

# THE VIENNA DIALOGUE

Five PRO ORIENTE Consultations  
with Oriental Orthodoxy

MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
DEIR AMBA BISHOY  
OCTOBER 1991

Booklet No. 3  
Vienna 1993

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*Shenouda III  
Patriarch of Alexandria and of the Holy See of St. Mark*

## The Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic Ecumenical Dialogue

### PRO ORIENTE Booklet Series

- \* Booklet Number 1, Communiqués and Joint Documents; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1990, 136 p. Available in English and Arabic, planned in Malayalam, Armenian, Amharic and German.
- \* Booklet Number 2, Summaries of the Papers; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1991, 74 p. Available in English and Arabic; planned in other languages.
- \* Booklet Number 3, Middle East Regional Symposium, Deir Amba Bishoy, October 1991; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 168 p. Available in English, planned in other languages.
- \* Booklet Number 4, On Primacy, First Study Seminar, June 1991; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 92 p. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- \* Booklet Number 5, On Councils and Conciliarity, Second Study Seminar, June 1992; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- \* Booklet Number 6, Kerala Regional Symposium, Kottayam, October 1993; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1994. Planned in the above mentioned languages.

### PREAMBLE

It is a great pleasure indeed for me to introduce this publication issued by the foundation PRO ORIENTE for the benefit of all those interested in ecumenical affairs. It contains the papers and discussions of the Middle East Ecumenical Symposium organised by PRO ORIENTE in our residence at Deir Amba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun in October 1991. On that occasion we were glad to welcome to our monastery over 120 bishops, priests, theologians and lay people from all the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East representing a large number of churches.

The aim was the popularisation of the results of the Vienna Dialogue between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, which started in the Austrian capital in 1971 in our personal presence to be followed up by other conferences in 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988.

We thank God the Almighty who let our common efforts come to be fruitful with the development of the so-called "Christological formula of Vienna".

Much of the success of this meeting was due to the personal presence of the Founder and Protector of PRO ORIENTE, H.Em. Franciscus Cardinal König, Archbishop emeritus of Vienna.

To Cardinal König we are also grateful for sharing our common experience with an Austrian audience in the Aula Magna of the University of Vienna. Moreover, our thanks go to the highly appreciated foundation PRO ORIENTE, currently presided over by H.Em. Hans Hermann Cardinal Groer, Archbishop of Vienna, whose Protector I was proclaimed in 1984.

Our personal feeling about the historical importance of this meeting is expressed in the commemorative medal we had coined with the inscription: PRO ORIENTE Symposium Amba Bishoy Monastery, Egypt Oct. 1991 - Perfect in Divinity, Perfect in Humanity, CHRIST OUR LORD 1Tim 3:16.

Cairo, Epiphany 1993

*Shenouda III*

FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

The Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic  
Ecumenical Dialogue

PRO ORIENTE Publications in English

- \* First Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 1 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1972) 190 p.
- \* Second Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 2 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1974) 208 p.
- \* Third Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 3 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1976) 240 p.
- \* Fourth Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 4 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1978) 256 p.
- \* Fifth Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 5 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1989) 208 p.
- \* Selection of the Papers and Minutes of the Four Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Edited by Stiftung PRO ORIENTE in Vienna (1988) 286 p.

This booklet is to be the third in a series of documentations designed to spread the good news of what has come to be termed the Vienna Dialogue among a wider public of interested Christians, be they theologians, members of the clergy or lay people. This dialogue involves a series of hitherto five "non-official Ecumenical Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church" held in Vienna in the years 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988.

Thanks to fortunate circumstances, it was possible to assemble eminent theologians from the Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Ethiopian Orthodox and Syro-Indian Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church for over a week each time to discuss those problems which had led to the harmful split at the Council of Chalcedon and to consider ways of eliminating the factors dividing the two church families ever since.

The most successful breakthrough happened at the very first consultation in 1971. Due to the effective intervention of Amba Shenouda, who only a few weeks later was to become as Shenouda III the successor to St. Mark on the Throne of Alexandria, it came up with the so-called "Christological formula of Vienna": "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 commixion, 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."

This formula later came to be officially accepted in the Common Declarations signed by Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II on the one hand and Pope Shenouda III, the Patriarchs Yacoub III and Zakka I Iwas and other Heads of the Oriental Churches on the other hand.

Over and above these Common Declarations officially signed by the Heads of the Churches, two bilateral processes of dialogue have emerged from the Vienna Dialogue: the Official Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, which started in 1973, and the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India, which began its work in 1989.

The complete English texts of the papers and discussions of the five Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy are published in five volumes and selection covering the first four events (see opposite page). The fifth volume also contains the communiqué of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches (pp. 171-175).

In order to facilitate the reception of the results of these five rounds of consultations of the Vienna Dialogue by as many of the theologians, clergymen and lay people of the Churches concerned, we felt it necessary to condense the more than 1500 pages of learned thought down to a form which is more readily accessible.

Hence, we are publishing these series of booklets as a short introduction to the most important results of the debates. Booklet No. 1 begins with two basic articles on the theological significance of the results of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. It then goes on to give the programmes, participants' lists, official communiqués and the main

theological significance of the results of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. It then goes on to give the programmes, participants' lists, official communiqués and the main sermons held during the concluding liturgies at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. Furthermore, you can find the texts of the official documents signed between the various Heads of Churches in the course of the Dialogue. The booklet closes with a short resumé of the relations PRO ORIENTE has maintained with the five Oriental Orthodox Churches over a quarter of a century.

Booklet No. 2 represents a compilation of the summaries of the papers submitted at the Five Vienna Consultations, giving a resumé of the main papers and opinions of the speakers. This was done by famous scholars known to be among the foremost specialists on the subject, such as Fr. Alois Grillmeier SJ of the Higher Theological Institute in Frankfurt/Main and Fr. Wilhelm de Vries SJ of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. (The summaries of the first four Consultations were first published in German in: Piffel-Percevic/Stirnemann (Hrsg.), Das Gemeinsame Credo, 1600 Jahre seit dem Konzil von Konstantinopel, Tyrolia Innsbruck-Wien, 1983.). In addition you will find the texts of the addresses read by the respective Presidents of the Republic of Austria on the occasion of receptions given for the participants at the last three consultations.

Booklet No. 3 records the first PRO ORIENTE regional symposium held for Christians of the Middle East in Deir Amba Bishoy of Wadi Natrun/Egypt from 26th to 28th October 1991. The idea for this meeting, which is to be followed by similar events in India, Armenia, Ethiopia and Syria, came from the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE. This body unites representatives of the six Oriental Orthodox jurisdictions and the Roman Catholic Church. They are Metropolitan Amba Bishoy of Damiette and Kafr el Sheikh, Archbishop Mar Gregorios of Aleppo, Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Patriarchal Delegate for Central Europe and Sweden, Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Primate of Lebanon, Archbishop Gharima of Illubabor and Dr. George K.M. Kondothra. Fr. John F. Long SJ, Vice-Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Mons. Philipp Harnoncourt, Professor for liturgical studies at the University of Graz, Fr. Frans Bouwen, Editor of Proche-Orient Chrétien, and the Secretary General of the foundation.

The purpose of the regional symposia is to propagate the message of the achievements of the Oriental Orthodox/Roman Catholic dialogue in general and the Vienna Consultations in particular among religious opinion leaders at the local level and in the respective vernaculars.

The first such event, the Middle East Symposium of 1991 was made possible through the generous hospitality of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III who offered us his summer residence as a venue, gave himself a lecture on Christology and had the kindness to write the preamble to this publication. His presence and that of His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König - both are Protectors of PRO ORIENTE - as well as the attendance of His Beatitude Patriarch Stephanos II gave dignity and weight to the occasion. To all of them we owe a great debt of gratitude for their magnanimity and personal commitment.

Moreover, our thanks go to the speakers Dom Emmanuel Lanne OSB, Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Archbishop Cyrille Salim Bustros of Baalbek, Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba, Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, Fr. Tadros Malaty and Fr. Khalil Kochassarly OP, who assumed the task of presenting the issues

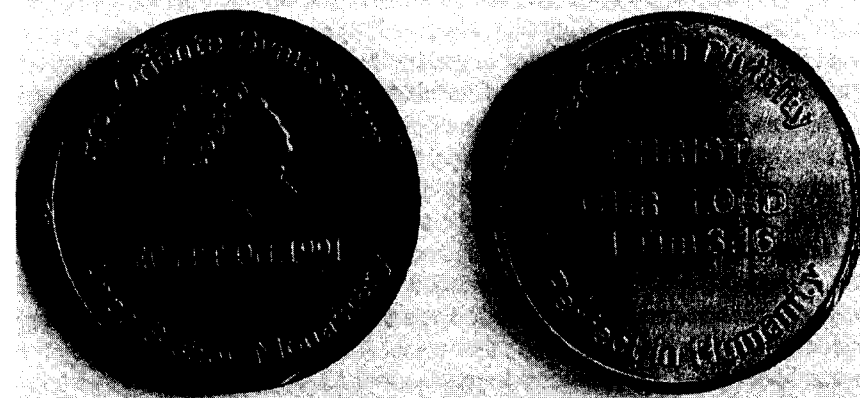
to an audience of 120 representatives of all walks of religious life, including 20 bishops, from Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, Europe and the USA.

The papers were read in both English and Arabic with simultaneous interpretation. The above mentioned PRO ORIENTE Booklet No. 1 with the communiqués of the Vienna Dialogue and the joint documents signed by the different heads of churches had been made available in Arabic for this purpose. The Arabic version of Booklet No. 2 will appear shortly.

Hence, the present volume is a collection of all the lectures given at Wadi Natrun, together with the opening ecumenical worship, the minutes of the discussions, the final document and Cardinal König's report on the event in the Aula Magna of the University of Vienna. It is also going to be published in Arabic shortly.

The pictures give a lively impression of the animated spirit and great success of the undertaking which was an extraordinary show of our almost complete unity.

Tangible proof of the special attention His Holiness Pope Shenouda attached to this occasion is the commemorative medal he had coined, with the inscription "PRO ORIENTE Symposium - Egypt Oct. 1991 - Amba Bishoy Monastery - Perfect in Divinity - Perfect in Humanity - CHRIST OUR LORD 1 Tim 3:16". Thus, the results of this Middle East Symposium are not only printed on the hearts and minds of the participants and the paper of this publication but also engraved in bronze for the memory of future generations.



Commemoration-medal in bronze, coined by Pope Shenouda III to commemorate the PRO ORIENTE Middle East Regional Symposium, October 1991, at Deir Amba Bishoy

## A SOUND BASIS FOR FURTHER EFFORTS

### *Assessing the Scholarly Achievement of this Volume*

The foundation PRO ORIENTE hereby presents a comprehensive documentation of its first Regional Symposium, which was held at the conference centre of the Patriarchate of the Coptic Church in Deir Amba Bishoy/Wadi Natrun in October 1991 and is to be followed by a series of similar symposia in the home countries of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, i.e. India, Armenia, Ethiopia.

This is the occasion to take a critical look at the achievement of the symposium and the achievement of this documentation; firstly, in order to see if any and which results were accomplished at the symposium and secondly, in order to be able to draw the conclusions for future symposia. Besides, those institutions which had given financial support to the undertaking must be given account about how their funds were being managed.

Ecumenical efforts designed to help overcome the division between the churches can only get closer to their target when the churches are informed about their outcome. And informing the public that ecumenical work does make progress counters the frequent reproach that Christians, because of their internal factionalism, are not in a position to fulfil their mission to the world and in the world - proclaiming the faith, bearing witness to hope and love, promoting justice, reconciliation and peace.

### *1. The Results of the Symposium*

First of all the results must be seen in terms of the target, that is to say: Did the symposium - wholly or partly - achieve what the organiser had in mind? Moreover, it must be asked, whether additional results may also have been accomplished.

The PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee for dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches clearly defined the target of the envisaged Regional Symposia: they are intended to make effectively known and communicate to the grass-roots the results of the five Consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988) held in Vienna/Lainz. For what is the use of common findings helping to bring down the division between the churches when they are shared by a mere handful of experts, and nice minutes accessible to only a few, when those who must draw the conclusions - i.e. synods as decision-makers and teachers of theology - do not get to know them. The Standing Committee considered the broad information of the grass-roots to be of such importance that it has deferred any follow-up consultation until the actual results are generally received within the churches concerned and included in the theological curriculum.

Bearing this in mind, invitations were extended to selected expert theologians and to the leadership of all the churches established in the Middle East. In order not to pass on too much at a time, it was decided to start by talking about the Christological consensus and conciliarity and to tackle further controversial questions at a later stage.

Large attendance and a broad ecumenical spectrum of participants as well as their ecclesial and theological authority were the most important preconditions for reaching the target set. Their keen interest, their openness for dialogue and the strong sense of one being part of a family, which could also be felt at the common services and the two celebrations of the Eucharist, were major elements in the success of this event.

Theologians of the individual churches, who had taken part in the consultations, presented papers about the Christological consensus reached in Vienna. The ensuing intensive discussions revealed two things: first, that the Christological controversy continues in fact to this day to be the fundamental theological problem between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches, and second, that the Vienna consensus - "the Christological formula of Vienna" for short - is in fact still almost unknown. In this respect the symposium was a breakthrough.

In this connection it must also be pointed out that besides the Regional Symposium in Wadi Natrun itself, Booklet No 1 in Arabic which was published in time before the event, played a major role in the propagation and reception of the results of the Vienna Consultations.

The detailed discussions following the reading of the papers showed that in theological questions the same long-standing views and arguments from history of theology are being advanced to this day. However, many theologians do seem to be ready to give serious thought to new considerations.

Regarding Christology, the theological accusations which used to be levelled at each other and were put forward as the main reason for the church division - the Chalcedonian churches were allegedly "Nestorian" and the non-Chalcedonian churches "Monophysite" - must be dropped, for they have no justification. The divided churches confess the same faith in Christ, albeit in different linguistic formulations. In this point clear agreement was reached and the propagation of this fact has now finally started. Let us hope that this new insight will now begin finding its way into teaching (formation of theologians!) and preaching (information of the people). The future will show it.

As far as ecclesiology is concerned, no such agreement has yet been reached - not in the Vienna talks and even less so at the Regional Symposium. For while there is far-reaching agreement on the conciliarity of the church(es) this does not go for the problem of primacy of the Pope of Rome. Whether this is in fact a question of faith or merely a question of law or church structures in which different opinions may exist side by side, is another point to be dealt with.

The success of the symposium represents a first important set towards the reception of what has been achieved so far; the documentation of the symposium, which will also be done in Arabic, is designed to initiate the second step: making known the results to as many people as possible.

Another achievement of the symposium was the common realisation that the division of the churches and the subsequent deepening of the split were not only caused by theological issues. For non-theological, political, economic, social, cultural and linguistic factors also played a major role. These factors too must be thoroughly studied and pointed out if the rift between the churches is to be effectively healed.

Yet another achievement of the symposium is the fact that on this occasion churches - represented by hierarchs and theologians - who otherwise tend to act in isolation if

not as adversaries, got talking to each other. This contribution to mutual trust and understanding cannot be valued highly enough.

Last but not least, the repeatedly expressed wish for a continuation of this kind of common theological dialogue is to be counted among the scholarly achievements. Here the issues put forward for discussion were: proselytism, primacy of the Pope of Rome, dogmas of the Roman church,...to name only a few.

It was a good thing and a right decision to conduct the entire symposium in two languages, i.e. English and Arabic. English testified to the international importance of the event and to its international participation, Arabic, however, is a pre-condition for the propagation and reception of both the event and its results throughout the Middle East.

## *2. The Implications for Further Symposia*

Possibly this Regional Symposium in Egypt represents the world-wide first successful attempt to transmit the results of the work done in ecumenical commissions to the grass-roots directly concerned. Without such a transmission, however, the best results of commission work remain without effect. In this respect the symposium was a pioneering undertaking. Hence, symposia of this kind must be continued.

The next Regional Symposium, for which preparations are already underway, is due to be held in South India, i.e. Kerala, in autumn 1993. Again it will be important to set out a clear framework for the main topic. Furthermore, it will be important to give priority to the presentation and discussion of the results reached in the Vienna consultations. It cannot be assumed that the majority of the participants in a Regional Symposium have prior knowledge of the results of the preceding symposia. Hence, the need for substantial repetition. There will, however, be the possibility to include experiences, i.e. to expand on what proved successful and to correct or avoid mistakes.

Participants must come from all the churches based in India, in order for all of them to be able to familiarise themselves with the subject matter of the conference. After all the aim is twofold: to give a first information on as broad a basis as possible and to promote the general reception of the actual results among the participants - responsible hierarchs and eminent theologians - and, later on, among the grass-roots of the churches through formation of the clergy and information of the people. To meet the latter demand it will also in the case of India be necessary and helpful to publish the fundamental documents about the Vienna Consultations and the Regional Symposium in Egypt (for instance Booklet No 1 and Booklet No 3) in the most common vernacular, Malayalam. Preparations are already underway.

## *3. Rendering Account to Supporters and Sponsors*

The Regional Symposium is closely connected with a research project financed by the "Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung" (FWF, Fund for the Promotion of Scientific and Academic Research) in Austria. In my capacity as coordinator of this project I am aware that an individual academic contributor is not in a position to do an exhaustive study of such a complex matter as the controversial

Christology between the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches. The papers presented by theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and Catholic communicators provide essential parts of the study as a whole and facilitate summaries and conclusions leading further afield. Thus, this documentation is both an insight into one part of the research work done and its results so far as well as the starting point for further steps towards the realisation of the project.

This is why we are particularly grateful to the "Fonds der wissenschaftlichen Forschung" (FWF) in Austria for financing this project on Christology. Likewise our thanks go to other individuals and institutions who are offering generous support for the activities of the Foundation PRO ORIENTE.

## *4. Information of the Public*

Moreover, the entire documentation in English in a handy volume is a duty to the ecumenical work done by almost all the churches world-wide. All too often it happens that important results of the work of eminent ecumenists find so little propagation and continuation because they are inaccessible.

It goes without saying that this English edition is to be followed by one in Arabic, and soon also by one in German. The Arabic edition is indispensable for the discussion and propagation of the results in the Middle East, the German one takes account of the fact that the initiatives for both the research project and the symposium came from Vienna. The entire material is to be made available for ecumenical work in the German-speaking countries for information on the one hand and for the continuation of the talks on the other.

PROGRAMME OF THE MIDDLE EAST SYMPOSION

Saturday, 26th October 1991

*Ecumenical Worship in the Conference Hall*

Coptic Hymn

H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III: Thanksgiving Prayer (Coptic, Arabic)

Syriac Hymn "Al 'Tar'eyk I'to"

H.B. PATRIARCH STEPHANOS Eph. 4:1-7; 11-13 (Arabic)

Mr. ALFRED STIRNEMANN Eph. 4:1-7; 11-13 (English)

H.G. BISHOP ZAVEN CHINCHINIAN Psalm, Alleluja (Armenian)

H.G. ARCHIMANDRITE NICOLAS ANTIBA John 17:20-24 (Greek)

H.G. MAR GREGORIOS John 17:20-24 (Arabic)

Latin Hymn: Veni, Creator Spiritus

Intercessions

The Lord's Prayer each in his/her own language

Armenian Hymn

H.Em. CARDINAL KÖNIG: Blessing

*Opening Ceremony*

Moderator: Mr. ALFRED STIRNEMANN Vice-President and Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE

Addresses by

H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, Protector of PRO ORIENTE

H.Em. FRANCISCUS CARDINAL KÖNIG Founder and Protector of PRO ORIENTE

H.B. STEPHANOS II, Patriarch of Alexandria for the Coptic Catholic

*Topic I: General Survey*

Moderator: MAR GREGORIOS YOHANNA IBRAHIM of Aleppo

ALFRED STIRNEMANN, Roman Catholic, Vienna (English)

Vice-President and Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE

Fr. KONDOTHRA M.GEORGE, Syro-Indian, Geneva (English)

Associate Director of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey

Discussion

*Topic II: The Christological Consensus*

Moderator: Bishop MESROB K. KRİKORIAN

H.H. POPE SHENOUDA, Coptic Orthodox, Cairo (Arabic)

Discussion

Dom EMMANUEL LANNE OSB, Roman Catholic, Chevotogne (English)

Honorary Member of PRO ORIENTE

Discussion

Sunday, 27th October 1991

*Coptic Liturgy/Deir Amba Bishoy*

*Topic II: The Christological Consensus*

Moderator: Metropolitan AMBA BISHOY of Damiette

Bishop MESROB K. KRİKORIAN, Armenian Apostolic, Vienna (English)

Patriarchal Delegate for Central Europe and Sweden, Co-Chairman of the Official Dialogue between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Honorary Member of PRO ORIENTE

Archbishop CYRILLE SALIM BUSTROS of Baalbek, Melkite (Arabic)

Discussion

*Vespers at Amba Bishoy Monastery*

Archimandrite NICOLAS ANTIBA, Melkite, Jounieh (English)

Superior General of the Basilian Aleppian Order

Discussion

*Topic III: Councils and Conciliarity*

Moderator: Bishop Mesrob K. KRİKORIAN

MAR GREGORIOS YOHANNA IBRAHIM of Aleppo, Syrian Orthodox (Arabic)

Honorary Member of PRO ORIENTE

Discussion

Monday, 28th October 1991

*Catholic Liturgy*

*Topic III: Councils and Conciliarity*

Moderator: MAR GREGORIOS YOHANNA IBRAHIM of Aleppo

Fr. TADROS MALATY, Coptic Orthodox, Alexandria (Arabic)

Fr. KHALIL KOCHASSARLY OP, Syrian Catholic, Brussels (Arabic)

Discussion

*Conclusions/Outlook*

Moderators: Mr. STIRNEMANN and AMBA BISHOY



## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### *Coptic Orthodox:*

His Holiness Amba *Shenouda III*, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, Protector of PRO ORIENTE, Cairo, Egypt  
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His Grace Amba *Boula*, Bishop of Gharbeya, Tanta, Egypt  
His Grace Amba *Serapion*, Bishop for Public, Ecumenical and Social Services, Cairo, Egypt  
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His Grace Amba *Moussa*, Bishop for the Youth, Cairo, Egypt  
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The Rev. Prof. *Paulos Abd El Miseeh*, professor for canon law at the Theological College of Tanta, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Sidarous Abd El Miseeh*, Shebein El Kom Theological College, Menoufia, Egypt  
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Prof. *Ashraf Beshara Sedky*, the Theological School of Baliana, Egypt  
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Dr. *Karam Habib Salib*, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Saleeb Sourial*, Giza, Egypt

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The Rev. Fr. *Bishoy Wadie*, Tanta, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Makarios Youssef*, Baliana, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Yohanna Faiz Zakarry*, professor at the Theological School of Baliana, Egypt

### *Coptic Catholic:*

His Beatitude *Stephanos II Ghattas*, Patriarch of the Coptic Catholic Church  
The Rev. Fr. *Georges Obeid*, Secretary of His Beatitude  
His Grace *Athanasios Abadir*, Metropolitan of Ismailia  
Mr. *Ayad Zacaria Nosr Alla*, seminarian at the Theological School of Maadi, Egypt  
The Rev. Sister *Mary Nadia Said Aziz*, teacher at the Theological Institute of Sakaking, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Francis Nouer*, Cairo, Egypt  
Mr. *Joseph Sabri*, seminarian at the Theological School of Maadi, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Kamil William Samaan*, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Ibrahim Isaac Sedrak*, rector of the Theological School of Maadi, Egypt  
Mr. *Raafat Shawki*, seminarian at the Theological School of Maadi, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Fadel Sidarous*, Cairo, Egypt

