

# **CHRISTOLOGY**

**ACCORDING TO  
THE NON-CHALCEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES**

**FR. TADROS Y. MALATY**  
**ST. GEORGE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
**SPORTING-ALEXANDRIA**

In the last decades, after 15 centuries of the council of Chalcedon (held in 451 A.D.), many Pan-Orthodox meetings were held: 4 unofficial consultations<sup>1</sup> and one official “joint-Commission of the Theological Dialogue<sup>2</sup>”, in which the representatives of the non-Chalcedonian and the Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches declared their deep feeling of unity, especially when every party declared its faith concerning “the nature of Christ”, which was misunderstood by the other. No doubt, today, the historical circumstances differ from those of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, when the Byzantine emperors interfered in theological and ecclesiastical affairs. Now days, I think, through sincere love and mutual respect, churchmen and theologians can meet to declare the oneness of the Orthodox Church.

- 1- The Circumstances of the Council of Chalcedon.
- 2- “Mia-physis” and “Monophysitism” (One-Nature).
- 3- “Dyophysis” (Two-Natures).
- 4- Chalcedon and St. Cyril.
- 5- Chalcedon and St. Dioscorus.
- 6- Chalcedon and St. Severus.
- 7- Chalcedon and Tome of Leo
- 8- “Mia-physis” in the New Testament.
- 9- “Mia-physis” and our salvation.
- 10- Christology according to the Coptic Liturgies and Hymns.
- 11- Efforts for the unity.

1- **The Circumstances of the Council of Chalcedon.**

In this paper, I do not aim to discuss the details of the Council of Chalcedon, but to refer to the main points of the

historical and theological circumstances of the fifth century, in order to underline the deep roots of this bitter and long period of separation between the two Orthodox families, which we hope to call them: One Family in Christ.

A. Prof. Meyendorff started his paper on the Pan-Orthodox Unofficial Consultation in August 1964, by declaring the role of the historical circumstances in the East from the Chalcedon council date (451) until the conquest of the Arab in Egypt and Syria. He said:( Emperors tried to solve the dispute by force. For us, today, there is no doubt about the fact that the military repressions of monophysitism<sup>3</sup> in Egypt, and in other places. The imposition of a Chalcedonian hierarchy in Byzantine (politics), the frequent exile of the real, popular leaders of the Church of Egypt, all played a decisive role in giving to the schism the character of a national resistance to Byzantine ecclesiastical and political control of Egypt, Syria and Armenia. For centuries, the Orthodox Chalcedonians were considered as Melechites- the people of the Emperor (King)– by the non-Greek Christians of the Middle East<sup>4</sup>.

But we have to indicate that these circumstances, even though they created national attitudes in Egypt, Syria, and Armenia, yet the true battle in the minds of our church leaders was truly on the grounds of theology and faith. According to our Coptic point of view and many scholars point of view the bishops of Rome envied the Coptic bishops (Popes of Alexandria as hero of faith, for while the former had the civil authorities and honor and riches for they lived in Rome, the Capital of the Empire, the Alexandrian bishops (Popes) like SS. Athanasius and Cyril were the true leaders and had theological and spiritual priority. All the ancient Christendom looked to the Egyptian Fathers as the defenders of the Orthodox faith, as leaders in theology and ascetic life etc... and had their effective role in the ecumenical councils. Leo of Rome, prepared his tome before the council and the emperor Marcion and the empress Pulchria<sup>6</sup> had been gathering signatures since 450 A.D. the idea was to draft a basic paper against the Alexandrian theologians under the pretence of defending the church faith against Eutyches who committed heresy while he was struggling against the

**Nestorians. He wanted to affirm the unity of Christ, but in a wrong way, believing that the divinity of Christ absorbed His humanity. This heresy, as I will explain, was not accepted at all in our Church. Leo tried to distort the face of the Egyptian Church by attributing the Eutychian heresy to her fathers, which they struggled against, although Eutyches himself was hesitating or acting deceptively.**

Some scholars state that there was no need for this council, but politics played the principal role. Aloys Grillemeier, the German theologian, says: (It was only under constant pressure from the emperor Marcian that the Fathers of Chalcedon agreed to draw up a new formula of belief<sup>7</sup>).

**Nobody can ignore the disadvantages of the combined marriage that occurs between politics and religion. For example, the righteous emperor Constantine, the first roman Emperor converted to Christianity, consequently declared it as the official religion, when he summoned the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), refused to interfere into the theological disputes, leaving this task to the bishops. However, when he himself interfered in the church affairs and supported the Arians for long time, he exiled the hero of faith, St. Athanasius of Alexandria.**

**I think the decisions of the Chalcedon Council and the events that followed it would surely be totally different if the rulers Marcion and Pulcharia had not interfered in theological church affairs.**

**B. Besides the historical circumstances, the theological circumstances also played a principal role in creating a huge gap among the churches. While the Alexandrian, Syrian and Armenian churches were struggling against Nestorianism, which was widely spread, especially in Constantinople, Leo of Rome did his best to gain those who had semi-Nestorianism on his side against the Alexandrian Church. He pretended purifying the faith from Eytchianism, while the other party considered this tome as semi-Nestorianis.**

