THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

BY

MAGED ATTIA

PO Box 136
Abasseya, Cairo, Egypt

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Foreword: H.H. Pope Shenouda III
Author: Maged Attia

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. His Holiness' pioneering ecumenical work and tremendous commitment for Christian unity has produced remarkable achievements and milestones for the Christian world in general and the Coptic Orthodox Church in particular.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of lords

THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR

H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark

His Grace Bishop Daniel
Bishop of Sydney and Affeliated Regions

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FOREWORD

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III
Pope of Alexandria and
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

PREFACE

Before His death on the cross, our Lord Jesus prayed to His Father for the unity of the Church, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:21).

"Make efforts for unity, there is nothing better than it is", wrote St. Ignatius of Antioch to St. Policarp of Smyrna. These are evangelical patristic calls, which never lose their topicality.

"The whole Christian world", writes Pope Shenouda III, "is anxious to see the church unite. Christian people – being fed up with divisions and dispersion – are pushing their church leaders to do something about church unity and I am sure that the Holy Spirit is inspiring us". These empowering words from the Patriarch of Alexandria and one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches (1991-1998) and one of the Presidents of the Middle East Council of Churches (1994+), reflects the deep commitment of the Coptic Church to the Ecumenical movement.

As founding members of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1963 and the Middle East Council of Churches in 1974, the Church of Alexandria has given careful attention to and has worked tirelessly for Christian unity.

Over the last five decades, clergy and laity from the Coptic Church have been instrumental in capturing, developing and enhancing the ecumenical vision as articulated by Pope Shenouda. This ecumenical vision is constructed upon unity of faith and not unity of jurisdiction. This has manifested itself in theological dialogue at bilateral and unilateral levels; constructing bridges of love and actively participating in ecumenical organisations at national, regional and international levels. In all these endeavours, the Church fulfils the words of the Scriptures; "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5).

This book is far from exhaustive; rather it is an attempt to acquaint the reader with an outline of the Coptic Orthodox Church contribution to the Ecumenical movement over the past five decades. May the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, continue to guide our church's comprehensive efforts and bless the future work that lies ahead. Thus the visible unity of the one Holy Universal and Apostolic Church can be fully achieved in Christ.

MAGED ATTIA, B.A.LLB
Sydney, Australia,
Pentecost, June 2001

CHAPTER 1

UNITY AND DISUNITY

THE ONE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus Christ established His church, which He purchased with His blood (Acts...). Accordingly, our understanding of the nature and mission of the Church is founded on the Holy Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition handed down in the Church and preserved in her sacramental liturgical life. Furthermore, the writings and canons of the Fathers together with the three ecumenical Councils: Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed represents an irreplaceable foundation and expressions of the faith.

The essence of the Church was epitomized in the four traditional characteristic notes first enumerated in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, ie. The Church is one, holy, universal and apostolic.

The note of Unity is intimately related to the concept of the Church as "one body in Christ" (Romans 12:5) and as the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23). The essential elements in Church Unity may be stated in agreement with the teaching of St. Paul (Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12-27) as being the common worship of the one God, the common holding of the one faith, the common possession of the one sacramental life, the common aim at the attainment of the one hope, and the common indwelling by the one Spirit.

The Holiness that is the second note of the Church is the organic or objective Holiness, which is constituted by the doctrines and laws and sacraments and aims of the Church as Holy, even if the subjective Holiness, which is the lives of individual members, is not perfect. This organic Holiness is well founded biblically, eg. St. Paul addresses those who are "called to be saints" (Romans 1:7). The Corinthian Church consists of those "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). St. Paul, while recognising that community as holy, he condemns sins committed by members of it (1 Corinthians 5,6). The Church is rightly described as holy even if some of its members are sinful, as the ignorance of some members of a University does not hinder that University from being rightly described as learned.

Universal is the third note. As applied to the Church, the word Universal is the opposite at once of particular and of heretical. Thus, it denotes both universal and orthodox. St. Cyril of Jerusalem gives an expanded explanation of the sense in which the term Universal has been applied to the Church, saying:

> "The Church is called 'Universal' because it extends through all the world, from one end of the earth to another. Also, because it teaches universally and without omission all the doctrines which ought to come to man's knowledge, about things both visible and

invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it brings under the sway of true religion all classes of men, rulers and subjects, learned and ignorant; and because it universally treats and cures every type of sin, committed by means of soul and body, and possesses in itself every kind of virtue which can be named, in deeds and words, and spiritual gifts of every kind."

Apostolic is the fourth and last of the notes of the Church. The term Apostolic affirms that the Church is descended from the Apostles by a due succession. The fact of the succession of the ministry from the apostles, and of the apostles from Christ, was strongly emphasised by St. Clement of Rome before the end of the first century (Clement of Rome, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 44). The Episcopate is thus held to create a historical link between the Church of the Apostolic times and that of today and is both the means and assurance of the continuity of office and of transmission of grace, and on these grounds the episcopate descended from the Apostles is the guarantee of the Apostolicity of the Church.

THE THREE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Since the dawn of Christianity, the Coptic Orthodox Church has played a leading role in the ecumenical movement. At the Council of Nicea in 325 AD the Alexandrian Patriarch, Alexandrus, assisted by his deacon Athanasius, vigorously opposed Arius' false teachings and St. Athanasius formulated the Nicene Creed. In 381 AD, at the Council of Constantinople, the Pope of Alexandria, Timothous, responded to critical questions of dogma, which were enshrined as canon law. At the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, Pope Cyril of Alexandria chaired the sessions of the 3rd Ecumenical Council that excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestros. The school of Alexandria stood as a lighthouse for Christianity in the first five centuries, in the area of biblical exegesis and the theological insight and scriptural scholarship.

THE CHALCEDONIAN SCHISM

Following the schism at Chalcedon in 451, the Coptic Orthodox Church was isolated, persecuted and incorrectly labelled as Monophysite. Whereas they have always believed in God Incarnate, with His divinity and humanity fully present and united without mixture, confusion or change.

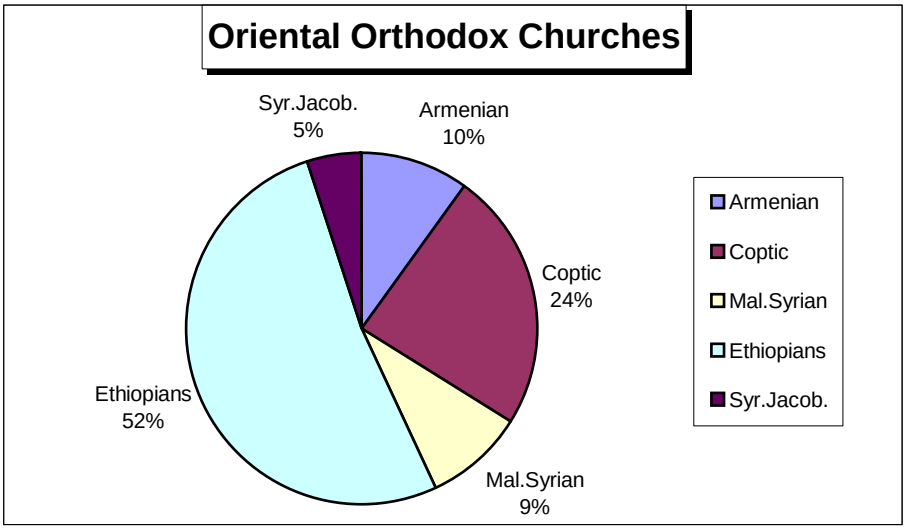
As concerning the "Two natures of Christ", the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria unwaveringly upheld the formula of Saint Cyril the Great whose authority had been unanimously accepted by all members of the universal church. They kept it up without the slightest addition or alteration. This formula is: "One nature of God the Logos Incarnate", which reveals the "Hypostatic union" of both natures, the divine and the human in one without mingling, nor confusion, nor alteration". This by no means denies the existence of the human nature in Christ as Eutychianism did, which the Coptic Church totally rejected since the very beginning.

According to the Coptic concept, God the Son "took to Himself a real and perfect manhood", "He bore our sins in His body and He truly died for our sake". "Godhead and manhood are united in such a way that properties of divinity and humanity are not lost, nor confused or mixed. We (the adherers of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria) do not interpret the Cyrillian

phrase: “One nature of God the Word incarnate” to mean absorption of the manhood or the human properties, as the Euthychian heresy declares”.

Today it is generally admitted that this wrong designation of the Coptic Creed as “Monophysite” was mainly the consequence of misinterpreted and misunderstood terminology. This has repeatedly been attested on several occasions as well as through the common declarations between the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Anglican Church (1990), the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church (1989), the Roman Catholic Church (1988) and the Protestant Church in Germany.

WHO ARE THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES?



1. The Armenian Apostolic Church

Tradition says that the Apostles (Thaddeus and Bartholomew) brought Christianity to ancient Armenia, which is why this church is called the “Armenian Apostolic Church”. Subsequently, through the efforts of Gregory the Illuminator in 301, it was espoused as the religion of the state, making Armenia the oldest Christian kingdom. Its liturgies and customs are therefore very ancient and respected.

At the time of the Russian Revolution (1917), the use of ‘apostolic’, not ‘orthodox’, in the title of this church proved useful as it prevented the Russian authorities from forcing it to join the Russian Orthodox Church as they did with other churches such as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as they did with other churches such as the Ukrainian Orthodox. Presently Armenia is only one-tenth its original size. It is bound by Georgia to the north, which is Christian, but Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey are all Muslim countries. The original Armenia comprised the present Armenian (previously ‘Soviet Socialist’) Republic, adjacent parts of the previous ‘Soviet’ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhichevan), the north-eastern provinces of Turkey, and the western parts of Irian Azerbaijan.

After the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, the Armenians agitated for their own independence, as the great powers had done nothing to promote their aspirations. The great bone of contention in the years that followed was the attempted genocide committed on the Armenian people by the Turks between 1894 and 1922, which resulted in about 1.5 million people being put to death and the same number resettled. The Turks have denied that it took place. The Armenians want them to acknowledge that it occurred and to apologize. The alleged reason for resettling the Armenians was that they were near the border with Russia at the time of the First World War and siding with them. During the First World War many Armenians fled into various countries including Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Europe and the USA. Today Los Angeles has a huge Armenian population.

The Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians has oversight of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia (nowadays in Lebanon), and the patriarchates of Constantinople and Jerusalem. Another of his duties is to bless the Holy Oil for use in all churches and to ordain bishops.

2. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

This church, sometimes called the Abyssinian Church, is closely related to the Coptic Church, as it shares the same early history. The exact date of the arrival of Christianity in Ethiopia is not certain, but we know that St. Athanasius consecrated St. Frumentius in about 347 as head of the Ethiopian Church. This was indicative of the fact that the Ethiopian Church came under the jurisdiction of Alexandria.

In the thirteenth century the Coptic Patriarch in Alexandria assumed the right to consecrate a Coptic bishop as metropolitan of the Ethiopian Church. Moreover, Alexandria limited their episcopate to seven, thus effectively preventing them having their own metropolitan. This custom continued until 1959, when Emperor Haile Selassie I secured the autonomy of the Ethiopian Church. Henceforth they had a head known as a Catholicos-patriarch instead of the Coptic *abuna*. Their patriarch, Merkorious, resides in Addis Ababa. Although the primacy of Alexandria is acknowledged, the Ethiopian Church is independent in all things.

In 1626 they became Uniats (accepted the Pope in Rome as their Pope) under Jesuit influence, but when the Jesuits were expelled in the year 1632, they reverted to their Coptic allegiance and so-called monophysitism. In fact, as a church they reject the term Monophysite, preferring the term that translates as ‘unionite’, expressing the union in Christ of the human and divine natures. They regard both Nestorius and Eutyches as heretics. At the time of the Council of Florence they rejected the agreed-upon union with Rome. Today they have become in some ways an ‘island’ church in their isolation, with the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus (EECMY) Church their main competitor. This latter has Lutheran contacts and support. About 17 million in Ethiopia belong to this church.

3. Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India

This church traces its origin to the Apostle St. Thomas. When the Portuguese discovered India in the fifteenth century, there were about 100,000 St. Thomas Christians in India. Over the

centuries they had managed to maintain a measure of contact with the patriarch in Babylon/Baghdad, and had had a succession of bishops, all of whom came from Mesopotamia. Only in the seventeenth century did they get an indigenous Indian as bishop. The language of the liturgy was traditionally in Syriac.

Technically the Malankara Church, which does not accept the Council of Chalcedon, is a so-called Monophysite church, but, as we have seen, these labels can be misleading and are often rejected by the people on whom they are pinned. Whatever the historical events, the Malankara Church is currently dialoguing with the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Chruch. The latter dialogue began in 1989. The hope of these dialogues is that they will clear up the misunderstandings that originated with the often difficult Christological debates in the fourth and fifth centuries and for which many people and churches have suffered injustices over the centuries.

The current Catholicos (patriarch) or Catholicos Patriarch, of the Malankara Church is His Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mattheus II, Catholicos of the East. He resides in Kottayam, in the state of Kerala, India. The patron of this church is St. Thomas, the Apostle.

4. Syrian Orthodox Church

This is one of the most ancient churches in Christendom. St. Peter preached at Antioch before he ever got to Rome! At Antioch, where the patriarch used to reside, believers were first called Christians. Now the patriarch resides in Damascus. (The Antiochian Orthodox Church also has its patriarch resident in Damascus.)

They are sometimes called Jacobite after a sixth century archbishop, Jacob (James) Baradaeus. They were suppressed and deprived of their clergy by the Emperor Justinian, but revived under the favour of the Empress Theodora. Baradaeus marked the revival. They are in communion with the Copts, Ethiopians and Armenians.

For economic reasons (mainly), but also because of the different kinds of oppression they have suffered, there has been a diaspora of Syrians to all parts of the world. This has occurred mainly since 1945.

THE EAST/WEST SCHISM

The climax to the breakdown of the East-West relationship is normally given as the year 1054. The immediate events that led up to the schism are well known.

From around 1040 the papacy decided to impose the Latin rite on the churches of southern Italy (which were Greek by custom). The Normans were to provide the military force if necessary, though the Pope soon became nervous of the growing strength of his would-be allies. In Constantinople, Patriarch Michael Cerularius responded to the Pope's actions tit for tat, by imposing the Eastern rite on Latin Churches in Constantinople and rejecting such western customs as the use of unleavened bread, the celibacy requirement for clergy and the use of the *filioque* clause (the treachery of the West over this latter matter was not forgotten).

In 1052, the Bshop of Trani in Apulia, Italy (whose churches were Greek in discipline and customs), received a letter from the metropolitan of Bulgaria, defending the Greek use of leavened bread in the Mass and the practice of fasting on Saturdays. The Bishop of Trani reported this to the Pope and western Bishops. It caused a huge furore and raised again the problem of Roman jurisdiction versus Greek autonomy and the desire to protect and preserve their distinctive customs.

In this electric environment, in 1054 the Pope sent a team of representatives, headed by Cardinal Humbert, to Constantinople to begin negotiations with the Greeks. Humbert, it should be noted, was a Frenchman from Lorraine, keen on reform but very inflexible in character. He also had a limited knowledge of Greek culture. He was unaware, for example, that the Aramaic 'Maranatha' meant 'Come, Lord' (or 'The Lord is coming') and was not an anathema! The Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, on the other hand, was a monk from Constantinople who proved to be very hostile to the Latins and as stubborn as Humbert.

Humbert and Michael Cerularius never actually met! Far from solving the problem, they only succeeded in inflaming the situation. Humbert left a bull of excommunication dated 16th July 1054 on the altar of the church of Sancta Sophia. In it he praised the emperor, clergy and laity but castigated Cerularius for sowing 'an abundant crop of heresies each day in the bosom of the city'. His attack was uncompromising:

> Michael, after having received the written admonitions of our master, Pope Leo, has refused to amend all these errors and many other culpable acts ... Let Michael the neophyte, who improperly bears the title of Patriarch ... and with him Leo, who calls himself Bishop of Achridia, and Michael's chancellor, Constantine ... and all those who follow them in the above mentioned errors and presumptuous temerities, let all those come under the anathema, Maranatha, with the Simonians.

The bull, which contained many false accusations, was burned by order of Emperor Constantine IX after trying in vain to reconcile the parties. In due course, and by way of retaliation, a synod on Constantinople excommunicated Humbert and his associates.

Later doctrinal and papal developments only widened the gap between East and West, as did the secession of the Uniat churches from Constantinople to Rome.

It was only on 6th January 1964, the Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I embraced in Jerusalem in a public gesture symbolic of their willingness to repair the damage. Together they read the prayer of Jesus for unity in Chapter 17 of John's gospel. A year later, on 7th December 1965, simultaneously in Rome and Istanbul (the present name for Constantinople), the mutual excommunications of 1054 were officially withdrawn. In the joint declaration the elders of the East and West stated that they:

> "Regret the offensive words, unfounded reproaches and unworthy actions which on both sides marked or accompanied the unfortunate events of the period... Regret equally and efface from the memory and the presence of the Church the Sentences of Excommunication that followed them, the memory of which acts to our own day are an obstacle to our drawing together in charity, and consign them to oblivion... Deplore lastly the unfortunate precedents and later developments which, influenced by various factors such as misunderstanding and mutual distrust, led in the end to the actual breaking off of ecclesiastical communion."

Commenting on this historic occasion Congar notes that "the bad memories and the mistrust were replaced by feelings of brotherly love; the creed of separation was replaced by feelings of brotherly love; the creed of separation was replaced by the creed of love; the dialogue of charity had begun. However, from that time on it has been ballasted with a theology of extreme importance, that of sister churches."

The current theological dialogue, begun in 1980, between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is a sign of the continuing goodwill on both sides. In 1980 the Joint International Dialogue between the two churches was set up. This commission, in the words of Vatican II, has devoted itself "to the work of restoring the full communion that is desired between the Eastern Churches and the Catholic Church". The first meeting of the commission was in Rhodes (on John's island of Patmos), and since then it has met virtually annually at Munich (twice), Nicosia, Crete, Opole (Poland), Bari (twice) and Valamo. It has produced two important statements, namely, *The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*, and *Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church.* In 1988 it also produced a common statement with the rather unwieldy title of *The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, with Particular Reference to the Importance of the Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God.*

THE RITES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Tradition

There is one main rite in this Western tradition, known as the Latin rite, and four small rites known as the Ambrosian (Milan, Italy), Mozarabic (Toledo, Spain), Slavonic and Gallican (Lyons, France). The Latin rite is centered on Rome and then Western Europe from whence it spread to the Western world. The language used in the liturgy was Latin and is now the vernacular. 98% of Roman Catholics belong to this rite.

Antiochene Tradition

There are three rites: Maronite, Syrian and Malankara. The Maronite rite honours St. Maroun and St. Chabel in particular. Originally from Lebanon, the languages used in the liturgy are Arabic, Aramaic and English. Their patriarch resides in Lebanon. The (West) Syrian rite gives special honour to Saints Ephrem, Elias and Ignatius of Antioch. Aramaic and Arabic are the languages of the liturgy. The followers of the Syrian rite live in the countries of the Middle East, but like the others, some have immigrated to the New World. Their patriarch lives in Lebanon. The Malankara rite in India uses Malayalam as a liturgical language.

East Syrian (Chaldean) Tradition

There are two rites: the Chaldean and the Malabar rites. The Chaldean rite is found in Iraq and they use Aramaic in their liturgies. The saints that originally brought Christianity to them were Saints Thomas, Addai, Agai and Mari. Their patriarch lives in Iraq. Its sister church, which is not in communion with Rome, is the Assyrian Church of the East. Their followers have immigrated to all parts of the world such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Malabar rite is found in India and uses Malayalam as its liturgical language.

Armenian Tradition

There is only on rite. The Armenian rite uses classical Armenian in its liturgy as well as French and English. Originally from Armenia, they are now in the Middle East and in the USA and Australia. St. Gregory the Illuminator and St. Vartan and martyrs are their best known saints. Their patriarch resides in Lebanon.

Alexandrian Tradition

There are two rites: the Coptic and Ethiopic rites. The Coptic rite originated in Egypt. St. Mark is said to be their founder but they also honour St. Anthony of Egypt. Their liturgy, celebrated in white hood and alb, is that of St. Basil and their languages are Coptic and Arabic. Cairo is the home of the Coptic Patriarch. Christmas is celebrated on 7th January. The Ethiopic rite, found in Ethiopia, uses Ge'ez (now a dead language) in its liturgies which are strongly influenced by African music, handclapping and dancing.

Byzantine Tradition

There are nine rites as follows. The Melkite rite is found in Middle Eastern countries like Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and Israel, with a patriarch in Damascus. Greek is its liturgical language. The main liturgy is that of St. John Chrysostom. The Ukrainian rite uses the Ukrainian language mainly in its liturgy. Christianity came to the Ukraine in 988. Saints Vladimir and Cyril and Methodius are the popular saints. Their elected cardinal resides in Rome. Ukrainians have immigrated to countries like the USA, Canada and Australia. The Russian rite uses old Slavonic and some English in its liturgy, depending on where it is found in the world. They have emigrated to China, Europe, North America and Australia. Like the Ukrainians, they claim St. Vladimir as their patron and list Saints Olga and Nicholas among their favourites. Their elected bishop resides in Rome. The Bulgarian rite uses Bulgarian in its liturgies and has been in existence since 863, when Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, introduced Boris I into Christianity. The Greek rite uses Greek in its liturgies and was established in 1856. The Georgian rite uses the liturgies of both St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom, and the Georgian language. The Italo-Albanian rite, found in Southern Italy, Sicily, Malta and Corsica uses both Greek and Albanian as liturgical languages. The Romanian rite, united with Rome since 1698, uses Romanian in its liturgies. The Serbian rite uses Slavonic. Some classifications go further and add seven more rites, or sub-rites to this list, namely, Albanian, Byelorussian, Hungarian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Yugoslav and USA.

LUTHERANS

Based on the teachings of Martin Luther (the former Catholic priest), the Lutherans can be traced back to the Reformation in Germany in the year 1517, it broke away from the Roman Catholic Church when Luther declared the 39 articles. They hold that the bible is the authoritative source for Christian belief, teaching and practise.

At the time of the Reformation in the 16th Century, Lutherans made declaration of belief, which together form the Book of Concord and under the Bible are authoritative for Lutheran belief. The most important of these are the Augsburg Confession (1530). The above writings highlight the beliefs of Lutherans, summarised thus: Through Christ alone, by grace alone, in faith alone. The Lutherans form of worship known as Common Order is similar in liturgical structure to the Anglicans.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND (ANGLICAN)

In 1534, King Henry VIII of Britain broke away from the Catholic Church of Rome when the Pope of Rome refused to grant him a divorce. He challenged the authority of the Pope and established an independent Church in England with the King as its official head. The Church's belief doctrines and rites are set down in the Book of Common Prayer. In America and Canada it is known as the Episcopal Church, where as in Australia, the Church adopted the name Anglican in 1981.

The member Churches of the Anglican Communion throughout the world vary remarkably in their local characteristics. Canterbury, in England, however, remains the symbolic centre of the Anglican Communion, and the Decennial Lambeth Conference is still the most important demonstration of its unity.

PRESBYTERIAN

This Church traces its roots to and through the Reformation of Switzerland, the Rhineland, Scotland and the Netherlands. The two founding persons of this church are John Calvin (1504-1564) and John Knox (1513-1572). They see the Scriptures as the supreme standard for belief and conduct. Further, they have substituted the Apostolic teaching for the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647. Central to Presbyterian doctrine is justification by grace alone through faith. Within this context, election or predestination is stressed and must be kept.

CONGREGATIONALISTS

It first appeared in England early in the seventeenth century under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). It began chiefly as protest against the relationship of the Church of England to the State. They believed that the Church should be independent of the State and that each local Church should control its own affairs. The Scriptures hold a pre-eminent place in the belief and practice of Congregationalists.

In 1658, they produced their own Savoy Declaration in matters of doctrine not very different from the Westminster Confession, but there were attached of the Institution of Churches and the Order appointed in them by Jesus Christ. This attachment set out the distinctive principles of the local church where of necessity, as John Owen an eminent 17th Century Congregationalist remarked, Christians are gathered unto church order. Congregationalists were among the first church to ordain women ministers worldwide.

METHODISTS

This Church has its origins in the work of the Wesley brothers – John and Charles – in the 18th century. The name Methodist emanated from the methodical way the members planned their religious practice. The name arose from the methodical way members planned their daily routine in order to include time for lengthy personal devotion, corporate Bible reading, concentrated academic study and practical Christian witness.

The Methodist Church broke away from the Church of England in 1795. The core of their doctrine is universal salvation, assurance and Christian perfection. Although the Bible is considered the foremost formulation of their faith and doctrines they celebrate the Eucharist once a month in a non-liturgical ceremony.

UNITING CHURCH

In June 1977, the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodists Churches in Australia formed the Uniting Church. Although, they are united in faith and theology, the three member Churches

maintain a degree of flexibility in their rites of worship. There are no Bishops, leaving church affairs to be administered by national and state presidents.

BAPTIST

This Church began in the 17th century in England. As the name indicates, the chief cause of difference here was in the matter of baptism. Where most Christians practised infant baptism, these people felt that the only real baptism was the baptism of Christian believers. On this issue they separated themselves from the Church of England. Their greatest concentration is in the United States.

There is no official creed or system of Church law to which Baptists must subscribe because the Bible, as the Word of God, is the supreme guide to faith and practice. Individuals have the right of private interpretation, but as a guide, most churches include in their constitution a brief statement of commonly accepted doctrines, which cover the main evangelical beliefs with additional articles on baptism and church government. However, over the years Baptists have produced many 'confessions of faith' and theological documents for the guidance of their members.

CHURCHES OF CHRIST

It was organised as a separate denomination in the United States from 1827 by Alexander Campbell who had been a Presbyterian minister. It grew out of a strong interest in the union of the Churches, through a restoration of New Testament Christianity.

Some historians describe the Churches of Christ as the indigenous American Religious movement. The Church beliefs that God's self revelation has been progressive. This belief found expression in their stress on the fact that it was the New Testament rather than the Old Testament, which was normative for Christians. Further, they assert that the Scriptures need to be intelligently interpreted. The Churches of Christ claim they do not hold any formal doctrine, rather they exist to re-acquaint the divided Church with the need for unity.

QUAKERS OR SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

This denomination began in the 17th Century under the leadership of George Fox. He emphasised the 'Inner Light' and pursuing this idea. The Quakers dispensed with most of the normal features of Church life. Their worship is characterised by quietness and silence.

BRETHREN

Under the leadership of an Irish Anglican priest, J. Darby, groups of brethren began to appear in England about 1830, accepting neither creeds nor formal ministers. They were to be found in groups open in varying degrees to ideas and conduct other than their own.

PENTECOSTAL

The word Pentecostal describes a movement rather than a single denomination. There are at least ten major sub groups within the movement. Pentecostal roots may be found in several 19th Century developments. One of these was the International Divine Healing Association. Several Pentecostal groups have developed including: The Apostolic Church (1929); The Christian Revival Crusade (1945); The Christian Outreach Church. Speaking in tongues and divine healing coupled with songs and hymns constitute the worship service. Other features include: hand clapping, hand raising, spontaneous dancing and embracing people.

CHAPTER 2

THE ECUMENICAL VISION

Derived from the Greek word OIKOUMENI, meaning 'all of God's created order', ecumenism is the movement of thought and action concerned with the Reunion of Christians. Thus, the Ecumenical Movement means that which pertains to Christian Unity, a process towards a greater expression of unity and cooperation among all Christians. For the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Vision is the realisation of Christian unity on the grounds of unity of faith and not unity of jurisdiction. To this end the Church fulfils the Scriptures "one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism."(Ephesians 4:5).

The Coptic Orthodox Church's strong support for the Ecumenical movement emanates from the conviction that the unity of the Church is an unescapable imperative for all Christians. This unity cannot be restored or fulfilled except through the coming together of those who share the same faith. The Ecumenical movement is not an arena for triumph of one church over another.

Thus, the purpose of the Ecumenical movement is not about making conversions, but rather it involves a genuinely positive attitude, coupled with a profound spirit which moves to look towards our separated Christian brethren with respect, understanding and hope. With respect because we recognise other Christians as brothers in Christ, not opponents. With understanding because we seek to find the divine truths we share in common and recognise honestly the difference in faith that lie between us. With hope that we may grow together in a more perfect knowledge and love of God.

Ecumenism therefore, seeks the truth in charity not in a spirit of rival sectarianism. It is about dialogue not debate, doing rather than philosophising and gathering rather than scattering.

THE SEARCH FOR UNITY

The Coptic Orthodox Church participates fervently in the search for communion. She expresses her yearning to the unity of the Church through prayer, teaching and ecumenical work.

1. The Coptic Prayers for Unity:

A. There is a prayer for the peace of the Church in which the priest says, "…Remember, O Lord, the peace of Your One Only Holy Apostolic Church… that which exists from one end of the world to the other, all peoples and all flocks do You bless…"
B. In the Anaphora of the liturgy of St. Gregory, the priest intercedes saying, "Yea, we beseech Thee, Christ Our Lord. Make firm the foundation of the Church. The unanimity of love may take root in us…May the schisms of the Church cease. Nullify the arrogance of the heresies, and count us all in the unity of godliness".

C. Together with other churches in Egypt, the Coptic Church celebrates the week of common Prayer for Christian Unity.
D. The Coptic Church also teaches her people, in the Morning Prayer of the Canonical Hours, a lesson read daily from St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 4:1-6, which is an exhortation to unity. She reminds her people of the unity also through reading the Synaxarion that commemorates saints, martyrs, bishops and synods of the Universal Church before the Chalcedonian Schism.

2. Bishopric of Public Ecumenical and Social Services

In September 1962, His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI established the Bishopric of Public Ecumenical and Social Services and ordained Bishop Samuel (1920-1981) to oversee its programs and activities. With zeal and passion Bishop Samuel worked tirelessly to enhance the Coptic Churches participation in Ecumenical fields.

Bishop Samuel attracted educated, spiritual youth to serve the Ecumenical cause. Bishop Serapion succeeded Bishop Samuel in June 1985. For ten years until November 1995 under Bishop Serapion, the ecumenical work further flourished, both in Egypt and abroad. Presently, under the directions of Bishop Youannis the ecumenical work continues to expand.

3. Ecumenism Course

Since 1993, a seminar class on Ecumenism was introduced in the Theological College and the Institute of Pastoral Affairs. The course is taught by Metropolitan Bishoy, who is co-chairperson of the Inter Orthodox Commission, President of the Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East (ATIME) and member of The Faith and Unity Commission of the MECC. The course outlines the development of the Ecumenical movement in the 20th century and explores the biblical theological and ecclesiastical principles used in reaching agreements between the Coptic Orthodox Church and other Churches.

4. Ecumenical Office

To foster greater relations with churches in the USA, Pope Shenouda III established an Ecumenical Affairs office in the Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese office of America in February 2000. His Holiness appointed Mr. Bishoy Mikhael as ecumenical officer, overseeing the directions of the office. Pope Shenouda executed a protocol detailing the aims and objectives of the office together with a mission statement about the nature of activities which this office is entrusted with.

At the Annual American Coptic Clergy Conference in Boston in September 2000, Pope Shenouda III requested from the ecumenical officer to make a presentation and distribute pamphlets about the important role of the office of Ecumenical Affairs.

5. Youth Ecumenical Committee

Under the dynamic leadership of Bishop Moussa, Bishop of Youth Affairs, a Youth Ecumenical Committee was set up within the Bishopric of Youth. The committee joins in with youth from the Catholic and Protestant in common prayers, bible studies and shared activities.

The church encourages youth to participate in regional and international ecumenical conferences as stewards. This involves assisting in various tasks such as ushers, preparation of documents, setting up conference resources and translation.

THE PRINCIPALS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

Unity is full communion. The search for full communion means the common search for full agreement in faith. Sacramental communion can take place only after identification in the faith has been ascertained.
Unity is not to be understood in the outdated ecclesiology of return to the Catholic Church, since each local church manifests all the fullness of the Church of God. They are all Sister Churches identically, and their agreement is necessary for the unity of the Church. Therefore, there is no need for the insistence on communion with one particular See or bishop as absolutely essential and uniquely indispensable.
Unity is not to be understood as a submission of one Church to the other. It is a communion of love in conciliarity on equal terms.
Unity is neither absorption nor fusion but a meeting in truth and love.
Therefore, the missionary activity that has been called "uniatism" cannot be accepted either as a method to be followed or as a model for the unity that is being sought.

UNITY IN FAITH

The Church as a community of believers and faithful should have unity in faith: "One Lord, one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). They have to abide by the genuine deposit of the Apostolic faith handed down in the Church and profess it without alteration or addition.

The Common Quest for Unity in Faith

The search for re-establishing unity is a common quest by the Churches for a full accord on the content of the faith and its implications. As Ratzinger puts it: "Now Church unity is of course no political problem which can be solved through compromise, by judging what might find acceptance and what can be solved through compromise, by judging what might find acceptance and what is just tolerable. Here unity in faith is at stake, that is to say the question of truth, which must not become the object of political bargaining. So long and in so far as there is the obligation to regard any maximum solution in terms of a claim to truth itself, so long and in so far as there is no other way, but to simply strive for conversion of the respective partner. Conversely it must be said: The claim to truth must not be raised where it has no imperative and unshakeable authority. It must not be imposed as truth what in reality is a historical grown form, more or less closely connected with truth."

NO COMMUNION WITH THE HERETICS

Church and heresy are excluding entities (1 Corinthians 11:18-19, Galatians 5:20). St. Peter speaks of "false prophets" who "secretly bring in destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1).

The Church, therefore, cannot tolerate heresies. Any doctrine lacking biblical foundation and support must stand outside the teaching that the Church gives authoritatively as the representative of God.

Since the beginning the Church used her teaching authority in condemning heresy, following Christ's command: "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:17).

St. Paul is explicit: "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition." (Titus 3:10).

St. Ignatius of Antioch writes: "Be not deceived my brethren. If any man follows one that makes schism, he 'does not inherit the kingdom of God'. If any one walks in strange doctrine, he has no fellowship with the Passion."

"Present Roman Catholic teaching makes a distinction between 'formal' and 'material' heresy. The former, which is heresy properly so called, consists in the wilful and persistent adherence to an error in matters of faith on the part of a baptised person; as such it is a grave sin involving *ipso facto* excommunication. 'Material heresy', on the other hand, means holding heretical doctrines through no fault of one's own, 'in good faith', as is the case, eg. With most persons brought up in heretical surroundings. This constitutes neither crime nor sin, nor is such a person strictly speaking a heretic, since, having never accepted certain doctrines, he cannot reject or doubt them."

It is true that 'material heresy' is considered less serious than 'formal heresy'; yet still it is a sin of ignorance. In the Old Testament, unwitting or inadvertent sin, which although less serious than conscious transgression, involves guilt and requires atonement. Intellectual ignorance can lead to sin; in fact, ignorance of God and the Gospel is identical with spiritual estrangement and apostasy, eg. The Jews' ignorance in crucifying Jesus (Acts 3:17) and Paul's ignorance in persecuting the Christians (1 Timothy 1:13), and the failure of the Jews to acknowledge Christ (Acts 13:27) and to understand the true 'righteousness' of God (Romans 10:3), and the failure of the Gentiles to know the true God (Acts 17:30, 1 Corinthians 15:34, Ephesians 4:18, 1 Peter 1:14).

Anyhow, it is the duty of the Church to instruct material heretics, preferably through dialogue. But their admittance into communion must be on the basis of unity in faith after renouncing their heresies.

NO COMMUNION WITH NON-CHRISTIANS

The Church has the obligation to use all available means for evangelisation of the World including dialogue with non-Christians and unbelievers. But unless they accept the Christian faith, there can be no possibility, of course, for communion with them. Therefore: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

These verses and others (1 Corinthians 7:39, Deuteronomy 7:2-3, Joshua 23:12, 1 Kings 11:2, Ezekiel 9:2) pronounce also against mixed marriages between Christians and non-Christians, and

against the present practice of blessing such marriages in the Catholic Church by the priest, who has a liturgical form from the Roman Ritual, namely the Rite of Celebration of Marriage.

UNITY IN FAITH WITH DIVERSITY IN RITES

We find St. Dioscorus of Alexandria, before the end of his first year, in correspondence with Pope Leo I, who did not miss the opportunity of giving liturgical directions, as from the See of St. Peter, to the new successor of St. Mark. "He wrote, on June 21st 445 to Dioscorus, that 'it would be shocking to believe that St. Mark formed his rules for Alexandria otherwise than on the Petrine model'; therefore, what we know to have been observed by our Fathers we wish to be retained by you also," "viz, that the ordination of priests or deacons should not be performed at random on any day, but early on Sunday morning and repeating the eucharistic celebration on great festivals, in the Church, as often as a fresh congregation might take it necessary."

The Coptic Church, however, did not bow to the claims of the Roman See, nor has changed any of her Apostolic Traditions. Until the present time, it is only the consecration of bishops that is performed on Sundays according to the Apostolic Tradition, while the ordination of priests and deacons is performed at any day of the week. While it is possible at any day to repeat the eucharistic celebration in the same church but on different altars and sanctuaries, with different liturgical vessels, by different celebrant fasting priests and deacons, yet on great festivals, it is only one liturgical celebration which is allowed in each church in all the Coptic churches at the same time without repetition whatsoever.

The one sided unions performed by the Council of Florence (1439-1443) with the Eastern Churches had no roots and were doomed to failure. In the union performed with the Jacobites of Egypt, recorded in the bull of reunion *cantate Domino* dated February 4th 1442, pressure tactics were used in collecting and warning against the so called "errors of the Copts and Ethiopians", for example, they did not know about confirmation and "extreme unction", they omitted the Filioqe, the venerated Dioscorus as a saint, they allowed divorce in case of serious crime ...etc. These were actually legitimate liturgical, canonical and theological differences incomprehensible at the time to the Latin mind. The bull demanded of the Copts "true obedience, to obey always and faithfully the order and commands of the Apostolic See." It is clear that the papal claims were always rejected, and such forced unions never had real existence and were totally ignored by contemporary Coptic and Oriental Orthodox historical records.

UNITY IN FAITH BUT NOT IN JURISDICTION

Church unity has to be manifested in the full agreement and communion in faith, hope and love, communion in the sacraments and communion in the ministry through conciliar practice, but never in jurisdiction.

In the Ecumenical Movement, the Orthodox of both families of Churches are often alone in emphasizing the importance of the dialogue of faith. Others often claim that common action and a sense of belonging together is enough and that Christian unity is already achieved on some vaguely described spiritual level. The Orthodox would wish to look for unity in faith, which leads to unity in sacraments and in the fullness of ecclesial life. This is what is now taking place

between the two traditions of Orthodoxy: the historical disagreement has been cleared and the fullness of faith and spiritual life is being rediscovered in the other tradition. It proves that a conscious theological dialogue can lead to ecclesial unity.

CHAPTER 3

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX AND EASTERN ORTHODOX DIALOGUE

The restoration to full unity between the two families of Orthodoxy is an Ecumenical priority for the Coptic Orthodox Church. After 1,500 years of separation and division, the Holy Spirit drew the two families together to canvass concrete proposals for full unity of faith.

The Oriental Orthodox family consists of the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Indian and Eritrian Churches. The Eastern Orthodox family consists of the Constantinople, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Jerusalem, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Greek, Cyprite, Georgian, Polish, Bulgarian, Albanian and Macedonian Churches.

The breach of ecclesiastical communion between the Eastern and the Oriental Orthodox Churches came in the fifth century as a result of controversies concerning the divine and human nature of Christ at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. The Oriental Churches rejected the teachings of this council and never acknowledged it as the fourth ecumenical council. The Eastern Churches however, recognised and acknowledged Chalcedon along with the three other ecumenical councils.

The two families of Orthodoxy, although having led a separate historical life, today show great similarities in dogmatic faith, ecclesiology, liturgy and spirituality. This is due to their common fidelity to the ancient tradition, thought, life and principles of church authority and administration.

For over 1,500 years the two families were separated with little attempts at reconciliation and steps towards full communion. Through the efforts of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, unofficial consultation between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches in a spirit of joy and hope. The initial success at Denmark in 1964 was a joyful surprise. Outstanding scholars from both sides belonging to two traditions not in communion with each other for a millennium and a half could confess together that "we recognise in each other the one Orthodox faith of the Church". We publish the agreed statements from the 4 unofficial consultations.

THE UNOFFICIAL CONSULTATIONS

Through the role of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, unofficial consultations between the two families of Orthodoxy commenced in Denmark in 1964.

1. Aarhus – Denmark – August 1964
2. Bristol – England – July 1967
3. Geneva – Switzerland – August 1970
4. Addis Ababa – Ethiopia – Jan 1971

THE FIRST UNOFFICIAL CONSULTATION

AARHUS, AUGUST 1964

Ever since the second decade of our century representatives of our Orthodox Churches, some accepting seven Ecumenical Councils and others accepting three have often met in ecumenical gatherings. The desire to know each other and to restore our unity in the one Church of Christ has been growing all these years. Our meeting together in Rhodes at the Pan-Orthodox Conference of 1961 confirmed this desire.

Out of this has come about our unofficial gathering of fifteen theologians from both sides, for three days of informal conversations, in connection with the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission in Aarhus, Denmark.

We have spoken to each other in the openness of charity and with the conviction of truth. All of us have learned from each other. Our inherited misunderstandings have begun to clear up. We recognize in each other the one orthodox faith of the Church. Fifteen centuries of alienation have not led us astray from the faith of our fathers.

In our common study of the Council of Chalcedon, the well-known phrase used by our common father in Christ, St. Cyril of Alexandria, mia physis (or mia hypostasis) Tou Theou Logou sesarkomene (the one physis or hypostasis of God's Word Incarnate) with its implications, was at the centre of our conversations. On the essence of the Christological dogma we found ourselves in full agreement. Through the different terminologies used by each side, we saw the same truth expressed. Since we agree in rejecting without reservation the teaching of Eutyches as well as of Nestorius, the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon does not entail the acceptance of either heresy. Both sides found themselves fundamentally following the Christological teaching of the one undivided Church as expressed by St. Cyril.

The Council of Chalcedon (451), we realize, can only be understood as reaffirming the decisions of Ephesus (431), and best understood in the light of the later Council of Constantinople (553). All councils, we have recognized, have to be seen as stages in an integral development and no council or dent should be studied in isolation.

The significant role of political, sociological and cultural factors in creating tension between factions in the past should be recognized and studied together. They should not, however, continue to divide us.

We see the need to move forward together. The issue at stake is of crucial importance to all churches in the East and West alike and for the unity of the whole Church of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit, Who indwells the Church of Jesus Christ, will lead us together to the fullness of truth and of love. To that end we respectfully submit to our churches the fruit of our common work of three days together. Many practical problems remain, but the same Spirit who led us together here will, we believe, continue to lead our churches to a common solution of these.

Participants

Eastern Orthodox

Bishop Emilianos
Ecumenical Patriarchate

The Very Rev. Prof G. Florovsky
Ecumenical Patriarchate

The Very Rev. Prof. J.S. Romanides
Ecumenical Patriarchate

The Very Rev. Prof Vitaly Borovoy
Russian Orthodox Church

The Rev. Prof J. Meyendorff
Russian Orthodox Greek
Catholic Church of North America

Prof J.N. Karmiris
Church of Greece

Prof G. Konidaris
Church of Greece

Oriental Orthodox

Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan
Armenian Apostlotic Church

Bishop Karein Sarkissian
Armenian Apostlotic Church

Archbishop Mar Severius Zakka Iwas
Syrian Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Mar Thoma Dionysius
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

The Rev. Father Dr. N.J. Thomas
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

Like Siltanat Habte Mariam Worqineh
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The Rev. Prof. V.C.Sammuel
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

Dr. K.N. Kehlla
Coptic Orthodox Church

Dr. Getachew Haile
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

THE SECOND UNOFFICIAL CONSULTATION

BRISTOL, JULY 1967

1. We give thanks to God that we have been able to come together for the second time as a study group, with the blessing of the authorities of our respective Churches. In Aarhus we discovered much common ground for seeking closer ties among our Churches. In Bristol we have found several new areas of agreement. Many questions still remain to be studied and settled. But we wish to make a few common affirmations.

2. God's infinite love for mankind, by which He has both created and saved us, is our starting point for apprehending the mystery of the union of perfect Godhead and perfect manhood in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is for our salvation that God the Word became one of us. Thus He who is consubstantial with the Father became by the Incarnation consubstantial also with us. By His infinite grace God has called us to attain to His uncreated glory. God became by nature man that man may become by grace God. The manhood of Christ thus reveals and realizes the true vocation of man. God draws us into fullness of communion with Himself in the Body of Christ, that we may be transfigured from glory to glory. It is in this soteriological perspective that we have approached the Christological question.

3. We were reminded again of our common fathers in the universal Church - St. Ignatius and St. Irenaeus, St. Anthony and St. Athanasius, St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim Syrus and St. Cyril of Alexandria and many others of venerable memory. Based on their teaching, we see the integral relation between Christology and soteriology and also the close relation of both to the doctrine of God and to the doctrine of man, to ecclesiology and to spirituality, and to the whole liturgical life of the Church.

4. Ever since the fifth century, we have used different formulae to confess our common faith in the One Lord Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect Man. Some of us affirm two natures, wills and energies hypostatically united in the One Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us affirm one united divine-human nature, will and energy in the same Christ. But both sides speak of a union without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The four adverbs belong to our common tradition. Both affirm the dynamic permanence of the God- head and the Manhood, with all their natural properties and faculties, in the one Christ. Those who speak in terms of “two” do not thereby divide or separate. Those who speak in terms of “one” do not thereby commingle or confuse. The “without division, without separation” of those who say “two,” and the “without change, without confusion” of those who say “one” need to he specially underlined, in order that we may understand each other.

5. In this spirit, we have discussed also the continuity of doctrine in the Councils of the Church, and especially the monenergistic and monothelete controversies of the seventh century. All of us agree that the human will is neither absorbed nor suppressed by the divine will in the Incarnate Logos, nor are they contrary one to the other. The uncreated and created natures, with the fullness of their natural properties and faculties, were united without confusion or separation, and continue to operate in the one Christ, our Saviour. The position of those who wish to speak of one divine-human will and energy united without confusion or separation

does not appear therefore to be incompatible with the decision of the Council of Constantinople (680-81), which affirms two natural wills and two natural energies in Him existing indivisibly, inconvertibly, inseparably, inconfusedly.

6. We have sought to formulate several questions that need further study before the full communion between our Churches can be restored. But we are encouraged by the common mind we have on some fundamental issues to pursue our task of common study in the hope that despite the difficulties we have encountered the Holy Spirit will lead us on into full agreement.

7. Our mutual contacts in the recent past have convinced us that it is a first priority for our Churches to explore with a great sense of urgency adequate steps to restore the full communion between our Churches, which has been sadly interrupted for centuries now. Our conversations at Aarhus in 1964 and at Bristol in 1967 have shown us that, in order to achieve this end by the grace of God, our Churches need to pursue certain preliminary actions.

8. The remarkable measure of agreement so far reached among the theologians on the Christological teaching of our Churches should soon lead to the formulation of a joint declaration in which we express together in the same formula our common faith in the One Lord Jesus Christ whom we all acknowledge to be perfect God and perfect Man. This formula, which will not have the status of a confession of faith or of a creed, should be drawn up by a group of theologians officially commissioned by the Churches, and submitted to the Churches for formal and authoritative approval, or for suggestions for modifications which will have to be considered by the commission before a final text is approved by the Churches.

9. In addition to proposing a formula of agreement on the basic Christological faith in relation to the nature, will and energy of our one Lord Jesus Christ, the joint theological commission will also have to examine the canonical, liturgical and jurisdictional problems involved - e.g anathemas and liturgical deprecations by some Churches of theologians regarded by others as doctors and saints of the Church, the acceptance and nonacceptance of some Councils, and the jurisdictional assurances and agreements necessary before formal restoration of communion.

10. We submit this agreed statement to the authorities and peoples of our Churches with great humility and deep respect. We see our task as a study group only in terms of exploring together common possibilities that will facilitate action by the Churches. Much work still needs to be done, both by us and by the Churches, in order that the unity for which our Lord prayed may become real in the life of the Churches.

Participants

Eastern Orthodox

Metropolitan Emilianos
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Ecumenical Patriarchate

Archpriest V. Borovoy
Russian Orthodox Church

The Rev. Prof.. J. Meyendorff
Russian Orthodox Church of North America

Archimandrite D. Papandreou
Church of Greece

Prof. G. Konidaris
Church of Greece

Prof. N.A. Nissiotis
Church of Greece

Prof. N. Chitescu
Romanian Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Nikodim Sliven
Bulgarian Orthodox Church

Prof. E. Tsonievsky
Bulgarian Orthodox Church

Oriental Orthodox

Vardapet Arsen Berberian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Dr. K.N. Khella
Coptic Orthodox Church

Vardapet Dr. M.K.Krekorian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Ato G.E. Mikre Selassie
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Theophilos Philippos
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

Bishop Samuel
Coptic Orthodox Church

The Rev. Prof. V.C. Samuel
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

Rev. Fr. P. Verghese
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East

THE THIRD UNOFFICIAL CONSULTATION

GENEVA, 1970

1. The third unofficial consultation between the theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches was held from August 16-21, 1970 at the Cenacle, Geneva, in an atmosphere of openness and trust which has been built up thanks to the two previous conversations at Aarhus (1964) and Bristol (1967).

REAFFIRMATION OF CHRISTOLOGICAL AGREEMENT

2. We have reaffirmed our agreements at Aarhus and Bristol on the substance of our common Christology. On the essence of the Christological dogma our two traditions, despite fifteen centuries of separation, still find themselves in full and deep agreement with the universal tradition of the one undivided Church. It is the teaching of the blessed Cyril on the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ that we both affirm, though we may use differing terminology to explain this teaching. We both teach that He who is consubstantial with the Father according to Godhead became consubstantial also with us according to humanity in the Incarnation, that He who was before all ages begotten from the Father, was in these last days for us and for our salvation born of the blessed Virgin Mary, and that in Him the two natures are united in the one hypostasis of the Divine Logos, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, with all the properties and faculties that belong to Godhead and to humanity.

3. The human will and energy of Christ are neither absorbed nor suppressed by His divine will and energy, nor are the former opposed to the latter, but are united together in perfect concord without division or confusion; He who wills and acts is always the One hypostasis of the Logos Incarnate. One is Emmanuel, God and Man, Our Lord and Saviour, Whom we adore and worship and who yet is one of us.

4. We have become convinced that our agreement extends beyond Christological doctrine to embrace other aspects also of the authentic tradition, though we have not discussed all matters in detail. But through visits to each other, and through study of each other's liturgical traditions and theological and spiritual writings, we have rediscovered, with a sense of gratitude to God, our mutual agreement in the common tradition of the One Church in all important matters liturgy and spirituality, doctrine and canonical practice, in our understanding of the Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, on the nature of the Church as the Communion of Saints with its ministry and Sacraments, and on the life of the world to come when our Lord and Saviour shall come in all His glory.

5. We pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to draw us together to find our full unity in the one Body of Christ. Our mutual agreement is not merely verbal or conceptual: it is a deep agreement that impels us to beg our Churches to consummate our union by bringing together again the two lines of tradition which have been separated from each other for historical reasons for such a long time. We work in the hope that our Lord will grant us full unity so

that we can celebrate together that unity in the Common Eucharist. That is our strong desire and final goal.

SOME DIFFERENCES

6. Despite our agreement on the substance of the tradition, the long period of separation has brought about certain differences in the formal expression of that tradition. These differences have to do with three basic ecclesiological issues - (a) the meaning and place of certain councils in the life of the Church, (b) the anathematisation or acclamation as Saints of certain controversial teachers in the Church, and (c) the jurisdictional questions related to manifestation of the unity of the Church at local, regional and world levels.

(a) Theologians from the Eastern Orthodox Church have drawn attention to the fact that for them the Church teaches that the seven ecumenical councils which they acknowledge have an inner coherence and continuity that make them a single indivisible complex to be viewed in its entirety of dogmatic definition. Theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Church feel, however, that they have so far held the authentic Christological tradition on the basis of the three ecumenical councils, supplemented by the liturgical and patristic tradition of the Church. It is our hope that further study will lead to the solution of this problem by the decision of our Churches.

As for the Councils and their authority for the tradition, we all agree that the Councils should be seen as charismatic events in the life of the Church rather than as an authority over the Church; where some Councils are acknowledged as true Councils, whether as ecumenical or as local, by the Church's tradition, their authority is to be seen as coming from the Holy Spirit. Distinction is to be made not only between the doctrinal definitions and canonical legislations of a Council, but also between the true intention of the dogmatic definition of a Council and the particular terminology in which it is expressed, which latter has less authority than the intention.

(b) The reuniting of the two traditions that have their own separate continuity poses certain problems in relation to certain revered teachers of one family being condemned or anathematized by the other. It may not be necessary formally to lift these anathemas, nor for these teachers to be recognised as Saints by the condemning side. But the restoration of Communion obviously implies, among other things, that formal anathemas and condemnation of revered teachers of the other side should be discontinued as in the case of Leo, Dioscurus, Severus, and others.

(c) It is recognised that jurisdiction is not to be regarded only as an administrative matter, but that it also touches the question of ecclesiology in some aspects. The traditional pattern of territorial autonomy or autocephaly has its own pragmatic, as well as theological, justification. The manifestation of local unity in the early centuries was to have one bishop, with one college of presbyters united in one Eucharist. In more recent times pragmatic considerations, however, have made it necessary in some cases to have more than one bishop and one Eucharist in one city, but it is important that the norm required by

the nature of the Church be safe guarded at least in principle and expressed in Eucharistic Communion and in local conciliar structures.

7. The universal tradition of the Church does not demand uniformity in all details of doctrinal formulation, forms of worship and canonical practice. But the limits of pluralistic variability need to be more clearly worked out, in the areas of the forms of worship, in terminology of expressing the faith, in spirituality, in canonical practice, in administrative or jurisdictional patterns, and in the other structural or formal expressions of tradition, including the names of teachers and Saints in the Church.

TOWARDS A STATEMENT OF RECONCILIATION

8. We reaffirm the suggestion made by the Bristol consultation that one of the next steps is for the Churches of our two families to appoint an official joint commission to examine those things which have separated us in the past, to discuss our mutual agreements and disagreements and to see if the degree of agreement is adequate to justify the drafting of an explanatory statement of reconciliation, which will not have the status of a confession of faith or a dogmatic definition, but can be the basis on which our Churches can take the steps necessary for our being united in a common Eucharist.

   We have given attention to some of the issues that need to be officially decided in such a statement of reconciliation. Its basic content would of course be the common Christological agreement; it should be made clear that this is not an innovation on either side, but an explanation of what has been held on both sides for centuries, as is attested by the liturgical and patristic documents. The common understanding of Christology is the fundamental basis for the life, orthodoxy and unity of the Church.