### *Syrian Orthodox:*

His Grace *Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim*, Archbishop of Aleppo, Honorary Member of PRO ORIENTE and member of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE, Syria  
His Grace *Eustathius Matta Roham*, Metropolitan of Jazeera, Hassakeh, Syria  
His Grace *Julius Yesu Cicek*, Archbishop of Central Europe, Losser, Netherlands  
Mr. *Samir Joulji*, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Ephrem Karim*, Maynooth, Ireland  
Mr. *Antoine Salman*, Aleppo, Syria  
Mr. *Razek Syriani*, Coordinator of the Christian Education Programme in the MECC, Aleppo, Syria  
The Rev. Fr. *Joseph Tarzi*, Burbank, United States

### *Syrian Catholic:*

His Grace *Denys Antoine Beylouni*, Archbishop of Aleppo, Syria  
His Grace *Basile Moussa Daoud*, Bishop of Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Khalil Kochassarly OP*, Brussels, Belgium

*Armenian Apostolic:*

His Grace *Zaven Chinchinian*, Archbishop of Cairo, Primate of North Africa, Cairo, Egypt  
His Grace Bishop Dr. *Mesrob K. Krikorian*, Patriarchal Delegate for Central Europe and Sweden, Honorary Member of PRO ORIENTE and member of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE, Vienna, Austria  
The Rev. Fr. *Arshavir Kapoudjian*, Dean of the Theological Seminary of Antelias, Lebanon

*Armenian Catholic:*

His Grace *Boutros Marayati*, Archbishop of Aleppo, Syria  
His Grace *Boutros Taza*, Bishop for Egypt and the Sudan, Cairo, Egypt

*Malankara Orthodox Syrian:*

The Rev. Fr. Dr. *Kondothra M. George*, Associate Director of the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, member of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE, Geneva, Switzerland

*Maronite:*

His Grace *Joseph Khoury*, Archbishop of Tyr and Vice-President of the Middle East Council of Churches, Tyr, Lebanon  
His Grace *Joseph Dergham*, Bishop of Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Prof. Fr. *Elias Khalifa Hashem*, University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon  
The Rev. Fr. *Paul Sayah*, Associate Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, Beirut, Lebanon  
The Rev. Prof. Fr. *Paul Rohana*, University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon

*Greek Catholic (Melkite):*

His Grace Archbishop *Paul Antaki*, Vicar General for Egypt and the Sudan, Cairo, Egypt  
His Grace *Cyrille Salim Bustros*, Archbishop of Baalbek, Lebanon  
His Grace *Georges Kwaiter*, Archbishop of Saida, Lebanon  
His Grace Archimandrite *Nicolas Antiba*, Superior General of the Basilian Aleppian Order, Aleppo, Syria  
His Grace Archimandrite *Ignace Dick*, Vicar General for the Greek Catholics in Aleppo, Syria  
His Grace Archimandrite *Xavier Eid*, priest at St Mary of Peace Church, Cairo, Egypt

*Roman Catholic (Latin):*

His Eminence *Franciscus Cardinal König*, former Archbishop of Vienna, founder and Protector of PRO ORIENTE  
His Grace Pro-Nuncio Mons. *Antoine Magnoni*, Cairo, Egypt  
Mr *Alfred Stirnemann*, Vice-President and Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE, Vienna, Austria, member of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE  
Mons. *Philipp Harmoncourt*, professor for liturgical studies at the University of Graz, Austria, member of the Executive Committee and of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE, Austria  
The Rev. Fr. *Frans Bouwen P.A.*, Sainte Anne, Jerusalem, member of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE  
The Rev. Fr. *Victor Chelhot SJ*, Aleppo, Syria  
The Rev. Fr. *George Anawati OP*, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Samir Khalil*, Collège Notre Dame, Jamhour, Lebanon  
The Rev. Dom *Emmanuel Lanne OSB*, Chevetogne, Belgium, Honorary Member of PRO ORIENTE  
The Rev. Fr. *Maurice Martin*, Collège de la Sainte Famille, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Jacques Masson*, Collège de la Sainte Famille, Cairo, Egypt  
The Rev. Fr. *Christian van Nispen*, professor at the Coptic Catholic Theological School of Maadi, Egypt  
Mr. *Hannes Schreiber*, theologian and Executive Secretary of PRO ORIENTE, Graz/Vienna, Austria  
Mr. *Dietmar Winkler*, theologian and candidate for a doctor's degree at the University of Graz, Austria

*Coptic Evangelical:*

The Rev. *Safwat N. Elbiady*, Vice-President of the Protestant Churches in Egypt, Cairo, Egypt  
Prof. *Farough El Dary*, Cairo, Egypt  
Mrs. *El Dary*  
Mr. *Magdy Fouad*, seminarian, Cairo, Egypt  
Prof. *Guendy Ibrahim*, Cairo, Egypt  
Mr. *Fakhry Naguib Yacoub*, seminarian, Cairo, Egypt  
Mr. *Imad A. Thabet*, seminarian, Cairo, Egypt

*Anglican:*

Mr. *Anthony H. Carr*, Chichester Theological College, United Kingdom  
The Venerable *Howard Levitt*, Alexandria, Egypt

Observers:

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Rome: The Rev. Fr. *Bernard Dubasque*

Middle East Council of Churches, Tyr, Lebanon: His Grace *Joseph Houry*, Archbishop of Tyr and the Rev. Fr. *Paul Sayah*, Associate Secretary General of the Institution:

Protestant Churches in Egypt, Cairo, Egypt: The Rev. *Safwat N. Elbiady*, Vice-President and the Venerable *Howard Levitt*

Secretaries of the Minutes of the Discussions:

The Rev. Fr. *Frans Bouwen P.A.*

The Rev. Fr. *Ephrem Karim*

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP

HYMN (COPTIC)

ἜΖΜΑΡΩΟΤΤ ΔΛΗΘΩΣ  
ΝΕΜ ΠΕΚΙΩΤ ΝΑΓΑΘΟΣ  
ΝΕΜ ΠΙΠΝΑ ΕΘΩ: ΞΕ  
ΔΚΙ ΔΚΩΤ ἌΜΟΝ.

Ek Ezmaroot Alisos  
Nem Bekyoten Aghathos  
Nem be ebnevma ethoob ge  
ak eiak sote emmon.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER (COPTIC)

[H. H. Pope Shenouda III]

Patriarch  
ΨΑΗΛ.

eshliil.

Let us pray.

Deacon  
ΕΠΙ ΠΡΟΣΕΤΥΧΗ ΣΤΑΘΗΤΕ.

epi epros-evki estathite.

Stand up for prayer.

Patriarch  
ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΠΑΣΗ.

irini pasi.

Peace be with you all.

Participants  
ΚΑΙ ΤΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΣΟΦ.

ke to pnevmati so.

And also with your spirit.

Patriarch  
ΜΑΡΕΝΨΕΠ ΕΜΟΤ  
ἸΤΟΤΥ ἌΠΡΕΥΕΡ-  
ΠΕΘΝΑΝΕΦ ΟΤΟΖ ἸΝΝΑΗΤ:  
ΦΝΟΤΨ ΦΙΩΤ ἌΠΕΝΘΟΙΣ  
ΟΤΟΖ ΠΕΝΝΟΤΨ ΟΤΟΖ ΠΕΝ-  
ΣΩΤΗΡ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΠΙΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ.

marenshpep ehmot  
entotf empirefer-  
pethnanef o-oh enna-it  
efnoti efyot em penshoys  
o-oh pennoti o-oh pen-  
sotiir isos pikhristos.

Let us give thanks  
to the beneficent  
and merciful God,  
the Father of our  
Lord, our God, and  
Savior Jesus Christ.

ΞΕ ΔΥΕΡΕΣΚΠΑΖΙΝ ΕΞΩΜ:  
ΔΥΕΡΒΗΘΙΝ ΕΡΟΝ: ΔΥΑΡΕΖ  
ΕΡΟΝ: ΔΥΨΩΠΤΕΚ ΕΡΟΦ:  
ΔΥΤΑΣΟ ΕΡΟΝ: ΔΥΤΙΤΟΤΕΝ  
ΔΥΕΝΤΕΚ ΨΑ ΕΞΗΡΙ Ε ΤΑΙ-  
ΟΤΜΟΤ ΘΑΙ.

je af-er-eskpazin egon.  
af-er-vo ithin eron, af-areh  
eron: af-shopten erof,  
af-ti-aso eron, af-titoten  
af-enten sha e-echri etay-  
u-nuthay.

For He has protected  
us, helped us, preserved  
us, accepted us, had  
compassion upon us,  
and has supported us  
until this hour.

ΝΘΟΥ ΟΝ ΜΑΡΕΝΤΙΗΟ ΕΡΟΦ  
ΕΡΟΨΩΣ ἸΤΕΥΑΡΕΖ ΕΡΟΝ:  
ΞΕΝ ΠΑΙΕΖΟΟΤ ΕΘΟΤΑΒ  
ΦΑΙ ΝΕΜ ΝΙΕΖΟΟΤ ΤΗΡΟΤ  
ἸΤΕ ΠΕΝΩΚΩ: ΞΕΝ ΖΙΡΗΝΗ  
ΝΙΒΕΝ: ἸΧΕ ΠΙΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑ-  
ΤΩΡ ΠΘΟΙΣ ΠΕΝΝΟΤΨ.

enthof on marentiho erof  
hopos entef-areh eron,  
khen paycho-u-o ethhowaav  
fay nem ni-eho-u-o tiiru  
ente pen-unkh khen hirini  
niven, enje pi-pantokra-  
tor epschoys pennuti.

Let us pray  
that He, our Almighty  
God, will keep us in  
peace throughout  
this Holy day and all  
the days of our life.

Deacon  
ἸΠΡΟΣΕΤΥΖΑΣΘΕ.

epros ev eksaste.

Let us pray.

Participants  
ΚΤΡΙΕ ΕΛΕΗΣΟΝ.

kiriye eleyson.

Lord have mercy.

Patriarch  
ΦΝΗΒ ΠΘΟΙΣ ΦΝΟΤΨ  
ΠΙΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ: ΦΙΩΤ  
ἌΠΕΝΘΟΙΣ ΟΤΟΖ ΠΕΝΝΟΤΨ  
ΟΤΟΖ ΠΕΝΣΩΤΗΡ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ  
ΠΙΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ.

efniif epschoys efnoti  
pi-pantokrator, efyot  
em penshoys o-oh pennoti  
o-oh pensotiir isous  
pikhristos.

O Lord, Master, and  
God Almighty, the  
Father of our Lord,  
our God, and our Savior  
Jesus Christ.

كل حد وكل  
نجرة وكل فعل  
الشیطان ومؤامرة  
الناس الاشرار  
وقيام الأعداء  
المتبين والظالمين  
أزعمساعنا

kullu hasadin, wa  
kullu tagribatin, wa  
kullu fi'li shshaytaan,  
wa mu-amareatu nnasi  
l-ashraar, wa qiyaamu  
l-a'daa-i lkhafiyiina  
wazzahiriin, inza'ha  
'anna.

All envy, all  
temptation, all the  
work of Satan, the  
intrigues of wicked  
people, and the rising  
up of enemies, hidden  
or apperent, cast them  
away from us.

ومن سائر  
شعبك  
ومن مروضتك  
للقدس هذا

wa 'an saa-iri sha'bik,

And from all Your people.

wa 'an mawdi 'ika  
lmuqaddas haaza.

And from this holy  
place.

وأما الصالحات  
والناقصات ، فأرزقنا  
أياماً لأنك أنت الذي  
اعطيتنا السلطان أن  
ندوس على الحيات  
والتناوب وعلى كل  
قوة العدو ،

wa amma ssalihat wa  
nnafi'aat farzuqna  
iyyaaha, li-annaka anta  
llazi a'tytana ssultaan  
an naduusa lhyyat wa  
l'agaarib, wa kull  
quwwat il'adu.

As for the good and useful  
things, please bestow them  
upon us, for You have granted  
us the power to tread on  
serpents and scorpions and  
every power of the enemy.

The Patriarch continues saying:

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil through the grace, compassion and love of mankind of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ.

HYMN (SYRIAN) (H.G. Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, H.G. Eustathius Matta Roham, H.G. Julius Yesu Cicek)

حلا لا تخدم دجال

AL 'TAR'EYK I'TO

حلا لا تخدم دجال بلهنا صبح  
حلا لا تخدم دجال بلهنا صبح  
عبدكم عداً لهنا  
هوسه وحبه عه عبدنا  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه

Al tar'eyk f'tō no'tū'rē koy'min,  
Blil'yō ubi'mo'mo men'bi'sō not'r'in.  
Šem'un še'tes'tō vfav'lus er'dih'lō.  
Yu'ha'nōn da'bith Ševš'bi'nō uroh'mo.  
Ha'le'lū'ya u'ha'le'lū'ya Mor'yo  
Da'vith Ke Nō'ro Dru'ho ka'di'šō.

حلا عبدكم طول يوم دجال  
حلا عبدكم طول يوم دجال  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه  
هنا هوسه

Al Šem'un Kifō Mo'ran i'tē bnō.  
Val Šab'in vet'rin a'mu'din ethk'nō,  
Vmen tu'ray kar'du romo vem'al'yō.  
Er'dih'lō deb'nō bam'rav'me maim'rē.  
Ha'le'lū'ya u'ha'le'lū'ya Mor'yo.  
Brik deb'nō L'i'te veth'ken bo methib'hō.

نشكرك . على  
كل حال ومن  
أجل ككل حال  
وفي كل حال ،  
لأنك سترتنا  
وأهنتنا وحفظتنا  
وقبلتنا إليك  
وشغقت علينا  
وعندتنا وأتيت بنا  
إلى هذه الساعة ،

nashkuruka 'ala kullī  
haalīn wa min agli kullī  
haalīn wa fi kullī haal.

We thank You for  
all occasions and for  
every thing and at all times.

Deacon

أطلبوا لنا  
برحمتنا الله وبرأف  
علينا وبسنتنا  
وبعزيتنا ، وبتبل  
سؤالات وملابيات  
قدسية منهم  
بالصلاح بنا في  
كل حين ، وبقدر  
لنا خطايانا .

li-annaka satartena,  
wa a'ntana, wa hafiztana,  
wa qabiltana ilayaka,  
wa ashafaqta 'alayna,  
wa 'addattana wa atayta  
bina ila hazihi ssaa'a.

For You have  
protected us, helped us,  
preserved us, accepted us,  
and had compassion upon us,  
and have supported us  
until this hour.

utlubu likay yarliamna  
llaah wa yataraa-af  
'alayna, wa yasma'na wa  
yu'iinana, wa yaqbal  
su-alaat wa tilbaat qiddi-  
siah minhum bissalaahi  
'anna fi kullī hiin, wa  
yaghfer lana khatayaana.

Pray the Lord  
have mercy and  
compassion upon us, help us,  
and accept the requests and  
prayers of His Saints for our  
righteousness at all  
times and to forgive  
our sins.

Participants  
κῆρυξ ἐλεησον.  
Patriarch

(Coptic Orthodox Participants)  
Kiriye eleyson.

Lord have mercy.

من أجل  
هذا ، نسأل ونطلب  
من صلاحك يا محبوب  
البنين ، آمين نحن الآن  
نكمل هذا اليوم  
القدس وكل أيام  
حياتنا بسكك سلام  
مع شوقك ،

min agli haaza nas-al  
wa natlub min salaahika  
ya muhib ilbashaar.  
imnahna an nukammila  
haaza lyawm ilmuqaddas.  
wa kull ayyaam hayaatina.  
bikulli salaamatin ma'  
khawfika.

Wherefore we pray and  
appeal to Your  
Goodness, O Lord, Lover  
of Mankind. Grant that  
we may complete this  
holy day, and all the  
days of our life in complete  
peace and in Your fear.

READING [SG Stinemann (Roman Catholic); Patriarch Stephanos II (Coptic Catholic)]

Eph. 4, 1-7; 11-13 (in English and Arabic)

ALLELUIA/PSALM (ARMENIAN) [Archbishop Chinchinian]

ալէլուիա, ալէլուիա	Alleluia, alleluia.	Alleluia, alleluia.
Ի խորոց կարգացի առ քեզ տէր, տէր լուր ձայնի իմում:	I khorots gartatsi ar kez Ter, Ter, lour tzayni imoum.	Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice:
Եղիցին ականջք քո՝ ի լսել զձայն արթից իմոց:	Yeghitsin agantchk ko i lsel ztzayn aghotiis imots.	let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.
Թե՛ զանորէ՛նութիւնս քննես տէր, տէր իսկ ո՞ր կարէ՛ կալ արաջի քո, զի ի քե՛ն է քսուութիւն:	Te zanorenoutiouns knnes Ter, Ter isk ow gare gal aratchi ko, zi i ken e kavoutioun.	If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee.
Վասն անուան քո համբերի տէր, համբեր անձն իմ բանի քում, յուսա- ղաւ անձն իմ ի տէր:	Vasn anwan ko hamberi Ter, hamber antzen im bani koum, housatsaw antzen im i Ter.	I wait, for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. (Psalm 130, 1-4a.5)

GOSPEL [Archimandrite Antiba (Greek Catholic); Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syrian)]

John 17, 20-24 (in Greek and Arabic)

HYMN (CATHOLIC)

1. Veni, Creator Spiritus. / mentes tuorum visita: / imple superna gratia. quae tu creasti pectora.	1. Come. O Creator Spirit, come. / and make within our hearts thy home: / To us thy grace celestial give, / Who of thy breathing move and live.
2. Qui diceris Paraclitus. / donum Dei altissimi, / fons vivus, ignis, caritas / et spiritalis unctio.	2. O Paraclete, that name is thine, / of God most high the gift divine. / the well of life, the fire of love / our soul's anointing from above.
3. Tu septiformis munere. / dexterae Dei tu digitus. / tu rite promissum Patris / sermone ditans guttura.	3. Thou dost appear in sevenfold dower / the sign of God's almighty power. / the Father's promise, making rich / with saving truth our earthly speech.
4. Accende lumen sensibus. / infunde amorem cordibus. / infirma nostri corporis / virtute firmans perpeti.	4. Our senses with thy light inflame, / our hearts to heavenly love reclaim. / our bodie's poor infirmity / with strength perpetual fortify.
5. Hostem repellas longius / pacemque dones protinus; / ductore sic te praevio / vitemus omne noxium. / Amen.	5. Our mortal foe afar repel. / grant us henceforth in peace to dwell, / and so to us, with thee for guide, / no ill shall come, no harm betide. / Amen.

INTERCESSIONS

[Metropolitan Amba Bishoy (Coptic): for the success of the symposium;  
 Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim (Syrian): for peace in the Middle East;  
 Bishop Krikorian (Armenian): for the unity of the church;  
 Archbishop Bustros (Greek Catholic): for all those who are needy, ill and deprived;  
 Mons. Harmoncourt (Roman Catholic): for the dead, in particular for the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I]

Response: Kyrie eleison

THE LORD'S PRAYER [Everybody in his/her own language]

HYMN (ARMENIAN) [Archbishop Chinchinian, Bishop Krikorian, Fr. Kapoudjian]

BLESSING [Franciscus Cardinal König (Roman Catholic)]



From right to left: Cardinal König, Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch Stephanos II, Alfred Stirnemann, Vicepresident of PRO ORIENTE



View of the auditorium of the PRO ORIENTE Middle East Regional Symposium, October 1991 at Deir Amba Bishoy, Wadi Natroun



From left to right: Bishop Mesrop K. Krikorian, Metropolitan Amba Bishoy of Damiette, Pope Shenouda III, Cardinal König, Pro-Nuncio Mons. Antonio Magnoni



The Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE with Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch Stephanos II and Cardinal König. From left to right: Father Frans Bouwen, Bishop Mesrop K. Krikorian, Father K. M. George, Vicepresident Alfred Stirnemann, Metropolitan Amba Bishoy, Professor Philipp Harnoncourt, Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim

OPENING SPEECH

Your Holiness, Your Beatitude, Your Eminence, Your Graces, Reverend Fathers, Dear Sisters and Brothers,

On behalf of the Board of PRO ORIENTE in Vienna I would like to bid a wholehearted welcome to all of you! Ahlan wa sahan!

The President of PRO ORIENTE, former President of the Republic of Austria Dr. Rudolf Kirchschräger, who to his great regret cannot be here among us, asked me as his vice-president to convey to you his most cordial wishes and the expression of his thanks and gratefulness to His Holiness Pope Shenouda for having offered us his most generous hospitality. His Holiness has given overwhelming proof of being what Cardinal König proclaimed him a long time ago, a true Protector of PRO ORIENTE.

But he is not only a Protector of PRO ORIENTE, he is also a champion of ecumenism. Time and again he was eager to inform people in Egypt and all over the world about the results of the different ecumenical dialogues. Thus, he has on several occasions invited our speakers. I myself had the privilege of being invited to his residence in order to speak about the results of the Vienna Dialogue in front of students of Coptic Orthodox theology.

Due to his indefatigable initiative news of the achievements obtained in ecumenical dialogue are made known in Egypt, in the Arab world and the whole Middle East. And it was with this aim in mind that he also invited us to hold our Middle East Symposium here in Wadi Natrun. We are very grateful for this offer and appreciate it as a unique chance. Having said this I would now like to ask His Holiness to open this meeting.



OPENING SPEECH

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Dear Cardinal König, founder and Protector of PRO ORIENTE, Dear Patriarch Stephanos of the Coptic Catholic Church, Dear Mr. Stirnemann, Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE, who is the most active and energetic person working here and there, Dear Brothers in Christ, Metropolitans, Bishops, Priests, Laymen, Dear Sisters, I am very glad to welcome you here in the Amba Bishoy Monastery of Wadi Natrun, an ancient monastery going back to the 4th century. It is with great appreciation indeed that I think of the work PRO ORIENTE is doing. Back in September 1971, actually just two months before I became Patriarch of the Coptic Church, I was among those who attended the very first Vienna Consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. In retrospect, that meeting of 1971 was to my mind one of the most successful conferences of this kind. We came to find a new Formula of Faith accepted by all fathers, by the Catholic theologians just as well as by those who represented the Oriental Orthodox Churches there. This same Formula of Faith was subsequently included in a number of official declarations, especially in the Common Declaration between His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness the late Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church Mar Ignatios Yacoub III. Moreover, it was also used in the Common Declaration between His Holiness Pope Paul VI and myself in 1973 as well as in the Agreed Statement on Christology between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church signed by us in 1988 during a meeting in this very monastery.

The foundation PRO ORIENTE has been working for the promotion of Christian unity for over 20 years and achieved a great deal with these five consultations. On this occasion we would also like to pay tribute to the efforts made by dear Bishop Mesrob within the framework of this institution.

Let me repeat how happy I am to be able to receive you here today and tell you how I was touched by the prayers of this morning, said in numerous languages witnessing the different liturgies and rites. As we prayed in Arabic, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Greek, English, German and Latin it was like the day of Pentecost.

Many churches are represented in this meeting: there are Oriental Orthodox, Oriental Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Anglican participants. Together we are working towards Christian unity, for Christian unity was the wish and the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, the passage from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians which we heard was about one faith; and one Lord and the passage from Saint John the Apostle was about the prayer of our Lord that all be one as the Father and the Son are one.

We have had many theological dialogues. The Vienna Dialogue initiated by PRO ORIENTE was the first one. It was to be followed by many dialogues for Christian unity both with our Catholic brothers and with our Byzantine Orthodox brothers here in this monastery. But ecumenism is not only a matter of theological dialogue, it should also be a matter of prayer. Constancy before the Spirit may unite the Churches.