**It is necessary to form an idea of these theological struggles that surrounded this council, especially concerning the “Nature of Christ”.**

## **Nestorianism<sup>8</sup>**

**The Nestorian School adopted the phrase: “ in two natures” to assert a doctrine of two persons: Jesus the mere man who was born of Mary and the Son of God. Nestorus condemned the wisemen who worshipped Jesus and offered gifts, for he was merely a man; he also called St. Mary “Christokos” and not “Theotokos”, for she did not bring the Incarnate Word of God, but the man, Jesus Christ. The Divinity was united to humanity for a time, and on the cross, the divinity departed while Jesus, the man, was crucified.**

**St. Cyril of Alexandria was the defender of the Orthodox faith against Nestorius and Nestorianism. He used the expression “-----“ (One Nature of God the Logos Incarnate), to assert that our Lord Jesus Christ has a united nature, two in one, as one person. (Christ is indeed “of two natures”, the properties and operations of each are there in Him in a state of indivisible and insoluble union. In Christ hunger and all other human and physical disabilities were united and made His own by God the Son in His incarnate state. In the same way, the super-human words and deeds were expressions of the Godhead of the Son in Union with manhood. In other words, it was the one incarnate Person who was the subject of all words and deeds of Christ<sup>9</sup>).**

**It is noteworthy that human languages are incapable of describing the unity of divinity and humanity, and can easily be misunderstood.**

**When St. Cyril notice the Nestorian heresy and semi-Nestorian ideas were spread he insisted on the expression”Mia- physis tou theou Logou Sesarkomene”, to assert the hypostatic unity between the divinity and humanity without any mixing or changing, explaining this sole unity through some examples like the unity of**

soul with body in one human nature and the unity of fire with iron etc...

## **Eutychianism**

**Eutyches (c. 378-454) was archimandrite of a monastery at Constantinople. His eager opposition to Nestorianism led him to another heresy, as he denied that the manhood of Christ was consubstantial with ours. He said that there were two natures before the Union but only one after it, for the divine nature absorbed the human one, and manhood was totally lost.**

**Sometime he used an orthodox statement:**

**“Concerning His coming in the flesh, I confess that it happened from the flesh of the Virgin, and that He became man perfectly for our salvation”.**

**“For He Himself, who is the Word of God, descended from heaven without flesh, was made flesh of the very flesh of the Virgin unchangeably and inconvertibly in a way, which He Himself knew and willed. And He, who is perfect God before the ages the Same also was made perfect man for us and for our salvation”<sup>10</sup>**

**For St. Dioscorus of Alexandria did himself express the rejection of the ideas of Eutyches read at Chalcedon. Through all ages the non-Chalcedonian Church declares its refusal to any Eutychian attitude.**

**Now, through these theological circumstances, we can understand the accurate difference between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Churches. The Chalcedonian Churches looked to the Chalcedon Council as a defender of the Orthodox faith against Eutychianism. They accepted the two natures of Christ to assert that His manhood had not been lost.**

**The non-Chalcedonian Churches also reject this heresy, but they accepted the Cyrillian expression “one nature of God the Logos Incarnate” to defend the Orthodox faith from**

**Nestorianism, especially that this council did not use the twelve chapters of St. Cyril, which he set against this heresy. They looked to the Tome of Leo as a Nestorian or Semi-Nestorian one.**

**Fr. S. Romanides (Greek Orthodox) said: (Each side believed that its terminology alone could protect the Church from heresy<sup>11</sup>).**

### **Mia-Physis and Monophysitism**

The Chalcedonian Churches, recently, called us “Monophysistes” an inaccurate term, for it draws us very close to the Eutychian heresy, which we deny.

There is a slight difference between “monos” and “mia” in regard to the “two natures – one nature” dispute. Monophysitism suggests the exclusion of all natures in one. “Mia” refers to “one united nature” or as St. Cyril says: “One nature of God the Logos Incarnate”. In the term “monophysiste”, “mono” refers to simple one, while in the Cyrillian term “Mia-Physis” refers to a composite nature, and not a numerous one. Bishop Sarkissian says: [When we speak of (one will and one energy) we always speak of a united one not a simple numerical one<sup>12</sup>.]

**This term “monophysite” was not used during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, but was introduced later in a specific way and in a polemic spirit on behalf of the Chalcedonian Churches.**

**Here we display our concept of “-----“:**

- A. We affirm that Jesus Christ has one nature not in the sense that He is God and not a man but in that He is truly the “Incarnate Son of God”.**

**[All the non-Chalcedonian leaders have affirmed that in His incarnation God the Son united to Himself manhood animated with a rational soul and of the same substance as us that He endured in reality blameless passions of the body and the soul, and that there was no confusion or mixture of different natures in Him<sup>13</sup>.]**

- B. He took to Himself a real and perfect manhood, and not a supernatural one. He is without sin, but He bore our sins in His body and He truly died for our sake.**

- C. Godhead and manhood are united in such a way that properties of divinity and humanity are not lost, nor confused or mixed. We do not interpret the Cyrillian phrase: “one nature of God the Word incarnate” to mean absorption of the manhood or the human properties, as Eutychian heresy declares.

