting of the International Bishops’ Conference on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union of Utrecht (established in 1889)<sup>44</sup>. Kreuzer reacts to this by writing

Einen Ersatz für Dr. Keussen im Oxfordausschuss habe ich noch nicht. Es wird auch nicht leicht sein, aus der deutschen Kirche jemanden zu gewinnen, da die Gründe, die Keussen zum Rücktritt veranlasst haben, mehr oder weniger für uns alle gelten<sup>45</sup>.

On the other hand, he is in favour of marking the 50th anniversary of the international communion of Old Catholic Churches and would prefer an event in Utrecht: “wiewohl sie [sc. Eine Zusammenkunft] für uns Deutsche infolge der

40 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 5 December 1938.

41 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 14 December 1938.

42 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 14 December 1938.

43 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 14 December 1938.

44 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 11 March 1939. Rinkel also compliments Kreuzer with a contribution in the ecclesial press by one of his priests: “Der Aufsatz des Pfr. Pfisters im Volksblatt hat mich sehr gefreut; es ist gut, dass Ihre geschulte Geistliche der Oberflächlichkeit widerstehen und gründlich sagen, was katholisch ist.”

45 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 15 March 1939.

noch wieder verschärften Devisenbestimmungen nicht einfach durchzuführen wäre.” He indicates that he will follow the lead of Rinkel and Küry in this matter.

In the next exchange of letters between the two bishops the topic of the Second World War enters into the conversation. It dates to mid-September 1939 – the invasion of Poland had begun on 1 September – and concerns the illness and death of two Dutch priests, one of which was the professor, parish priest and pacifist Fr. Van Riel. Kreuzer expresses his devastation at his sudden passing<sup>46</sup>. Rinkel thanks him for his condolences and notes “Unsere Kirche trauert sehr um diesen Verlust; er war einer der tüchtigsten unter uns und hinterlässt eine Leere, die sich schwer ausfüllen lässt”<sup>47</sup>. In addition to Van Riel, the Hilversum parish priest Willem Jan de Vrij (1883–1939) has a heart attack and dies shortly thereafter. In the midst of these personally distressing events, Rinkel also comments on the outbreak of the war, which is still quite distant:

Einstweilen ist das grosse Elend des Krieges gekommen, die uns allen zum tiefsten besorgt macht. Mein tägliches Gebet gilt unseren Kirchen in allen Ländern; Gott schütze sie und...disponat pacem in diebus nostris.

Sie, lieber Herr Bischof, werden viel Stärke und Weisheit bedürfen in dieser Zeit. Gott leite Sie und Ihre Kirche durch alle Dunkel dieser Tage; Er bringe Licht<sup>48</sup>

Kreuzer reacts to this by commenting on the fact that both of the deceased priests coincidentally had German wives<sup>49</sup> and thanks Rinkel for his prayerful support: “Für Ihre freundlichen Wünsche und die Zusage Ihres betenden Gedenkens danke ich Ihnen herzlich! Ich muß mir täglich neue Kraft erbitten”<sup>50</sup>. Kreuzer’s remark sets the tone for much of what will follow, as he indicates that he is also enduring much hardship as part of the new order.

A new topic is introduced in October 1939, when Rinkel invites Kreuzer to attend the commemoration of the 1200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Willibrord – the founder of the Church of Utrecht – who had become a key saint in the history

46 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 11 September 1939. The sentiment may be somewhat surprising given the massive disagreement between Kreuzer and Van Riel at the Old Catholics’ Conference in Zürich.

47 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 14 September 1939.

48 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 14 September 1939. Indicating that the war is a disaster is not necessarily in line with the NS view – possibly Rinkel is being critical in a veiled manner here. The same is true for the reference to darkness later on.

49 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 14 September 1939: “Wie seltsam übrigens, dasz die beiden, die deutsche Frauen hatten, zu gleicher Zeit ausscheiden!” – The fact that both had German wives was not a coincidence: both married German wives while abroad and while clerical celibacy was still compulsory in the Dutch Old Catholic Church, cf. A. BERLIS, Einde aan een kaste buiten de maatschappij. Rond de opheffing van de celibaatsverplichting in de Oud-Katholieke Kerk van Nederland, in: M. MONTEIRO/G. ACKERMANS (eds.), Mannen Gods. Klerikale identiteit in verandering (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 53–71.