   Such a statement of reconciliation could make use of the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria as well as expressions used in the Formula of Concord of 433 between St. Cyril and John of Antioch, the terminology used in the four later Councils and in the patristic and liturgical texts on both sides. Such terminology should not be used in an ambiguous way to cover up real disagreement, but should help to make manifest the agreement that really exists.

SOME PRACTICAL STEPS

9. Contacts between Churches of the two families have developed at a pace that is encouraging. Visits to each other, in some cases at the level of heads of Churches, and in others at episcopal level or at the level of theologians have helped to mark further progress in the growing degree of mutual trust, understanding and agreement. Theological students from the Oriental Orthodox Churches have been studying in institutions of the Eastern Orthodox Churches for some time now; special efforts should be made now to encourage more students from the Eastern Orthodox Churches to study in Oriental Orthodox institutions. There should be more exchange at the level of theological professors and church dignitaries.

It is our hope and prayer that more official action on the part of the two families of Churches will make the continuation of this series of unofficial conversations no longer necessary. But much work still needs to be done, some of which can be initiated at an informal level.

10. With this in mind this third unofficial meeting of theologians from the two families constitutes:

    a) A Continuation Committee of which all the participants of the three conversations at Aarhus, Brbtol Geneva would be corresponding members, and
    b) A Special Executive Committee of this Continuation Committee consisting of the following members, who shall have the functions detailed further below:

        1. Metropolitan Emilianos of Calabria
        2. Archpriest Vitaly Borovoy
        3. Vardapet Mesrob Krikorian
        4. Professor Nikos Nissiotis
        5. Father Paul Verghese

FUNCTIONS

(a) To edit, publish and transmit to the Churches a report of this third series of conversations, through the Greek Orthodox Theological Review.

(b) To produce, on the basis of a common statement of which the substance is agreed upon in this meeting, a resume of the main points of the three unofficial conversations in a form which can be discussed, studied and acted upon by the different autocephalous Churches;

(c) To publish a handbook containing statistical, historical, theological and other information regarding the various autocephalous Churches;

(d) To explore the possibility of constituting an association of Theological Schools, in which all the seminaries, academies and theological faculties of the various autocephalous Churches of both families can be members;

(e) To publish a periodical which will continue to provide information about the autocephalous Churches and to pursue further discussion of theological, historical and ecclesiological issues;

(f) To make available to the Churches the original sources for an informed and accurate study of the historical developments in the common theology and spirituality as well as the mutual relations of our Churches;

(g) To sponsor or encourage theological consultations on local, regional or world levels, with a view to deepening our own understanding of, and approach to, contemporary problems especially in relation to our participation in the ecumenical movement;

(h) To explore the possibilities of and tot carry out the preliminary steps for the establishment of one or more common research centres where theological and historical studies in relation to the universal orthodox tradition can be further developed;

(i) To explore the possibility of producing materials on a common basis for the instruction of our believers including children and youth and also theological textbooks.

Participants

Eastern Orthodox

Dr. A. Arvanitis
Church of Greece

Archpriest V. Borovoy
Russian Orthodox Church

Prof. N. Chitescu
Romanian Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Emilianos
Ecumenical Patziarchate

The Very Rev. Prof. G. Florovsky
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Metropolitan Georges
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch

Prof. J.Karmids
Church of Greece

Prof. G. Konidaris
Church of Alexandria

The Rev. Prof. J. Meyendorff
Orthodox Church in America

Metropolitan Nikodim
Bulgarian Orthodox Church

Prof N.A. Nissiotis
Church of Greece

Archimandrite D. Papandreou
Church of Greece

Prof. B. Piperoy
Bulgarian Orthodox Church

The Very Rev. Prof J.S. Romanides
Church of Greece
Prof. L. Voronov

Oriental Orthodox

Kahali Alemu C.
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The Very Rev. N. Bozabalian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Abba G.E. Degou
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Bishop Gregorius
Coptic Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Severius Zakka lwas
Syrian Orthodox Church of India

The Rev. Dr. K.C. Joseph
Syrian Orthodox Church of India

Dr. M.K.Krekorian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Metropolitan Theophilos PhiEppos
Syrian Orthodox Church of India

Rev. Fr. P. Verghese
Syrian Orthodox Church of India

Liqe Seltanat Habte Mariam Worqneh
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Russian Orthodox Church

Dr. J.D. Zizioulas
Church of Greece

Prof. I. Zonewski
Bulgaxian Orthodox Church

THE FOURTH UNOFFICIAL CONSULTATION

ADDIS ABABA, 1971

The following conclusions and questions have arisen out of our informal discussions in Addis Ababa about the lifting of anathemas and the recognition of Saints:

1. We agree that the lifting of the anathemas pronounced by one side against those regarded as saints and teachers by the other side seems to be an indispensable step on the way to unity between our two traditions,

2. We are also agreed that the lifting of the anathemas would be with a view to restoring communion between our two traditions, and therefore that it presupposes essential unity in the faith between our two traditions. The official announcement by both sides that there is in fact such essential unity in faith, a basis for which is already provided by the reports of our earlier conversations at Aarhus, Bristol and Geneva, would thus appear to be essential for the lifting of anathemas.

3. We agree further that once the anathemas against certain persons cease to be effective, there is no need to require their recognition as saints by those who previously anathematized them. Different autocephalous churches have differing liturgical calendars and lists of Saints. There is no need to impose uniformity in this matter. The place of these persons in the future united church can be discussed and decided after the union.

4. Should there be a formal declaration or ceremony in which the anathemas are lifted? Many of us felt that it is much simpler gradually to drop these anathemas in a quiet way as some churches have already begun to do. Each church should choose the way most suited to its situation. The fact that these anathemas have been lifted can then be formally announced at the time of union.

5. Who has the authority to lift these anathemas? We are agreed that the Church has been given authority by her Lord both to bind and to loose. The Church that imposed the anathemas for pastoral or other reasons of that time has also the power to lift them for the same pastoral or other reasons of our time. This is part of the stewardship or Oikonomia of the Church.

6. Does the lifting of an anathema imposed by an ecumenical council call in question the infallibility of the Church? Are we by such actions implying that a Council was essentially mistaken and therefore fallible? What are the specific limits within which the infallibility of the Church with her divine-human nature operates? We are agreed that the lifting of the anathemas is fully within the authority of the Church and does not compromise her infallibility in essential matters of the faith. There was some question as to whether only another ecumenical council could lift the anathema imposed by an ecumenical council. There general agreement that a Council is but one of the principal elements expressing the authority of the Church, and that the Church has always the authority to clarify the decisions of a Council in accordance with its true intention. No decision of a Council can be separated from the total tradition of the Church. Each council brings forth or emphasizes some special aspect of the one truth, and should therefore be seen as stages on the way to a fuller articulation of the truth. The dogmatic definitions of each council are to be

understood and made more explicit in terms of subsequent conciliar decisions and definitions.

7. The lifting of anathemas should be prepared for by careful study of the teaching of these men, the accusations levelled against them, the circumstances under which they were anathematised, and the true intention of their teaching. Such study should be sympathetic and motivated by the desire to understand and therefore to overlook minor errors. An accurate and complete list of the persons on both sides to be so studied should also be prepared. The study should also make a survey of how anathemas have been lifted in the past. It would appear that in many instances in the past anathemas have been lifted without any formal action beyond the mere reception of each other by the estranged parties on the basis of their common faith. Such a study would bring out the variety of ways in which anathemas were imposed and lifted.

8. There has also to be a process of education in the churches both before and after the lifting of the anathemas, especially where anathemas and condemnations are written into the liturgical texts and hymnody of the church. The worshipping people have to be prepared to accept the revised texts and hymns purged of the condemnations. Each church should make use of its ecclesiastical journals and other media for the pastoral preparation of the people.

9. Another important element of such education is the rewriting of Church history, textbooks, theological manuals and catechetical materials. Especially in Church history, there has been a temptation on both sides to interpret the sources on a partisan basis. Common study of the sources with fresh objectivity and an irenic attitude can produce common texts for use in both our families. Since this is a difficult and time-consuming project, we need not await its completion for the lifting of anathemas or even for the restoration of Communion.

10. The editing of liturgical texts and hymns to eliminate the condemnations is but part of the task of liturgical renewal. We need also to make use of the infinite variety and richness of our liturgical traditions, so that each church can be enriched by the heritage of others.

11. There seems to exist some need for a deeper study of the question: “Who is a Saint?” Neither the criteria for sainthood nor the processes for declaring a person as a Saint are the same in the Eastern and Western traditions. A study of the distinctions between universal, national and local saints, as well as of the processes by which they came to be acknowledged as such, could be undertaken by Church historians and theologians. The lifting of anathemas need not await the results of such a study, but they merely provide the occasion for a necessary clarification of the tradition in relation to the concept of sainthood.

12. Perhaps we should conclude this statement with the observation that this is now the fourth of these unofficial conversations in a period of seven years. It is our hope that the work done at an informal level can soon be taken up officially by the churches, so that the work of the Spirit in bringing us together can now find full ecclesiastical response. In that hope we submit this fourth report to the churches.

Participants

Eastern Orthodox

Metropolitan Parthenios
Patriarchate of Alexandria

Metropolitan Nikodim
Moscow Patriarchate

Metropolitan Nikodim
Church of Greece

Metropolitan Mathodios
Patriarchate of Alexandria

Archpriest L. Voronov
Moscow Patriarchate

Prof. S. Agourides
Church of Greece

Prof. N.A. Nissiotis
Church of Greece

Prof. T. Sabey
Church of Bulgaria

Archpriest V. Borovoy
Russian Orthodox Church

Prof. P. Fouyas
Church of Greece

Dr. A. Ifitsides
Church of Cyprus

Fr. S. Hackel
Russian Orthodox Church

Fr. N. Osolin
Russian Orthodox Church

Oriental Orthodox

Bishop Samuel
Coptic Orthodox Church

Bishop K. Sarkissian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Rev. Fr. P. Verghese
Syrian Orthodox Church of India

Dr. V.C. Samuel
Syrian Orthodox Church of India

Like Seltanat Habte Mariam Workineh
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Prof. M. Selassie Gebre Ammanuel
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Archimandrite N. Bozabalian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Archimandrite S. Kasparian
Armenian Apostolic Church

Dr. K.M. Simon
Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate

Ato Abebaw Yigzaw
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Ato Adamu Amare
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Ato Aberra Bekele
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Ato Wolde Selassie
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Ato Ayele Gulte
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Archpriest Memher Ketsela
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

BETWEEN UNOFFICIAL AND OFFICIAL CONSULTATIONS

In an endeavor to consolidate the relations between the two families of Orthodoxy two conferences were convened, one in Lebanon in 1972 and another in Greece in 1978. Both conferences pressed for articulating concrete proposals of visible unity.

A Joint Declaration of Orthodox Churches, The Papal Convent of our Mistress of Belmont, March 1-5, 1972

We are gathered here in one spirit and in total accord regarding the document we are about to endorse. As representatives of the Antiochene Church for the Greek Orthodox, the Antiochene Church for the Syrian Orthodox, the Alexandrian Church of the Coptic Orthodox and the Armenian Orthodox Church, we look forward to the unity of the churches in response to the aspirations of our nations, clergy and laity. Since the tragic schism of AD 451, there have been repeated attempts towards unity as the Lord said, *"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." John 17:21.*

Evangelisation in this sense must of necessity be conditioned by the unity of the church. Nowadays, more than ever before, we are badly in need of a practical unity to face the challenges of the age and to realise the eternal message of the salvation of souls. Here conditions in the Middle East make our association with each other mandatory on the spiritual and social planes both locally and internationally.

We must recognise the efforts of the past that were done towards the realisation of this unity in Rhodes (1961), Aarhus (1964), Bristol (1967), Geneve (1970), and the reports of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in June 1965, and the Conference of Chambesy in June 1968, and the Conference of Addis Ababa in August 1971, which created an awareness of necessity of unity. They have also bridged the chasm that separated sister churches for a pretty long time. To this effect, we firmly believe that the Holy Spirit will guide us towards the realisation of this aim and will make of it a reality.

Now, as we look at the present church and its responsibilities and look ahead at the future generations, we earnestly desire to build upon the past foundation, to solidify it and to erect upon it an edifice pulsating with faith and positive wholehearted endeavour.

We shall follow in the footsteps of our great forefathers who left no stone unturned in consulting with each other and in defending the Christian faith in a spirit of love and amicability. They have always claimed that all should work together towards this end of unity irrespective of the petty differences that separated them. Complete unity was not for them a far-fetched idea, but a pressing necessity for continuity.

We respect the Christian legacy of our ancestors and we should do everything in our power to keep it intact. Schisms and sectarianisms should not stand in our way and keep us apart. We should emphasise the redemption and salvation of souls and we should always keep in mind the social, historical, cultural and political promptings that led to these schisms. Also, we should not ignore the quibbles over semantics, which have brought about deplorable results.

Now, after fifteen centuries of separation on one hand and the attempt towards mutual understanding on another hand, and after the disappearance of many factors that led to this schism, we are actually at present in a new milieu. There are sufficient rapports,

more clarity of thought and more earnestness to bring down the barriers that stand against unity. We are in a position to refer the whole issue to sub-committees in our churches to study it in the light of our Orthodox doctrine.

We may raise some points that are pertinent to this prospective unity:

1. Aren't we all repeating the same Creed in every service?
2. Don't we confess the same Triune God, the same Jesus Christ, the same Holy Spirit, the same efficacy of the seven Mysteries of the Church?
3. Don't we all believe in the resurrection of the dead, the Second Coming, Judgement, and the eternal life to come?
4. Don't we all believe in the Divinity of the Only-Begotten Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Logos of God the Father and His Wisdom, who in the fullness of time was incarnated and became Man for our salvation, and Who is One in Essence with the Father without separation or division or partition or change?
5. Don't we all believe in the redemptive act that the Son of God has undertaken after His Incarnation of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary in a body similar to ours with a rational soul, and so sharing our humanity without sin or corruption.
6. Don't we believe that our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is the Only-Begotten Son of God with respect to His Divinity, and the Son of Man regarding His Humanity, and that His Divinity and His Humanity are perfectly united without confusion or admixture or alteration or separation or division, and that He who is the unseen image of God, was seen in the flesh, and who has been since time immemorial and will be without end, the Lord who accepted the image of the servant, and who combined all the divine and human attributes in a union without separation that cannot be explained?
7. Don't we all believe that the Holy Spirit grants us the godly graces through the Sacraments of the Church such as Baptism, Myron, Eucharist, Repentance, Unction, Marriage and Priesthood?
8. Don't we all believe in the beatitude of the Holy Virgin Mary, the "Mother of Light", her permanent virginity, her intercession and her due reverence, and that she is higher than the angels and the archangels, for she is the Queen and Mother of the King, who deserves to be called Theotokos?
9. Don't we all believe in the three sources of Orthodox education: the Old and New Testaments with their seventy-six chapters, the tradition and councils, and their legislative authority?
10. These are our doctrines and the tenets of our Orthodox faith, which we share with others. There are no disagreements whether in parts or wholes as regards what is mentioned above.
11. We have joint rites in connection with our private and communal prayers, our celebration of the Eucharist, which is the essence of our church prayers. Also, we share the mystery of our communion with the Lord and His Church, the rites of fasting and feast celebrations, the efficacy of prayer, the veneration of icons and the relics of saints, the intercessions of angels and God's chosen vessels, whether they are still alive or have already reposed in the Lord.

All of these form a host of witnesses regarding the victorious Church, which will hoist its banner on the day of Judgement. Together with them, we wait for the Second Coming of the Lord and the manifestation of His Glory to judge the living and the quick.

We have studied all these issues in depth and we are sure that it is possible to come closer to each other. What is only missing from the practical side is the official declaration of the heads of our churches that unity is a reality based on logic and openness of mind. Henceforward, the joint work of effective co-operation is bound to start in all spiritual, ritual and pastoral areas.

As regards faith and doctrine, this prospective declaration would be sufficient for sharing the mystery of the one godly altar, which is our communion in the one Body. This would also apply to the Sacraments of Baptism, Myron, Marriage, Priesthood and all the other Mysteries and Rites. The declaration of the unity of the church should be followed by a proclamation that Christians are one and are in common in the oneness of the redemptive mystery.

In accordance with this official declaration, all the obstacles that still stand against unity must be overcome. All abusive and offensive terms must be put aside so that effective co-operation in the spiritual and pastoral domains would take place. In this sense, we would be practically applying what St. Paul the Apostle has said, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all…For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body…and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many…Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (1 Corinthians 12:4-27).

THE OFFICIAL CONSULTATIONS

After two decades of unofficial consultations, the official consultations commenced in 1985, bringing the 14 Orthodox churches and 5 Oriental Orthodox churches to pray, study, explore, and agree on the issue of Christology. The agreed statements and recommendations reached by the commission and the subcommittees are published in chronological order.

1. Chambesy – Switzerland – December 1985
2. St. Bishoy Monastery – June 1989
3. Chambesy – September 1990
4. Chambesy – November 1993
5. Subcommittee – Corinth – September 1987
6. Damascus – February 1998

JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

CHAMBESY, 10-15 December, 1985

After two decades of unofficial theological consultations and meetings (1964-1985), moved forward by the reconciling grace of the Holy Spirit, we, the representatives of the two families of the Orthodox tradition, were delegated by our Churches in their faithfulness to the Holy Trinity, and out of their concern for the unity of the Body of Jesus Christ to take up our theological dialogue on an official level.

We thank God, the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for granting us the fraternal spirit of the love and understanding that dominated our meeting throughout.

The first part of our discussions centered on the appellation of the two families in our dialogue. Some discussion was also devoted to the four unofficial consultations of Aarhus (1964), Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970), and Addis Ababa (1971). It was thought that the studies and "agreed statements" of these unofficial consultations as well as the studies of our theologians could provide useful material for our official dialogue.

A concrete form of methodology to be followed in our dialogue was adopted by the Joint-Commission. A Joint Sub-Committee of six theologians was set up, three from each side, with the mandate to prepare common texts for our future work.

For the next meetings, whose aim would be to re-discover our common grounds in Christology and Ecclesiology, the following main theme and subsequent sub-themes were agreed upon:

Towards a common Christology

a) Problems of terminology
b) Conciliar formulations
c) Historical factors
d) Interpretation of Christological dogmas today.

Special thanks were expressed to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for convening this official dialogue, as well as for the services and facilities which were offered for our first meeting here in Chambesy, Geneva, at the Orthodox Centre.

We hope that the faithful of our Churches will pray with us for the continuation and success of our work.

PROF. DP, CHRYSOSTOMOS KONSTANTINIDIS
METROPOLITAN OF MYRA
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
Co-President of the Commission

BISHOP BISHOY
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
Co-President of the Commission

MEETING OF THE JOINT SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

CORINTH, 23rd to 26th Septembe,r 1987

We, a group of theologians forming and representing the Joint Sub-Committee of the Joint-Commission of the theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox non-Chalcedonian Churches, met at Corinth, in Greece, from 23rd to 26th September 1987 in order to discuss problems of terminology as decided by the first Plenary Session (Chambesy, 10-15 December 1985).

Although not all official members of the Joint Sub-Committee were able to participate in this meeting for different reasons, the group however could accomplish its mandate in preparing a common text for the future work.

We discuss the main problems of christological terminology and were convinced that though using some terms in different nuances or sense, both sides express the same Orthodox theology. We focused our dialogue on the terms: **physis, ousia, hypostasis, prosopon**, and attested that they have not been used with conformity in different traditions and by different theologians of the same tradition. Following St. Cyril who in his key phrase sometimes used "mia physis (tou theou Logou sesarkomeni)" and sometimes "mia hypostasis"', the non-Chalcedonians pay special attention to the formula "mia physis", and at the same time they confess the "mia hypostasis" of Jesus Christ, where as the Chalcedonians stress specially the term "hypostasis" to express the unity of both the divine and human natures in Christ. Yet we all confirmed our agreement that the unique and wonderful union of the two natures of Christ is a hypostatic, natural and real unity.

We affirmed that the term **"Theotokos"** used for the Virgin Mary is a basic element of faith in our common tradition. In this connection for the solution of the terminological problems of Christology could be helpful the confession of St. Cyril of Alexandria, our common father:

"Almost the whole of our strugglers con central in order to assure that Holy Virgin is **'Theotokos'** ", (Ep. 39,PG 77,177).

"Therefore it is sufficient for the confession of our true and irreproachable faith to say and to confess that the Holy Virgin is **'Theotokos'** ", (Hom. 15,PG 77, 1093).

We were convinced therefore, in confessing Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God the Father, truly born of the Holy and Virgin Mary, our Churches have avoided and rejected the heretical teachings of both Nestorius and Eutyches. Both lines of terminological development produced the same true faith through different terms, because both condemned Nestorianism and Eutychianism. The common denominator of these two interpretations was the common doctrine of the two real births of the Logos. The Logos, the Only begotten of the Father before the ages, became man through His second birth in time from the Virgin Mary. Both interpretations accepted the two real births of the Logos, whereas Nestorianism denied his second birth - "for that which is born of flesh is flesh". Every theologian who accepted the two real births of the Logos was to be considered orthodox, regardless to every terminological differentiation.

We concluded our discussions expressing our faith that the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ was necessary for the salvation of the human kind. Only the Incarnate Logos, as perfect God and at the same time perfect man, could redeem man and peoples from sin and condemnation.

The four attributes of the wonderful union of the natures belong also to the common tradition of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christology, since both sides speak of it as "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation". Both affirm the dynamic permanence of the Godhead and the Manhood with all their natural properties and faculties, in the one Christ. Those who speak in terms of "two", don't thereby divide or separate. Those who speak in terms of "on"', don't thereby co-mingle or confuse. The "without division, without separation" of those who say "two" and the "without change, without confusion" of those who say "one", need to be specially underlined, in order that we may understand and accept each other.

Heart-felt thanks were expressed to His Eminence Panteleimon, Metropolitan of Corinth and president of the Commission of Interorthodox Relations, for his friendly and generous hospitality as well as for the services and facilities offered for our meeting in Corinth.

We hope that the faithful of our Churches will pray with us for the continuation and success of our dialogue.

Elias
Metropolitan of Beirut

Bishoy
Bishop of Damiette

Chrysostomos
Metropolitan of Peristerion

Dr. Mesrob K. Krikorian
Patriarchal Delegate for Central Europe and Sweden

Prof. Vlassios Phidas
Canada

Father Tadros Y. Malaty
Coptic Orthodox Church

Secretary: Dr. M.K.Krikorian,
Kolonitzgasse 11/11, 1030 Vienna,
Austria

JOINT COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

EGYPT, 20-24 June, 1989, St. Bishoy Monastery - Wadi El-Natroun

The second meeting of the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place at the St. Bishoy Monastery in Wadi El-Natroun, Egypt from June 20th to 24th, 1989.

The official representatives of the two families of the Orthodox Churches met in an atmosphere of warm cordiality and Christian brotherhood for four days at the guesthouse of the Patriarchal Residence at the Monastery, and experienced the gracious hospitality and kindness of the Coptic Orthodox Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and his Church.

His Holiness Pope and Patriarch Shenouda addressed the opening session of the meeting and appealed to the participants to find a way to restore communion between the two families of Churches. The participants also travelled to Cairo to listen to the weekly address of Pope Shenouda to thousands of the faithful in the Great Cathedral of Cairo. Pope Shenouda also received the participants at his residence later.

The twenty-three participants came from thirteen countries and represented 13 Churches. The main item for consideration was the report of the Joint Sub-Committee of six theologians on the problems of terminology and interpretation of Christological dogmas today. The meetings were co-chaired by his Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland and his Grace Bishop Bishoy of Damiette. In his response to Pope Shenouda, Metropolitan Damaskinos appealed to the participants to overcome the difficulties caused by differences of formulation. Words should serve and express the essence, which is our common search for restoration of full communion. "This division is an anomaly, a bleeding wound in the body of Christ, a wound which according to His will that we humbly serve, must be healed."

A small drafting group composed of Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi, Professor Vlassios Phidas, Prof Fr. John Romanides, Prof. Dimitroff, and Mr. Joseph Moris Faltas produced a brief statement of faith based on the report of the Joint Sub-Committee, in which the common Christological convictions of the two sides were expressed. This statement, after certain modifications, was adopted by the Joint Commission for transmission to our churches, for their approval and as an expression for our common faith, on the way to restoration of full communion between the two families of Churches. The statement follows

Agreed Statement

We have inherited from our fathers in Christ the one apostolic faith and tradition, though as churches we have been separated from each other for centuries. As two families of Orthodox Churches long out of communion with each other we now pray and trust in God to restore that communion on the basis of common apostolic faith of the undivided church of the first centuries that we confess in our common creed. What follows is a simple reverent statement of what we do believe, on our way to restore communion between our two families of Orthodox Churches.

Throughout our discussions we have found our common ground in the formula of our common father, St. Cyril, of Alexandria: mia physis (hypostasis) tou Theou Logou sesarkomene, and his dictum that "it is sufficient for the confession of our true and irreproachable faith to say and to confess that the Holy Virgin is Theotokos (Horn: 15, cf. Ep. 39)".

Great indeed is the wonderful mystery of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one True God, one ousia in three hypostases or three prosopa. Blessed be the Name of the Lord our God, forever and ever.

Great indeed is also the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, for us and for our salvation.

The Logos, eternally consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit in his Divinity, has in these last days, become incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Blessed Virgin Mary Theotokos, and thus became man, consubstantial with us in His humanity but without sin. He is true God and true man at the same time, perfect in His Divinity, perfect in His humanity. Because the One she bore in her womb was at the same time fully God as well as fully human we call her the Blessed Virgin Theotokos.

When we speak of the one composite (synthetos) hypostasis of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not say that in Him a divine hypostasis and a human hypostasis came together. It is that the one eternal hypostasis of the Second Person of the Trinity has assumed our created human nature in that act uniting it with His own uncreated divine nature, to form an inseparably and unconfusedly united real divine-human being, the natures being distinguished from each other in contemplation (theotia) only.

The hypostasis of the Logos before the incarnation, even with His divine nature, is of course not composite. The same hypostasis, as distinct from nature, of the Incarnate Logos, is not composite either. The unique theandric person (prosopon) of Jesus Christ is one eternal hypostasis who has assumed human nature by the Incarnation. So we call that hypostasis composite, on account of the natures that are united to form one composite unity. It is not the case that our fathers used physis and hypostasis always interchangeably and confused the one with the other. The term hypostasis can be used to denote both the person as distinct from nature, and also the person with the nature, for a hypostasis never in fact exists without a nature.

It is the same hypostasis of the Second Person of the Trinity, eternally begotten from the Father who in these last days became a human being and was horn of the Blessed Virgin. This is the mystery of the hypostatic union we confess in humble adoration - the real union of the divine with the human, with all the properties and functions of the uncreated divine nature, including natural will and natural energy, inseparably and unconfusedly united with the created human nature with all its properties and functions, including natural will and natural energy. It is the Logos Incarnate who is the subject of all the willing and acting of Jesus Christ.

We agree in condemning the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. We neither separate nor divide the human nature in Christ from His divine nature, nor do we think that the former was absorbed in the latter and thus ceased to exist.

The four adverbs used to qualify the mystery of the hypostatic union belong to our common tradition without commingling (or confusion) (asyngchytos), without change

(atreptos), without separation (achoristos) and without division (adiairetos). Those among us who speak of two natures in Christ, do not thereby deny their inseparable, indivisible union; those among us who speak of one united divine-human nature in Christ do not thereby deny the continuing dynamic presence in Christ of the divine and the human, without change, without confusion.

Our mutual agreement is not limited to Christology, but encompasses the whole faith of the one undivided church of the early centuries. We are agreed also in our understanding of the Person and Work of God the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father alone, and is always adored with the Father and the Son.

The Joint Commission also appointed a Joint Sub-Committee for Pastoral Problems between churches of the two families, composed of the following ten persons.

- Metropolitan Damaskinos, Co-President, Ex officio
- Bishop Bishoy, Co-President, Ex officio
- Prof. Vlassios Phidas, Co-Secretary, Ex officio
- Bishop Mesrob Krikorian, Co-Secretary, Ex officio
- Metropolitan Georges Khordr of Mt Liban
- Metropolitan Petros of Axum
- Prof. Gosevic (Serbia)
- Prof. Dr. K. M. George (India)
- A nominee of Patriarch Ignatius Zaka Iwas of Syria
- Metropolitan Gregorios of Shoa

This Joint Sub-Committee will have its first meeting from December 5th to 9th, 1989 in St. Bishoy Monastery and will prepare a report for the next meeting of the Joint Commission.

It was also decided that the next meeting of the Joint Commission would be held in September 1990 at Chambesy, Geneva, to consider:

a) The report of the Joint Sub-Committee on Pastoral Problems.
b) Conciliar formulations and anathemas. (Rev. Prof. John S. Romanides, H. E. Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios).
c) Historical factors. (Prof. Vlassios Phidas, Rev. Father Tadros Y. Malaty),
d) Interpretation of Christological dogmas today. (Metropolitan Georges Khodr of Mt Liban, Bishop Mesrob Krikorian, and Mr. Joseph Moris).
e) Future steps.

It was also decide that the name of the Joint Commission would be Joint Commission of the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Participants

Eastern Orthodox	***Oriental Orthodox***
Metropolitan Damaskinos Papandreouy Metropolitan of Switzerland Orthodox Co-president of the Joint Commission.	Bishop Bishoy Bishop of Damiette General Secretary Holy Synod Coptic Orthodox Church Orient. Orth. Co-president of the Joint Commission.
Prof. Vlassios Phidas Co-Secretary	Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios Metropolitan of Delhi Sec. to Synod for Inter Ch. Relations
	Mr. Joseph Moris Paltas Dipl. Theol. Assistant Co-Secretary

REPORT OF THE JOINT SUB-COMMITTEE ABOUT THE PASTORAL PROBLEMS

EGYPT, 31 January - 4 February, 1990, St. Bishoy Monastery - Wadi El-Natroun

1. The General Committee of the Joint Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches met at St. Bishoy Monastery - Wadi El-Natroun, during the period 31/1 - 4/2/1990. In an atmosphere of hearty love and Christian brotherhood, both His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos, Bishop of Switzerland and His Grace Bishop Bishoy of Damiette, chaired the works of the Committee.

   At the inaugural session His Holiness Pope Shenouda III welcomed and addressed the members, focussing on the importance of the joint agreement concerning the issue of Christology, the text of which was signed by the Joint Commission for the Theological Dialogue in its meeting in summer 1989. He also pinpointed the widespread acceptance of this agreement by everybody.

   Moreover, he showed great interest in the joint work between our churches taking part in the dialogue, to overcome our pastoral problems. Furthermore, he drew the attention of the Committee to the importance of mutual recognition of Baptism, and taking into consideration marriage, divorce, etc.

   Both of the two Secretaries of the Committee Professor Vlassios Vidas and Mr. Joseph Morris Faltas, recorded the outcomes of these discussions and then put them down in the present text of the Report, which expresses the spirit of the discussions and the final proposals of the Joint Sub-Committee for Pastoral Affairs.

2. The Orthodox Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches have a clear feeling that they live in, and confess Jesus Christ in the same faith, that is fed continuously and uninterruptedly from the fatherly apostolic source of the early centuries. The lack of mutual understanding of the Christological explanations and expressions, did not affect the substance of the faith, in the humanity at its fullness and the divinity at its fullness of the Incarnate Logos Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God (Monogenis Eiou Oheou).

   This common feeling did not only yield many fruits, in the attempts of brotherhood and theological initiatives and discussions, but also yielded the common spiritual experience of the believers.

   The greatest criterion of the fatherly apostolic tradition is that it formed the teachings, worship of God, the conception of asceticism, and the ecclesiastic life in general. It also identified in the past, and even more today, the deep meaning of brotherhood and spiritual approach between the Orthodox Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

   In this respect, it is worth confirming that while the faith unifies us, history keeps us distant, or isolates brotherly believers from each other. This is because it creates ecclesiastical practical problems, which often are more difficult in its outcomes than those of the historical difference, which are caused by theological expressions or dogmatic explanations.

In fact, the start of the official theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches always indicates the wealthy faith and tradition that we possess, and the common basis our faith through the common theological texts. However, this alone does not automatically solve the problems of our ecclesiastical relations existing since many centuries.

And although these problems do not have a deep theological cause, they renew the feelings of suspicion and pain among us, and will diminish the value of the theological fruits of our official dialogue that we started together.

Our assessment of the historical theological problems through our theological dialogue differs from our assessment of these problems through our practical ecclesiastical relations. This does not express our commitment as in the theological dialogue we all express our agreement of our overcoming approximately fifteen centuries on one hand, and in our ecclesiastical relations we still abide to the preservations of the past on the other.

In this case, we give a perception that either the theological dialogue is theoretical and will remain without practical outcomes in the liturgical life of the Church, or that the actual liturgical practical life of the Church does not interact with its theological reality.

Only love and common sincere desire in unity are able to complement what is lacking in our relations through the common faith and ties of love.

The reaction in the Christian world regarding the fruits of our theological dialogue proves the importance of the effort exerted.

Today the approaching and common work between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, is increasing continuously, not only due to our feeling of the same spirit, but also due to the need of the Christian world for the dogmatic and moral principles.

Denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ, authenticity of the Holy Bible, the problem of ordination of women to priesthood, and the problems facing the spiritual life, impose on us a common witness, not only in the area of the Ecumenical Movement, but also to the civilised world of today.

The things that separate us can be overcome by the spirit of love, mutual understanding, and through our common witness to the whole world.

The proposals of the Sub-Committee for Pastoral Affairs can be identified in two areas:

1- The relation of the two Orthodox Families.
2- Our common relations with the rest of the Christian world.

1 - In the area of the relation between the two Orthodox families:-

a) The official ecclesiastical acceptance by the two parties of the theological agreement related to the Christology and the joint theological text signed by the joint Committee for the dialogue, as this will also apply to the ecclesiastical relations.

b) The clear official acceptance and recognition of the Baptism performed by the two families through the spirit of our common tradition and the unity of the mysteries and its distinctions as regards the gifts granted on one hand, and on the other, we can not separate Christ of the mysteries from Christ of the faith.

c) Regular attempts in our joint theological work to benefit of the fruits of our theological dialogue in the writings and publications of each of the two families, towards a farther objective to create ecclesiastical relations. This can be realised through exchanging the theological writings, professors and students of the Theological Institutes.

d) Preparation of publications to the congregation of the two families to be acquainted with what is taking place in the theological dialogue, and the relations existing between us.

e) Joint confrontation of the practical problems in the two families such as the problems of marriage divorce (consideration of the marriage as having taken place) etc.

f) Preparation of a book containing information about the churches taking part in the dialogue.

g) A summary of the most important Christological terms together with a brief explanation and analysis, based upon the fathers' theology and writings.

h) Preparation and publication in different languages of a separate pamphlet comprising the joint text agreed upon in the meeting of the committee held in July 1989, related to our agreement on the issue of Christology, and its necessity for the unity of the Church.

2 - Regarding our relation with the external world

The following is of utmost importance from the practical point of view

a) Serious joint work of the two families to adopt the same attitude in relation to the theological dialogue within the framework of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and with the countries of the whole world through the ecumenical movement.

b) To issue a joint communique against the modern conceptions, which are completely in contradiction with our Apostolic tradition, whether those related to the faith and the campaigns of suspicion, or those related to ecclesiastical issues, such as the ordination of women, and the moral issues.

c) As regards the issue of the woman's position in the church and also not allowing her to be ordained as a priest, the attitude of our churches is the same. Also the joint General Committee for the Dialogue can issue a declaration indicating the importance of the theological basis, which will depend upon the outcomes of the World Orthodox Summit Meeting held in Rhodes in 1988, as well as the address of H.H. Pope Shenouda Ill to the meeting of the Anglican Churches held at Lambeth 1988, and other sources.

d) The common work in view of neutralising the trends of proselytism among the churches.

e) The joint work to confront the religious groups who use twisted and dangerous means to mislead believers from the faith, such as Jehovah's witnesses, Adventists, etc.

JOINT-COMMISSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

GENEVA, September 23 - 28, 1990, Orthodox Centre of Ecumenical Patriarchate - Chambesy

INTRODUCTION

The third meeting of the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Chambesy, Geneva, from September 23rd to 28th, 1990.

The official representatives of the two families of the Orthodox Churches and their advisers met in an atmosphere of prayerful waiting on the Holy Spirit and warm, cordial, Christian brotherly affection. We experienced the gracious and generous hospitality of His Holiness Patriarch Dimitrios I, through His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland in the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We were also received two grand receptions, one at the residence of Metropolitan Damaskinos and the other at the residence of His Excellency Mr. Kerkinos, the ambassador of Greece to the United Nations, and Mrs Kerkinos.

The 34 participants (see list of participants) came from Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Greece, India, Lebanon, Poland, Switzerland, Syria, U.K., U.S.A., U.S.S.R. (Russian Church, Georgian Church and Armenian Church), and Yugoslavia. The six days of meetings were co-chaired by His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland and His Grace Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette. His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos in his inaugural address exhorted the participants to 'work in a spirit of humility, brotherly love and mutual recognition" so that 'the Lord of the Faith and Head of His Church' will guide us by the Holy Spirit on the speedier way towards unity and communion.

The meeting received two reports, one from its Theological Sub-Committee, which met at the Orthodox Centre, Chambesy (20-22, 1990), and the other from its Sub-Committee on Pastoral Relations, which met at the St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt (Jan 31 - Feb 4, 1990). The following papers, which had been presented to the Theological Sub-Committee, were distributed to the participants:

1. “Dogmatic Formulations and Anathemas by Local and Ecumenical Synods within their Social Context”, Rev. Prof.John S. Romanides, Church of Greece.
2. “Anathemas and Conciliar Decisions - Two Issues to be settled for Restoration of Communion among Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches”, Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Delhi, Orthodox Syrian Church of the East.
3. “Historical Factors and the Council of Chalcedon”, Rev. Fr. T.Y.Malaty, Coptic Orthodox Church.
4. “Historical Factors and the Terminology of the Synod of Chalcedon (451)”, Prof. Dr. Vlassios Phidas, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.
5. “Interpretation of Christological Dogmas Today”, Metropolitan George Khodr, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch.

6. “Interpretation of Christological Dogmas Today”, Bishop Mesrob Krikorian, Armenian Apostolic Church of Etchmiadzin.

The six papers and the two Sub-Committee reports, along with the 'Summary of Conclusions" of the Fourth Unofficial Conversations at Addis Ababa (1971) which was appended to the reports of the Theological Sub-Committee, formed the basis of our intensive and friendly discussion on the issues and actions to be taken. A drafting committee composed of Metropolitan George Khodr, Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, Archbishop Kashishlan, Archbishop Garima, Rev. Prof. John Romanides, Metropolitan Matta Mar Eustathius (Syria), Prof. Ivan Dimitrov (Bulgaria) with Prof. V. Phidas and Bishop Krikorian as co-secretaries, produced the draft for the Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to Churches. Another drafting committee composed of Prof. Papavassiliou (Cyprus), Bishop Christoforos (Czechoslovalda), Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios and Liqaselttanat Habtemariam (Ethiopia), with Fr. Dr. George Dragas as secretary, produced the draft for the Recommendations on Pastoral Issues.

The following is the text of the unanimously approved Second Agreed and Recommendations.

SECOND AGREED STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CHURCHES

The first Agreed Statement on Christology (Annex 1) adopted by the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, at our historic meeting at the St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt, from 20th to 24th June, 1989, forms the basis of this Second Agreed Statement on the following affirmations of our common faith and understanding, and recommendations on steps to be taken for the communion of our two families of Churches in Jesus Christ our Lord, who prayed “that they all may be one”.

1. Both families agreed in condemning the Eutychian heresy. Both families confess that the Logos, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, only begotten of the Father before the ages and consubstantial with Him, was incarnate and was born from the Virgin Mary Theotokos; fully consubstantial with us, perfect man with soul, body and mind He was crucified, died, was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, ascended to the Heavenly Father, where He sits on the right hand of the Father as Lord of all creation. At Pentecost, by the coming of the Holy Spirit He manifested the Church as His Body. We look forward to His coming again in the fullness of His glory, according to the Scriptures.

2. Both families condemn the Nestorian heresy and the crypto-Nestorianism of Theodoret of Cyrus. They agree that it is not sufficient merely to say that Christ is consubstantial both with His Father and with us, by nature God and by nature man; it is necessary to affirm also that the Logos, Who is by nature God, became by nature man, by His incarnation in the fullness of time.

3. Both families agree that the Hypostasis of the Logos became composite by uniting to His divine uncreated nature with its natural will and energy, which He has in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created human nature, which He assumed at the Incarnation and made His own, with its natural will and energy.

4. Both families agree that the natures with their proper energies and wills are united hypostatically and naturally without confusion, without change, without division and without separation, and that they are distinguished in thought alone.

5. Both families agree that He who wills and acts is always the one Hypostasis of the Logos Incarnate.

6. Both families agree in rejecting interpretations of Councils that do not fully agree with the Horos of the Third Ecumenical Council and the letter (433) of Cyril of Alexandria to John of Antioch.

7. The Orthodox agree that the Oriental Orthodox will continue to maintain their traditional Cyrillian terminology of "One nature of the Incarnate Logos" since they acknowledge the double consubstantiality of the Logos which Eutyches denied. The Orthodox also use this terminology. The Oriental Orthodox agree that the Orthodox are justified in their use of the two natures formula, since they acknowledge that the distinction is "in thought alone" Cyril interpreted correctly this use in his letter to John of Antioch and his letters to Acacius of Melitene (pages 77, 184-201), and to Eulogius (pages 77, 224-228) and to Succensus (pages 77, 228-245).

8. Both families accept the first three ecumenical councils, which form our common heritage. In relation to the four later councils of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox state that for them the above points 1-7 are the teachings also of the four later councils of the Orthodox Church, while the Oriental Orthodox consider this statement of the Orthodox as their interpretation. With this understanding, the Oriental Orthodox respond to it positively.

   In relation to the teaching of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of the Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox agree that the theology and practice of the veneration of icons taught by the council are in basic agreement with the teaching and practice of the Oriental Orthodox from ancient times, long before the convening of the council, and that we have no disagreement in this regard.

9. In the light of our Agreed Statement on Christology as well as the above common affirmations, we have now clearly understood that both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, though they may have used Christological terms in different ways. It is this common faith and continuous loyalty to the apostolic tradition that should be the basis of our unity and communion.

10. Both families agree that all the anathemas and condemnations of the past that now divide us should be lifted by the Churches in order that the last obstacle to the full unity and communion of our two families can be removed by the grace and power of God. Both families agree that the lifting of anathemas and condemnations will be consummated on the basis that the councils and the fathers previously anathematised or condemned are not heretical.

We therefore recommend to our Churches the following practical steps:

A. The Orthodox should lift all anathemas and condemnations against all Oriental Orthodox councils and fathers whom they have anathematised or condemned in the past.

B. The Oriental Orthodox should at the same time lift all anathemas and condemnations against all Orthodox councils and fathers whom they have anathematised or condemned in the past.

C. The manner in which the anathemas are to be lifted should be decided by the Churches individually.

Trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, Unity and Love, we submit this Agreed Statement and Recommendations to our venerable Churches for their consideration and action, praying that the same Spirit will lead us to that unity for which our Lord prayed and prays.

Signatures of the Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches-Chambesy, 28 September 1990,

Participants

Eastern Orthodox

Metropolitan Damaskinos
Co-President
(Ecumenical Patriarchate)

Prof. Vlassios Phidas
Co-Secretary
(Greek Orth. Patr. Alexandria)

Prof. Athanasios Arvanitis
(Ecumenical Patriarchate)

Metropolitan Chrysostomos
of Peristerion
(Ecumenical Patriarchate)

Prof.Father George Dragas
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Metropolitan Petros of Aksum
Greek Orth. Patr. Alexandria

Metropolitan George Khodr
Greek Orth. Patr. Antioch
per
Metropolitan Damaskinos

Mr. Nikolal Zabolotski
Russian Patriarchate

Mr. Grigorij Skobej
Russian patriarchate

Prof. Stojan Gosevic
Serbian Patriarchate

Dr. Ivan Zhelev Dimitrov
Bulgarian Patriarchate

Metropolitan David of Sukhum
Gregorian Patriarchate

Mr. Boris Gagua
Gregorian Patriarchate

Horepiskopos Barnabas of Salamis
Church of Cyprus

Prof.Andreas Papavasiliou

Oriental Orthodox

Metropolitan Bishoy
Co-President
(Coptic Orthodox Church)

Bishop Dr. Mesrob Krikorian
Co-Secretary
(Armenian Church of Etchmiadzin)

Metropolitan Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios
(Orth. Syrian Church of the East)

Dr. Joseph M. Faltas
Assistant Co-Secretary
(Coptic Orthodox Church)

Bishop Serapion
Coptic Orthodox Church

Father Tadros Y. Malaty
Coptic Orthodox Church

Metropolitan Eustathius Matta Rouhm
Syrian Orth. Patr. Antioch

Armenian Church of Etchmiadzin
(see co-secretary)

Archbishop Aram Keshishian
Catholicosate of Cilicia

Archbishop Mestrob Ashdjian
Catholicosate of Cilicia

Father George Kondortha
Orth. Syrian Church of the East

Archbishop Abba Gerima of Eluvabur
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Rev. Habte Mariam Warlcineh
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Church of Greece

Metropolitan Meletios of Nikopolis
Church of Greece

Prof. Father John Romanides
Church of Greece

Bishop Jeremiasz of Wroclaw
Polish Orthodox Church
per
Metropolitan Damaskinos

Bishop Christoforos of Olomouc
Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia

Father Joseph Hauser
Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia

Father Heikld Huttunen
Finish Orthodox Church
per
Metropolitan Damaskinos

RECOMMENDATIONS ON PASTORAL ISSUES

The Joint-Commission of the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, at its meeting at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in Chambesy, Geneva from September 23rd to 28th, 1990, received a report from its Joint Pastoral Sub-Committee which had met at the St. Bishoy Monastery in Egypt from 31st January to 4th February 1990. The report was the starting point for an extended discussion of four types of pastoral issues:

I. Relations between our two families of Churches, and our preparation for unity.

II. Relations of our Churches with other Christian Churches and our common participation in the ecumenical movement.

III. Our common service to the world of suffering, need, injustice and conflicts.

IV. Our cooperation in the propagation of our common faith and tradition.

I. Relations among our two families of Churches

1. We feel as a Joint Theological Commission that a period of intense preparation of our people to participate in the implementation of our recommendations and in the restoration of communion of our Churches is needed. To this end we propose the following practical procedure.

2. It is important to plan an exchange of visits by our heads of Churches and prelates, priests and lay people of each one of our two families of Churches to the other.

3. It is important to give further encouragement to exchange of theological professors and students among theological institutions of the two families for periods varying from one week to several years.

4. In localities here Churches of the two families co-exist, the congregations should organize participation of one group f people - men, women, youth and children, including priests, where possible from one congregation of one family to a congregation of the other to attend in the latter's eucharistic worship on Sundays and feast days.

5. Publications:

    a) We need to publish, in the various languages of our Churches, the key documents of this Joint Commission with explanatory notes, in small pamphlets to be sold at a reasonable price in all our congregations.

    b) It will be useful also to have brief pamphlets explaining in simple terms the meaning of the Christological terminology and interpreting the variety of terminology taken by various persons and groups in the course of history in the light of our agreed statement on Christology.

    c) We need a book that gives some brief account, both historical and descriptive, of all the Churches of our two families. This should also be produced in the

various languages of our peoples, with pictures and photographs as much as possible.

d) We need to promote brief books of Church History by specialist authors giving a more positive understanding of the divergences of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries.

6. Churches of both families should agree that they will not re-baptize members of each other, for recognition of the baptism of the Churches of our two families, if they have not already done so.

7. Churches should initiate bilateral negotiations for facilitating each other in using each other's church premises in special cases where any of them is deprived of such means.

8. Where conflicts arise between Churches of our two families, e.g. (a) marriages consecrated in one Church annulled by a bishop of another Church; (b) marriages between members of our two families, being celebrated in one church over against the other, (c) or children from such marriages being forced to join the one church against the other; the Churches involved should come to bilateral agreements on the procedure to be adopted until such problems are finally solved by our union.

9. The Churches of both families should be encouraged to look into the theological curriculum and books used in their institutions and make necessary additions and changes in them with the view to promoting better understanding of the other family of Churches. They may also profitably devise programmes for instructing the pastors and people in our congregations on the issues related to the union of the two families.

II. Relations of our Churches with other Christian Churches in the world

10. Our common participation in the ecumenical movement and our involvement in the World Council of Churches needs better coordination to make it more effective and fruitful for the promotion of the faith which was once delivered to the saints in the context of the ecumenical movement. We could have a preliminary discussion of this question at the Seventh Assembly of the WCC at Canberra, Australia, in February 1991 as well as in regional and national councils of Churches and work out an appropriate scheme for more effective coordination of our efforts.

11. There are crucial issues in which our two families agree fundamentally and have disagreements with the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. We could organise small joint consultations on issues like:

a) The position and role of the woman in the life of the. Church and our common Orthodox response to the contemporary problem of other Christian communities concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood,

b) Pastoral care for mixed marriages between Orthodox and heterodox Christians,

c) Marriages between Orthodox Christians and members of other religions,

d) The Orthodox position on dissolution or annulment of marriage, divorce and separation of married couples,

e) Abortion.

12. A joint consultation should be held on the burning problem of Proselytism, vis-a-vis religious freedom to draw the framework of an agreement with other Churches, for the procedure to be followed when an Orthodox or Oriental Orthodox person or family wants to join another (Catholic or Protestant) Church or vice-versa.

13. A special joint consultation should be held on the theology and practice of Uniatism in the Roman Catholic Church, as a prelude to a discussion with the Roman Catholic Church on this subject.

14. We need to have another joint consultation to coordinate the results of the several bilateral conversations now going on or held in the past by the Churches of our two families with other Catholic and Protestant Churches.

III. Our common service to the world of suffering, need, injustice and conflicts

15. We need to think together how best we could coordinate our existing schemes for promoting our humanitarian and philanthropic projects in the socio-ethnic context of our peoples and of the world at large. This would entail our common approach to such problems as:

(a) Hunger and poverty,
(b) Sickness and suffering,
(c) Political, religious and social discriminations,
(d) Refugees and victims of war,
(e) Youth, drugs and unemployment,
(f) The mentally and physically handicapped,
(g) The old and the aged.

IV. Our cooperation in the propagation of the Christian Faith

16. We need to encourage and promote mutual cooperation as far as possible in the work of our inner mission to our people, i.e. in instructing them in the faith, and how to cope with modern dangers arising from contemporary secularism, including cults, ideologies, materialism, aids, homosexuality, the permissive society, consumerism, etc.

17. We also need to find a proper way for collaborating with each other and with the other Christians in the Christian mission to the world without undermining the authority and integrity of the local Orthodox Churches.

RESPONSE FROM THE COPTIC CHURCH

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III convened a special meeting of the Holy Synod in November 12th 1990, to examine the proposals in the Chambesy document. The Holy Synod ratified the document and its recommendations for immediate implementation. Metropolitan Bishoy wrote the following letter to Metropolitan Damaskinos:

Dear Brother in Christ,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ, hoping to be always together in the charity of love and cooperation.

I would like to inform Your Eminence that the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, headed and presided by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, on its meeting in Cairo on November 12th 1990, has accepted the Agreed Statement of our last commission, considering that the lifting of the anathemas will happen simultaneously as stated in the agreement which we have signed in Chambesy on September 28th 1990.

Also the same Synod had accepted the Agreed Statement of St. Bishoy Monastery (June 1989) in its previous meeting of June 1990.

With my best wishes to Your Eminence for the success of our Joint Commission in its mandate. Yours in Christ, signed Metropolitan Bishoy.

Joint Commission Of The Theological Dialogue Between The Orthodox Church And The Oriental Orthodox Churches

Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Geneva, November 1-6, 1993

COMMUNIQUE

Following the mandate of their Churches, the Joint Commission for the Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches held their fourth meeting at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Chambesy, Geneva, Switzerland from 1-6 November 1993, to consider the procedure for the restoration of full communion.

The official representatives of the two Orthodox families of Churches and their advisers met in an atmosphere of prayer and warm, cordial, Christian brotherly love. They experienced the gracious and generous hospitality of His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomaios I, through His Eminence Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, in the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The 30 participants (see the List of participants) came from Albania, Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Greece, India, Lebanon, Poland, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Syria, United Kingdom and U.S.A.

The plenary meetings of the Joint Commission were co-chaired by His Eminence Metropolitian Damaskinos of Switzerland and His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette. His Eminence Metropolitian Damaskinos in his inaugural address explained the procedure which was to be followed and stressed that *"The present Meeting of the Full Joint Theological Commission for the Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches is of the utmost importance not only for evaluating correctly the truly historic theological work of our Commission which has been already accomplished in our previous meetings, but also for facilitating the necessary ecclesiastical procedures for the restoration of full communion."*

After the inaugural meeting, each side met separately to consider papers prepared on the following subjects:

- What is the competent ecclesiastical authority from each side for the lifting of the anathemas and what are the presuppositions for the restoration of ecclesiastical communion?

- Which anathemas of which synods and persons could be lifted in accordance with the proposal of paragraph 10 of the second Common Statement?

- Which is the canonical procedure from each side for the lifting of the anathemas and the restoration of ecclesiastical communion?

- How could we understand and implement the restoration of ecclesiastical communion in the life of our Church?

- Which are the canonical and liturgical consequences of full communion?

They produced two Reports, which were presented to the plenary meeting for clarifications and discussion on the third day of the proceedings. As a result of these discussions the Oriental Orthodox presented a document of Response, which opened the way for further discussions in the plenary. A drafting committee consisting of H. E. Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, H. E. Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, H. E. Archbishop Mesrob Krikorian from the Oriental Orthodox side and Professors Fr John Ramanides, Fr George Dragas and Vlassios Phidas from the Orthodox side were appointed to prepare appropriate Proposals to the two church families on lifting of anathemas from each side and restoring full communion among them.

The text of these proposals, unanimously agreed upon after discussion in plenary session, is as follows:

Proposals for lifting of anathemas

1) In the light of our Agreed Statement on Christology at St. Bishoy Monastery 1989, and of our Second Agreed Statement at Chambésy 1990, the representatives of both Church families agree that the lifting of anathemas and condemnations of the past can be consummated on the basis of their common acknowledgment of the fact that the Councils and Fathers previously anathematised or condemned are orthodox in their teachings. In the light of our four unofficial consultations (1964, 1967, 1970, 1971) and our three official meetings that followed on (1985, 1989, 1990), we have understood that both families have loyally maintained the authentic orthodox Christological doctrine, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, though they may have used Christological terms in different ways.

2) The lifting of the anathemas should be made unanimously and simultaneously by the Heads of all the Churches of both sides, through the signing of an appropriate ecclesiastical Act, the content of which will include acknowledgment from each side that the other one is orthodox in all respects.