### **3. Dyophysis or Two Natures**

The Chalcedonians call us “monophysites”, accusing us of adopting a Eutychian attitude; we also – from our part – look to the Dyophysites faith as a way to Nestorian heresy. We reject the Council of Chalcedon because it accepted the Tome of Leo (two natures after the union, instead of the Cyrillian expression: “ One NATURE of God the Logos Incarnate”).

It did not use the Cyril’s Twelve Chapters against Nestorius, and failed to condemn the theology of Thelore<sup>14</sup>, on the contrary accepted Theodoret<sup>15</sup> and Ibas<sup>16</sup>, whose Nestorian attitude was well known. Many of the Chalcedonians believe that they were Nestorians at least until the Council of Chalcedon. The writings of those three semi-Nestorians which were included in the documents of Council of Chalcedon (Three chapters- Tria Kephalaia) were condemned afterward by the Emperor Justinian and then by the Council of Constantinople in 553.

We can conceive the great hatred of Theodoret towards St. Cyril, when we hear some of the Chalcedonians relate that he, in the Council, asked the attendants to set a huge and heavy stone on the tomb of Cyril, lest he might agitate the dead and they would send him to the world again<sup>17</sup>.

For this reason the Armenians (and the Copts and Syrians also) in their fighting against this Council, were fighting against Nestorianism. [The association between the Nestorian way of thinking and early Chalcedonian understanding of Christology was a very close one. Those who followed Theodore of Mopsuestia in East Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia, were very happy with the Council of Chalcedon. But this does not mean that the Armenian



**Church Fathers confounded Chalcedon and the dualistic Christology of theodore<sup>18</sup>.]**

**In Egypt thousands of believers were martyred by the hands of their brothers in Christ, the Byzantines, and their churches and monasteries were destroyed, for their refusal to sign on the copies of the Tome of Leo, considering it as a Nestorian one.**

**The treatise of St. Timothy, the Pope of Alexandria, written during the sixties of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when he was in exile in Cherson<sup>19</sup>, reveals that St. Discorus – his predecessor – was fighting against Nestorianism. We quote here:**

**[(Discorus says): “ I know full well, having been brought up in the faith, that the Lord has been begotten of the Father as God and that the same has been begotten of Mary as man. See Him walking on the earth as man and creator of the heavenly hosts as God; see Him sleeping in the boat as a man and walking on the seas as God; see Him hungry as man and giving food as God; see Him thirsty as man and giving drink as God; see Him tempted as man and driving demons away as God and similarly of many other instances”.] He says also: [“ God the Logos consubstantial with the Father eternally became consubstantial with man in the flesh for our redemption, remaining what He was before”]**

**Fr. Florlisky separates the Nestorian dyophysism and the Chalcedonian one by distinguishing between:**

- A- Symmetrical dyophysism, as a Nestorian duality of prosopa (nature), a complete parallelism of two natures, which leads into duality of prosopa or subjects, which may be united only in the unity of function.**
- B- Asymmetrical dyophysism: There is but one hypostasis at the object of all attributions, although the distinction of divine and human natures is carefully safeguarded. Humanity is included in the Divine hypostasis and exists, as it were, within this one hypostasis. There is no symmetry: two natures but one hypostasis.**

#### **4- Chalcedon and St. Cyril**

**St. Cyril used the term: “one nature of God the Logos Incarnate” as a tool to conserve the church faith in the Person of Jesus Christ, especially against Nestorianism. The Council of Chalcedon failed to use it setting another formula “in tow natures”, believing that this new one, which had no traditional basis, could be a tool against Euthychianism.**

**In fact the Cyrillian term reveals the “Hypostatic union”, which means that the Incarnate Logos is known as the indivisible one Emmanuel.**

**There are 3 points of emphasis made by the Cyrillian phrase:**

- a. It was God the Logos Himself, who became Incarnate.**
- b. In becoming incarnate, He embodied manhood in union with Himself and made it His very own.**
- c. The Incarnate Logos is one Person, and has one will. St. Cyril explained this unity through two examples:**

**A) The unity of soul and body in one human nature, He says: “Let us take an example from our own nature. Because we are created of soul and body, and these are separate natures before their union, and with their union become a man with one nature, the soul is not changed in its nature because of its union with the flesh. The soul has not become flesh, and the flesh has not become soul; but the soul and the flesh together have become one nature and one man<sup>20</sup>.”**

**According to the Chalcedonian logic we can say, that after union Jesus Christ has 3 natures, one of the souls, the other of the flesh and the third His divine nature<sup>21</sup>.**

**B) He also says: “Let us take the union of fire with iron. Although their natures are different, through their union they become one nature, not because the nature**

of fire is changed and become iron, nor because the nature of the iron is changed and become fire, but fire is united with iron. It is fire and it is iron... if the iron is struck then the fire is struck also. The iron suffers, but the fire does not suffer”.