50 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 14 September 1939. Cf. Rinkel-Kreuzer, 19 September 1939 for Rinkel’s confirmation of De Vrij’s passing.

of the Old Catholic Churches<sup>51</sup>. The celebrations would consist of a Eucharist in the Old Catholic Cathedral in the morning of 7 November and a national service in the Dom Church of Utrecht (medieval cathedral, used for Protestant worship); a day prior, the Old Catholic synod would meet<sup>52</sup>. Rinkel is aware that travelling is not easy in a time of war – he may also have at the back of his mind the way in which the aforementioned Lagerwey had created a Christian internationalist focus for the celebrations<sup>53</sup> – so he allows for a negative answer to his invitation from the start:

Ich weiss schon, dass es sehr schwer sein wird für die ausländischen Brüder der Einladung Folge zu leisten; wenn also ein ‘non possumus’ folgt, werden wir das verstehen und hoffen, dass die Gebetsgemeinschaft bleibt. Möchte es aber doch möglich sein, dass Sie kämen, dann werden Sie vom ganzen Herzen unser Gast sein in diesen Tagen.

Das Herz ist einem schwer in der heutigen Zeit. Gott möge die Völker leiten in den Frieden und seine Kirche und die ganze Welt schützen.

Vom ganzen Herzen bete ich Ihnen Stärke und Bewahrung zu, Ihnen mit Ihrer Familie, Kirche und Vaterland<sup>54</sup>.

Kreuzer also appears to be sensitive to the political situation and responds as follows:

Ihre freundliche Einladung hat mich herzlich gefreut, doch ich habe noch eine Frage, auf dem Herzen und bitte, sie ganz rückhaltlos zu beantworten. Ich könnte mir gut vorstellen, daß Sie in der gegenwärtigen Lage wohl das Bedürfnis haben, mir die Freundlichkeit der Einladung zu erweisen, aber im Grund Ihres Herzens denken müssen: hoffentlich sagt er ab. Deshalb frage ich: Würde das Erscheinen eines Gastes aus einem kriegsführenden Land keinerlei Peinlichkeit für Sie mit sich bringen? Ich würde es sehr gut verstehen, wenn Sie mir schreiben: bleiben Sie lieber zu Haus [sic]<sup>55</sup>.

He does note that he will have to accept the offer of Rinkel’s hospitality should he be able to come, because it also depends on whether he gets a visa and the

51 Cf. WIETSE VAN DER VELDE, “Kooomt dezen dag blijmoedig vieren aan Willibrordus toegevoegt”, *Perspectief* 35 (2017), 18–35.

52 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1939.

53 See SMIT, *Leiderschap* (note 32). See in general also: A.H.M. VAN SCHAİK, “Waar alle richtingen samenkomen”. *De Willibrordherdenking van 1939*; *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht* 1981 (1981), 325–356.

54 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 15 October 1939. Rinkel’s offer of hospitality has, likely, also to do with the difficulty of exporting money when travelling abroad; the hope that a fellowship of prayer may be retained, indicates that the church is a communion that somehow transcends political vicissitudes and can be read as somewhat critical of the political state of affairs. Similarly, the emphasis on peace runs counter against more militaristic options and Rinkel’s heavy heart sits uneasily with those propagating war as a logical means of extending one’s *Lebensraum*.

55 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 20 October 1939. Kreuzer’s reference to current situation may be all he can say given censorship; the comment on his lack of students is probably even critical: the lack of students had to do with the fact that young men were called up for military service – statistically, religiously affiliated men were called up more frequently than others.

necessary funds for the journey to the Netherlands<sup>56</sup>. In the meantime, not too many Old Catholic bishops appear to be able and willing to attend the celebrations in Utrecht, as Rinkel reports to Kreuzer:

Jetzt beeile ich mich Sie zu antworten. – Ihr Brief macht uns viel Freude. Bischof Kury hat schon abgesagt, er hat Beschwerde gegen die Reise und steht mitten in der Universitätsarbeit; Bischof Paschek brach eine Rippe, schrieb mir und ‘darum kann er nicht kommen’ (Luk. 14,20!); Bischof Tüchler hat noch nicht geantwortet. Darum ist Ihre vorläufige Zusage doppelt erfreulich.

Ich kann Sie völlig beruhigen. Hier ist jedermann uns willkommen; weder innerkirchlich noch ausserkirchlich, noch bei den Behörden der Stadt oder des Staates wird Ihre Anwesenheit etwas anderes als selbstverständlich sein. Sie können davon überzeugt sein, dass vor allem unsere Kirche es sich als eine Ehrung rechnet.

Selbstverständlich sind Sie unser Gast, und ich hoffe dass Sie bei mir, Emmalaan 8, wohnen wollen<sup>57</sup>.