3) The lifting of the anathemas should imply:

    a) The restoration of full communion for both sides is to be immediately implemented;

    b) That no past condemnation, synodical or personal, against each other is applicable any more;

    c) That a catalogue of Diptychs of the Heads of the Churches should be agreed upon to be used liturgically;

    d) At the same time the following practical steps should be taken:

        i) The Joint Sub-Committee for Pastoral issues should continue its very important task according to what had been agreed at the 1990 meeting of the Joint Commission.

        ii) The Co-Chairmen of the Joint Committee should visit the Heads of the Churches with the view to offering fuller information on the outcome of the Dialogue.

iii) A Liturgical Sub-Committee should be appointed by both sides to examine the liturgical implications arising from the restoration of communion and to propose appropriate forms of co celebration.

iv) Matters relating to ecclesiastical jurisdiction should be arranged by the respective authorities of the local churches according to common canonical and synodical principles.

v) The two Co-Chairmen of the Joint Commission with the two Secretaries of the Dialogue should make provisions for the production of appropriate literature explaining our common understanding of the orthodox faith that has led us to overcome the divisions of the past, and also coordinating the work of the other Sub-Committees.

Subsequent Directions

To give direction and implementation to the work of the Joint Commission, the two chairpersons, Metropolitan Bishoy and Metropolitan Damaskinos embarked on visits to the heads of Orthodox Churches in 1994. Whilst the Joint Commission of the two families of Orthodoxy has not convened since 1993, many are looking for concrete steps to reach full communion.

CHAPTER 4

COPTIC ORTHODOX AND CATHOLIC CHURCH DIALOGUE

PREAMBLE

The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church split at the council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. From the fifth Century to the middle of the twentieth century both churches remained apart making very infrequent and brief contacts. The first break through came in 1963, when the Coptic Church accepted an invitation from the Catholic Church to attend (as observers) the second Vatican council in Rome.

In 1965, Pope Kyrillos VI sent a delegation to meet Pope Paul VI in an attempt to return the relics of St. Mark from Venice. In June 1968 the Holy relics of St. Mark were returned to Egypt and in the following year a Coptic delegation visited Rome to strengthen ties between the two churches. In November 1971, the Catholic Church attended the Enthronement ceremony of Pope Shenouda to the Apostolic See of St. Mark. Through such exchange visits, bridges of communication were constructed, opening the way for cordial relations between the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Rome.

THE HISTORIC MEETING

Accompanied by eight Egyptian and two Ethiopian Metropolitans, Pope Shenouda III visited Pope Paul VI in the Vatican from May 4th-10th, 1973. This was the first time since 451 that an Egyptian Pope had visited the Holy See of Rome. The historic visit marked the celebrations in commemoration of the 1,600th anniversary of the death of St. Athanasius the Great. Pope Paul VI presented Pope Shenouda III with the relics of the great Church father. We publish the speeches of the two Popes and the Common Declaration signed at the conclusion of their historic meeting. The first official meeting between the two Popes was on May 5th, 1973.

POPE SHENOUDA III'S ADDRESS TO POPE PAUL VI

May 5th, 1973

Your Holiness,

We feel happy, to meet today Your Holiness as the Supreme Head of the Roman Catholic Church in Christendom and to exchange with Your Holiness the holy kiss of peace, and to be in Rome, the great cosmopolitan city of vast and long history which definitely has left its print on the course of human history. The importance of Rome is not exclusively civic, as it had been for a long period the capital of the Roman Empire. Its spiritual Superior, the Roman Pontiff, has had and still has a guiding role along the history of the Christian Church.

Here we wish to express our cordial gratitude to Your Holiness for Your kind invitation to us to come here to Rome and to the Vatican City and to enjoy this happy occasion of meeting each other.

We pray humbly that this meeting would have its far-reaching results in supporting and strengthening the friendly relations between our two Apostolic Churches.

We grasp the opportunity to thank you for the facilities Your Holiness has given to us and for the efforts your most venerable men have exerted, namely, their Eminences, their Excellencies and the Reverend Fathers among whom those who have received us at the airport and those who will accompany us during our stay in the Vatican City and Rome as guests of Your Holiness. We mention with great esteem the good amiable spirit of His Excellency the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio in Cairo; all those respectable men who did their best to make our trip an easy one and who, I am sure, will do their best as well to make our stay here in Rome and in the Vatican City most comfortable and pleasant until we go back to Cairo, carrying with us the holy relic of St. Athanasius the Great, the Apostolic, and with it the affections of love, esteem and endearment to Your Holiness.

Once more we thank Your Holiness in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and we extend to Your Holiness our cordial invitation to come to Egypt, that Your Holiness might see our beautiful country, of long glorious history, our religious archaic places and antiquities and our land once blessed by the flight of our Lord and our Lady into Egypt and recently by the apparitions of St. Mary at Zeitoun.

May the love of Christ bring us more and more together.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus and in His service, blamelessly and void of offence, till the Day of His appearing. Now unto Him be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.

RESPONSE OF POPE PAUL VI TO POPE SHENOUDA III

May 5th, 1973

Dear Brother in Christ,

The words you have addressed to us have been particularly moving ones. We are truly happy to welcome Your Holiness to our home. From the day of your elevation to your position as Father and Head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, God has granted us the grace to maintain frequent relations through letters and through the ministry of our representatives. Now we have this opportunity to meet face to face. It is a solemn moment and a joyful one.

It is also a joy for us to greet the distinguished members of your delegation and through them the entire community of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

In his goodness, God has been wisely and patiently following out the plan of His grace for us. We meet at a time when Christians are asking themselves about the meaning of the faith they profess and the mission they have to the world. You come to this ancient See of Rome, bearing with you the traditions of the ancient See of Alexandria, of its apostles, its martyrs, its doctors, its holy monks and the vast army of its people, who have given witness to their faith in periods of great darkness. It is our hope that through our discussions and prayer we may make a significant contribution towards understanding each other better, thus making it possible to help Christians find valid answers to the questions they are asking themselves today.

We realise that God is presenting us with a great challenge. We do not expect to overcome immediately the difficulties that fifteen centuries of history have created for us. But we do hope to be able to set out upon a way that will lead to our overcoming these difficulties. For our part, we approach these meetings in a spirit of great confidence. We are confident that our Churches are determined to reach out to each other in an effort to carry out better the mission God has entrusted to us. We strive to be faithful servants of the tradition that has been handed on to us from the Apostles through the Fathers and great spiritual leaders of this Church. But that tradition is a living one. The efforts at renewal that are going on in the Catholic Church and in the Coptic Church give testimony to this. We are confident therefore that our meetings during these days will strengthen the bonds of brotherly love between us and between our people. May God enlighten us and guide us and grant us new insights as we strive together to see how we may attain that full unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace that Christ asks of us and which is his gift.

HOMILY OF POPE PAUL VI

May 6th, 1973

During the Cappella Papale in St. Peter's on May 6, 1973, to commemorate the 16th centenary of the death of St. Athanasius, Paul VI delivered the following homily in the presence of Patriarch Shenouda III.

"That is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it". We very willingly repeat this liturgical acclamation, motivated by the feast of Easter, on this present occasion in which the presence of Patriarch Shenouda III, one who is himself honoured by the title of "Pope" of the venerable and most ancient Coptic Church which has its centre at Alexandria in Egypt, evokes in our heart a profound emotion. Here is one who is Head of a Church which is still officially separated from us and which, for centuries has been absent from the communal celebration of prayer with this Church of Rome. He is indeed Head of a Church whose origin goes back to the Evangelist Mark, whom Saint Peter calls his son (1 Peter 5:13), and which had in Saint Athanasius, the sixteenth centenary of whose blessed death we are celebrating today, the invincible defender of our common Nicene faith, that is, faith in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was proclaimed, under divine inspiration, by Simon, son of John, who was therefore transformed by Christ himself into the unchanging Peter and made by him the foundation of the whole Church. He is here, and he has come expressly and spontaneously to tie again the bonds of love (Colossians 3:14) in happy anticipation of that perfect unity of the spirit (Ephesians 3:4) which, after the recent second Ecumenical Vatican Council, we are striving humbly and sincerely to restore. He is here with us and with this great assembly of faithful at the tomb of the Apostle Peter. How could we not rejoice and invite all of you, sons and daughters of this Roman Catholic Church, to praise the Lord with us on this extraordinary day? Do we not see that the book of the Church's history, in which the mysterious hand of the Lord is the chief guide of men's hands to write there "new things and old" (Matthew 13:52), opens before us centuries-old pages and others which are still unused and ready to register events, God willing, which will be happier ones, the records of the merciful Providence of God in the life of the Church, which is still a pilgrim in time? How could we not greet this great and venerable brother who has come from afar and who today is so close to us, our visitor, our guest, here at our altar and united with our pontifical prayer, together with his large and representative and most noble entourage?

The reading from the Holy Gospel (Luke 24:35-48) to which we have just listened invites us to reflect on the fundamental theme of our faith: the theme of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Does not Saint Paul say: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9)? And it seems that this Gospel narrative of the Mass that we are celebrating intends to bear witness to the reality of the fact of Christ's Resurrection as an objective historical reality, proved even by the direct and tangible experience of the senses, even though it pertains to a supernatural order. It seems likewise to wish to stimulate us to draw directly from the observation of this unheard of reality our indomitable and most lively faith, faith like that of Thomas, the positive man of criticism, of doubt and of verification, with his words which still resound: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

How propitious is today's liturgical reflection, celebrating as it does the glorious memory, as we have said, of Saint Athanasius, the intrepid and undaunted defender of the faith! Saint Athanasius is a Father and Doctor of the universal Church and thus merits our common commemoration.

The best way of commemorating a Saint who made an extraordinary contribution to the life of the Church at a decisive moment of her history, when heretics denied the very consubstantial divinity of the Word and hence of Christ, seems to us to be by reflecting on the heritage which he has left us, the witness of faith in his life and in his thought.

When we reflect on his life, we see a believer solidly founded on evangelical faith, a convinced defender and champion of truth and one who was ready to endure every calumny, persecution and violence. Of the forty-six years of his episcopate, he spent twenty in repeated exile; this very city of Rome gave him shelter for three years during his second exile, from April 339 till October 342, in the time of Pope Julius I (337-352).

Always and everywhere and before all men, before the powerful and those in error, he professed faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, true God and true man; therefore the Eastern liturgical tradition describes him as a "column of the true faith" (Apolytikion of 2 May) and the Catholic Church numbers him among the Doctors of the Church.

He was indeed a man of the Church, a vigilant and attentive pastor. He dedicated his entire life to the service of the Church, not only his own Church of Alexandria but the whole Church, bringing everywhere the warmth of his faith, the edifying example of his unswervingly consistent life and the call to prayer which he had learned from the monks of the desert, amongst whom he was several times obliged to take refuge.

The divinity of Christ is the central point of Saint Athanasius' preaching to the men of his time, who were tempted by the Arian crisis. The definition of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), according to which Jesus Christ is the Son of God, of the same substance as the Father, true God from true God, was the constant point of reference of his teaching. Only if one accepts this doctrine can one speak of redemption, of salvation and of the re-establishment of communion between man and God. Only the Word of God perfectly redeems; without the Incarnation, man would remain in the state of corrupt nature, from which penance itself could not free him (De Incarnatione, pp, 25,144,119).

Freed by Christ from corruption and saved from death, man is reborn to new life and acquires once more the pristine image of God, in which he had been created in the beginning and which sin had corrupted. "The Word of God", declares Saint Athanasius, "came Himself, so that, being the Image of the Father, He might create man anew in the image of God" (ibid.).

Saint Athanasius evolves this theology, centring it on the sharing of redeemed man in the very life of God, through baptism and sacramental life. He even declares, in a forceful expression, that the Word of God "became man so that we might be divinised" (ibid.).

This new creation restores what sin had compromised: the knowledge of God and a radical change of life.

Jesus Christ reveals the Father to us and makes Him knowable: "The Word of God became visible with a body so that we might be able to form an idea of the invisible Father" (ibid.).

From this new knowledge of God follows the need for moral renewal. Saint Athanasius calls for it strongly: "Whoever wishes to understand the things of God must purify himself in his way of life and resemble the Saints by the similarity of his own actions, so that united with them in the conduct of his life he may be able to understand what has been revealed to them by God" (ibid.).
We are thus brought to the centre of the Christian event: redemption by the work of Jesus Christ, the radical renewal of man with his restoration to the image and likeness of God, restored communion of life between man and God, also expressed in a profound change of conduct.

This is the sublime message that Saint Athanasius the Great today addresses also to us: to be strong in faith and consistent in the practice of the Christian life, even at the cost of grave sacrifices. It is up to us to accept this message, to meditate on it, examine it closely and put it into practice in our lives.

Through the prayers of Saint Athanasius, Father and Doctor of the Church, may God grant us, us too today, the grace to be able worthily to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that He is the Saviour of the world.

And finally we wish to address a word to the faithful whom we see here present.

Faithful of the Roman Parish of Saint Athanasius, we are happy to see you present for this great ceremony. We greet you all and ask you to take our greetings and our blessing to the entire parish community. We urge you especially to honour the memory of the great patron of your parish Saint Athanasius. To honour him in what way? With the commemoration of his life and the profession of his faith. With the love of Christ the Eternal Word of God, Son of God and Son of Man, our Teacher and our Saviour. And with a sincere and faithful commitment to the Church of Christ and with a practical charity towards our neighbour. Are we understood? To all of you and to your Parish Priest we impart our special Apostolic Blessing.

ADDRESS OF POPE SHENOUDA III

May 6th, 1973

After the celebration of the Holy Mass, Pope Shenouda III went to the main altar of the basilica where he was greeted by Paul VI. He then delivered the following address.

Dear Brother in the Lord,

Your Holiness Pope Paul VI,

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the Father: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us," (John 17:21), "...that they may be one as We are." (John 17:11). Jesus Christ, who so said, undoubtedly leads with His Holy Spirit every action that tends to unity, whether of heart, mind or faith. For the Church is Christ's body; and He has but one body.

We fully believe that He has disposed for this meeting so that we may take a step forward in strengthening the relations between our two apostolic Churches, which were two among the four great apostolic Churches of early Christianity. We have a responsibility, we believe, to work for the unity of faith, not only between us but all over Christendom.

We dare say our differences were for the sake of Christ's love, through which we love each other regardless of the differences. We meet today so that we may deepen our mutual love. Talks guided by the Holy Spirit in such an atmosphere should lead to unity of heart, mind and faith.

However, we have to declare there are between us many points of agreement in the principles of faith. We all believe in the One God, the divine, Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Lord's Incarnation, act of Redemption, Resurrection, Ascension and Second Coming to judge the living and the dead are our common belief. Yes, we believe that the human soul is everlasting, we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life hereafter, the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints, the seven sacraments and the work of the Holy Spirit Ghost in them. We believe in one way for salvation and we condemn the heresies of Arius, Nestorius, Euthyches, Sabelius, Macedonios and the others.

As for points of difference, there is no doubt that after fifteen centuries of study, examination and controversy both on theological and public levels we are undoubtedly on much nearer grounds than our ancestors of the fifth and sixth centuries. We all are readier and more intensive to reach solutions for the differences and attain simpler and more practical forms of expression for the conceptions of faith that all would welcome. We are mindful that the tension of old philosophic and, linguistic understandings together with the political implications connected with the days of schism and the following centuries have been considerably reduced.

Your Holiness, the world of today, suffering from movements of atheistic, materialistic, sceptic or immoral natures is in drastic need for the cooperation of all Churches so that proper human conscience would find support in the twentieth century. Hence, fully

conscious of its duty of witnessing to Christ, the Church is committed to unite so that it would proclaim its spiritual message more effectively. Only through communion in the mystery of the One Christ would it achieve its mission of reconciliation, between God and man, the spirit and the flesh.

Your Holiness, the friendly relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church have become stronger and more expansive in this generation, particularly through meetings, visits and messages. Coptic delegates attended the sessions of the Vatican Council since 1962. Catholic representatives attended the celebration of the inauguration of St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, June 1968. The friendly gift of Your Holiness at that time of the relic of St. Mark now laid in his See in Cairo has met with feelings of deep regard and gratitude on behalf of the Copts.

Later we attended the celebrations of St. Mark in Venice. We shared together in many conferences, to mention in particular the theological Consultation in Vienna, September 1971, between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, where a tentative formula of faith about the nature of Christ was achieved and approved by both sides. This was a positive, successful and hopeful step which proved that theological discussions with friendly attitudes lead to proper and useful results.

Through this present personal meeting we are driving on to more promotion of this movement.

May we, through His Providence, the work of the Holy Spirit and for the sake of His Kingdom, find a proper place for Him in every heart and exert the expansion of love, goodness, peace and justice in His world.

Your Holiness, as we celebrate the sixteenth Centenary of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, who played the greatest role in editing the Christian Creed at the Council of Nicaea and defended the right faith with all power and persistence bestowed upon him by the Almighty, we remember that St. Athanasius the Copt is Father of both of us at the same time. He is father of the Church in the East as well as in the West. In him we meet as we meet at the feet of our Lord. We unite in his dogmas and faith.

In his steps proceeded St. Cyril the Great, the Alexandrian who became a pillar and a hero of Christian faith. As St. Athanasius had struggled against Arianism, so St. Cyril did for the defence of faith against Nestorianism and professed the faith of Western and Eastern Christianity. Like Athanasius, he became a point of agreement not only in his faith but also in the proper and definite expression of faith, which exemplify clearly the word of truth precisely and effectively.

The common traditional theology of Athanasius and Cyril stands as solid centre for the dialogue that we commit to a considerable number of theologians to go through in a spirit of faithful love. We expect them to agree on proper belief expressed in clear and uncomplicated language that all minds understand and consciences approve with comfort.

Your Holiness, at this historic moment of this blessed day we lift our hearts to Heavenly Jerusalem where we all hope to have lodging. Round the Sacred Throne of the One God gather the angels and human saints as one Family headed by one Lord and Father whom we all worship, serve and feel happy to watch. We also remember the earthly Jerusalem, the city of our God in whose streets He strode and taught, where He was crucified, died and rose back from the dead, and ascended to the Sky. We cannot forget the sufferings of

the Holy Land and the Middle East, which was blessed by Christ's work and life during the period of incarnation.

May Christ's love move us to exert more common effort for the return of peace of the Land of Peace, a peace based on justice and truth! May He ever be blessed in us. May we worship Him with righteousness all our life. We humbly beg for Your Holiness and the Catholic Church all peace from the Lord to whom glory and reverence be forever. Amen.

RESPONSE OF POPE PAUL VI TO POPE SHENOUDA III

May 6th 1973

Beloved Brother in Christ,

It is with joy that we extend to you our heartfelt greetings in the Lord as we welcome you in this great Basilica dedicated to the Apostle Peter, who until his death gave witness to his ardent faith in the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, and whom, with Saint Paul, we venerate as the founder of the Church of Rome.

We greet also your brother bishops, the clergy and the distinguished laymen, worthy representatives of the entire community of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Our greetings go moreover to the two venerable bishops of the Ethiopian Church who form a worthy part of your delegation. Welcome into our home and into our hearts.

It is not only in our own name that we speak. Surrounding us are our brothers in the episcopate and thousands of our Christian priests and laity gathered here at the tomb of the Apostle to honour another great witness to the faith, Athanasius of Alexandria.

On this solemn day the Church of Rome greets the Church of Alexandria in a gesture of brotherly love and peace.

Over sixteen hundred years ago, the great Saint Athanasius was welcomed by our predecessor Julius I, who saw in him a champion of that faith which was being compromised and even denied by people who were stronger than him in political power but weaker in faith and understanding. The Church of Rome supported him steadfastly. He in turn recognised in the Church of the West a secure identity of faith despite differences in vocabulary and in the theological approach to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Triune God. His successor Peter was to find the same brotherly reception and support from our predecessor Damasus. A half-century later, the Churches of Alexandria and Rome, in the person of their bishops Cyril and Celestine, were to serve once more as beacons of light when belief in the God Man, Jesus Christ, was obscured by those who refused to render to the holy Mother of God her glorious title of "Theotokos". These are our great Fathers, Doctors of the faith and Pastors of men.

Humbly conscious of our own frailties we look to them to strengthen us now as we seek to fulfil the vocation to which God has called us.

For God has truly called us to great things. In a particular way, he wishes us to bring to the world his gift of faith, reconciliation and peace. Men, estranged from him and from each other, are to be reconciled by our humble ministry.

First, however, we must ask ourselves how far we can accomplish this if we Christians are not reconciled with each other. The question is an important one for us. By the grace of God we share with you faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus Christ we profess the Incarnate Son of God, who for us and for our salvation was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and rose from the dead. Incorporated into him by baptism, we share his divine life in the sacraments of his Church; we share the Apostolic traditions handed down by our common Fathers; our liturgical, theological, spiritual and devotional life are nourished from the same sources, even though they receive various

legitimate expressions. We are particularly mindful of the fact that the principles of the spiritual life propounded by the great fathers of the Egyptian desert, beginning with Saint Anthony, have had an influence upon the entire Christian world.

Yet in humility and sorrow we must recognise that in the history of our Churches we have experienced fierce disputes over doctrinal formulae by which our substantial agreement in the reality they were trying to express was overlooked. Methods alien to the Gospel of Christ were at times used by some to try to impose that Gospel. Reasons of a cultural and political order as well as theological ones have been used to justify and even extend a division, which should never have taken place. We cannot ignore this sad legacy. We recognise that a great deal must yet be done to overcome its harmful effects. However, we are determined that we will not let it continue to influence our relations.

A new phenomenon is taking place, of which our meeting today gives eloquent testimony. In mutual fidelity to our common Lord, we are rediscovering, the many bonds which already bind us together. In response to the brotherly invitation extended by our venerable predecessor John XXIII, your own predecessor of happy memory Kyrillos VI sent observers to all sessions of the Second Vatican Council. They were able to experience the efforts made by that great assembly to assist the reform and renewal of the Catholic Church. We are happy to greet two of them as they return to this Basilica with you today as bishops of your Church.

In 1968 we shared in the joy of the return of the relics of the Evangelist Saint Mark, from Venice to the venerable Church of Alexandria.

In 1969 we had the pleasure of greeting a large pilgrimage of Coptic Orthodox clergy, and lay people; and more recently our own special delegation assisted at the solemn enthronement of Your Holiness as Father and Head of your Church. We recognise in these events signs coming from God. This is the favourable time that the Lord is granting us and we share with Your Holiness the determination to take advantage of it, knowing full well that there are still obstacles of a theological, psychological and institutional order to be overcome. Not denying them, we refuse to be frightened by them. At one time, the Christian world, torn apart by strife and schism, finally was able to recognise in the faith preached by both Damasus of Rome and Peter of Alexandria the genuine Catholic faith.

Trusting in God's grace and walking in his Spirit, we will strive to overcome the obstacles which still exist, so that once more our Churches can give a common and more perfect witness to the world which has so much need of Him.

Venerable Brother, we meet on this solemn and joyful occasion when the Church of Rome celebrates the sixteenth centenary of the death of Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. He was a man of constant faith, buoyant hope and generous open heartedness, even to those who opposed him. Because he was constant in his faith, he could hope against hope. And when, after bitter exile, God allowed him to return to his flock, he opened his heart to all men, ever seeking that reconciliation and peace which are God's gifts to us in his Incarnate Son.

May Athanasius, our common Father, intercede for us, that we may be more faithful servants of God in his Church and more effective pastors to those for whose sake Christ has given us the mission of breaking the bread of his Word and of his Body.

POPE PAUL VI'S ADDRESS BEFORE THE "REGINA COELI"

May 6th, 1973

In his brief address before the "Regina Coeli" on May 6, Paul VI spoke of Saint Athanasius and of the visit of Patriarch Shenouda III.

We must explain to you the ceremony just now celebrated by us in the Basilica of St. Peter's. We wished in this way to commemorate the XVI Centenary (no short period of time!) of the death of St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt; and we wished thereby to honour the presence among us of the new Coptic-Orthodox Patriarch Shenouda III who, with his widely representative entourage, is our guest during these days.

Two questions spontaneously arise: who was St. Athanasius, and who are the Orthodox Copts? In other words, why does Rome attach solemnity to these two themes, which are not deeply rooted in our religious culture? We may limit our reply to saying that precisely because of our insufficient information on these matters, we have felt it necessary to set out in bold relief these two subjects by celebrating in St. Peter's a special service of divine worship known as the "Cappella Papale".

On the other hand, no one is ignorant of the towering figure of Athanasius, precisely in relation to our profession of the Catholic Faith in regard to Jesus Christ our Lord. Like St. Peter in the Gospel, he replied to the ever-insistent question: "Who is Jesus Christ?" He replied in the same way as the first ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea in 325, overcoming the doubts and the ambiguous opinions of the time (we are now in the fourth century at the beginning of the public life of the Church). His reply was that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the Son of God made Man, of the same substance as the Father, Himself very God, together with the Holy Spirit, in the ineffable unity of the divine nature, living in the mysterious Trinity of the three Divine Persons. Here we are at the very heart of the supreme Reality, of the supreme Truth, of the first conquest of our Faith.

In a life full of troubles and hardships, Athanasius defended, especially against the rising tide of Arianism, this faith, which has ever received from Rome its expression and support. A symbol of the most firm fidelity and of witness heroically endured he gives us the joy to have with us his Church, cut off from Catholic communion, also by political controversies no longer existing, after the council of Chalcedon (451), which defined that in the unity of the Person, there are in Christ two natures, divine and human. This Church is now re-flourishing and in an act of reflection, while now it is happy to proclaim with us the identical Nicene Faith of Athanasius, champion of the unity of the East with the Latin West, himself a guest of the Roman Church for a long sojourn in 339, during the time of Pope Julius.

You see, dear sons, how the memories of the past become a presage and a hope for the future; and for their fulfilment, let us now pray.

POPE SHENOUDA III'S ADDRESS AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS VISIT TO POPE PAUL VI AND TO THE CHURCH OF ROME

May 10th, 1973

The visit of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III concluded on May 10. At noon Pope Paul went to the Tower of St. John in the Vatican Gardens, where his guest had been staying during his visit. Pope Shenouda III addressed the Holy Father in these words:

Beloved Brother in Christ,

On the last day of our happy stay in Rome and in the Vatican City and on the occasion of our leave taking, we have the pleasure to thank Your Holiness, not only in our own name but also in the name of our brothers in the episcopate, the metropolitans and bishops our companions, together with the priests and laity, but also in the name of the whole Church of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark.

We, from a full heart, thank Your Holiness for all the brotherly love your highly esteemed person has graciously shown towards us and for all the welcome and kind reception with which we have been received in Rome and in the Vatican City since the very moment of our arrival, from the part of Your Holiness and from the part of their Eminences the Cardinals, their Excellencies the archbishops and bishops and the other prelates of the Roman Curia and the reverend priests, among whom those who have received us at the Airport and those who have accompanied us and those who have welcomed us with joy and love in Your magnificent and splendid Basilicas and gracious monasteries and other holy and historical places.

We especially mention with profound acknowledgment the efforts and the pains of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. We shall not forget how we were moved with reverence and spiritual emotions at seeing churches and monasteries built on sites that had been irrigated with the holy blood of the martyrs of the Church who gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel as witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We very much admire the activities and the scholarly work of the staff of the theological institutes and research centres working in Rome, compiling books of deep and thorough investigations.

Once more and from our inmost soul, we present very many thanks to Your Holiness for Your invaluable present of the relic of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the great father and doctor of the Universal Church, the herald of Orthodoxy against Arianism, the champion of truth who gave his life and fought the good fight in defence of the divinity of Christ. We cannot express in words how our clergy and people in Egypt would rejoice at our return with the relic of St. Athanasius. For this and for Your Holiness's previous most precious present of the relic of St. Mark you gave to our Church in 1968, our gratitude is unspeakable.

We grasp the opportunity to lift up our hearts to the Almighty so that He may deepen our love in Him towards one another and strengthen the bonds of brotherly affections between our two apostolic Churches and that He may render success to the joint commission representing our Churches we are setting up to guide common studies leading to the full unity of the Church.

We shall always keep in our memory these happy days we spent in Rome.

We shall remember Your Holiness and your honourable men in our prayers and we believe that your Holiness will do the same for us. We all have to pray earnestly and humbly for the unity of the Church, for the spread of the kingdom of Heaven on earth and for the peace of the whole world. Amen.

THE FAREWELL SPEECH OF POPE PAUL VI TO POPE SHENOUDA III

May 10th, 1973

Pope Paul responded as follows:

Dear Brother in Christ,

After a week of meetings, visits and conversation, during which Your Holiness and the distinguished members of your delegation have come to a more intimate knowledge of the Church and the people of Rome, we meet personally once again.

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks for your visit, which has enabled us to know more profoundly yourself and the Church of the teaching of Saint Mark. We have been able to see even more clearly how God is calling us to a more perfect unity in Him, for the glory of His name and for the service of all men who have been redeemed by the blood of His incarnate Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. With humility, but with confidence, we renew our resolution to strive to fulfil that calling, mindful of the exhortation of Saint Paul: "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philippians 2:1-2).

We also see in the visit of Your Holiness a significant step towards strengthening the foundations of the relations between the Churches of Rome and of Alexandria. We look forward to a growth in these relations, always based on our total commitment to that living Christian faith that has been handed down to us through the Apostles and the Fathers, and to the exigencies of Christian love. May our commitment always be that of the great Saint Athanasius, the sixteenth centenary of whose death the Church of Rome celebrated during your visit.

As you return to your See and to your country, may we ask Your Holiness to convey our greetings to the faithful of your own Church and to all the people of your country, whom we love very much. How great a privilege it would be if it were ever possible for us to meet them personally.

May God accompany Your Holiness on your journey and may He always be close to us with the inspiration of His Holy Spirit in our endeavours for the building up of His Kingdom.

COMMON DECLARATION SIGNED BY POPE PAUL VI AND POPE SHENOUDA III

May 10th, 1973

At the Tower of St. John in the Vatican gardens, on May 10th, in the presence of Paul VI and Shenouda III, Cardinal Willebrands read a common declaration, which the two Heads of the Churches then signed. The text is as follows:

"Paul VI, bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, and Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, give thanks in the Holy Spirit to God that, after the great event of the return of relics of St. Mark to Egypt, relations have further developed between the Churches of Rome and Alexandria so that they have now been able to meet personally together. At the end of their meetings and conversations they wish to state together the following:

We have met in the desire to deepen the relations between our Churches and to find concrete ways to overcome the obstacles in the way of our real cooperation in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us the ministry of reconciliation, to reconcile the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

In accordance with our apostolic traditions transmitted to our Churches and preserved therein, and in conformity with the early three ecumenical councils, we confess one faith in the One Triune God, the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the, Holy Trinity, the Word of God, the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His substance, who for us was incarnate, assuming for Himself a real body with a rational soul, and who shared with us our humanity but without sin. We confess that our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect man with respect to His humanity. In Him His divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

The divine life is given to us and is nourished in us through the seven sacraments of Christ in His Church: Baptism, Chrism (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders.

We venerate the Virgin Mary, Mother of the True Light, and we confess that she is ever Virgin, the God-bearer. She intercedes for us, and, as the Theotokos, excels in her dignity all angelic hosts.

We have, to a large degree, the same understanding of the Church, founded upon the Apostles, and of the important role of ecumenical and local councils. Our spirituality is well and profoundly expressed in our rituals and in the Liturgy of the Mass, which comprises the centre of our public prayer and the culmination of our incorporation into Christ in His Church. We keep the fasts and feasts of our faith. We venerate the relics of the saints and ask the intercession of the angels and of the saints, the living and the departed. These compose a cloud of witnesses in the Church. They and we look in hope

for the Second Coming of our Lord when His glory will be revealed to judge the living and the dead.

We humbly recognise that our Churches are not able to give more perfect witness to this new life in Christ because of existing divisions which have behind them centuries of difficult history. In fact, since the year 451 AD, theological differences, nourished and widened by non-theological factors, have sprung up. These differences cannot be ignored. In spite of them, however, we are rediscovering ourselves as Churches with a common inheritance and are reaching out with determination and confidence in the Lord to achieve the fullness and perfection of that unity which is His gift.

As an aid to accomplishing this task, we are setting up a joint commission representing our Churches, whose function will be to guide common study in the fields of Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems, so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to *proclaim* together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world. At the same time we express our gratitude and encouragement to other groups of Catholic and Orthodox scholars and pastors who devote their efforts to common activity in these and related fields.

With sincerity and urgency we recall that true charity, rooted in total fidelity to the one Lord Jesus Christ and in mutual respect for each one's traditions, is an essential element of this search for perfect communion.

In the name of this charity, we reject all forms of proselytism, in the sense of acts by which persons seek to disturb each other's communities by recruiting new members from each other through methods, or because of attitudes of mind, which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterise the relationships between Churches. Let it cease, where it may exist. Catholics and Orthodox should strive to deepen charity and cultivate mutual consultation, reflection and cooperation in the social and intellectual fields and should humble themselves before God, supplicating Him who, as He has begun this work in us, will bring it to fruition.

As we rejoice in the Lord who has granted us the blessings of this meeting, our thoughts reach out to the thousands of suffering and homeless Palestinian people. We deplore any misuse of religious arguments for political purposes in this area. We earnestly desire and look for a just solution for the Middle East crisis so that true peace with justice should prevail, especially in that land which was hallowed by the preaching, death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and by the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we venerate together as the Theotokos. May God, the giver of all good gifts, hear our prayers and bless our endeavours.

From the Vatican, May 10, 1973.

THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

PREAMBLE

The International Joint Commission between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church conducted six meetings in an endeavour to resolve the issues between the two churches in order to achieve full communion .We publish the statements of the International Joint Commission.

FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

March 26th-30th, 1974

The first plenary session of the Joint International Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church was held in Cairo March 26 to 30, 1974. The deliberations of the Commission were inaugurated by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in the presence of His Beatitude Stephanos I, Cardinal Sidarouss, Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria, of the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Achille G1orieux, and of representatives of the Catholic and Orthodox communities.

The members of the Commission are:

For the Catholic Church:

Rev. Msgr. Charles Moeller, Secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, head of the Catholic delegation.

His Excellency Msgr. Youhanna Kabes, auxiliary bishop to His Beatitude Patriarch Stephanos I Rev. Louis Abadir, Rector of the Coptic Catholic Seminary of Meadi.

Rev. Prof. Alovs Grillmcier, S.J., professor at the Jesuit Faculty of Theology, Sankt-Georaen, Frankfurt.

Rev. Prof. André de Halleux, OFM, professor at the University of Louvain.

Rev. John Long, S.J., staff member of the Secretariat of Promoting Christian Unity, secretary of the delegation.

Mr. Amin Fahim, President of the Christian Association of Upper Egypt for Schools and Social Promotion.

For the Coptic Orthodox Church:

His Grace Bishop Gregorios, Bishop of Coptic Culture and Higher Theological Studies, head of the Coptic Orthodox delegation.

His Grace Bishop Athanasius of Beni Suef and Bahnasa.

His Grace Bishop Samuel, Bishop of Public Ecumenical, and Social Services.

His Grace Bishop Yohannes of Gharbieh.

Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor of New Testament, Coptic Theological College

Dr. George Bebawi, Professor of Patristics; General Secretary of the Association of Theological Institutions in the Near East; secretary of the Coptic Orthodox delegation.

Mr. Amin Fakhry Abdelnour, lay leader in church, social, and civil institutions.

JOINT REPORT

Introduction

The Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and Coptic Orthodox Church established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III during their meeting in Rome, May 1973, held its first plenary session in Cairo from March 26 to 30, 1974. According to the mandate given it, the commission is "to guide common study in the fields of church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems, so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world

During its meetings the Commission considered the progress made up to the present in theological studies with a view to seeing if further steps could be taken regarding our understanding of Christology and to determining points which need further clarification and study. It was possible to move a step further in the presentation of the faith of our churches at this time in Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son of God. Recommendations for further theological studies to be undertaken by experts of both Churches, as well as recommendations concerning the cooperation between the two Churches in the practical field were agreed upon.

I. A Statement on Christology

1. With regard to the Christological understanding of both our Churches, and as a further development of what was already stated by our church leaders in their Common Declaration, the members of the Joint Commission are in agreement on the following.
2. We confess that the union that took place in the Incarnation between the Godhead and the Manhood of Our Lord is a mystery incomprehensible to any created mind, ineffable, inexpressible, beyond description and too great for words.
3. We must humbly recognise the limitations of our minds to grasp the truth of it, nor are we able to give adequate words in our human language to fully express it.
4. According to the truth of our salvation which is revealed to us through the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures and the tradition of our common Fathers before the schism, we together confess that one of the Holy Trinity, the Second Person, who is true God, for the sake of the economy of our salvation, has assumed to Himself from the holy Virgin Mary a real body possessing a rational soul. This ensouled flesh did not exist before the union. The body remained body although glorified after the God befitting

resurrection and ascension. It is from the very moment of the descent of the Divine Word in the Virgin's womb, that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity united to Himself the perfect humanity, which he took from the virgin. He Himself one and the same consubstantial with the Father with respect to His Divinity became consubstantial with us with respect to His Humanity.

5. As we confess the faith formulated above according to the first three Ecumenical Councils, we together anathematise Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism and profess the faith expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol. Still we need a formula of reconciliation between what the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox confess one nature, out of two natures, or one nature that possesses the properties and qualities of the two natures, and what the Chalcedonian Catholics confess in two natures.

6. We accept a perfect real union, and not a conjunction or combination of two persons or entities. When the Orthodox part rejects all duality in Jesus Christ, it is intended to say that every act of Jesus Christ is in fact the act of God the Word incarnate and not that some of His acts be attributed to His Divinity alone and some others to His humanity alone as it might seem. When the Catholics confess their faith in Jesus Christ, then they do not deny what the Orthodox say, but they want to emphasise that in Him are preserved all the properties of the Divinity as well as all the properties of the Humanity, a fact which the Orthodox profess incessantly.

7. When the Orthodox confess that Divinity and Humanity of Our Lord are united in one nature, they take "nature", not as a purely simple nature, but rather as one composite nature, wherein the Divinity and Humanity are united unseparated and unconfusedly. And when the Catholics confess Jesus Christ as one in two natures, they do not separate the Divinity from the Humanity, not even for the twinkling of an eye, but they rather try to avoid mingling, commixtion, confusion or alteration.

8. The Orthodox part stresses in the union the reality of the humanity of Our Lord, for the salvation of mankind could not be but the act of the Divine Word incarnate. The Divinity did not and could not forsake the Humanity for a moment neither during the time of crucifixion nor any time after. In the Eucharist, the faithful always partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, a fact that stresses the reality of His Humanity. On the other hand, they stress the reality of the Divinity of Our Lord, the Word, Who was and still is the very God incarnate. For this reason the resurrection of Our Lord is a conclusive evidence of His Divinity. This explains the most illustrious importance the Orthodox give to the feast of Resurrection.

9. It is precisely the same concern of the Catholics to confess the reality of the Humanity in Jesus Christ as the indispensable instrument of our salvation. But they also affirm that our salvation is the very act of the Word of God. They also believe that there has never been any separation of Divinity and Humanity in Jesus Christ even at the moment of crucifixion, death and descent to hell.

10. This is our faith in the mystery of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the economy of our salvation. In this we all agree.

11. It is the conviction of the Joint Commission that this statement can serve not only the deepening of relations between our two Churches but also can be used as our authentic expression of our beliefs in our relations with other Christian Churches and communities.

II. Further Theological Studies

The Joint Commission recommends that the following issues be further studied by experts of
Both Churches:

1. The history and doctrine of the Councils of the Early Church and in particular those concerned with Christology:
   a) Their theological and non-theological factors
   b) Their ecclesiastical authority as such
   c) The acceptance of the Canons in both Churches, especially concerning their application to our contemporary differences and needs.
2. The Sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of Salvation.
3. The recognition of Saints, concerning Orthodoxy of faith and spirituality.
4. The ways of implementing the above mentioned points in liturgical and historical books and theological institutions.

This list is not an exhaustive one. It indicates those points of particular, importance that should be given priority.

The Joint Commission will examine the ways for involving experts in these studies and bringing the results of their work to the attention of our Churches.

III. Practical Affairs

The joint Catholic-Coptic Orthodox commission recognises that the struggle of ideologies, rapid social changes, the exaltation of materialism and atheism challenge the faith of Christians and the Churches themselves. We are called by the grace of God to a cooperation which is both serious and sincere, and which will help the Churches meet their responsibility in this world.

In their Common Declaration, Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III clearly encouraged this cooperation and indicated the principles, which should guide it. This commission hopes, by what it will now say to contribute to its concrete realisation.
The Joint Commission recognises that some of the people of our Churches still have a strong feeling of mistrust when it comes to common cooperation. We must strive to eliminate this feeling and to root out its causes. The commission also recognises that certain people, because of a lack of proper understanding both of the Church's responsibility in the world and of the ecumenical spirit, might use the common declarations of our leaders, and our own proposals, to disturb another's community by trying to recruit new members from it or by cultivating attitudes of minds which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterise brotherly relationships between Churches. Actions and attitudes of this kind can find no justification in the efforts of Catholics and Orthodox to deepen charity and cultivate mutual consultation, reflection and cooperation in the social and intellectual fields. On the contrary, we are convinced that Christian pastors and faithful who have been working zealously for the spread of Christ's kingdom will find that, by implementing the directives of our church leaders and by giving concrete substance to the suggestions and guidelines given by this Joint Commission, they will give a deeper significance to their

pastoral activities and exert a more profound influence on their own people and on all with whom they will work.

Moreover, the Joint Commission is convinced that the programmes it proposes should be implemented with an eve to concrete situations and to the needs of our people and the resources at our disposition. To attempt to do everything in one day could lead to failure and disillusionment. To refuse to take a step because of difficulties which might be foreseen could be a refusal of the inspirations being given by the Holy Spirit and of the clear manifestations of the desire the leaders of our Churches have for the development of that profound unity among us which is Christ's will for His Church.
It is with these reflections in mind that the Joint Commission recommends the formation of a Local Joint Committee in Egypt whose function will be to implement the use of resources for the service of Christ and His Church in Egypt, and to take effective measures to eliminate activities which obstruct this service.
In consultation with the authorities of our Churches, this committee will determine the structures useful for carrying out its task. One of these should be a joint subcommittee for regular contact with church institutions, to plan, promote and guide the use of personnel and resources towards a wider service of the whole Church and of all the people in Egypt, in a spirit of mutual respect for each other's Churches. A second subcommittee is to be established to examine and take effective measures against those practices, which create tensions among the Churches or affect the spirit of mutual confidence between them.

Furthermore, this committee will advise and guide other groups, which may wish to propose joint programmes of action, according to the spirit mentioned above.
The committee can also arrange studies on practical questions as shall be indicated to it by this Joint Commission. Included among these are studies of the procedures and problems arising in the perspective of our Churches' present endeavour along the road of unity in Christ that is God's gift.

In its endeavours the Local Joint Committee will maintain regular contact with local church authorities and will report to this Joint Commission on its work and on perspective for future activities, to be guided and supported by the Commission.
As an aid towards dealing with some practical problems which may arise on the local level, our Joint Commission wishes to recall the words of the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III: "The Divine life is given to us and is nourished in us through the seven sacraments of Christ in His Church: Baptism, Chrism (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders". We wish to emphasise that this passage underlines the common regard and mutual respect that should be had for each other's sacraments. We want to see this reflected in our pastoral practices and in our concern for the conscience of everyone.
This Joint Commission recommends to our Church authorities to encourage through exhortations, pastoral letters and synodal decisions, the work of the Local Joint Committee as well as to promote the adoption of the principles enunciated in the common declarations of our leaders both in the statutes and the activities of our church institutions.

Finally this Joint Commission expresses its conviction that the more it proves in a practical way its own sincerity and seriousness as it works to implement the mandate given it, the more our pastors and church leaders will respond to the concrete demands made upon them to develop and guide our people towards working for full unity in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ.

SECOND MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

October 27th-31st, 1975

From October 27th to 31st, 1975, the Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church met in Cairo. This was the second session of the Commission since it was established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III after their historic meeting in Rome in 1973.

Following upon the common declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III, the commission, in its first meeting in March 1974, made a significant step in expressing one fundamental understanding of Christ as God Incarnate, so that we can consider the Christological problem nearly solved from a theological point of view.

The main theme of this meeting was a vision and understanding of the unity we seek. It was agreed that the union we are looking forward to achieving in the future in which our two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, would come into full communion again on the basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the undivided Church of the first four and a half centuries, would be a real unity.

It was recognised that there remain serious divergences among us on a number of questions and particularly in regard to our understanding of the ecclesiology on which unity is based. For this reason, the Commission has decided that theological studies be undertaken on the understanding of unity which existed in the undivided Church in order to see what this has to tell us for the life of our Churches today. Not merely were these studies decided upon, but a clear plan for carrying them out was developed.

In addition, the Commission considered concrete ways by which mutual understanding could develop among our clergy and people.

In 1974, the Commission had recommended the establishment of a local Joint Committee whose objective was to implement the use of resources for the service of Christ and His Church in Egypt, and to take effective measures to eliminate activities, which obstruct this service. This Committee, which is in existence for almost a year now, reported to the Commission that it has made progress in carrying out its mandate. Plans for continuing and developing its work were discussed and approved by the Commission.

The Commission feels that God has accompanied its work with blessings. If unity must still be achieved and the many common studies and activities the Commission envisages should not be interpreted as if it were already an accomplished fact, nevertheless, Catholics and Orthodox see in these studies and activities positive steps towards achieving the Unity desired and prayed for.

Participants in the meeting were:

Catholic delegation

Msgr. Charles Moeller, General Secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (co-chairman).

H.E. Bishop Youhanna Kabes, Auxiliary to Patriarch Stephanos I.

Rev. Fr. Louis Abadir, Rector of the Coptic Catholic Seminary of Meadi.

Rev. Prof. Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., Professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Jesuit Fathers, Frankfurt.

Rev. Prof. André de Halleux, O.F.M., Professor at the University of Louvain.

Mr. Amin Fahim, President of the Christian Association of Upper Egypt for Schools and Social Promotion.

Rev. Fr John F. Long, S.J., from the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Rev. Fr. Maurice Martin, S.J., Regional Superior for Egypt of the Jesuit Fathers.

Coptic Orthodox delegation

His Grace Bishop Gregorios, Bishop of Coptic Culture and Higher Theological Studies, co-chairman.

His Grace Bishop Athanasius of Beni Suef and Bahnasa.

His Grace Bishop Samuel, Bishop of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services.

His Grace Bishop Yohannes of Gharbieh.

Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor of New Testament, Coptic Theological College.

Dr. George Bebawi, Professor of Patristics, General Secretary of the Association of Theological Education in the Near East.

Mr. Amin Fakhry Abdelnour, Active Layman in church, social and civil institutions.

Rev. Antonios Ragheb, parish priest, Cairo.

Vision of union

We met together to discuss and to investigate, in mutual respect and with the spirit of love for one another, what we can do to hasten or to push forward the case of the union between our two Apostolic sister Churches.

The union we envisage is a real one, a communion in faith, in sacramental life, and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God.

Different views of the question

In spite of the fact of the desire and hope for the Unity for which we have been praying for centuries, we recognise the existence of points of divergences that have grown wide since the Schism that took place in Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

1. In our first meeting in March 1974, we worked together for a Christological Declaration, which helped to clarify the situation more than ever, and made a significant step that expresses one fundamental understanding of Christ as God Incarnate.

2. Now after our deliberations in this second meeting of the official Joint Commission, we came to realise that we met certain difficulties in regard to Ecclesiology on which Unity is based:

   a) To the Orthodox, the Church of Christ is One Unique Catholic and Apostolic Church. She is the same everywhere and at all times. The Church of Alexandria is the Church Universal (Catholic) in Alexandria. If the Church be called local, that means that it is one and the same Church Universal with all its qualities and treasures of Christ and the Holy Spirit, as acting in the place, whether it is in a form of one diocese headed by its bishop or a group of dioceses in one or more than one country governed by the Holy Synod with the Patriarch as head. She can speak in matters of faith with authority that is the authority of Christ given to the Church to preach the Gospel, to propagate the faith and to govern the people of God. She can speak and decide according, to the Scriptures and to the Tradition transmitted to her through the ages.

      An Ecumenical Council is the Supreme body of the Church Universal to judge and decide on points of dispute. There is no need for a supreme administrative body to govern all Churches of Christendom. The Church is not in need of referring to any other bishop as if this bishop possessed the full power to be the only spokesman of Christ and the Church Universal. Bishops in the early Church used to consult each other, to impart their problems to each other as brothers and fellow bishops of equal authority. When there was a problem that needed a decision from the Church Universal, an Ecumenical Council had to be convened. In principle, there is no assigned bishop that has the prerogatives to preside over the Council. The president is to be appointed by free election by the member bishops of the Council.

   b) The Roman Catholic side also is keenly aware of the essential place occupied in the Church of Christ by the local Church, understood as the congregation of the faithful gathered around the bishop, and by the particular Church, which is the gathering of a number of local Churches in a single body headed by a Patriarch or

some other bishop. The universal Church subsists of and in the local Churches. Moreover, it believes that, in conformity with the will of Christ, a ministry of universal unity exists for the communion between local Churches, which ministry the Roman Catholic Church conceives as realised in the ministry of the bishop of Rome.

Common view

3. Since, however, Our Lord Jesus Christ willed that His Church be one, we are confident that a way will be found to achieve union between our two sister Churches.

4. The process by which it is achieved is that two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, come into full communion again on the basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the undivided Church of the first four and a half centuries.

5. Such a communion once achieved, there will be but one Coptic Church under the leadership of the one Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.

6. Since this unity would be a full communion, the richness of the Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression, within the structure of this one Coptic Church for the enrichment of all.

Procedures for our work

7. We hope to achieve the study of the main theological points as well as of practical and pastoral questions within a period of six years, dividing up the work by people designated by the Commission or its Secretariat in yearly sections, with regular meetings of the Joint Commission. This period might be extended according to needs and to progress of studies.

8. Theological and historical subjects which must be studied as helps to achieving unity:

   a) The type of Unity known in the history of the Church before 451 A.D.
   b) The Oneness of the Church as expressed in the Nicean Creed.
   c) Unity as the communion which was in existence at a certain time in the life of the Church Universal in relation to the concepts of Unity existing today.
   d) The method by which the Churches solved their theological and pastoral problems and to what extent we should apply this method when Unity is achieved.
   e) The question of the particular role of St. Peter and his successors in the light of common tradition of both Churches until 451 A.D.
   f) Theological differences that can hinder Unity, eg. councils, canons, saints, anathemas and other dogmas concerning the Holy Spirit, the blessed Virgin, life after death, sacraments and rites.

9. For their relations concerning questions of common interest and concern, the Church of Rome and the Church of Alexandria will agree on the methods and procedures to be used.
10. Certain concrete projects can be developed, eg:

a) Appreciating the work developed within the *Association for Theological Education in the Near-East* (Atene)*, we recommend further collaboration between seminaries, the possible exchange of professors between local faculties as well as with faculties outside Egypt.
b) Exchanges between monasteries are also recommended.

11. The Commission learned with satisfaction of the recent meetings between members of the hierarchies of the Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholic Churches to discuss questions of common interest and concern. It expresses its hope that meetings of this type may continue on a regular basis, and may be an example and inspiration for similar meetings on other levels.

12. We recommend that a popular commentary on the events and the documents of the visit of Pope Shenouda III to Rome in 1973 be prepared in common to create a wider understanding of this event. People who took an active part in this event should be responsible for preparing this text.

13. A permanent Secretariat of the Joint Commission has to be set up to follow up the work of the Commission during the periods between its meetings. This Secretariat would see to the preparing of papers on the subjects decided for study, to the carrying out of these concrete studies and mutual consultations, and would prepare the general meetings of the Joint Commission. In addition, it would assist the Joint Local Committee in carrying out decisions made by that committee, and in other projects, such as preparing Arabic translations of documents for approval by that Committee. The members of the permanent Secretariat, serving at the pleasure of this commission, are: Fr. John Long, Fr. Louis Abadir and Fr. Antonios Ragheb.

14. The Joint Commission projects the following timetable for its next meetings:

a) Since a good number of members of the Commission will be attending the symposium sponsored by "Pro Oriente" in Vienna in September, 1976, there will be a three day meeting of these members before the symposium and dedicated specifically to the work of the Joint Commission.
b) The next plenary session of the Joint Commission would be held in March 1977.

If the meeting at the Vienna symposium cannot be arranged, the next plenary session of the Joint Commission will be held at the end of October 1976.

* At its 1980 General meeting Atene, set up in 1967, became Atime: *Association of Theological Institutions in the Near East.*

THIRD MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

August 26th- 29th, 1976

As proposed and agreed upon in their meeting of October 1975 in Cairo, the members of the Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church who were present for an Ecumenical Consultation sponsored in Vienna from August 29th to September 5th by the Foundation **Pro Oriente**, held a meeting of the Commission from August 26th to 29th. Present from the Coptic Orthodox side were His Grace Bishop Gregorios, His Grace Bishop Samuel, His Grace Bishop Yohannes of Garbieh, Rev. Father Antonios Ragheb and Dr. George Bebawi; from the Catholic side, Rev. Msgr. Charles Moeller, Rev. Msgr. Louis Abadir, Rev. Prof. Aloys Grillmeier S.J.. Rev. Prof. André de Halleux O.F.M., Rev. John Long S.J., Rev. Emmanuel Lanne, O.S.B. was also present for one day, during which he presented for discussion a paper on the subject of (the Unity of the Church up to the century

COMMON REPORT

Towards a Christological Statement

The participants felt it useful to prepare a statement on Christology that would be a definitive presentation of their thought concerning the *Christological understanding of both Churches.* Using material contained in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda Ill and the Commission's report of March 30, 1974, they unanimously agreed to the statement attached to this report.

This statement is submitted to the authorities of both Churches for their definitive judgement and use. However, the Commission requests that even if approval is given, the statement not be made public until some time in the future that will be mutually agreed upon by the two Churches.

Theological studies

In its report of October 1975, the Joint Commission had indicated a series of theological and historical subjects that must be studied as helps to achieve unity, and had expressed its hopes that these studies be achieved within a period of six years. Father Lanne's contribution to the Vienna meeting was helpful as a beginning of this process. However, the participants felt that procedures should be revised to speed up the process and to achieve concrete results within the next five years. They should not be merely academic studies but should be aimed at treating those specific subjects that are obstacles to full communion between the two Churches.

Furthermore they should be carried out in such a way that the proper authorities of the Churches would have the opportunity to pronounce on them within the next five years.

It is proposed, therefore, that two major studies be made in the period between now and October 1977. Each should be assigned to one or more experts from each side, each of which would prepare a preliminary study on the topic assigned. They would exchange their studies for mutual criticisms and suggestions. After this, provision should be made

for the experts to meet personally for whatever period of time is necessary to prepare together, by September 1977, conclusions to be presented to the meeting of the Joint Commission in October of that year. These conclusions should include points upon which agreement has been reached and those unresolved points for which the Commission will be asked to give its help and guidance. The Commission will determine whether it has sufficient material to be already presented in a preliminary way to its authorities.

At this same meeting, the Commission will determine the subjects to be treated for the following year.

The subjects to be studied during the coming year are:

1. With reference to *Church unity:* what were the roles of the Bishop of Rome and the Bishop of Alexandria in the Church in the first five centuries? What can this tell us about unity in the Church today?