All our work can only be of any help or bear fruit when we ask the Holy Spirit to bring us together and help us achieve a common understanding and real knowledge of each other. So let us pray for this divine inspiration in the conduct of this meeting here in Egypt.

Of course it is impossible for me to give expression to all my thoughts in this inaugural address. I shall continue my reflections this afternoon in my theological lecture about the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the moment I am just saying once again: Thanks to all of you and welcome in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and all His Saints in Heaven.

## OPENING REMARKS

I am very happy to be with you on this occasion and to attend this meeting with Pope Shenouda III. Let me take this opportunity to tell you something about the Ecumenical Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church from 1973 to this day.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) released two very important documents. The first is entitled: "Decree on Ecumenism", and the second is "Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches and their relations with the Orthodox Sister Churches". This council invited some representatives of the Coptic Orthodox church as observers to attend its sessions. Following the council, the Roman Pontiffs - in particular Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II - continuously used their good offices for the constant and constructive dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark of the Coptic Orthodox church, accepted the invitation to come to Rome, extended by the Pontiff His Holiness Pope Paul VI. On 5 May 1973, he went to the Vatican heading a delegation of bishops, priests and high ranking lay people, on 5 May, 1973. This was the first time in the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church, that a Coptic Orthodox Patriarch has ever come to Rome to meet the Roman Pontiff for consultations related to the issue of unity between the two churches.

On May 10, 1973, a joint communiqué was signed by both the Roman Pontiff and the Pope of Alexandria concerning this historical encounter. The following was mentioned:

- Acknowledgement of the common dogmatic issues.
- Mention of certain divergence.
- The sincere desire to undertake continuous effort to realise the desired unity and to deepen friendly relations between the two Churches.
- Repudiation of all kinds of "proselytism" from both sides.
- Exchange of opinions, points of view and experiences for the interest of all in the rest of the social and cultural issues.

The two parties agreed to set up joint specialised committees comprising on the Catholic side: members of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity in Rome as well as from the Coptic Catholic Church. On the Coptic Orthodox side: bishops, priests and laity similar to the Catholic side. The task of these members of both parties is to study pastoral, to be discussed at the sessions of the Ecumenical Dialogue.

Between 1974 and 1978, four very important ecumenical meetings were held, and on 23 June 1979 principles and a protocol for the safeguard of the ecumenical dialogue were developed between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. These were endorsed and signed by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Shenouda III.

Meetings of the ecumenical dialogue were interrupted because of the decree issued by the late President Sadat detaining H.H. Pope Shenouda III inside the walls of St. Bishoy monastery in Wadi El Natrun, thus not allowing him to perform his patriarchal duties.

These meetings were resumed in January 1985, upon the return of Pope Shenouda to his Patriarchal See.

In one of the meetings, on 12 February 1988, the two parties reached a complete agreement on a common formula regarding the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ; perfect in His divinity, and perfect in His humanity. "He made His humanity one with His divinity without mingling, without commixing, without change, without confusion, and His divinity did not separate from His humanity for a single moment of a twinkle of an eye. At the same time, we anathemize the doctrines of both Nestorius and Eutyches."

Later on, three meetings were held between members of the joint dialogue commissions at Amba Bishoy Monastery, Wadi El Natrun in October 1988, April 1990, May 1991, about the "Procession of the Holy Spirit" and "the Purgatory" without achieving satisfactory solutions. However, both sides agreed to pursue the ecumenical dialogue with mutual trust, confidence unwavering and sincere love in accordance with Jesus Christ's Will, for which he prayed: the unity of his Holy Church. (St. John 17).

## OPENING SPEECH

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

With this greeting often used by the Apostle Paul, I extend my own greeting and blessing to the Middle East Symposium, which has been opened and introduced by Your Holiness Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark.

In the name of PRO ORIENTE, I would like to express our great joy that this ecumenical symposium could take place here in Wadi Natrun. We thank Your Holiness for the hospitality that has been offered to us in your monastic community on the occasion of such a significant meeting.

I should like to express my very best wishes and to ask for God's blessing that our coming together may bear good fruit, both for our Churches and for our ecumenical cooperation. It should also be a sign that we are bound together by the love of Christ, so that mutual trust and the wish to grow closer to one another are strengthened.

May I also express the hope that our communities may become more deeply aware of ecumenical cooperation and its fruits, and strengthen and further these through their prayers.

I am delighted that this symposium will also deal with the Christological consensus. May I remind you in this respect that in the series of five non-official consultations in Vienna the very first one in 1971 produced a world-wide response. This first dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church was distinguished by the presence of His Holiness, Patriarch Shenouda III. Furthermore, the concluding communiqué of the first meeting in Vienna contained a declaration that was very encouraging for ecumenism. The formulation was approved by both the Oriental Orthodox theologians and the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. This document states, among other things:

We, as Christians, feel united in a spirit of brotherhood in our faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, God and Saviour, and recognise 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 (cf. John 17, 21).

On the occasion of the visit that Your Holiness made to Rome in 1973, you commented, in the presence of Pope Paul VI, on the importance for the consultations in Vienna. At that time you stressed that with joined forces, it had been possible to work out a "tentative formula, a formula of faith about Christ, which was achieved and approved by both sides".

The Vienna meetings showed that despite a separation of 1500 years it was possible to examine together, in a friendly atmosphere a number of misunderstandings. It was found that many apparently different theological standpoints were rooted in long-standing cultural and political differences. Ecumenical cooperation was greatly aided by the recognition that different, apparently contradictory, theological standpoints were often partly caused by misunderstandings of language.

I pray and fervently wish that this symposium in Wadi Natrun may make a special contribution to the strengthening of interest in ecumenical matters in our time and in a

world that is becoming more unified. I wish, above all, that it may increase awareness of ecumenism in our communities.

On the occasion of this Middle East Symposium we have received various signs of love, of unity, of approval and appreciation. H.B. Patriarch Parthenios III, H.B. Patriarch Ignatios VI of Antioch, the Supreme Catholicos of all Armenians Vasken I - who is represented here by Archbishop Zaven Chinchinan of Egypt -, Catholicos Karekin II - represented by Dean Arshavir Kapoujinan - and H.B. Patriarch Maximos V - represented by Archbishop Paul Antaki - have sent us messages wishing us all the best of success for this undertaking.

Moreover, I have the special privilege of welcoming observers from very important ecumenical institutions, Fr. Bernard Dubasque of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome, Archbishop Joseph Khoury of Tyr, one of the Presidents, and Fr. Paul Sayah, Associate Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches, Rev. Safwat N. Elbiady, Vice-President of the Protestant Churches in Egypt and the Venerable Howard Levitt of the Anglican Church in Egypt.

Last but not least I would like to mention those who have developed this idea of coming together in an Orthodox country to present the outcome of the dialogue of the last 20 years to a large audience of Christians from all walks of religious life. They are those members of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE who are among us today, that is H.G. Metropolitan Amba Bishoy from the Coptic Orthodox Church, H.G. Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim from the Syrian Orthodox Church, H.G. Bishop Mesrob Krikorian from the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Rev. Fr. Kondothra M. George from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and Mons. Philipp Harnoncourt from the Roman Catholic Church. It is thanks to their spiritual initiative that this ecumenical effort has come about.

THE VIENNA ECUMENICAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN ORIENTAL  
ORTHODOX AND ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGIANS:  
PURPOSE AND RESULTS

1. *Ecumenism and PRO ORIENTE*

1.1. PRO ORIENTE's Purpose

During the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church some intellectuals in Vienna, the editors of the review "Wort und Wahrheit", were reflecting on what contribution they might be able to offer to the success of this council. This synod, which was the biggest in the history of the church (1962 - 1965) had prepared the "aggiornamento" (renewal) of church structures and the entrance of the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement striving towards Christian unity and the unity of the Church, something which is not only rooted in "the wish of man" but above all in Christ's prayer that "they all be one" (John 17,21).

The Archbishop of Vienna Franciscus Cardinal König, as a member of the Central Preparatory Commission and the Theological Commission, had played a major role in the preparation and conducting of this Council and appealed to all faithful to express their opinions and make their contributions to church life in modern times.

With this in mind, the group of committed Christians mentioned above decided to turn their special attention to the Christian Churches of the Orient, taking into account Austria's century-long close relations with the countries of the Balkans - predominantly Orthodox Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece -, with the European East - that is Russia and the Ukraine, part of which was for a long time under Austrian rule -, as well as with the Middle East. The Austrian Emperors - bearing the title of a King of Jerusalem - considered themselves as protectors of the Christians in the Orient and, with the consent of the Ottoman sultans and the Khedives, acted for a long time as supporters of Christians living in Egypt and in the Sudan.

1.2. Vienna and the East

Vienna has had its Orthodox communities for many centuries, sometimes since the Middle Ages, some of which - the Greeks, the Serbians, and the Romanians - have especially thrived over the last three centuries. The 18th century saw the advent of the Armenians, Bulgarians and Russians and the last thirty years brought workers of Aramaic language and Christian faith from Anatolia and Mesopotamia to Austria as well as students and intellectuals and now also workers from Egypt, the Lebanon and Syria. This led to the foundation of Coptic Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox church communities in Austria.

The Archbishop of Vienna and other Catholic bishops have given church buildings to priests sent from the venerable Sees of Alexandria and Antioch as places of worship and of social encounter, where the priests can also live.

These historical ties and the presence of the communities were the advantage and

asset for the activities of this organisation which, under the name of "Foundation PRO ORIENTE" was established by the head of the Church of Vienna, Franciscus Cardinal König - who happily is among us today. The exact date was 4th November 1964, just a week before the Vatican Council adopted its most important ecumenical document, "Unitatis Redintegratio", which was to become the Magna Charta of Catholic ecumenism and has since provided the guidelines for the work of the Roman Secretariat for Christian Unity, now called "The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity". This latter institution was founded by the late Augustin Cardinal Bea who also was its first president. He was then succeeded by Their Eminencies Jan Cardinal Willebrands and Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, who is its present head.

Under the leadership of Franciscus Cardinal König and his current successor on the Archiepiscopal See of Vienna, Hans Hermann Cardinal Groer, PRO ORIENTE has been able to render its service to the Churches concerned. It managed to open doors for the first time, which in turn led to intensive and fruitful relations with the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

1.3 The Principles of Ecumenism

In its work PRO ORIENTE followed some very fundamental, yet simple principles. They may be summed up as follows:

- a. Avoiding a relationship of paternalism, by respecting the partners to the ecumenical dialogue as equals, by treating them *par cum pari*.
- b. Avoiding polemics which seem to be outdated and unjust.
- c. Avoiding the impression of wanting to convert the other to a different opinion by striving jointly for a better understanding of Christian truth, thus going forward to a common future, not looking back to a divided past.
- d. Working towards the realisation of Christ's will to make all Christians one, without conducting these activities as a threat against anybody, be they within other churches or outside the church.
- e. Rendering a service to the church of Vienna and at the same time to the world church by promoting church unity at an unofficial level. Thus, PRO ORIENTE served as a kind of "laboratory for unity", trying to seek out new avenues and reach new results, which would then go on to benefit the official church leadership.
- f. Encouraging, by its ecumenical initiatives peace and understanding among people of different cultures, traditions and interests, even on a civil and secular basis.

The high esteem which the foundation's presidents enjoyed was an important factor in PRO ORIENTE's positive impact. They were Dr. Heinrich Drimmel from 1964 to 1969 and Dr. Theodor Piffil-Percevic from 1969 to 1989, both former ministers of education and culture of the Republic of Austria. Our actual president of PRO ORIENTE Dr. Rudolf Kirchschräger (since 1989) held for 12 years (1974-1986) the office of President of the Republic of Austria.

## 2. PRO ORIENTE's Ecumenical Achievements

By following these principles, PRO ORIENTE was not only able to open up new dialogues but initiated also major rounds of dialogue which have subsequently born good fruit. This is particularly true of the Romanian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches, all of whom have long lived in an especially difficult situation of isolation under the threat of atheistic communism, which however - to our great delight - they have now been able to overcome.

Thus, PRO ORIENTE's most important ecumenical achievements were as follows:

### 2.1. The So-Called Ecclesiological Colloquy of Vienna

This unofficial meeting in 1974 of theologians of the (Byzantine) Orthodox and Latin traditions was the first assembly of pan-Orthodox scope ever to be held between Rome and Orthodoxy. This Colloquy was co-chaired by the Secretary General for the preparation of the Pan-Orthodox Synod, Metropolitan Damaskinos from Geneva, and by the Secretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Pierre Duprey. This meeting was particularly important since some of the theologians came from Churches which for a long time had been quite reluctant to enter into a theological dialogue with Roman Catholicism.

This meeting proved that the time was ripe to proceed from the unofficial talks in Vienna to an official dialogue between Pan-Orthodoxy and Rome, a process which started immediately after the Colloquy of 1974 and resulted in the announcement of the official dialogue in 1979 by Pope John Paul II and the late Patriarch Dimitrios I, whose death last month we deeply deplore. The first meeting of the Mixed Commission took place in 1980 on the islands of Patmos and Rhodes and was followed by successive rounds of talks held every other year in Munich 1982, Crete 1984, Bari 1986 and 1987, New Valamo 1988 and again Munich last year 1990.

### 2.2. The Five Vienna Consultations

The second important contribution PRO ORIENTE could make to the international ecumenical dialogue were the five Vienna Consultations with theologians of the five venerable non-Chalcedonian Churches, the focus of attention at this Middle East Symposium here in Wadi Natrun, which we are initiating today.

It was in the years 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and ten years later, in 1988 that theologians of the Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Ethiopian Orthodox and Syro-Indian Orthodox Churches met with Roman Catholic theologians in Vienna. These five consultations were chaired by Vardapet (now bishop) Mesrob K. Krikorian - present among us - on the Oriental side. The Catholic chairmen were the late Monsignor Otto Mauer at the earlier ones and the Jesuit Father John F. Long at the last three consultations. He is the current Vice-Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome but unfortunately cannot be with us today. These consultations made a major contribution to the Christian world by developing a new spirit in the churches concerned and coming up with visible results.

The initial idea to start this dialogue can be found in the PRO ORIENTE minutes of May 1970. Its model were the talks between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian

Orthodoxy held under the auspices of the Ecumenical World Council of Churches in Aarhus 1964, Bristol 1967, Geneva 1970 and Addis Ababa 1971. The priest in charge of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Vienna, Vardapet (now Bishop) Krikorian had attended them all and thus became one of the major contributors to the project. Other impulses came from a visit Mons. Mauer paid to Egypt in November 1970, where he met Amba Shenouda, at the time head of the Coptic Orthodox Seminary, and Amba Gregorios, from trips of the Secretary General to Rome where he had talks with Fr. Duprey and from the visit the Archbishop of Baghdad and Basrah, Mar Zakka I Iwas, now Syrian Patriarch of Antioch, paid to Vienna in June 1971.

On September 7th 1971 nine Oriental and nine Catholic theologians met for the first of the nine working sessions in Vienna. This was the first meeting of these two Christian families after 1520 years of separation and 500 years after the not so successful Council of Florence, attended by some of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Church of Rome.

Its main results were the so-called Vienna Christological Formula and the further development of the common and distinctive elements in our ecclesiologies. The respective understanding of unity, church authority, councils and conciliarity, will be explained in detail by the other lectures which will follow.

Let me just try to sum up some of the main features of these five Vienna Consultations:

a. All five consultations were characterised by a spirit of brotherhood and good will and a deep sense of responsibility that the scandal of division between the one church of Christ has to be done away with and that the church has to be brought back to complete unity as expressed in Christ's will "that the whole world may see it and believe in him" (John 17,23).

b. All five Oriental Orthodox Churches were present. They were aware that in the past Church divisions were caused and deepened by the physical inability of certain churches to attend some councils, mostly due to political or even technical transport problems. This was very important because even difficulties between the Oriental Churches as e.g. between Antioch and India, between the two Armenian Catholicosates, between Alexandria and Ethiopia did not make it easier to consider the split which separated Christians at and after Chalcedon.

c. All five traditions were represented by competent theologians, often even bishops, who came to Vienna in a personal capacity as experienced theologians standing in the intellectual and spiritual tradition of their churches. They had, however, no official mandate from their church authorities. This procedure proved to be the appropriate way to get the theological dialogue started. Still, we were already hoping that there will be one day official consultations initiated by the hierarchies.

d. All five consultations saw the contributions of eminent theologians and church leaders. Let me just mention the participation of Amba Shenouda at the first Consultation in 1971, of the former Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Tiran Nersoyan, at the first and fourth Consultations, of Mar Zakka I Iwas, who later became Syrian Patriarch, at the 2nd and 3rd Consultations, of Archbishop Keshishian of Lebanon, who is now the moderator of the World Council of Churches, at the fourth Consultation and of Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi who was a president of the World Council of Churches.

From the Catholic side the outstanding participants and lecturers to be mentioned

were Cardinal König himself, Professor Karl Lehmann, now Bishop of Mayence and head of the German Bishops' Conference, Paul Werner Scheele, now Bishop of Würzburg, and such experts as the professors Alois Grillmeier SJ (Frankfurt), Wilhelm de Vries SJ (Rome), André de Halleux OFM (Louvain) and Emmanuel Lanne OSB (Chevetogne).

The presence of these personalities was not only significant in terms of their contributions made during the Consultations but also for their role in the subsequent reception of the results within the respective churches.

e. All five consultations ended in unanimously carried final communiqués describing the main issues of debate and the papers submitted. The complete texts of several lectures are published in English in the review "Wort und Wahrheit".

f. All five consultations were prepared by a preparatory committee including experts from all the churches concerned. Together with the chairmen and the PRO ORIENTE staff they discussed the issues, papers, speakers and possible results. In this way the programmes for the realisation of the plans were really a common effort of all parties concerned.

Every day a different church invited the participants of the sister churches to take part in its liturgy and the task of preaching was always confided to the minister of a different church. Thus, at the final pontifical liturgies at St. Stephen's Cathedral, celebrated by Franciscus Cardinal König and in the case of the fifth Consultation by his successor, Archbishop Hans Hermann Cardinal Groer, the sermons were held by Amba Shenouda, Mar Zakka I Iwas, Archbishop Nersoyan, Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of Delhi and the Ethiopian Metropolitan Timotheos of Kefa.

g. All churches involved took great interest in these consultations. Moreover, besides the churches directly committed to this dialogue through their most brilliant theologians many internationally renowned institutions of ecumenism sent observers, such as the Secretariat (now Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity, the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Department for Foreign Relations at the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Anglican Communion.

Upon request of the representatives of the Coptic Orthodox Church, theologians of the Coptic Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syro-Malankarese and Syro-Malabar churches were invited and took actually part in the fourth and fifth Consultations. With their help a statement was included in the Common Declaration of the fourth Consultation on the status of the Uniate churches. It reads as follows: "The Oriental Catholic Churches will not even in a 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 missions for other churches. The sister churches will work out local solutions, in accordance with different local situations, implementing as far as possible the principle of a unified episcopate for each locality."

The Roman Popes Paul VI and John Paul II as well as the heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches repeatedly encouraged PRO ORIENTE's initiatives and showed great interest in their outcome.

### 3. Reception of the Results

#### 3.1. Official Declarations of Heads of Churches

The active endorsement by the Heads of the Churches also enabled PRO ORIENTE to do a great deal for the reception of the results of the five consultations within the churches concerned. The common communiqués were officially transmitted to the Patriarchs, who had them studied by their counsellors for ecumenism.

Moreover, there was a world-wide echo in the press, beyond Europe as far as Russia, the United States, India, Egypt and Africa.

On October 27th 1971, Paul VI and Mar Ignatios Yacoub III stated in their Common Declaration in Rome "that they are in agreement, there is no difference in the faith (we) profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and became really man."

The same belief is expressed in the final Communiqué of the First Vienna Consultation: "We in our common faith in the one Lord, Jesus Christ regard his mystery inexhaustible and ineffable... We are convinced, however, that these differing formulations on both sides can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicaea and Ephesos".

Amba Shenouda, who two months after his participation in the first Vienna Consultation became the 117th successor to Saint Mark on the See of the Patriarch of Alexandria - precisely 20 years ago next week - was the first Coptic Pope to visit a Roman Pontiff.

Pope Shenouda then said under the canopy of Bernini in St Peter's Cathedral "one of the steps which led to this first meeting of a Patriarch of Alexandria with a Patriarch of the West after one and a half millenary is called Vienna". Then he stated: "We shared together in many conferences, to mention in particular the Theological Consultation of September 1971, between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, at which a tentative formula of faith about the Nature of Christ was achieved 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."

The Common Declaration he signed with Pope Paul VI in the Vatican on May 10th 1973, quoted the Vienna Christological Formula word by word, which thus became incorporated in a document officially accepted by both churches.

Similar declarations were signed also by the Roman Pontiffs and Heads of Oriental Churches, and the Vienna Christological definition was mentioned expressly as a result of the Vienna Consultation by Cardinal Willebrands at the General Meeting of his Roman Secretariat on February 8th 1972.

#### 3.2. The End of Polemics

The reception of these Vienna Consultations by the churches concerned will also do away with fruitless polemics between the supporters and opponents of Chalcedon. Now the Oriental Orthodox can no longer be unjustly called monophysites nor the Chalcedonians accused of having succumbed to Nestorianism.

The belief in Christ being perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His humanity is the

same. It had only found different expression with some stressing the union and others underlining the distinction, without accepting any separation, "not even for the twinkling of an eye."

So if man wants, it is possible to put an end to mutual accusations and insinuations that others hold a wrong Christological faith because they use a different formulation arising from a different tradition.

Nowadays, Western and Eastern theologians are convinced that these different formulations can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus. Very often both expressions can be considered Orthodox and should no longer serve as weapons and ammunition in a controversy going against God's wish and Christ's commandment. On the contrary, they may be employed as a means to a better understanding of His mystery which, as we all know - will always be inexhaustible and ineffable and never be fully comprehensible for the human mind.

The studies carried out came to the conclusion, that in Ephesus and Chalcedon both sides rejected the teachings of Eutyches and those of Nestorius, so that their faith is to be regarded as truly Orthodox.

The decisive point is whether we want to be instruments for peace and unity or reason for warfare and division. It is a matter of our decision in this ecumenically decisive moment.

### 3.3. Mutual visits

In the light of this new ecumenical spirit a great number of mutual visits between the two church families took place on all levels, involving patriarchs, bishops, theologians, priests and lay people.

This is not to be considered a luxury of ecumenical tourism, but a precondition for further progress in our efforts towards church unity. We cannot understand each other when we do not meet, we cannot love each other, when we do not know each other, we cannot go forward together without joining ranks.

### 3.4. Official Dialogues

Another fruit of the non-official Vienna dialogue was the start of official dialogue between Rome and two of the five Oriental Orthodox Churches: The Coptic Orthodox Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India.

#### a) The Official Dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church

In 1973 the Common Declaration of Paul VI and Shenouda III set up a special Joint Commission between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox Churches to guide common study in the fields of church tradition, patristics, liturgy, history of theology and practical problems so that "by cooperation in common we might seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences of our churches."

By 1979 the Commission had met four times in Cairo, reaching progress in the area of Christology. Pope John Paul VI and Pope Shenouda found that in ecclesiology only little real progress had been made. Hence it was proposed to form an Official Commission of six members instead of the special joint commission. Unfortunately, due to outside events curtailing Pope Shenouda's activities the dialogue came to a

virtual standstill.

However, both Popes signed the "Principles Guiding the Search for Union between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox Church" and a Protocol consisting of nine points.

It was not until 1985 that the mixed commission was able to take up its work.