**Quotations from St. Cyril writings:**

- + **The Word was made man, but did not descend upon a man<sup>22</sup>.**
- + **But neither again do we say that the Word which is of God dwelt in Him who was born of the Holy Virgin as in an ordinary man, lest Christ should be understood to be a man who carries God (within him), for though the Word “dwelt in us” John 1:14, and “all the fullness of the Godhead” as it said (col 2:9) “dwelt in Christ bodily”, yet we understand, that when He became flesh the indwelling was not such as when He is said to dwell in the saints, but having been united by a union of natures and not converted into flesh, He brought to pass such an indwelling as the soul of man may be said to have its own body.**

**[St. Cyril, in the same epistle, rejects the terminology of the Nestorians who called the union of the two natures an indwelling or a connection or close participation<sup>23</sup>].**

- + **We believe, therefore, in one nature of the Son because He is one, though became man and flesh.**
- + **For the one and sole Christ is not twofold, although we conceive of Him as consisting of two distinct substances inseparably united, even as a man is conceived of as consisting of soul and body, and yet is not twofold but one of both.**
- + **If we reject this hypostatic union either as impossible or unmeet, we fall into error of making two sons.**

## 5- Chalcedon and St. Doiscorus

We have said that the political circumstances played the principle role in the Council of Chalcedon. St. Dioscorus, who rejected Eutychianism as Nestorianism, was condemned in this council as a Eutychian. He was present in the first meeting and when the Roman representatives noticed his orthodox faith, and that he attracted many bishops to his side, he was prevented to attend and was condemned.

The Greek professor Rev. Romanides says: [Dioscorus was considered quite orthodox in his faith by such leading Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon as those represented by Anatolius of constantinople<sup>24</sup>].

### **Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum states:**

[ Information which we possess does not depict Dioscorus as a heretic. From available information it is obvious that he was a good man and even Bishop Leo himself tried to take him on his side...Likewise Emperor Theodosius in a letter to Dioscorus calls him a man who radiates the Grace of God, a humble man and of orthodox faith.

Several times in the course of the Council Patriarch Dioscorus declared his faith. He was not condemned because he was heretical but because he refused to communicate with Leo, the Archbishop, and because he refused to come to the Council although he was invited to do so three times.

This evidence is sufficient for us to look for other reasons for Dioscorus, condemnation. Rome was annoyed by the extraordinary vitality of the Church of Alexandria and its active Patriarch. This is apparent from the statements of one of the representatives of Leo...<sup>25</sup>]

R.V. Sellers, in his book: "The Council of Chalcedon"<sup>26</sup>, states: [At Chalcedon, Anatolius, bishop of

Constantinople – who at the same time, was ready to confess that the Alexandrian “had filled the whole world with storm and tempest<sup>27</sup>” – could declare that the accused had been deprived, not on account of erroneous belief, but because he had dared to excommunicate the Bishop of Rome, and though cited three times, had deliberately absented himself from meeting of the Council<sup>28</sup>].

## **6- Chalcedon and St. Severus**

Following St. Cyril of Alexandria St. Severus of Antioch accepts 4 phrases with reference to the Incarnation:

- Of ( ) two natures.
- Hypostatic union.
- One incarnate nature of God the word.
- One composite nature.

St. Severus spoke of Jesus Christ as “ ( ) of two natures”. By this phrase he does not sanction the expression: “two natures before the union”, because there was no two natures then that were united. We cannot accept this idea even in fancy. St. Severus affirms “ the flesh possessing a rational soul did not exist before the union with Him”. We can summarize St. Severus’s Christology in the following points<sup>29</sup>:

- A. Christ’s manhood was an embodiment of manhood, fully like and continuous with our manhood, with the single exception that it was sinless.
- B. It was insinuated only in a hypostatic union with God the Son, and it continued to exist in perfection and reality in this union, but not independent of its union with the Logos.
- C. The union did not lead to confusion of the manhood element with, or a loss in, the Godhead. Therefore in Christ there were Godhead and manhood with their

receptive properties hypostatically united with each other.

- D. The union brought into being one Person, the Son of God in His incarnate state.
- E. The manhood of Christ was real, perfect and dynamic in the union.

## 7- Chalcedon and Tome of Leo

Leo of Rome prepared a tome (letter) to be offered at the Council of Ephesus in 449. It was a paper against the Alexandrian theologians. The tome was not read because of Pope Dioscorus objection. Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum comments on this objection to the reading of this tome by saying: [Those who support Leo's Letter say that Pope Dioscorus unlawfully objected to the reading of Leo's letter in the Council of 449, because, they assert, by doing so the position of the Church of Rome was concealed. But this is not the case. The fact that the Letter was submitted to the Synod was enough. Leo's representatives were present and they could have made his view known. Even today, circular letters are submitted to the Synods, but not necessarily read<sup>30</sup>].

He also says: [This action of Dioscorus provoked Leo's anger for he thought Dioscorus' attitude as a disgrace to his Throne. Consequently Leo of Rome rejected that Council which had otherwise been recognized by Emperor Theodosius whose sudden death saved Leo from Dioscorus of Alexandria (Dioscorus of Alexandria had demanded from Emperor Theodosius to send Leo to exile). Honigman, the well known scholar, writes that the famous Tome of Leo was circulated to the bishops for signature before the convening of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod but half of them refused to sign it because they regarded it as unorthodox<sup>31</sup>.]