2. With reference to *Councils of the Church:* What are the doctrinal and dogmatic points to be found in councils that have not been shared by the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches. Are these acceptable? How can points of disagreement be resolved? How can a Church, which has celebrated many councils, be in communion with one that has not shared these councils? How much are the canons and anathemas of earlier councils binding today?

   The experts who are to treat these subjects will be chosen by the end of October 1976.

Concerns and proposals about pastoral problems

The Coptic Orthodox participants informed the meeting that during the proposed period of five years of study and cooperation, they are hesitant to inform people of the work being done or the results achieved. They feel that this could be used against them, especially among the simple faithful, to foster proselytism or expansion among them.

The Coptic Orthodox therefore proposed a series of actions to be taken or promoted by the Catholic authorities concerned in various areas of religious, pastoral, educational and social work as well as in the areas of the use of Church resources and structures. It was made clear that they were for a transitional period of five years, that they were not directed at the ordinary pastoral activities of the Catholic Church in favour of its own faithful and that their purpose was to create an atmosphere in which the projected common studies and activities during the next five years would be able to achieve significant results, aiming towards full communion.

It was agreed that no ecumenical activities between our Churches should be used to create confusion in the minds of the faithful or open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. Anything of this kind would be opposed to what Pope Paul VI expressed to the Coptic Orthodox delegation in Rome in St. Peter's Basilica on May 6th, 1973 and in the Common Declaration signed by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III on May 10th of the same year.
It was therefore agreed by the commission that the following recommendations be submitted to the authorities of the Catholic Church for their approval and action:

1. The authorities of the Catholic Church who are concerned direct the religious and pastoral activities of missionaries towards service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church.

2. Through contacts with Orthodox Church authorities, institutions involved in the educational and social activities of Catholic missions invite Orthodox to be members of board or other agencies that plan and administer these services.

3. The Catholic authorities authorise the local Joint Committee to examine existing social projects conducted by missionaries in regions where all, or almost all Christians are Orthodox, to see what can be conducted by the Orthodox or what could better be conducted under joint auspices, and to recommend to the authorities the proper action to be taken.

4. Orthodox projects should be considered among the programmes supported by Catholic international agencies.

5. To help train Coptic Orthodox workers to run specific projects, a joint training institute should be established.

6. Church buildings of missionaries that are not being used or little used at present should be sold or given to Orthodox rather than to others, secular or religious.

7. The Coptic Catholic Church should refrain from expanding by not establishing new parishes or dioceses or nominating new bishops and by not establishing new monasteries or convents.

It was also recommended that the work of the Local Joint Committee be strengthened and that means be found for its work to be carried out on a regular basis. If necessary, additional members could be coopted, especially persons who are in a position to put into effect the recommendations of the committee. There is also need for the authorities of the Churches to clarify how the committee relates to persons and institutions and how its recommendations can be effectively carried out.

The participants in the Vienna meeting submit the above observations and recommendations to their respective authorities in the conviction that they are fulfilling the charge laid upon them as a joint commission to guide common study in theoretical fields and in the field of practical problems "so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world" (cf. Common Declaration). We pray that what the commission is doing will contribute, by Gods' grace, to achieving full unity between our Churches.

CHRISTOLOGICAL DECLARATION

In accordance with our apostolic traditions transmitted to our two apostolic Churches and preserved therein, and in conformity with the early three ecumenical councils and the tradition of our common Fathers before the schism, we confess one faith in the One Triune God, the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word of God, the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His substance. Who for us and for the sake of the economy of our salvation has assumed to Himself from the Holy Virgin Mary a real body possessing a rational soul. This ensouled flesh did not exist before the union. The body remained body although glorified after the God befitting resurrection and ascension. It is from the very moment of the descent of the Divine Word in the Virgin's womb, that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity united to Him the perfect humanity that He took from the holy Virgin. He Himself one and the same consubstantial with the Father with respect to His Divinity became consubstantial with us with respect to His Humanity.

Our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, then is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect man with respect to His Humanity. In Him His Divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

As we confess the faith formulated above according to the first three Ecumenical Councils, we together anathematise Arianism, Apollinarism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism and profess the faith expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol. We accept a personal, real union, and not a conjunction or combination of two persons' entities. When the Orthodox part rejects all duality in Jesus Christ, it is intended to say that every act of Jesus Christ is in fact the act of God the Word incarnate and not that some of His acts be attributed to His Divinity alone as it might seem. When the Catholics confess their faith in Jesus Christ, then they do not deny what the Orthodox say, but they want to emphasise that in Him are preserved all the properties of the Divinity as well as all the properties of the Humanity, a fact which the Orthodox profess incessantly.

When the Orthodox confess that Divinity and Humanity of Our Lord are united in one nature, they take "nature", not as a pure and simple nature, but rather as one composite nature, wherein the Divinity and Humanity are united inseparably and unconfusedly. And when Catholics confess Jesus Christ as one in two natures, they do not separate the Divinity from the Humanity, not even for the twinkling of an eye, but they rather try to avoid mingling, commixtion, confusion or alteration.

We both confess in the union the reality of the humanity of Our Lord, for the salvation of mankind could not be but the act of the Divine Word incarnate. The Divinity did not and could not forsake the Humanity for a moment neither during the time of crucifixion nor any time after. In the Eucharist, the faithful always partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, a fact that stresses the reality of His Humanity. On the other hand, we stress the reality of the Divinity of Our Lord; the Word Who was and still is the very God incarnate. For this reason the resurrection of Our Lord is a conclusive evidence of

His Divinity. This explains the most illustrious importance we give to the feast of Resurrection.

This is our faith in the mystery of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the economy of our salvation. In this we all agree.

Vienna, August 29th. 1976

FOURTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

March 13th – 18th 1978

From March 13 to 18 there took place in Cairo the fourth meeting of the Joint International Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Previous meetings have been held in Cairo in 1974 and 1975 and in Vienna in 1976. The Joint Commission was established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on the occasion of their meeting in Rome in May 1973. Its function, as stated in the Common Declaration issued then, is "to guide common study in the fields of Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing, between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world".

In the course of its meeting, the commission discussed studies on the role of the councils in the life of the Church and on the sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of salvation. The studies had been recommended in earlier meetings as being of particular importance for reaching a common understanding of our Christian faith and life. The commission was able to clarify a number of points concerning these subjects and indicate areas that need further reflection and clarification.

The commission considered some general principles for the relations between our Churches and their activities. It also agreed upon some specific recommendations for the study of the nature and forms of the full unity we are seeking. It examined the work of the Joint Local Committee that had been set up in 1974 to promote and guide the contacts between the Churches on the local level and aid in overcoming obstacles to these contacts.

Recommendations were made for improving and strengthening this work.

The commission also stressed that, since its work and that of the local committee is an effort at accomplishing God's will for our Churches, this work should be accompanied by prayer and fasting among its members and that others in both Churches should be invited to participate in these same spiritual activities aimed at obtaining, God's blessing.

The conclusions and recommendations of this meeting are now being submitted to the authorities of both Churches.

In the course of the meeting of the Commission, the members participated in fraternal suppers held at the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate and at the Apostolic Nunciature. They also made a pilgrimage to the Wadi El-Natroun where they were guests of the monasteries of Saint Macarios and of Deir es Suriani.

Participating- in the meeting were:

For the Catholic Church: Rev. Msgr. Charles Moeller, Secretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, head of the Catholic delegation; His

Excellency, Msgr. Youhanna Kabes auxiliary Bishop to His Beatitude Patriarch Stephanos I; His Excellency, Mgr. Athanasios Abadir, Patriarchal Vicar; Rev. Prof. Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., professor emeritus at the Faculty of Theology Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt; Rev. Prof. André de Halleux, O.F.M., professor at the University of Louvain; Rev. John F. Long, S.J., Bureau Chief of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; Mr. Amin Fahim, President of the Christian Association of Upper Egypt for Schools and Social Promotion.

For the Coptic Orthodox Church: His Grace Bishop Gregorios, Bishop of Coptic Culture and Higher Theological Studies, head of the Coptic Orthodox delegation; His Grace, Bishop Samuel, Bishop of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services; Rev. Father Antonios Racheb, Shoubia, Cairo; Dr. George Bebawi, Professor of Patristics, Coptic Theological College; Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor of New Testament, Coptic Theological College; Mr. Amin Fakhry Abdelnour, lay leader in Church, social and civil institutions.

Two members of the delegation were unavoidably prevented from taking part in the meeting; Bishop Yohannes of Garbieh (because of ill health) and Bishop Athanasios of Beni Suef (outside Egypt for other important business).

COMMON REPORT

The Joint Commission held its fourth meeting in Cairo at the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. All the members of the Commission participated except Bishop Yohannes of Garbieh (absent because of ill health) and Bishop Athanasios of Beni Suef (outside Egypt for other important business).

I. Theological Studies

After presentation and discussion of two themes in a general session, the following conclusions were reached by the theological subcommission and later approved by the whole commission.

A) The Role of Councils in the Life of Our Churches

1. Councils and synods of all kinds (local, regional, general etc.) have been an expression of the living communion of the Church.

2. Ecumenical Councils constitute one of the clearest manifestations of the life and unity of the Church.

3. The significance of an ecumenical Council for the tradition of the Church manifests itself through an on-going process of reception in the life of the universal Church.

4. The first three Ecumenical Councils are unanimously received as such by both our Churches.

5. The other councils, received in the Roman Catholic Church as ecumenical or general, should not be considered as an insurmountable obstacle in our search for unity, although the Coptic Orthodox Church does not accept them as ecumenically binding.

6. The Coptic Orthodox Church considers these other councils as subjects of further studies. She respects the conciliar tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, especially as far as it fosters the common Christian tradition.

B) Sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of salvation.

1. The Holy Spirit communicates to the faithful the redemptive work of Christ, that is his life, death and resurrection, through the kerygma and the holy mysteries, or sacraments, of the Church.

2. Through holy Baptism the faithful are incorporated into the Church as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is nourished and unified by the Holy Eucharist as the centre and culmination of our communion with Christ and within his Church.

3. As unity is our ultimate goal, we realise that the issues concerning sacraments cannot be studied separately from the question of unity. We would like our dialogue to go on, seeking a solution of the problems of ecclesiology, especially those related to the sacraments.

The theological sub-commission also presented a number of questions that it judged necessary to be considered in the framework of any study being made about the unity that is envisaged between our Churches. Among these are:

1. After union, what will be the place of the one Coptic Catholic Orthodox Church in Egypt in the Catholic Communion?

2. How will the two Churches of Rome and Alexandria form one body, the Church of God?

3. How will the historical rights of Alexandria be preserved?

4. How will the developments of Roman ecclesiology since 451 be taken into consideration?

5. How can a Church, which has celebrated many councils, be in communion with one that has not shared these councils?

By a decision of the whole commission, these questions are to be referred to the sub-committee on the forms of unity, which is to be set up in accordance with the recommendations made below.

II. General Principles for the Relations Between our Churches.

Following upon the previous meetings of this commission, especially that of Vienna, there have been a series of meetings, letters and other communications between representatives of our Churches. From all this, the following, emerge as general principles for the relations between our Churches and as practical proposals for furthering these relations.

A) The Holy See of Rome

a) Considers its relations with the Coptic Orthodox Church as among its most important relations with Christian Churches;

b) Recognises the Coptic Orthodox Church as a Church possessing the Apostolic succession and a faith and sacramental life which establish a particular communion with the Catholic Church;

c) With the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church seeks to establish an unselfish cooperation in the service of the Gospel.

For these reasons, the following principles have been communicated to Catholic and Coptic Orthodox authorities in Egypt as representing the attitude of the Church of Rome regarding activities of the Catholic Church:

1. No activities of the Catholic Church should be used to open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox.

2. The Catholic Church does not consider the Coptic Orthodox as objects of mission.

3. Pastoral activities should not be conducted between Orthodox with the purpose of the passing of people from one Church to another.

4. Pastoral work between Orthodox must not be done without the knowledge, approval and cooperation of Orthodox authorities.

5. The Catholic Church carries out its pastoral activities within the framework of its existing structures and institutions. When pastoral responsibilities necessitate changes in the existing structures, it is strongly recommended that these be done in mutual consultation with the appropriate Orthodox authorities in order to preserve and put into practice the principles stated above.

6. Encouragement is given by the Catholic authorities to the religious orders and congregations to direct their activities also to the service of the Orthodox Church with her approval and cooperation or in answer to her request.

From her side, the Coptic Orthodox Church welcomes the statement of these principles and the spirit animating them as a concrete step towards helping both churches to proceed further on the road to perfect union.

We therefore consider it particularly important that there be frequent and regular contacts between Catholic Bishops and religious superiors and those of the Orthodox Church:

a) To create an atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence which are lacking now;

b) To meet the serious pastoral needs of the faithful of both communities;

c) To Avoid misunderstandings which may arise;

d) To resolve specific cases which would be a source of misunderstanding or friction.

B) Some practical recommendations of a general nature:

1. It is strongly urged that there be avoided al words, articles, homilies, instructions and attitudes which wound each other's Churches, in their leaders and in their faithful.

2. We strongly recommend to both hierarchies the work of the Joint Local Committee and encourage their cooperation with it as an instrument that could help them in putting into practice the principles and suggestions made here.

3. We encourage the following of the Week of Prayer for Unity, as has been practised for many years in Cairo and Alexandria, in other provinces according to local institutions.

4. Taking notice of the fact that in some places there are already positive contacts existing between our Churches, we recommend particular programmes in two geographical areas as a beginning towards developing these contacts further. In the, areas of Cairo and Beni Suef-Minya, Bishops, priests and qualified laity could meet in order to study and seek solutions to such general problems as:

   a) modern challenges to faith and how to meet them; b) the younger generation; c) rural migration; d) participation of the Church in the developing life of the country etc.

III. A Specific Recommendation

In our second report we stated "the union we envisage is a real one, a communion in faith, in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God. The process by which this union is to be achieved is that two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, come into full communion again on the basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the undivided Church of the first four and a half centuries. Such a communion once achieved, there will be but one Coptic Church under the leadership of the one Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. Since this unity would be a full communion, the richness of the Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression within the structure of this one Coptic Church for the enrichment of all". Furthermore this one Coptic Church would be in full communion with the other Christian Churches and in particular with the Church of Rome.

We feel the time has come to seek a clearer and more precise form of this unity that we envisage in order to build further confidence among Catholics and Orthodox and to show that mutual fears about absorption or losing religious and social values have no serious basis.

We therefore direct the Joint Local Committee to set up, in accordance with the provisions of our First Report, no. III § 8, a sub-committee whose purpose will be to study and report back to this commission one or more forms or projects of unity which might be envisaged between our Churches. It will include in this study a consideration

of the theological, ecclesiastical and structural aspects of this unity, seen from both the national and international points of view.

The following points of procedure are to be observed:

1. Before the end of April, the joint Local Committee will meet to choose the members of the subcommittee and further define its activities.

2. The sub-committee is encouraged to enlist the services of "ad hoc" consulters for the study of specific questions.

3. At the beginning of its work, the subcommittee should sponsor two private consultations, one among Catholics and one among Orthodox, composed of a selected group of bishops, priests and laymen, to collect and evaluate the desires, hopes, understandings, preoccupations and fears to be found in each Church. The results of these consultations will provide useful material for the work of the sub-committee and help it to determine the priorities of its studies.

4. At least three times a year the results of the work are to be communicated through mail or in meetings to all members of the Joint Commission, including those living outside Egypt, for their suggestions, criticisms and eventual directives.

5. A detailed report of its work will be presented to this Joint Commission at its next meeting.

6. The sub-committee and its sponsor, the Joint Local Committee, should keep in mind that its concrete object is to indicate possibilities of real union. It should be open to various alternatives, not merely one; it should indicate theological and ecclesiastical problems and determine how they are to be studied and, if possible, resolved. While considering practical questions concerning the coming together of the two Churches, it should not try to go into too many minute details during this first stage of its work.

Since we are firmly convinced that this subcommittee is striving to accomplish God's will for our Churches, its work should be accompanied by prayer and fasting among its members. Others should also be invited to participate in these same spiritual activities aimed at obtaining God's blessing on this work.

IV. The Joint Local Committee and the Joint Commission.

The Joint Local Committee

1. Because the work of the Local Committee is being increased and expanded, it is logical that it increases its membership. The Joint Commission takes note of what was decided last November by the Committee about adding at least one, and perhaps more members from each side. It recommends, however, that the committee also take into account a more frequent use of "ad hoc" consulters, to avoid becoming too large and unwieldy itself.

2. It is recommended that the Joint Local Committee meet occasionally in places outside Cairo in order to come into closer contact with the persons and the situations of the local communities.

3. It is urged that the Bishops-members of the Joint Local Committee become the regular point of contact between the Committee and the Synods of both Churches.

The Joint Commission

1. This Commission confirms its decision to set up a permanent Secretariat to follow up the work of the Commission during the periods between its meetings. This Secretariat is to see to the preparing of papers on the subjects decided for study, to the carrying out of these concrete studies and would prepare the general meetings of the Joint Commission. It could also assist the Joint Local Committee in carrying out decisions made by that Committee.

2. While recognising the financial problems involved, this Commission strongly recommends that one of its meetings in the near future be held outside Egypt, possibly in the environs of Rome, to enable all members to have personal contact with the Roman Church and its institutions, general superiors of religious orders etc.

3. In the meantime, note should be taken of the presence of Egyptian members of the Commission at various meetings in Europe so that they can take advantage of these trips to arrange partial meetings of members of the Commission.

With the ascension of Pope John Paul II to the Apostolic throne of St. Peter in October 1978, Pope Shenouda III thought it important to enhance relations between the two churches. Consequently he sent a delegation to Rome to meet the new Pope and sign a document entitled "Principles Guiding the Search for Unity".

LETTER OF POPE SHENOUDA III TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

June 16th, 1979

His Holiness the Roman Pontiff Pope John Paul II Beloved Brother in the Lord,

A delegation composed of our brothers in the episcopate: their Graces Archbishop Athanasius of Beni-Suef, Bishop Samuel of Ecumenical and Social Services in the Patriarchate, Bishop Gregorios for Theological Studies, Bishop Johannes of El-Gharbia, Deacon Dr. George Bebawi and Mr. Amin F. Abdelnour, is carrying respectfully in my name and in the name of our Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church of the See of St. Mark, our Greetings to your Holiness and through you to the Roman Catholic Church, and conveying to your Holiness once more our congratulations after your installation as Pope of the Catholic Church. Joined with our supplications to the Almighty God imploring Him to grant your Holiness full strength and the best health so that you may hold successfully the heavy responsibility of the Pontificate on your shoulders.

We have been following with joy and admiration your openness to all people and Churches. Your pastoral visits to Latin America and to Poland have been world wide appreciated as an expression of your Christian love for God's People whom the Almighty has created in His own image. It is our confidence in the Lord that your Holiness carry on the message of reconciliation between our two Apostolic Churches which took its start generally and prophetically with Pope John XXIII and followed by Pope Paul VI of the happy memory.

We never forget the 22nd of June 1968, the day on which the relics of St. Mark were given back to Egypt and to the Coptic Orthodox Church by Pope Paul VI in Rome and in the Vatican City.

With splendid joy we have received back the relics of St. Athanasius the Apostolic on the 6th of May 1973 during our visit to Pope Paul VI in Rome and the Vatican City in an unforgettable celebration in the Basilica of St. Peter. On the 10th of May a Declaration was signed by the Pope of Rome and the Pope of Alexandria, in which it was recorded for the first time in history after fifteen centuries of complete isolation and separation, points of agreement between the two Apostolic Churches. An official Joint Commission was set up at the same date to study points of divergence with a view to restore the unity of the Church Universal. Since then four official conferences have taken place in Cairo.

Besides those meetings, another four ecumenical non-official Pro-Oriente Conferences took place in Vienna since 1971.

It became clear that our two Churches confess and profess in essence almost the same teaching that Christ our Lord is God Incarnate, who is perfect in His Divinity, meantime He is perfect in His Humanity. His Godhead and His Manhood are united together

inseparably and unconfusedly. In Ecclesiology only very little real progress has been reached.

This is why we thought it appropriate to delegate an official delegation of six members of the official Commission, in order to enhance the negotiations between our two Churches, which seem to have stopped at a point without reaching further steps of real progress in the achievement of the unity of our two Churches, in Faith, and to see what would be their conception of the future relations between the two Churches and the practical steps to be taken at present and in the near future to fulfil the unity in Faith of the Church of Christ. May the good God keep your Holiness in peace and health.

Pope SHENOUDA III
By the Grace of God Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark
Cairo, June 16, 1979

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO A COPTIC ORTHODOX DELEGATION

June 23rd, 1979

On June 23,1979, the Holy Father received in audience a delegation from the Coptic Orthodox Church, representing His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. On this occasion the Pope gave the following address:

My dear Brothers in Christ,

It is with joy that I greet you, distinguished guests and worthy delegates of my brother. His Holiness the Patriarch of Alexandria, Pope Shenouda III. I am grateful for his having sent you and for the warm words of greeting and brotherly love he has addressed to me through you. They are a source of comfort and encouragement.
How marvellous are the ways of the Lord! He permits us to profess today our common faith in Jesus Christ, His divine Son, true God and true Man, who died and rose again and through His Holy Spirit lives in and guides His Church, the body of which He is the head. We rejoice together that the doubts and suspicions of the past have been overcome so that with full hearts we can proclaim together once again this fundamental truth of our Christian faith.

From the very first days of my election as Bishop of Rome I have considered as one of my principal tasks that of striving to bring about the unity of all those who bear the holy name of Christian. The scandal of division must be resolutely overcome, so that we may all fulfil in the lives of our Churches and in our service to the world the prayer of the Lord of the Church "that all may be one". I have stressed this on a number of occasions already. I repeat it to you now, since what is involved here is the communion between two apostolic Churches such as ours.

I know that one of the fundamental questions of the ecumenical movement is the nature of that full communion we are seeking with each other and the role that the Bishop of Rome has to play, by God's design, in serving that communion of faith and spiritual life, which is nourished by the sacraments and expressed in fraternal charity. A great deal of progress has been made in deepening our understanding of this question. Much remains to be done. I consider your visit to me and to the See of Rome a significant contribution towards resolving this question definitively.

The Catholic Church bases its dialogue of truth and charity with the Coptic Orthodox Church on the principles proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, especially in the Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, and the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio.* I am happy to make my own the statements of the Common Declaration signed by my venerated predecessor Pope Paul VI with Pope Shenouda III in 1973 and the further encouragement the Holy See has given to this dialogue since that time.

Fundamental to this dialogue is the recognition that the richness of this unity in faith and spiritual life has to be expressed in diversity of forms. Unity - whether on the universal level or the local level - does not mean uniformity or absorption of one group by another. It is rather at the service of all groups to help each live better the proper gifts it has received from God's Spirit. This is an encouragement to move ahead with confidence

and reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whatever may be the bitterness inherited from the past, whatever may be the present doubts and tensions that may exist, the Lord calls us to move forward in mutual trust and in mutual love. If true unity is to be achieved, it will be the result of cooperation among pastors on the local level, of the collaboration at all levels of the life of our Churches so that our people may grow in understanding of each other, in trust and love of each other. With no one trying to dominate each other but to serve each other, all together will grow into that perfection of unity for which Our Lord prayed on the night before he died (John 17) and for which the Apostle Paul exhorted us to work with all diligence (Ephesians 4:11-15).

Again my thanks for your coming. My thoughts and prayers go to my brother Pope Shenouda III, to the bishops, clergy and faithful of your Church, as together with my brothers the bishops and the faithful of the Catholic Churches in Egypt you pray and work for full ecclesial communion which will be God's gift to all of us.

PRINCIPLES FOR GUIDING THE SEARCH FOR UNITY BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE PROTOCOL JOINT TO THE PRINCIPLES

The Principles and the Protocol prepared on June 23rd, 1979 by the members of the joint international commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church were submitted to Pope John Paul II and to Pope Shenouda III, who approved and signed both documents.

PREAMBLE

Through meetings of an official mixed commission established in 1973, through unofficial theological consultations starting in 1971 and through other exchanges, official and informal, the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church have made important progress in understanding the deep bonds of faith and Christian life which exist between them, despite a separation which has lasted fifteen centuries. We have overcome the difficulties of the past concerning our faith in the mystery of the Word Incarnate and we can now profess in common our faith in the mystery of our redemption. We possess the same priesthood received from the Apostles and thus celebrate the same Eucharist of the Lord whose members we become through the same baptism. We share many other aspects of the Christian life proclaimed by the Apostles and handed on by the Fathers of the Church.

At the same time there are some dogmatic and canonical divergences that prevent us from enjoying that full communion which at one time existed between the Churches of Rome and Alexandria. Serious efforts have been made to overcome these divergences. However, it seemed useful to review these efforts, to register their positive aspects and discern the deficiencies up to now.

The election of His Holiness Pope John Paul II seemed an appropriate occasion for this review. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III has sent an official delegation of the Coptic Orthodox Church to bring his greetings to the new Bishop of Rome, to express his concern about the dialogue in course and to discuss with responsible officials in Rome ways by which this dialogue may be improved and strengthened towards achieving its goal of full communion between the two Churches.

The participants in these conversations were greatly encouraged by the message of Pope Shenouda III and the warm response of Pope John Paul II. The texts of these messages contain very important reflections and guidelines for continuing the common search. In addition, the participants recognised that many important elements are to be found in the various reports and communications made over the past eight years. However, if these elements are to bear fruit among the clergy and faithful of both Churches, they must be understood within the context of certain general principles that can guide the search for unity in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence and of renewed dedication to the command of the Lord of the Church “that all may be one”.

These principles are now presented to our Churches with the hope that they will be seriously studied and assimilated by our people, and with the prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide us in applying them effectively to the work which still lies ahead.

1. The objective of our efforts is a full communion of faith expressing itself in communion in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God.

2. We are two Apostolic Churches in which, by virtue of the Apostolic succession we possess the full sacramental life, particularly the Eucharist, even if Eucharistic communion has not yet been achieved between us in so far as we have not completely resolved the divergences among us.

3. The resolution of these divergences is all the more important, therefore, in order that our Churches may give more adequate expression to the communion that already exists in an imperfect way among them. Thus they will be able to give more perfect witness to their faith and their life in Christ than they can in their present state of division, since local Catholic Churches everywhere and the Coptic Church will then fully recognise each other as the realisation in their-places of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

4. The unity we envisage in no ways means absorption of one by the other or domination by one over the other. It is at the service of each to help each live better the proper gifts it has received from God's Spirit.

5. The unity presupposes that our Churches continue to have the right and power to govern themselves according to their own traditions and disciplines.

6. This legitimate autonomy does not deny the necessity of mutual relations between our Churches. When the Churches live more closely together in communion of faith and mutual charity, they will develop new contacts and patterns of relations that will indicate how to deal with questions of common interest and concern. This process will also help the Churches to arrive to a better understanding of the meaning and extent of primacy in the Church, a concept which exists in both our Churches but about which there remain canonical and doctrinal differences preventing our full communion. In the meantime, important questions of faith, of pastoral problems, of mutual need can be treated by brotherly communications and consultations between the primates or by other means that will be judged useful.

7. It is in the light of all the foregoing principles that we will seek to resolve the differences that still exist among us concerning our understanding of the structures through which the unity and the integrity of the faith of the Church are to be served.

8. It is in the perspective of the search for this unity that we understand that the pastoral activity, mutual collaboration and common witness should take place at present in Egypt. None of these can have as their objective the passing of people from one Church to another. They are to serve the entire Christian community in Egypt. It is particularly important therefore that there be frequent and regular contacts between Catholic bishops and religious superiors and those of the Orthodox Church:

    a) To create an atmosphere os trust and mutual confidence
    b) To meet the serious pastoral needs of the faithful of both communities
    c) To avoid misunderstandings which may arise
    d) To resolve specific cases which could be a source of misunderstanding or friction.

Frequent contacts at all levels of Church life will also help avoid words, articles, homilies, instructions and attitudes which might wound each other's Churches, in their leaders or in their faithful.

9. All this should be guided by and be in conformity with the principles stated in various communications made by the See of Rome to the Catholic Bishops of Egypt and to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

10. Even if we do not adopt all the positions of the other, e should respect those positions as part of the historical heritage of the other and not exclude the possibility of reaching agreement about them.

11. Once unity is achieved, the richness of the various Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression for the enrichment of all within the one Coptic Church under the leadership of the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.

12. We recognise that unity is God's gift to His Church. Its concrete expression should be in accordance with the living tradition of each Church which allows for new insights and a deeper understanding of how God wishes the Churches to meet the problems presenting themselves to all Christians today and to serve the world in unity and love.

June 23rd, 1979

PROTOCOL

1. We request official reaction to the principles by the authorities of both Churches as soon as possible and not later than the end of October. If modifications' have been made, a small committee will meet immediately to discuss them and reach a common agreement about them.

2. The approved document will be communicated by each Church to its bishops and published for the use of other persons and groups affected by it.

3. We feel that the composition and the functions of the Joint Mixed Commission and the Local Joint Committee need further review and reform.

4. In the meantime two committees will be formed: one for directing studies and one for guiding practical implications. So that they can meet easily and frequently and be able to adhere to a regular timetable of work, these committees should be small, composed of two or three members from each Church.

5. Both committees should use freely the services of other experts and not feel that the permanent members must do the bulk of the work.

6. The committee for practical implications will set up at least three subcommittees: for schools, for social institutions, for pastoral projects. Each of these will have the responsibility to study the possibilities of cooperation in their particular area. They will seek to enlist the support and concrete activity of persons and institutions who can engage in this cooperation. There should be regular and frequent reporting on their work, with a minimum of three times a year.

7. The committees - with their subcommittees - advise concerned persons about the principles that have been developed at the Rome conversations of June 1979, about the possibilities for concrete action etc. They will help coordinate this action. Where questions may arise about the application or the non-application of the principles accepted, the matter should be brought to the immediate competent authority or, if this procedure is not effective, to the higher authorities, as the case may require.

8. One of the first priorities of the two committees will be to establish a programme and priorities. Basing themselves on the four commission reports (but not restricted to them), the committees will provide for a detailed outline of the theoretical and practical studies necessary for assisting the move towards unity, and determine the priorities and relations among these as well as the people from in and outside Egypt most indicated to take part in them.

9. What is of particular importance is that a programme be planned and implemented as soon as possible for bringing to the attention of the clergy and laity of both Churches the principles that have been determined and the progressive action that can be taken to implement them. No serious search for unity between our Churches can be carried forward without an informed and sympathetic participation of the whole Church. It is recommended that the various proposals presented by the Joint Commission and the Local Joint Committee for achieving this and for ensuring cooperation among the hierarchies of our Churches be re-examined and implemented.

THE RESUMPTION OF THE DIALOGUE

When Pope Shenouda at the beginning of 1985 was able to resume completely his functions, steps were taken to relaunch the theological dialogue between the churches. Pope Shenouda sent Bishop Arsanious to Rome to make contacts and forward proposals. A Catholic delegation lead by Father Pierre Duprey, secretary of the secretariat for promoting Christian Unity came to Egypt for first round talks of resuming the work of the international joint commission of dialogue, the subjects to be treated and the ways and means to do so.

AGREED STATEMENT ON CHRISTOLOGY

At the request of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and for the purpose of making the doctrinal agreement contained in the common declaration of 1973 more accessible to the faithful, a brief formula, summarising the essential content of this agreement, was adopted during an ecumenical meeting in Egypt in February 1988. The statement runs as follows:

In the love of God the Father, by the grace of the Only Begotten Son, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

On Friday, the 12th of February 1988, the mixed commission* of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church met in the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, Wadi El-Natroun, in Egypt.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III opened the meeting by prayer. His Excellency Giovanni Moretti, the Apostolic Pro Nuncio in Egypt, and Reverend Father Pierre Duprey, Secretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, attended this meeting representing His Holiness Pope John Paul II and enabled to sign this agreement. Also bishops delegated by His Beatitude Stephanos II Ghattas, Patriarch of the Coptic Catholic Church, were present and delegated to sign this agreement.

We have rejoiced at the historical meeting that happened in the Vatican on May 1973, between His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. This was the first meeting since about 15 centuries between our two Churches.

In that meeting we found ourselves in agreement on many issues of faith. In that meeting also a mixed commission was formed to discuss the issues of difference of doctrine and faith between the two Churches aiming at church unity. Previously in Vienna, September 1971, Pro Oriente arranged a meeting between theologians of the Catholic Church and those of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Coptic, the Syrian, the Armenian, the Ethiopian, and the Indian. They achieved an agreement concerning Christology.

We are grateful to God that we are now able to sign a common formula expressing our official agreement on Christology, which was already approved by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church on 21st June 1986.

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* *Note.* This is the group entrusted with the task of making a new start with the dialogue and prepare the fifth meeting of the International Joint Commission.

All other issues of difference between our Churches will be discussed successively according to God's will.

THE BRIEF FORMULA

We believe that our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Incarnate-Logos is perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity. He made His Humanity one with His Divinity without mixture nor mingling, nor confusion. His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity even for a moment or twinkling of an eye.

At the same time, we anathematise the Doctrines of both Nestorius and Eutyches.

LETTER FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II TO POPE SHENOUDA III

The above agreement on Christology was well received by both Churches. Pope John Paul II sent a letter to Pope Shenouda III in May 1988 affirming the significance of the Christological formula. We publish the letter as follows:

To His Holiness Pope Shenouda Iii, Pope Of Alexandria And Patriarch Of The See Of St Mark

Ever since the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, I have often been in communion in prayer and thought with Your Holiness, asking the Lord to enlighten us so that we may be faithful collaborators in the accomplishment of his will. The reality of brotherhood in Christ impels me to assure you that I feel deeply part of your joy and your sorrows.

I am happy to learn that the grace of God has borne new fruit among Christians of the Near East in their search for unity. The agreement signed on February 12, 1988 by your Holiness his Beatitude the Patriarch Stephanos II, the Apostolic Pro Nuncio Archbishop Giovanni Moretti, and Father Pierre Duprey, together with several bishops, priests, and Egyptian lay people, resumes the essential content of the one signed on May 10, 1973 by your Holiness and my predecessor Pope Paul VI. It was useful to give to this agreement a simpler and more popular form in order to make it accessible to all the faithful in Egypt.

The Christological agreement signed on November 19, 1987 by your Holiness and the heads of the Orthodox Churches in the Near East is also an important event. A new step has thus been taken by Churches of the Apostolic tradition present in the Near East to overcome the Christological divergence that was among the reasons for division in the past. And so today the Christians of the Near East are no longer divided in confessing their faith in the mystery of the Incarnate Word of God, the person of Christ who, being God of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, became truly man, and fully assumed our human nature without losing or diminishing or changing His divine nature. Being perfect God, he became perfect man without confusion, without separation, as is rightly expressed in the declaration you signed on November 19, 1987.

In affirming together our faith in Christ, true God and true man, we become ever more strongly aware of the life as children of God which we received in baptism, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4).

We must bear witness to this common baptism in our world since we believe that it is the "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins" (Nicene Creed) and especially because it is a baptism that we recognise reciprocally.
During these days when the feast of Pentecost is still fresh in our minds, I pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten our Churches and guide them "into all the truth" (John 16:13), and I assure your Holiness of my warm good wishes in Christ our Lord.

From the Vatican, May 30, 1988.

FIFTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

April 23-27, 1990

REPORT

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, Amen.

The International Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church held its regular study meeting from April 23rd to 27th, 1990 in the Monastery of St. Bishoy. The main thence of discussion was the procession of the Holy Spirit and the controversy over the "Filioque" in the text of the Creed.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, after welcoming the members of the commission, presented a general view of the subject and indicated the points which His Holiness felt needed discussion and solution.

Papers were presented to consider both Churches' view concerning (1) the history of the "Filioque" Controversy; (2) Biblical, Theological and Patristic Aspects of the procession of the Holy Spirit, and (3) the addition of the formula "Filioque - and the Son" to the text of the Nicean-Constantinopolitain Creed.

The work of this meeting of the commission was primarily concerned with clarifying each side's understanding of the other's positions. For the Coptic Orthodox Church the "Filioque" should not be in the Creed or in the Liturgy or in the theological teaching for doctrinal and canonical reasons. The Catholic Church believes that this addition is admissible for both reasons. There was a full discussion of the terminology used by both Churches and the principal official declarations made by the Catholic Church in this matter.

While each side expressed and clarified what its Church considers to be its own authentic belief, it is the unanimous conviction of the members of the Commission that further studies must be made in each of the three areas mentioned above. These studies will be prepared for distribution and reflection before the next meeting of the Commission, scheduled for April 15th to 19th, 1991.

The intensive work of the commission could not have been carried out without the prayers and fraternal concern of many people at the Monastery of St. Bishoy. Strongly encouraged by His Holiness, Pope Shenouda, the bishops, monks and staff, clerical and lay, showed a spirit of Christian love and dedication which impressed those coming from outside and helped inspire the members of the commission in their search for that light and strength of the Holy Spirit which will lead both Churches to the fullness of communion in faith and love.

April 27, 1990

Members Of The Commission

Coptic Orthodox Members

His Grace Bishop Bishoy
Bishop of Damiet

General Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church

Bishop Rueiss Building - Ramses Street
Cairo, Egypt,C*o-Chairman*

His Grace Bishop Athanasios
Bishop of Beni Suef and El Bahnesa
Coptic Bishopric
P.O. Box 30
Beni Suef, Egypt

His Grace Bishop Arsanios
Bishop of Minia and Abu-Korkas
Coptic Bishopric
Tegara Street
Minia, Egypt

His Grace Bishop Benjamin
Bishop of Menoufeya (Middle Delta)
Coptic Bishopric
P.O. Box 130
Chebine AI Kom, Egypt

His Grace Bishop Moussa
Bishop for Youth
Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Bishop Rueiss Building - Ramses Street
Abbasseya
Cairo, Egypt, Co-Secretary

His Grace Bishop Petros
General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate
Bishop Rueiss Building - Ramses Street
Abbasseya
Cairo, Egypt

His Grace Bishop Abraam
Bishop of Fayoum
Coptic Bishopric
P.O. Box 85
Fayoum, Egypt

Revd. Father Tadros Malaty
22 Abd-el-Hamid
El-Abady Street
Alexandria, Egypt

Dr. Emile Maher Ishak
Coptic Orthodox Theological Faculty
Bishop Ruciss Building - Ramses Street
Abbasseya
Cairo, Egypt

Catholic Members

His Excellency Monsignor
Pierre Duprey
Secretary, Pontifical Council for Promoting
Christian Unity
I-00120 Vatican City, Co-Chairman

His Excellency Monsignor
Antonios Naguib
Coptic Catholic Bishop of Minia
P.O. Box 32
Minia, Egypt

and his proxy:
Revd. Father Iskander Iskander
Rector, Coptic Catholic Mission in France
1, Cité du Sacré Coeur
F-75018 Paris, France

His Excellency Monsignor
Athanasios Abadir
Coptic Catholic Bishop of
Ismailia
P.O. Box 127
96, El-Gueish Street
Ismailia, Egypt

His Excellency Monsignor
Hanna Golta
Auxiliary Bishop to the
Coptic Catholic Patriarchate
Ahmad-Helmi Street
Kenisset Essegoud
Cairo-Shoubra, Egypt

Revd. Father Emmanuel
Lanne, osb
Monastère bénédictin de la
Sainte-Croix
B-5395 Chevetogne, Belgium

Revd. Father Prof. André De
Halleux, ofm
Prosper-Poulletlaan, 5/410
B-3000 Leuven, Belgium

Revd. Father Prof. John F.
Long, sj
Vice-Rector, Pontificio Istituto
Orientale
Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore,
71-00185 Roma, Italy

Revd. Father Maurice Martin,
Collège de la Sainte Famille
Cairo, Egypt

Lawyer Amin Fahim
Chairman-Director, Upper-
Egypt Christian
Association for Schools and
Social Promotion
85, Ramsen Street
Cairo, Egypt

Monsignor Gérard Daucourt

Pontifical Council for
Promoting Christian Unity
I-00120 Vatican City, Italy,
Co-Secretary

SIXTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

February 25-29, 1992

In pursuit of the ongoing international discussions between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, the two delegations met at St. Bishoy Monastery, as guests of the Coptic Orthodox Church, from Tuesday 25th to Saturday 29th February 1992.

The Christian atmosphere of love and brotherhood which prevailed during the meetings of the group, has undoubtedly helped the two parts to glorify together their common faith in the One Almighty God of the universe, in the act of salvation which the Lord Jesus Christ has achieved for His people, and in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

In accordance with our apostolic traditions transmitted to our Churches and preserved therein, we confess together our faith in one unique Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are one in essence and substance, three hypostases, equal in glory, and to be adored equally. This belief has been expressed in a number of ancient creeds of our Churches, notably that which is handed down as the creed of Nicea-Constantinople.

Our reflections have not been merely a question of rational speculation about divine mysteries. Upon our belief in the Holy Trinity and expression of that belief depends our correct understanding of God's plan for redeeming humankind, which is essential to our whole liturgical doxology and spiritual life as individuals and as Churches.

The two delegations also had to face doctrinal differences and pastoral difficulties between their churches.

In this meeting we had deliberate discussions concerning the Procession of the Holy Spirit. The common Creed of Nicea-Constantinople states that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father". The Catholic Church has introduced the phrase "and from the Son" *[Filioque]* after "from the Father".

The Coptic Orthodox Church stands firmly against this addition. The two delegations had the opportunity to express their positions: biblically, theologically and historically towards the doctrine and the insertion of the *Filioque* clause.

The Local Joint Pastoral Committee presented the report of its activity during the period since the request for re-activation made at the meeting of the International Commission in April 1991.

The Commission welcomed this report and gave it attentive consideration. It is encouraging that the local problems arising in the relations between priests and faithful from both Churches and between some of our institutions are being frankly

discussed and that the Committee is determined to seek out ways of resolving these problems and avoiding them in the future.

The Commission encouraged the Local Joint Pastoral Committee to meet regularly, in order to enhance the collaboration in pastoral activity, educational and charitable work and in various forms of common witness. This collaboration can never have as its objective the passing of people from one Church to another. It is to serve the entire Christian Community of Egypt.

At the closing session the two delegations agreed that the next meeting would be from 27 April - 1 May 1993 at St. Bishoy Monastery.

The Coptic-Catholic dialogue continues its work, looking forward to the goal described in the Principles of 1979. "The objective of our efforts is a full communion of faith expressing itself in communion in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God".

MEETING OF THE POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE POPE OF ROME

As part of the great jubilee celebrations, His Holiness Pope John Paul II visited Egypt between February 24th-27th 2000. Pope Shenouda III received the Pope of Rome at St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo on February 24th 2000.

Pope Shenouda addressed Pope John Paul and the Papal entourage spontaneously and affectionately. Pope Shenouda recalled his meeting with Pope Paul VI in 1973 and the Joint Doctrinal Declaration they signed with a smile. Pope John Paul said that he feels at home in Egypt as St. Mark wrote his gospel for the Romans.

ECUMENICAL SERVICE

On February 25th, an ecumenical service was held at the Coptic Catholic Cathedral of Notre Dame of Egypt. Pope Shenouda together with heads of Christian Churches in Egypt attended the service. In his homily, Pope John Paul II said:

"Egypt has been home to the Church from the beginning. Founded upon the Apostolic preaching and authority of Saint Mark, the Church of Alexandria soon became one of the leading communities in the early Christian world. Venerable bishops like Saint Athanasius and Saint Cyril bore witness to faith in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, as defined by the first Ecumenical Councils. It was in the desert of Egypt that monastic life originated, in both its solitary and communal forms, under the spiritual fatherhood of Saint Anthony and Saint Pachomius. Thanks to them and to the great impact of their spiritual writings, monastic life became part of our common heritage. During recent decades that same monastic charism has flourished anew, and it irradiates a vital spiritual message far beyond the borders of Egypt.

Today we give thanks to God that we are ever more aware of our common heritage, in faith and in the richness of sacramental life. We also have in common that filial veneration of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, for which the Coptic and all the Eastern Churches are renowned. And 'when we speak about a common heritage, we must acknowledge as part of it, not only the institutions, rites, means of salvation and the traditions which all the communities have preserved and by which they have been shaped, but first and foremost this reality of holiness' (Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint, 84). For faithfully guarding and preaching this heritage, the Church in Egypt has undergone heavy sacrifices and continues to do so. How many martyrs appear in the venerable Martyrology of the Coptic Church, which dates back to the terrible persecutions of the years 283-284! They gave glory to God in Egypt, through their unfaltering witness unto death!

I repeat what I wrote in my Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint, that whatever relates to the unity of all Christian communities clearly forms part of the concerns of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome (cf. No. 95). I therefore wish to renew the invitation to all 'Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for His Church' (No. 96). With regard to the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, I ask the Holy Spirit to shine His light upon us, enlightening all the Pastors and theologians of

our Churches, that we may seek together the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognised by all concerned (cf. Homily, 6 December 1987, 3: Ut Unum Sint, 95). Dear brothers, there is no time to lose in this regard!

Our communion in the one Lord Jesus Christ, in the one Holy Spirit and in one baptism already represents a deep and fundamental reality. This communion enables us to bear common witness to our faith in a whole range of ways, and indeed it demands that we cooperate in bringing the light of Christ to a world in need of salvation. This common witness is all the more important at the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, which present enormous challenges to the human family. For this reason too, there is no time to lose!

As a basic condition for this common witness, we must avoid anything that might lead, once again, to distrust and discord. We have agreed to avoid any form of proselytism, or methods and attitudes opposed to the exigencies of Christian love and what should characterise the relationship between Churches (cf. Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III, 1973). And we recall that true charity, rooted in total fidelity to the one Lord Jesus Christ and in mutual respect for each one's ecclesial traditions and sacramental practices, is an essential element of this search for perfect communion (ibid).

We do not know each other sufficiently: let us therefore find ways to meet! Let us seek viable forms of spiritual communion, such as joint prayer and fasting, or mutual exchanges and hospitality between monasteries. Let us find forms of practical cooperation, especially in response to the spiritual thirst of so many people today, for the relief of their distress, in the education of the young, in securing humane conditions of life, in promoting mutual respect, justice and peace, and in advancing religious freedom as a fundamental human right.

PRO ORIENTE

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX – CATHOLIC FORUM

The Archbishop of Vienna, Franciscus Cardinal König established Pro Oriente, on November 4, 1964 as an ecclesiastical foundation of the Archiepiscopal See of Vienna. It was established for the purpose of engendering a favourable climate which can be used for the Ecumenical dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic churches.

STRUCTURE

It was a board of sixty members under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Vienna who decides on the general lines. A presidency of twelve members chaired by the former Minister for Culture and Public Instruction of the Republic of Austria, Heinrich Drimmel (1964-1969) and Theodore Puffl-Percevic (since 1969) and with Alfred Stirneyman as Secretary General since 1965 as the Executive.

THE CONSULTATIONS

The five historic Vienna Consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988) between theologians of the Roman Catholics and Oriental Orthodox Churches have formed a landmark in the inspired movement of the two Churches endeavors to seek true unity in Christ. These highly scholarly and brotherly meetings of theologians and hierarchs from both traditions brought the two Churches to the path of dialogue, mutual understanding and a high degree of mutual love and trust.

The First Consultation

Following the consultations with the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch and the churches in Armenia, Ethiopia and India, the first Pro Oriente consultation took place in Vienna in September 1971. Representing the Coptic Church were: H.G. Bishop Shenouda, Bishop for Education and the late Reverend Father Salib Sourial (1916-1994). Bishop Shenouda delivered a sermon at the opening worship service held at the Catholic Cathedral of Vienna.

Communiqué of the first non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches organised by the Foundation Pro Oriente, in Vienna, September 7-12, 1971.

The Roman Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox theologians gathered together in Vienna from September 7th to 11th, 1971, for an "unofficial ecumenical consultation" at the invitation of the Foundation Pro Oriente have agreed on the following statement:

"We, as Christians, feel united in a spirit of brotherhood in our faith in the One Lord Jesus Christ, God and Saviour, and recognised equally the commission and prayer of

our Lord that we may all be one in Him in order that we may bear common witness to Him that the world may believe". (John 17:21).

We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed; we all confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431); we all agree in rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ. We have endeavoured for a deeper understanding of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christologies which have separated us until now.

We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity. His divinity was not separated from His humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with His divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation. We in our common faith in the One Lord Jesus Christ, regard His mystery inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible.

We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions; we are convinced, however, that these differing formulations on both sides can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus.

Realising that there can be different emphases in the theological and dogmatic elaboration of Christ's mystery, we wish to encourage common efforts for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of this mystery in harmony with our different ecclesiastical traditions.

We have also discussed generally the problem of the Ecumenical Councils, their authority and reception, and we urge that these problems be extensively studied on both sides. We commonly submit ourselves to the witness of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament and thus to the Apostolic Kerygma and express our intention not to get tired in the search for a common language of the mystery of salvation in our Lord in a brotherly spirit … "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God," Ephesians 4:13). We wish to see the mystery of the compassion of God translated into a life of Christian compassion.

All of us have experienced how fruitful this Consultation has been and we pray that God, who brought us together may bless us and guide our future efforts in such helpful discussions."

The Second Consultation

At the second consultation of Pro Oriente in Vienna in September 1973 the Coptic delegation consisted of H.G. Bishop Gregorious, Bishop for Higher Theological Studies, Coptic Culture and Scientific Research and Deacon Dr. George Bebawi. The former received the decree of the Honorary Membership of Pro Oriente and presented a paper entitled *"The Ecumenical Councils and the Ministry of St. Peter"*.

(1). Once again we give thanks to God who has brought us together here in Vienna for the Second non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, at the invitation of the Foundation Pro Oriente, from September 3rd to 9th, 1973.

We have come together in order to become more deeply aware of the fundamentally common faith in the mystery of the Incarnation in an increasingly interdependent world with all its problems which are also our own and to make our common faith more meaningful to modern man. We reaffirm what was said in the first non-official consultation (Vienna, September 7th to 11th, 1971). We have in an increasing measure experienced the same spirit of fraternal unity in the faith in one Lord Jesus Christ, God and Saviour as we did two years ago. We were impelled by the same loyalty to the prayer of our Lord that 'they all be one', our common basis is the same one, apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol which all of us confess.

(2). Together we confess our faith that He who is the Second Person of the Trinity came down for us and for our salvation, became Man like us in all respects except sin. The Son of God was incarnate and became the Son of Man, so that we the children of men may become the children of God by His Grace. Great is the mystery of the God-Man, no created mind can fully comprehend the mystery of how Godhead and Manhood became united in One Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can human words give adequate utterance to it. We recognise the limits of every philosophical and theological attempt to grasp the mystery in concept or express it in words. If the formulas coined by the fathers and doctors of the Churches have enabled us to obtain an authentic glimpse of the divine truth, we recognise that every formula that we can devise needs further interpretation.

We saw that what appears to be the right formulation can be wrongly understood and also how even behind an apparently wrong formulation there can be a right understanding. We understand that when our common father in Christ, St Cyril of Alexandria, speaks of the one Incarnation of God's Word, he does not deny but rather express the full and prefect humanity of Christ. We believe also that the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, rightly understood today, affirms the unity of person and the indissoluble union of Godhead and Manhood in Christ despite the phrase 'in two natures'.

We all agree that our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is consubstantial with the Father in His Divinity, Himself became consubstantial with us in His Humanity. He perfectly unites in Himself perfect Godhead with perfect Manhood without division, without separation, without change, without commixture. The flesh possessing a rational soul did not exist before the union. The flesh remained flesh even after the God-befitting

resurrection and ascension. Though the body of God, it has not been changed into the Godhead. We are partaking in the Holy Eucharist the Life-giving Flesh of the Lord, which He united with His Divinity.

(3). The problem of terminology remains with us. For those of us in the Western tradition, to hear of the one nature of Christ can be misleading, because it may be misunderstood as a denial of His humanity. For those of us in the Oriental Orthodox Churches, to hear of two natures can be misleading because it can be misunderstood as affirming two persons in Christ. But both sides are agreed in rejecting Eutychianism and Nestorianism. We all agree in our confession of the One Lord Jesus Christ, very God of very God, begotten before ages from the Father, who was born of the Virgin Mary, grew in wisdom and stature as a full human being, suffered, died, was buried, rose again on the third day and ascended into Heaven and is to come again as judge and ruler of the living and the departed.

Our common effort to clarify the meaning of the Greek terms *hypostasis* and *physis* in the Trinitarian and Christological context made us realise how difficult it was to find a satisfactory definition of these terms that could do justice to both contexts in a consistent manner.

(4). Furthermore, we realise our common need to reinterpret our faith in Christ in relation to problems that confront man today; the disunity of mankind, the presence of poverty and injustice, attitudes towards people of other religions, races and cultures, towards unbelievers and despisers of the Church and towards all those for whom it has become increasingly difficult to enter into the world of faith. While the meaning behind the ancient terminology remains valid, this terminology itself is hardly relevant for an adequate solution of these problems. There is urgent need to interpret in contemporary terms how the Son of God becoming one with us in the Incarnation affects the life of man today. And there we feel we can find a common approach and express our hopes that all of our Churches will work together with zeal and courage to meet this challenge.

(5). In the question of anathemata now being pronounced by one side on the teachers and fathers of the other, we were of the opinion that it was not necessary to insist on the acceptance of these as teachers and fathers by those who formally condemned them. A formal lifting of the anathemas also may not be necessary. It may be possible for the Churches simply to drop from the liturgical corpus anathemas of saints and teachers of the other side, as some Churches have already begun to do. It would then also be necessary to attempt writing new Church history books and catechisms that we seek to be more fair to one another by instructing and educating the faithful and our future priests, teachers and Church leaders in a spirit of tolerant ecumenical understanding and love.

(6). We also studied the question of Ecumenical Councils, especially the difference in number (three, seven or twenty one). Though no consensus is easily attainable in this issue, we agree that the first three Ecumenical Councils had, because of their more general acceptance in the Church, a greater degree of fullness, which the later Councils do not have. We look forward, however, to future regional and ecumenical Councils with larger representations as the reunion of Churches is hastened by the working of the Holy Spirit. As regards the relation between the ministry of St. Peter

and the Ecumenical Councils, as the Roman Catholics understand it, we have not reached a consensus on it, though the principle of collegiality emphasised by the Second Vatican Council is appreciated as a move in the right direction according to which the role of the bishop of Rome is seen within the Council and not above it.

(7). We appeal to all men of good will everywhere to pray that the scandal of divisions within the one Church of Christ be done away with and that the Churches be brought to the full union as and when Christ wills it that the whole world may see it and believe in Him.