Rinkel adds to these liturgical instructions concerning the (Old Catholic) Eucharist in St. Gertrud’s Cathedral and the national (i. e. ecumenical) service in the Dom Church, still doubting what to wear on that occasion (the choice is between a suit and a cassock with a purple [band] cincture). Such considerations are more than expressions of clerical fuzziness: they are indicative of the early stages of the ecumenical movement that this event takes place in<sup>58</sup>. In this letter, it is still uncertain whether Anglican bishops could attend, with Rinkel himself having declined an invitation to preach in Westminster Abbey on 19 November due to the war (n.b.: the U-boat war was already going on in the North Sea):

Von den Anglikaneren sollten die Bischöfe von Gloucester (Headlam) und Iron kommen, und ich war für den 19. Nov. zur Predigt in West Minster [sic] Abbey eingeladen; hatte es angenommen, aber habe es heute des Krieges wegen absagen müssen; auch die Anglikaner werden jetzt nicht kommen können; leider<sup>59</sup>.

A day later, Rinkel again has occasion to write, given that the Anglicans have confirmed their attendance:

Ich meinte, dass Ihnen dieses schreiben musste, da ich Ihnen erst schrieb, dass die Anglikaner nicht kommen sollten. Wir hoffen einstweilen, dass diese keine Abänderung in Ihren Plänen machen wird; unsererseits gibt es keinerlei Beschwerden. Vielleicht ist es gerade gut, wenn man einander gerade in diesen Zeiten begegnet auf neutralem Boden.

Möchte doch Gott unserer Welt den rechten Frieden geben<sup>60</sup>!

56 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 20 October 1939.

57 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 25 October 1939.

58 On this aspect, see: VAN SCHAİK, *Richtingen* (note 54).

59 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 25 October 1939. “Iron” is a typo; Rinkel corrects this in his letter of 26 October (it should be Ripon).

60 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 26 October 1939.



The problem solves itself, in the sense that Kreuzer's exit visum is refused and he is, as he indicates, restricted to being present in the spirit only<sup>61</sup>. Rinkel received this letter somewhat late, only after the festivities on 12 November<sup>62</sup>. He can therefore report on the celebrations themselves:

Die Feier ist würdig verlaufen, sowohl kirchlich als national. Anwesend waren die Bischöfe von Gloucester und Fulham, Canon Douglas und Rev. Usher, vier Bekannte also. Gloucester predigte bei uns am Abend des 6. in der Vesper. Fulham bedauerte insbesondere Ihre Abwesenheit. Auf der Nationalfeier in der Domkirche sass ich, in Mitten des Gloucester und Fulham dem römischen Erzbischof gegenüber! Die Anwesenheit der Anglikaner war vor allem auch für das protestantische Niederland eine Freude, Rom gegenüber<sup>63</sup>.

He also wonders when he will be able to meet Kreuzer again, promises to pray for him and also requests his prayer, concluding with: "Wir beten und hoffen, dass Gott der Welt den Frieden gebe, damit die Völker und Gottes Kirche Ruhe haben und gedeihen. Warum sind die Menschen so verblendet?"<sup>64</sup> When Kreuzer responds to this, commenting on the delay of his letter and that of Rinkel with "...wir müssen uns halt in die Zeitverhältnisse fügen", a further dimension of the international contacts reveals itself:

Wenn der Bischof von Fulham mein Fehlen bedauert hat, so hängt das wohl mit folgendem zusammen. Er hatte mich durch Bischof Küry bitten lassen, dasz sich unsere Geistlichen der anglikanischen Amerikaner und geborenen Engländerinnen annehmen möchten. Im Einverständnis mit unserem Ministerium und mit dem Auszenamt der evangelischen Kirche haben wir das denn auch in die Wege geleitet.

...

Sollten Sie einmal an Fulham schreiben, so können Sie ihn also darüber beruhigen. Ich würde ihn allerdings um einen Gegendienst bitten: In England sind die dort wohnenden evangelischen Geistlich der deutschen Gemeinden sämtlich verhaftet gewesen; nunmehr ist Nachricht da, dasz sie bis auf einen wieder freigelassen worden sind, nur steht noch nicht fest, ob sie ihren Gemeinden wieder dienen können. Der Eine, er noch gefangen gehalten wird, ist der 67jährige Pfarrer Wehrhan, der trotz seines Alters nun schon am dritten Internierungsort ist. Wenn Fulham sich erkenntlich zeigen will, dann möchte er doch dahin wirken, dasz auch dieser alte Herr freigelassen wird. Wenn Sie das vermitteln könnten, wären ich und die evangelische Kirche Ihnen dankbar dafür<sup>65</sup>.