On the death of Theodosius who was the supporter of Pope Dioscorus, the latter summoned a council and condemned Pope Leo. Pope Leo did all his best to get rid of Dioscorus.

The Emperor Marcion and his wife Pulcharia were supporters of Leo against Dioscorus. They gathered signatures on

the Tome, to be introduced as a basic paper at Chalcedon against the Alexandrian theologians. According to Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum, the tome was not a dogmatic epistle but a helpful historical paper of the Council, which a number of the fathers who participated in the Council had expressed doubts in it, but the representatives of Leo had threatened to walk out of the Council<sup>32</sup>.

As a matter of fact while the non-Chalcedonians from the early ages in their refutation of the council attack the tome more than the council's definition, the Byzantine Chalcedonians do not comment on the tome as much as on the Chalcedonian definition, by explaining the latter along the lines of Cyrillian Christology, which brought their interpretation of Chalcedon near to our Christological position<sup>33</sup>.

The Greek Prof. Rev. Florovsky says: [The tome of Leo, if taken alone by itself, could have created the impression of an excessive opposition of two natures especially by its persistent attribution of particular acts of Christ to different natures, without any adequate emphasis on the unity of Christ's Person, although the intention of the Pope himself was sound and orthodox. However the interpretations of the Tome by the Roman Catholic historians and theologians in modern times quite often transfers a certain quasi Nestorian bias, to which attention has been called recently by some Roman Catholic writers themselves<sup>34</sup>.]

Leo wrote in his tome:" Christ really has two natures, He is both God and man, the one performs the miracles and the other accepts sufferings." This teaching does not affirm Christ's personal unity, but regards the natures as two persons. For this reason our church prefers the expression "*Incarnate God*" than the expression "*He is a God and a man*", to assert the hypostatic unity.

The tome uses the term "en dus physes" (in two natures), which has no Greek tradition at all. The traditional term before Chalcedon was "ek duo physeon" (of two natures)".

Metropolitan Methodios states, [The recognition by the well known Letter of (St.) Leo, Bishop of Rome, to Flavian Archbishop of

Constantinople, is considered by our Non, Chalcedonian brothers as an unsurmountable abstacle in our efforts to be united with them. Non-Chalcedonians believe that two “physeis and ousiai” in one person is nestorianizing. This is supported by the fact that Leo’s Tome was praised by Nestorius Himself who said:” On reading that letter I thanked God because the Church of Rome held an orthodox confession of Faith<sup>35</sup>”].

## **8- Mia-physis in the New-Testament**

H.H. Pope Shenouda III, in his book on “The Nature of Christ”, explains the “One Nature” of Christ in the New Testament in detail. Herein I try to give a brief account of this point.

### **A) Mia-physis and the birth of Christ:**

Let us ask ourselves: Who was born by Virgin Mary? Was He mere God? Mere man? God and man? Or Incarnate God? It is impossible to say that He was mere God, for she brought forth a child, who was witnessed by all attendants. He was not mere man; otherwise we fall in the Nestorian heresy. Why is it mentioned in the Scriptures:” The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called: the Son of God “Luke 1:35? What is the meaning of calling her Son “Emmanuel” which being interpreted “God with us” Matt. 1:23? What is the meaning of the prophet Isaiah’s words: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” Is. 9:6? Therefore, He was not just a man but He was the Son of God, Emmanuel and the mighty God!

The virgin did not bring a man and a God, otherwise she would have two sons, but one: the Incarnate God. We worship Him, as the Incarnate God, without separating His divinity from His humanity. When St. Mary visited Elisabeth; this old saint, said: “Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” Luke 1:43. Even before bringing forth the Child, while she was pregnant she was called “mother of the Lord”.



Jesus Christ who spoke with the Jews said: “Before Abraham was, I am” John 8:58. He did not say: “My Godhead existed even before Abraham” but said “I am”, as an argument of the unity of His nature.

Finally the famous teaching of the Evangelist John that “the Logos became flesh” John 1:14 signified the divine mystery of the unity of Christ’s Person and nature<sup>36</sup>.

B) Using the term “Son of Man” which expresses His manhood while He was speaking about properties of His divinity, although neither of the two natures was changed. He asserts His unity by these words.

\* “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven” John 3<sup>13</sup>. Who is the Son of Man that descent from heaven? ! Surely the Godhead, who attributes this to Himself as “ the Son of man”

\* In the same way He says that “ the Son of man” is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt.12:8), the Forgiver of sins (Matt 9:6), the Judge (Matt.16:27, Matt 25:31-34, John 5:22) etc...

Besides this we find some properties of His manhood are attributed to His as the Lord without saying “the manhood of Christ” as St. Paul says: “ For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” 1Cor. 2:8. He did not say, “ The body was crucified” but “the Lord of Glory”.

St. Gregory of Nyssa states, [On account of the union achieved between the flesh which is taken and the Godhead which takes, names are communicated and given to each mutually in such a way that the divinity is spoken of in human term and the humanity in divine terms. Thus Paul calls the Crucified One the Lord of Glory (1Cor. 2:8); and He who is adored by the whole creation, above, below and upon the earth, is called Jesus<sup>37</sup>].