The Third Consultation

The Coptic delegation to the third Pro Oriente consultation in Vienna, 1976, consisted of: H.G. Bishop Gregorious, the late Bishop Samuel (1920-1981), the late Bishop Youannis of Gharbia (1923-1987) and the Reverend Father Antonius Ragheb, Dr Maurice Tawadros, lecturer in New Testament at the Coptic Theological College and Deacon Dr. George Bebawi. Bishop Samuel presented a paper on the practical consequences of the three Vienna consultations. Bishop Gregorious delivered a paper entitled *"The Church of Christ as the local church"* and Bishop Youannis presented a paper entitled *"The Origins of the Counciliar Idea"*. A special feature of the consultation was the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by the Coptic Delegation in an Austrian Protestant Cathedral, which was attended by some of the Orthodox and Catholic delegates and where Bishop Samuel delivered the Homily.

Communiqué of the third non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches organised by the Foundation Pro Oriente, in Vienna, August 30-September 5, 1976.

For the third time we have gathered together as a non-official Consultation of Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians, here in Vienna, from August 30th to September 5th, 1976, upon invitation of the Pro Oriente Foundation.

On the basis of the wide area of Christological agreement in the first two Consultations, which we reaffirmed here, we sought to enter into the question of an understanding of the nature of the Church, and the structure of its unity. Unity is Christ's gift to His Church, and is not merely the result of human endeavours. While this unity allows for a multiplicity of traditions, the diversity has to be held together by basic unity in fundamental matters.

One of our concerns in this third non-official Consultation has been to discuss the notions "local" Church, the "universal" Church and Church Catholic. We confessed that it is the same mystery of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, the Body of our Risen and Ascended Lord, that is manifest both in the "local" Church and in the "universal" Church. One and the same Church, for there cannot be more than one, is manifested both locally and universally as a koinonia of truth and love, characterised by Eucharistic communion and the corporate unity of the episcopate. The unite of the Church has its source and prototype in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into which we have been baptised.

Today, all our churches are spreading worldwide. As a consequence, more than before, we experience today in many places, both our sharing of much in common of the Christian faith and life, and also our disunity in so far as we are unable to manifest fully the unity of the Church in truth and love, in eucharistic communion and unity of the episcopate.

We have studied together the notion of conciliarity, ie the understanding of the Church as koinonia, so essential to the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ, and so clearly visible in the structure of its life and leadership from the very inception. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth and all unity through councils and other means; it is to Him that we look in hope for a council in which the unity of the one

church in truth and love, in Eucharistic communion and Episcopal unity can be publicly affirmed and manifested.

In our discussions we distinguished between the council or synod as an event, and the synod as an aspect of the continuing structure of the Church's life. As for the council as an event, we could not agree on how and by how and by whom such a worldwide council of our churches should be convoked and conducted, nor could we agree completely on the procedure for the reception of past or future councils. We also took note of the fact that while the Roman Catholic Church regards many of the councils held after the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus 431, as – although in a different sense – "ecumenical", the Oriental Orthodox Churches are unable to so regard them.

We wished to affirm the right of the churches to convoke a council whenever found necessary and possible though there is no necessity to hold ecumenical councils at given intervals as a permanent structure of the Church. We recognise the need to structures of coordination between the autocephalous churches for the settlement of disputes and for facing together the problems and tasks confronting our churches in the modern world.

As an unofficial consultation, we are not in a position to act as official representatives of our Churches or to take decisions in their name. We offer here to our Churches the results of our experience, out of which we make the following proposals:

1. Pro Oriente, to which we owe so much, should be requested to take the necessary steps to prepare a fourth unofficial consultation in Vienna in the nearest possible future which will focus mainly on two issues:
    a. Papal primacy and jurisdiction – theoretical considerations and practical implications; and
    b. The status of the Catholic Churches of Oriental Rites – ecclesiological and practical considerations.

2. The Churches be requested to set up a Joint Commission composed of bishops, theologians and canonists, in order to:
    a. Look more closely into the agreements and disagreements in the unofficial consultations and present them to church authorities and people for study;
    b. Examine more closely the issues and actions which continue to irritate our churches and harm relations between them – proselytism, practices regarding marriages and other sacraments, the use of outside resources for objectives not in harmony with the good of our churches – and to make specific recommendations for changing the situations;
    c. Look into the possibility of convening assemblies of representatives of the various churches in the different nations and regions, in order to make people in our churches more aware of the unity that now exists;
    d. Make recommendations to the churches regarding further steps that need to be taken along the road to full unity like the withdrawal of anathemata, and a more systematic organisation of the exchange of students and professors, mutual visits by prelates, inter-church aid projects.

Once again we acknowledge with grateful hearts the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our work here, which was throughout characterised by genuine openness and desire to

understand each other. As theologians we join fervently in the prayer of our Lord and of the Church that the day may soon come when the unity of all will be more manifestly seen and experienced bearing fruit in truth, love, joy and peace.

The Fourth Consultation

The fourth Pro Oriente conference convened in September 1978 and was inaugurated by a liturgy at St. Mary's Coptic Church in Vienna. The Coptic and Syrian delegation co-celebrated and Cardinal König, Archbishop of Vienna, preached the sermon. Once again, Bishop Gregorious who was accompanied by Bishop Samuel, Bishop Youannis and Deacon Bebawi headed the Coptic delegation. Bishop Gregorious delivered a paper on the tensions between theoretical statements and the effective exercise of the primacy in the ecclesiastical life of the Oriental Orthodox Church.

Communiqué of the fourth non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches organised by the Foundation Pro Oriente, in Vienna, September 11-17, 1978.

1.The fourth unofficial Vienna Consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, convened by the Foundation Pro Oriente from September 11-17, 1978 had as its primary topic the nature and scope of primacy in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. As a related minor topic, the role of the Oriental Catholic Churches was also given some consideration.

2. Sixteen Roman Catholic theologians and sixteen Oriental Orthodox theologians attended; three representatives of the Oriental Catholic Churches were also present. The meetings were co-chaired by Vardapet Dr. Mesrob K. Krikorian of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Etchmiadzin) and by Fr. John F. Long SJ (Rome). In the absence of the latter on the first days, Prof. Ernst Chr. Suttner of the University of Vienna took the chair on his behalf.

3. The consultation was held in an atmosphere of cordiality and openness and was characterised by common prayer and mutual assistance at each other's liturgical celebrations. Each day was begun with liturgical prayer celebrated according to one of the traditions represented at the consultation. A pilgrimage was made to the shrine of Mariazell, to the Carmelite Convent there, and to the Cloister of the Canons Regular at Herzogenburg. The participants also assisted at the worship services of the local Coptic, Armenian and Roman Catholic communities.

4. Seventeen scholarly papers on the historical, canonical and theological aspects of primacy were presented and discussed. The principle was clearly recognised that the historical context in which decisions were made and formulas were enunciated in the Churches has often had a crucial impact on the content of those decisions and formulations.

5. There was general agreement that in all our Churches three elements were integrally related to each other: primacy, conciliarity and the consensus of the believing community, though their relative importance has been differently understood in different situations.

6. While in the Roman Catholic Church, primacy of the Bishop of Rome is regarded as of universal scope, the Oriental Orthodox Churches historically practised regional primacy; but these have exercised and continue to exercise primatial jurisdiction also over a national diaspora widespread in many continents of the world.

7. In the view of the Oriental Orthodox Churches primacy is of historical and ecclesiological origin, in some cases confirmed by ecumenical councils. In the view of the Roman Catholic Church, the historical development of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome has its roots in the divine plan for the Church. In both cases conviction about the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit was the basis for these views and yet provides the common ground for coming to mutual agreement in the future and for a common understanding of the Scriptural witness.

8. In the Roman Catholic Church there is a specific tradition concerning the basis and scope of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, which has received conciliar exposition and sanction. These formulations, especially those of the First and Second Vatican Councils, are to be understood in the context of their historical, sociological and political conditions and also in the light of the historical evolution of the whole teaching of the Roman Church, a process which is still continuing. The Oriental Orthodox Churches have not felt it necessary to formulate verbally and declare their understanding of primacy though it is clearly implied in the continuing life and teaching of their Churches. However, in the light of the newly emerging global perspectives and pluralistic tendencies in the world community, all of our Churches have to undertake afresh a common theological reflection on primacy with a new vision of our future unity. In this respect the discrepancy between theory and practice in all Churches was commonly recognised. Efforts should be made to overcome misunderstandings in this regard and to arrive at common conceptions.

9. There was agreement that infallibility or, as the Oriental Orthodox Churches prefer to say, dependable teaching authority, pertains to the Church as a whole, as the Body of Christ and abode of the Holy Spirit. There was no complete agreement as to the relative importance of the different organs in the Church through which this inerrant teaching authority is to find expression.

10. We were agreed that we should work towards a goal of full union of sister Churches - with communion in the faith, in the sacraments of the Church, in ministry and within a canonical structure. Each Church as well as all Churches together will have a primatial and conciliar structure, providing for their communion in a given place as well as on a regional and worldwide scale.

11. The structure will be basically conciliar. No single Church in this communion will by itself be regarded as the source and origin of that communion; the source of the unity of the Church is the action of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the same Spirit who operates in all sister Churches the same faith, hope and love, as well as ministry and sacraments. About regarding one particular Church as the centre of the unity, there was no agreement, thought the need of a special ministry for unity was recognised by all.

12. This communion will find diverse means of expression - the exchange of letters of peace among the Churches, the public liturgical remembering of the Churches and their primates by each other, the placing of responsibility for convoking general synods in order to deal with common concerns of the Churches, and so on.

13. The Oriental Catholic Churches will not even in the transitional period before full unity be regarded as a device for bringing Oriental Orthodox Churches inside the Roman Communion. Their role will be more in terms of collaborating in the restoration of Eucharistic communion among the sister Churches. The Oriental Orthodox Churches, according to the principles of Vatican II and subsequent

statements of the See of Rome cannot be fields of mission for other Churches. The sister Churches will work out local solutions, in accordance with differing local situations, implementing as far as possible the principle of a unified episcopate for each locality.

14. We were agreed that the primates of all the sister Churches have a special responsibility for witnessing to and promoting the manifest unity of the Church. No consensus was reached on the special responsibility that the Roman Catholic Church believes the Bishop of Rome has in this regard or on the special office of Peter in the Church. It was recognised by the Catholic participants however, that the future exercise of such an office is not identical with the present practice that has developed without contact with the Oriental traditions. Therefore, this role of the Bishop of Rome needs further mutual discussion and elucidation among the sister Churches as well as within the Roman Communion itself on the basis of the Nicene Canons and the further developments that have taken place and are continuing to take place in all Churches.

15. The consultation recognised the need for further studies and development of our understanding of such fundamental ideas as the nature and function of authority in the Church, the shape of our future communion, the meaning and degree of autonomy in the Church and the reception of conciliar decisions after the separation. Of particular importance is a fresh study in common of the whole New Testament with its witness to the nature and mission of the Church and to its various ministries.

16. Taking into account the fact that the work of the four Vienna consultations is not yet officially assessed by our Churches, nor widely known to many even in the clergy, not to mention most of the laity, the following recommendations are made:

a. The results of the four Vienna consultations should be presented by the participants to their respective Churches for evaluation and assessment, so that these evaluations can be a basis for further steps to be considered by an official commission of the Churches taking into account especially the recommendations of the Third Consultation.

b. It would be useful to bring together in one volume the main conclusions of the four consultations with selections from the more significant papers. This could be published for use by theologians and theological students as well as others interested.

c. A series of more popular and briefer publications and articles in various languages could he published for bringing the members of our Churches into the discussion. Other mass media presentations would also be useful.

17. The differences between the Roman Catholics and the Oriental Orthodox have grown out of their mutual estrangement and separate development in the period since the Council of Chalcedon. Differing historical experiences of the past fifteen centuries have made deep marks on the thinking and convictions of both traditions. In order to overcome these differences and to find mutual agreement and understanding, new ways of thinking and fresh categories of reflection and vision seem to be required, so that the sister Churches may together fulfil their common responsibility to the Lord and carry out their common mission in the light of the present situation and for the sake of future generations.

The Holy Spirit, who guides the Church, will continue to lead us to full unity. And all of our Churches have to be responsive to the divine call in obedience and hope.

The Fifth Consultation

It was not until 1988 that the fifth non-official consultation organised by the Ecumenical Foundation of Pro Oriente was convened. Representing the Coptic Church was H.G. Bishop Bishoy of Domyatt and General Secretary of the Holy Synod and the Very Reverend Father Tadros Malaty, Professor of Patristics at the Coptic Theological College.

Communiqué of the fifth non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches organised by the Foundation Pro Oriente, in Vienna, September 18-25, 1988.

The fifth non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church was held at the Bildungshaus Lainz, Vienna from Sunday, September 18th to Sunday, September 25th, 1988.

The purpose of the fifth meeting, as according to the agenda explained by co-chairmen Bishop Mesrob Krikorian (Oriental Orthodox) and Fr. John Long Sj. (Roman Catholic), was to review the work of the series of four meetings in 1971, 73, 76, and 78, to assess official actions taken by the churches in the past ten years, and to chart steps to overcome the remaining obstacles on the path to the restoration of full communion.

There were nine participants from the five Oriental Orthodox Churches, each delegation led by a bishop. Among Roman Catholic participants there were three members of the hierarchy among the nine theologians. Observers came from the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, from the Russian Orthodox Church, and from the Anglican Communion, as well as from the Coptic and Armenian Catholic Churches; and the Foundation PRO ORIENTE was represented by a delegation of three, including the President and the Secretary General.

The opening liturgy was celebrated in the neighbouring Syrian Orthodox Parish Church of St. Ephrem, with His Grace Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios of India, a President of the World Council of Churches as celebrant and His Eminence Dr. Hans Hermann Groër, Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna preached the sermon. H. E. Cardinal Groër also formally inaugurated the consultation later. Every working day began with a liturgy of one of the six Churches. The concluding worship was a celebration of High Mass in the Metropolitan and Episcopal Cathedral of Vienna with H. E. Hans Hermann Cardinal Groër as chief celebrant and H. G. Archbishop Timothios of Kefa as preacher.

More than 20 papers were presented on the purpose of the Consultation, on assessment of the theological significance of the four Vienna Consultations, and on consideration of past proposals and future plans leading to restoration of love, trust and communion among the churches. In this connection, four papers, two from each side, were presented on the theological, ie. Trinitarian, Christological and Ecclesiological implications of liturgical texts of the praying Church.

The conversations were held in a cordial atmosphere of openness and love, with mutual respect and faithfulness to the tradition of the Church, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Consultation noted with gratitude the fact that the Christological consensus arrived at in the first four Consultations had led to joint statements affirming a common faith by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria as well as Pope John Paul II of Rome and His Holiness Patriarch Zakka II was of Antioch. It was noted with gratitude that a common statement on Christology was formally approved by the Episcopal Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church and signed by the official representatives of the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in February 1988. This common statement made use of the formulations developed at the Vienna Consultations.

The fifth Consultation emphasized that the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God could not be exhaustively, formulated in words, and that within the limits of condemned errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutycheanism, a certain plurality of expressions was permissible in relation to the inseparable and unconfused hypostatic union of the human and the divine in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Blessed Virgin Mary, consubstantial with God the Father in His divinity and consubstantial with us in his humanity.

A second major positive result of the first four Vienna Consultations was in relation to mutual anathemata. Several churches have, in the interest of better ecumenical relations, given up condemning fathers and teachers of the other side by name in their liturgical practice. It was recognised that it may not be possible or necessary to lift these ancient anathemata formally; wrong teaching should however continue to be reproved.

In relation to councils, it was reaffirmed that our common ecumenical basis is the faith of the first three Ecumenical Councils, ie. Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). In relation to the Council of Chalcedon and later councils it was recognised that the Oriental Orthodox Churches were not in a position formally to accept these councils irrespective of the question whether they, actually participated in these later councils or not. The later councils should continue to be a subject of common study and reflection in the light of the historical circumstances of the time when they were held, and with due consideration to their faithfulness or otherwise to the Apostolic Tradition of the Church.

In relation to the question of 'reception' of councils, we saw that conciliar decision, confirmation of the decisions, and their reception by the churches were integral parts of a single process, not to be separated from each other. There are some decisions of councils regarded as ecumenical, which have not been received by all churches. There are also canonical decrees of the council of Chalcedon and later councils, which find their place in the canons of some Oriental Orthodox Churches, even when they refuse to receive the doctrinal formulations or horos of these councils. In general the Oriental Orthodox Churches did not see the necessity of a formal confirmation - procedure intervening between decision and reception, except as an action by local synods forming an integral part of the reception process. It was also recognised that

the substance of a particular decision of a council can be integrated into the living tradition of a church without a formal reception of the conciliar decision as such.

On the question of primacy, it was recognised that each Church has its own form of primacy. The responsibility of a Primate, be he Patriarch, Catholicos or Pope, is not understood in the same way in the different churches though all recognise that primacy is related to the conciliar life of the church.

In the Oriental Orthodox Churches, primacy is exercised within each church and not by one church over others. However, when primates meet in an ecclesial context, there is an agreed protocol of rank attributed to them.

According to the Roman Catholic understanding, by virtue of his primacy within the communion of churches, the Bishop of Rome exercises a unique service ordered to maintain the unity of the churches.

It is clear then, that here must be further reflection on the question of primacy, what it means, how it is to be exercised within a church, as well as among the many churches. To aid this reflection, it is proposed that here be discussions, which will include the following questions:

1. Authority in the Church as having its roots in the sacramentality of the Church.

2. Personal and synodical authority in the Church beyond the level of the local bishop considered from the liturgical, canonical and pastoral tradition of each of the churches.

3. Conciliarity as an expression of communion of churches in the light of the two previous subjects.

With regard to an ecclesiological basis for the unity of the Church, the Consultation saw the need both for autonomy and decentralisation of authority on the one hand, and for some central coordination on the other. The concrete theological and practical principles for working this out were not fully agreed upon but it is hoped that the studies mentioned above will make a significant contribution to further agreement on this matter.

In order to move forward the recommendations made here, the Consultation proposes to PRO ORIENTE, the formation of a small group, which will meet more frequently and search out the most effective methods to implement these recommendations and encourage the continuation of this work. Among its activities will be to gather from the churches those further issues that they consider necessary for, or of vital importance to, the dialogue between our churches and arrange for the proper discussion of these. Some of these issues, which have already been suggested among the participants, are a consideration eg. of the ‘procession of the Holy Spirit’ and the ‘immaculate conception’.

Furthermore the Consultation renews the statement of the 1976 meeting and earnestly requests that a joint Commission composed of bishops, theologians and pastoral ministers be set up by churches represented here which will:

a). Look more closely into the agreements and disagreements which have been uncovered in these unofficial consultations and present them to Church authorities and people for study and action;

b). Examine the issues and actions that continue to harm relations between the churches and make specific recommendations for changing the situation;

c). Make recommendations to the churches regarding practical steps that need to be taken towards promoting common action, where possible, and further steps towards unity. Finally, the Consultation urgently appeals to all of the churches represented here to set up a joint official body to engage in that formal dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which will have, as its objective the achievement of full communion in faith and sacramental life.

THE STUDY SEMINARS

In addition to the unofficial consultations the Standing Committee felt the need to hold special study seminars focusing on areas of dissent in the light of recent research. The eventual goal would be to bring together the various strands of findings in another consultation pointing concrete ways to unity.

1. Primacy – Vienna, October 1991
2. Councils – Vienna, June 1992
3. Ecclesiology – Vienna, July 1994

FIRST STUDY SEMINAR – PRIMACY

In certain places, the creation of joint local workgroups of commissions may be advisable in order to facilitate implementation and to evaluate the situation in common. There is not only the need for dialogue between the Churches of the East (Oriental Orthodox) and East (Oriental Catholic) on the local level. Together they have the same history and the same tradition. They live side-by-side most of the time and are confronted with the same difficulties and challenges.

The fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the respective Oriental Catholic Churches have a different and at times conflicting reading of their common reading of history can cause misunderstanding and mistrust. Efforts for a common reading of history would therefore be very helpful to facilitate mutual acceptance and collaboration.

It is an encouraging sign that some Oriental Orthodox and Oriental Catholic Churches are already involved in dialogue and collaboration in the frame of national or regional ecumenical organizations, like for instance the Middle East Council of Churches.

It is not yet entirely clear what other role the Oriental Catholic Churches can play in the search for communion between East and West. In fact, it is generally accepted that the present status of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the Catholic Communion is essentially of a provisional nature. That is clear as well from the texts of Vatican II as from the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (1991). Their present status cannot be a model of possible future relations between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and Rome in case of Unity.

Nevertheless the Oriental Orthodox Churches do not remain unaffected in front of certain direct interventions of the authorities of Rome in the life of the Oriental Catholic Churches. Sometimes they are for them a cause of concern raising the question of liberty in the church, and whether a real respect for diversity in unity is concretely possible, because of the ways the Roman Primacy is being exercised. A more harmonious development in this field could help dissipate certain apprehensions.

The Oriental Catholics think that they still have a role to play within the Catholic Church in the search for unity between East and West. Their presence in the Catholic Communion can help the Latin Church to discover in an even more concrete way that

she does not on her own respect the whole Christian tradition, that diversity exists and is an enrichment for the Church of Christ. In this way, they think that they have the task to open the Catholic Communion to the diversity of the East and to prepare it to welcome the Oriental Churches and their traditions as authentic, rich and important.

At the conclusion of the Study Seminar some concrete suggestions were made for future study or action, in PRO ORIENTE or elsewhere, to facilitate a harmonious development of relations between the Oriental Orthodox and the Oriental Catholic Churches in search for full communion between the Catholic Church and the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches:

1. The method of organizing study seminars, should also in the future be maintained, however there could be an introductory part in them, in order to reconsider those parts of previous Study Seminars, which treated similar subjects and strict chairing should prevent repetition of already studied problems.

2. As the problem of Primacy seems to be the most difficult of all, this subject should be approached from different sides in order to consider various approaches such as: Jurisdiction (episcopate, primacy and synod; distinction between the powers of ordination and jurisdiction); Local and Universal Church-ethnicity and Church; the petrine office as seen in the Second Vatican Council; Infallibility of the Church.

3. Symposia of Church historians and teachers of history in Church seminars should be convened in view of a common reading of history.

4. Common research work on controversial questions, such as the origins of the Oriental Catholic Churches.

5. Study on not outspoken emotional reservations as a motivation to uphold division among Christians.

6. A common study of obstacles to unity on the local level, especially by establishing information flow (information service and exchange of documents to promote a better understanding of the other side).

7. Elaboration of hypothetical models of unity with a view on future ecumenical possibilities at least on the local level.

8. Working out of the best model of future union among the Churches with special attention on practical problems. The visit of His Eminence Cardinal Hans Hermann Groer at the last session of the Study Seminar was welcomed cordially by the participants.

Words of greetings were exchanged by his Eminence and the chair. The presence of the Cardinal was regarded as a sign of encouragement for the ecumenical dialogue. All the participants express the gratitude to PRO ORIENTE for this occasion of being together as brothers in One Lord, working in the One Spirit for the Unity the one church to the Glory of the One Father.

SECOND STUDY SEMINAR – COUNCILS

Statement of the Second Study Seminar of PRO ORIENTE on Councils and Conciliarity, between theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches Vienna, June, 26 to 29, 1992

In view of the fact that the first PRO ORIENTE Study Seminar on Primacy in June 1991 felt the need for further study and clarification of certain issues, a second study Seminar on Councils and Conciliarity was held at the Bildungshaus lainz, Vienna from June 26th to 29th, 1992. The meetings were chaired jointly by Bishop Mesrob Krikorian ad Fr. Frans Bouwen. Papers were presented by Rev. Tadros Y. Malaty on Ecumenical Councils and the Trinitarian Faith; by Prof. Hans-Joachim Schulz on The Great Councils - The Defferent Degrees of their Realization of Ecclesial Conciliarity and their Incorporation in the Respective Tradition; and by Fr. Khalil Kochassarly OP on Councils and Conciliarity in the Life of the Churches.

H.Em. Franz cardinal Konig was present for part of the meeting and the participants expressed their gratitude for His Eminence's leadership and inspiration and also to PRO ORIENTE for the hospitality for this study seminar.

COMMUNIQUE

Introduction

The Veinna conversations have helped to clarify a considerable area of agreement between the Roman Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, on the subject of councils and conciliarity. Some differences, however, remain, to be further discussed and clarified, in order that the consensus may become more comprehensive.

Area of Unofficial Consensus

The main points of agreement emerging from the unofficial Vienna Conversations may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. The Church is by its very nature conciliar, being an icon in the created order of the ineffable Holy Trinity, three Person in one ousia, bound together in the perfect communion of love. Conciliarity means more than councils. Conciliarity is communion (koionia). Communion in conciliarity can continue even during long periods when no formal ecumenical councils are held.

2. This communion has two essential dimensions: (i) the vertical transcendent communion of all members with the Triune God in the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit; (ii) the horizontal communion of all members in all space with each other, a special aspect of which is the communion of the Church on earth with the heavenly Church. Without either of these dimensions the Church would not be the Church.

3. This communion is above all a communion of love; where love is not present, communion cannot be real.

4. This communion is participation in the Body of the one Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, crucified. Dead and risen, ascended and seated at the right hand of the father; it is effected by the Holy Spirit through faith and baptism-chrismation, through the Eucharist, and through sharing in the Apostolic teaching and witness; guarded, authenticated and pastored by the episcopate with the presbyterate and the diaconate, and through loving service to each other and to the world.

5. Conciliarity belongs to the essence of the church. This conciliarity is expressed at various levels- in the Eucharistic communion of the local church (diocese), with the bishop or bishops, and with the whole Church Catholic in all time and all space, as well as in local national, regional and universal synods. In the local parish, the presbyter, as vicar of the bishop, is the focus of conciliarity. He exercises the ministry in conciliar fellowship with his people, - the ministry of (i) worship, prayer and intercessions, (ii) of pastoral building up of the people, and (iii) of loving service to the world – all three aspects being marked by conciliarity.

6. The ecumenical councils of the Church Catholic are an important expression and instrument of conciliarity. The Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts of the Apostles 15, is unique and in a class by itself because of the presence of the Holy Apostles. This Council, because of its uniqueness is usually not included in the list of ecumenical councils. The first three ecumenical Councils Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431) accomplished, through the Holy Spirit, a clarification of the Apostolic faith and have become the basis of the present Christological consensus between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol of Faith remains as irreplaceable foundation and expression of the faith of the Church.

THIRD STUDY SEMINAR – ECCLESIOLOGY

Agreed Report on the third PRO ORIENTE Study Seminar "Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church" (Vienna, 1-5 July 1994).

At the invitation of PRO ORIENTE a third study seminar was held in Vienna, in the Bildungshaus Lainz, from 1-5 July 1994, on the theme "Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church." Its purpose was to continue the work started at the two previous study seminars on "Primacy", in 1991, and on "Concils and Conciliarity", in 1992.

The main theme this time was a comparative study of the ecclesiologies of the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches with special attention given to the place of the Oriental Catholic Churches. A number of specialists on this subject and theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Oriental Catholic Churches took part in the presentations and discussions.

The general theme was introduced by two presentations on "Ecclesiology and the search for communion between East and West": one from the Catholic side by Prof. Fr. Hervé Legrand OP (Paris) and one from the Oriental Orthodox side by Prof. Emile Maher Ishak (Cairo), of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Two general briefings were given to the participants as a contribution to the discussions:

1. "The Current Theological Discussion of the Problems of Uniatism and Proselytism in the Framework of the Theological Dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox", by Fr. Frans Bouwen PA (Jerusalem);

2. "The Ecclesiological and Canonical Status of the Oriental Catholic Churches according to Vaticanum II and the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (1991)", by Prof. Richard Potz (Vienna).

"The role of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the Search for Communion between East and West" was introduced by two representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: Archbishop Mar Gregorios of Aleppo of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, and Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian of Vienna of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Etchmiadzin, as well as by two representatives of the Oriental Catholic Churches: Fr. Makarios Tawfiq (Cairo) of the Coptic Catholic Church, and Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil of Changanacherry of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The discussions that followed the introductory papers were characterised by a spirit of fraternal openness, brotherly love and peaceful joy in the Holy Spirit. The main elements of the common reflection can be summarised in the following points.

Both the Roman Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox families of churches seek unity on the basis of and Ecclesiology of communion. Communion, though having a broad spectrum of meanings primarily signifies eucharistic communion in both our traditions.

On each place where the Eucharist is celebrated in the one faith and around the bishop in the Apostolic succession the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is present in its fullness. This local church is in communion with all other churches that celebrate the same Eucharist in the same Apostolic Faith. The links of communion are the bishops. The worldwide church (Church universal) is a communion of local Churches, bound together at every level by ways of a conciliar fellowship. It is within this conciliarity that the presence and function of Primacy should be seen, at the local, regional and universal levels.

Churches in full communion with each other are Sister Churches in the full sense of the word. In spite of the fact that the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches are not yet in full communion, they have already so much in common regarding Apostolic Faith and sacramental life that they can call each other Sister Churches, although in a still imperfect way.

We commonly recognise that in each one of our traditions we have some difficulties in expressing church unity at the regional level or within the wider context of our communions. Having this problem in common, we believe that we can learn from each other and we hope that reflecting in common we shall find better ways to express the full catholicity of the One Church.

For the time being, divergences appear between Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox traditions in understanding the wider character of ecclesial communion.

While the Roman Catholic Church can qualify itself as a communion of churches, it sets the principle of communion with the Bishop of Rome as successor of Peter as an essential condition for this ecclesial authenticity of the churches and their communion. The concepts of the universal church and universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome are integral to this understanding of communion.

The Orthodox Churches maintain the principle of eucharistic communion in one faith between this local churches in a conciliar context as a sufficient expression of the ecclesiology of communion. Integral to this communion is the catholicity of the church understood as the fullness of truth, which includes historical and geographical elements. In a situation of true unity it is this mutual communion among these churches that becomes the essential and visible sign of the ecclesial authenticity of churches. It does not require any exclusive authentication by any one See within this communion.

The integral connection between ecclesiality, catholicity, conciliarity, primacy and unity cannot be underestimated. The holistic nature of unity as understood in Western and Eastern traditions demands that we consider these elements not in isolation, but in their constant mutual interactions.

A deep awareness of the undivided church is ingrained in our different ecclesiological positions. The vision of one church arises from the reality of the one Body of Christ.

The concept and practice of primacy and in particular the nature of the interrelation between primacy and conciliarity at the universal level constitute one of the main and most sensitive points of difference between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox

Churches. Common reflection and research should continue in order to clarify the principles and to come to a commonly acceptable practice.

The quality of the relations between the local Churches and the worldwide Church, in full respect for the distinct identity and the legitimate diversity of the traditions is intimately linked with the interrelations between primacy and conciliarity, especially on the universal level.

Some form of primacy is recognised in the present historical life of all our churches. While in the Roman Catholic traditions primacy of the bishop of Rome is understood to be the guarantee and indispensable condition of communion between local churches, in the Oriental Orthodox traditions primacy arises out of the experience of communion, without the concept and practice of jurisdiction. In the Oriental Orthodox view primacy at different levels is consequential to communion within and between local churches. Although primacy may in turn pastorally nourish this existing communion, in the form of a ministry for unity it is not the condition of existence or criterion of authenticity of the communion among local churches.

The Roman primacy understands itself as a binding test of authentic ecclesial communion and it appears to the Oriental Orthodox to be of mainly jurisdictional character.

The traditional expressions used to qualify primacy in the Orthodox tradition like primacy <u>of honour</u>, primacy <u>of love</u> and primacy <u>among equals</u> – all pointing to the same reality – presuppose eucharistic communion and conciliar consensus as conditions. They do not suggest necessarily any jurisdictional character. Primacy can be the expression of conciliarity but not vice versa.

It is against the background of the tragedy of the division within the one Body of Christ and the untiring efforts of the churches to fulfil the will of Christ that "they may be one", that the origin and history of the Oriental Catholic Churches have often to be seen. Without questioning the sincerity of the intentions of the persons involved, it is now possible to say that these efforts did not succeed to restore unity. On the contrary they led often to new divisions and to new sufferings.

Now that fraternal relations have been re-established between the Catholic Church and all of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, it is desirable that the Oriental Catholic Churches be integrated in this common search for unity.

Thus we are glad to see that in fact, the respective Oriental Catholic Churches have been fully involved in the official dialogue that the Catholic Church has initiated with the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Likewise we hope that similar dialogue may whenever possible, emerge with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches.

This integration of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the common search for unity is possible and profitable only if certain conditions are fulfilled. In the first place, every proselytism, every aim of expansion of one church at the expense of the other or every purpose of the passing of people of one church to another should be clearly eliminated. Pastoral, educational and social activities that involve faithful of the other

church should not be undertaken without the knowledge, the approval and the cooperation of the authorities of that church. Moreover, the aim should be to come to a mutual consultation and collaboration beyond a mere peaceful living side by side.

We welcome fully the directives given by the church authorities in this sense, as well as the common principles and practical rules evolved in the dialogues between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

It was stressed that the declarations of principles are not sufficient. Experience shows that there is often a wide gap between the texts and their implementation in the life of the Churches. First, it is of great importance that the principles agreed upon and the decisions taken at the level of authority are in fact communicated to the bishops, the priests and the faithful on all levels. Secondly, concrete ways and means should be explored, according to the different local circumstances, to promote a real change in mentality and attitude in the relations among our Churches. There is also hope that the Churches will be able to take concrete steps aiming to lift and to remove the feelings of suspicion of proselytism that weigh on them and hinder mutual trust. In certain places, the creation of joint local workgroups or commissions maybe advisable in order to facilitate implementation and to evaluate the situation in common.

There is not only need for dialogue between the Churches of the East and West. There is perhaps still a greater need of dialogue between East (Oriental Orthodox) and East (Oriental Catholic) on the local level. Together they have the same history and the same tradition. They live side-by-side most of the time and are confronted with the same difficulties and challenges.

The fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the respective Oriental Catholic Churches have a different and at times conflicting reading of their common history can cause misunderstanding and mistrust. Efforts for a common reading of history would therefore be very helpful to facilitate mutual acceptance and collaboration.

It is an encouraging sign that some Oriental Orthodox and Oriental Catholic Churches are already involved in dialogue and collaboration in the frame of national or regional ecumenical organisations, like for instance the Middle East Council of Churches.

It is not yet entirely clear what other role the Oriental Catholic Churches can play in the search for communion between East and West. In fact, it is generally accepted that the present status of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the Catholic Communion is essentially of a provisional nature. That is clear as well from the texts of Vatican II as from the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (1991). Their present status cannot be a model of possible future relations between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and Rome in case of unity.

Nevertheless the Oriental Orthodox Churches do not remain unaffected in front of certain direct interventions of the authorities of Rome in the life of the Oriental Catholic Churches. Sometimes they are for them a cause of concern raising the question of liberty in the church, and whether a real respect for diversity in unity is concretely possible, because of the ways the Roman Primacy is being exercised. A

more harmonious development in this field could help to dissipate certain apprehensions.

The Oriental Catholics think that they still have a role to play within the Catholic Church in the search for unity between East and West. Their presence in the Catholic Communion can help the Latin Church to discover in an even more concrete way that she does not no her own represent the whole Christian tradition, that diversity exists and is an enrichment for the Church of Christ. In this way, they think that they have the task to open the Catholic Communion to the diversity of the East and to prepare it to welcome the Oriental churches and their traditions as authentic, rich and important.

At the conclusion of the Study Seminar some concrete suggestions were made for future study or action, in PRO ORIENTE or elsewhere, to facilitate a harmonious development of the relations between the Oriental Orthodox and the Oriental Catholic Churches in the search for full communion between the Catholic Church and the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches:

1. The method of organising study seminars should also in the future be maintained, however, there could be an introductory part in them, in order to reconsider those parts of previous Study Seminars, which treated similar subjects and strict chairing should prevent repetition of already studied problems.

2. As the problem Primacy seems to be the most difficult of all, this subject should be approached from different sides in order to consider various approaches such as: Jurisdiction (episcopate, primacy and synod; distinction between the powers of ordination and jurisdiction); Local and Universal Church – ethnicity and Church; the Petrine office as seen in the Second Vatican Council; Infallibility of the Church.

3. Symposia of Church historians and teachers of history in Church seminars should be convened in view of a common reading of history.

4. Common research work on controversial questions, such as the origins of the Oriental Catholic Churches.

5. Study on not outspoken emotional reservations as a motivation to uphold division among Christians.

6. A common study of obstacles to unity on the local level, encouraging the dialogue between the Churches on the local level, especially by establishing information flow (information service and exchange of documents to promote a better understanding of the other side).

7. Elaboration of hypothetical models of unity with a view on future ecumenical possibilities at least on the local level.

8. Working out the best model of future union among the Churches with special attention on practical problems.

The visit of His Eminence Cardinal Hans Hermann Groër at the last session of the Study Seminar was welcomed cordially by the participants. Words of greetings were

exchanged by His Eminence and the chair. The presence of the Cardinal was regarded as a sign of encouragement for the ecumenical dialogue.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESULTS

Different theological issues were canvassed and various recommendations were made on various topics in the course of the four consultations of the Pro Oriente. These include:

1. The call for prayer in order to overcome the scandal of division.
2. Common study of all councils and the fathers of the church.
3. Creation of new textbooks on church history and catechism for the teaching and education of the faithful in a broader ecumenical understanding.
4. Exchange of students and professors, mutual visits of church leaders and collaboration in church aid programmes.
5. Studies on the essence and functions of authority in the church with the emphasis on autonomy and conciliar decisions after the separations.
6. Common studies of the New Testament with an address to the nature and mission of the Church and its various ministries.
7. Popularisation by shorter publications and articles in different languages as well as in the mass media.
8. Evaluation of the results of the consultations by official communications of the particular churches.

However, the dialogue has been interrupted because of the proselytism that the Catholic Church is practising in Egypt until today, in spite of the excellent relations between Alexandria and Rome. Furthermore, the Coptic Church considers the following issues of primary concern prior to raising any anathemas:

1. The procession of the Holy Spirit.
2. Purgatory.
3. The Immaculate Conception.
4. Indulgences.
5. Mixed marriages with non-Christians.

The five unofficial Pro Oriente consultations have been beneficial, offering a suitable forum for canvassing the issues and eradicating past differences and misunderstandings. Owing to Pope Shenouda's invincible dedication to ecumenism and his erudite theological status, Pro Oriente granted His Holiness the title of Protector of Pro Oriente in November 1984.

FUTURE ISSUES

Whilst considerable work has been done, particularly in the areas of the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the church, there still lies ahead extensive research, study and consultations in the following key areas:

1. Ministry of St. Peter and the Primacy and Infallibility of the Pope.
2. Mariology (Immaculate Conception).
3. Ecclesiology and nature of authority.
4. Pneumatology (Filogue).
5. Liturgy and doctrine of Transubstantiation.
6. Principle of pluralism and theological diversity.

7. Confirmation and reception of ecumenical councils.
8. Saints – meaning and process of canonisation.
9. Proselytism and the Oriental Catholics (unites), ie. Coptic Catholics, Armenian Catholics etc.
10. Moral theological issues – certified birth control, marriage and divorce etc.
11. Local liturgical developments eg. Reservation of the Blessed Sacraments for adoration; distribution of the Sacraments by the laity
12. The laity; women serving as altar assistants.

CHAPTER 5

COPTIC ORTHODOX AND ANGLICAN CHURCH DIALOGUE

Despite limited contact, warm relations between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Church of England (Anglican) existed for centuries. With the migration of Copts to England, America and Australia in the mid-sixties, contact between the two churches increased as the Coptic communities abroad began to worship in rented and subsequently purchased Anglican perishes. The great love and assistance rendered to the Coptic communities is immeasurable and constitutes an ecumenical pillar in the relations between the two churches.

MUTUAL VISITS

In February 1979, Pope Shenouda made a pastoral visit to England, where upon H.H. paid a visit to the Right Reverend Dr. Coggen, the Archbishop of Canterbury at his residence in Lambeth Palace.

In October 1987, H.H. Pope Shenouda received the Most Reverend Dr. Robert Runice at St. Bishoy Monastery. The two church leaders signed the first ever Common Declaration between the leaders of the Coptic Orthodox and Anglican Churches, expressing mutual commitment towards full unity.

ANGLICAN – COPTIC JOINT DECLARATION

Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark and Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the Anglican Consultative Council, give thanks to God in the Holy Spirit for meeting in Egypt, both in Cairo and at the Monastery of St. Bishoy in the Wadi El-Natroun for common prayer and conversation to further closer relations between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Coptic Orthodox Church in accordance with the prayer of our Lord for the unity of His disciples (John 17:21).

Our desire for mutual understanding and closer cooperation has, for its foundation, the basic conviction, that in spite of many centuries of isolation from each other and the separate development of our two traditions, we nevertheless still share an essentially common faith.

The heart of this faith is to be found in the Christian profession of faith in One God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made. who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnated by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who, with the Father and the Son, together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets; and in One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Acknowledging one baptism for the remission of sins, and looking for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

This is the faith of the Church. This is our faith: belief in One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit which Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox confess in the early three Ecumenical Councils.

In spite of past misunderstandings Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox also confess together their faith that our Lord and God, the Saviour and Sovereign of all, Jesus Christ, is perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity. In Him divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling or interchanging, without confusion or change, without division or separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant; He who is God eternal and indivisible became visible in the flesh and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

Though Anglican and Coptic Orthodox Churches recognise with humility the theological differences which have sadly separated Christians since 451, they also

now recognise that some divisions had cultural and political origins rather than because of real differences in faith. Nevertheless, as a result of their separate histories, Anglicans and Coptics need to examine their differences to overcome difficulties and misunderstandings; for example, regarding the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The recently established Anglican/Oriental Orthodox pastoral forum has proposed a future theological forum, which should promote a place for this discussion so that existing difficulties over the doctrine and practice of Holy Baptism may be overcome, together with any other perceived differences of faith or sacramental life which would prevent closer relations and ultimate communion between our two churches.

Pope Shenouda III and Archbishop Robert also express deep thankfulness for the good relations that are now well established between the local Anglican Diocese in Egypt and its bishop, the Right Reverend Ghais Mailk, and the Coptic Orthodox Church. These same good relations characterise Anglican/Coptic cooperation in other regions, principally Western Europe, North America and Australia. We call on the two churches to continue to give each other brotherly mutual support and help. We recognise the great significance of the Coptic Church in the wider context of Christianity in the Middle East. Christians throughout the world have the duty to support their Christian brothers and sisters in the original homelands of the Christian Church.

Above all, we call upon the faithful of the Anglican Communion and the Coptic Orthodox Church to pray for each other as fellow members of the household of faith. This will be the true basis for the increased theological understanding, consultation and social collaboration that should characterise the relations between the two churches. In conclusion, we commend the sacred cause of the unity of Christians to the prayers of all the saints and especially to St. Mark the evangelist, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, St. Anthony of Egypt, St. Bishoy and above all the Blessed Virgin St. Mary, Theotokos, in whose company and fellowship we are supported in the communion of saints.

May God, the giver of good gifts, answer our prayers for unity through Jesus Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In spite of past misunderstandings, Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox also confess together their faith that our Lord and God, the Saviour and Sovereign of all, Jesus Christ, is perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity. In Him His divinity is united with His humanity in a real perfect union without mingling or commixture without confusion of change, without division or separation, His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the faith and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real perfect indivisible and inseparable union.

Pope Shenouda in Cairo received the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, in October 1995. The two church leaders renewed their commitment to visible unity between the two churches.

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE

The ten yearly gathering of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion, known as the Lambeth Conference met at Canterbury in July 1988. The question of ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopate was on the agenda for discussion and debate. Representatives from churches are invited to attend as observers. Pope Shenouda delegated Metropolitan Bishoy of Damyatt and General Secretary of the Holy Synod; carrying an open message regarding the ordination of women in a six-page document, with twelve headed sections and a total of thirty paragraphs. The message is as follows:

Our main source of reference in this subject is the Holy Bible, where we may find the relevant Divine inspiration "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16).

In our search for the truth we cannot rely on our own wisdom but must go back to Scripture in accordance with the word of God: "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands…Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding...Do not be wise in your own eyes...Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding...Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her." (Proverbs 3:1,5,7,13,17,18).

We do not have the right to lay down any teaching, legislation or order that does not comply with the Bible. In his Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul urges them "stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15). He warns them against any "brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

Our secondary source of reference is Church Tradition, particularly in the early period when she received the doctrine from our Lord and the Apostles directly. From the above-mentioned sources we shall find the following:

1. **The inadmissibility of women teaching in the Church**
   Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

   It will be noted here that Saint Paul's teaching provides justification for such a prohibition, which has no connection with either the social conditions of the time, or the particular conditions of Timothy's church. He based his teaching on the state of man and woman even before their departure from paradise.

   If woman is not allowed to teach in the church, it is all the more reason that she is not entitled to hold any of the ecclesiastical orders, since they continue ministry and teaching side by side.

2. **Man is the head of woman**
   St. Paul states: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:22-24).

   How can we accommodate this teaching to the ordination of women? How can she submit to man in everything if she is to be in charge of preaching, teaching, care and leadership? Is it not the sheep that should submit to the shepherd, the disciples to their teacher, the individuals to their teacher and the children to their parents?

   We read also: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. For the man is not of the woman, but woman from man. Nor was the man created for the woman, but woman for the man " (1 Corinthians 11:3,8,9).

3. **The Priest is Christ's Representative**
   Through the power of the Holy, Spirit in priesthood, the Apostles became the ministers of Christ on earth, and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1). He invested them with full authority to forgive sins and reconcile people with God, to offer the sacrifice of Redemption as He offered Himself on the Cross and became a Chief priest forever. The Apostle Paul combines his evangelistic and his Apostolic roles in preaching and in priestly service: "the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Ghost." (Romans 15:15,16).

   It cannot be denied that the priesthood is a continuation of the redemptive work of Christ on earth. It is no accident that the Saviour came as a man not a woman. "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourself also know." (Acts 2:22). Jesus was born male to become the High priest, to exercise the spiritual fatherhood and authority over the church: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6,7)

4. **The was no Precedence in History or Tradition for Ordination of Women**
   Our Lord Jesus Christ selected all His Disciples and Apostles from amongst men, entrusting the Church to their care. The Apostles, in turn chose males to the ministry of the church, without one exception and the line of succession was restricted to males.

5. **The Blessed Virgin Mary and Priesthood**
   Although she, was the holiest and purest female, the Virgin Mary, did not assume any, priestly f unction. Had women been entitled to the ministry, the Virgin would, in all respects and at all times, been more entitled to it.

   Let those advocates of the ordination of women ponder the Virgin's example. She

gave birth to the Logos, helped to bring Him up, He the Chief Priest and never made any claim for the priesthood.

6. **The Eucharist and Priesthood**
   Jesus Christ gave the Sacrament of the Eucharist to His Disciples, all male, gathering them around Him, and saying "Do this in remembrance of Me."

7. **Origin of Priesthood**
   In Exodus 13:1, "Sanctify, unto Me all the first born" the reference here is to every first born male instead of those redeemed by God in the land of Egypt. Later the Lord chose all the males of Levi's tribe alone, instead of all the tribes of Israel. He asked Moses to count the number of all the male firstborn, from a month old and upward, and to take an equal number from the Levites alone. Having counted both, Moses found that the latter were only twenty-two thousand, against twenty-two thousand and two hundred and seventy-three, ie. less by two hundred and seventy-three males (Numbers 3). Rather than making up for the difference through the recruiting of female offspring, He ordered Moses to supply five shakels apiece, by the poll.

8. **Priesthood of Males Alone**
   It is significant that through all ages priesthood was restricted to males. The early Patriarchs (Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), Aaron's priests, Melchizadek, the Apostles and all their successors, were all strictly male. The ordination of women would hence be novelty introduced into this tradition.

9. **Possible Schism in the Church**
   Such a novelty will undoubtedly bring about various dissents and splits undermining the unity of the church, whether it be the internal unity of the Anglican Church, or its relationships with other churches, at a time when we are looking forward to further convergence, not divergence.

10. **Possible Risks of Extra Biblical Freedom**
    Nowadays it is familiar to see the over zealous rushing towards innovations and tendencies by which the female pronoun is to be introduced to the name of the deity and suppressing the term Heavenly Father. This will seriously endanger the doctrines of the church, this reference to the three Hypostases, their interrelations, the atoning power of Jesus Christ and His Spiritual Fatherhood as a Headpriest.

11. **Practical Obstacles**
    There are various practical day-to-day difficulties as regards certain times in the life of woman, such as childbirth, Lactation and the bringing up of children, which necessitate her obligation to take long breaks from work. It is another possibility also, that due attention to the demands of priesthood may end up in woman's sacrificing some of her basic duties, such as attention to the home and children.

Some Objections:

1. It may occur to some that the Bible denied woman the right to priesthood on the grounds that she played no active role in society in old ages and in the early years of the Church, and that nowadays, since women are becoming more and more active in almost every walk of life she should also assume a bigger share of responsibility in the sphere of the church as well, including, the Holy Orders. But let me point out the inherent inaccuracy in this idea. Women did occupy quite elevated positions in society in bygone days. There were women prophets, such as Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron; there were women judges such as Deborah. There were Queens, such as Esther, and the Queen of Sheba (mentioned by Christ). We all know of Cleopatra and Hatshepsut. However, no women assumed any position as member of the ecclesiastical priesthood.

   At the time of Christ, woman had her full share of recognition: we know of Mary Magdalene who was the first to tell of the resurrection, we know of various women who offered their own houses as churches, as the mother of John known as Mark, Lydia seller of Purple. Priscilla wife of Aquila, as the daughters of Phillip who used to prophecy, and many other women mentioned by Paul the Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans. Let us not forget that we do not know of any woman who took part in any of the Ecumenical Councils.

2. Some may argue that the Holy Spirit can be accepted by women as by men and gives them the gifts; consequently, women can be ordained as priests. Our reply to this is that truly the Holy Spirit is for all believers in the sacrament of Chrismation and the gifts for several of believers according to church needs but the sacrament of priesthood is for a chosen group. The gift of the Holy Spirit is not the same for all people. We see this clearly in St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "And God has set some in the church, first Apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Corinthians 2:28-30). So that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not common for all people and this means not all can receive the One Gift.

   The Lord said: "But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'", (1 Corinthians 12:20-21). Can all be the head? Can all be eyes? Of course not, for they, are many members. The Lord has set in the body of the church every member with a special function. Also in our body every part has a function and that does not reduce the value of other parts.

   Must it be that all is eye or tongue or head? Where is the Heart? Or the hand? It is possible that Woman is the heart (centre of affection) and not the head.

The right place of woman in the church

As deaconess (without consecration by laying on of hands), such as Phoebe of the church of Kankharia, or Olympias who served as deaconess to St. John Chrysostom

the patriarch of Constantinople. Women also have an indispensable part to play in the social service of the church in education of women and children, in drawing Icons, in the making of ecclesiastical vestments, in the service of orphans and widows, and many other similar areas.

Accordingly, out of our sheer loving relationship with the Anglican Church, and our desire to see closer ties among all churches of Christendom, we appeal to the Lambeth Conference to look into the matter with more concern, and to devote further studies to this vital issue. If there is already a lively dialogue between all churches, let such a dialogue be all the more embracing.

In conclusion, allow me to convey to you the expressions of love that His Holiness Pope Shenouda III feels towards all of you, and his prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide the deliberations of Lambeth Conference.

Anglican/Oriental Orthodox Forum

As a result of informal consultations between some Oriental Orthodox representatives and Anglicans, an International forum was established to enhance the steps towards unity. The first meeting of the forum took place at St. Alban's England on 7-11 October 1985.

The First Meeting

The first meeting of the forum took place in Kent, England following the Lambeth Conference in July 1988. The purpose was to explore the need and procedure and budget for setting an Anglican/Oriental Orthodox Commission and submit a report to the forum together with suggestions of topics to be discussed and possible size of such a commission.

The Second Meeting

The second meeting of the forum took place at St. Bishoy's Monastery in Egypt in March 1990. Attending were 30 Bishops and Theologians from 14 different countries. The issues discussed were:

1. The source and structures of authority in the Anglican Church
2. Polygamy
3. Homosexuality
4. Ordination of Women

Addressing the opening session of the forum, Pope Shenouda III said:

"Through the Holy Bible we can be one Church; we can have one teaching. Sometimes the term 'variety' is used, but there is a great difference between variety and contradiction; we may rejoice in variety if this variety is not contradicting any commandment of God, if it is according to the will of God. For this reason, we always feel sorry and disappointed when in what is called 'the new theology' people may not believe in many chapters of the Holy Bible, claiming that this is a kind of mythology – and sometimes the Old Testament is not respected as much as the New Testament.

These people may also divide the New Testament into two parts: what was said by Jesus and what was said by the Apostles. Some may say that a particular thing is the teaching of St. Paul and not of our Lord Jesus Christ, but who is St. Paul? St. Paul is the Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ and the words of St. Paul are inspired by the Holy Spirit. We can therefore take the words of St. Peter in his second Epistle (2 Peter 1:20-21): "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

I would also like to add what was mentioned in the second Epistle of St. Timothy (2 Timothy 3: 15-17), "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

We, therefore, want to use the Holy Bible in all the topics of our dialogue, to depend only on the Holy Bible; and also on the tradition of the Church, a tradition that is in full agreement with the Holy Bible. We cannot subject the Holy Bible to our own minds.

In this way, I want to discuss with you, dear brethren, some points that are very essential to us, especially in the East; and which have caused deep disappointment and had many reactions here. These are: homosexuality, polygamy and ordination of women. These are three specific points which are not accepted by any Church in the East, and which are also not accepted by our brothers of the Orthodox Churches, and I think also not accepted by the Catholic Church.

It was amazing that the topic of homosexuality might be a topic of discussion, because it is very clear that it is a kind of immorality, fornication, a clear sin against the Holy Bible. But, as it was mentioned at the Lambeth Conference, this point needs an in-depth study, so that we can conduct it together according to the decision of this conference."

The Third Meeting

The third meeting of the forum took place in Wimbledon from the 15th-21st May 1993. Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches together with delegates from the Anglican Communion, under the joint chairmanship of the Right Reverend John Dennis and Archbishop Yegische Gizirian, met in five days of friendly discussions.

The Forum began with Sunday worship in the various Oriental Orthodox parishes of London, and then at a service of Vespers conducted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral. This was the first time that the liturgical languages of those churches had been used at a public service in the Cathedral. During the week delegates visited the British Library, the Chapels Royal of the Tower of London, and attended Choral Eucharist for Ascension Day at Westminster Abbey. Each day members of the forum joined in corporate prayer and Bible study.

The members of the Forum were received at Lambeth Palace and entertained to lunch on Thursday, 20 May with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs Carey, and to dinner by the Nikaean Club on his behalf.

During the discussions many opinions were expressed with frankness, respect and love for each other. The topics examined included the following items:

- **Exchange of Students and Theological Literature**
  There are already a number of students from the Oriental Orthodox Churches studying in the Anglican Communion worldwide, and a number of Anglicans studying in Oriental Orthodox institutions. The exchange of journals and other Church publications was seen as mutually beneficial, and a joint working group

was established to explore how this might be achieved. The same group will collect information about available funding and scholarships both for Anglican and Oriental Orthodox students.