61 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 1 November 1939: "Nun muß ich aber leider doch absagen und zwar, weil zur Zeit ein Ausreise-Visum grundsätzlich nicht erteilt wird. Ich habe heute die Ablehnung bekommen."

62 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 13 November 1939.

63 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 13 November 1939.

64 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 13 November 1939.

65 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 25 November 1939.

Kreuzer concludes by expressing his desire for the day in which he will be able to meet Rinkel face to face again and by greeting him “in ungestörter Gebetsgemeinschaft”<sup>66</sup>.

These developments leave Rinkel in the middle of a number of international relations that he attempts to negotiate in his role as president (and spokesperson) of the International Bishops’ Conference, at this time only his second year in office. Concerning the request of Kreuzer with regard to Wehrhahn, he does take action and writes to the bishop of Fulham with a request for assistance. Simultaneously, he is concerned about the Old Catholics, both Polish National Catholics and Mariavites, in Poland, now an occupied country. He received communications from bishop Padewski from the former and heard nothing about the latter<sup>67</sup>, commenting

Hoffentlich hat seine Kirche nicht zu viel bei dem Streit in Polen gelitten und können diese Leute zusammenhalten. Wie wird es indessen den Mariaviten gegangen sein; es ist zu hoffen, dass sie dem deutschen Teil des alten Polen angehören<sup>68</sup>.

Again, a prayerful wish concludes the letter, and this reference to peace may be intended on multiple levels: “Ich bete, dass Ihre Kirche den Frieden des kommenden Weihnachtsfestes erhalte und dadurch stark und treu sei”<sup>69</sup>. In response, Kreuzer mentions a communication from the Mariavite bishop Philipp Feldmann on a subject different than the fate of his church and thanks Rinkel for his efforts with the bishop of Fulham, noting further: “Im ganzen geht das kirchliche Leben seinen ungestörten Gang, nur einige von meinen jüngsten Geistlichen sind ihrem Amt entzogen, aber bisher haben wir immer noch ausreichende Aushilfe schaffen können”<sup>70</sup>. The correspondence with the bishop of Fulham turns out to suffer from wartime delays in communication as well: the German pastor had already been released before Rinkel’s letter reached him<sup>71</sup>. In the meantime, Kreuzer also tries to find out what has become of the Polish Old Catholics, inquiring with the (Old Catholic) governor-general of Poland, Hans Frank<sup>72</sup>, to whom he wrote “einen orientierenden Brief über die Nationalkirche und die

66 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 25 November 1939.

67 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 7 December 1939.

68 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 7 December 1939.

69 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 7 December 1939.

70 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 23 December 1939. – Rinkel remembers this and comments on it as follows (Rinkel-Kreuzer, 27 December 1939), by hoping “dass Sie in diesen schweren Zeiten Ihre Kirche ruhig weiter führen können und dass Ihre Geistlichen nicht zu stark ihrem Amt entzogen werden.”

71 On 23 December 1939, Rinkel forwards his correspondence with the bishop of Fulham to Kreuzer, to wit, Fulham-Rinkel of 18 December 1939.

72 On whom, see in brief: RING, Katholisch (note 4) 272.

Mariavieten”<sup>73</sup>. He received a grateful letter for this from the Polish National Catholic bishop:

Dafür hat mir Padewski gedankt, der daraufhin zum Generalgouvernement gerufen worden war, und mir mitgeteilt, dass seine Gemeinden ohne Schaden davongekommen seien. Von den Mariaviten habe ich noch keine Nachricht.

When Rinkel receives his response from the bishop of Fulham, he forwards it to Kreuzer, noting “Ich bin immer bereit Ihre Kirche und die Evangelische in solchen Angelegenheiten, nach besten Kräften zu dienen.”<sup>74</sup> He adds to this:

Heute bekam ich eine Karte vom Bischof Feldmann aus Plock, der mir berichtete, dass sie allen in Sicherheit waren und dass drei Kirchen (zwei in Warschau und eine in Lowiez) sehr beschädigt waren; sonst arbeiteten sie allen in ihren Gemeinden<sup>75</sup>.

In these days, the correspondence is concluded with Fulham, who reports to Rinkel that all (seven) German pastors in England have been released again, including “Pastor Wehrhan whose Nazi views I gather were more pronounced than the others”<sup>76</sup>.

News also arrives about the Czechoslovakian bishop Paschek, who has been suffering from “Ohnmachtsanfälle”<sup>77</sup>. Kreuzer reacts to this with concern, given that Paschek had already broken a rib when falling due to fainting. Otherwise, all is well:

Bei uns geht es in Anbetracht des Ernstes der Zeit gut; bisher haben wir auch die Seelsorge noch voll aufrecht erhalten können. Nur Studenten hätte ich gern einige mehr<sup>78</sup>.