## **9- Mia-physis and Our Salvation**

The “mia-physis” or the “one-united-nature of Christ” is very necessary and essential for our salvation. Some modern theologians ask: “How can the limited body of Christ forgive

unlimited sins committed against God? Is the body of Christ unlimited? Or was the Godhead of Christ crucified? We find the answer in our belief of the “mia-physis”, for the Lord is crucified (1 Cor2:8) even if His divinity did not suffer, but His manhood, and the sacrifice of the Cross is attributed to the Incarnate Son of God, and thus has the power to forgive the unlimited sins committed against God.

Although the divinity of Jesus Christ could not be made to suffer, yet all the events of our salvation through the cross were attributed to the Son of God Himself, and not to His body as if it was separated from His Godhead.

**Examples:**

- ❖ “For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son...” John 3:16.
  - ❖ “...To feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” Act 20:28
  - ❖ “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all...” Rom 8:32.
  - ❖ “He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” 1John 4:10
  - ❖ “In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” Col 1:14,15.
- (See also Acts 3:14,15; Heb 2:10; Rev 1:17,18 etc.)

## **10- Christology According to the Coptic Liturgies & Hymns<sup>38</sup>**

Our liturgies, prayers and church hymns that have not been changed since the fourth and fifth centuries, affirm our traditional Christology, revealing that from the very moment of the descent of the Logos in the Virgin’s womb, He took to Himself from St. Mary’s body a human body animated with a human rational soul, and made Himself One with manhood as His own. He is the One Incarnate God, One

**Hypostasis, One Person, One nature of two natures, had the properties and faculties of the two natures without confusion or change and without separation or division. We here mention some examples:**

**+ My Lord, Jesus Christ, Begotten of the Father, before all ages, who took flesh from the Virgin Mary and was born on earth in Bethlehem of Judea, who saved us from our sins; He who gives light to everyone coming into the world, illuminate our hearts and grant us the blessing of your virgin birth...**

**[For the dismissal at Christmas & Epiphany]**

**+ Amen, Amen, Amen, I believe, I believe, I believe and profess unto my last breath that this is the life-giving Body, which your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, took of our Lady and Queen of us all the Theotokos, the Pure St. Mary, and made it one with His divinity without mingling, nor confusion, nor alteration... I believe that His divinity never departed from His humanity not for even a single instant nor a twinkle of an eye.**

**[The Confession: Liturgy of St. Basil<sup>39</sup>]**

**+ His divinity never separated either from His soul or from His body...**

**One is Emmanuel... and undivided into two natures.**

**[The Syrian Fraction, used by the Copts]**

**+ God the Logos became man without separation.**

**He is One of two: The Holy and incorruptible Godhead, consubstantial with the Father and the Pure manhood without sperm, consubstantial with us according to His dispensation.**

**[Theotokon os Sunday<sup>40</sup>]**

**+ She bore to us God the Word who became man for our salvation. After He became man, He was still God; therefore she who bore Him remained virgin.**

[ Theotokon of Tuesday<sup>41</sup>]

+ There is One, out of two: Godhead and manhood; thus the Wiseman worshipped and silently adored Him, witnessing to His divinity.

[ Theotokon of Thursday

<sup>42</sup>]

## **11- Efforts for Unity**

In His Farwell prayer Jesus Christ said: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” John 17:10. It is Jesus’ heart desire that we all be united as His One Body in truth, have one faith and one mind.

What the Universal Church had suffered through the fifth century grieved God’s heart, and we all are now responsible for binding up the Church’s wound, not through social relationship or some formalities but through the oneness of faith that unites us in spite of the difference in expressing it through theological terms which in fact are unable to express the Mystery of the Incarnation and reveal the Person of Jesus Christ enough.

Now, I would like to present an idea of the efforts towards unity, and suggested proposals, by the help of the Holy Spirit who bestows communion, love and unity.

### **First: Efforts for unity in the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>43</sup>**

No doubt the exile of the Pope of Alexandria and the persecutions that the Copts and Syrians suffered by their brothers in Christ caused many troubles to the Byzantine Empire. In 543 A.D., in order to quiet the minds of Christians and restore the spiritual unity of the Empire, the Emperor Justinian condemned the

**“Three chapters” (the writings of three semi-Nestorian authors, Theodore of Mopusestia, Theodore of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa<sup>44</sup>), which were included in the documents of the Synod of Chalcedon. In 553 A.D., the Second Council of Constantinople confirmed the condemnation of the Emperor against the “Tria Kephalaia”. Of course this gesture of the Fifth Ecumenical Council to a certain extent pleased the Non-Chalcedonians, but it neither solved the problems, not settled the crisis. Some of the Chalcedonians were not happy with the results of the Synod of Constantinople, and some of the non-Chalcedonians still were not convinced of the Orthodoxy of Chalcedonian doctrine.**