- **The Use of Scripture**
  The Oriental Orthodox Churches regard Holy Scripture as the central authority "inspired by God for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be holy" (2 Timothy 3:16). They believe that the Christian faith is revealed by God in the Holy Bible. The Oriental Orthodox do not discriminate between the Old and New Testament, and in the New Testament they do not discriminate between the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and those of the Apostles, since they believe that all the writings are inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the Oriental Orthodox position that Holy Scripture is the Word of God revealed to the Church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that its commandments are obligatory, and that the Church must always abide by it in all generations. If a nation has the desire for immortal life it must go on 'breathing God's Breath' with which it was quickened at the very moment of its creation.

  The official position of the Anglican Communion of Churches on the authority of Scripture was presented, and received general assent from the other Anglican participants in the Forum: the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the rule and ultimate standard of faith. This position is consistently held and explicated in the pertinent official Anglican sources: the oath or declaration taken at ordination, the formulae for tradition of Scriptures at ordination, the Catechism, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886-88, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (especially Article VI), and the classical creeds of the Christian Church.

  From each church there was a presentation on the use of the Bible in its life and liturgy. The Armenian Orthodox presentation was on the use of Scriptures in the Divine Liturgy. The Syrian Orthodox Church presentation was on the Bible in Liturgy and in the spiritual life of the Church. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church presented a paper on the Bible in the social life of the Church. The Coptic Orthodox Church presented a paper emphasizing respect for the Holy Bible, noting that there is no discrimination between the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and that of the Apostles. In that context, it condemned women ordination to the priesthood, homosexuality and polygamy in the same terms used at the second forum in 1990. The Anglican Communion in two presentations demonstrated the centrality of Holy Scripture in its constitutions, life and liturgy.

- **Christology**
  The Anglican Communion presented to the Forum a Paper on Christology based on the formulae of common declarations agreed at the Consultations between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church (Pro Oriente), and the Christological discussions of the Forum in 1990. Both Oriental Orthodox and Anglican participants are satisfied that this paper could provide valuable material for dialogue in the future.

  The Forum recommends that a small representative group of theologians be appointed to seek to draw up a common statement on Christology for consideration by the next meeting of the Forum.

- **Regional Forums**
  The Forum welcomed the formation of regional forums throughout the world since the last meeting. At present Anglicans meet together with the Oriental Orthodox in England, the USA, Canada and Australia. The Forum recommends that such a body be formed in the Middle East, and that the co-chairs approach Church leaders in the Middle East to initiate this.
- **Future Prospects**
  The Forum recognizes the need for our communities to meet in continuing dialogue and recommends a further meeting of the Forum within three years. It notes with gratitude an invitation from Mar Gregorios Yohanna of Aleppo on behalf of His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakka II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, to hold the next meeting of the Forum in Damascus. It further recommends that this communique be sent to the existing regional groups.

Anglican

The Right Reverend John Dennis (co-chair)

The Ven Riah Abu El-Assal

The Reverend Canon Harold Nahabedian

The Very Reverend Mary June Nestler

The Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Rowell

The Right Reverend John Stewart

The Reverend Dr. William Taylor

The Reverend Canon Prof. J RobertWright

The Reverend Alan Amos

Staff

The Reverend Dr. Donald Anderson

Anglican Communion Office

The Reverend Dr. Richard Marsh

Lambeth Palace

Armenian Orthodox Church

Archbishop Yegische Gizirian, (Oriental Orthodox co-chair)

Archbishop Ardavazt Terterian

The Reverend Dr. Nerses Nersessian

Coptic Orthodox Church

Dr. Emil Maher

The Reverend Father Antonios Thabit

Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Archbishop Yohannes

Archpriest Soloman G Selassie

Syrian Orthodox Church

His Emminence Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim Metropolitan of Aleppo

Father Ephrem Karim

Dr. Aziz Abdul-Nour

Indian Orthodox Church

The Reverend Father Thomas Yohannan

The Oriental Orthodox – Anglican forum has not convened since May 1993, however, the Patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in their joint statement in February 1999 indicated that they endorse the upgrading of the forum to a theological dialogue to explore means of reconciliation between the Anglican and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

CHAPTER 6

COPTIC ORTHODOX AND WORLD ALLIANCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES DIALOGUE

With many branches of Protestant churches, the most effective way of conducting a Theological dialogue was through the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which consists of most Protestant churches worldwide.

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX – REFORMED DIALOGUE
FIRST SESSION

A group of representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, who were authorised by their respective churches, met on 27th August 1992 in the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, Switzerland (on the occasion of the Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches) and decided to hold a theological dialogue the following year. This meeting took place at St. Bishoy Monastery, Wadi El-Natroun, Egypt from 2nd-5th May, 1993. The host was His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

This was the first meeting between these two Christian families and, as such, was an historic one. Twelve representatives from each of the families were invited.

After the opening prayer, the participants were welcomed by both H.H. Pope Shenouda III and Dr. Milan Opocensky, General Secretary of the WARC.

The Papers Presented

Six papers were presented and discussed.

1. Dr. Karel Blei presented a paper entitled 'Main Characteristics of the Reformed tradition'. He gave particular attention to the following issues:
   i. The variety of opinions and positions existing within the Reformed community, making it difficult to speak of 'the' main characteristics of the Reformed tradition.
   ii. The ongoing Reformed tendency to rethink Christian faith *vis-à-vis* the challenges of the hour

iii. The absence, apart from the authority of Holy Scripture, of any formal, structural factor that would hold the Reformed together
iv. The juridical emphasis of Western, and thus also Reformed, soteriology
v. The Protestant, and thus also the Reformed, understanding of the gospel as in its essence the message of justification by grace through faith alone
vi. The authority of Scripture, over against the Church
vii. The Reformed emphasis on sanctification as the fruit of justification
viii. The importance of the Reformed of the Old Testament and the notion of covenant
ix. The special relationship, for some of the Reformed, between the Church and the Jewish people

2. H.G. Mar Matta Roham, the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan, presented a paper entitled **'Introduction to the Oriental Orthodox Churches'**. These churches believe in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and recognise the following sacraments: baptism, myron (chrismation), eucharist, penitence and confession, unction of the sick, matrimony and priesthood.

   Salvation needs: baptism, eucharist, repentance, faith and good works. The Church means the building, the believers and the clergy. It must include an altar. Incense, icons, candles and the cross are used and have meanings. Veneration of saints, and asking their intercessions, honouring St. Mary and believing in her perpetual virginity, monasticism, fasting are practised in these churches.

   Concerning Christology, Oriental Orthodox churches believe in One incarnate nature of God, the Word out of two natures. They reject the *filioque*, ie, the addition of 'and the Son' to the statement in the creed concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit.

3. H.H. Pope Shenouda III presented a paper entitled **'Tradition'**, explaining that:
   i. Tradition is older than the Holy Bible. It goes back to our fathers: Adam (Genesis 4:4), Noah (Genesis 8:20), Abraham (Genesis 12:7, 14:18, Hebrews 7:6-7), Jacob (Genesis 28:22).
   ii. The Holy Bible does not mention everything (John 21:25, John 20:30-31, Luke 4:40, Luke 24:27, Acts 1:3).
   iii. Tradition is taken from the teachings of the Apostles, many of whom did not write epistles or books.
   iv. The Apostles laid down disciplines for the Church (John 13,14, Corinthians 11:34, 2 Timothy 2:2, Acts 1:3).
   v. The Apostles recorded in their Epistles things they received through tradition (Jude 9:14-15, Revelation 2:14, Hebrews 12:21).
   vi. Tradition delivered to us the Bible itself, the Church heritage, rituals and discipline. It also kept the sound faith and certain beliefs like consecration of Sunday, monogamy, and prayers for the departed.
   vii. Sound tradition must not contradict the Bible, or other Church traditions, and should be accepted by the Church.
   viii. The Bible ordered us to preserve the tradition (2 Thessalonians 2:15, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 1 Corinthians 11:2).

4. Dr. Silke-Petra Bergjan presented a paper entitled 'A Reformed View of Tradition and Scripture'. According to her presentation, the Reformed understanding of Scripture was developed in the historical context of the 16th century and has to be seen in this perspective. At the same time, it raises the axiomatic question of Scripture as a theological principle.
   i. Calvin and the confessions of the 16th century speak about Scripture in connection with revelation. This led to the identification of Scripture and the Word of God (issues mentioned: authority of Scripture, inward illumination of the Spirit and inspiration, Scripture as the norm of Christian faith).
   ii. The 18th century was characterised mainly by a discussion of reason and revelation. The Bible was understood as a document of revelation; the historical approach was developed to explain religious experience and the Bible.
   iii. Reformed reactions to this development:
      a. Historical-critical exegesis
      b. The relation of revelation and Scripture (cf. Karl Barth, the threefold Word-incarnated, written and preached).
      c. Scripture as part of the positive description of Church life (cf. Schleiermacher: Scripture was no longer dealt with in the *prolegomena* to theology but as part of the positive description of church life).
      d. The concept of revelation and history.

5. Father Dr. K.M. George presented a paper entitled **'Nature and Mission of the Church-An Oriental Orthodox Perspective'**. It included the following points:

   Koinonia rooted in ecclesial experience summarises the Orthodox understanding of the Church. The Oriental Orthodox churches are enriched by great cultural and liturgical diversity. The one apostolic faith is expressed in different linguistic and cultural contexts. The *oikumene* of God goes beyond the old Roman-Byzantine imperial borders. The local and universal dimensions of this one Church are expressed in various ways without contradiction. The Orthodox understanding of mission is characterised by faithfulness to the apostolic tradition and compassion for God's world. For historical reasons the Orthodox churches developed a 'missiophobia' with regard to aggressive western missions.

   Three aspects of the Orthodox missionary calling are: (i) *Martyria* (witness), (ii) Many ways of the Spirit, (iii) Hospitality (*philoxenia)*. The self-giving love of God is the only motive for incarnation. It is God's hospitality. The kenotic hospitality where guest and host become one in genuine love and mutual respect is a proper model for mission.

6. Reverend Dr. Samuel Habib presented a paper entitled 'The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Reformed View'. It included the following points:

   The Church is the body of Christ, a fellowship of true believers. Reformed confessions emphasised the necessity of the institutional Church. Reformed theology emphasises the priesthood of all believers. Reformed Churches practise preaching, sacraments and discipline. They confess what they believe on the basis of the sole authority of the Scripture.

The mission of the Church is, on the one hand, a witness to God's living and liberating purpose for the whole human family and the whole creation; on the other hand, it identifies itself without outcast and marginalised brothers and sisters. People of God, men and women, young and old, must be fully involved in the task of mission. Theological training for the laity as well as clergy is a concern of Reformed Churches.

Possible Topics for Future Discussion

The following topics received considerable attention and were identified as possible areas for consideration in the near future:

1. Christology
2. Holy Scripture and Tradition
   a. The Interpretation of Scripture
   b. The Authority of Scripture and Tradition
3. The Nature of the Church
4. The Doctrine of Salvation: The Divine and Human Roles.
5. The *Diakonia* of the Church.
6. Toward a Common Understanding of the Mission of the Church Today.
7. Christian Faith and Many Cultural Contexts.
8. Our Common Patristic Heritage.

Future Action

On the final day the topics listed above were discussed and the following topics were selected as the theme for the next dialogue:

1. Christology
2. Holy Scripture and Tradition or Toward a Common Understanding of the Mission of the Church Today (to be decided later).

Participants in the First Session

Oriental Orthodox

His Grace Bishop Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Apostolic Church

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Grace Bishop G.M. Coorilos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Dr Kondothra M. George, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

His Grace Bishop Moussa, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Grace Bishop Eustathius Matta Roham, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

His Grace Bishop Serapion, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of Alexandria, Coptic Orthodox Church

The following persons were present for the planning meeting on 27 August 1992 in Geneva but were not able to participate in the dialogue from 2 to 5 May 1993:

His Eminence Metropolitan Yohanna Ibrahim Gregorios, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

His Grace Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Armenian Apostolic Church

His Grace Archbishop Timotheos, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Reformed

Dr. Karel Blei, The Netherlands Reformed Church

Dr. Silke-Petra Bergjan, Evangelical Reformed Church, Germany

Dr. Samuel Habib, Synod of the Nile of the Evangelical Church, Egypt

Reverend Dr. Abdel Masih Istafanous, Synod of the Nile of the Evangelical Church, Egypt

Dr. Milan Opocensky, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

Dr. Jana Opocenska, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

Dr. George Sabra, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

Reverend J. Jayakiran Sebastian, Church of South India

Dr. Eukgene Turner, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr. Harold Vogelaar, Reformed Church in America

Dr. Rebecca Weaver, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr. H.S. Wilson, Church of South India

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX – REFORMED DIALOGUE
SECOND SESSION

'Kerk en Wereld', Driebergen, The Netherlands

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met from 10th to 15th September 1994 at 'Kerk en Wereld', Driebergen, The Netherlands, for a theological dialogue hosted by the Netherlands Reformed Church. An earlier meeting at St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt in May 1993 laid the ground for this meeting. The sessions were opened by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III (Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark) and Professor Dr. Milan Opocensky (General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches). The delegates attended a reception held in their honour by the Council of Churches of the Netherlands.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III gave an address on Christology. Papers were presented by seven participants on the following themes:

- The Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries
- Survey of the recent bilateral agreements between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Eastern Orthodox Churches and other Christian communions
- The bilateral agreements between the Oriental Orthodox and the Eastern Orthodox Church: a reformed response
- Tradition and its role in the Syrian Orthodox Church
- Holy Scripture and Tradition - Reformed perspective
- Holy Scripture: its use and misuse from an Oriental Orthodox perspective
- The use and abuse of the Scriptures in relation to mission, evangelism and proselytism from a Reformed perspective.

A major achievement at this meeting was the Agreed Statement on Christology, whereby the two sides delved deeply into the common patristic roots of both traditions and reached mutual understanding in this area. This statement is to be offered to the authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and to the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches for their consideration and action. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III has already expressed his satisfaction with the outcome.

A further important area that received considerable attention was the understanding of Holy Scripture and Tradition. It was agreed that this subject needs further discussion in the future meetings.

The proceedings took place in a spirit of Christian love and mutual openness. Oriental Orthodox delegates were present from the Coptic Orthodox Church (Egypt), the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch (Syria), the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East (India), and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. There was no representative from the Armenian Orthodox Church due to the death of the Armenian Patriarch, His Holiness Vasken I, Catholicos of all Armenia.

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches was represented by delegates from the Netherlands Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in Germany, the Reformed Church in America, the Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Evangelical Union of Lebanon, the Church of South India, and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Plans have been made for the next meeting. The topics to be discussed have been determined. They are:

- Understanding of the Holy Scripture and its inspiration in our respective traditions.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in the early Church: the question of the normative status of the early Church for our respective traditions.
- The role of present historical context in the interpretation of Holy Scripture – the hermeneutical problem.

Included is also a recommendation to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches regarding the future printing of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

At the conclusion of the meeting there was a time of silence and prayer in honour of His Holiness Vasken I.

Areas of Emerging Convergence on Holy Scripture and Tradition

Both sides acknowledge the deep relationship between the early traditions (the total life) of the Church, as guided by the Holy Spirit, and the emergence of written Holy Scripture. The incarnate Word of God is both the source and the judge of the tradition and the Holy Scripture of the Church that bear witness to Him.

The Oriental Orthodox distinguish the Tradition of the entire Church regarding matters of faith from local traditions of the various churches. They understand both Tradition and Holy Scripture as constituting on reality emerging from the continuing life of the Church. Tradition must be essentially in agreement with the intention of the Holy Scripture, and the authority of the fathers of the Church is recognised from their acceptance by the Church as a whole. The Reformed side respects this understanding.

The Reformed Churches affirm the critical distance of Holy Scripture in relation to tradition. The Church must always examine and reform their traditions in the light of Holy Scripture. The Oriental Orthodox side respects this emphasis.

Both sides agreed on the normative function of Holy Scripture for the life of the Church. The Word incarnate makes use of human means, including human language and culture. So Holy Scripture and its correct interpretation, guided by tradition, witnesses to the Word of God in our different contexts.

Areas that need further clarification:

- Our concepts of history and revelation.
- Methods of interpreting Holy Scripture and evaluating tradition.

- How do our historical contexts affect our understanding of Holy Scripture?
- The question of canonical books in our respective traditions.

Suggested topics for future meetings:

- Understanding of Holy Scripture and its inspiration in our respective traditions.
- The function of theological reflection and the work of theologians in our traditions.
- Understandings of revelation and history.
- The work of the Holy Spirit in the early Church: the question of the normative status of the early Church for our respective traditions.
- Holy Scripture and tradition and how they are correlated.
    - What do we mean by 'tradition?'
    - Results from previous ecumenical meetings, eg. At Montreal; see the book edited by Ellen Flesseman-van Leer.
- The role of present historical context in the interpretation of Holy Scripture – the hermeneutical problem.
- Introduction to liturgical practices of the Oriental Orthodox Church on the premises of our next meeting.
- Our views on the sacraments and the ministry of the Church (for a later meeting).

Agreed Statement With The World Alliance Of Reformed Churches 1994

In our search for a common understanding of the differences in Christology that have existed between us, we have thought it appropriate to focus on the Formula of Union, AD 433. This formula represents an agreement reached by Antioch and Alexandria following the Third Ecumenical Council in 431 and, as such, provides a common point of departure for both parties. We find the interpretation in this agreement to be in accord with the Christological doctrines of both our traditions.

We confess our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, consisting of a rational soul and a body, begotten of the Father before all ages according to His divinity, the same, in the fullness of time, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, according to His humanity; the same consubstantial with the Father according to His divinity, and consubstantial with us according to His humanity. For a union has been made of two natures. For this cause we confess one Christ, one Lord.

In accordance with this sense of the unconfused union, we confess the holy Virgin to be Theotokos, because God the Word became incarnate and was made human, and from the very conception united to Himself the temple taken from her. As to the expressions concerning the Lord in the Gospels and the Epistles, we are aware that theologians understand some as common, as relating to one Person, and others they distinguish as relating to two natures, explaining those that befit the divine nature according to the divinity of Christ and those of a humble sort to His humanity (based on the Formula of Union).

The four adverbs to qualify the mystery of the hypostatic union belong to our common Christological tradition: “without commingling” (or confusions – asyngchytos), “without change” (atreptos), “without separation” (achoristos) and “without division” (adiairetos). Those among us who speak of two natures in Christ are justified in doing so since they do not thereby deny their inseparable, indivisible union; similarly, those among us who speak of one united divine-human nature in Christ are justified in doing so since they do not thereby deny the continuing dynamic presence in Christ of the divine and the human, without change, without confusion.

Both sides agree in rejecting the teaching that separates or divides the human nature, both soul and body in Christ, from His divine nature or reduces the union of the natures of the level of conjoining. Both sides agree in rejecting the teachings that confuses the human nature in Christ with the divine nature so that the former is absorbed in the latter and ceases to exist.

The perfect union of divinity and humanity in the incarnate Word is essential for the salvation of the human race: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

In offering this statement, we recognise the mystery of God’s act in Christ and seek to express that we have shared the same authentic Christological faith in the one incarnate Lord.

We submit this statement to the authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and to the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches for their consideration and action.

The meeting was honoured by the presence of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark. His Holiness gave a speech in the opening session and participated in some other sessions.

Participants in the Second Session

Oriental Orthodox

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy (Co-Chair), Coptic Orthodox Church

His Grace Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Dr Kondothra M. George, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

His Grace Bishop Moussa, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Eminence Metropolitan Mar Eustathius Matta Roham, Syrian Orthodox Church

Reverend Seife Selassie Yohannes, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Reformed

Dr Milan Opocensky (Co-Chair), Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

Dr Karel Blei, The Netherlands Reformed Church

Dr Silke-Petra Bergjan, Evangelical-Reformed Church, Germany

Dr Christopher Kaiser, Reformed Church in America

Dr Peter McEnhill, Church of Scotland

Dr George Sabra, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

Reverend J. Jayakiran Sebastian, Church of South India

Dr Eugene Turner, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr Rebecca Weaver, Presbyterian Church (USA)

WARC Staff

Dr H. S. Wilson, Church of South India

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX – REFORMED DIALOGUE
THIRD SESSION

Sophia Centre, Kottayam, Kerala, India

At the invitation of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the delegations of both families gathered to continue their theological dialogue. The meeting took place from 10th-15th January 1997 at the Sophia Centre, Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam. This is the third meeting in our ongoing theological dialogue.

The delegates of both families wish to express their deep gratitude for the hospitality they received from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, specifically His Holiness the Catholicos Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews II, His Eminence Metropolitan Mathews Mar Severios, His Grace Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Father K. M. George, the staff and the students of the Orthodox Theological Seminary, Mar Gregorios Orthodox Christian Student Movement of India and the people of this ancient Church.

The meeting started by expressing condolences at the demise of His Holiness Baselius Mar Thoma Mathews I, His Beatitude Baselius Paulos II, His Grace Mar Gregorios, The Metropolitan of Delhi and Principal of the Orthodox Seminary, Kottayam, and Dr. M. M. Thomas from the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, former Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

At the second meeting an agreement concerning Christology was reached, signed and submitted to the churches for consideration. The present meeting dealt with two issues: "The Holy Scripture: its authority and its inspiration' and 'The function of theological reflection and the work of theologians' in the Orthodox and the Reformed traditions.

The meeting started by listening to two presentations: 'The history of the Orthodox Syrian Church in India' and 'A brief history of the Reformed Churches in India', by His Grace Geevarghese Mar Coorilos and Dr Franklyn J. Balasundaram respectively.

On Saturday, 11 January, two papers were presented on the following topic: 'Understanding of the Holy Scripture: Its authority and its inspiration': The perspective of the Orthodox tradition, was presented by His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy along with His Grace Bishop Moussa, and in the perspective of the Reformed tradition by Reverend Dr. Karel Blei.

The Oriental Orthodox View

The presentation of His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy and His Grace Bishop Moussa covered the following issues:

- The definition of Inspiration
- Terms related to Inspiration
- Inadequate theories of Inspiration
- The Positions of Biblical Rationalists and of Liberal Protestants
- The Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration

- The objections to this view of Inspiration

Here is the summary of the paper:

- We believe that the Bible is the word of God and is inspired by Him. Inspiration is the divine action by the Holy Spirit on the mind of the sacred writers, whereby the Scriptures were not merely their own, but the word of God. The Bible does not merely contain, but is the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 2:21) 'all (literally: every) Scripture is inspired by God.'
- We received the Scriptures through the church tradition, but the Scriptures have authority over the church. The Holy Bible should be binding upon our minds, consciences and wills.
- Scriptures are not mere products of human intellect, natural or intuitional inspiration; otherwise, the Bible would be just a human product.
- Nor do we believe in 'Partial Inspiration', which is valid only in matters of faith and practice, and not valid in scientific and historical matters. The Holy Spirit secured the writer in every word. He did not only secure the thoughts, but also the words of the Bible. Supernatural things mentioned in the Bible, like the virgin birth of the Lord, Resurrection, Ascension, resurrection of the dead and final resurrection, are true, because we believe in an infinite God, Almighty and Omnipotent.
- Inspiration does not cancel the human element, but the Holy Spirit spoke through living human beings, using human languages, tools, knowledge, and style, but securing them from making any mistakes whatsoever.
- The Bible constitutes a specific unity although written by more than 40 writers, over a period of 1600 years, because the Holy Spirit was inspiring and securing them. Thousands of supernatural prophesies mentioned in the Old Testament were fulfilled, and all the archeological discoveries proved the authenticity of the Bible.
- The Bible should be read in veneration, with an open mind and heart, and with a will ready to interact with God, believe in His promises and obey His commandments. So then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

A contribution was given by Reverend Father Dirayr Panossian from the Armenian Apostolic Church of Cilicia, as follows:

The Bible read in the liturgy carries the presence of God, the Breath of God, and therefore is venerated in our churches by being put on the altar, read in a spirit of devotion while standing, kissed, having candles of light around. We read several chapters from the Old and New Testaments in every liturgy. All our doctrines, traditions, rituals should be biblical in essence.

The Reformed View

Dr. Karel Blei presented a paper. Here is the summary:

- Like the Orthodox, Reformed Protestants respect tradition, especially the Tradition of the first five centuries. In this tradition, they find the expressions and summary of the Gospel as it has been proclaimed to us in the Scripture.

- In their understanding, Scripture is the ultimate standard for deciding on what is and what is not the true Christian faith. While the tradition of the church is *norma normata*, Scripture is *norma normans*.
- To be precise, it is not so much Scripture as such, as its content that matters. It is the Gospel that speaks to us and wants to engage us, that again and again becomes God's word to us.
- In the Reformed view, the authority of Scripture is not based on any ('authoritative') church decision of church process. Reformed do not dispute that faith preceded Scripture, nor that it was the early church that (through its Council decisions) established Scripture as the concrete collection of canonical books we have today. They emphasize, however, that what the church did in establishing Scripture essentially was an act of acknowledgment and obedience. It was and is God's Word, as we hear it from the Bible that imposed and imposes itself as authoritative.
- In that context the Reformed also speak of scripture as being (divinely) inspired. The view that this inspiration is to be seen as a work of verbal dictation came up only at a later stage of the Reformed tradition. Originally and essentially to the Reformed, the inspiration of the Scripture was not the basis of its authority. Rather, the idea of inspiration was their way of acknowledging the authority.
- Further explaining this unique authority of Scripture, the Reformed also spoke about the 'properties of Scripture, such as its sufficiency, inspiration and perspicuity.' By this perspicuity is meant that the overall witness of the Scripture is clear in itself and that each single text, even any difficult text, should and can be explained in the light of this overall witness: only Scripture is its own interpreter.
- In the nineteenth century, historical-critical Bible study approached the Bible as a purely human book. This may be an adequate approach. However, it surely highlights an aspect that the Reformed understanding should not be forgotten. The Bible indeed is a human book and as such it is the book in and through which God's Word is coming to us. The Reformed accept the historical-critical Bible study as useful and helpful in understanding the Bible's message.
- Karl Barth, in his *Church Dogmatics*, spoke about the threefold manifestation of the Word of God: the Word as proclamation, the Word as Scripture and the Word incarnate. These three manifestations are linked together. This may help us in understanding Scripture, its authority and inspiration.

Despite the differences that can be seen in the views of the two sides, mentioned above, yet the discussions showed a common understanding concerning the following points:

- Chronologically the tradition preceded the writing of the Scripture. The church does not have authority over the Bible; She is the servant of the Bible, which is inspired by God.
- The Scriptures witness to the Word of God, i.e. Our Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:39).
- The church is built "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20).

On Monday the 13th of January the second topic was presented by both families and was discussed. It was **'The function of theological reflection and the work of the theologians'** in both traditions.

The Reformed View

Dr. Milan Opocensky presented a paper. Here is the summary:

- In the Reformed understanding theology is a reflection of faith. The starting point is God's revelation in Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures.
- Theology is a function of the church and is in the service of the church. The ecclesial character of theology should not limit its freedom. Theology is bound by the object of its work. Its task is to purify and to deepen the witness to the triune God.
- Theology examines and analyses to what extent the church and its members are faithful to the living Christ who is the focus f the preaching. Theological reflection is entrusted to every church member.
- Theological work is undertaken in obedience and unceasing listening. In the first place, we listen to the prophets and apostles and, secondly, to the cloud of witnesses throughout the history of the Christian Church.
- Theology does not flee before science and welcomes scientific critique. By its work theology contributes to scientific research and it is a part of broader cultural activity.
- Theology is free and ultimately responds to the calling and claim of the Gospel. However, it is not self-sufficient nor does it feel superior to the other human activities. It is a gift of grace that God reveals himself to us and that we can give an account of the hope in us.
- Theology is not the wisdom of an onlooker but it is the outcome of an existential struggle. However, theological knowledge has to be guided by Christ's love, which surpasses all knowledge.
- Theology is a self-examination of faith and helps the faith to be based on truth and reality.
- Theology has a dialogical character. In order to serve the church members living in the contemporary world, theology has a dialogue with philosophy, psychology, sociology and natural sciences. The love for our neighbors binds us to have a dialogue with the world and its knowledge. In doing theology we have to listen for different voices, especially those who were ignored (women, Dalits, gypsies, etc).
- Theology is practical and aims at a renewal of the church and change of the world. The consequence of the Word of God is a creative transformation. The lasting task of theology is to free the Word from all forces which may enslave, imprison and domesticate it.
- Theology is a sustained and critical reflection of an engaged participant. It is an articulation and interpretation of questions of personal and communal identity. Theology has political and social consequences. It should not be misused to legitimize the existing *status quo*.
- Theology has an impossible task to express the reality of the triune God. Reformed theology is aware of its limitations, therefore, any theological statement is considered to be preliminary, tentative and partial. As theologians we approach our task with prayer and in the spirit of repentance and humility.

- *Theologia reformata et semper reformanda* (Theology reformed and in need of being constantly reformed) – this is the main characteristic of Reformed theology and its birthright which should not be forfeited.

The Oriental Orthodox View

Father K. M. George presented a paper. Here is the summary:

'Theology' (from *theologia*) in the Oriental Orthodox tradition, refers primarily to the triune mystery of God. At this level of 'theology' the church worships the Holy Trinity and does not pretend to inquire into the divine mystery with human conceptual and linguistic tools. So all theology is doxology, praising the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – the triune God, in joy and gratitude. Since God is essentially incomprehensible, the spiritual tradition of the Oriental churches recommends total silence before the awe-inspiring reality of the divine presence.

In the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, our Saviour, the ineffable God manifested great compassion for humanity. As human beings are given the grace of perceiving the incarnate God with their external senses, we are also given the privilege of talking about Jesus Christ and the divine plan for salvation. The Gospels bear witness to Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. The prophets and the Apostles proclaimed him in different cultures and languages of the world. The Disciples of Christ, like the Apostles John and Paul, interpreted the mystery of our salvation making use of the cultural and intellectual categories of their contemporary world. What they did for the proclamation and interpretation of the Gospel is a model for theology in the church. Thus in our act of theology we are also encouraged by the Apostles to announce and interpret the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world by using all the gifts of God including, science and the wisdom of this world.

At this level of oikonomia (economy) where we participate in the compassionate love of God for humanity, we can use human concepts, languages, literary-intellectual gifts and human imagination, as long as they bear witness to Christ and edify the Church, the Body of Christ.

A theologian in the Oriental Orthodox Church is called upon to be a teacher to instruct the people in the way of the Word Incarnate and to reflect on the meaning of the reality of our daily existence in the light of the Gospel. A theologian's power of speech (*logos*) has to be derived from the true Word of God, the *Logos* incarnate. The quality of a theologian's work is measured by the degree to which the theologian becomes Christ-like, conforming to the image of God as well as possible.

A theologian has constantly to call upon the Holy Spirit so that he/she can be guided into all truth. Listening to the mind of the worshipping community, the Body of Christ, and being rooted in the faith of the church are essential conditions for the proper guidance of the theologian. A theologian's authority is dependent on the authority of the Holy Scripture, the faith of the worshipping community and the Christian quality of his/her personal life.

Extensive discussions took place on the two papers. Despite the differences realized, points of convergence emerged:

- Almighty God's Eternal Divine Essence cannot be comprehended. Human reason can only approach God when illumined by the Holy Spirit, through prayers and Scripture.
- Theology is not only an act of thinking but should be practically related to life and to our salvation.
- A Christian theologian is one who is rooted in the faith community and nurtured by it.
- Theologians are called upon to express the beauty and splendor of the divine presence in their theological work. Story and poetry, music and iconography, art and architecture, rites and rituals have been used in various Christian traditions precisely to bring out this aesthetic dimension of theology.
- Our ultimate goal is to reach a common theological understanding, which is based on our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the Holy Scriptures and is related to the needs and sufferings of humanity at large.

Plans for the future

The delegates agreed to hold the fourth session of the dialogue at the Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, USA from 10th-15th January, 1998. The theological theme to be discussed at this session is 'The nature and mission of the church.' Two papers each from the Orthodox and Reformed perspective on 'The nature of the church' and 'The mission of the church' will be presented at this dialogue.

Participants in the Third Session

Oriental Orthodox

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy (Co-chair), Coptic Orthodox Church

His Grace Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

His Grace Bishop Moussa, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Grace Bishop Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Apostolic Church

Very Reverend Dirayr Panossian, Armenian Apostolic Church

Dr. Kondothra M. George, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Invited Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Delegates:

His Eminence Metropolitan Philopos Mar Eusebius

Mr. P. C. Abraham

Mrs. P. Lukose

Father John Mathews

Father John Thomas

Reformed

Dr. Milan Opocensky (Co-chair), Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

Reverend Dr. Karel Blei, The Netherlands Reformed Church

Dr. Christopher Kaiser, Reformed Church of America

Dr. Peter McEnhill, Church of Scotland

Reverend J. Jayakiran Sebastian, Church of South India

Dr. Eugene Turner, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr. Rebecca Weaver, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Reverend Emile Zaki, Synod of the Nile of the Evangelical Church, Egypt

Consultant

Dr. Franklyn Balasundaram, Church of South India

WARC Staff

Dr. H. S. Wilson, Church of South India

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX – REFORMED DIALOGUE
FOURTH SESSION

Union Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, Virginia, USA

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches met form 9th-15th January 1998, at Union Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, USA for the fourth session in their theological dialogue. Through this dialogue the delegates seek a deeper understanding of one another's traditions and hope to find some points of common agreement between two traditions that have been separated for fifteen hundred years but which share a common faith in Jesus Christ. Already this process has borne some fruit with the production of a common statement on Christology, which is to be submitted to their respective church authorities for approval.

The meeting was opened by Dr Milan Opocensky, General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the delegates were welcomed to UTS/PSCE by its President, the Reverend Dr. Louis Weeks, on behalf of the school, and by the Reverend Dr. Eugene Turner, the Director of the Department of Governing Bodies, Ecumenical and Agency Relationships, on behalf of the PC (USA). The sessions were co-chaired by Dr. Milan Opocensky and His Grace Bishop Aykazian of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In addition to the talks themselves, the delegates enjoyed the many opportunities to experience the hospitality that was extended to them by local institutions and churches. Particular mention must be made to President Weeks and the Reverend Dr. Rebecca Weaver who co-hosted a dinner in the delegates' honour and also of St. James Armenian Apostolic Church who extended the same privilege later in the week.

Following the previous discussions on Christology, Scripture and Tradition, this meeting focused upon the Nature of the Church and the Mission of the Church. One paper one each topic was presented by each tradition. It was realised that the traditional categories of East and West were inadequate in the contemporary historical context where they have acquired different connotations. (It is a revealing indication of the geographical diversity of the contemporary church traditions that the furthest most eastern delegate to this dialogue was a Reformed participant from Bangalore, and the furthest most western delegate was a Coptic Bishop from Dallas). Each paper was subjected to searching and critical discussion and points of convergence and divergence were highlighted. The draft common statement represents those areas in which the delegates found themselves to be in closest agreement. It will also serve as a basis of a draft working document for future discussions and will be expanded to incorporate the previous work on Christology, Scripture and Tradition, and the yet to be discussed subject of Ministry.

Participants in the Fourth Session

Oriental Orthodox

His Grace Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

His Grace Metropolitan Mor Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

His Grace Bishop Mor Cyril Ehprem Karim, Syrian Orthodox Church

His Grace Bishop Youssef, Coptic Orthodox Church

His Grace Bishop Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Apostolic Church

His Grace Bishop Dirayr Panossian, Armenian Apostolic Church

Dr. Kondothra M. George, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Reformed

Dr. Milan Opocensky, Evangelical Chuch of Czech Brethren

Dr. Christopher Kaiser, Reformed Church in America

Dr. Peter McEnhill, Church of Scotland

Dr. J. Jayakiran Sebastian, Church of South India

Dr. George Sabra, National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon

Dr. Eugene Turner, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Dr. Rebecca Weaver, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Visitors

Reverend Dr. C. S. Calian, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Reverend Dr. Victor Makari, Presbyterian Church (USA)

WARC Staff

Dr. H. S. Wilson, Church of South India

CHAPTER 7

COPTIC ORTHODOX AND LUTHERAN CHURCH DIALOGUE

The Evangelical Church of Germany (EKG), which gathers all the Protestant denominations in Germany, including the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, sought dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The first unofficial meeting took place at the Coptic Orthodox Monastery of St. Anthony in Kroffelbach in Germany. The main issue discussed was the Seven Sacraments.

The second dialogue took place in Hanover Germany in November 1991. CHRISTOLOGY was the focus of discussion and debate. At the conclusion of the conference a joint communique was issued.

The EKD was keen on commencing dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox churches, which had communities in Germany.

CHAPTER 8

COPTIC ORTHODOX AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DIALOGUE

At the invitation of H.H. Pope Shenouda III the first theological dialogue between the Coptic and Presbyterian churches was held at the Papal Residence in January 16, 1989.

The Coptic delegation:

H.H. Pope Shenouda
H.G. Bishop Arsanius
H.G. Bishop Benyamin
H.G. Bishop Moussa
H.G. Bishop Paula
H.G. Bishop Tadros
H.G. Bishop Reweiss
H.G. Bishop Besantee
H.G. Bishop Abraam
H.G. Bishop Morcos
Dr. Shaker Bassillious
Dr. Maurice Tawadros

The Presbyterian delegation:

Rev. Dr. Samuel Habib
Rev. Dr. Fayaz Fares
Rev. Dr. Bakki Sadek
Rev. Dr. Menassa Abdel Nour
Rev. Dr. Makram Naguib
Rev. Dr. Safwat Albayadi

TOPICS ADDRESSED:

- What is our understanding of salvation?
- How and when do we obtain salvation?

At the conclusion of discussions and debates a 10-point statement was issued:

1. Salvation is a life long story and not a once in a lifetime experience.
2. Salvation is constructed on the blood of Jesus Christ.
3. There is a strong relationship between grace and struggle in the life of the Christian to attain a life of Holiness.
4. The faith that is alive must be mixed with love in the life of the faithful.
5. The main purpose of the church is the salvation of Man.
6. We affirm that Baptism is death in and resurrection in Christ.

7. We affirm the importance of baptising children upon the faith of their parents.
8. We affirm the importance of faith as a means to salvation.
9. Faith proceeds baptism.
10. The Holy Spirit works in the sacraments.

SECOND THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

Delegates from the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Presbyterian Church assembled for at the Papal Residence in Cairo on Tuesday, 27 Feb 1989.

The main topic for discussion was baptism.

The following 5-point statement was issued:

1. Baptism is a holy sacrament established by Christ essential for the work of the Holy Spirit to develop.
2. Baptism is conducted in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit the one God.
3. The Church baptises children on the faith of their parents to accept the responsibility of raising the children according to the Christian faith and fear of God.
4. The church baptises persons other than infants provided they declare their Christian faith.
5. Baptism must be performed by water and full immersion.

THIRD THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE

On Feb 12, 1990 the third theological dialogue between the Coptic Orthodox church and Presbyterian church convened at the Papal residence in Cairo to canvass the issues pertaining to salvation and baptism and the future directions of the dialogue.

BAPTISM:

1. Sacrament.
2. Performed in the name of the trinity.
3. Child Baptism on faith of their children.
4. Full emersion and not sprinkling is required.
5. Elderly must make profession of faith.

CHAPTER 9

CONSTRUCTING BRIDGES OF LOVE

Fostering amicable relations with other churches has been of great significance to the Coptic Church's ecumenical endeavors. The Coptic Orthodox Church has taken every opportunity of hosting and attending meetings to further steps towards visible unity. In so doing, the church constructs bridges of love to overcome walls of divisions, suspicions and fears, which have accumulated for centuries.

Oriental Orthodox Churches Conference- January 1965

The conference was held at the initiative and at the invitation of the Emperor Haile Selassie. It was the first meeting of Oriental heads of churches since 431 AD. The conference held on 15th-21st January 1965, was preceded by a period of consultation (9th-14th January). The conference adopted decisions embodied in three resolutions and a long declaration, comprising a preamble and six chapters:

- The Modern World and the Churches
- Co-operation on Church Education
- Co-operation on Evangelism
- Relations with other Churches
- Machinery for the Maintenance of Permanent Relations among the Churches
- Statement on Peace and Justice in the World

A standing committee with an interim secretariat was appointed by the conference and held several meetings in the following years. The conference concluded with a statement affirming the commitment of the Oriental Orthodox Churches to seek the restoration of communion with the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Part of the statement read as follows:

Though in our concern for the reunion of Christendom we have in our minds the reunion of all churches, from the point of view of closer affinity in faith and spiritual kinship with us we need to develop different approaches in our relationship with them. This consideration leads us to take up the question of our relation with the Eastern Orthodox Churches as a first step. We shared the same faith and communion until the Council of Chalcedon in 451, and then the division took place.

Concerning the Christological controversy that caused the division, we hope that common studies in a spirit of mutual understanding can shed light on our understanding of each other's positions. So we have decided that we should institute formally a fresh study of the Christological doctrine in its historical setting to be

undertaken by our scholars, taking into account the earlier studies on this subject as well as the informal consultations held in connection with the meetings of the World Council of Churches. Meanwhile, we express our agreement that our churches could seek a closer relationship and cooperate with the Eastern Orthodox Churches in practical affairs.

Meeting of the Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs

In order to deepen the historical, theological and ecclesiastical bonds between the Coptic, Armenian and Syrian Orthodox Churches the respective heads of churches decided to meet annually. This strengthens the fellowship between the churches and monitors their ecumenical involvement at regional and international levels. The preliminary meeting was in Lebanon at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, in June 1996.

The first official meeting occurred in Egypt in March 1998, then Syria in March 1999, followed by Lebanon in May 2000 and then Egypt in March 2001. We publish the Joint Statements issued by the heads of churches, which includes programs for implementation. A standing committee was also set up to brief and facilitate the meetings.

PRELIMINARY MEETING OF ORIENTAL ORTHODOX PATRIARCHS OF THE MIDDLE EAST – LEBANON JUNE 1996

In June 1996 the three Patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: Pope Shenouda III of the Coptic Orthodox Church; Mar Ignatius Zakka I, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church; Catholicos Aram I of the Armenian Orthodox Church, met in Lebanon and issued a 7 point statement.

We, the heads of Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East, Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria, Zakka I, Patriarch of Antioch and Aram I, Catholicos of Armenian (Cilicia), meeting in the Catholicate of Armenia in Lebanon on Friday, 14th June 1996, thank God who provided this rich opportunity to be together in prayer and reflection, and to explore ways to enhance our ecumenical work in our age. We therefore wish to emphasis the following:

1. It is time the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which consist of Coptic, Syrian, Armenian and Ethiopian, express effectively the unity of faith and their dealings with each other in all areas and in different ways.

2. We have to follow, with a strong will and faith, and renew our work through the ecumenical movement frame at an international and regional level and take one opinion as members of one family especially in the most important issues.

3. Our churches have deep roots in this region of the world; therefore we cannot stand with our hands tied regarding the issues that are important to this region. We strongly express our solidarity and support the Just Arabic Issue and agree to its permanent and comprehensive peace, which will be realised by restoring all the occupied Arabic territories to their owners. We commit ourselves to the issue of Jerusalem, so we can keep the rights of the Christians and Muslims together.

4. Our churches have lived along side with the churches of the region through the generations, side by side with the Muslims in an atmosphere of love and peace. The living dialogue with the Muslims is an important part of our lives, so we must follow this pattern through our day-to-day lives.

5. We appeal strongly and necessarily to continuation of the cooperation between all the churches of the region, especially in this critical time. The churches should be an example in expressing the Christian unity and in this field should have an influential and pioneering role for the Middle East Council of Churches, which, through it, can help to open new horizons for cooperation with each other, to incarnate the unity of our lives.

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE HEADS ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (ST. BISHOY MONASTERY, WADI EL-NATROUN, EGYPT, 10TH-11TH MARCH, 1998)

Common Declaration

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In March 1998, all three heads of church met in Egypt and produced common declaration and set up a joint standing committee to follow up progress between the churches. In their Common Declaration the three Patriarchs stated:

"We, **Pope Shenouda III**, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark; **Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I**, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and **Catholicos Aram I**, Catholicos of the Armenians of the Great House of Cilicia, and the members of the preparatory committee of this meeting who are with us, give thanks to God for bringing us together at the Monastery of the great St. Bishoy in Wadi El-Natroun, Egypt on Tuesday and Wednesday, 10th and 11th of March 1998. We have gathered together as Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East to reaffirm our unity of faith and our common ministry in the life of our people in the Middle East and all over the world, and explore together the most efficient ways and means to strengthen our common presence and witness in the region.

On the basis of our Joint Agreed Statement issued on the 14th of June 1996 at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, in Antelias, Lebanon, we studied a number of issues and questions of common concern. Hereunder we mention briefly some of the issues and perspectives that acquired an important place in our deliberations.

First: In our common witness to our faith in the Only Begotten Son, the Incarnate Logos, our Saviour Jesus Christ, we hold firmly to the Apostolic Faith handed down to us from the Apostolic Fathers through the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, from the three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD) and Ephesus (431 AD), and through the teachings of the saintly fathers of our three Churches who have struggled in keeping the doctrines of our churches and the teachings of these Councils. In fact, our Churches have strived throughout their history and at the cost of the blood of their martyrs to keep intact the teachings of the Council of Ephesus concerning the incarnation of the Logos based on the teachings of St. Cyril the Great (444 AD) as well as the decisions of the said Council. We want to mention here from among our Holy Fathers, especially St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Dioscorus of Alexandria, Mar Philixenus of Mabbugh, Mar Jacob Baradeus and St. Nerses the Gracious who have kept firm the Apostolic Faith and strongly defended the orthodoxy of the teachings of the first three Ecumenical Councils.

Second: The teachings of St. Cyril the Great constitute the foundation of the Christology of our Churches. It was on the basis of these teachings that the Committee of the Joint Official Theological Dialogue between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches was able to formulate a joint agreement that is now under study by the Holy Synods of both families. In fact, the following statement was mentioned at the beginning of this agreement: "We have founded our common ground

(ie. In the Apostolic Faith) in the formula of our common father Cyril of Alexandria: 'Mia Physis tou Theo Logou sesarkoumeni – **One Incarnate Nature of God the Logos**' and in his dictum that 'it is sufficient for the confession of our true and irreproachable faith to say and confess that the Holy Virgin St. Mary is the Mother of God, the **Theotokos**.'"

Third: In accordance with and in faithful obedience to the faith, doctrine and teachings of our Holy Fathers, we firmly restate our common rejection of all the heretical teachings of Arius, Sabillius, Apollinarius, Macedonius, Paul of Samosata, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, Eutyches and of all those who follow these and other heretics and propagate their erroneous and heretical teachings.

Fourth: We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ the Logos, Son of God, came in His own person. He did not assume a human person, but He Himself, by hypostatic union took full and perfect human nature; rational soul and body, without sin, from the Virgin St. Mary, through the Holy Spirit. He made His own humanity one incarnate nature and one incarnate hypostasis with His divinity in the very moment of incarnation through a true natural and hypostatic union. His divinity did not separate from His humanity even for a moment or a twinkling of an eye. This union is superior to description and perception. When we speak of 'One incarnate nature of the Word of God' we do not mean His divinity alone or His humanity alone ie. A single nature, but we speak of one united divine-human nature in Christ without change, without mixture, without confusion, without division and without separation. The properties of each nature are not changed and destroyed because of the union; the natures being distinguished from each other in thought alone.

Fifth: We agreed on the necessity of maintaining a common position of faith in all theological dialogues. Thus, henceforth, we will engage as a family of Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East in any theological dialogue with other churches and Christian world communions. We hope that this basic principle will also be accepted by other beloved churches of our family, as is happening now in many theological dialogues.

Sixth: We reaffirm the vital importance of establishing more organised and close collaboration between our churches to ensure the oneness of our faith, our full communion in the ecclesial and liturgical life, and our partnership in evangelism, diakonia and in witnessing Christ the Lord in the Christian world and to the entire humanity. We believe that this goal could be achieved by several means, some of which are:

1. To meet periodically and regularly every year.
2. To have a common doctrinal and theological attitude in all theological dialogues.
3. To have a common position on issues of vital concern for our churches in the Middle East Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, Pro Oriente and other ecumenical organisations.
4. To exchange teachers and students among the seminaries and theological institutes of our churches.
5. To exchange pastoral letters dealing with matters of faith and issues related to the witness, mission, evangelism and diakonia.

6. To exchange books, periodicals and publications pertaining to Christian education, theological formation and moral teachings of our churches.
7. To exchange information related to the various activities of our churches.
8. To take a common stand on issues of justice, peace and human rights.
9. To encourage our clergy and people to establish close collaboration on the diocesan and parish levels in the Middle East and everywhere.

Seventh: We hope that through our common efforts the scope of our meetings will be widened in the near future to include other beloved churches of the Oriental Orthodox family, in continuation with the historic meeting of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1965.

Eighth: We wish to meet periodically with the Heads of Eastern Orthodox family to enhance our theological dialogue and strengthen further our ecumenical collaboration on local, regional and global levels.

Ninth: We discussed the celebration of the 2000 anniversary of the birth of Christ our Lord, and gave a special responsibility to the Standing Committee to organise properly this important event.

Tenth: We discussed the prevailing situation in the Middle East. The difficulties that the peace process is facing actually are due to Israel's uncompromising and hardline policy. We shall together exert strong and continuos efforts through the worldwide ecumenical fellowship and in international community so that the people of the Arab world may regain their violated rights in Jerusalem, Palestine, Golan and South of Lebanon. It is also our demand that the embargo and sanctions imposed on the people of Iraq be lifted immediately. We pray that peace with justice prevails throughout the world.

Eleventh: A Standing Committee was appointed by us to implement the decisions of this meeting. This committee shall meet twice a year. The members of the Standing Committee are: H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy and H.G. Bishop Moussa from the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria; H.E. Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and H.E. Metropolitan Mar Theophilus George Saliba from the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch; H.G. Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian from the Armenian Orthodox Church (the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia).

At the conclusion of our meeting we joyfully present our thanks to Almighty God who has promoted and sustained our endeavours. We ask Him to always assist our efforts for the well being of our churches, for the unity of all churches and the salvation of the world.

We thank the Church of Alexandria for its love and kind hospitality. We also thank all who prayed and worked for the success of this meeting. Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever Amen.

THE SECOND MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (ST. EPHREM MONASTERY, MA'ARAT SAYDNAYA, DAMASCUS, SYRIA, FEBRUARY 10-12, 1999).

COMMON DECLARATION

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, **Pope Shenouda III**, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, **Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I**, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and **Catholicos Aram I**, Catholicos of the Armenians of the Great House of Cilicia, and the members of the Standing Committee H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy, H.E. Metroplitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, H.E. Metropolitan Theophilus George Saliba, H.G. Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian, also H.E. Metropolitan Athanasius Ehphem Barsoom, H.E. Metropolitan Abraham, H.E. Severius Melke Murad, H.G. Bishop Serapion and H.G. Bishop Julius Kuriakos who are with us, giving thanks to God for bringing us together. We have gathered together for the second time as Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East to re-affirm our unity of faith and our common ministry in the life of our people in the Middle East and all over the world, and explore together the most efficient ways and means to strengthen our common presence and witness in the region.

On the basis of our previous Common Declaration made on March 11, 1998, at the Monastery of Saint Bishoy in Wadi El-Natroun, Egypt, we assessed our work together after our last meeting and we studied issues and concerns of common interest with the firm commitment of deepening our unity of faith. Hereunder we mention briefly some of the issues, perspectives and decisions that acquired an important place in our deliberations.

First: Congratulations

a). Pope Shenouda III and Catholicos Aram I congratulate His Holiness Patriarch Zakka I for his election as one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches. We are confident that His Holiness will efficiently represent the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Middle East in the WCC.

b). Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I congratulate His Holiness Catholicos Aram I for his re-election as moderator of the Central Committee and the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches. They deeply appreciate the significant role of His Holiness in the ecumenical movement and his continuous efforts to secure a more active participation of the Orthodox Churches in the WCC.

c). We congratulate His Excellency Mr. Hafez El-Assad for his re-election as President of Syria for a new term praying Almighty God to grant him long and prosperous life and continuous progress to beloved Syria.

Second: Theological Dialogues

a). *Official dialogue with the family of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.*

We decided to follow up the results of this dialogue and encourage the close cooperation between the two Orthodox families in the ecumenical movement. We consider important the publishing in national languages of the texts and explications of the agreed statements, as well as the findings of the subcommittees.

b). *Dialogue with the Anglican Communion.*
We welcome the decision of the Lambeth Conference in 1988 and in 1998 to upgrade the standard of the dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches form the level of Forum to official theological dialogue. We hope that the other Churches of the Oriental Orthodox family will also agree with us to give an official character and status to our dialogue with the Anglican Communion. A comprehensive program must be prepared for this dialogue by a preparatory committee.

c). *Dialogue with the World Alliance Reformed Churches.*
We received a progress report about the dialogue and especially about the last meeting in Ma'arat Saydnaya, January 10-15, 1999, discussing ministry/priesthood. We noted the points of agreement and the points of disagreement between the Oriental Orthodox and the Reformed. We encourage the continuation of this dialogue according to a well-elaborated program and agenda.

d). *Non-Official Dialogue Organised by Pro-Oriente.*
In the context of our unofficial dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, organised by Pro-Oriente (Vienna, Austria), our attention was called to the question of the legal recognition of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Austria. We heard an updated report on the new law of recognition of churches and religious groups, and the ongoing consultations concerning this matter. By expressing our deep concern we feel that unless the problem is properly solved, the present situation may have its negative repercussions to our collaboration with Pro-Oriente. The legal recognition of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Austria similar to the Armenian Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church is important. It is our expectation that the Roman Catholic Church of Austria will help to give a proper solution to this matter.

e). *Dialogue with the Seventh Day Adventists.*
We received a proposal from the Seventh Day Adventists to start a theological dialogue. We did not consider appropriate to respond positively to this invitation because, first the faith held by the Seventh Day Adventists does not correspond to the teachings of the Apostolic Church and second, because of received active involvement in proselytism.

Third: The Orthodox Church of Eritrea

a). We learned that the Coptic Orthodox Church has signed a protocol with the Orthodox Church of Eritrea which was approved by the Holy Synods of these two Churches. This protocol recognised the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Eritrea. We welcome the formation of this new autocephalous Church.

b). We express our concern in view of view of the continuing war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We express our full solidarity with our sister Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches, and we pray for the immediate cease-fire and permanent peace based on just settlement of the conflict.

Fourth: The Middle East Council of Churches

a). As the Seventh General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches will be convened in Lebanon, April 26-30, 1999, we have decided to propose the name of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III for re-election as a president of the Council from our family. We express our deep appreciation for the ecumenical efforts and commitment of His Holiness.

b). We congratulate the Council on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee recognising its ecumenical achievements in our region.

c). We gave due consideration to the question of membership in the Middle East Council of Churches in light of the application for membership of the Assyrian Church:

i). We re-affirm our strong attachment to the Christology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which is based on the Christological teachings of St. Cyril of Alexandria and is summarised in his will-known formula of "One nature of God Incarnate Logos".

ii). We re-state the rejection of our Churches of the teachings of all heretics, including Nestorius and his followers, and we reiterate anathemas uttered against them.

iii). We re-affirm the ecumenical commitment of our Churches to engage responsibly in theological dialogue and ecumenical relations and collaboration with all the churches for the full and visible unity of the church.