The war does not prevent people from having jubilees, and so Rinkel congratulates Kreuzer with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on 1 April 1940: “Das ist ein Zeitraum, der einem das Recht gibt, die Arbeit niederzulegen und sich zur Ruhe zu setzen”, however, according to Rinkel, this does not apply to bishops: “wenn es nur einigermaßen möglich ist, stirbt der Bischof im Harnisch.” As Kreuzer is, according to Rinkel, the right man for the

73 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 12 December 1939.

74 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 19 December 1939.

75 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 19 December 1939. Rinkel also comments on a problematic “episcopus vagans” in this letter: “Vor einigen Wochen bekam ich einen Brief vom ‘Bischof’ Fatôme, der mir beteuerte, dass seine Weihe tadellos war; nur der Kowalski hatte gesprochen ‘Accipe Spiritum Sanctum’; also die Anwesenheit der Weiber verneint er nicht! Ich habe dem Charlatan nicht geantwortet.” – This subject had appeared earlier in the correspondence and surfaces a number of times afterwards, but does not concern the topic of this essay.

76 Fulham-Rinkel, 15 December 1939, cf. also Rinkel-Kreuzer, 23 December 1939.

77 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 27 December 1939.

78 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 5 January 1940.

position, there is no reason to think of retiring anyway<sup>79</sup>. Kreuzer reacts to this as follows:

Mir selbst ist an solchen Tagen nie nach 'jubilieren' zu Mute, denn mich bedrückt in der Rückschau viel zu sehr das Bewusstsein, wie vieles man in der langen Zeit versäumt hat, wieviel man von dieser Zeit vergeudet hat. Man kann dem lieben Gott nur bitten, nicht streng zu sein, wenn man einmal Rechenschaft geben muss von der Verwaltung einer so reichlich berechneten Zeit<sup>80</sup>.

With this, the correspondence prior to the invasion of the Netherlands, which may well be considered as a rupture in the relationship between the German and Dutch Old Catholic Churches, comes to an end. The materials that have been presented so far permit a number of general observations, which will be offered by way of conclusion.

## 6. Concluding Observations: Themes and Topics

First, in terms of stance, it is more than apparent that Rinkel attempts to mediate between Kreuzer (and through him other German theologians, such as Keussen) and other Old Catholic theologians outside of the Old Catholic Church of Germany. He wants to converse with Kreuzer – who may feel excluded by others – in such a manner that communion is preserved, lines of communication are being kept open and cooperation is ensured. And such cooperation does take place, at least, for example, when Rinkel and Kreuzer search for information on Old Catholics in Poland (both Polish [National] Catholics and Mariavites) and the fate of German clergy in England.

Second, it is also apparent that both bishops attempt to steer clear of politics. This, it seems, is not only a matter of expediency, but a matter of theological principle. Rinkel especially is keen to express thoughts that have their roots in the tradition of apolitical Catholicism, a tradition with which Kreuzer also identified (though his particular interpretation allowed him to side strongly with National Socialism). The bond that exists among Christians ought not to be affected by political differences or to be influenced by the course of political, even military events. It ought to transcend these barriers and offer an alternative way of relating to each other (i. e. an alternative to political partisanship).

Third, these two items relate to each other, as is apparent over the course of the correspondence. The virtual abstinence from political positioning – apart from a kind of “non-positioning” or, even better, a lack of explicit positioning that may

79 Rinkel-Kreuzer, 28 April 1940 (the date of this letter is wrong, it has to be 28 March; Kreuzer responds to it in his letter of 9 April 1940).

80 Kreuzer-Rinkel, 9 April 1940.

have given offense – creates the space to continue the correspondence and co-operation. Alternatives to this stance were certainly available – such as the aforementioned stances of Van Riel and Lagerwey, both people close to Rinkel – at least in terms of work (as seminary professor and Utrecht parish priest respectively). One may say, certainly in retrospect, that Rinkel's conciliatory, mediating and apolitical stance came at the price of being unable to hold Kreuzer accountable. Yet that was apparently a price Rinkel was willing to pay, at least for the time being<sup>81</sup>.

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81 For an account of Rinkel's holding accountable of Kreuzer following the war, see SMIT, Rinkel (note 4) 116–119. Also in SMIT, Vrienden (note 18), it is apparent throughout that there have been instances in which, in a post-war situation, Rinkel and others did hold their German colleagues accountable.