**In the 7<sup>th</sup> century patriarchs and emperors undertook a new effort in order to reconcile the Miaphysites with the supporters of Chalcedon. Bishop Sergius of Constantinople had phrased a formula of two natures but one divine-human operation (Energeia = energy, active operation) and will (Thelema). In 638 the Emperor Heraclius officially proclaimed the Monothelite doctrine in his edict named “Ecthesis”. Pope Honorius also supported the reconciliation. The Copts, Syrians and particularly the Armenians were enthusiastic and satisfied in expectation to see the oneness of Christ emphasized in a way. But as the Arabs conquered Egypt, Syria and Armenia, the adherents of “Two natures” exerted pressure on the Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) to reject the Monothelite formula, reaffirm the Chalcedonian doctrine and condemn Pope Honorius, and describe St. Dioscorus together with Eutyches as haters of God and St. Severus together with Appolinarius and Themistius as scorners of God.**

+ + +

### **Second: Efforts for unity to-day**

**During the last 2 decades four Unofficial Consultations between the theologians of the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches were held. Many issues were presented for discussions, agreed statements were declared and many proposals for agreement were suggested.**

**An official Joint-Commission between the (Byzantine) Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox non-Chalcedon Churches were held at Chambase in December 1985, in which I presented the following paper.**

+ + +

**AN EVALUATION OF THE  
FOUR UNOFFICIAL  
CONSULTATIONS**

**BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES OF THE  
ORTHODOX CHURCHES  
PRESENTED BY  
FR. TADROS Y. MALATY**

In the last decades, and 15 centuries after the Council of Chalcedon was held in 451 A.D., four unofficial consultations were held, in which the representatives of the two Orthodox families declared their deep feeling of unity, and wherein every party declared its faith concerning the "Nature of Christ", which was misunderstood by the other. Now in this first official mixed commission, I would like to represent a brief evaluation of the acts of these unofficial consultations from our point of view, hoping that every church would evaluate the great efforts of the theologians offered throughout those consultations, and offer its comments in more detail. In fact we are in need of a permanent joint-committee to follow up this matter seriously.

1) Concerning the first Consultation (Aarhus 1964)

The theologians declared in the statement: "On the essence of the Christ logical dogma we found ourselves in full agreement".

We, as orthodox churches, believe in unity that is based on the theological basis, or on the unity of faith and not just through pastoral and social cooperation. This faith must be expressed in theological terms, but others may misunderstand sometimes "terminology". It is our duty to set the term that explains our mutual concepts of Christology overcoming the terms, which can be misunderstood. Every family believes that her terminology only can protect the church from heresy. The Chalcedonians accepted their term "two natures" against Eutychianism, while the non-Chalcedonians accepted their term "one nature (of two natures) against Nestorianism.

The two families accepted the unity of the Godhead and manhood without separation or division and

also without confusion or changing. We are both in need to set the formula to express this dogma in an accurate way, motivated by true faith and not as slaves of special terms, so that we can use” the one unite nature” or any other suitable term.

2) Concerning the Second Consultation (Bristol 1967)

The theologians studied the formula of the two families concerning the nature, will and energy of Christ. Although we affirm the one united divine-human nature, will and energy in the same Christ, the other family believes in two natures, wills and energies, hypostatically united in the One Lord Jesus Christ. We do not commingle or confuse and they do not divide and separate. [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 each other].

I think now the way towards unity is not far ahead if we sincerely demand it in our Lord Jesus Christ.

3) Concerning the Third Consultation (Geneva 1970)

this consultation raised the problem of the Ecumenical Councils and lifting up the anathemas.

From our point of view the first 3 Ecumenical Councils were sufficient to set the formula of the Church creed and dogma.

Now, concerning the Council of Chalcedon, we know that in this council Anatolius of Constantinople considered our Pope Dioscorus as an orthodox and declared that he was condemned because he dared to condemn Leo of Rome.

Historically, we cannot accept the Council that condemned our orthodox leader, but we may accept the



recent reenter predation of its Christology, which is very close to our traditional concept.

The council will not constitute any problem when both of us lift up the anathemas against Leo, dioscorus, Severius of Antioch etc... As anathemas will be lifted up and Christological formula will be set, then the acceptance or non-acceptance of the council of Chalcedon will not be a problem.

Concerning the last three councils, I think if we lifted up the anathemas, we'll find that many of the contents of the acts of these councils deal with subjects and problems we were not exposed to as the defense of Icons. In our area, icons were not attacked at all by any Christian in our churches, and we had no need to defend the veneration of icons until the beginning of this century when some of the western Protestants attacked it.

I think these councils will not represent a true problem.

#### 4) Concerning the Fourth Consultation (Addis Ababa 1971)

The theologians studied – in more detail – the lifting up of anathemas by both sides, and who should have the authority to lift up those anathemas. Is there a need of an ecumenical council to do so?

I think we are in need of time to prepare the minds of our people before doing so. This is the job of the holy synods of every church...

Now we can say that the two families can find their way towards Christological common faith through the Cyrillian statement, “mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkomene [One nature of the Incarnate Word of God]. “ According to this statement our theologians meeting together found that the Logos 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 in His Godhead and is perfect in His humanity and He is the Incarnate God. He is one hypostasis with all the properties and faculties that belong to the Godhead and humanity.

Finally, we hope to take practical steps towards our unity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to enjoy the exchange of thought to strengthen and deepen our eastern evangelic spirituality and orthodox faith and life, to witness to our Christ and preach the Gospel according to the Patristic thought.