On this basis, in view of the family structure of the Middle East Council of Churches, we do not oppose to the membership of any church in the Middle East Council of Churches provided that it is in line and in accordance with the constitution, rules and procedures of the Council.

Fifth: The World Council of Churches

We re-affirm our ecumenical commitment to our fellowship within the WCC. The Council is called to play an important ecumenical role in promoting the visible unity of the church. We welcome the decision of the Eight Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, in December 1998, to form a Special Commission to ensure a full and active Orthodox participation in all aspects and at all levels of the life and witness of the World Council of Churches, including the decision-making bodies. We invite all Orthodox Churches to send their representatives to the meetings of this Special Commission.

Sixth: The Co-operation Between our Churches in Pastoral Matters

To ensure and develop closer contacts and co-operation among the clergy of our Churches at the local level, we recommend the following:

a). To form joint committees.

b). To facilitate the mutual use of church buildings wherever and whenever it is necessary.

c). To distribute the Directory prepared by the Standing Committee to all our parishes and communities in various countries, to enable our faithful to find the nearest church to them.

d). In case of family problems, the church, which officiated the sacrament of matrimony, is responsible for any matter related to this marriage (eg. Annulment, permission of re-marriage, etc.).

Seventh: Oriental Orthodox Youth

To achieve closer links among our youth, we decided to form an Oriental Orthodox Youth Sub-Committee to prepare a special program for joint youth activities under the supervision of the Standing Committee. The first meeting of the said Committee will take place in the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon, in July 1999.

Eighth: 2000 Great Jubilee

a). By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we will celebrate the 2000 Jubilee of His Nativity at our next annual meeting during February 26-28, 2000, in the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, Lebanon. We have instructed the Standing Committee to prepare a special program for this celebration, including a joint liturgical text.

b). In the same year, the Coptic Orthodox Church will celebrate the 2000 Jubilee of the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt. All churches are invited to attend this important celebration and visit holy places in Egypt visited by the Holy Family.

c). Also, on the occasion of the 2000 Jubilee, the Syrian Orthodox Church will have celebrations in the St. Ephrem Monastery in Ma'arat Saydnaya, Damascus, Syria, August 25-September 10. We invited our faithful to take part in this celebration.

At the conclusion of our meeting, we joyfully render our thanks to Almighty God who has promoted and sustained our endeavours. We ask Him to always assist our efforts for the well being of our Churches for the unity of all Churches and the salvation of the world.

We thank the Church of Antioch for its love and kind hospitality. We also thank all whom prayed and worked with us for the success of this meeting.

Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE THIRD MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (ARMENIAN CATHOLICOSATE OF CILICIA, ANTELIAS-LEBANON, MAY 4TH-9TH, 2000).

COMMON DECLARATION

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, **Pope Shenouda III,** Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, **Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I**, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and **Catholicos Aram I**, Catholicos of the Armenians of the Great House of Cilicia, and the members of the Standing Committee H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy, H.G. Bishop Moussa, H.E. Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, H.E. Metropolitan Theophilus George Saliba, H.G. Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezin, who are with us, give thanks to God for bringing us together once again in the context of this Third meeting of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East, May 4th-9th, 2000 at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias-Lebanon.

Our meeting provided us the opportunity to pray and deliberate together on issues and perspectives pertaining to the life and witness of our Churches. We re-affirmed our unity in faith and our firm attachment to the first three Ecumenical Councils and the teachings of our fathers. We addressed a number of concerns and challenges related to the evangelistic, educational and diaconic tasks of our Churches particularly in the Middle East. We explored efficient and tangible ways to deepening our collaboration through joint programs and initiatives in the various spheres of the life of our Churches.

In fact, we strongly believe that the unity of faith must be translated into concrete action and deeper engagement in the life of our people and communities. We also believe that our Churches must responsibly and courageously face the new realities and challenges of contemporary societies by remaining faithful to the integrity of their Apostolic faith and centuries-old traditions on the one hand, and becoming sensitive and responsive to the new conditions and concerns, on the other hand.

We were led in our discussions and decisions by all these considerations and concerns, as well as by the ecumenical spirit of openness and dialogue.

Great Jubilee Celebration

On May 8th, 2000 we celebrated the Second Millennium of the Birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by a common prayer service in the St. Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia. The clergy and believers of our Churches took active part in this celebration. On this occasion we issued a Pastoral Letter addressed to our faithful all over the world.

We were rejoiced with the fact that several celebrations of the Great Jubilee have taken place and will take place in our Churches. We believe that these celebrations will become a source of spiritual renewal for our faithful. We also believe that they will become a great challenge for re-strengthening the witness of our Churches in

view of all temptations and trends that may undermine the vital importance of spiritual and moral values in the life of our communities.

17th Centenary Celebrations of Armenian Christianity

In the year 2001 the Armenian Orthodox Church will celebrate the 17th Centenary of the Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia. On the blessed occasion of this historical milestone, Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I extend their congratulations to Catholicos Aram I and the faithful of the Armenian Orthodox Church, and respond warmly to bring their participation in the celebrations of this great event in the life of the Armenian Church.

Official Theological Dialogues

(a) *Oriental Orthodox Churches-Eastern Orthodox Churches*

We made a general assessment of the results of the 15 year-long Official Theological Dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and underlined the necessity of its continuation aimed at the full communion of these two families of Orthodox Tradition.

In response to the invitation of His Holiness Alexy I, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, addressed in a letter to Pope Shenouda III dated April 12th, 2000 to initiate a bilateral dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church and then the Oriental Orthodox Churches, we thought that it is more appropriate to continue in a more organised way the Official Theological Dialogue between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox families. Meanwhile, we welcome mutual pastoral visits with the clear understanding that they should not be selective and include all the Churches of the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox families.

We welcomed the pastoral agreement reached between the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa regarding the mutual recognition of the sacraments of holy matrimony blessed in their respective churches in case of mixed marriages.

(b) *Oriental Orthodox Churches-Roman Catholic Church*

We were informed of the wish of the Roman Catholic Church to start an official Theological Dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church with the possible extension of it to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. We believe that before our engagement in a formal Theological Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, the following points should be taken into consideration:

(i) the clarification of the future relations of the Oriental Orthodox Churches with the Pro Oriente;
(ii) the appointment of a mixed preparatory committee to prepare the agenda and discuss methodologies, procedures and other aspects related to this Dialogue.

After this preparatory work, our Churches will be ready to engage in an Official Theological Dialogue with the hope that in the near future other members of the

Oriental Orthodox family will join us.

Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I asked Catholicos Aram I to discuss the modalities and other important matters related to this Dialogue both with the Roman Catholic Church and the other members of the Oriental Orthodox family.

(c) *Oriental Orthodox Churches-Anglican Communion*

As a follow up to a resolution passed at the Lambeth Conference 1998, His Grace George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, extended a formal invitation to the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches to start the Official Theological Dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Anglican Communion.

We decided to appoint a preparatory committee to meet with the representatives of the Anglican Communion to prepare the agenda and clarify the modalities of this Dialogue.

Again, Catholicos Aram I was asked to discuss this matter with the other Churches of the Oriental Orthodox family.

(d) *Oriental Orthodox Churches-World Alliance of Reformed Churches*

The first phase of this official dialogue will end in January 2001 by the meeting of the Commission at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia. In light of our theological discussions with WARC in the last seven years, we found it important to continue this Dialogue if they would take the same position. It is, however, important that a new agenda, procedures and guidelines be set for the next period.

World Council of Churches and the "Special Commission for Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches"

We expressed our deep satisfaction for the active participation of our Churches in the global ecumenical movement through the World Council of Churches. Ms. Teny Pirri-Simonian, Executive Secretary of Church and Ecumenical Relations and the official representative of the WCC to this meeting, reported on the new programmatic framework, priorities and activities of the WCC in general, and the work of the "Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches" in particular. She underlined the positive impact of the Annual Meetings of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East on the ecumenical movement and particularly on the Orthodox Churches – WCC relationship and cooperation.

We re-affirmed our commitment to the ecumenical movement through the World Council of Churches and our serious engagement in the work of the Special Commission that aims at a greater Orthodox participation and role in the WCC.

MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

We also expressed our deep satisfaction for the significant role that our Churches are playing in the Middle East Council of Churches.

Rev. Riad Jarjour, the General Secretary of the MECC, extended his thanks for the full and continuous support of the three Heads to the ongoing work of the Council and reported on the programmatic activities of the Council, highlighting some of the challenges and concerns that this regional ecumenical structure is facing.

We emphasized the vital necessity of re-evaluating the ecumenical work of the MECC vis-å-vis the changing conditions and new developments in the region.

ORIENTAL ORTHODOX YOUTH

We appointed a sub-committee for the Oriental Orthodox Youth to prepare special programs for joint activities of the youth of our Churches. This sub-committee will convene its meeting in the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, in Antelias-Lebanon, in September 2000.

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES

A sub-committee composed of the Deans of the Oriental Orthodox Theological Seminaries was appointed. This sub-committee will explore practical ways and possibilities to organise mutual exchange of teachers and seminarians, as well as joint programs in the area of Christian education and ministerial formation. The meeting of this sub-committee will take place in the Monastery of St. Ephrem, in Damascus-Syria in October 2000.

PUBLICATIONS

We welcomed the recent translations of the books of Pope Shenouda III into Syriac and Armenian, and reprints of some of them in Arabic. Publications were considered a vital tool for Christian education and theological formation. Therefore, with the aim of further organising and coordinating the efforts of our Churches in this area, we established a sub-committee for publications. This sub-committee will meet in the Monastery of St. Bishoy, in Cairo-Egypt in November 2000. We recommended to this sub-committee to publish the history of our three Churches in Arabic, Syriac, Armenian and English and to provide news related to our three Churches to be printed in our official newsletters in the *"News From Sister Churches"* section, and also to prepare the updated address book of our Churches and church-affiliated organisations.

The standing committee will coordinate and supervise the work of these three sub-committees, and report back to us.

At the end of our Third Meeting, we give thanks to the Almighty God who has guided us in our deliberations and decisions. We ask Him to sustain our endeavours for the unity of the churches and the salvation of the world. We thank the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia for its love and kind hospitality. We also thank all who prayed and assisted us for the success of this meeting.

THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST – CAIRO, EGYPT, MARCH 2001

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and Catholicos Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia of the Armenian Orthodox Church, and the members of the Standing Committee: H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy, H.G. Bishop Moussa, H.E. Metropolitan Theophilus George Saliba, H.G. Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian, and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian, who are with us, give thanks to God for bringing us together once again in the context of this Fourth Meeting of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East, March 15-17, 2001, at the St. Mark Center of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Nasr City-Cairo, Egypt.

Led by our common spiritual heritage, tradition, faith, theology, doctrine and witness, and on the basis of the Common Declarations we made in our last three meetings (St. Bishoy Monastery-Wadi Natroun, Egypt, March 10-11, 1998; St. Ephrem Monastery-Maa'rat Sadnaya, Damascus, Syria, February 13-14, 1999; Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias-Lebanon, May 4-9, 2000), we have come once again together as a fellowship of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East, to pray together, to re-affirm our unity in faith and our firm attachment to the first three Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431), as well as to the teachings of our church fathers. We also have reconfirmed the decisions adopted and the guidelines set by us in the context of our common witness and service to our people particularly in the Middle East; a region where the Church of Christ was born and true faith was received and shaped by our fathers and martyrs through their teachings and martyrdom. This is our sacred heritage, indeed, which was delivered to us and to be delivered in turn to the generations to come.

Guided by the Holy Spirit and inspired by the teachings and examples of our forefathers, we carefully studied the following important items and took appropriate actions:

I. 1700th Anniversary Celebration of the Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as State Religion

Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I welcomed the invitation of Catholicos Aram I to attend the celebrations of the Armenian Orthodox Church in the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, in Antelias-Lebanon, May 25-27, 2001, on the occasion of the 1700th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as State Religion. In fact, Christianity was preached in Armenia by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew. Christian faith was a living reality in the life of the Armenian people in the following centuries. It was in 301 that Christianity became the state religion of Armenia. Hence, the Armenian nation is the first nation to accept Christianity as state religion.

Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I consider the 1700th Anniversary celebrations an excellent opportunity to share the joy of their sister Armenian Church,

to pray for its prosperity and to re-affirm the unity that exists between the Armenian, Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Churches.

II. Theological Dialogues

A. Oriental Orthodox Churches-Eastern Orthodox Churches

1. We discussed the actual state of the theological dialogue between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and emphasized the importance of this d ialogue for the full unity of Orthodox Churches.

2. In response to the invitation of His Holiness Alexy II Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, we appointed Metropolitan Bishoy, Metropolitan Eustathius Mattha Rohom and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian to participate in the meeting of the Coordinating Committee. This Committee, which will meet in Moscow, March 20-22, 2001, will prepare the agenda for the meeting of a larger Committee. The purpose of this Mixed Committee will be to discuss the present situation of theological dialogue between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and to explore the possibilities of enhancing this important process. This Committee will also identify specific areas of closer ecumenical collaboration between our Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church.

3. The Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church in June 2000 and the Permanent Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa in November 2000 have approved the pastoral agreement reached between them regarding the mutual recognition of the sacrament of the holy matrimony blessed in their respective churches in case of mixed marriages. We welcomed this significant ecumenical initiative, as we did in respect to a similar decision contained in the agreement that was reached between the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch.

B. Oriental Orthodox Churches-Anglican Communion

We agreed to respond positively to the letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, H.G. Dr. George Carey, dated January 16, 2001, addressed to six Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches concerning the upgrading of the theological Forum between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the world Anglican Communion. This resolution was taken by the Lambeth Conference in 1988 and was re-affirmed in 1998. We decided to delegate our representatives to the next meeting of the Forum to be held July 27-August 1, 2001, in London. The purpose of this meeting will be to clarify matters pertaining to the agenda, procedures, methodologies and timetable of the theological dialogue.

C. Oriental Orthodox Churches-Roman Catholic Church

1. According to the decision taken in our previous meeting, Catholicos Aram I met in Antelias with Cardinal Cassidy and Cardinal Kasper and notified them of our readiness to start a bilateral theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, following the same structure and procedures as with the Anglican Communion. Catholicos Aram I will continue to follow up this process.

2. We carefully reviewed the document entitled "Dominus Iesus" issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Vatican. We noted our basic disagreements concerning a number of points included in this document. We decided

that this document become a matter of serious reflection in our theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church.

D. Oriental Orthodox Churches-World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The full report of the dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), prepared in the meeting of January 2001, at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias-Lebanon, was submitted to us. This report includes an introduction about the family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, its theological teachings, doctrine and traditions, as well as the Agreed Statement on Christology signed in 1994, and a summary of their meetings (Egypt-1993, Holland-1994, India-1997, USA-1998, Syria-1999, Scotland-2000, and Lebanon-2001). The report particularly refers to the points of agreements and disagreements existing between the two families.

We decided to study this report in our respective Holy Synods and consider it further in our next meeting.

Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I asked Catholicos Aram I to follow closely the developments of these theological dialogues and share with them his views for necessary action.

III. World Council of Churches and the Special Commission for Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches

We were informed about the interim report of the Special Commission for the Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches that was presented to the Central Committee of the WCC in its meeting in Germany, February 2001. We discussed a number of important issues and perspectives outlined in the said report. Catholicos Aram I, as Moderator of the WCC, exposed his own views concerning this critical process in the life of the WCC. Those members of the Special Commission present with us, Metropolitan Bishoy and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian, shared with us their assessment of the last meeting of the Steering Group in Geneva. In light of our discussion, we decided:

1. To express our appreciation and satisfaction concerning the first phase of the work of the Special Commission. It is our firm expectation that in the next phase the Commission will address more comprehensively and critically concrete issues and concerns pertaining to Orthodox participation in the life and witness of the WCC.

2. To propose that questions related to ecclesiology, as well as controversial theological matters be discussed in the Faith and Order Commission. We believe that Faith and Order could provide a proper context and framework for such a discussion.

IV. Middle East Council of Churches

We received the report of the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches in Lebanon, November 2000.

We expressed our joy concerning the appointment of Prof. Girgis Ibrahim Saleh as Associate General Secretary of the MECC representing our family. We also discussed matters related to the activities of the MECC in the region.

We re-affirm our support to this regional ecumenical organization as its founding and active members. We also underline the urgent need for making the ecumenical witness of the MECC more efficient and responsive to the new realties and expectations of the churches in the region.

V. Sub-Committees

A. Sub-Committee for Theological Seminaries

We received the report of this Sub-Committee, which met on November 24-25, 2000, in Maa'rat Sayednaya-Damascus, Syria, and expressed our appreciation about the progress made in this area. In view of the proposal made in article 6 of the said report, we decided to establish a special department for Oriental Orthodox Studies in our seminaries.

We appointed Metropolitan Bishoy as Coordinator and Prof. Girgis Ibrahim Saleh as proxy of this Sub-Committee.

B. Sub-Committee for Youth

We appointed Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian as Coordinator and Father Mashdots Chobanian as proxy. This Sub-Committee will convene in October 2001, in Antelias-Lebanon.

C. Sub-Committee for Publications

We appointed Metropolitan Theophilus George Saliba as Coordinator and Rahban Elia Habib Bahi as proxy. This Sub-Committee will convene in June 2001, in Cairo-Egypt.

The Standing Committee will coordinate and supervise the work of these Sub-Committees.

VI. Exchange of Resources of Information

We consider the sharing of information among our Churches a vital task for our fellowship. Our Churches have important resources (such as books, magazines, audio cassettes, video tapes, cds, etc.) that must be shared and exchanged between our Churches. This process will significantly help us to have deeper knowledge about the life and witness of our Churches.

VII. Peace in the Middle East

1. We pray that our common Lord Jesus Christ may grant His peace to the Middle East. We urgently need peace in our region. A comprehensive and permanent peace with justice is achieved when the Palestinians are given full right for an independent state having Jerusalem as its capital, when the occupation by Israel of the West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza, Golan Heights and Shebaa Farms is ended.

2. The attempts to change the demographic structure of Jerusalem aiming at its Judiazation, ignoring the international agreements, building more settlements, confiscating lands, military aggression against the Palestinian people, refusal of the return of the refugees and besieging of the people in their towns and villages, etc., all

these will widen the circle of violence and will never help to achieve real security and permanent peace in the Middle East.

3. We urge the international community to exert necessary efforts and strong pressures to lift the unjust sanctions imposed on the people of Iraq causing much suffering and pain. We invite everybody to support the people of Iraq and especially the children, the sick and the elderly.

4. The Middle East has been the birthplace of Christianity. We are not strangers in these lands. We are integral to the civilizations, cultures and societies of the Middle East and have played a decisive role in the various spheres of the societies. Therefore, we appeal to our faithful to remain firmly attached to this region, including the Holy Land. We must strengthen and re-organize the Christian presence and witness in our region, at the same time deepening our peaceful co-existence and dialogue of love with our Muslim neighbours based on mutual respect and trust.

5. We pray for the peace of the whole world and ask God to support the peaceful efforts of all people of good will to overcome violence in its various forms and manifestations.

At the end of our meeting, we thank the Lord for His guidance in our deliberations and decisions. We ask Him to give us the strength and courage to work for the unity of His Church and for peace with justice.

We thank the Coptic Orthodox Church for her love and kind hospitality. We also thank all who prayed and assisted us for the success of this meeting.

Glory be to God the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen

Pope Shenouda III

Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I

Catholicos Aram

March 17, 2001

St. Mark Center Coptic Orthodox Church

Nasr City-Cairo, Egypt

Common Declaration and Message issued by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church and His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians (Cairo-Egypt, 16th October, 2000).

Being on of the Christian Orthodox faith, we give thanks to God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who graced us with this opportunity to express our mutual brotherly love on the occasion of the first visit of His Holiness Karekin II to Egypt in the days between 12th and 19th October, during the celebrations of the Great Jubilee of the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt.

As one of the great leaders in our family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, His Holiness Karekin II is highly welcomed in the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, by its clergy and people, in ancient Coptic Orthodox monasteries and nunneries as well as his Armenian flock in both Cairo and Alexandria.

How rewarding it is to reaffirm the unity of our Christian faith that has been faithfully maintained all along the past centuries, and which is based on the Holy Scriptures on the early church Tradition as promulgated by the first three Ecumenical Councils, namely, of Nicea (325), of Constantinople (381) and of Ephesus (431). We renew our commitment to give more concrete expression to that unity in the life and witness of our churches in faithful obedience to the will of our Lord the Logos Incarnate, Jesus Christ, and in continuation of the Orthodox legacy of the sacred Tradition of our Church Fathers. We preserve and treasure expression of our common father Saint Cyril of Alexandria "Mia physis Tou Theou Logou Sesarkoumeni" ie "One incarnate nature of God the Word".

We render thanks and glory to the Holy Trinity for having blessed our Armenian and Coptic Orthodox Churches in the past centuries of consecrated life and sound teaching of our saints and martyrs, and for the unshaken and unbroken continuity in the unity of faith which was "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) and for the spiritual well being of our beloved peoples.

We commit ourselves to promote in more visible and tangible ways the close cooperation of our respective Churches of the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches in our involvement in the Ecumenical movement on local, regional and world levels, to pursue more activity in our common task in facing and meeting the challenges of the dangers of the heresies and sects which are dangerous to our believers. Also our common task in facing and meeting the new challenges of the modern world where extreme secular trends of life are so deeply affecting the spiritual, moral and social life of our people in this century. In Christian hope we look forward to the third millennium of our Christian history, as earnest, pray our Lord to make it a time of greater spiritual renewal. The Coptic Orthodox Church is happy to congratulate the Armenian Orthodox Church on the occasion of the 17th Centenary celebration in the year 2001 of the Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as a state religion and to venerate the glorious memory of Saint Gregory the Illuminator.

We encourage all our Diocesan Metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, parish priests, deacons, monks, nuns and lay people in our own countries of Egypt and Armenia as well as in the lands of immigration, to develop closer relationships and to advance in the genuine ecumenical ways of mutual cooperation by being motivated by the unity

and demand of our faith and by the concern for the spiritual health and creative service of our people around the world, particularly in our service to the new generation in Sunday School and Youth meetings and activities.

We encourage the pursuit of greater collaboration in the areas of the Theological Education, to bring into focus the living traditions of our respective churches. Exchange of students and professors of theology is one of the immediate ecumenical tasks that we recommend to our Theological schools and other centres engaged in theological research and studies.

In view of our common care for the exchange of publications and news, our churches have welcomed the translation of four books of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to the Armenian language and we look forward for more exchange of translations to both Armenian and Arabic languages. Also we encourage the exchange of experience in fields of new technology eg. Audiovisual and computer facilities.

The sound and healthy edification in the Christian faith of the children and the adult, in accordance with the Orthodox doctrine and moral teachings of our churches, is another area where we instruct our churches to create new and more relevant and productive ways of cooperation.

We endorse the promotion of the social services of our churches particularly for the poor and the under-privileged, for the sick and the handicapped. We suggest to all our organisations with diaconal vocation and mandate to engage in increased and concerted efforts in this area of need.

We pray with all the members of our churches for the establishing of peace and Justice in the Middle East and Caucasus particularly in Jerusalem and Karubagh with exception of violence all over the world. We pray also for the prosperity of our two friendly peoples and Countries Armenia and Egypt.

WEEK OF PRAYER

Every year a special week of prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated. The Christian Churches in Egypt assemble at different churches, united in prayer. Commenting on the significance of this important activity, Pope Shenouda III said:

Ecumenical Encounters

Over the past 50 years there have been numerous meetings and conferences of Coptic Church delegates with Byzantine Orthodox Churches. A Coptic delegation was invited as observers at the Pan Orthodox conference at Rhodes in September 1961.

In October 1972, Pope Shenouda visited the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Demetrius II and the Patriarchs of Antioch, Moscow, Romanian and Bulgaria, thereby enhancing the spirit of love amongst the Orthodox Churches, urging the churches to work towards visible unity of faith.

In Egypt, His Holiness has injected a wonderful spirit of love amongst the different churches, culminating in the establishment of the Council of Churches in 1976. His Holiness has encouraged ecumenical work between the churches in Egypt, particularly in social and welfare services.

In June 1988, Pope Shenouda III accompanied by Bishop Serapion attended the Millennium Celebrations marking the Baptism of Russia. In April 1995, His Holiness attended the enthronement of the Armenian Patriarch-Catholicos, His Beatitude Keryakan, in Turkey and in July he attended the enthronement of the Armenian Catholicos, His Beatitude Aram Keshishian in Lebanon. In October 1995, Pope Shenouda attended the celebration marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Romanian Orthodox Church's independence.

CHAPTER 10

ECUMENICAL ORGANISATIONS

The participation of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement is not revolution in the history of the Church of Alexandria. It constitutes another attempt, like those made in the Patristic period to apply to the Apostolic faith to a new historical situation and existential demands. What is in a sense new today, is the fact that this attempt is being made together with other Christian bodies with whom there is no full unity of faith. It is here that the difficulties arise, but it is precisely here that there also are many signs and real hope for growing in fellowship, understanding and cooperation.

The various ecumenical organisations continue to respond to the multiple needs of contemporary society such as these include, the refugee problem; the combating of racism; the promotion of peace and justice; the protection of the environment; the enhancement of the role of addressing third world debt; women and youth in the church and the struggle against poverty and hunger. All these programs of ecumenical organisations are valuable and constitute a great framework of a common witness to Christ and service to His children of the world. The Orthodox Church however, asserts that such activities should not constitute an end in themselves.

PARTICIPATION IN ECUMENICAL ORGANISATIONS

The commitment of the Coptic Orthodox Church to Christian unity is reflected in its active participation in ecumenical organisations at international, regional and national levels. The Coptic Church is a founding and active member of: the World Council of Churches in 1948 (international), the All African Conference of Churches in 1963 (regional) and the Middle East Council of Churches (regional) in 1974. The efforts and work of the church is acknowledged in having Pope Shenouda III one of the immediate past presidents of the WCC (1991-1998) and currently one of the four presidents of the MECC (1994+). Clergy and laity (men, women and youth) have actively participated in the units and sub units commissions, conferences and symposiums of the WCC, MECC and the AACC.

In conducting conferences, consultations, seminars and workshops on various issues such as faith and unity, mission and evangelism, peace, justice and integrity of creation, the status of women in the church, the role of the family, these ecumenical organisations offer a unique opportunity for the churches to discuss and contribute to these matters in a stimulating and rewarding manner. Further it has strengthened the bond of unity between the Coptic Orthodox Church and other churches.

The Coptic Orthodox presence in ecumenical bodies has influenced the life and work of these ecumenical bodies, by promoting Trinitarian theology, the primacy and urgency of unity of doctrine, the ecclesiology of the local church, spirituality and sacramental life and the centrality of the liturgy.

AMBASSADORS OF ORTHODOXY

Several clergy and lay personalities have been outstanding ambassadors of the Coptic Orthodox Church in ecumenical circles. Mention is made of the great pioneering efforts of the Very Reverend Father Ibrahim Luka (1897-1950) the first delegate to represent the Coptic Church at the formation of the WCC in September 1948. Key ecumenical personalities include: the late Bishop Samuel (1920-1981), member of WCC central committee (1964-1981) founder and president of MECC (1974-1981); Metropolitan Athanasius of Benisueif, member of WCC central committee (1981-1991); Metropolitan Bishoy, Secretary of the Holy Synod (member of the Central Committee of the MECC from 1987 +).

Metropolitan Bakhomous of Behera, member of AACC executive committee; Bishop Moussa, Bishop for Youth Affairs, member of several MECC committees and founder of ecumenical youth committee in Egypt; Bishop Serapion, former Bishop of Ecumenical Relations (1985-1995), presently Bishop of Los Angeles, who is presently serving on the WCC central committee from 1991+ and was vice president of the AACC from 1992-1997; Bishop Antonious Markos, Bishop for African Affairs, was vice president of AACC from 1981-1992; Very Reverend Father Tadros Malaty, member of the Inter-Orthodox Dialogue 1985+; Reverend Father Shenouda Maher, member of the Inter-Orthodox sub-committee.

Many lay persons have invested considerable effort and time in various ecumenical circles including: Miss Iris Habib El Misry, Dr. Maurice Assad, Associate General Secretary of the MECC; Ms Marie Assad at the WCC; Mr Sarwat Shehatta, Associate General Secretary of AACC from 1972-1980; Mr Samir Marcos, Associate General Secretary of the MECC 1994+; Mr Magdy Makram, Head of the Youth Unit of MECC 1994+; Dr Joseph Faltas, Head of the Ecumenical Studies Unit at the Coptic Orthodox Church Development Institute. All these personalities have been outstanding ambassadors of Coptic Orthodoxy in various ecumenical circles.

All these persons faithfully served their church and the ecumenical movement, witnessing to the new reality of a profound fellowship with other churches while remaining rooted in their rich Orthodox Tradition.

At the local level, the Coptic Orthodox Church is a member of the National Council of Churches of Christ (USA) since 1970, National Council of the Churches in Australia, August 1973 and Canadian Council of Churches (1966), Conference of Churches in Aotearoa, New Zealand (1997).

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Founded in 1948, the World Council of Churches is an international Christian Organisation built upon the foundation of ecumenical collaboration, grounded in the prayer of Christ: "that they all may be one…that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

AIM AND PURPOSE

The WCC purpose is to pray for and pursue the unity of Christ's Church. The aim of the WCC is not to build a global 'super church' nor to standardise styles of worship, but rather to deepen the communion of Christian Churches and Communities so they may see in each other authentic expressions of the one Holy Universal and Apostolic Church.

THE WCC MEMBERSHIP

Over 400 million Christians represented through over 330 churches in 100 countries constitute the membership of the WCC Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed and others have created new bridges, overcoming centuries of divisions. The worlds largest Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, is not a member of the WCC but works and cooperates with the council and sends non-voting representatives to major WCC conferences and assemblies.

HOW IS THE WCC ORGANISED?

From its central offices in Switzerland the staff of the WCC work to carry out, support and coordinate ecumenical activities mandated by its member Churches. The on going work of the WCC is supervised by the 150 member central committee elected by the Assembly from among the delegates and its 3 standing sub-committees; namely the Executive Committee, Program Committee and Finance Committee. At the 8th Assembly in Harare in December 1998, the structure of the WCC was changed from program units to 4 clusters.

Cluster on Issues and Themes

This includes, Faith and Order Commission, Mission and Evangelism, Justice Peace and Creation, Education and Ecumenical Formation.

Cluster on Relations

This embraces Church and Ecumenical Relations, Regional Relations and Ecumenical Sharing, Inter-religious Relations and Dialogue and International Relations.

Cluster on Finance, Services and Administration

This involves Income Monitoring and Development, Human Resources and House Services, Finance and Computer Information Services.

Cluster on Communication

This includes Public Information, Publications and Documentations.

WHAT DOES THE WCC DO?

The WCC promotes worldwide Christian unity. It does so through its programmes of sharing, support and advocacy, through its studies and publications, through its assembles and conferences, where a rich diversity of Christians, clergy and laity (men, women and youth) gather and where common worship, prayer and bible study form the backdrop for consultation and commitment on critical contemporary issues.

WCC ASSEMBLIES

Every seven years the WCC convenes an assembly to call together thousands of voting delegates. The assembled delegates set policies for the council's work in the years ahead, in the light of the contemporary situation in church and world. The inaugural assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 had the theme of: "Man's Disorder and God's Order". Representing the Coptic Church was the late Reverend Father Ibrahim Luka (1897-1950) of St. Mark's Church, Heliopolis.

Illinous USA in 1954 was the second assembly with the theme: "Christ – Hope Of the World". Representing the Coptic Church were Very Reverend Father Makarii El Souryani (in 1962 became Bishop Samuel) and Dr. Aziz Sourial Attia.

In 1961 the assembly was held in New Dehli with the theme: "Jesus Christ – The Light of the World". Representing the Coptic Church was Reverend Father Makarii El Souryani.

In 1968 the assembly was back in Europe and was held in Uppasla, Sweden with the theme: "Behold I Make All Things New". The Coptic delegation consisted of H.G.Bishop Samuel and Reverend Father Salib Suriel of St. Mark's Church Giza.

The fifth assembly took place in 1975 in Kenya with the theme: "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites". Representing the Coptic Church were their Grace Bishop Samuel, Bishop Athanasius of Beni Suef, Bishop Bakhomious of Beherra and the very Reverend Father Antonious Ragheb of St. George Church New Jersey.

Vancouver in Canada was the venue of the sixth assembly in 1983 carrying the theme: "Jesus Christ The Life Of The World". Representing the Coptic Church was H.G. Metropolitan Athanasius of Beni Swef, His Grace Bishop Antonious Marcos, Bishop of African Affairs and Dr. Elrahib.

The seventh assembly was in Canberra, Australia in February 1991 with the theme: "Come Holy Spirit Renew the Whole Of Creation". The Coptic delegation consisted of: His Holiness Pope Shenouda; Metropolitan Bakhomous of Beherra; Metropolitan Bishoy, General Secretary of the Holy Synod; Bishop Paula of Tanta; Bishop Moussa, Bishop for Youth Affairs; Bishop Serapion, Bishop of Los Angles, Reverend Father Antonious Thabet, of St. Mark's Church, London; Very Reverend Father Gabriel Abdel Sayed, of St. Mark's Church, New Jersey, Dr. Marcelle Hanna from Los Angels (Woman representative), Ms Jackie Malek and Mr Maged Attia (youth representatives). At the conclusion of the assembly, His Holiness Pope Shenouda was elected one of eight presidents of the WCC.

"Turn to God, rejoice in hope", was the theme of the 8th Assembly of the WCC which convened in Zimbabwe in December 1998. The Coptic delegation was: Metropolitan Bishoy (head), Bishop Antonious Markos, Bishop Serapion of L.A., Bishop Dimian of Germany, Bishop Youannis, Bishop Paul of Mission, Bishop Suriel of Melbourne, Father Antonious Thabet of London, Dr. Marcelle Hanna, Dr. Wedad Abbas, Mr. Girgis Saleh, Mr. Bishoy Mikhail (youth).

THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND THE WCC

The purpose and vision of the WCC on the eve of its golden jubilee was under review by its members. The Orthodox Churches, in particular, have expressed serious concerns about the direction, policies and decisions of the WCC. At the WCC 7th assembly in Canberra in February 1991, these concerns are summarised in a statement issued by the Orthodox Churches:

The Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox delegates and participants at the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Canberra, Australia, want to communicate with all in attendance through this statement in order to express to them some concerns. We preface our comments with an expression of appreciation to the World Council of Churches for its many contributions to the development of

dialogue among churches, and to assisting all members in making efforts to overcome disunity. As Orthodox, we appreciate the assistance given over decades in the process of dialogue leading toward the full communion of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

We also recognise the contributions of the WCC in the work it has done in its Commissions on Faith and Order and on Mission and Evangelism (CWME), its contribution to the Renewal of Congregational Life (RCL), its relief work through the Inter Church Aid, Refugees and World Service (CICARWS), and in the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Programme (JPIC).

Yet, our experience at this Assembly has heightened a number of concerns that have been developing among the Orthodox since the last Assembly. We want to share these with the Canberra Assembly and to tell where these are now leading us.

The Orthodox concern about these issues should not be understood as implying a reluctance to continue dialogue. The present statement is motivated not by disinterest or indifference toward our sisters and brothers in other churches and Christian communities, but by our sincere concern about the future of the ecumenical movement, and about the fate of its goals and ideals, as they were formulated by its founders.

Orthodox Concerns

1. The Orthodox Churches want to emphasise that for them, the main aim of the WCC must be the restoration of the unity of the Church. This aim does not exclude relating church unity with the wider unity of humanity and creation. On the contrary, the unity of Christians will contribute more effectively to the unity of humanity and the world. Yet the latter must not happen at the expense of solving issues of faith and order, which divide Christians. Visible unity, in both the faith and the structure of the Church, constitutes a specific goal and must not be taken for granted.

2. The Orthodox note that there has been an increasing departure from the basis of the WCC. The latter has provided the framework for Orthodox participation in the World Council of Churches. Its text is: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (Const.) Should the WCC not direct its future work along these lines, it would be in danger of ceasing to be an instrument aiming at the restoration of Christian unity and in that case it would tend to become a forum for an exchange of opinions without any specific Christian theological basis. In such a forum, common prayer will be increasingly difficult, and eventually will become impossible, since even a basic common theological vision will be lacking.

3. The tendency to marginalise the Basis in WCC work has created some dangerous trends in the WCC. We miss from many WCC documents the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the world's Saviour. We perceive a growing departure from biblically based Christian understanding of

i The Trinitarian God,
ii Salvation,
iii The "Good News" of the gospel itself,
iv Human beings as created in the image and likeness of God, and
v The Church, among others.

Our hope is that the results of Faith and Order will find a more prominent place in the various expressions of the WCC, and that tendencies in the opposite direction will not be encouraged. The Orthodox, consequently, attribute special significance to the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, and view with concern each tendency to undermine its place in the structure of the Council.

4. The Orthodox follow with interest, but also with a certain disquiet, the developments of the WCC towards the broadening of its aims in the direction of relations with other religions. The Orthodox support dialogue initiatives, particularly those aiming at the promotion of relations of openness, mutual respect and human cooperation with neighbours of other faiths. When dialogue takes place, Christians are called to bear witness to the integrity of their faith. A genuine dialogue involves greater theological efforts to express the Christian message in ways that speak to the various cultures of our world. All this, however, must occur on the basis of theological criteria, which will define the limits of diversity. The biblical faith in God must not be changed. The definition of these criteria is a matter of theological study, and must constitute the first priority of the WCC in view of its desired broadening of aims.

5. Thus, it is with alarm that the Orthodox have heard some presentations on the theme of this Assembly. With reference to the theme of the Assembly, the Orthodox still await the final texts. However, they observe that some people tend to affirm with very great ease the presence of the Holy Spirit in many movements and developments without discernment. The Orthodox wish to stress the factor of sin and error, which exists in every human action, and separate the Holy Spirit from these. We must guard against a tendency to substitute a "private" spirit, the spirit of the world or other spirits for the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son. Our tradition is rich in respect for local and national cultures, but we find it impossible to invoke the spirits of "earth, air, water and sea creature". Pneumatology is inseparable from Christology or from the doctrine of the Holy Trinity confessed by the Church on the basis of Divine Revelation.

1. The Orthodox are sorry that their position with regard to eucharistic communion has not been understood by many members of the WCC, who regard the Orthodox as unjustifiably insisting upon abstinence from eucharistic communion.

   The Orthodox once more invite their brothers and sisters in the WCC to understand that it is a matter of unity in faith and fundamental Orthodox ecclesiology, and not a question of triumphalistic stance.

   For the Orthodox, the Eucharist is the supreme expression of unity and not a means toward unity. The present situation in the ecumenical movement is for us an experience of the cross of Christian division. In this regard, the question of the

ordination of women to the priestly and episcopal offices must also be understood within a theological and ecclesiological context.

7. Finally, our concern is also directed to the changing process of decision-making in the WCC. While the system of quotas has benefits, it may also be creating problems. As Orthodox we see changes that seem to increasingly weaken the possibility of an Orthodox witness, in an otherwise Protestant international organisation. We believe that this tendency is to the harm of the ecumenical effort.

8. For the Orthodox gathered at this Assembly, these and other tendencies and developments question the very nature and identity of the Council, as described in the Toronto Statement. In this sense the present Assembly in Canberra appears to be a crucial point in the history of the ecumenical movement.

We must, therefore ask ourselves "has the time come for the Orthodox churches and other member churches to review their relations with the World Council of Churches?"

We pray the Holy Spirit to help all Christians to renew their commitment to visible unity.

Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC

As a result of increasing concerns of the Orthodox Church about the priorities programs and ethos of the WCC it was decided to establish a special commission to address Orthodox concerns in concrete terms and forward to the central committee for implementation.

The commission is composed of an equal number of representatives appointed by the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches and representatives from the other member churches of the WCC appointed by the Central Committee. Its co-moderators were Bishop Rolf Koppe (Evangelical Church in Germany) and Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchs of Constantinople) in the absence of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus. Representing the Coptic Orthodox Church is Metropolitan Bishoy of Dimiette.

The mandate of the special commission is 'to study and analyse the whole spectrum of issues related to Orthodox participation in the WCC' and 'to make proposals concerning the necessary changes in structure, style and ethos of the Council' to the WCC Central Committee.

First plenary meeting

The Special Commission's first meeting took place from 6 to 8 December 1999 in Morges, Switzerland. This meeting began by providing ample space for delegates to voice the concerns of their church or church family, their region, their experience with the WCC, as well as their vision for the Commission's agenda and methodology. The Commission decided to divide its work into four sub-committees that would each meet once prior to the next plenary meeting. As one of the goals of the Special Commission was to foster an increased mutual understanding of the churches and their life, the locations and venues of the meetings were chosen bearing in mind the potential for church visits and encounters.

Sub-committees & mandates

Sub-committee I: The Organization of the WCC
Host: Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
Ma'arat Saydnaya, Syria, 6-8 March 2000

Sub-committee II: Style and Ethos of our Life Together in the WCC
Host: Orthodox Church in Czech Lands and Slovakia
Vilemov, Czech Republic, 29 July - 3 August 2000

Sub-committee III: Theological Convergences and Differences between Orthodox and other Traditions in the WCC
Host: Ecumenical Patriarchate and Church of Crete
Kolympari-Chania, Crete, 22-24 August 2000

Sub-committee IV: Existing Models and New Proposals for a Structural Framework for the WCC
Host: Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
Ma'arat Saydnaya, Syria, 6-8 March 2000

Second plenary meeting

The second plenary meeting of the Special Commission was hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and held at St Mark’s Centre in Cairo, Egypt from 23 to 25 October 2000.
The "Cairo meeting" had before it two major tasks. The first was to receive the work of the four sub-committees created at the inaugural meeting the previous December; the second was to map out the way forward. As indicated in the Communiqué, and more substantially in the official report, both tasks were accomplished.
The Cairo report forms the main substance of the first interim report on the work of the Special Commission to be received by a wider audience -- in this case the WCC Central Committee, which will meet in Potsdam in early 2001.

ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

As the mother Church of Africa, the Coptic Orthodox Church has been keen to actively participate in the life of the AACC since its inception in 1963. The AACC is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and only Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christian councils may be associate members and Christian organisations may be associate organisations.

Aims and functions, main concerns and activities

1. To keep before the churches and national Christian councils the demands of the gospel pertaining to their life and mission, for evangelism, for witness in society, for service and for unity, and to this end to promote consultation and action among the churches and councils;
2. To provide a common programme of study and research;
3. To encourage closer relationship and mutual sharing of experience among the churches in Africa through visits, consultation and conferences, and the circulation of information;
4. To assist the church in finding, sharing and placing personnel and utilising other resources for the most effective prosecution of their common task;
5. To assist the churches in their common work of leadership training, lay and clerical, for the task of the church today;
6. Without prejudice to its own autonomy, to collaborate with the WCC and other appropriate agencies, in such ways as may be mutually agreed.

STRUCTURE OF AACC

The AACC comprises of 147 member churches and national Christian Councils in 39 countries. There are 16 national Christian Councils that are associate members of the AACC. The following units coordinate the various activities of the Council.

UNIT I: GENERAL SECRETARIAT

This involves finance and administration information and communication, and International Affairs.

UNIT II: SELFHOOD OF THE CHURCH

This entails youth desk, women's desk, Christian and family life, education, theology and interfaith.

UNIT III: SERVICE AND WITNESS

This embraces emergency and refugee services, research and development consultancy service, communication training centre.

ORGANISATION OF THE CONFERENCE

The General Assembly is the main policy-making body of the AACC. Between Assemblies, policy is entrusted to the General Committee. The AACC is managed by the Executive Committee acting on behalf of the General Committee, which is elected every five years by the General Assembly. The work of the Conference is carried out through the three Units as follows:

The present projects of the AACC are as follows:

- Selfhood of the Church
- Women's Programme
- Refugee Programme
- Youth Programme
- Information Activities
- International Affairs Programme

THE ALEXANDRIAN CONFESSION (1976)

The Confession of Alexandria was a public confession made by the African Churches collectively during the meeting of the AACC in Egypt in 1976. At that time the AACC was the most influential voice on the continent. It was the growing expression of the African consciousness, minority rules, institutional racism, underdevelopment and the like.

"The storms of history have sometimes led us astray", said the Confession. We have struggled against colonialism and many other evils and yet, have built up again those things that we had torn down (Galatians 2:18). We have spoken against evil when it was convenient. We have often avoided suffering for the sake of others, thus refusing to follow his example (1 Peter 2:21). We have been a stumbling block for too many. We have often been paternalistic towards others for these and many other sins. We are sorry and ask God to forgive us. The statement went to confirm: our contemporary search for authentic responses to Christ as Lord over the whole of our lives had led us to a deeper understanding of the heritage delivered to us by the Fathers of the early Church in North Africa. We became conscious of the fact that we are inheritors of a rich tradition. The statement proceeded:

"Our commitment to the struggle for human liberation is one of the ways we confess our faith in an incarnate God, who loved us so much that He came among us in our own human form, suffered, was crucified for our redemption and was raised for our justification. Such undeserved grace evokes a response of love and joy that we are seeking to express and to share in languages, modes of spirituality, liturgical forms, patterns of mission and structures of organisations that belong uniquely to our own cultural context."

The meeting of the AACC in Alexandria was the first to take place in North Africa, which is separated from the South by a vast desert and water jungles. Persecution of Christians in the North at the hands of the Romans, the Greeks, the Turks, the Arabs and others, claimed the life of many congregations in North Africa and hindered the outreach ministry of the others. The Church of Alexandria survived the persecution and managed to maintain its identity and indigenous culture. When the Church was able to extend a helping hand to the South, it carried the Gospel in its substance and did not force its culture on the people there.

THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

As the largest Church in the Middle East, the Coptic Orthodox Church has been instrumental in founding this regional ecumenical body in 1974. The MECC stands as a forum and facilitator in the road to unity and an instrument of the Churches cooperation in witness and service.

STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS

The concept of the family of churches is the basis of the MECC structures. The term family is used to indicate those churches in the region that have a common ecclesial tradition and are in communion with one another. Hence four families constitute the MECC:

1. Oriental Orthodox
2. Eastern Orthodox
3. Catholic
4. Protestant

The MECC has a vast set of programs, which are summarised below:

General Secretariat: general coordination and administration, justice and peace program, international ecumenical relations, dialogue with Western evangelicals, MECC meetings.

Communications Department: newsletters and periodicals in Arabic, English and French, documentation service, audio-visual centres and productions, publications of Christian Arab literature, MECC Book and Arts Centre, Ecumenical Travel Office.

Unit on Life and Service: research and assistance to churches in their diakonal services, health advisory committee, training, working group on refugees, and resource sharing with WCC. Related MECC programs which are budgeted under the Life and Service section include the Ecumenical Popular Education Program (EPEP), the Ecumenical Loan Fund (ECLOF), and the Service to Refugees and Migrant Groups (SRMG). His Grace Bishop Youannis represents the Coptic Church in this unit.

Unit on Education and Renewal: family education program, women's program, youth program, cooperation between church-related school's, curriculum development for Christian education in schools, scholarships program. The official representative of the Coptic Church in this unity is His Grace Bishop Moussa, Bishop of Youth Affairs.

Unit on Faith and Unity: promotion of ecumenical fellowship, focusing on: agreeing on a common date for Easter, working on a common Arabic version of the Lord's prayer, inter-church pastoral issues, theology of the trinity, inter-church dialogue and dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East, inter-religious dialogur, programs of the Association of Theological Institutes in the Middle East (ATIME). His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy of Dimette represents the Coptic Church in this unit.

THE MECC LOGO

The logo of the Middle East Council of Churches is composed of four major elements: the cross, the 'Chi-Roh', the fish, and the oval. The cross is central to the figure. It controls the form of the second element, the 'Chi-Roh', an ancient Christian symbol formed of the first two Greek letters of the name, 'Christ', meaning, 'the Anointed'. The fish is another early Christian symbol. The Greek word for fish, ICQUS, can be seen as an acrostic standing for 'Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour.' The oval, like the circle, is meant to represent unity, the main purpose of the Council's existence – the churches working together, trying to fulfil Christ's prayer for God-given unity among His disciples. The oval shape also suggests the coloured eggs, which are distributed in eastern churches as a symbol of the Resurrection as Eastertide.

CHRISTIANS COMMON MESSAGE TODAY

Since its founding and first General Assembly in May 1974, the Middle East Council of Churches has kept true to its conviction that the Church's ministry in the region is relevant and crucial. Celebrating and using its diversity of traditions and gifts, the Church is entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation – cornerstone of the Kingdom, fountainhead of hope and the binding force that draws Christians toward each other in the Spirit's fellowship. It breaks down walls of enmity between themselves, and between them and other people of sincere faith. In the end, in a divided and violent world, it forges links of peace and wholeness whose strength is Jesus the Christ, the Prince of Peace.

THE COUNCIL'S FIVE THEMES

This seminal outlook continues to deepen as the MECC discovers how increasingly significant its role becomes in the Middle East and worldwide. Five key themes characterising its program and activities are:

1. The MECC is committed to strengthen a sense of unity, confidence, continuity and purpose within the fellowships of its member churches. The activities and programs of the council seek to encourage Christians to remain in the region and to make positive contributions towards its new and better future.

2. The MECC encourages its member churches to support and uphold each other as they help their people understand their faith and witness. Within the MECC Christian dialogue takes place on all levels, from the pastoral grass-roots to academic halls, from formal dialogue among church leaders to the day-to-day fellowship among Christians on the street. With greater maturity, they respond to the demands of their faith and witness.

3. The MECC builds bridges of understanding and mutual respect between Christians and people of other faiths. The council believes that Christians have a vital role to play within the Middle East's pluralistic society. Although

numerically small, a self-confident and committed Christian community knows how to respect and celebrate diversity. The MECC is therefore well positioned to be a bridge between people of different faiths.

4. The MECC nurtures within the churches the spirit and resources for service (diakonia). The Middle East is an arena for economic, political and often violent conflict. In this environment the legions of the poor, the downtrodden and exploited, the sick and suffering, the deprived, disenfranchised, and displaced grow more numerous every day. What guides the council in its ministry of compassion and service is the realisation that Christ died for all people. To heal, to transcend barriers, and to touch the spiritual as well as the material, social and physical needs of people is to imitate Christ.

5. The MECC is a mediator not only between Christians and churches in the Middle East, but also between them and their brothers and sisters in Christ elsewhere. Social and cultural gaps often impede or undermine understanding. But with its historical heritage, the council is uniquely equipped to bridge these gaps, to nurture trust in partner relationships, and to focus broad Christian concern for justice, peace and the relief of human suffering in the region.

HOW THE MECC WORKS

The MECC is a meeting place for the indigenous churches of the region, a facilitator of their common response to common needs. It encourages and supports relationships between its member churches in an ecclesiastically sensitive manner, adhering to the historical confessions of the united Church, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, to which all its members subscribe. Its family structure emphasises consensus and participation in community. Larger and smaller families each have equal opportunity to have their voices heard in its deliberations, and no one perspective is permitted to eclipse any other. The decision-making process of the MECC is sensitive to the various church traditions represented.

As far as possible, the Middle East Council's program initiatives complement ministries, which its members already fulfil. And over the years these programs have sifted out into three program units: Faith and Unity, Education and Renewal, and Life and Service. The General Secretariat focuses these activities and augments them. Administration, finance and communications departments in the Council enable, strengthen, rationalise and publicise the work.

The constitutionally regularised decision-making and program-implementation processes begin with the Council's General Assembly. This ninety-six-member body, an effective instrument of the member churches, meets once every four years, it reviews and assesses what has been done, and it gives the general mandate for what is to happen through the next four years. In the interim it gives authority to the Executive Committee to carry on. The Assembly-appointed General Secretary and three Associates from an administrative General Secretariat, which regularly reports, to the Council's four Presidents and to the Executive Committee.

MECC ASSEMBLIES

Conducted every 5 years, the assemblies constitute the main policy making body of the council. The inaugural assembly was in Cyprus in 1974 with the theme: One Common Christian Message Today. In 1977 the theme of the 2nd assembly was: He Gave Us The Ministry Of Reconciliation. Your Kingdom Come was the theme of the 3rd assembly in Cyprus in 1980. Bishop Samuel was elected President of the Council. Thereafter the theme was The Living Hope in 1985. The 5th general assembly in January 1990 had the theme: Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bonds of Peace. Representing the Coptic Church was Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, Bishop Benjamin, Bishop Paula, Bishop Moussa and Bishop Marcos.

My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you was the theme of the 6th assembly of the MECC, in Cyprus in November 1994. His Holiness Pope Shenouda headed the Coptic delegation, which included, Metropolitan Abraham of Jerusalem, Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, Bishop Benjamin, Bishop Moussa, Bishop Marcos and Mr. Samir Marcos. A significant feature of this assembly was the admission of the Catholic Church to the Council. At the conclusion of the assembly His Holiness Pope Shenouda III was elected one of the Presidents of the Council representing the Oriental Orthodox family.

The jubilee assembly was held in Lebanon in May 1999 under the theme: Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever (Hebrew 13: 8). The Coptic delegation consisted of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Metropolitan Abraham of Jerusalem, Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, Bishop Moussa, Bishop Marcos, Bishop Raphael, Mr. Samir Marcos, Mr. Girgis Saleh. Pope Shenouda III was re-elected one of the Presidents of the Council to serve a further five years.

HEADS OF CHURCHES MEETING

From January 23rd-25th 1998 there met in Nicosia, Cyprus, a remarkable conclave – the leaders of the churches of the Middle East came together for a working session. All but three of the region's leaders attended in person and those three sent high-level deputies.

As guests of His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos, the working sessions were convened in the hall of the Holy Synod of the autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus located in the Archbishopric in the sadly divided city of Nicosia. There they were surrounded by magnificent frescoes executed in iconographic style depicting scenes from the gospels, a fitting setting for what they had come together to undertake.

The idea of bringing together the heads of churches had been generated during a meeting of the presidents and honorary presidents of the Middle East Council of Churches in Damascus during May 1997 itself a landmark event.

This meeting was remarkable for its inclusiveness and for the fact that it was a working session, and has been likened to the Council of Nicea of the 5th century. While that ancient council drew tighter churches from throughout the then-known world where the Church had taken root (predominantly what we now know as the modern Middle East), times have changed. Now the Church is far more widely dispersed. But for the Middle East – both Christian and Muslim – and particularly for

the members of the ancient and younger churches, the coming together of their spiritual leaders was accompanied by high expectancy and sense of moment. It had, for them, something of the symbolic significance of a true ecumenical conclave, a 'Council of Nicosia'. Whatever else may be said about it, it represented a genuine moment of ecumenical cordiality, and was inspired by a spirit of common purpose.

At the conclusion of their meeting, the leaders of the Middle East's Churches issued an open pastoral letter. We publish the document:

Sent out by the leaders of Middle East Churches at their meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus January 24th 1998.