On February 12th 1988 the Mixed Commission of the Dialogue between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox Churches met in this monastery of Amba Bishoy here in Wadi Natrun and produced an "Agreed Statement on Christology" which was signed by Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch Stephanos II and the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio and the Secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity representing the Holy Father as well as by a number of bishops, theologians and lay people of both churches. It was then confirmed by a letter of Pope John Paul II of May 30th 1988.

We are now looking forward to other Agreed Statements on different subjects, especially on the ecclesiological problem which the mixed commission is currently considering.

#### b) The Official Dialogue with the Malankara Syro-Indian Church

A similar official dialogue was opened by the setting up of a Joint International Commission for dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India, which first met from October 22nd to 25th 1989 at Kottayam (Kerala) and agreed on a Doctrinal Agreement on Christology which was made public on June 3rd 1990. It also contains the Vienna Christological Formula, stating that both communions share the same faith.

After the settlement of the Christological problem this dialogue commission too will be able to tackle the issue of ecclesiology.

#### c) The pastoral agreement between Rome and the Syrian Church

Another document must be mentioned in this respect: The Common Declaration signed by Pope John Paul II and Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas of Antioch on June 23rd 1984, which immediately after its ratification the Patriarch personally brought to Vienna on the occasion of his second patriarchal visit to the city.

This document, while confirming the earlier Declaration signed between Paul VI and Patriarch Ignatios Yacoub III and taking over the Vienna Christological Formula goes even one step further by adding an agreement on mutual sacramental hospitality for the faithful of the Syrian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches.

It states: "Since it is the chief expression of Christian unity between the faithful and between the bishops and priests, the Holy Eucharist cannot yet be concelebrated by us," and goes on to point out: "Our identity in faith, though not yet complete entitles us to envisage collaboration between our Churches in pastoral care, in situations which are frequent both because of the dispersion of our faithful throughout the world and because of the precarious conditions of these difficult times. It is not rare, in fact, for our faithful to find access to a priest of their own Church materially or morally impossible. Anxious to meet their needs and with their spiritual benefit in mind, we authorise them in such cases to ask for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick from lawful priests from either of our two sister Churches, when they need them."

Moreover, bishops are encouraged to cooperate in priestly formation and theological

education. This shows - especially in the diaspora situation which the Syrian Orthodox Church is facing in some European countries - that practical collaboration is another possible consequence of this our far-reaching unity in faith.

Let us hope that official dialogues will also be taken up with the Armenian Apostolic and the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches when external conditions allow it and the situation within these churches will be ripe to do so.

#### 4. *The Future of PRO ORIENTE's Ecumenism*

##### 4.1. Creation of a Standing Committee

Beneath the level of official dialogue, PRO ORIENTE will try to continue to render its service to the ecumenical community and to the respective churches involved. So far PRO ORIENTE may point to four fruits of its work over the period of its 27 years of existence:

a. Elaboration of the Vienna Christological Formula by the first Consultation achieved above all through the great contributions made by Amba Shenouda and Mons. Otto Mauer.

b. Important preparatory studies for further consensus in the field of ecclesiology, such as on the nature of church authority, the role of the first pastors - be they called Popes, Patriarchs, Catholicoi, Metropolitans or Primate -, on the importance of councils and the meaning of conciliarity.

c. The development of an atmosphere of ecumenical trust and brotherhood, of a sense of belonging together as well as the establishment of ways to move forward the ecumenical process by studies, mutual visits and dialogue of charity.

d. The setting up of a permanent Standing Committee made up of nine experienced ecumenists, six from the Oriental jurisdictions and three from among the Catholic participants of PRO ORIENTE. These personalities, knowing the tradition, history and inner life of the churches, having the confidence and the ear of their church authorities may become an important driving force for further ecumenical efforts, thus giving fresh impetus to our work in order to keep up with the needs of our communities by proposing new initiatives in an unofficial framework, examining possible fields of action and promoting ecumenical progress.

They include : From the Coptic Orthodox Church: Metropolitan Amba Bishop of Damiette, Barari and Kafr el Sheikh, Secretary General of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

From the Syrian Orthodox Church: Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo

From the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin: Bishop Prof. Dr. Mesrob K. Krikorian, Patriarchal Delegate of the Armenian Apostolic Church for Central Europe and Sweden, residing in Vienna.

From the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate of Cilicia: Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Primate of Lebanon and Moderator of the World Council of Churches.

From the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: Archbishop Gharima of Illubabor.

From the Syro-Indian Orthodox Church: Dr. Kondothra M. George, Associate Director of the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Geneva

From the Roman Catholic Church : Prof. John F Long, Vice-Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome and Rector of the Pontifical Russian College Prof. Mons. Dr. Philipp Harmoncourt, chairman of the theological council of PRO ORIENTE, Alfred Stirnemann, Vice-President and Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE.

The Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE meets twice a year. Having met so far several times in Vienna and Geneva, we just yesterday had the 6th meeting here in Wadi Natrun in order to examine the results reached so far and to make new proposals for the continuation of our ecumenical endeavours.

##### 4.2. Regional Symposia

One of the recommendations of the Standing Committee was the organisation of this Middle East Symposium. The idea is to make known the results of the ecumenical dialogue reached among the faithful of all the churches concerned. Three elements are vital for the success of an ecumenical dialogue:

- a) The studies and innovative ideas of theologians
- b) The judgement of its results by the competent church authorities
- c) The reception by the pleroma of the faithful community

In this way the results become incorporated into the tradition, which all our churches have always regarded as a living process of absorbing new elements.

According to the will of the Standing Committee this is among other things to be achieved by regional symposia to be organised for individual language groups. This is the first one aiming to reach the predominantly Arabic-speaking world of the Middle East and was made possible through the hospitality of His Holiness Amba Shenouda in his own residence here in Wadi Natrun.

The idea is to familiarize interested opinion leaders of the churches in this region - be they bishops, theologians or working in the Christian mass media, directors, teachers, students at theological faculties or seminarists - with the concepts developed by ecumenical experts and acknowledged by the church authorities in order to make them part of everyday church life.

There are plans to hold similar regional symposia every other year, the next one in India and later, if peace comes back to these regions, in Ethiopia and Armenia.

Possibly there will also be another Arabic-speaking symposium so that we can accept the kind invitation extended by His Holiness the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Damascus. This would be for the benefit of the Christian clergy and lay people in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran.

The same effort of popularising the results is also made in European languages by various means, through the organisation of symposia, courses in Christian information centres, through the mass media or publications in different European languages, especially German.

##### 4.3. Study Seminars

At the moment the Standing Committee does not feel that the time has come to organise a sixth Vienna Consultation in the near future. Actually even after the fourth Consultation there was some hesitation on whether to organise a fifth one. When it finally took place, an interval period of ten years had passed. It was felt that the



Church authorities did not have enough time to keep up with the rapid progress of theologians' work and ecumenical proposals.

The time factor should be given special attention when considering the ecumenical progress to be expected and when it comes to setting a realistic time-table.

On the other hand, many of the ecclesiological subjects studied have not yet been sufficiently developed at past consultations. Papers were read, lectures given but often there was a lack of time to discuss at full length or the necessary expertise was not there as some experts were not able attend.

The solution of this kind of problem was the idea to have special study seminars assembling experts to tackle specific points and issues in a thoroughgoing fashion.

Thus, back in June of this year the exercise of primacy in each church and the role of heads of churches was discussed at a study seminar held in Vienna.

Next year the subject of "Councils and Conciliarity" will be looked into. There is a feeling that this method is probably more appropriate for the more intractable problems in which success will not be easily won without preventing our church leaders from putting into practice in the meantime what has been achieved until now.

#### 4.4. Publication Programme

The complete minutes of the five Vienna Consultations containing the English texts of the lectures and the discussions cover five volumes of approximately 1100 pages. This obviously makes it very difficult for any newcomer to the dialogue to familiarize himself with the material. Hence, a selection of the most important papers and minutes of the first four Consultations was compiled and condensed down to less than 300 pages.

Still, this was considered to be too compact. Moreover, the Standing Committee was aware that the reception by the communities of the faithful would not be possible if we do not provide the main results in the languages spoken by Christians in the countries concerned. So the idea was born to publish a series of rather small and easily accessible booklets in such languages like Arabic, Armenian, Amharic and German.

Booklet No 1 contains the communiqués, the opening speeches and a general introduction into the five Vienna events as well as the programmes of the Consultations, the lists of participants and the sermons preached as well as the Common Declarations of the Heads of Churches and the agreements of the two official theological dialogues. You can find your personal copy in English and Arabic in front of you.

Booklet No 2 contains the summaries of the five Consultations worked out by such eminent participants in the dialogues as Prof. Alois Grillmeier and Prof. Wilhelm de Vries and the addresses of the Presidents of the Republic of Austria Rudolf Kirchschläger (1974-1986) and Kurt Waldheim (1986-1992) to the participants of the Vienna Consultations. It is published in English and will soon also be available in Arabic.

It is planned to publish both in English and Arabic the discussions of the Study Seminar on Primacy of June/July 1991 as No 3 and the lectures of this Middle East Symposium as No 4.

Thus you can see that there are enough future projects to keep PRO ORIENTE and the Standing Committee busy for many years to come. A lot of human energy and

financial means will be needed to realise this programme.

#### 5. Need of Cooperation

Allow me to appeal to all of you to back these our efforts and to join in the fulfilment of Christ's call for church unity in whatever capacity you might be able to do so: be it as a theological researcher or teacher,

be it as a church leader promoting Christian unity through your authority,

be it as a believer and "one who has an ear to hear the word which the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2, 11)

Looking back at those twenty years of carrying on the Vienna Dialogue and comparing the changes that have come about since the initial stage I am quite confident that all the Churches concerned, their hierarchs, theologians and faithful will continue their way and follow their church leaders in this effort.

In many details improvements have been accomplished, from the Christological formula, to the new climate of confidence and trust. Much of the barren polemics of former times were given up. Mistrust has been overcome and Christian charity is increasingly prevailing among our sister churches and between Christians in their common faith which is now officially accepted as such so that we are no longer separated by different expressions but know that there is unity, even if it is not yet a complete one. It is important to know that the credibility of us Christians in the world will be measured by the charity and love we show for each other in our witness to our common Lord Jesus Christ.

In the past PRO ORIENTE was happy to find supporters of its goals in many churches who often were champions of ecumenism. Let me mention alongside those quoted above in their function as members of the Standing Committee, those honorary members of PRO ORIENTE whom we have found among the members of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. They are His Grace Bishop Amba Gregorios, Bishop for Higher Theological Studies, Coptic Culture and Academic Research, Liqe Silttanat Habtemariam Workineh, now Bishop Melke Tsadik, former chaplain of the Ethiopian emperor and now Dean of the Qidos Paulos Theological Seminary of Addis Ababa, who suffered in prison for a very long time;

Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of New Delhi, who as Dr. Paul Verghese was a former deputy secretary general and later president of the WCC;

Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, a former Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem;

Metropolitan Mar George Osthathios of Niranam in Kerala and even two important figures of the dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy, the chairmen Chrysostomos Konstantinidis, Metropolitan of Myra, and Metropolitan Damaskinos Papandreou of Switzerland, the present chairman of the Joint Commission. We are happy to hear that important conclusions were reached in this official Ecumenical Dialogue.

Let me also pay tribute to the Popes John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II, to Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch Zakka I Iwas of Antioch and Vasken I, Supreme Catholicos of All Armenians, for leading us their way. All these three Heads of Oriental Churches we consider with pride to be "protectors of PRO ORIENTE" together with the Cardinals König and Willebrands who for some decades have been leading us the way

by virtue of their wisdom and their courage and advised us on the methods to be employed to move forward. Let me add that we are quite confident to reach the final destination of our common home in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, which we together confess in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. May our pace not be too slow so that we can arrive there before the fall of darkness. If we do not ignore serious considerations as to the pace and speed at which we are moving along there is a real chance of attaining visible unity at least among the three families of churches who fully preserve the ancient Apostolic Tradition, that is the non-Chalcedonian church family and the Chalcedonian church families of the Greek Byzantine and Latin traditions. If God wills and if all of us take our responsibilities this decisive step might well be a reality in the year of the celebration the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ who wants us "to be one" in Him (John 17,21). And this would be an appropriate birthday present for Our Lord.

*Fr. Kondothra M. George*

## THE VIENNA ECUMENICAL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THEOLOGIAN OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: PURPOSE AND RESULTS

### *Introduction*

The five historic Vienna consultations between theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and the ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches have formed a major landmark in the inspired movement of our churches to seek true unity in Christ.

Sponsored by PRO ORIENTE, an ecumenical foundation started by His Eminence Cardinal König, then Archbishop of Vienna, these consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988) broke the deep silence of 1500 years between the West and the Orient, since the time of the controversial Council of Chalcedon in 451. These highly scholarly and very brotherly meetings of theologians and hierarchs from both traditions brought our churches to the path of dialogue, mutual understanding and a high degree of mutual love and trust.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda, who was personally present at the first consultation in 1971, qualified it as "a positive, successful and hopeful step which proved that theological discussions with friendly attitudes can lead to proper and useful results". The starting of this dialogue paved the way for the later historic meetings between Pope Shenouda and the Popes of Rome, Paul VI and John Paul II. Also, meetings and important common declarations of heads of other Oriental Orthodox Churches like Syrian, Armenian and Indian with the Popes of Rome were facilitated by the fruitful Vienna consultations.

### *The Common Heritage and Purpose*

All our ancient churches were equally motivated for this dialogue because the quest for unity is deeply rooted in the Apostolic tradition of our churches, and especially so, ever since the unfortunate divisions. Churches in the East as well as in the West had always recognised that the Body of Christ was one and any division of the one Body of Christ was against the will of God. So we continued to confess our common faith in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church as expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed in spite of the historical divisions.

Specific historical circumstances like the rise of the modern ecumenical movement in which the Oriental Orthodox Churches participated fully and the convening of the Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church were in a way God's answer to the continuous prayer of the churches for unity in faith and communion in the one Body of Jesus Christ our Lord. As Mgr Otto Mauer, one of the pioneers of the Vienna dialogue, put it in his introduction to the papers and minutes of the first consultation (1971): "Christians have become aware that unity in the faith and unity in the constitution of the Body of Christ that is the church is a binding and urgent mandate of the Lord which none of the Christian churches can evade". Therefore, there was no hesitation on the part of our churches about the true purpose of these unofficial theological consultations.

The dialogue started not in a vacuum, but from a solid common ground which our Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church together shared. Our

common Apostolic tradition handed down by our common fathers and teachers in Christ, our common confession of faith in the Nicene creed, and our common acceptance of the three ecumenical councils of Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus. The Oriental Orthodox Churches consider these elements as constituting an adequate doctrinal basis for Christian faith.

Acknowledgement of the uniqueness of this common ground by all ancient churches facilitated the theological dialogue of the Oriental Orthodox Churches with the Byzantine Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches.

#### *Witness of the East and the Search for Communion*

After the division at the Council of Chalcedon (451) where communion broke between the Oriental Orthodox family of churches on the one hand and the Byzantine Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches on the other, many attempts were made to bring these churches back to communion. However, very often political and cultural factors along with Christological issues stood in the way of reunion.

The Byzantine Orthodox tradition and the Roman Catholic tradition later broke communion between them in the 11th century (1054), although they stood together at Chalcedon. Each of these traditions developed its own history, ways of theological thinking and forms of worship after the separation.

So when we look back to Chalcedon and search for the lost unity, we have to attribute a special importance to our common history up to Chalcedon when all these churches were in fact in one communion as one undivided Body of Christ. It is here that the witness and role of the Oriental Orthodox tradition become important. The Oriental Orthodox tradition understands itself as faithfully continuing the Apostolic heritage of the one undivided church. In this dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox tradition uncompromisingly maintained this sense of the undivided church, its faith and practice. In reviewing the doctrinal formulations and the ecclesiastical government and structures developed by the Roman Catholic Church independently of the Eastern Church, after the separation, the Oriental tradition will always use this criterion of the faith and practice of the undivided church. As Professor A. Grillmeier put it already in the first consultation (1971), "the testimony of the East will be particularly necessary" in the context of the Western development of theology as the latter faced various criticisms from within the church and from outside.

This is not to suggest that the Oriental Orthodox Churches are locked in the past and have no awareness of the historical challenges and developments. It is precisely because of the great concern for the future of the church that these ancient churches are eagerly involved in ecumenical dialogue. For the Oriental Orthodox tradition it is the restoration of eucharistic communion in the Apostolic faith in Christ that constitutes the core of unity. With a view to this, it attempts to discern what is conducive and what is not conducive for unity in the later Western developments. The basis of this discernment is the undivided church. Therefore it was clear for the Oriental Orthodox Churches from the very beginning of their dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, that any conversation should finally aim at the restoration of communion as we had it in the one church. All later Western developments of ecclesiastical claims of jurisdiction, special privileges and responsibilities and formulations of new doctrines should be discerned on the basis of the communion experience of the undivided church and not vice versa.

## RESULTS

### *The first dialogue (1971):*

Since the division started at the Council of Chalcedon with the Christological issue, the first two Vienna consultations were particularly focused on this question. On both sides were present some of the well known scholars and historians on the subject of Chalcedon. So the discussion had quality and depth. The faith of both the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches that Jesus Christ united in his person his perfectly divine and perfectly human natures was clearly brought out in the discussion. Although the ancient disagreement had been about how this truth could be expressed in language, there was no doubt about the truth of faith held by both sides. As a result, the Communiqué at the end of the dialogue stated very clearly the following:

"We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed; we all confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicaea (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 a 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." (The Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No 1, p.46)

The Communiqué recognised that in spite of this agreement on Christology there were still differences in theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions.

There was also general presentation and discussion of the ecumenical councils, which constitute a major problem in the recovery of unity.

### *The second dialogue (1973)*

In the second consultation, while continuing the discussions of the previous one, themes such as reception of the Councils, the problem of anathemas, schism and heresy, the ecumenical councils and the ministry of Peter were taken up for reflection.

Since the Oriental Orthodox Churches which accept only three councils as ecumenical do not share a common history with the Byzantine Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches after the Council of Chalcedon, the later councils accepted as ecumenical (seven by the Byzantine tradition, twenty-one by the Roman Catholic Church) by the Chalcedonian side constitute a problem. Though there was no consensus, it was commonly agreed that the first three ecumenical councils, namely those of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431) had, because of their more general acceptance in the church, a greater degree of fullness, which the later councils do not have. Thus, the principle of a certain "hierarchy of truths" is applied in evaluating the relative importance of the councils. The most famous result of the first three ecumenical councils, that is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed is a common

doctrinal expression of the undivided church and serves as a common link and as an adequate basis for the doctrinal unity of the divided churches. All later creeds and conciliar expressions of faith may be seen as attempts to elaborate the fundamental truth expressed in the Nicene creed.

The mutual anathemas pronounced on each other's Fathers and Teachers, is another problem related to the councils. Since the councils formally pronounced many of these anathemas some people may think that only some future council should formally lift them. But there was general consensus that the anathemas may be dropped by individual churches from their liturgical corpus without a formal action as is already being done by some churches. But no individual church should be under obligation to receive as doctors and saints people who were once condemned as heretics by that church. However, as unity deepens, new interpretations of history and new ways of instruction may help bridge the gaps and rediscover the common heritage of fathers, teachers and saints of the one church of Christ.

The consultation emphasized the importance of reinterpreting our faith in Christ in the context of humanity's present needs. The terminology which the ancient councils used to express the faith may not always be fully relevant to our times. Therefore, we need to reinterpret for our age how God's becoming one with us in Jesus Christ affects human life today. The disunity and conflicts between people, the rampant poverty and injustice, the relations between people of different faiths and of no faith, the racial and ethnic conflicts, etc., constitute the reality of human life today. It is our common and urgent task to throw the light of faith on such aspects of our living reality.

The ministry of Peter and its relation to the ecumenical council as the Roman Catholic Church understands it, poses a difficult ecumenical problem. While there was no consensus, it was pointed out that the Oriental Orthodox Churches appreciated the move towards collegiality as shown by Vatican II. The principle of collegiality - if fully applied - would require that the role of the Bishop of Rome is within the council and not above it. The Oriental Churches were unambiguous in maintaining that the patriarchs and catholicoi are within the college of bishops and they cannot overrule the collegial principle.

#### The third dialogue (1976)

In continuing the earlier dialogues, the third consultation examined such themes as local and universal church, necessity and signs of communion between the local churches, the conciliar idea, authority of the councils and the unity of the churches, binding dogmatical decisions and the historicity of the life of the church.

There was substantial agreement that it was the same mystery of the one, holy, catholic and Apostolic church which is expressed both locally and universally. The present situations of our churches are to be seen in the light of our understanding of that one church "as a koinonia of truth and love, characterised by eucharistic communion and the corporate unity of the episcopate" (Communiqué of the third consultation, The Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No 1, p. 71). While the Roman Catholic Church would attribute fundamental ecclesiological significance to "the communion with the bishop of Rome" as a *sine qua non* condition of ecclesial unity, the Oriental Churches would emphasize the elements of eucharistic communion and corporate unity of the episcopate as constitutive of the one church of Christ.

On the notion of conciliarity, there was agreement that the conciliar principle is essential to the nature of the church as a koinonia and as the Body of Christ. We can discern the work of the Holy Spirit in the practice of true conciliarity by which the church is continually led to truth and love.

The consultation made a distinction between the council as an event and the council as an aspect of this continuing structure of the church's life. In the case of the council as an event, there was no agreement on how and by whom such a world-wide synod should be convoked or conducted. There was consensus on the right of convoking local synods as part of the continuing structure of the local church life. However, it was pointed out especially by the Oriental Orthodox theologians that the convoking of future world-wide ecumenical councils need not be an essential element of the life of the church. This was clear from the historical fact that the Oriental Churches have maintained their church life intact without any ecumenical council for the last 1,500 years. However, some kind of structure of coordination can assist the autocephalous churches in practically resolving the problems that may arise between them.

#### *The fourth dialogue (1978):*

The new element at the fourth consultation, as far as participants were concerned, was the presence of three representatives of the Uniate (Oriental Catholic) churches. The main topic for the discussion was the nature and scope of primacy in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. There were presentations on the role of the Uniate Churches. Altogether seventeen scholarly papers explored the subject of primacy from historical, canonical and theological points of view.

The Roman Catholic Church considers the primacy of the Bishop of Rome to be of universal scope as expressed by such titles as universal shepherd, Vicar of Christ, etc. In this view, the historical development of papacy is rooted in the divine plan for the church. The Oriental Orthodox Churches also have a notion of primacy, but quite different from the Roman Catholic view. Here it is understood basically as regional primacies originating in certain historical and ecclesiastical situations. Today, however, because of the diaspora spreading throughout the world every Oriental Church has, in a way, a world-wide jurisdiction. Primacy in this case may be seen in a global way.

The basic question is the relationship between primacy and the nature of the one church. In the Roman Catholic view the unity of the church has been traditionally understood in terms of a universal structure, and therefore the notion of primacy also naturally becomes universal. But in the Orthodox tradition, the emphasis has been on the conciliar koinonia of diverse local churches without immediately implying one universal structure or one single primate having a special ministry for unity. According to the Orthodox view no single church will by itself be regarded as the source and origin of communion. In the discussion, there was divergence between the Western and Eastern views and no agreement has so far been possible.

A cordial discussion took place on the very touchy issue of the Uniate (Oriental Catholic) Churches. All the Oriental Orthodox Churches are of the opinion that this is one of the most negative elements that continually strain their relations with the Church of Rome. Uniatism, in the experience of all Orthodox Churches, is simply proselytism - very often proselytism through dubious means. The Roman Catholic participants affirmed that the official Roman Catholic policy was against proselytism.