+ + +

## Notes

- 1- The unofficial Consultations were held in Aarhus, Denmark, at August 1964; in Bristol, England at July 1967; In Geneva, Switzerland at August 1970, and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in Jan. 71. The Greek Orthodox Review, vol, published the essays and agreed statements 10:2 (winter 1964-65); vol 13:2 (fall 1968); vol 16:1,2 (Spring and Fall 1971).
- 2- The official Joint-Commission was held in Chambase, Switzerland in December 1985.
- 3- See article 2: “Miaphysis” and Monophysitism (One nature).
- 4- Greek Orthodox Theological Review (G.O.T.R.), vol 10, No2, p16.
- 5- Many Scholars share the Coptic Church her point of view, for example, Metropolitan Methodius of Aksum states, “Rome was annoyed by the extraordinary vitality of the Church of Alexandria and its active Patriarch “[Methodios foyas: Theological and Historical Studies, vol8, Athens 1985, p15.
- 6- Pulcharia (399-453) was the daughter of the Emperor Arcadius (395-408) and elder sister of Theodosius II. She incited her brother the emperor to remarry for his wife was barren, but as he asked St. Isidore (one of the famous desert fathers) he refused. She vowed virginity, but loved Marcion and married him.

- 7- Christ in the Christian Tradition, London 1975, vol 1, p543.
- 8- Nestorius (d. about 451), from whom the heresy takes its name, was a priest of Antioch and disciple of Theodore. He was consecrated bishop of Constantinople on April 10, 428.
- 9- G.O.T.R., vol 10:2, p 50 (Rev. Fr. Samuel).
- 10- Ibid 40.
- 11- Ibid 120.
- 12- Ibid 31.
- 13- Ibid 120.
- 14- Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428), Antiochene theologian and Biblical exegete. He studied rhetoric at Antioch under Libanius, but in 369, with his friend St. John Chrysostom, he entered the School of Diodore in a monastery at Antioch, where he remained for nearly ten years. In 392 he became bishop of Mopsuestia. His doctrine concerning the Incarnation was condemned at the councils of Ephesus (431) and Constantinople (533). He was accused as semi-Nestorian.
- 15- Theodoret (c.393- c. 466) a native of Antioch, was educated in its monastery school. After distributing his property among the poor, he entered the monastery of Nicerte about 416. In 423, he was consecrated bishop of Cyrrhus in Syria against his will. He was friend and admirer of Nestorius, opposing St. Cyril.
- 16- Ibas of Edessa (from 435 to 449 & from 451-457), was closely associated in doctrine and policy with Theodoret. Though he was vindicated at the Council of Chalcedon (451), his famous letter to Bishop Mari of Hardascir in Persia was condemned by Justinian and anathematized by the Council of Constantinople in 553.
- 17- Frances Young: From Nicea to Chalcedon, 1983, p 242.
- 18- G.O.T.R., vol10:2, p 120.
- 19- Ibid 125.

- 20- Cf. Epistle 17:8.
- 21- H.H. Pope Shenouda III: *The Nature of Christ*, 1984 (In Arabic).
- 22- Dial. 1 (See St. Athanasius: *Contra Arian* 3:30)
- 23- J. Quasten :*Patrology*, vol3, p 139.
- 24- G.O.T.R., vol 10:2, p77.
- 25- Methodios Fouyas, *Archbishop of Theateira and Great Britan: Theological and Historical Studies*, vol 8, Athens 1985, p14, 15.
- 26- S.P.C.K., 1961, p30, 31.
- 27- See the letter of Anatolius to Leo, written after Chalcedon (Leo, Ep 101:2)
- 28- Mansi, VII, 104.
- 29- G.O.T.R., vol 10:2, p47.
- 30- Methodios Fouyas, p14 (N3)
- 31- Ibid, p14.
- 32- Ibid, p13.
- 33- G.O.T.R., vol 10:2, p49
- 34- Ibid 32.
- 35- Methodios Fouyas, p12, 13.
- 36- G.O.T.R., vol 10:2, p32.
- 37- Ad. Theoph. (Alex.) Adv. Apollianrius. PG45: 1278 A (Latin).
- 38- Dr. Hakim Amin: *The Orthodox Faith in the Liturgies and Prayers of the Coptic Church* [WCC:Does Chalcedon divide or unite? Geneva 1981, p 107-120.
- 39- Fr. T. Malaty & Fanous: *The Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil*, 1976,p 48.
- 40- .....
- 41- .....
- 42- .....
- 43- Rev. Mesrob K. Krilorian: *The Attitude of the Oriental Orthodox Churches Towards the V th, VI th, VII th Ecumenical councils*. [Copies of his paper were distributed in the official Joint-Commission... at Chambase].
- 44- See notes No. 14,15,16.



## COMMUNIQUE

\*\*\*\*\*

### 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 love and understanding, which 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 Asrhus (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) **Councilor formulations**
- c) **Historical factors**
- d) **Interpretation of Christ logical 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 Center.

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

+ **Prof. Dr. Chrysostomos Konstantindis** +  
**Bishop Bishoy**  
**Metropolitan of Myra**  
**Coptic Orthodox Church**  
**Ecumenical Patriarchate** **Co-**  
**President of the Commission**  
**Co-President of the Commission**