Beloved brothers and children in the Lord, we praise God that He has made it possible for us to meet for the second time since 1985 as heads of the four church families – Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical. We meet during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, within the framework of the Middle East Council of Churches, and as the guests of His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos in Nicosia, capital of Cyprus.

As we meet, what unites us is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God and Saviour, according to Holy Scripture and as we have confessed it in the Apostles' Creed and the Niceo-Constantinople Creed. And we have met to renew our efforts to fulfil our common calling to give glory to our One God, Father, Son on the threshold of the year 2000, a year in which, with all the world's Christians, we now prepare to celebrate the Great Jubilee, the jubilee of two thousand years since the coming of our Saviour and Redeemer, Christ the Lord. Thus we direct our gaze to the Holy Land to renew our solidarity with its people, and to affirm the unique character and holiness of the city of Jerusalem. We call the attention of all the churches and the whole international community to the dangers that loom over it and threaten world peace.

None of us lacks the awareness that Christian existence in this part of God's world goes back to the days when Christ the Lord was born, lived, died, rose again and founded His Church upon this gracious land. It is from here that the light of the gospel shone forth upon the whole world, East and West.

In ancient times churches were founded in this land, each with its history, heritage and liturgical traditions. These are churches with their martyrs, saints and scholars, individuals who have greatly enriched Christian culture and all humanity with their books and writings, filling them from the springs of the Holy Gospel. These bequests continue to be valuable resources for every person who wants to explore the evangelical values within which they lived and for whose glory they gave their lives.

None of us can forget Jerusalem whence the Church first set forth after the Holy Spirit had come to dwell in it. We cannot forget Antioch where the believers were first called Christian. We cannot forget Alexandria, the fruit of St. Mark's preaching. We cannot forget Cyprus nor the cities of Asia Minor where St. Paul sojourned and to whom he addressed most of his letters, among the most precious things in Christianity's treasury. In his permissive will, God gave some of these into other hands. He is the sovereign of history, the Lord of all destinies. It is for us to develop

our skill in reading the writing that he writes in straight lines though letters may be crooked.

We have met today to discuss together in the presence of God, in good conscience, and before you all whether we and you, no matter our affiliations, have been faithful to the mission of the Church which Christ the Lord entrusted to us. All of us believe Christ is who He is – divine and human, Lord and redeemer, our shepherd and our guide up the steep ascents of life and through its valleys of shadow. More especially we affirm this belief in these days when we see so many of our people being deprived of their basic human rights. Emigration bears many away in a hemorrhagic flood as in southeastern Turkey. We also see an increasing number of our people in other countries leaving their homes and going to the West where they believe they can realise themselves more satisfyingly and assure a future for their children. We do not hide from you the fact that this phenomenon has shaken us to our very souls. We firmly believe that Christ the Lord has placed upon us and upon you the burden of His mission in this Middle East, to bear witness to the values of the gospel.

We cannot properly carry out this mission…nay, we cannot effect it at all…unless we exemplify in a vital manner our intention to deepen ties of mutuality and love among ourselves. We are all responsible for that which Christ the Lord has entrusted into our hands. It is the legacy of faith that gives birth to hope, the wellspring of love. Not in vain did the apostle Paul proclaim, "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13). What the apostle said only echoes the saying of Christ the Lord, declaring love to be the distinguishing mark of Christians: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35). Love alone guides us toward the unity we desire, the unity for which Christ prayed and for which He commanded us to pray. He said, "Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one, as we are one." (John 17:9-11).

But someone says, "What is to be done? Our numbers dwindle every day. The avenues for witness narrow. Our resources wither in our hands." This is true. But we have no intention to try to proclaim the message Christ the Lord gave to us by human means alone. That is not what is required of us in the places where we live. That which is required, we believe, is that we implement the imperatives of our faith, to be what the Lord wants us to be. That is, we are asked to be salt which savours the food (Matthew 5:13), the lamp stand which gives light to all in the house (Matthew 5:15), and the yeast which leavens all the dough (Matthew 13:33). The apostles who preached the gospel to all the known world in their day numbered only twelve. They proclaimed what Christ the Lord had taught them to proclaim about freedom, justice, equality, giving equal opportunity, and showing respect for the rights of people. They did not go out to set one regime against another, nor set one faction against another so long as all governed justly and spoke the truth.

Christians face many problems today. These alienate them from effective participation in public life, and this, in turn, intensifies feelings of anxiety and fear. But Christians are not alone in being aware of problems and the things which stimulate fear. Many Muslims also see that that which causes Christians anxiety should be a concern for all citizens in society. This lays upon us the responsibility to

urge more strongly the participation of Christians in public life, and to make more effective Christian-Muslim cooperation in building a society founded upon respect for diversity, full equality in citizenship, the protection of freedom, and the defense of the dignity and rights of the human individual.

The difficulties which test the very existence of Christians and their witness, we urge our people to stand firm, and to be strong in the hope which Jesus Christ has given to them. This requires that they work within present realities with a spirit of wisdom and objectivity. Let them not exaggerate, be terrorised or fall victims to fear.

This does not mean that we make light of those things which cause stress in the situation and the need to respond to them head on. It requires of us greater cooperation and solidarity in making use of our intellectual and material resources in the fields of culture, education, society, and economy in order to mobilize Christians in their role of serving society.

Greeting you in the love of the Lord Jesus, we have this to say: Stand firm in your faith in God. He pays attention. "Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered" by Him (Luke 12:7). Strengthen the bonds of love and mutuality among yourselves, because "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (1 Timothy 1:7). Among yourselves cultivate harmony, brotherhood and peace. The Apostle Paul warns us that hard times will come, "for people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud and arrogant…" (2 Timothy 3:2), but he also says, "I beg you…to lead a life worthy of the calling to which God has called you, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You are one body and the Spirit is one, just as God called you to one hope. You have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, the Father of all. He is above all; He works through all; and He is in all." (Ephesians 4:1-6).

We cannot conclude this letter of ours without reaffirming that we feel our people's pain. We share fully in their cry for justice not least of all in the heart of the struggle occasioned by the Israeli occupation of Palistine, Lebanon and Syria, and by the Turkish occupation of Cyprus. We must also point out the tragic circumstances through which the Iraqi people are living because of unjust and unjustifiable sanctions, causing extreme suffering among civilians, most especially among children, old people and the sick. We call the churches of the world to stand in solidarity with the people of Iraq for their right to live with dignity.

Beloved brothers and children in the Lord, let us be a community whose hearts are filled with the gospel's limitless love, and hearts filled also with courage to defend the truth. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Signatories:

Ignatios IV Hazim,
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Greek Orthodox Church

Petros VII,
Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa for the Greek Orthodox Church

Theodoros I,

Patriarch of Jerusalem for the Greek Orthodox Church (represented by Metropolitan Timothy Margarites)

Chrysostomos,
Archbishop of Cyprus

Chrysanthos,
Bishop of Limassol for the Greek Orthodox Church

Shenouda III,
Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark of the Coptic Orthodox Church

Ignatious Zakka I Iwas,
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Syrian Orthodox Church

Aram I Keshishian,
Catholicos of Cilicia for the Armenian Orthodox Church

Nasr-Allah Butros Sfeir,
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East for the Maronite Church

Maximos V Hakim,
Patriarch of Antioch for the Greek Catholic Melchite Church (represented by Bishop Ilarion Kabuggi and Metropolitan Kyrillos Bustros)

Ignatious Antoine II Hayek,
Patriarch of Antioch for the Syrian Catholic Church (represented by Bishop Elias Tabi)

Raphael I Bedawid,
Patriarch of Babylon for the Chaldean Catholic Church

Jean Pierre XVIII Kasparian,
Patriarch of Cilicia for the Armenian Catholic Church

Michael Sabbah,
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

Istifanous II Ghattas,
Patriarch of Alexandria for the Coptic Catholic Church

Salim Sahiouny,
President of the Supreme Council of Evangelicals in Syria and Lebanon

Ghays Abd-ul-Malik Barsoum,
President Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East

Safwat al-Bayadi,
President of the Supreme Council of Evangelical Churches of Egypt

Munib Younan,
Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan

INDEPENDENT AFRICAN CHURCHES

Through the visionary ecumenical work of His Grace Bishop Antonious Markos, the Bishop of African Affairs, an International Association called Organisation of African Independent Churches was conceived in 1978. Bishop Antonious Markos' extensive travels and meetings across several African Countries gave him opportunity to know leaders of the African Independent Churches. When Bishop Antonious Markos asked where they wished to conduct their 1st meeting since 1860, they stated Egypt, the first Apostolic country in Africa.

FIRST CONFERENCE

Pope Shenouda welcomed the opportunity to host the conference in Cairo, November 3rd – 15th 1978. The first plenary session of the Organisation of African Independent Churches took place in the Conference Hall of the Bishopric of Public Ecumenical and Social Services in St. Rowess Monastery. It was decided to establish an organisation to work for the welfare of the African Independent Churches. These churches sought liberation from colonialism and imperialism, which they vehemently opposed.

The organisation was to be spiritual, educational and for training purposes only and had no political purpose or activities. Bishop Antonious Markos was elected secretary and primate of Adejobi and Right Reverend Aladura was elected chairperson. Nairobi was selected as the headquarters of the organisation. It carried out its activities from St. Anthony's Coptic Monastery in Nairobi. In October 1982, the O.A.I.C acquired a permanent residence in Nairobi.

SECOND CONFERENCE

With the assistance of the A.A.C.C, the 2nd Conference of the Independent African Churches was held in Nairobi in November 1982. It was officially opened by the minister of local government in Kenya who representing the president Daniel Arap Moi. Over 100 delegates attended representing over 56 churches across 19 African countries.

SYNDESMOS

It is the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth and has the aim of developing cooperation and communication between Orthodox Youth movements and Theological Schools around the world and of promoting within them a deeper understanding and vision of their common faith. Founded in 1953, Syndesmos today counts 118 member movements in 41 countries and regularly organises meetings, festivals and exchanges as well as publishing resource materials, reports, directions and quarterly newsletter.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

The Coptic Orthodox Church is not a full member, but rather an associate member. In view of the recent historic official dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Orthodox Churches, Syndesmos is striving to encourage closer cooperation and understanding between the youth movements of both families of Orthodox Churches. With this aim Syndesmos held a major consultation in St. Bishoy's Monastery in Egypt in May 1991.

At the conclusion of the consultation the following statement was issued:

We, 25 youth representatives from the Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches in 11 different countries, met in St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt, May 20th-26th, 1991.

This meeting was made possible with the blessing of His Holiness, Patriarch and Pope Shenouda III and of His Holiness Patriarch and Pope Parthenios III and by the generous hospitality of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Bishopric of Youth, and Public, Ecumenical and Social Services.

We rejoice in the fact that our Churches have, by God's will, in the official dialogue "clearly understood that both families have always loyally maintained the authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the Apostolic Tradition, though they may have used Christological terms in different ways. It is this common faith and continuous loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition that should be the basis of our unity and condition." (Second agreed statement of the joint commission of the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and Oriental Orthodox Churches, Chambesy, Switzerland, September 23rd-28th, 1990).

In accordance with the recommendations on pastoral questions of this official dialogue and the resolution made by the XIIIth SYNDESMOS General Assembly (Boston, USA, 1989), SYNDESMOS convened this Consultation, with the aim of enabling Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox youth movements to support the imminent re-establishment of communion between our Churches.

During the Consultation, we heard three presentations which provided the basis for our deliberations: Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, (unable to attend in person), outlined the History and Progress of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches; Bishop Moussa, Coptic

Orthodox Bishop for Youth, and Metropolitan George of Mont Lebanon (Byblos and Batroun) both spoke on Challenges for Cooperation on Pastoral Questions. Two themes were discussed during group work: How can SYNDESMOS support, on a youth level, the official dialogue between the two families of Churches? And what should be the forms of cooperation between youth movements of the two families of Churches? We shared a common worship life, which reflected our varied liturgical traditions.

We agreed that youth should participate in making the official theological agreed statements an ecclesial reality. This can be done initially by informing our young people of the results of the official dialogue between our Churches, which, in turn, will help the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox youth to know and love each other better, and to live their common faith together, thus preparing themselves for the restoration of communion.

We agreed to make the following recommendations:

2. That all Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox youth movements prepare their members for the imminent renewal of communion between our Churches by means of information, common activities and close cooperation. This is particularly important in those regions where our Churches coexist.

3. That SYNDESMOS publish and distribute information about the official theological dialogue between the two families of Churches. This information could take the form of a booklet containing a short history of each of the Orthodox Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches and their youth movements, and a chapter summarising the history of the dialogue between our Churches up to and including the recent agreed statements.

4. That SYNDESMOS actively encourage close cooperation on a local and regional level of youth movements from both families of our Churches. This cooperation could take the form of regional and local committees, joint seminars and retreats with biblical and liturgical studies, and discussion on themes of Tradition and renewal.

5. That SYNDESMOS initiate a programme of contacts and exchanges between students and teachers of Theology from both families of Churches.

6. That SYNDESMOS amend its Constitution to allow Oriental Orthodox youth increments and theological schools to become full (affiliate) members of SYNDESMOS, thereby enabling these movements to participate fully in the life and decision-making processes of SYNDESMOS.

As the Consultation concluded on the day of Pentecost, we thanked God who through His Holy Spirit had brought us together in our common Orthodox faith, and had guided us in an atmosphere of hope and love.

APPENDIX I

CHRISTOLOGICAL AGREEMENT SIGNED BY THE AUTHORITIES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST 1987

November 19th, 1987

We render thanks to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for the joy of spiritual communion that we were graced with from above as we met here in the Holy Monastery of St. Bishoy in Egypt, on the occasion of the meeting of the Executive Committee of MECC (Middle East Council of Churches) (16-19 November 1987) upon the invitation and with the gracious hospitality of our sister Coptic Orthodox Church.

It was the first time that Heads of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, members of the MECC, having our Holy Sees in the Middle East, we met together and reflected on our common task in the present day situation of the Middle East.

While reflecting once more on the deeply rooted inner unity of faith existing among our two families of churches, we rejoice by realising how much we have advanced in our rediscovery and in the growing consciousness among our people of that inner unity of faith in the Incarnate Lord. Attempts by theologians of both families aimed at overcoming the misunderstandings inherited from the past centuries of alienation towards one another have happily reached the same conclusion that fundamentally and essentially we on both sides have preserved the same faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in spite of diverse formulations and resulting controversies.

Welcoming all such attempts made on international or regional levels, and focusing our attention particularly on the latter, namely the meetings held in Balamand, Lebanon (1972) and in Pendelli, Greece (1978), we affirm our togetherness in the true understanding, of the person of Christ who being God of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, became truly man, fully assumed our human nature without losing or diminishing or changing His divine nature. Being perfect God, he became perfect man without confusion, without separation.

In the light of this conviction, we recommend that the official dialogue on both regional (Middle East) and international levels be pursued through common endeavours in the healthy process of clarifying and enhancing our commonness in faith and dispelling the misapprehensions of the past, thus preparing the way towards the full recovery of our communion.

We urge our people to continue to deepen their consciousness of the deep communality of faith and to relate to one another as brethren and sisters who share the same Gospel, the same faith and the same commission entrusted to them by their common Lord. Thanks be to God that ancient controversies and rivalries have given way to a new era of sincere and open dialogue and communal brotherhood.

We pray that these most difficult and crucial times in the Middle East may stimulate all of us to see more clearly the demand and the command of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may be one according to His will (John 10) and prayer (John 17).

APPENDIX II

ADDRESS BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III AT WCC ASSEMBLY; CANBERRA, FEBRUARY 1991

Dear Friends,

I first wish to extend my sincere greetings to all of you.

I am grateful that you have chosen for the theme of the Assembly "Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation."

The Holy Spirit is the power that founded the Church and led it from the beginning of the Apostolic Age. It became the most powerful period in Christian history because the Holy Spirit was disposing all of its acts.

Let us recall together the picture from the beginning. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded the apostles to await Gods promise and refrain from any service until they were clothed with power from above (Luke 24:49). This power was of a certain nature and had a definite purpose. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8). Hence, we are faced with two things, DIVINE POWER and WITNESS TO CHRIST. It is the power that God grants us and our witness to Christ; the work of the Spirit and our response to act. This we can call the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). The apostles' work was centred upon witnessing to Christ. The Church was strong and faith extended and overflowed into the world. The Spirit worked in them powerfully "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47).

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, the role of the Church is to establish the kingdom on earth, which is to witness to Christ in all places, and to win day by day those who are saved, for there is no salvation without Christ's blood. "There is salvation in no one else." (Acts 4:12).

The Holy Spirit was the speaker in the mouths of the apostles. "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." (Matthew 10:20). Thus was the spreading of faith. With one sermon on Pentecost three thousand souls were added to the Church (Acts 2:41). It was not Peter who uttered the words, but God's Spirit spoke through Peter's mouth. The audience were cut to the heart and believed.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). Here we find four things: repentance, faith, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. With these four works, 3000 souls were saved on one single day.

When shall we live upon this power?

When shall God's kingdom and its establishment by the Holy Spirit be the centre of our work?

When shall we live the anointment of the Spirit and receive His only teachings? "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things," (1 John 2:27).

When shall all people see in us a mystery they need which is the teaching of the Holy Spirit?

They shall come forward asking, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:27).

When will the Lord send us to them as He sent Peter to Cornelius? (Acts 10). Or as He sent Philip to the Ethiopian minister to convey to him words of salvation? (Acts 8).

When could our work be the spreading of faith and the kingdom?

When can we utilise the power of the Holy Spirit that is granted to us to witness to Christ?

When can the word of the bible be achieved, "The kingdom of God has come" (Mark 9:1)?

St. Athanasius the Apostle is known as a hero of faith because he stood firm, with true witness that won unique record in history. So were called heroes: Cyril of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Gregory Theologos, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem and many others.

What then?

When can people say the WCC has become a hero of faith?

When shall we fulfil the Lord's testament "And you shall be my witnesses?" Or say God's kingdom has come with power?

When can we carry a cross and follow Jesus? Indeed we need to try to spread faith among those whose knowledge of God is imperfect. But we also need to work fervently for the faith the various churches hold, so that one day Christ's wish be realised and all be one flock for one Shepherd, ie Christ.

May we all work to realise the apostle's words, "One God, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

May every one of us cease to speak of his own mind, but offer what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:3).

May every one use every effort to achieve common understanding on principle points so that one day we could gather around the Holy Eucharist!

St. John the divine, a pillar of the church, was the only living disciple when he addressed his message to the seven churches. He did not give personal words, but could convey the message of the Spirit because, he says: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). We need to listen to the voice of the Spirit in us and to convey his message as is. We have to deny our wisdom to join Saul of Tarsus in saying, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

Jesus Christ is asking what we have done with the talents we received to merchandise with. May we be able to answer, "Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them." His joyful voice will then answer, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:20,21).

Dear brethren, the time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29). We need to work for God before He comes. Let us join in building His kingdom and speak to all about Jesus and His wonderful salvation. Let us not listen to every voice, but to His voice only. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1). The world can be spiritually conquered and Jesus' prayer be fulfilled, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me…For I have given them the words which You have given to Me," (John 17:6-8). "O righteous Father! The world has not known You… And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:25-26).

APPENDIX III

ADDRESS BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III; WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, JANUARY 1974

A speech given by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark the Apostle in the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, held in St. Mark's Coptic Cathedral in Cairo 1974.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. AMEN. We thank our Lord and Master Jesus Christ who has granted us this opportunity to gather in church to pray for its Unity and solidarity and for us to become one in Him.

CHRISTIAN UNITY IS GOD'S WILL

"So there will be one flock and one Shepherd" (John 10:16). In His last prayer in Gethsemane, Our Lord said: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:21-24).

What does that mean?

It means that Christian Unity is essential for Faith and Evangelism. The mere existence of so many Christian divisions and factions is the greatest stumbling block to the rest of the world. How could they believe while the truth appears lost amidst controversy and contradiction between various churches?

"They may be one … So that the World may believe…" and listen to that Comparison and what a Comparison it is!: "They may be one just as we are one" (John 17:22). On His way to Golgotha, the Lord's sole concern was the Church's Unity. He had given a commandment and a prayer to His disciples. The commandment is: "that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:12-13) and the Prayer is that: "they may be one even as We are One".

CHURCH UNITY AS A NATURAL STATE

We all know that the Church is the Body of Christ. Christ has one body. He is the head, we all are the body. It cannot be such a mutilated Body. The Church is Christ's bride. Christ has one bride… one church. "I am the Vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). One vine: One church: We all are branches.

CHURCH UNITY IS AN ECCLESIASTICAL FACT

In the creed we say: 'Truly we believe in the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church.' Therefore, One Church it must be; it gathers all; and it is Holy. If we say many churches, we would have broken our Creed. The plural word 'churches' is mentioned in the Bible in a geographical sense only. So, it is one Church, no matter where it exists.

CHURCH UNITY IS AN HISTORICAL INHERITANCE

"those who believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32). We also find lots of delightful expressions about this 'One Church' in St. Paul's plea for Unity in his epistle to the Ephesians: "Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; on Lord, on faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:1-6).

Christianity started as on Apostolic Church in Jerusalem, and it will end also as one Church in the Eternal everlasting life, gathering not only all those who believed but also the angels…in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

UNITY IS LOVE

If we are divided, then we don't love one another…"This is my Commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12). If we have this kind of love, the whole world will see Christ in us. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him." (1 John 4:16).

Let us love one another first, then in an atmosphere of love we can discuss theological matters. Divisions in the Christian world happened not because of theological differences but because we abandoned the love we had in the beginning. Every church looked for the others' faults. Theologians studying the nature of Christ, which is full of love and peace, became divided and excommunicated on another.

Would that we loved one another without arguments about matters that we know we cannot fully comprehend. St. Paul says: "I, brethren, could not speak to you as spiritual people…For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Unity is love. We don't have to compromise the faith, but with love, discuss it and reach unity.

UNITY IS STRENGTH

Divisions have weakened our Universal Apostolic Church. Christians united with love can be compared with bricks united in one building; one Church. Christianity nowadays confronts waves of atheism, materialism and permissiveness, which could destroy the world. The modern world does not favour an Orthodox, Protestant or Catholic approach to life. All could be lost. Christian Unity will give the Church strength and solidarity against the permissiveness, materialism and unbelief of our time.

We cannot reach unity unless we humble ourselves. Without humility we could, be wasting time, be busy finding who is going to be the head of a united church and which Church is going to lead the rest. When the disciples had these thoughts, our Lord said to them: "It shall not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great

among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28).

St. Paul addresses us saying: "fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:2-8). If we are seeking Christian unity, then let us have such Christ like humility.

UNITY IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We, dear brethren in Christ, have not yet reached this unity but we are praying for it now. We believe that Church unity is the work of the Holy Spirit and the result of God's intervention in His Church. Don't think that unity can be achieved merely by our strength or our knowledge of the Bible. It cannot be achieved by our wit or theological ability. "Unless the Lord builds the House, they labour in vain who build it." (Psalm 127:1). Unless the Lord unites the Church, Ecumenical Conferences and theological meetings will be held in vain.

Let us pray that God intervenes and pours out upon our hearts His love and humility, so that when we open our mouths, we speak His word.

We have met to pray to God, to pray that the Lord fulfils what He promised His Church; one flock, one Shepherd. We pray that the Church may live invested by His peace and security.

Some could ask: "What steps have you taken on the road to Church unity and what results have you reached?"

The Coptic Orthodox Church has taken part in all Theological Conferences that have been held for Church unity. We met with the Uniate Orthodox and with Byzantine, Chalcedonian Churches including the Orthodox of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Constantinople. We met the Roman Catholics in their conferences. We are members of the World Council of Churches.

We Copts belong to a conservative and traditional Church, however, we extended our hands to unity and we studied all aspects because it is the Lord's wish and commandment.

In 1971, when I was a Bishop, I attended the Vienna Pro Oriente Conference. In that conference, we expressed our faith in a "Common Formula" upon which we all agreed and it is as follows:

"We all believe that Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word, the Incarnate God. We believe that He was perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity and that His divinity never departed His humanity not even a single instant nor a twinkle of an eye."

I asked them in the Pro Oriente Conference to leave aside all the ancient Greek phrases that had caused divisions and disagreements, to choose simple expressions, easy to comprehend, to leave the difficult philosophical matters to the theologians. Christianity is not only for Philosophers! Our Lord spoke simple, easy words. The children, the illiterate, the uneducated and all the masses understood Him clearly. He never used difficult expressions, He explained even the Parables to His disciples.

In Vienna, we discussed "The One Nature". We Copts and the Roman Catholics believe in what St. Cyril expressed as "The One Nature of the Incarnated Word" but they thought (wrongly) that we believe in one nature and deny the other. This is not the case. We believe that the two natures, His divinity and His humanity, are in perfect and complete unity. We called this perfect unity "The One Nature". It is neither divinity nor humanity; it is the unique nature of the God Incarnate.

In our Ecumenical meetings, we should talk about actual beliefs regardless of what happened in the past. We must avoid complex and vague expressions. In spite of all the problems that might arise about History, Rites, Ecumenical Councils and so on we shall achieve good results with love, good spirit and determination. We shall achieve this together. It is God's will.

The whole Christian world is anxious to see the Church unite. Christian people, being fed up with divisions and dispersion, are pushing their Church leaders to do something about Church unity and I am sure that the Holy Spirit is inspiring us.

Christian unity will be a magnificent universal achievement for generations to come.

Let us pray that we unite in the faith delivered to us by our great Fathers, who kept it, defended it and sacrificed their lives for it.

Let us pray that God works in our hearts and thoughts so that we fulfil His will.

Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever more. AMEN.

Appendix VI

SYNDESMOS Statement, May 1991

The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth

CONSULTATION ON COOPERATION BETWEEN ORTHODOX AND ORIENTAL ORTHODOX YOUTH MOVEMENTS

PRESS RELEASE

SYNDESMOS, The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, (the only international Orthodox organisation) convened the first *"Consultation on Cooperation between Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Youth Movements"*, in St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt, May 20th-26th, 1991.

The Consultation brought together 25 young people, representing Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox youth movements in 10 countries, notably India, Ethiopia and Europe, as well as the countries of the Middle East, in an attempt to support the official theological dialogue between the two families of Churches, particularly in the light of the unanimous and official declaration of a common Christological faith in September 1990.

The Consultation heard speeches from three eminent keynote speakers: Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, (unable to attend in person), outlined the *History, and Progress of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*, Bishop Moussa, Coptic Orthodox Bishop for Youth, and Metropolitan George of Mont Lebanon (Byblos and Batroun) both spoke on Challenges for Cooperation on Pastoral Questions. Two themes were discussed during group work: How can S YNDESMOS support, on a youth level, the official dialogue between the two families of Churches and what should be the forms of cooperation between youth movements of the two families of Churches?

Although the participants came to realise the pastoral, as well as the practical and jurisdictional problems preventing the complete re-establishment of communion, the meeting was marked by a realisation of the unity of Faith of all those present, despite the fifteen centuries of tragic separation following the schism over the Council of Chalcedon, which saw the mistaken naming of the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Egyptian, and later Indian) as Monophysite.

Worship provided the central element of the week, and the participants shared a common prayer life, with each day reflecting the Tradition of one of the Churches represented. Although no Liturgy was celebrated during the week, the participants were invited to attend the celebration of Pentecost in the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchal Cathedral in Cairo, where they were received by His Holiness Patriarch and Pope of Alexandria Shenouda III.

An excursion was organised to visit Alexandria on Saturday 25th May, and the participants were received by Greek Orthodox Patriarch and Pope of Alexandria His Holiness Parthenios III, who expressed his support for the meeting, and for the process of reconciliation between the two families of Orthodox Churches.
The Final Document produced by the meeting (See enclosure) expressed the feeling of hope and love of the participants at the imminent re-establishment of communion between the two families of Churches. The participants expressed their desire to see improved communication and information about the historical relationship between the two families of Churches, as well as an effort to inform and prepare the faithful for the re-establishment of communion.

Most importantly for SYNDESMOS, the meeting recommended that the Constitution of the Orthodox Fellowship be amended, to allow the full participation of Oriental Orthodox youth movements in the life and activities of the organisation. At the moment, youth movements can only become associate members of SYNDESMOS, reflecting the absence of Eucharistic unity between the two families of Churches. It was unanimously decided that such a change in the Constitution of SYNDESMOS would be a concrete and effective way to support the historic declarations about unity made by the two families of Churches.

APPENDIX VII

LETTER OF CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS TO HIS GRACE BISHOP SAMUEL

January 28th, 1977

Your Grace,

The Catholic members of the Joint Commission between our Churches who were present at the Commission meeting in Vienna from August 26th to 29th, 1976 have presented a report on that meeting and its recommendations to the authorities of the Catholic Church. I would like to communicate to Your Grace, and through you to the authorities of the Coptic Orthodox Church, our reactions to these recommendations.

First of all, I wish to assure you that the report of the Vienna meeting has been given very careful consideration by the different parties in our Church who are concerned with the relations between our two Churches, including, in a particular way, His Holiness, Pope Paul VI. In addition, we have studied various other communications and reports including your letter of November 15th, 1976 to His Eminence, the Cardinal Secretary of State.

Thus, in giving very serious and sympathetic attention to every aspect of the report presented to us, we have at the same time considered it in the context of what has been accomplished over the whole period of time since the memorable meeting between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in May 1973.

We are happy to see that the Commission makes concrete proposals about theological studies that clarify their objectives and present a timetable for carrying them out. They are not academic exercises but are aimed at pointing the way towards full communion between our two Churches. As we understand the proposal, the five years project is flexible enough and realistic enough so that even if all theological questions which exist between our Churches are not completely resolved by that time, we will nonetheless have established a firm theological base for eventually achieving that perfect communion which, in the final analysis, will be God's gift to us.

With regard to the concerns and proposals about pastoral problems, I feel it would be helpful to clarify certain general ideas before entering into a consideration of the proposals themselves.

Within the Catholic Church, it is the local Church, with the bishop, the various religious congregations, the parishes, lay organisations etc., which is primarily responsible for maintaining the Christian life of the community and its apostolic work. There is a great deal of room for local initiatives and autonomous action. The central authorities of our Church can stimulate and coordinate this activity, encourage it where it needs help, guide or correct it where abuses may occur. The Church of Rome, however, does not merely dictate to the local Church nor substitute itself for it. Communion with Rome does not mean absorption by Rome.

You will understand, therefore, that if we are sympathetic to proposals that may be made for developing our mutual relations, if we encourage them and assist them by moral and material means, we cannot simply impose them upon the local Church. It is our task - a task for which we also need your understanding and cooperation to help local Catholic authorities, organisations and individuals to understand and accept these proposals, and even enrich them with the fruits of their own experience.

We fully agree with the statement of the Vienna report that no ecumenical activities between our Churches should be used to create confusion in the minds of the faithful or open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. In fact no activities of our Churches should be used for this purpose. At the same time, our search for union must take place in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, of frequent consultations between Catholics and Orthodox on the local scene to prevent misunderstandings and friction. There must be an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other despite the admittedly regrettable attitudes and actions of the past, and of recognition that we are all trying to fulfil God's will for His Church even if at times there may be shortcomings and failures. Catholics and Orthodox alike must work to create this atmosphere so that there is not the impression that one group is out to suppress the other or gain control of the other.

We find many of the recommendations of the Vienna report reasonable and possible of implementation. We believe it possible for Catholic congregations of men and women to work directly in the service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. We shall encourage them to do this under the pastoral guidance of the Orthodox bishops and other authorities of Your Church in the same way as they do this today under the guidance of Catholic authorities.

We find the second and third recommendations concerning institutions involved in educational and social activities acceptable. Though these institutions have their own statutes and financial autonomy, we shall encourage them to put these recommendations into practice in every way possible.

We have already contacted some Catholic international agencies encouraging aid to Orthodox projects under the same conditions as this aid is now given to Catholic projects. We shall continue to do so. Furthermore, we would suggest that local Catholic and Orthodox representatives meet together to draw up plans for the training institute mentioned for submission to these international agencies (cf. n. 5 of the Vienna Report).

The transfer of property is often determined by the statutes of the individual organisations that own them and by the conditions established by the original founders or later benefactors. Keeping this fact in mind we shall encourage the sale or transfer of properties not being used to Orthodox.

The recommendation that the Catholic Church must not establish new parishes or dioceses or nominate new bishops or establish new monasteries or convents cannot be accepted in the form in which it is stated. No authorities of our Church can impose on local bishops and pastors an absolute prohibition against using those means that they judge necessary for carrying out their pastoral responsibilities towards their own faithful. There are certain needs of the faithful of the Coptic

Catholic Church at present, which can only be met by providing them with institutions that do not exist today.

However we recognise that the setting up of Catholic institutions has at times resulted in expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Orthodox. Therefore we could accept a formulation of a recommendation, which states that, the Catholic Church carry out its pastoral activities within the framework of structures and institutions already existing, and that any changes in these be determined uniquely by needs of its own faithful.

Whatever may have been attitudes in the past, we wish to state clearly that the Catholic Church does not consider the Coptic Orthodox as objects of a "mission" . If there is to be any pastoral work among Orthodox it must be done with the knowledge, approval and cooperation of the Orthodox authorities and without the intention of having people pass from one Church to the other. For this reason, we feel it necessary that there be frequent and regular contacts between the bishops and religious superiors of the Catholic Church and those of the Orthodox Church. These are absolutely necessary to create that atmosphere of respect and confidence that are lacking at present. It would help both parties to meet concrete pastoral needs of their people without fear of creating, friction and competition. It would also help resolve specific cases arising out of disputes within parishes or communities or where individuals may have particular problems or conscience. Above all, it would help the ordinary faithful see that we are moving towards unity with full respect of each other, with a desire to overcome past errors and with no intention of taking advantage of the other party.

The local joint committee can be of great help in making investigations and offering advice. We are happy to see that the Vienna meeting recommended reinforcing its work and clarifying its authority. We shall remain in close contact with the local Catholic authorities to achieve this. However, we are convinced that, in the long run, only if regular and systematic consultation among the authorities of the two Churches take place will it be possible to meet the fears, preoccupations and desires expressed in the Vienna report.

Furthermore, there is one point that I think I must mention in all frankness. The authorities of our Church in Rome will make every effort to implement the recommendations of the Vienna meeting, along the lines I have indicated. However, in our contacts with Catholic representatives at all levels - bishops, agents of Catholic fund agencies, religious superiors, laymen - we have encountered a hesitation to go further towards implementing the Vienna proposals because of a practice, recently introduced in the Coptic Orthodox Church, of refusing to recognise baptism conferred in the Catholic Church and therefore of insisting that this holy sacrament be conferred again on any Catholic who wishes to enter the Orthodox Church. By questioning the validity of Catholic baptism in these cases, the Coptic Orthodox Church seems to deny the very existence of the Catholic Church with its hierarchy, liturgy, sacraments, etc. which have their foundation in the sacrament of baptism. This practice has been the occasion of crises of conscience and of bitterness among Catholics. Many individuals and organisations see it as an obstacle to their putting themselves at the service of the Orthodox authorities and to establishing the cooperation we all desire. Until this practice, which has not been part of the long

tradition of our Church, is changed, we will continue to have difficulty in receiving cooperation from many Catholics in our efforts to implement the recommendations of the common declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III as well as those of the various meetings of the Joint Commission.

I must ask you, therefore, that even if no public and formal declaration about this be made on your part, something be worked out to bring this practice to an end, as a matter of fact, in all situations in which a Catholic enters your Church.

I send these reactions to you, as I mentioned in the beginning after long reflection and wide consultation. They represent the judgement of the major authorities here. It is my hope that they may form the foundation for further development of sincere and confident relations between our Churches leading to that unity that is God's will for us.

May I ask Your Grace to present to His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III, the expression of my respect and veneration. His far-sightedness and trust in the Lord have contributed in a remarkable way to bring us closer as persons and as leaders of our Churches.

I wish also to assure you of my esteem and affection in the Lord and of my prayers that God will bless abundantly your efforts for serving His Church to the glory of His Name.

JOHANNES CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS
President

APPENDIX VIII

LETTER OF CARDINALS JOHANNES WILLEBRANDS AND PAUL PHILIPPE TO THE COPTIC CATHOLIC PATRIARCH, STEPHANOS I SIDAROUSS

March 29th, 1977

During the visit of Your Beatitude to Rome, last November, we had occasion to discuss the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. We were able to recognise that certain factors could harm relations between our Churches and we examined how these relations might be further developed. The joint committee, established following the visit of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to the Holy Father in 1973, presented certain recommendations to the Holy See for the furtherance of the dialogue. In addition there have been several exchanges of messages between the representatives of the Coptic Orthodox Church and those of the Catholic Church.

In these circumstances we thought it useful to share with Your Beatitude and your brothers in the episcopate the thinking of the Holy See on this subject, such as it has been expressed on various occasions in recent months, above all in a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State addressed to Patriarch Shenouda and also in the letter of the President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, sent to His Excellency Bishop Samuel.

As Your Beatitude knows, the Holy See considers the dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church, in the search for full communion, as one of the most important dialogues of the Catholic Church. The Coptic Orthodox Church is recognised as a Church possessing apostolic succession and a faith and sacramental life which, in the words of the Holy Father (Speech for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 1972), put it in an "almost complete" communion with the Catholic Church. In ecumenical dialogue the Coptic Orthodox Church is a partner with whom the Catholic Church seeks disinterested collaboration in order to cooperate in the development of the Christian life of her faithful and to open the way to a more perfect communion.

The Coptic Catholic Church has a specific role to play in this dialogue that she carries out according to the principles of the conciliar Decree on Ecumenism and the statements of the Holy Father. An essential part of this dialogue is the deepening, of the spiritual and apostolic life of the Church. Hence, the need to partake in the pastoral renewal occurring throughout the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council.

It is in this context that His Eminence Cardinal John Villot, in the name of the Holy Father, expressed his regret to His Holiness Shenouda III, that the episcopal nomination of the Catholic patriarchal Vicar, His Excellency Monsignor Athanasios Abadir, might have been thought by the Patriarch to be an obstacle to the search for unity. The Pope, who continues to disapprove of acts of proselytism between our Christian communities, is really convinced that the unity hoped for among all those who believe in Christ, cannot come about without all the faithful, clergy and laity,

feeling in themselves the pain of division and ceaselessly meditating on the prayer of Christ "that they may all be one" (John 17:21). But this can only come about if Christians live deeply the whole message of the gospel.

The preaching of this message, wrote the Cardinal Secretary of State, and the encouragement of both clergy and laity to live it out fully, constitute an essential task of the bishops. In this perspective, the nomination of a bishop, when it is required by the pastoral needs of the faithful, is truly an act by which the Church shows its desire to maintain and strengthen her faithfulness to Christ.

The Catholic Church receives with joy all the news concerning the vitality of the Coptic Orthodox Church and rejoices in it. Likewise we would hope that the nomination of a new Catholic pastor, who must see to the deepening of the faith of the Catholics, might be thought of as being able to bring with it a greater reconciliation among brothers, according to the will of Christ.

The Holy See, concluded Cardinal Villot, considers as positive the fact that the Coptic Catholic Patriarchal Synod chose as patriarchal vicar the only Coptic Catholic priest who was a member of the joint committee of the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Indeed, this choice seems to show a desire to further tighten the different kinds of links that already unite Catholic Copts and Orthodox Copts. Such is the election of a pastor who, whilst helping the Coptic Catholic Patriarch to guide his flock, would also be sympathetic in heart and mind to dialogue with his Coptic Orthodox brethren.

One important feature in the development of the dialogue is the work of the joint committee drawn from our two Churches. In a meeting held in Vienna during August 1976, certain recommendations were drawn up and submitted to the Catholic authorities. Some of these recommendations were connected with the concern of the Orthodox Copts to ensure that dialogue and mutual collaboration did not create confusion among their faithful or open the way to an expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Orthodox.

These recommendations have been the object of an in-depth study on the part of the Holy See. The Cardinal President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity informed Bishop Samuel of our reactions in a letter written with the full agreement of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

In this letter the need was recognised for the theological dialogue to be directed towards the re-establishment of full communion between our two Churches, without it getting lost in purely academic exercises.

The Orthodox had the impression that since their dialogue was with the Catholic Church, it was enough to have contact with the Church of Rome alone in order to reach certain decisions. But Cardinal Willebrands pointed out that although the Holy See remains the principal interlocutor, it is the local Church with its bishop that is first of all responsible for the Christian life of the community. Doubtless the Holy See can stimulate and coordinate this activity, encourage and guide it, or correct it where there are abuses, but the Church of Rome does not at all take the place of the local Church. The Church of Rome may favour certain concrete proposals; she may

encourage them and assist in their realisation, both morally and materially, in active cooperation with the local Church.

The letter confirms that the Catholic Church agrees completely with the following: that none of its activities should be used to create confusion among Orthodox faithful, nor open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. The search for full communion must take place in an atmosphere of mutual trust, reciprocal respect and continuing consultation. This atmosphere needs to be further developed, although one remains conscious of various errors, both in the past and even in the present.

We have informed Bishop Samuel that the Catholic authorities here accept a large number of the Vienna recommendations; indeed, we think it possible for members of religious congregations to work directly at the service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. They could work according to the pastoral instructions of the Orthodox authorities in a manner analogous to that in which they already follow the pastoral instructions of the Catholic authorities.

The Vienna statement recommended that Catholic institutions engaged in social and educational activities might invite members of the Orthodox Church nominated by their authorities to become members of their administrative or governing bodies, and that a study be made of the social projects already in existence in areas where all (or almost all) the Christians are Orthodox. This would be in order to discover what role might be given to the Orthodox in their direction and in their day-to-day activity. The Catholic authorities encourage the application of such recommendations, whilst taking account of the statutes of these organisations and their financial autonomy.

We encourage international Catholic financial aid agencies to support Orthodox projects in the same way in which they support Catholic projects. Furthermore, on the occasion of the sale, or transfer, of properties belonging to Catholic institutions, we suggest that preference be given to the Orthodox. However, the statutes of the organisations, which own the works, as well as the wishes of their founders or benefactors, must be taken into account.

In the same letter, the President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity let it be known that the recommendation that the Catholic Church should not set up new parishes, dioceses, or institutions such as monasteries or convents for a period of five years, was unacceptable in the form in which it had been drawn up. No such absolute prohibition could be imposed upon the bishops who are responsible for their own faithful and who must use whatever means they consider necessary to fulfil this responsibility.

However, we recognise that the setting up of Catholic institutions has at times resulted in the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Orthodox. Therefore we could accept a formulation of a recommendation which states that the Catholic Church carry out its pastoral activities within the framework of structures and institutions already existing, and that any changes be determined uniquely by the needs of its own faithful.

The Coptic Orthodox have been assured that the Catholic Church does not consider them as objects of a "mission" and that it is important that all pastoral work among Orthodox be undertaken with the knowledge, agreement and cooperation of the Orthodox authorities, and without the intention of having people pass from one Church to the other. For this reason it is necessary that there be frequent and regular contacts between Catholic bishops and religious superiors and those of the Orthodox Church. These contacts are deemed necessary in order to create that atmosphere of mutual respect and trust which is lacking at present, to meet the pastoral needs of the Christians, and to sort out particular items that could be a source of misunderstanding or friction.

Once again the Holy See commends the work of the local joint committee. Moreover, it is convinced that it is mainly by means of regular systematic consultations between the authorities of the two Churches, that the fears, worries and desires expressed in the Vienna Report can be dealt with.

In his letter to Bishop Samuel, Cardinal Willebrands spoke clearly and frankly about the practice of some Orthodox of "rebaptising" Catholics who pass to the Orthodox Church. By this custom the Orthodox Church puts in doubt the very existence of the Catholic Church with its sacraments, its liturgy, and its hierarchy. Many Catholics find in this behaviour an obstacle to their participation in the ecumenical movement. Therefore, we ask that this practice be ended, though we are not demanding any public statement on this matter.

In another letter, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity also informed Bishop Samuel of our thinking in the question of the passage of Christians from one Church to another. We recognise the possibility of such cases occurring for reasons of faith and out of a deep personal conviction, of which the local bishop is the judge. Nevertheless, when it is a matter of groups of persons able to form a community, the bishop will make a very close investigation of their motives. If these initiatives are due to a desire to withdraw, for no matter what reason, from the authority of their own bishop or parish priest, that is not sufficient motive. Such a request to pass to the Catholic Church should be refused, and the Orthodox authorities must be informed of such proposals. In collaboration with the Orthodox authorities, a solution must be sought in such a way as to restore peace to the community.

Your Beatitude can see the importance which we give to developing relations between Catholic and Orthodox bishops, whether on an individual basis or on the level of the hierarchies as such. It is important in the search for full communion that the Catholic and the Orthodox authorities really acknowledge one another as brothers in the episcopate, with pastoral concerns that transcend the present divisions and necessitate brotherly collaboration.

Recently, during the visit of the four Catholic members of the local joint committee, of which Bishop Kabès is co-president, we had an opportunity for friendly discussions, which helped us better appreciate both the difficulties being encountered in this important stage of dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the common desire to overcome them.

We had occasion to clearly underline, once again, the thinking and hopes of the Holy See. It has been agreed that we must together overcome the lack of trust that separates the Coptic Catholics from the Coptic Orthodox. Hence, the need for regular contacts between the two hierarchies to prevent misunderstandings, to deepen mutual respect and to favour the pastoral care of all Christians. Similarly, whilst respecting the autonomy of Catholic pastors to take the decisions they judge necessary for the pastoral care of their own people, these meetings and exchanges are especially recommended when it is a matter of taking important pastoral and organisational decisions.

During the meetings in Rome, the hope was expressed that the Assembly of Ordinaries might become an appropriate means for the encouragement of inter-ritual collaboration in the work for ecumenism as well.

As regards the collaboration offered by religious and other individuals and institutions to the Coptic Orthodox pastors, it has been decided that this collaboration would follow the general orientations of the Catholic Church, in conformity with their constitutions or statutes and according to the instructions of the hierarchy.

To conclude, the Holy See commends the local joint committee to the Catholic hierarchy. The committee's work is of particular importance for ecumenical activity in Egypt. The Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches and this Secretariat are very grateful to their colleagues for their work in this area.

In writing to Your Beatitude, we wished to offer these reflections in the hope that they might help the Catholic Church in Egypt fulfil its essential role in the search for unity between Catholics and Orthodox, a search which will lead the two sister Churches to re-establish the full communion which is Christ's will. The Holy Father has already told Your Beatitude that he is sure that the Catholics in Egypt will collaborate fully in this task. We entrust this task to your pastoral care and that of the members of your Holy Synod, and all the Catholic Ordinaries of Egypt, of whose assembly Your Beatitude is president.

With every fraternal good wish, Yours sincerely in Christ

JOHANNES CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS
President
Secretariat for Promoting
Christian Unity

PAUL CARDINAL PHILIPPE
Prefect
S. Congregation for the Eastern Churches

APPENDIX IX

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI TO COPTIC CATHOLIC PATRIARCH, CARDINAL STEPHANOS I SIDAROUSS

September 12th, 1974

My Lord Cardinal and Dear Brother in Christ,
The visit that His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Preaching of St. Mark, paid to us last year, should be the beginning of a new era in relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Coptic Church. The Catholics of Egypt are aware of the importance of these steps, which they have accompanied with their prayers, and they are concerned to see what the real effects will be both in the life of the Church in Egypt and in the gradual reconciliation between Christians.

Examining with our illustrious visitor "the concrete means to overcome the obstacles existing on the way to real collaboration", we had recalled together that "true charity is an essential element of this search for perfect communion". Assured of your collaboration and of that of the Bishops of your Synod, we had continued our joint declaration rejecting, in the name of this charity, "all dealings by which persons seek to disturb the communities of others by recruiting new members among them with methods or in states of mind contrary to the requirements of Christian love or to what ought to characterise the relations between Churches".

Reaffirming these principles, we wished to create the serene atmosphere necessary for the fruitful work of the mixed commission that we and the Bishop Shenouda III set up between our Churches on the occasion of our meeting. We are grateful to the Catholics of your country for the collaboration they have already given to this commission. It has just recommended the creation of a local mixed committee with the task of ensuring contacts between the Catholics and the Orthodox Copts with a view to seeking the ways leading to a greater and more brotherly collaboration between Christian brothers. It would also have the task of examining and trying to overcome the difficulties that will not fail to oppose this effort.

Knowing that your Beatitude agrees with this proposal of the commission, we willingly approve the formation of this committee and we would like to recommend its work to your pastoral solicitude and to that of the members of your holy Synod and of all the Catholic Bishops of Egypt, over whose assembly Your Beatitude presides. We hope that this committee will be able to contribute effectively to the work of reconciliation and growth in communion which is now undertaken and which will sometimes call, on both sides, for a renewal of certain attitudes and certain pastoral practices in order to adapt them to the new situation gradually created. This situation will be the fruit of this deep conversion of the heart that the Second Vatican Council tells us is one of the first conditions of progress in unity (*Unitatis Rediiitegratio,* n. 7).

May the Holy Spirit, who arouses and guides this effort of Christians, inspire the work of this committee and give its members the courage of faithfulness and docility.

Animated with this hope, we assure you again, Beatitude and very dear Brother, of our sentiments of deep charity in Christ Jesus.

From the Vatican, 12 September 1974.

APPENDIX X

TELEGRAM FROM H.H POPE JOHN PAUL II TO H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

January 26th, 1985

When Patriarch Shenouda III took up his full patriarchal duties once again after having been placed under house arrest at St. Bishoy Monastery by the Egyptian government, Pope John Paul II sent him the following telegram:

At this time when Christians are gladdened by the light of the birth and Epiphany of our Saviour, I am also glad to join in the joy of your Church at the return of its Pastor. Now that you are once again able to proclaim the Word of God to your people and to celebrate the Divine Mysteries with them, I offer thanks to God and pray that he will bless your ministry.

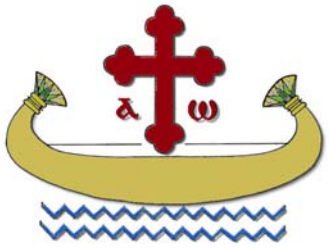
As soon as possible a delegation from our Church will visit you both to bring you my good wishes and to discuss with you how we can best pursue together that journey of hope by which the Lord is leading us towards full communion.
In the love of Christ.

June 28th, 1985

EXCERPT FROM THE SPEECH OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE ROMAN CURIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXV ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY

At the same time, before you I express my joy at knowing that His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, has been able to reassume all his responsibilities at the head of his Church. We shall therefore be able to reopen our dialogue, and, with determination on the one and on the other side, let it proceed without further delays in the will to overcome in the fullness of truth those doctrinal divisions, which still exist. There is also a need to dispel the disputes and condemnations of the past far from our memory and confide them to God's mercy. We must set to work building a future together which shall be more in conformity with Christ's will for unity for all his disciples.

Appendix XII



OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS

REPORT TO HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS February 2000 – January 2001

To His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Most Holy Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, I present to Your Holiness this brief account of the activities of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs in the first year of its existence, following its establishment on February 6, 2000 by Your Holiness.

The Office of Ecumenical Affairs has started to organize itself according to the structure and guidelines set forth in the Papal Protocol dated February 6, 2000 that established and blessed the formation of the Office and its first Officer, Bishoy M. Mikhail.

The noteworthy events and activities of the Office in the first year of its existence include:

- The circulation of the Papal Protocol dated February 6, 2000 amongst the primates and hierarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the leadership of the National Council of Churches was a means of introducing the Office of Ecumenical Affairs and its Officer. The Office received several congratulatory letters and has established a rapport with several of the hierarchs and the ecumenical offices of said churches and organizations.

- An official visitation to H.E. Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America, which was to introduce H.G. Bishop David to the Archbishop and His assistant bishop, as was reported in El-Kiraza Magazine took place in March 2000.

- Greetings were sent to the various hierarchs of the sister churches for the Feast of the Resurrection 2000.

- A presentation to the Clergy Seminar in Boston in September 2000 at the direction and with the blessings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III at which the Ecumenical Officer presented a brief overview of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs, its mission, and its plans for the future. At the Seminar, a pamphlet was distributed to the clergy for their information. To date, it is unfortunate to

report that only a few priests have expressed interest in or support of the work of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs.

- It should be noted that the Board of St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church of Cleveland, Ohio, recognizing the importance of the mission of this Office has provided a stable budget to meet the requirements and the financial needs of the activities of the Office, such as publications, gifts, equipment, travel and postage. I wish to thank the Board for their generosity and for their dedication to the cause of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs.

- The Ecumenical Officer attended the visit of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Detroit at the invitation of H.G. Bishop Nicholas of Detroit. The Ecumenical Officer had the opportunity to speak with the Ecumenical Patriarch, conveying to H.A.H. the greetings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III and presenting him with a copy of the excellent book on the Flight of the Holy Family into Egypt on behalf of His Holiness.

- An organized representation of the Coptic Orthodox Church to the Executive Board of National Council of Churches began with the involvement of H.G. Bishop Serapion of Los Angeles and the Ecumenical Officer, as well as membership on the Board of Directors of Church World Service. This is in addition to the membership in the General Assembly of the NCC. The General Assembly was attended by the entire delegation for the first time in many years. A separate report on the General Assembly is attached.

- The design of an official logo for the Office of Ecumenical Affairs which consists of a Coptic cross, the alpha and omega, a pharaonic falucca and the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic symbol for the flood. This is to resemble the well known ecumenical logos of a ship and troubled waters, but using Coptic symbolism.

- The establishment of the official website of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs, www.ecucopt.org.

- Participation in the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOOCH)

- Participation in the Joint Commission established between the Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOOCH) and the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops (SCOBA) [Eastern Orthodox Churches] in the United States.

- Greetings were sent to the various hierarchs for the Feast of the Incarnation, Christmas 2001, in the form of a specially printed Christmas card with the hymn of `Hπαρθενος (a 6th century Greek hymn on the Nativity of Christ chanted in both the Coptic and Byzantine churches, even though it was written after Chalcedon).

- An invitation to speak at one of the largest Greek Orthodox Churches in New York during the Sunday Divine Liturgy, which coincides with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

- All of the activities of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs and its Ecumenical Officer have been under the direct supervision of H.H. Pope Shenouda III along with the advice and guidance of H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy of Damietta and H.G. Bishop Serapion of Los Angeles.

Future plans include the collection and uploading of the official documents of the dialogues (and simplified explanations of said documents) of the Coptic Orthodox Church on the Office of Ecumenical Affairs website, the preparation of a proposal for a symposium on the Coptic Orthodox Church and her Ecumenical Activities, and the promotion of better communication between the Coptic Church in America with the other churches and organizations.

The presence of the Office of Ecumenical Affairs has made it possible for churches and individuals to find a contact in the Coptic Orthodox Church for information, as well as helping Copts learn more about the ecumenical activities of their Church.

As the Office continues to develop and establish its presence, it will grow in its ability to serve both the Coptic community as well as the other churches and organizations in America.

With a spirit of gratitude and filial love, I wish to express to Your Holiness how honoured and blessed I have been to serve in this capacity and ask for Your most holy prayers and Patriarchal blessings. May God grant Your Holiness many years!

Respectfully submitted,
Your Holiness's unworthy servant,

Bishoy M. Mikhail

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