However, it was painful to note that not only the Oriental Orthodox Churches but also the Byzantine Orthodox continued to be victims of the Uniatist policy of active proselytism. The common communiqué of the fourth consultation clearly stated: "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 Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No 1, p. 86).

The consultation made several proposals for widely disseminating the results of the four consultations in our churches.

*The fifth dialogue (1988):*

The main purpose of the last Vienna consultation was to review the work of the earlier consultations, to assess the responses of the churches and to plan the future course. Some twenty papers were presented. Topics such as Theological Implications in Liturgical Texts of the Praying Church; What Future Unity do we Envision; Roman Primacy as a Historical Development; and Common Ecclesiology for a United Church were discussed in addition to the responses of the individual churches to the dialogue.

The communiqué of the fifth consultation reaffirmed the earlier common statements and noted with gratitude that the churches were quickly moving to closer relations by acting, for instance, to drop the mutual anathemas from the liturgical text.

It was reaffirmed that our common ecumenical basis is the faith of the first three ecumenical councils - Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus. The later councils, which do not belong to the history of the Oriental Churches, should continue to be a subject of common study. The consultation also recommended the formation of a small group to meet more frequently to search out the methods for the implementation of common recommendations and for the continuation of the work. It was also requested that a joint commission composed of bishops, theologians and pastoral ministers be set up to look more closely into the issues that still separate us and strain our relations and to make recommendations as to the practical steps towards unity.

The scholarly discussions throughout the five consultations were marked by great mutual respect, concern for truth and a strong desire for the true unity of our churches. Common attendance at each others liturgical assemblies, visits to the monasteries and churches and the prayerful atmosphere in general added to the depth and genuineness of the theological discussions. All the churches involved in this dialogue are drawing good fruits from this rich experience. The participants in their meetings had a deep sense of the guidance of the Holy Spirit who continually leads us to the truth beyond our human limits and failures.

Moderator of the discussion: Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo,

*explains the goal behind convening this symposium, which is to introduce the people of the region to what PRO ORIENTE has been doing in the Consultations which aim to achieve the unity of the church.*

*He conveys the blessings and best wishes of H.H. Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas for a successful meeting.*

*Welcomes Archbishop Joseph El Khoury, one of the presidents of the Middle East Council of Churches; and Fr. Paul Sayah, Associate Secretary of the MECC.*

Fr. Joseph Tarzi (Syrian Orthodox): There is a general unawareness of the activities of PRO ORIENTE in the USA and Canada. Likewise, the Common Declarations signed by the Patriarchs and the Popes are generally unknown. This has its consequences in the pastoral field. What can PRO ORIENTE do to remedy this?

Mr. Stirnemann (Roman Catholic): *The same problem exists in Austria, where the PRO ORIENTE headquarters are. An important part of our work consists in informing people there. According to our knowledge there is a local dialogue in the USA and Canada between the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches. We have sent them the PRO ORIENTE documents and publications. They might help spread information.*

Fr. Kamil Samaan (Coptic Catholic): *All the churches are in pain because of proselytism, I wish that Fr. George give us some ideas about that.*

Fr. K.M. George (Syro-Indian): *During the meetings between the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches concern about proselytism was expressed.*

*Concerning this problem I will talk from our experience in India. Somehow we have accepted the Malabar and Malankara Catholic Church. We do not wish to eliminate them, but we want them to stop proselytising people from the Orthodox Churches to their own. We ask them to evangelize among the Hindus and others, not in our church which goes back to the first century.*

Fr. Khalil Kochassari (Syrian Catholic): *In the case of proselytism, there is always the fisherman and the proselyte. My comment is that in the history of the churches there might have been different kinds of pressure: psychological or material to draw some people from one domination to another. According to Western understanding the problem lies not in the leaders or the pastors but in the personal freedom of the individual which directs his or her choices. It seems that many people with no outside attempt, but from personal feelings or because of liturgical or spiritual matters wish to change. The question therefore is to what extent the pastors are really responsible for this proselytism.*

Mar Gregorios (Syrian Orthodox): *We lack the Arabic words which can express the theological concepts.*

*I agree with the idea of human personal freedom, but in the Vienna Consultations we dealt with the subjects of cooperation, mutual respect and communion; or shall we go back to St. Ephrem the Syrian who spoke of watching the big fish swallowing the small ones, which is a principle alien to Christianity?*

*It is good to mention here the new Agreement between the two Antiochian churches: the Greek Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox. Concerning this subject the Agreement prohibits any form of acceptance of individuals from the other side.*

*Likewise, Pope Shenouda (Coptic Orthodox) reminds of the situation in the Catholic Schools in Egypt, especially in the small villages in Upper Egypt, and the many activities of the Roman Catholic Church in the social field, etc. According to him, Orthodox children become practical Catholics without converting.*

*Nobody argues about personal freedom, but the question is: Does the little child who studies in a Catholic school have a personal freedom? Can we speak of personal freedom in the countryside where deep knowledge does not exist?*

*The human brain is sometimes under the influence of leaders who are stronger in knowledge and in particular guidance.*

*Change can come in schools, in the field of social care for the poor, as well as in places where no church or pastor can be provided.*

*I would like to mention also that a Russian and a Romanian bishop were both complaining to the Catholic Church about proselytism.*

*He also stresses that this problem requires a careful and fraternal study: a special consultation should perhaps be held on this topic. He puts this specific proposal to PRO ORIENTE, that could play a unique role. The Pope of Rome and other Heads of Churches published clear and good statements on this point, but on the local level proselytism continues to happen. The proposal for a special consultation of proselytism seems to meet with the approval of a number of participants (v.g. Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, Fr. Samir Khalil Samir).*

*Fr. Ignatius Dick (Greek Catholic): PRO ORIENTE took interest in the theological dialogue with the Christian Orient. Are there any similar attempts with the Byzantine Orthodox Churches?*

*Mr. Stirnemann: We found it easier and better to hold separate meetings with theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Byzantine Orthodox Churches. What concerns one family of churches may not concern the other. The results of this meetings may encourage us to hold multilateral meetings.*

*Fr. Makarius Youssef (Coptic Orthodox): Did the foundation think of publishing material written by all the churches preparing people to accept the one faith instead of just presenting the new agreements?*

*Mr. Stirnemann: We are concerned about letting the youth learn of those consultations and know some of the misunderstandings which circulated among one side concerning the faith of the other side. It is difficult to change the ideas of some people about others, but I understand that there is a responsibility for everyone to change his ideas about the other churches if those ideas were wrong. Holding consultations, therefore, and making the youth and seminarians aware of them is a very important thing.*

*Mr. Joseph Faltas (Coptic Orthodox) expresses his concern about the difficult relations among the Churches in Central and Eastern Europe and asks what the role and the responsibility of pro ORIENTE could be in opening up places and avenues for dialogue.*

*Mr Stirnemann presents briefly the latest visits and meetings in the framework of PRO ORIENTE, concerning this changing situation:*

*At the end of May 1991 a PRO ORIENTE fact-finding commission travelled to Romania to talk to Orthodox and Greek Catholic bishops there. In June 1991 PRO ORIENTE was able to launch an irenic initiative between Orthodox bishops from Serbia and Catholic bishops from Croatia. In July 1991 Cardinal König headed a PRO ORIENTE delegation to the Russian Orthodox Church and Patriarch Alexej II.*

*Fr. Samir Khalil (Roman Catholic): I suggest (to Fr. George) not to use the word "Uniates" because it is not used in the PRO ORIENTE documents which use instead the word "Oriental Catholics". The word "Uniates" comes from the Greek language and it hurts us. We are only Oriental Catholics. I wish to know whether there is a theological reason for using it.*

*I would also like to propose a question to both Pope Shenouda and Mar Gregorius concerning proselytism. I agree that the Catholic Church is in some places practising proselytism, which is related to the ecclesiology which does not match the new*

*teachings of today. But there is also proselytism practised by one of the Orthodox Churches against the other churches; I did not hear that from you, you spoke only of one side.*

*This is a very sensitive subject and with the cultural problems we need a long meeting to discuss it.*

*Pope Shenouda: I thank Fr. Samir because he teaches against proselytism, but I do not know any example of the Orthodox Churches proselytising from the others. There is a big difference between the policy of proselytism and individual proselytism. We even do not have the same means. There are, for example, several Catholic schools in Egypt which I appreciate, sometimes I myself send my people to them. Very often those schools invite our children to receive the communion and they give it to them, we do not do that.*

*There is also a big number of nuns working in the social services. There are many facilities and ways which we do not have and do not use.*

*I do encourage a meeting to deal with proselytism.*

*Mar Gregorios proposes that PRO ORIENTE should think about holding a conference concerning proselytism.*

*Otherwise Pope Shenouda is ready to invite church leaders to discuss the issue.*

*A final question is asked about the efforts towards a common celebration of the Christian feasts, especially Easter (Bishop Moussa Daoud, Syrian Catholic).*

*Archbishop Youssef Khoury (Maronite) reminds briefly the efforts undertaken by the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) in this field:*

*There are several suggestions, such as the one of Pope Paul VI in fixing a constant date for Easter. There are also joint commissions which studied the re-setting of a new date for Easter.*

*What we have now in the MECC is a practical proposal by some of the members consisting of an agreement among the churches of the region to celebrate Easter temporarily according to the Eastern date until a universal agreement is reached. We are awaiting the reply of the heads of churches on that.*

## THE NATURE OF CHRIST

### Introduction

The nature of Christ is a very important subject that caused a serious dissension within the Church in the fifth century, in 451 A.D. When the theological dialogue started as an effort towards the unity of churches, the subject had to be discussed. Therefore, our Orthodox Church found it necessary to issue a book<sup>1</sup> which presents its concept in this regard in a language fit for theological dialogues.<sup>2</sup>

The first theological dialogue we attended on this subject was in Vienna, Austria in September 1971 A.D. convened by the PRO ORIENTE Foundation. In this dialogue we reached a theological formula that was accepted by our Catholic brothers and those in the ancient Oriental Orthodox churches: the Syrians, Armenians, Ethiopians and Indians. It was an important dialogue indeed, for the dissension that occurred in the fifth century had distorted the face of every church before the other. But now the way is open for a common understanding.

Then, there was an official agreement with the Catholic Church after 17 years of differences (1988), based on the previous understanding. The agreement was recorded in a concise "Statement".<sup>3</sup>

There was another dialogue, in more detail, with our brothers in the Byzantine Orthodox Churches in St. Bishoy Monastery, Sheheit Desert in 1989 A.D.<sup>4</sup> It was attended by the theologians of twenty Orthodox Churches and was followed by another meeting of the priestly representatives of the Orthodox Churches in Chambesy, Geneva, in 1990.

Now, seeing it is necessary to make our people acquainted with the details and evidences that prove our concept of the Nature of Christ.

Since the PRO ORIENTE Foundation is convening a religious conference for the representatives of all Churches at the end of October 1991 to present to them the Agreed Statement on Christology, we were asked to present a paper on the subject and deliver it as a lecture in the conference in Arabic.

### 1. The Orthodox Concept Regarding the Nature of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is God Himself, the Incarnate Logos Who took to Himself a perfect manhood. His Divine nature is one with his human nature yet without mingling, confusion or alteration; a complete Hypostatic Union. It was said, that

1. Pope Shenouda III, "The Nature of Christ", ed. by the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Ottawa 1985, Cairo 1991 in English and Cairo 1991 in Arabic.

2. This subject (the Nature of Christ) was taught by me to the students of the Seminary "St. Mark Theological College" in 1984 in the form of lectures which I delivered to them in St. Bishoy Monastery, Sheheit Desert, as part of the courses of comparative Theology. The lectures were printed merely for the use of the students.

We had to print them in Arabic for the students of the Seminary and its branches and for the benefit of those who are interested in theological studies whether ministers or ordinary individuals.. and whoever has the desire from other churches to be acquainted with our concept of Christology.

3. Published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr 1, p. 120f.

4. Published in Wort und Wahrheit. Supplementary Issue No 5, p. 173.

without controversy, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. 3:16).

As this union is permanent, never divided nor separated, we say in the liturgy that His Godhead never departed from His manhood for a single moment nor even for a twinkle of an eye.

The Divine nature (God the Word) was united with the human nature which He took of the Virgin Mary by the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit purified and sanctified the Virgin's womb so that the Child to whom she gave birth would inherit nothing of the original sin; the flesh formed of her blood was united with the Only-Begotten Son. This unity took place from the first moment of the Holy Pregnancy in the Virgin's womb.

*As a result of the unity of both natures - the Divine and the human - inside the Virgin's womb, one nature was formed out of both: "The One Nature of God the Incarnate Logos" as St. Cyril called it.*

The Holy Church did not find an expression more reliable, deep and precise than that which was used by St. Cyril the Great, and which St. Athanasius the Apostolic used before him. Both of them were true leaders in the theological field worldwide.

When I participated in the dialogue arranged by the PRO ORIENTE Foundation in Vienna, Austria in September 1971 between the Roman Catholic Church and the ancient Oriental Orthodox Churches<sup>5</sup> concerning the Nature of Christ, the point of discussion was St. Cyril's expression "One Nature of God the Incarnate Logos" (Mia Physis Tou Theou Logos Sesarkomene).

After the schism which took place in the year 451 A.D., when the Coptic Orthodox Church rejected the motions of the Council of Chalcedon and its theological struggles, we were called "Monophysites" that is, those who believe in the "One Nature".

Sharing our belief are the Syrians, the Armenians, the Ethiopians and the Indians; who were also called "Non-Chalcedonian" Orthodox Churches.

On the other hand, the Chalcedonian Catholic and Greek Church "The Roman Orthodox" (as they are called in Arabic) believe in the two natures of Christ; the Protestant Churches also hold this belief. Consequently, these churches are known as "Dyophysites"-believers in the two natures of Christ.

The Roman - or Chalcedonian - Orthodox Churches include those of Constantinople, Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria as well as the Roman Orthodox Churches of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, America and the St. Catherine Monastery in the Sinai desert.

The term "Monophysites" used for the believers in the One Nature has been intentionally or unintentionally misinterpreted throughout certain periods of history. Consequently, the Coptic and the Syrian Churches in particular were cruelly persecuted because of their belief, especially during the period which started from the Council of Chalcedon held in 451 A.D. and continued to the conquest of the Arabs in Egypt and Syria (about 641 A.D.).

*This misinterpretation continued along history as though we believed in one nature of Christ and denied the other nature.*

*We wonder which of the two natures the Church of Alexandria denies?*

5. The papers and minutes are published in English in Wort und Wahrheit, Supplementary Issue No 1, Vienna 1972, its programm, list of participants and official Communiqué is published in English in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1 (English version), p. 39-48; in Arabic in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1(Arabic version), p. 59-71, a report on this first Consultation can be found in PRO ORIENTE Booklet 2 (English version), p. 9-18.

Is it the Divine nature? Certainly not, for our Church was the most fervent defender against the Arian heresy in the Council of Nicea, held in the year 325 A.D., as well as before and after that. Or is it the Lord's human nature that the Church of Alexandria denies? St. Athanasius of Alexandria resolved this entirely in the oldest and greatest book on this subject *The Incarnation of the Word*:

*The expression "One Nature" does not indicate the Divine nature alone nor the human nature alone, but it indicates the unity of both natures into One Nature which is "The Nature of the Incarnate Logos".*

The same applies when we speak about our human nature which comprises two united natures: the soul and the body. Thus, man's nature is not the soul alone nor the body alone, but their union in one nature called human nature. We will discuss this point in detail later on.

St. Cyril the Great taught us not to talk about two natures after their unity.

So we can say that the Divine nature united hypostatically with the human nature within the Virgin's womb, but after this unity we do not ever speak again about two natures of Christ. In fact, the expression "two natures" implies in itself division or separation, and although those who believe in "the two natures" admit unity, the tone of separation was obvious in the Council of Chalcedon - a matter which prompted us to reject the Council and caused the exile of St. Dioscorus of Alexandria.

Before we go further in explaining the subject of the One Nature and the two natures of Christ, we would like to give a brief description of the widely known heresies concerning the Nature of Christ.

## 2. Widely Known Heresies Concerning the Nature of Christ

### a) The Heresy of Arius (Arianism):

Arius denied the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ; he considered that Christ was not consubstantial with the Father and that He was created.

The roots of Arianism still exist until this day. Even after being condemned in 325 A.D. by the Council of Nicea, Arius and his followers caused trouble, dissension and suspicions within the Holy Church.

### b) The Heresy of Apollinarius:

Apollinarius preached the Divine Nature of Christ, but did not believe in His complete human nature; he considered that the human nature of Christ was not in need of a soul and thus He was without soul because God the Logos provided the needed life. As this implied that the human nature of Christ was incomplete, the Holy Ecumenical Council of Constantinople held in 381 A.D. condemned Apollinarius and rejected his idea declaring it a heresy.

### c) The Heresy of Nestorius (Nestorianism):

Nestorius was Patriarch of Constantinople in 428 A.D., he was excommunicated by the Holy Ecumenical Council of Ephesus held in 431 A.D. because he refused to name the Virgin St. Mary "Mother of God" (Theotokos). He believes that St. Mary gave birth to a mere human and that Divinity descended and filled this human; thus the Virgin

Mary would be called the "Mother of Jesus" (Christotokos), and not the "Mother of God" (Theotokos).

Nestorius' priest Anastasius, spread this teaching; and Nestorius then confirmed it and wrote five books to refute the idea that the Virgin was the "Mother of God".

In so doing he is considered to have denied the Divinity of Christ.

*His theory that Divinity descended and filled Our Lord meant that there was no hypostatic union, but rather meant that the Divinity descended to accompany Him or to fill Him as in the case of saints.*

In other words, Nestorius' concept meant that Christ became a dwelling for God just as He became a dwelling for the Holy Spirit through His Baptism. As such, Christ is considered a "Carrier of God" (Theophorus), which is the same title given to St. Ignatius of Antioch.

He explained that it was impossible for the Virgin to give birth to God, as the creation never gives birth to the Creator. Besides, whatever is born of flesh will merely be flesh.

Thus the opinion of Nestorius was that the relation between the human nature of Christ and the Divine nature started just after His Birth from the Virgin and it was not a hypostatic union. He explicitly said: "I distinguish between the two natures". *In this way the Nestorian belief is against the Propitiation Creed*, because if Christ has not united with the Divine nature it would have been impossible for Him to offer an unlimited propitiation (or sacrifice) sufficient for the forgiveness of all sins of all people throughout the ages.

*When our Church says that the Virgin is the "Mother of God", it confirms that she gave birth to the Incarnate Logos and not that she was the source of the Divine nature. Certainly not.*

God the Logos is the Creator of the Virgin, but He, in the fullness of time, descended and filled her and she became pregnant and carried Him united with the human nature and she gave birth to Him.

The twelve Anathemas which St. Cyril issued include answers to all the Nestorian heresies. He condemned those who said that the two natures resulted from being joined together and those who said that God the Logos was working in the man Jesus or that God the Logos was dwelling in Jesus. He also condemned those who distinguished between Jesus and God the Logos claiming that He was merely a man born of a woman.

### d) The Heresy of Eutyches (Eutychianism):

Eutyches was an archimandrite of a monastery in Constantinople. He zealously opposed the Nestorian heresy, and was so highly concerned about the unity of the two natures in Christ, which Nestorius tore apart, that he fell into another heresy.

Eutyches said that the human nature was absorbed and dissolved in the Divine nature as a drop of vinegar in the ocean. In this way, he denied the human nature of Christ.

After St. Dioscorus had excommunicated him, Eutyches pretended that he repented and accepted the true faith and St. Dioscorus allowed him to return on the condition that he would refuse his heresy. Later on however, he again declared his corrupt belief and was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon held in 451 A.D., and was also excommunicated by the Coptic Church.



### *The Council of Chalcedon:*

In spite of the fact that the Council of Ephesus had excommunicated Nestorius, the Nestorian roots extended to influence the Council of Chalcedon where the trend to separate the two natures became so apparent that it was said that Christ is two persons, a God and a human being; the one works miracles and the other accepts insults and humiliation.

Following the same trend, Leo, the Bishop of Rome, accordingly declared his famous Tome which was rejected by the Coptic Church. But the Council accepted and voted for it, thus confirming that two natures existed in Christ after their unity: a Divine nature performing its functions and a human nature carrying out its role.

Nestorius claimed that those two natures were distinctly separate. The Council of Carthago proclaimed their union but Nestorius separated them by this explanation. Just as he concluded that Christ had two natures, he also concluded that He had two wills and two lines of action.

The problem of the two natures and two wills has its roots here and thus began disruption and conflict within the Church. Now we are trying to settle this question by attempting to rewrite a satisfactory wording of our faith, which would be acceptable to all.

### *3. The Nature of this Union*

#### *Union without mingling, confusion, alteration or transmutation:*

By "one Nature", we mean a real union. This does not involve mingling as of wheat and barely, nor confusion as of wine and water or milk and tea. Moreover, no change occurred as in the case of chemical reaction. For example carbon dioxide consists of carbon and oxygen, and the nature of both changes when they are combined; each loses its properties which distinguished it before the unity. In contrast, no change occurred in the Divine or Human nature as a result of their unity.

Furthermore, unity between the two natures occurred without transmutation.

Thus, neither did the Divine nature transmute to the human nature, nor did the human nature, transmute to the Divine nature. The Divine nature did not mix with the human nature nor mingle with it, but it was a unity that led to Oneness of Nature.

#### *The example of the union between iron and fire*

St. Cyril the Great used this analogy and so did St. Dioscorus. In the case of ignited iron, we do not say that there are two natures: iron and fire, but we say iron united with fire. Similarly, we speak about the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and we do not say "God and man".

*In the union of iron with fire, the iron is not changed into fire nor fire into iron.*

Both are united without mingling, confusion or alteration. Although this situation is not permanent in the case of iron, and here is the point of disagreement, but we only want to say that once iron is ignited with fire, it continues to retain all the properties of iron and all the properties of fire.

*Likewise, the nature of the Incarnate Logos is One Nature, having all the Divine characteristics and all the human as well.*

### *The example of the union between the soul and the body*

This example was used by St. Cyril, St. Augustine and a large number of ancient and recent theologians.

*In this simile, the nature of the soul unites with the physical earthly nature of the body to form a union of one nature, which is the human nature.*

This united nature does not include the body alone nor the soul alone but both together are combined without mixing, confusion, alteration or transmutation. No transmutation occurs of the soul into the body nor of the body into the soul, yet both become one in essence and in nature, so we say that this is one nature and one person.

Hence, if we accept the idea of the unity between the soul and the body in one nature, why do we not accept the unity of the Divine and the human into one Nature?!

*Here we'd like to raise an important question regarding the One Nature and the Two Natures:*

Do we not all admit that the nature which we call Human Natures contained before the unity two Natures: the soul and the body? yet, those who claim that there are two natures in Christ: a divine and a human, do not mention the two natures of manhood i.e. the soul and the body but consider them one.

If we go into details we would find ourselves before three natures in Christ!!! the Divinity, the soul and the body, and each of them has its distinct entity and essence... Of course, this is unacceptable on both sides.

When we accept the union of the soul and the body in one nature in Christ, and when we use the expression theologically, it becomes easier for us to use the expression "One Nature of Christ" or "One Nature of God, the Incarnate Logos".

*Just as we say that the human nature is one nature consisting of two elements or natures, we can also say about the Incarnate Logos, that He is one entity of two elements or natures.*

If the Divine nature is claimed to differ from the human nature, how then do they unite? The reply is that the nature of the soul is fundamentally different from the nature of the body, yet it is united with it in one nature, which is the human nature.

*Although man is formed of these two natures, we never say that he is two, but one person. All man's acts are attributed to this one nature and not to the soul alone or to the body alone. Thus when we want to say that a certain individual ate, or became hungry, or slept, or felt pain, we do not say that it is his body which ate, or became hungry, or got tired or slept or felt pain. All man's acts are attributed to him as a whole and not only to his body.*

*Similarly, all the acts of Christ were attributed to Him as a whole and not to His Divine nature alone (independently) or to His human nature alone.*

This was explained by Leo in the Council of Chalcedon and we shall give further explanation to this point later on, God willing.

The union of the soul and body is an intrinsic real union, a hypostatic one. So is the union of the Divine nature of Christ with the human nature in the Virgin's womb. It is a hypostatic union, self-essential and real and not a mere connection, nor separation as Nestorius claimed.

Though the example of the union of the soul and body in the human nature is inclusive, still it is incomplete as it does not explain how the soul departs the body by death nor how they reunite again in the resurrection.

But as for the unity of the Divine and human natures of Christ, it is an inseparable union as the Divine nature never departed the human nature for one single moment nor for a twinkle of an eye.

#### 4. The Unity of Nature and the Birth of Christ

*To whom did the Virgin give Birth? Did she give birth to the Godhead only? Did she give birth to God and man? or did she give birth to the Incarnate God?*

It is impossible to say that she gave birth to God alone, because she gave birth to a Child who was seen by everybody, nor that she gave birth to man only (or a pure human nature), otherwise we revert to the heresy of Nesters.

What does the Bible mean by saying, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you, therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born of you will be called the Son of God*" (Lk. 1:35)? Again, what is the meaning of the verse stating that the Son shall be named Emmanuel which is interpreted "*God with us.*" (Matt. 1:23)? And what is the meaning of Isaiah's words: "*for unto Us a Child is born, unto Us a Son is given and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His Name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting, Father, Prince of Peace.*" (Isaiah 9:6). Therefore, He (Christ) is not just a man, but the Son of God, Emmanuel and the Mighty God.

The Virgin did not give birth to a man and God, otherwise she would be said to have had two sons: one being God and the other man. We are thus left with the evidence that she gave birth to the "Incarnate God."

*Christ is not two Sons, one the Son of God to be adored, and the other a man and not to be worshipped.*

We can not separate between the Divine and the human nature of Christ. As stated by St. Athanasius the Apostolic regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, he is not binatured, to one we kneel down and to the other we do not, but He is rather of One Nature - the Incarnate Logos - that is one with His Body and before whom we kneel down in one genuflection.

*Therefore, our worship is not offered to the Divine nature apart from the human nature. There is no separation and consequently, all worship is to the Incarnate God.*

The Lord Jesus is the Only-Begotten Son, Who was born from the essence of the Father before all ages. He Himself is the same Son of Man who became the first born among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). According to one of the fathers, He was born from the Father before all ages without a mother, and was born from a virgin in the fullness of time without an earthly father.

Hence St. Paul the Apostle said: "*But when the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, according to Law.*" (Gal. 4:4).

*Therefore, He who was born of the Virgin was the Son of God and at the same time the Son of Man as He used to call Himself.*

The Son (the Logos) filled the womb of the Holy Virgin, took from her His human nature and then she delivered Him. This differs from what Nestorius claimed that the Virgin gave birth to an ordinary man and that later on, God dwelt in this man or filled Him or that Christ just became a theophorus (a carrier of God) without a hypostatic union.

*For this reason we worship this born Child and say to Him in the Trisagion hymn: "Holy is God, Holy is the Almighty, Holy is the Everliving, who was born of the*

Virgin, have mercy upon us". This conforms with the words of the holy angel who told the Virgin: "The Holy One born of you is called the Son of God".

In Christ, the Divine nature was united with the human nature in the womb of the Virgin. That is why when the Virgin visited Elizabeth, the blessed old woman said to her: "*And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me.*" (Lk. 1:43).

At that time St. Mary was still pregnant and yet, was entitled "The Mother of God".

The Creed states: "We believe in one God, Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son (of God), who was born before all ages... who for us (we human beings) and for our salvation descended from heaven and was conceived of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, became Man and was crucified for our sake. He suffered, was buried and rose...".

*Therefore, this Only-Begotten Son is the same One who descended from Heaven and was Incarnated, He is God Himself who descended into the Virgin's womb and was incarnated.*

This opposes Nestorius' claim that he was originally man and that God dwelt in Him after His Birth! The One Who was Incarnated was originally the Only-Begotten Son of God born before all ages.

Thus He was able to say to the Jews while speaking to them, "*Before Abraham was, I am.*" (Jn. 8:58). He did not say, "*My Divine nature existed even before Abraham*", but He said, "*I am*", which proves the unity and Oneness of His Nature.

#### 5. Possibility of such Unity

This unity between the Divine nature and the human nature is possible, otherwise it would not have been fulfilled, it was known to God ever since the world began: He has preconceived and planned it through His fore-knowledge of what man needed for his salvation. For this reason St. Paul the Apostle said about the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus: "*According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,... but now is made manifest.*" (Rom. 16:25).

There is also a contemplation by one of the fathers on the verse "*eye has not seen, nor ear heard nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*" (1 Cor. 2:9), which refers to eternal happiness: that father said the things that had not entered into the heart of man were the Incarnation of God (becoming man), His crucifixion and His death for our sake in order to redeem and purchase us with His precious Blood.

Another father said that the presence of God among His creation takes 3 forms: either general existence due to His being present everywhere, or through His Grace bestowed On His Saints, while the third unique form which happened only once, is His consubstantiality with Christ when the Divine nature united with the human nature in the Virgin's womb.

*The One Nature of the Incarnate Logos:*

*It is One Nature (one entity) but has all the properties of two natures:*

It has all the properties of the Divine nature and all those of the human nature. In this One nature, the body was not transmuted to the Divine nature but remained as a body, the body of God the Logos. The Logos, also was not transmuted to be a human nature but remained as it is the Divine nature though united with a body. His Divine

nature is not susceptible to death while His human nature is liable to die. Both the Divine and the human natures united in essence in the Hypostasis and in nature without separation.

*No separation occurred between the Divine nature and the human nature at Christ's death:*

As we say in the Syrian Fraction, concerning the death of Christ *"The soul left the body but His Divinity never departed neither from His Soul nor from His Body. His Soul likewise, whilst united with His Godhead, descended into hell to preach those who died in the faith and to open to them the gates of Paradise and let them enter. Yet His Body, also united with His Godhead, remained in the grave."*

*On the third day His soul, united with His Godhead, came to unite with His body which was also united with His Godhead; thus resurrection took place.*

Consequently, the Incarnate God risen from the dead *was capable of coming out of the tomb while it was closed and sealed by a huge stone.* It was also possible for the One Lord to *enter through the closed doors and meet with His disciples (Jn. 20:19).*

*Did He enter through the closed doors by His Divine nature or by His human nature?* Is not this an evidence of the One Nature? and which one came out of the tomb? was it the Divine nature, the human nature, or Christ the Incarnate Logos?

We are not dealing here with two natures: God and a man, for this expression signifies two and not one, and the term "Two" does not ever denote unity.

A Union, actually, cannot be separated into two.

I would like to use the term "union" to talk about what happened in the Virgin's womb, but at the next stage we call it "One Nature". Similarly, the term "Two" denotes separation or the liability to separate.

## 6. The Importance of the "One Nature" for Propitiation and Redemption

The belief in the One Nature of the Incarnate Logos *is essential, necessary and fundamental for redemption.* Redemption requires unlimited propitiation sufficient for the forgiveness of the unlimited sins of all the people through all ages. There was no solution other than the Incarnation of God the Logos to offer this through His Divine Power.

Thus, if we mention two natures and say that the human nature alone performed the act of redemption, it would have been entirely impossible to achieve unlimited propitiation for man's salvation. Hence comes the danger of speaking of two natures, each having its own specific tasks.

*In such case, the death of the human nature alone is insufficient.*

Accordingly St. Paul says: *"For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." (1 Cor. 2:8).*

He did not say; they would not have crucified the man Jesus Christ. The term *"Lord of Glory"* here affirms the One Nature and its necessity for redemption, propitiation and salvation; this is because the one who was crucified is the Lord of Glory. Obviously, He was crucified in the body, but the body was united with the Divinity in One Nature, this is the essential basis for salvation.

St. Peter says to the Jews: *"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you and killed the Prince of Life." (Acts 3:14,15).* Here he confirms that the One crucified was the *"Prince of Life"*, a term which denotes

divinity. St. Peter never separated the two natures or facts involved in the crucifixion, due to the importance of their unity for the enactment of redemption.

St. Paul also says in his letter to the Hebrews: *"For it became Him, for whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." (Heb. 2:10)*

Whilst suffering, He never forgot His divine message: *"For by Him were all things created." (Col. 1:16).* In another instance St. Paul says: *"For Him and by Him all things"*.

When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to St. John the Visionary, He said to him: *"I am the First and the Last, I am He that lives, and was dead and behold, I am alive for evermore Amen... and have the Keys of hell and death." (Rev. 1:17,18).*

Thus it is He Who was dead that is the First and the Last and in Whose Hands are the keys of hell and death.

*Here Christ did not separate His Divine nature from His human nature while speaking about His death.*

Therefore, He who died is the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Life, the Prince of Salvation and the First and the Last.

It is very dangerous, for our salvation, to separate between the two natures. Perhaps some would say: who declared such separation? Is it not the Council of Chalcedon that declared the belief in two united natures?! Yes, it did but the Tome of Leo says also that Christ is two: God and man, the One astonished us with miracles and the other received disgrace and suffering!

What then? If that one being is alone the receiver of suffering, then where is the salvation we gained?!

Let us now move to the next point.

## 7. The One Nature and the Suffering

*Surely, Divinity is not susceptible to suffering, but when the human nature underwent suffering, it was united with the divine nature. Thus pain was inflicted upon this One Nature:*

This explains why the Creed set by the Holy Council of Nicea says, *"The Only-Begotten Son of God descended from heaven, was Incarnate and became man and was crucified for our sake in the reign of Pilate, suffered and was buried and rose from the dead"*.

There is a great difference between saying that the human nature alone, apart from the Divine nature, suffered, and that the Incarnate Only-Begotten Son was crucified, suffered, was buried and rose from the dead. Thus, here we find the advantage of believing in the One Nature which provides effective unlimited redemption.

*But, did the Divinity suffer?*

We say that, essentially, the Divine nature is not susceptible to suffering yet He suffered due to His humanity, and was physically crucified. Hence we say in the prayer of the None (the sixth hour), *"You Who have tasted death physically in the sixth hour"*.

He, the man, united with the Godhead, physically died and His death provided unlimited atonement.

*The holy fathers explained this point through the aforementioned clear example of the red-hot iron, it is the analogy equated for the Divine Nature which became united with the human nature: They explained that when the blacksmith strikes the red-hot*

iron, the hammer is actually striking both the iron and the fire united with it. The iron alone bends (suffers) whilst the fire is untouched though it bends with the iron.

As for the crucifixion of Christ, the Holy Bible presents us with a very beautiful verse; St. Paul the Apostle speaks to the bishops of Ephesus asking them: "... to lead the Church to God which He has purchased with His Own Blood" (Acts 20:28); he ascribes the Blood to God, although God is Spirit, and the Blood is that of His human nature.

This expression is the most wonderful proof of the One Nature of the Incarnate Logos; what is related to the human aspect can be attributed to the Divine nature at the same time without distinctions, as there is no separation between the two natures.

The separation between the two natures claimed by Nestorius failed to provide a solution to the question of propitiation and redemption. The Coptic Church insisted on the expression of the One Nature due to the importance of this matter and to its consequences.

*We often say "Mr. X died" but we do not say that his body alone died, seeing that the spirit is in the image of God, and God has bestowed on it the blessing of immortality.*

If the first aim of the Incarnation is redemption, and redemption cannot be fulfilled through the human nature alone, faith in the One Nature of the Incarnate Logos is an essential and undeniable matter. Redemption cannot be fulfilled if we say that the human nature alone underwent suffering, crucifixion, blood-shedding and death. Turn to the Holy Bible and read what it says about God the Father, *"He that spared not His Own Son but delivered Him up for us all." (Rom. 8:32)* and also, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish..." (Jn. 3:16)*, and *"But that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn. 4:10)*.

Thus, the One sacrificed by God is the Son, the Only-Begotten Son, that is, the Second Hypostasis (Person) of the Holy Trinity; the Logos. The Bible did not say that He sacrificed His humanity or anything of the kind although He died on the cross with His human body, this is clear proof of the One Nature of God the Logos, and herein is the importance of this unity for the act of redemption.

The Bible also says in this context, *"God the Father Who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of His Dear Son, in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, Who is the Image of the Invisible God." (Col. 1:13-15)*.

When the Bible speaks about the forgiveness of sins through the Blood of Christ, it attributes this to the Son Who is the Image of the Invisible God, and to Whom is the kingdom. This is more evidence of the One Nature and the concern of the Holy Bible dealing with the matter of redemption.

Another similar example is apparent in the parable mentioned by Christ about the wicked vinedressers. He says: *"But when the vinedressers saw the Son... They caught Him and cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him." (Matt. 21:37-39)*.

Here, death is attributed to the Son, and He did not specify His human body. How profound are these words concerning the One Nature!

The Holy Bible proves to us the One Nature of Christ by attributing to the Incarnate Word all acts and qualities that some attribute to one of the two natures, and we shall start by quoting the verses which throw light on the Son of Man.

## 8. The Term "Son of Man"<sup>6</sup>

*The Use of the Term "Son of Man" Where Reference is given to the Divinity:*

No doubt, the term "Son of Man" denotes the human nature of Christ just as the phrase "Son of God" denotes His Divinity.

However, our Lord Jesus Christ used the term "Son of Man" on several occasions where He meant "Son of God" of which I mention a few:

(1) *He explained that the Son of Man is in heaven and on earth, He told Nicodemus "no man has ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." (Jn. 3:13)*.

So who is that Son of Man who descended from heaven? And who is he that is in heaven and speaks to Nicodemus on earth? Is it the Divine nature or the human nature? He cannot be the Incarnate Logos. Therefore, this statement very clearly indicates the One Nature.

(2) *The Lord Jesus Christ said, "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." (Matt. 12:8)*

If the expression "Son of Man" means (or denotes) the human nature, and "the Lord of the Sabbath" denotes the divine nature, then being put together in one statement is another proof of the One Nature.

(3) *He said, that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6).*

But no one forgives sins except God alone. So was the one who said to the paralysed man "Your sins are forgiven" the human nature or the Divine one? Is it not preferable to say that it is the Incarnate Logos?

(4) *The Lord Jesus Christ says that the Son of Man is the One Who shall judge the world.*

So is it the human nature that will judge the world or the Divine nature? He also says: "For the Son of Man will come in the Glory of His Father with His angels and then He will reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:27). We notice here that:

*He says the "Son of Man" and at the same time "in the glory of His Father".*

That is: He defines "Son of Man" and "Son of God" in one statement, indicating the One Nature. Further He Says: *"The Son of Man with His angels"*, while the words *"His angels"* indicate His Divine nature.

*Thus, we notice here that the term "Son of Man" cannot indicate the human nature alone nor the Divine Nature alone, but indicates the unity of the two natures or the One Nature of the Incarnate Logos.*

(5) *We find the previous term in (Matt. 25:31-34):*

*"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit upon the throne of His Glory... and He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand come you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world".*

<sup>6</sup> See my book "So many years with the problems of the People (part II)" for more details about this point concerning the Son of Man.

Here the "Son of Man" and "Father" are used in one phrase.

This means that the speaker is the Son of Man and the Son of God at the same time. And the Son of Man is the One Who will judge the World while judgement proceeds from the Son of God (Jn. 5:22). And here the unity of natures (the One Nature) is obvious.

(6) The Lord Jesus Christ said to the high priest during His trial:

"Hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. 26:63-65). In this context, St. Stephen said at the time of his martyrdom: "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" (Acts 7:57).

So, who is the One sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heavens? Is He the One with the Human nature or the one with the Divine nature?

It is impossible to separate here but we can say that it is the One Nature, the Nature of the Incarnate Logos.

(7) The Son of Man calls the Angels "His angels" and the elect "His elect".

He says, "And He (the Son of Man) will send His angels with great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect..." (Matt. 24:29-31).

Here, as the "Son of Man", He acts as God, we cannot explain this phrase by saying that in one instance it is the human nature and in the other it is the Divine nature. For the speaker is the Lord Jesus the Son of Virgin Mary, as well as the Son of God, the Judge of the whole world, Who has supreme power over the angels and can send them, and has power over human beings and can collect His elect from the extremities of the heavens. It is One Nature which cannot be split or severed into two.

(8) Our Lord Jesus Christ, talking to His disciples said:

"What, and if you will see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before." (John 6:62). What is important here is the phrase "where He was before", meaning that he was in heaven at first. Obviously He Who was in heaven is the Son "hypostasis". But here, due to the One Nature, He says concerning the Son of Man what He says about the "Hypostasis" of the Son because He is the Incarnate Word.

This is consistent with what He said to Nicodemus about the Son of Man, that it is "He that came down from heaven." (Jn. 3:13), while He that came down from heaven is the Son "hypostasis", meaning the Divine nature.

In the same sense, St. Paul says about the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the "Lord from heaven." (1 Cor. 15:47).

[See my book "So many years with the problems of the People (part II)" for more details about this point concerning the Son of Man.]

## 9. Evidences from the Bible

Several Verses in the Holy Bible Prove the One Nature:

(1) God the Father Himself testified for Jesus Who was baptised by John the Baptist saying, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17).

Certainly, He did not say this about the human nature of His Son, as His human nature is inseparable from His Divine nature. This verse cannot indicate two, it refers to one, and here it indicates the One Nature of the Incarnate Word.

(2) John the Baptist gave the same testimony when he pointed at Christ and said: "This is the One of Whom I spoke. He that comes after me is preferred before me for He was before me." (John 1:15,30).

So how could He have been before him and come after him? Our Lord came after John the Baptist by human birth and was before him by the Divine nature.

The Baptist did not separate between the human nature and the Divine nature, as he said, "This who came after me (the Incarnate Logos) Was before me". Here the One Nature is obvious, for the One Who John baptised was He Himself who was before him.

(3) St. John the Evangelist says in his Gospel "No Man has seen God at any time, the Only-Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (Jn. 1:18). The Only-Begotten Son is God the Logos, and the Second Hypostasis. How then did He declare the Father? Certainly when He became Incarnate. Can we say then that the One who declared this was the human nature? St. John says about Him: "The Only-Begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" while we know that it is the Man Jesus Christ who declared Him, and this indicates the One Nature.

(4) The same words are spoken by the same Apostle in his first epistle, "That Which was from the beginning which we have heard and which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have touched." (1 Jn. 1:1). He talks about Him Whom he has seen and touched, as the One Who was from the beginning, that is, God. So how did they see God and touch him unless He was the Incarnate Logos? These words are not about the human nature alone, not about the Divine nature alone because the human nature was not eternal from the beginning and the Divine nature alone cannot be touched.

(5) The same meaning is conveyed in the conversation between our Lord Jesus Christ and the man who was born blind. When the Lord opened his eyes, the man asked Jesus "Who is the Son of God" and the Lord told him "you have seen Him and it is He that talks with you." (Jn. 9:35-37).

The Son of God is God the Logos Incarnate, that is, the Divine nature. But who was speaking with the blind man, was it merely the human nature? It cannot be the human nature alone because the Lord Jesus Christ confirms that "it is He that talks with you, the Son of God." Thus He is the Incarnate God Who was manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

(6) St. Paul the Apostle says about the Jews when they were in the desert of Sinai, "As they did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. 10:4).

It is well known that those Jews were in the desert of Sinai fourteen centuries before the birth of Christ, so how could He be with them quenching their thirst unless St. Paul is speaking about the Divine nature which is God the Logos? Yet God the Logos was not called Christ until the time of His Incarnation. But due to the One Nature the Apostle could not distinguish and spoke about the eternity of Christ and His presence before His Birth.

The Apostle proceeds in the same manner: "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents." (1 Cor. 10:9).

(7) Before whom did the Wise men fall down and worship (Matt. 2:11)? Did they worship the Divine nature alone? No, they fell down and worshipped a Child in a manger and they presented unto Him gifts. Did they worship the human nature? The human nature cannot be worshipped.

Thus the only answer left is that they worshipped the Incarnate God just as the man born blind did later, and as those who were in the ship did, when the Lord rebuked the wind and walked on the water; they did not worship Him merely out of respect for "Those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God' ". (Mt. 14:23).

(8) We also ask who it was who walked on the sea water and rebuked the wind, was it the Divine or the human nature? There is no doubt that He was the Incarnate Logos.

The same applies to all the other miracles of Christ; who worked those miracles? was it the Divine nature alone?

Then what is the meaning of the phrase "and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them" (Lk. 4:40)? and what can we understand from the healing of the woman, who had a flow of blood and it dried up when she touched His clothes (Mk. 5:29)? In opening the eyes of the blind, who was it who spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the eyes of the blind with the clay.

No doubt it was He Who performed all those miracles and several similar ones, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Logos. St. John, the Evangelist, says "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book." (Jn. 20:30). Notice here the use of the name (Jesus).

We shall be satisfied with presenting the above examples, because if we follow closely the Holy Bible we may indulge in an endless process, as the verses referring to the One nature are extensively used throughout. For this reason we shift now from discussing the One Nature to a related subject, i.e. "the One Will".

#### 10. The One Will and the One Act

Has the Lord Christ two wills and two actions, that is a Divine will and a human will, as well as two actions, that is, a Divine act and a human act? As we believe in the One Nature of the Incarnate Logos, as St. Cyril the Great called it, likewise:

*We believe in One Will and One Act:*

Naturally, as long as we consider that this Nature is One, the Will and the Act must also each be one.

What the Divine nature chooses is undoubtedly the same as that chosen by the human nature because there is not any contradiction or conflict whatever between the will and the action of both.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me to finish His work." (Jn. 4:34). This proves that His Will is the same as that of the Father. In this context, He said about Himself "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do, for what things so ever He does, these also does the Son likewise." (Jn. 5:19).

He does not seek for Himself a will that is independent of that of the Father. Consequently He says "Because I seek not Mine Own Will, But the Will of the Father, who has sent Me." (Jn. 6:38).

It is obvious that the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity have One Will, for the Lord Jesus Christ said: "I and My Father are One." (Jn. 10:30).

Hence, since He is one with Him in the Godhead, then He is essentially one with Him concerning the Will. Again, the Son, in His Incarnation on earth, was fulfilling the Will of the heavenly Father. Thus it must be that He Who united with the manhood had One Will.

In fact, sin is nothing but a conflict between man's will and God's.

But remember that our Lord Jesus Christ had no sin at all. He challenged the Jews saying: "Which of you convicts Me of Sin?" (Jn. 8:46). Therefore, His Will was that of the Father.

The Saints who are perfect in their behaviour achieve complete agreement between their will and the Will of God, so that their will becomes that of God, and the Will of God becomes their will.

And St. Paul the Apostle said "But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2:16). He did not say that our thoughts are in accord with the mind of Christ, but that "we have the mind of Christ", and here the unity is stressed.

If this is said about those with whom and in whom God works, then how much more the unity between the Son and His Own manhood would be in all that is related to the will, the mind and the power to act! He, in Whom the Divine nature has united with the human nature, a Hypostatic and Essential union without separation not for a second nor a twinkle of an eye.

If there was not unity between the Will of the Divine nature of Christ and His human nature, this would have resulted in internal conflict. Far be it from Him! How then could Christ be our guide and our example... to follow in His footsteps (1 Jn. 2:6).

The complete righteousness which marked the life of our Lord Jesus was due to His Divine as well as His human will. The same is true of the salvation of mankind, the message for which Christ came and said: "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18:11). This is the same Will of the Father who "Loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn. 4:10). Thus, the crucifixion was the choice of the Divine as well as the human nature. Had it not been One Will, it would not have been said that Christ died by His Own Will for our sake.

*Since the Will is One, the Act is necessarily One.*

Here we do not distinguish between the two natures.

*A very lively discussion develops concerning mainly certain verses of the New Testament speaking about the mystery and the activity of Christ. Most of the questions are asked by Coptic Orthodox priests and lay persons, who follow with vivid interest the explanations given by Pope Shenouda III.*

*It seems important to realise that these kinds of exchange are an essential part of the necessary reception process of the Christological consensus in the local Coptic community. The terminology used by Pope Shenouda is always the familiar one of the Alexandrine Cyrillic tradition: the unity of the nature of Christ. Occasionally he restates the fact that those who accept the Council of Chalcedon do not separate the two natures and profess the same faith.*

Fr. Joseph Tarzi (Syrian Orthodox): *1) The Incarnated God has ascended into Heaven, is He going to stay the Incarnated God forever? 2) Christ said to the thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" but he ascended into Heaven.*

Pope Shenouda (Coptic Orthodox): *First I will answer the second question: Christ is everywhere: in Heaven, on earth and in Paradise. The thief feels the presence of the Lord in Paradise as we feel His presence here on earth.*

*As to the first question: the body of Christ in which He accomplished the redemption is an eternal one which does not vanish. We are going to feel the presence of Christ in body and to comprehend His existence in the spirit.*

Fr. Ephrem Karim (Syrian Orthodox): *Since a new common formula for Christology which once was the main reason for anathemizing each other is reached; why do those anathemas still stand and they are not being lifted?*

Pope Shenouda: *The Christological matter was one of the problems dividing us, there are still other problems to be solved before lifting the anathemas.*

Fr. Bakhomios Atta (Coptic Orthodox): *Did the union between Divinity and humanity give humanity the infinity to pay for the Divine justice?*

Pope Shenouda: *The Divinity gave infinity to the sacrifice of humanity.*

Archbishop Cyrille S. Bustros (Greek Catholic) *remarks that the whole lecture of Pope Shenouda about the one nature of Christ ("one nature of the Incarnate Logos") could be given by the Chalcedonians, using instead the terminology of "one person" (sharhs or iqnum).*

*The example of the soul and the body is true in explaining the inseparability of Christ, but it cannot be used in proving the one nature because in Christ the Word is incarnated, while in the human body we do not say that the soul is incarnated.*

*Given that Christ is perfect in Divinity and perfect in humanity, he must have a perfect human will as well as a perfect Divine will (distinguished but not separated in one person).*

Pope Shenouda *stresses above all the fact that Christ's will is always one with the will of the Father: two wills in "theory", but only one effective will. He recognises that the differences are "linguistic", if one analyses the details.*

Fr Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox) *reminds the wellknown difficulties to understand and translate the technical Greek vocabulary like "hypostasis" and "prosopon", while Professor Maurice Tadros (Coptic Orthodox) stresses the importance of using a vocabulary accessible to ordinary people - principle proposed by Pope Shenouda at several occasions -, mainly the language of the Gospel.*

Mr. Joseph Sabri (Coptic Catholic): *The Chalcedonians do not separate but rather distinguish; is there any objection against using the term "distinguishing" between the two natures?*

Pope Shenouda: *Distinguishing is very important, otherwise how can we know the Divinity from humanity?*

## A CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSENSUS BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Since more than fifteen centuries Christians are divided about the very core of their faith, the Person of the Only Begotten Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All of them and all of their Churches agree that there is only one Saviour who is really and fully the Son of God, His Word incarnate, consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit; all of them and their Churches accept fully what is said in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed about his divine origin and sonship, about his incarnation (σαρκωθεντα) and inhumanation (ενανθρωπησαντα).

And still we are divided. We were divided on Jesus Christ our unique and beloved Saviour. Our Lord on the eve of the Passion prayed to his Father asking that his disciples *"they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me"* (Jn. 17,21). And thus those who had to be one in Christ as a common witness for the salvation of the world, were divided about their views on the same Christ they had to proclaim in front of this world.

I say: "we were divided" because since twenty years the situation has changed completely in this matter. After fifteen centuries of disagreements, of controversies, sometimes of fierce oppositions and also of anathemata, slowly we found the way of a deeper understanding, overcoming the previous gap between our apparently irreconcilable ideas on Jesus Christ.

For such a remarkable achievement the Vienna Foundation PRO ORIENTE played a decisive role with the various consultations gathered on this Christological subject during the last two decades. It is true that others previously had initiatives in this field, like the various unofficial consultations at Aarhus (1964), Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970), and Addis Ababa (1971) between representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and of the Byzantine Orthodox Church, which really pointed towards a mutual understanding resolving the old controversies. However we must recognise that the first non-official ecumenical consultation in Vienna (1971) has made possible the official statement of H. H. Pope Paul VI and H. H. Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III of the Syrian Orthodox Church, one month later in Rome, and with H. H. Pope Shenouda III on the occasion of the visit that H. H. the Alexandrian Patriarch paid the Roman one in 1973. In fact, H. H. Pope Shenouda was a member of the first Vienna consultation and he became Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church at the end of the following month of October 1971.

The first common non-official statement of Vienna 1971 starts with the affirmation of the common ground of our faith in order to proceed with the Christological declaration of faith. It is important to quote the four central paragraphs of this first statement (quoted from Wort und Wahrheit, Supplementary Issue Number 5, [=WW5] July 1989, p. 152, published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr 1, p. 46)

"We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Niceno-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 Nicea 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."

Thus, as it is said in the last two paragraphs, all the differences were not solved. However, the conviction emerged at the same time that these differing formulations on both sides can be understood with reference to the councils of Nicea (325) and Ephesus (431) and that was the future task of the theologians.

Some weeks after this first meeting of representatives of the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches organised by PRO ORIENTE, a first tangible positive and official result of the Vienna Consultation was registered, at the end of October 1971, on the occasion of the visit in Rome of H. H. the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacoub III. In a common declaration of Pope Paul VI and Mar Ignatius Yacoub III affirm the general recognition that in order to "remove the burden of history" "progress has already been made and Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacoub III are in agreement that there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become really man, even if over the centuries difficulties have arisen out of the different theological expressions by which this faith was expressed" (WW5, p. 164, published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1, p. 108)

The 10th of May 1973, then, Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III signed a common declaration of which we must give the full text of the Christological paragraph because it has been the most decisive clarification of the controversial positions of the past centuries (WW5, p. 165):

"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."

In this statement the terms "nature" and "hypostasis" were avoided, but the content of the idea is repeatedly present: "we confess... the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God... who was for us incarnate, assuming for Himself a real body with a rational soul, and who shared with us our humanity but without sin". Thus full divinity and full humanity of the incarnate Son of God is stated, clearly rejecting also any kind of Apollinarianism because the humanity assumed by Christ has "a real body with a rational soul". In the next sentence it is said that our Lord is perfect God and perfect man, quoting thus the formula of union between St. Cyril and John of Antioch (PG 77, 172 C and 176 D). Then the mode of union is clearly indicated in two sentences: the first one with the well-known negative attributes - six in this sentence, all of them found in the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria - against any kind of division or confusion; the second one affirming the perfection of the union. Finally we find the very important assertion for a Western doctrinal point of view that "all the properties of the divinity" and "all the properties of the humanity" are preserved in this perfect union.

We have to emphasize the meaning of this solemn Common Declaration because it has had a strong influence on other future Christological statements, and - first of all - because it was signed in this form by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III, i. e. without the word "nature", but with the affirmation that all the "properties" of both divinity and humanity are fully preserved in the union.

Some months after the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III the second non-official consultation, organized by the Foundation PRO ORIENTE between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches took place in Vienna, in the first days of September 1973. After affirming the fundamental common faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, the statement of the theologians deals with four questions related to the solution of the consequences of the Christological controversies of the past (WW5, pp. 153 f., published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr 1, p. 58f)

First (i.e. no. 2), the consultation stated that it is a mystery: "Neither can human words give adequate utterance to it. We recognize the limits of every philosophical and theological attempt to grasp the mystery in concept or express it in words". Furthermore the statement said that: "We saw 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". This double principle was to become the key for a conciliation of the Cyrilian and Chalcedonian points of view.

"We understand that when our common father in Christ, St. Cyril of Alexandria, speaks of the one Incarnate nature of God's Word, he does not deny but rather express the full and perfect 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"".

Second (i.e. no. 3), the statement recognizes that "the problem of terminology remains with us": in one nature or in two natures. "Both sides are agreed in rejecting Eutychianism and Nestorianism", but they realized "how difficult it was to find a satisfactory definition" of the terms hypostasis and physis "that could do justice to both contexts (i.e. Oriental and Western) in a consistent manner".

Third (i.e. no. 4), the theologians of this consultation are conscious of the "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 they hope that "all our Churches will work together" "to meet this challenge".

Finally (i.e. no. 5 and 6), the consultation raised the question of the anathemata of the past on persons of one side who are considered as teachers and fathers by the other side, and the problem of the ecumenical councils: three, seven or twenty one. It seemed that they were minor questions easy to be solved, but important was to "attempt writing Church history books and catechisms" "more fair to one another".

Again some months after this consultation of Vienna, at the end of March 1974, was in Cairo the first plenary session of the Joint International Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, This first meeting produced a joint report with an elaborated statement on Christology (cf. Information Service [The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican] No 76, 1991/1 =IS 76, pp. 14 ff.). This new text begins with the recognition of the Incarnation as a mystery and of the limitations of our minds to grasp the truth of it with adequate words. We must notice especially the following points of this statement:

1. The explicit mention of the double consubstantial: In the incarnation the second Person of the blessed Trinity "He Himself one and the same consubstantial with the Father with respect to His Divinity became consubstantial with us with respect to His humanity" (IS 76, p. 15) which is again a statement of the formula of union between St. Cyril and John of Antioch (PG 77, 172 D and 177 A).

2. The recognition that "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"(ibid.)

3. Four paragraphs (6 to 9) follow as an explanation of what each side *does not intend* with its own formulas. We must cite them in full because they are important for a clarification of both positions:

"(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 emphasize 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 inseparately 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 which stresses 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" (ibid.).

This was a very remarkable statement of the official Joint Commission of the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches. Its members realized that they had done an important achievement and for this reason they added the following paragraph:

"(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" (ibid.).

During the third meeting, at the end of August 1976, the same International Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church signed "a statement on christology which would be a definitive presentation of their thought concerning the christological understanding of both Churches "for their definitive judgement and use". However it was not to be made public immediately and, as far as I can see, it was never publicly approved as such, although the participants unanimously agreed on it. In fact this statement repeated all the elements already contained in the declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III and the elements in the previous statement of the International Joint Commission we have just largely quoted.

In June 1984 a further step was done on the occasion of the visit at Rome of H. H. the new Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I. First of all the two Heads of Churches state that "the confusions and schisms that occurred between their Churches" "in no way affect or touch the substance of their faith, since these arose only because of differences in terminology and culture and in the various formulas adopted by different theological schools to express the same matter". Thus follows the recognition that: "Accordingly, we find today no real basis for the sad divisions and schisms that subsequently arose between us concerning the doctrine of Incarnation. In words and life we confess the true doctrine concerning Christ our Lord, notwithstanding the differences in interpretation of such a doctrine which arose at the time of the Council of Chalcedon" (WW5, p. 166 published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1, p. 117).

Then comes the common Christological Declaration related to the first Common Declaration of the Syrian Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacoub III with Pope Paul VI in 1971, already mentioned. The new statement is in many points very similar to the Common Declaration of H. H. Pope Shenouda III with Pope Paul VI in 1973. That is the Christological paragraph (no. 4, WW5, p. 167 published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1, p. 117):

"4: Hence we wish to reaffirm solemnly our profession of common faith in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Yacoub III did in 1971.

They denied that there was any difference in the faith they confessed in the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become truly man. In our turn we confess that He became incarnate for us, taking to himself a real body with a rational soul. He shared our humanity in all this except sin. We confess that our Lord and our God, our Saviour and the King of all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God as to His divinity and perfect man as to His humanity. In Him His divinity is united to His humanity. This Union is real, perfect, without blending or mingling, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without the least separation. He who is God eternal and indivisible, became visible in the flesh and took the form of servant. In Him are united, in a real, perfect indivisible and inseparable way, divinity and humanity, and in Him all their properties are present and active".

We must notice one step further than in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI with Pope Shenouda III, the qualifications of all the "properties" preserved of Divinity and of humanity: "In Him - Christ - are united, in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable way, divinity and humanity, and in Him all their properties are present and active". So they are not passive qualities remaining after the union, but acting realities in order to make that every human action of Jesus Christ is truly and fully human, although it has only one subject, the Son of God. This clarification was important in order to save the substance of the doctrinal positions assumed during the seventh century by the Roman and the Byzantine Churches.

We must now open a parenthesis in order to mention the result of two meetings between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox Churches in 1987.

The first one in Corinth at the end of September 1987 a subcommission signed an agreement on the Christological terminology: physis, ousia, hypostasis, prosopon. We will quote only the most notable sentences of this text (WW5, pp. 172 f.)

1. "The non-Chalcedonians pay special attention to the formula "mia physis", and at the same time they confess the "mia hypostasis" of Jesus Christ, whereas the Chalcedonians stress specially the term "hypostasis" to express the unity of both the divine and the 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".

2. They stress the importance and sufficiency, according to the teaching of St. Cyril, of the confession of the Holy Virgin Mary as Theotokos, thus avoiding the heretical teachings of both Nestorius and Eutyches, and condemning Nestorianism and Eutychianism.

3. "The common denominator of these two interpretations was *the common doctrine of the two real births* of the Logos", i. e. before the ages from the Father and in the time from the Virgin Mary. "Every theologian who accepted the two real births of the Logos was to be considered Orthodox, regardless of every terminological differentiation".

4. "We concluded our discussions by expressing our belief that the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ was necessary for the salvation of humankind. Only the *Incarnate Logos*, as perfect God and at the same time perfect man, could redeem men and peoples from sin and condemnation".

5. The statement recognized the negative attributes of the union ("without confusion", etc.), like the previous agreements between Oriental Orthodox and Roman

Catholics. Then it added: "Both (i. e. Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Christology) affirm the dynamic permanence of the Godhead and the Manhood with all their natural properties and faculties, in the one Christ the incarnate Logos. 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 mingling, without confusion", of those who say "one", need to be specially underlined, in order that we may understand and accept each other".

In the same year 1987, in November, on the occasion of the meeting of the Executive Committee of MECC (Middle East Christian Council) in the Monastery of Amba Bishoy, the heads of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches signed an agreement on Christology (IS 76, p. 13) which was also explicitly approved by H. H. Pope John Paul II in a letter to H. H. Pope Shenouda III in May of the following year (published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr 1, p. 122). In this statement, related to the previous meetings of Balamand (Lebanon, 1972) and Penteli (Greece, 1978), the heads of these Orthodox Churches affirm their 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".

This short formula, which avoided the technical explanations of Christology, contained the essential elements of a real mutual agreement.

This was the situation until 1988. In February of that year the mixed Commission of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church also met in the Monastery of Amba Bishoy and signed a short common statement on Christology. This statement was explicitly related not only to the meeting of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in Vatican on May 1973, but also to the PRO ORIENTE meeting in Vienna 1971 between theologians of the Catholic Church and of the Oriental Orthodox Churches which "achieved an agreement concerning Christology". About this important first meeting in Vienna we have already spoken at the beginning of this report. In any case it is meaningful that the new short common statement was rooted in this broader context.

The new formula - it is said - was already approved by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church on June 21st, 1986. In the joint meeting of 1988, the signature of H. H. Pope Shenouda, H. B. the Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos II, H. E. the Apostolic Nuncio, various bishops and authorities of both Churches, and among them, Mons. Pierre Duprey, gave to this document a special weight. Here is the text (WW5, p. 169; IS 76, p. 13, published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1, p. 120f):

"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 anathematize the doctrines of both Nestorius and Eutyches".

In this statement we find again the double "perfect", which presupposes the properties of Divinity and of humanity, and three of the negative attributes of the union which stress the persisting distinction of Divinity and humanity, and at the same time the very strong negation of any kind of separation.

In order to understand better the deep intention of this statement and the short statement of 1987 between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Heads of Churches, I think it is important to remember the pastoral concern of H. H. Pope Shenouda III,

expressed on several occasions, and specially in the address to Pope Paul VI during the visit in Rome in May 1973, before the signature of the common statement we already mentioned. In this address Pope Shenouda said: "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*" (IS 76, p. 5; *italic mine*).

These words, according to my opinion, supply the key to the short Christological statements: they must be understandable to our faithful in all our Churches in order to convince them that really we have the same faith in Christ, avoiding the difficult terminologies which were in the past the flag of antagonist camps. In the letter of May 30, 1988, in which he accepted the brief formula signed by the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox parties, Pope John Paul II wrote that the new statement "resumes the essential content of the one signed on May 10, 1973, by Your Holiness and my predecessor Pope Paul VI". And he added: "It was useful to give to this agreement (of 1973) a simpler and more popular form in order to make it accessible to all the faithful in Egypt" (IS 76, p. 12, published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1, p. 122).

The 17th of November 1990 H. H. Pope Shenouda received an honorary doctorate from the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Bonn (Germany). On this occasion both the Dean of the Faculty and His Holiness underlined the importance of this brief Christological formula in order to express our common faith in Jesus Christ and the overcoming of the old terminological controversies in an understandable way for the faithful.

During the years 1989 and 1990 two new Christological statements were signed at Amba Bishoy and at Chambésy by the representatives of the Eastern (Byzantine) and Oriental Orthodox Churches (Episkepsis, No 422, pp. 11-12, and No 446, pp. 17-22 the 1989 Communiqué published in WW5, p. 173f.). We do not have to analyse them. We must note only that some theologians observed that they were strongly in the line of the so-called Neo-Chalcedonianism, with less regard to the Antiochian or the Western theology, as expressed in the letter of peace of John of Antioch to Cyril and in the Tomos of Pope Leo. However, because we agree fundamentally on the legitimacy of different theological points of view, provided that we confess the same faith, we cannot object in principle against this choice.

At the end of October 1989 at Kottayam (Kerala) a last Christological statement was signed by the Joint International Commission for dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church of India which was unanimously accepted by the members. This doctrinal agreement was submitted to the authorities of both Churches. They approved it and decided that it would be made public on June 3rd, 1990, the feast of Pentecost. In no. 5 of this statement is expressed the Christological consensus:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ is one, perfect in his humanity and perfect in his divinity - at once consubstantial with the Father in his divinity and consubstantial with us in his humanity. His humanity is one with his divinity - without change, without commingling, without division and without separation. In the Person of the Eternal Logos Incarnate are united and active in a real and perfect way the divine and human natures, with all their properties, faculties and operations" (IS73, 1990 [II], p. 39, published in PRO ORIENTE Booklet Nr. 1, p. 123f).

All the elements of the two first sentences are well known to us and they do not need any special comment. By contrast, the last sentence seems new in the formulation

because it speaks explicitly of the divine and human natures (plural), of course really and perfectly united, but with all their properties, faculties and operations. Someone understood that this phrase could be interpreted as if the union would be only from two natures but not in two natures. I must confess that the most obvious meaning of the wording does not sound this way because these natures are not only united but active with all their properties. I cannot see what in our Roman Catholic tradition we could ask more than this affirmation. In any case the same statement offers a solution of the doubt if possible, when it says in no. 8: "It is this faith which we both confess. Its content is the same in both communions: in formulating that content in the course of history, however, differences have arisen, in terminology and emphasis. We are convinced that these differences are such as can co-exist in the same communion and therefore need not and should not divide us, especially when we proclaim Him to our brothers and sisters in the world in terms which they can more easily understand". Thus, here too the pastoral care is in the limelight.

After the repeated ascertainment that we have one and the same faith in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, what remains to do in this field for the future? Nobody will deny from now on that it exists among us Catholics and Oriental Orthodox a Christological consensus, not only in the faith itself but also in the expression of this same faith.

However our task is not finished. This result has to penetrate the minds and the hearts of the faithful of our Churches. It is not sufficient for the Heads of our Churches to agree on formulae which solve the old disputes. That was the first indispensable step in order to check that we really have the same faith. But for the Christians of our Churches who have learnt that, for old historical and very mysterious reasons, we did not have the same faith in Christ, it is necessary not only to convince them that the responsible of our Churches have found a solution to these so old problems, but also that the faith we profess in each of our historical Churches is in truth the same faith, even if we have differences in our vocabulary, in our theological traditions, in our way of worship. The mutual trust in each other is the precondition for making the Christological consensus not the thing of some hierarchs who today agree and tomorrow might have another idea on the matter, but in order to persuade our priests, our seminarians, our people that really we have and we live the same faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of course, the question of the recognition of the councils, like Chalcedon, which were accepted by one part and rejected by the other is a serious one and needs solutions. It is not my task here to tackle these questions for which other competent scholars have to present their solution. However, I am convinced that it is not the first problem. And I had to say the same about the saints and doctors we venerate and about the anathemata pronounced against persons who are regarded as saints in their own tradition. It is also a real problem, but finally a secondary one.

The main question is to convince our Christians of the Oriental Orthodox and Catholic Churches, in their concrete daily life, that they are completely brothers and sisters in the same faith in Christ. In order to get this result it must be clear that, in no way, any kind of proselytism can be justified as if one Church had more secure means of salvation to offer because she has a better understanding of the mystery of Christ and of its implications.

If, with the grace of God and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Saint Mary the Theotokos, we succeed in reaching this goal by convincing every one in our Churches that really, in spite of a very painful past, we have the same faith in the same

Jesus Christ the Incarnate Logos, with no mental reservation of any kind, then the visible communion of our Churches will not be so distant. May the Lord grant us this grace!

Moderator of the discussion: Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic)

Pope Shenouda *once more points out the importance of the Christological agreement achieved by PRO ORIENTE, although it is short, because it has been accepted also by the Armenians, Ethiopians, Syrians and Orthodox from India.*

Prof. Rushdie Behman (Coptic Orthodox): *We forget that there were interventions by political leaders which influenced the thinking of the churches and drove the churches away from the common faith. Now that we are in the twentieth century, with political leaders no more intervening there is a real opportunity for reaching simple expression of faith.*

Mar Gregorios (Syrian Orthodox): *There is need for something new, after all the agreements signed. Now that the sensitive point of Christology is solved, we should ask ourselves what we have to do now. Perhaps we can study the ways of revising our books on church history in the new spirit of ecumenism.*

*This question of history provokes very different reactions. Pope Shenouda affirms that history is history and cannot be changed: it is impossible to ignore the persecutions, the martyrs, the violence after Chalcedon; history was very negative until the arrival of Islam. According to him, it is better to leave history to the past, to forget ancient sufferings and to live together in the present, in mutual understanding and love: We always talk about the agreement with the Catholic Church concerning Christology, the Catholic Church should do the same by sending a pastoral letter signed by Pope John Paul II to the Catholic Churches.*

*Others respond that history is a part of our sensitivity and identity and that it is necessary to try to understand each others' vision of history.*

Mr. Joseph Faltas (Coptic Orthodox): *Theology cannot be divided. If we have agreed on Christology we are still not in agreement on other subjects. How are we going to explain to the faithful that we are in agreement with the Catholic Church concerning Christology without touching the Catholic Church's understanding of other things on which we are in disagreement? Christology cannot be separated from ecclesiology.*

Dom Emmanuel Lanne (Roman Catholic): *To my understanding the important thing is that there used to be a disagreement, and it does not exist now. I did not say that there was a difference, but a disagreement. Since we have agreed concerning the Lord Jesus there is hope that we will eventually agree on all matters and clarify them step by step. If we are patient enough we are going to find solutions to all the problems step by step.*

Archbishop Mrayaty (Armenian Catholic): *A question addressed to the Pope: Is there accusation of the Council of Chalcedon or justification?*

Pope Shenouda: *According to our liturgical and history books, the letter of Leo mentions the coming of "Christ the Two: One performing miracles and the other suffering humiliation". Our books are, therefore, very critical of Leo's letter. We need to go back to the minutes of the Council of Chalcedon to know whether this sentence really exists.*

Bishop Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic) argues that it is impossible to change history, but it is possible to agree on some positive steps: we can lift the anathemas, we can also change the language and spirit of our history books.

Fr. Samir Khalil (Roman Catholic): *As long as there is no real understanding of the other from within, there can be no real dialogue. The medieval Christian writers, between the 7th and 8th c., in Syriac and Arabic, acknowledge that followers and opponents of Chalcedon differ in the expression but agree on the meaning:*

*We should not ignore the negative aspects of our history, but it is possible to re-read and understand history, and to change the words noticing that it is impossible to give up the Greek language in which all decision and formulas were written. We have to face history in order to avoid history confronting us. What we have said today can be read literally in the writings of both the Syriac and the Coptic Fathers. We should review history and benefit from the experience of those who came before us, and in order to understand what they have said we have first to justify them.*

Archimandrite Ignace Dick (Greek Catholic) expresses the opinion that a historical analysis of all the political, cultural and theological factors involved in the rejection or reception of Chalcedon can help to understand and accept each other.

Pope Shenouda: *Two elements should be realised concerning Chalcedon: the first one is the theological debate, and the second is the maltreatment which followed the council. After the council there was an attempt to exterminate the followers of the one nature. Patriarchs were dismissed and others were appointed instead; persecutions mounted by Emperors and Patriarchs of Constantinople.*

*Despite what we say about our friendship with our brothers the Chalcedonians today, what happened then cannot be justified. But in order to continue in a relationship of love and understanding, we should not insist on history.*

Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian

## THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSENSUS

### Introduction

On 9th November 1969 His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König had the kindness of assigning me as member to the Theological Advisory Council of the ecumenical Foundation PRO ORIENTE. In the same year the members of the Theological Council periodically met under the presidency of the late Mons. Otto Mauer and discussed various theological issues. Once, as I mentioned the unofficial Christological discussions between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, he was very enthusiastic and asked me to write an article. My short study was published in "Wort und Wahrheit".<sup>1</sup> At the same time he suggested that PRO ORIENTE should organise ecumenical consultations similar and parallel to the discussions between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox theologians. After a preparation of about one year, 1970-71, at the beginning of September 1971 (Sept. 7-12, 1971) the first Consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church was held in Vienna. The results of the meeting were so highly appreciated from both sides, by hierarchs, university professors and theologians that other consultations followed in 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988.

Now I have the joy and honour to examine and present to this distinguished audience the Christological consensus which was achieved during the five non-official ecumenical consultations. The first meeting was exclusively dedicated to the problems of Christology and the Council of Chalcedon (451). Both sides analysed the reasons for the rejection versus the reception of Chalcedon, and discussed various aspects of Christology - some New Testament aspects, problems of consensus in Christology, differences in christological conceptions between Orthodox and Roman Catholics, monophysitic and dyophysitic languages about Christ. At the end of the Consultation a common Communiqué was compiled in mutual agreement by all participants. The christological part reads as follows:

1) "We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; we all confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431);

1a) 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.

2) We all agree in rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ.

3) We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity.

4) His Divinity was not separated from his Humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye.

<sup>1</sup> *Wort und Wahrheit*, XXIV. Jahrgang, Juli/Aug. 1969, 348-350.

5) His Humanity is one with His Divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation..."<sup>2</sup>

Attentively examined, this Christological affirmation can be regarded and accepted not as a complete formulation, but rather a definition which sets at first stage only signs or bounding limits for Orthodox faith. For instance the terms nature and person were not used or mentioned in the Communiqué at all!

#### *A Milestone in the Christological Dialogue*

Even as an affirmation which rather defines criteria for Orthodoxy, the common statement of the first Consultation at Lainz/Vienna, is a milestone in the Christological dialogue between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. This great achievement of an unofficial meeting in fact had remarkable influence on official common declarations of both sides; popes and patriarchs made use of it in proclamations at the end of their meeting or visit in Rome or elsewhere. No doubt the best example is the common declaration of the late Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Patriarch Shenouda published in Vatican on 10th May 1973. (In September 1971, shortly before his election, H.H. Pope Shenouda participated as bishop in the Vienna Consultation).

As an important ecumenical document which laid down the cornerstone of the non-official Christological agreement between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, I would like to scrutinize in detail the Communiqué of the first Consultation.

#### *First Assertion*

The first assertion or sentence reads as follows:

"We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; we all confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431)."

With this affirmation the theologians of both traditions clearly state that the foundation and source of all Orthodox dogmatic decisions is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Hence any reconciled Christological convergence should be based on the teachings of the first three Ecumenical Councils. It is well known that the Oriental Orthodox Churches adhere strongly and exclusively to these Councils; that the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church consented to endorse such an affirmation without insisting on the reception of later general Councils, was a positive sign of good will and flexibility. However, we should not forget that many participants of the Oriental Orthodox Churches were experienced in a similar Christological dialogue with representatives of the Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox Church. In their

<sup>2</sup> *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue Number 1, "Non-official Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of The Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church", Vienna - Lainz, Sept. 7-12, 1971, Papers and Minutes, Vienna/1972, 182, also published in *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 46.

consultations and discussions they had repeatedly underlined the pre-eminence and importance of the first three Ecumenical Councils. For instance in the summary of conclusions of the Geneva Consultation (16-21 August 1970) we read as follows:

"Theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Church feel ... that the authentic Christological tradition has so far been held by them on the basis of the three Ecumenical Councils, supplemented by the liturgical and patristic tradition of the Church."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless the theologians of the Eastern Orthodox Church always stressed their conviction 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."<sup>4</sup> Only years later at the third meeting of the Joint Commission of the official Theological Dialogue in September 1990 (at Chambesey, Geneva) they agreed that "Both families accept the first three Ecumenical Councils which form our common heritage" (point 8 of the "Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches").

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as a fundamental source, touchstone and a safeguarding confession of faith has an old tradition in the ecumenical dialogue and reconciliation of differently formulated Christologies. As an illustrating historical example can be cited the *Henotikon* of Zeno (474-491). 482 as he was trying and striving to reconcile the supporters and antagonists of Chalcedon (451), he edited an Edict of Reunion. In this document the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed was described as the "only genuine and true faith" as follows:

"We are convinced that the source and stay of our sovereignty, its strength and impregnable safeguard, is that only genuine and true faith which, by the inspiration of God, was published by the 318 holy Fathers assembled at Nicaea, and confirmed by the 150 holy Fathers who, in like manner, met in Council at Constantinople."<sup>5</sup>

#### *Second Assertion*

The second assertion reads as follows:

"All agree in rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ."

From the very beginning the supporters and adversaries of the Council of Chalcedon suspected and accused each other mutually of Nestorian and Eutychian heresies. Specially in theological literature of the 5th and 6th centuries refuting versus defending the Christological decisions of Chalcedon, we come across such accusations. For example, at the beginning of the 6th century the Armenians wrote to the Syrian Orthodox in Persia a letter in which we read:

"We flee from and renounce the lies of Nestorius and others like him in Chalcedon; we know these people as having in dissimulation departed from paganism and Jewish

<sup>3</sup> *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. XVI, Nos 1 and 2, Brookline, Massachusetts/1971, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, Oxford Univ. Press 1943/63, 123.

doctrines in order to seduce into error the minds of the innocent, that is the ignorant, leading the blind away from the path."<sup>6</sup> etc.

About the middle of the 6th century, Abdisho, Bishop of the Orthodox Syrians, wrote a letter to Nerses of Bagrevand, Catholicos of the Armenians (548-557), anathematising the Nestorians. Abdisho too condemns "the obscene Nestorius and the Council of Chalcedon" in the same sentence:

"You know by yourselves, for we have written from us to you, and you have done the same to us, not only concerning the confirmation of the true faith, but also on account of the act of anathematising all the heretics who lead astray, above all the obscene Nestorius and the Council of Chalcedon."<sup>7</sup> etc.

In fact the erroneous designations monophysite and dyophysite are reminiscence and remnants of that mutual accusation, the Chalcedonians being associated with dyophysite Nestorius and the non-Chalcedonians with monophysite Eutyches. Therefore it was and is very essential for both sides to disassociate themselves and to keep a distance from the traditional misunderstandings, charges and quarrels in order to transmit each other a sign and guarantee for the commonly accepted true faith. Such an early methodical approach to the problem, we find in the same Edict of Reunion of Zeno (Henotikon, 482). In this document Nestorius and Eutyches are twice anathematised as extremities. Here I quote the second condemnation:

"And we anathematise any one who has held or holds any other opinion, either now or at any other time, whether at Chalcedon or at any synod whatsoever; and in particular do we anathematise the before mentioned Nestorius and Eutyches and all who upheld their teachings."<sup>8</sup>

With the same concern the participants of the unofficial Dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches at the end of their first consultation in Aarhus (August 11 -15, 1964) declared in an agreed statement:

"On the essence of Christological dogma we found ourselves in full agreement. ... 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."<sup>9</sup>

In September 1990 at Chambesey, Geneva, the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue in its "Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches" declared:

"1. Both families agree in condemning the Eutychian heresy...

2. Both families condemn the Nestorian heresy and the crypto-Nestorianism of Theodoret of Cyrus ..."

The expression "crypto-Nestorianism of Theodoret of Cyrus" in an agreed statement appears for the first time in this official declaration. In fact it was included in the document on the demand of the Eastern Orthodox theologians. Interestingly, the main

<sup>6</sup>. Leif Frivold, *The Incarnation (A Study of the Doctrine of the Incarnation in the Armenian Church in the 5th and 6th Centuries according to the Book of Letters)*, Oslo/1981, 80; Armenian text = *Book of Letters* (Arm.), Tiflis, 1901, 49.

<sup>7</sup>. Frivold, *Ibid.* 88-89; Arm. text = *Book of Letters*, *Ibid.* 62.

<sup>8</sup>. Bettenson, *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>9</sup>. *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, "Unofficial Consultation between Theologians of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches" (Aarhus, August 11-15, 1964), papers and minutes, vol.X/No 2, 1964-1965, 14.

opponents of Theodoret of Cyrus in the 5th and 6th centuries were the theologians of Alexandria as well as of Syria and Armenia who protested against the inclusion of the so called "Tria Kephalaia"/"Three Chapters" (the writings of three semi-Nestorian authors, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa) in the documents of the Council of Chalcedon. In 543 the Emperor Justinian in order to reconcile the supporters and rejecters of Chalcedon, condemned the "Three Chapters". Ten years later the Second Council of Constantinople or the Fifth Ecumenical Council confirmed that condemnation, but it was too late; the minds and emotions on both sides were so stirred and fired up that nobody could bring about the desired reconciliation.

### *Third Assertion*

The third assertion reads as follows:

"We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity."

The participants of the Consultation consciously avoided producing an agreed formulation of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, but through formal definition they tried to dispel the ancient misunderstandings and suspicions of the past. Confessing the Son Incarnate as "perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity" the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Oriental Orthodox Churches indirectly refused and refuted both the heresy of phantasma and the teaching of Nestorius. However, it has to be noted that the famed representatives of the School of Alexandria had always stressed that the Son Incarnate was perfect both in His Divinity and Humanity. For example Cyril of Alexandria in his Scholia on the Incarnation:

"The Word then from God the Father, who by nature is God, is named man, as having participated in flesh and blood identically with us. For he appeared thus on earth, without being changed from whatever he was, but becoming through assumption of the humanity that is as we, *perfectly realised* according to its definition. Notwithstanding He remained and is defined in the manhood God and Lord of all, as by nature and *truly begotten* of God the Father."<sup>10</sup>

Again:

"But (as I have said) Christ is not as one of the saints, a God-clad man, but *God in truth* and He possesses glory in surpassing excellence, because, being God by nature, the Word of God was made flesh, i.e. *perfect man*; for we believe that the Body which was united to Him is endowed with reason and ensouled, and *wholly true is the union*."<sup>11</sup>

In 1987 (23rd to 26th September) as a Joint Sub-Committee of the Joint Commission of ecumenical dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches met at Corinth to discuss problems of Christological terminology, the Byzantine Orthodox theologians insisted on the following formulation or criteria:

<sup>10</sup>. *The Armenian Version of Revelation Apocalypse of John followed by Cyril of Alexandria's Scholia on the Incarnation*, Armenian text with an English translation, edited by Fred.C. Conybeare, London, 1907 (Reprint Philo Press, Amsterdam n.d.), 172.

<sup>11</sup>. *Ibid.* 194.

"Every theologian who accepted the two real births of the Logos, was and is to be considered Orthodox, regardless to every theological differentiation."

Although the expression "two real births" was unusual (the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan in a personal letter criticised this phrase), however it is clear what the Eastern Orthodox meant: the Logos, the only begotten Son of God was born of the Father before the ages and was perfect in His divine nature; he became perfect man through His second birth in time from the Virgin Mary who really is Theotokos. The conclusion was manifest:

"Only the Incarnate Logos, as perfect God and at the same time perfect man, could redeem men and peoples from sin and condemnation." (Statement of Corinth).

#### *Forth Assertion*

The fourth assertion reads as follows:

"His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye."

At the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John it is clearly said that "the Word (Logos) was with God" (1,1) and "the same was in the beginning with God" (1,2). After the Incarnation too - as the second person of the Holy Trinity, he remained with God:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1,14).

Ephrem the Syrian commenting on St. John chap. 1/verses 1 to 2 emphasizes the fact that the Son Incarnate was always with God the Father and remained always with the Father:

"*Et le Verbe était Dieu; l' évangéliste enseigne ici trois choses: la divinité, l' hypostase et la génération du Verbe. Il était au commencement auprès de Dieu; l' évangéliste prend la précaution de marquer qu' il n' y a pas qu' une hypostase en Dieu. Il était au commencement auprès de Dieu. L' évangéliste parle d' abord de sa génération, puis il dit qu' il est auprès de Dieu, ensuite qu' il est Dieu, et enfin qu' il a toujours été auprès de lui*"<sup>12</sup>. ("And the Word was God; the Evangelist teaches here three things: the Divinity, the hypostasis and the birth of the Word. In the beginning he was with God; the Evangelist takes precaution to indicate that there is only one hypostasis in God. In the beginning he was with God. The Evangelist speaks first of his birth, then he says that He is with God, and afterwards that He is God, and finally that He was always with God.")

Cyril of Alexandria in his above quoted Scholia on the Incarnation explains how the Same being God and Man did not depart from God the Father, for He remained whatever He was:

"... We say that not by mutation or change has the Word of God been made Man, nor yet that It was diminished in any way of being God; but that taking flesh of a woman and united to it from the womb, He proceeded forth man, the Same being man and God; for not as casting away the Ineffable Generation out of God the father, did He

<sup>12</sup> Ephrem de Nisibe, *Commentaire de l' Évangile concordant ou Diatessaron*, traduction et notes par Louis Leloir, "Sources Chrétiennes" No 121/ 1966, 45.

endure that of a woman, inviting a beginning so to say of being, but rather permitted to His own flesh to be called into being in accord with the law of its own nature. in regard I mean to the mode of its birth"<sup>13</sup> etc.

During the Incarnation the Logos not only did not depart from God the Father, but also it "was not separated from his humanity for a single moment". This assertion refutes on the one side teachings which maintained that the Divinity of Jesus Christ came and dwelt in Him only during the Baptism, and on the other side various heresies of phantasm which denied the real Incarnation or thought that on the Cross suffered only his body or Humanity.

#### *Fifth Assertion*

The fifth assertion:

"His Humanity is one with His Divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation."

This affirmation in its classical phrasing originates from the Chalcedonian Definition of the unity of Jesus Christ:

"One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognised in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons" etc.<sup>14</sup>

The Latin text of this sentence reads as follows:

"Unum eundemque Christum Filium dominum unigenitum, in duabus naturis inconfuse, immutabiliter, indivise, inseparabiliter agnoscedum, nusquam, sublata differentia naturarum propter unionem magisque salva proprietate utriusque naturae et in unam personam atque subsistentiam concurrente, non in duas personas partitum sive divisum" etc.<sup>15</sup>

The participants of the Vienna Consultation have rather followed the Greek text or tradition which says:

εν δυο φύσεσιν  
ασυγχυτως ατρεπτως  
αδιαιρετως αχωριστως γνωριζομενον.<sup>16</sup>

Fr. Alois Grillmeier in his wellknown book - *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche* - translates these four attributes as *unvermischt* (without commixture), *unverwandelt* (without change), *ungetrennt* (without division), *ungesondert* (without separation).<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and H.H. Patriarch Shenouda III signed at Vatican on 10th May 1973, the first adverb ασυγχυτως was expressed in three terms: "Without mingling, without commixtion, without

<sup>13</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Scholia on the Incarnation*, *ibid.* 196.

<sup>14</sup> Bettenson, *ibid.* 73.

<sup>15</sup> *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Bologna, 1972/73, 86.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Alois Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Herder, 1/1979, 755.



confusion!"<sup>18</sup> In the unofficial and official consultations between theologians of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Latin-oriented phrase - "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" was normally used: In the Second Agreed Statement of Chambésy/Geneva in September 1990 the following affirmation (Point 4) was registered;

"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 (τη θεωρια μονη)".

The two natures of the Son Incarnate are distinguished, but hypostatically and naturally united. This assertion is important in many ways, but moreover in relation with the Holy Trinity: any change of properties or characteristics of the divine nature would alter the image and essence of the One Godhead of the Holy Trinity. The great theologian of Alexandria, St. Athanasius in his short treatise on the Holy Trinity writes:

"We distinguish the persons, but unite the Godhead. We do not assemble the Three and in return do not divide in three alien or different sons, but we maintain the Oneness entirely and truly confess the Three as one Godhead without confusion and without change; as unity, one nature, one equality, the same authority, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one unique power" etc.<sup>19</sup>

Athanasius repeatedly lays stress also on the wonderful unity of the natures of Jesus Christ "without division and without confusion". In his tract on the birth of Christ we read:

"One is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; in one nature He became man in the womb. Listen to the writings of the prophets who beforehand manifested Him as incorruptible in one nature. We do not deny the [one] nature and we do not divide it, but we confess unity without confusion."<sup>20</sup>

Cyril of Alexandria too in his Christological writings incessantly emphasizes that the one united nature of our Lord Jesus Christ is "utterly unchangeable and immutable", "totally free from merger", "one and indivisible". For example:

"Though we affirm that the Word is God on becoming incarnate and made man, any suspicion of change is to be repudiated entirely because he remained what he was, and we are to acknowledge the union as totally free from merger."<sup>21</sup>

"Whenever we take this point into consideration, therefore, we do not damage the concurrence into unity by declaring it was effected out of two natures; however, after the union we do not divide the natures from each other and do not sever the one and indivisible into two sons but say 'one Son' and, as the fathers have put it, *one incarnate nature of the Word* (μιαν φύσιν του λογου σεσαρκωμενην)".<sup>22</sup>

In view of these citations it is absolutely right when the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian theologians in their ecumenical dialogue declare that "Both sides speak

of a union without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. The four adverbs belong to our common tradition."<sup>23</sup>

An additional note to the first assertion of the common Communiqué (11th Sept. 1971) of the Consultation. The fourth paragraph states:

"We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical (ecclesial!) 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."

It belongs to the ecumenical spirit and "strategy" of dialogue to accept the Orthodoxy of faith of the partner on the sound and safe ground of common sources and traditions. The Councils of Nicaea and Ephesus constitute the foundation of the universally accepted Christology according to which it is possible to check up the authenticity and accuracy of various Christological interpretations and traditions.

#### *Further Steps towards Christological Consensus*

At the first Consultation of Vienna the framework for a Christological consensus was already achieved. It remained to fill and fulfil it with contents or a declaration of agreed statement. At the second ecumenical Consultation (September 3-9, 1973) only two lectures were given on the understanding of the Christological definitions of both (Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic) traditions in the light of the post-Chalcedonian theology, but other studies were devoted to the controversy of the Three Chapters, the infallibility of the Church, to ecumenical councils as well as to the ministry of Peter and anathemata - completing the discussion of the main theme and supplying considerable material for the clarification of various questions.

The second paragraph of the Communiqué<sup>24</sup> provides a detailed formulation of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ which as an authentic Christological presentation is acceptable for both sides. One of the points of the statement is that "great is the mystery of the God-Man". The human intellectual faculty or understanding is limited and its theological or philosophical concepts and dialectics are not qualified to express adequately the mystery of the Incarnation. Cyril of Alexandria and many other theologians have always underlined this fact. In a letter to Succensus Cyril writes:

"So we unite the Word from God the Father without merger, alteration or change to holy flesh owning mental life in a manner inexpressible and surpassing understanding, and confess one Son, Christ and Lord, the self same God and man, not a diverse pair but one and the same, being and being seen to be both things."<sup>25</sup> etc.

A Christmas hymn of the Armenian Church says:

"A great and wonderful mystery was revealed today; the shepherds sing with angels and give good news to the world: A new King is born in the town Bethlehem; sons of men praise Him because for us He became man."

<sup>23</sup>. "Papers and Discussions between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Theologians - The Bristol Consultation, July 25-29, 1967" in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* volume XIII/No 2, Brookline/Mass., 1968, 133.

<sup>24</sup>. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 2, 175, and *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup>. "First letter to Succensus" in *Select Letters*, *Ibid.* 75.

<sup>18</sup>. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 2, Vienna, 1974, 184.

<sup>19</sup>. St. Athanasius Patriarch of Alexandria, *Treatises, Epistles and Disputations* (ancient Armenian version), Venice, 1899, 242.

<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid.* 261.

<sup>21</sup>. Cyril of Alexandria, "Letter to Acacius, Bishop of Melitene" in *Select Letters* edited and translated by Lionel R. Wickham, Oxford 1983, 49.

<sup>22</sup>. *Ibid.* "First Letter to Succensus", 76-77.

There are three important Christological affirmations in the paragraph under discussion which intend to reconcile different positions and traditions and open the way for mutual acceptance. The first point concerns the great theologian St. Cyril of Alexandria. In advance the participants of the Consultation declare:

"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."

Cyril of Alexandria, a great interpreter and defender of the authentic Christology, because of his 12 Anathemata in the Third Letter to Nestorius and of the famed formula "One nature of the Logos of God Incarnate", here and there in Rome or Constantinople sometimes was suspected of monophysite heresy. Louis Duchesne in his *Church History* distinguishes "two Cyrils"! He writes:

"For Flavian and his Council, as for Eutyches, Cyril was assuredly a great authority. But, as can be seen, there were two Cyrils, the real, natural Cyril, the Cyril of the One Nature, and it is this Cyril whom Eutyches invoked on his side though he went beyond him; and the Cyril as diplomatist, the Cyril of safeguards and forced concessions, and this is the Cyril whom Flavian had in mind. The first was represented by the proposed Anathemas as well as by the letters to Acacius of Melitene and to Succensus; the other by the Dogmatic Letter to Nestorius and by that in which he accepts the Formula of Union."<sup>26</sup>

The participants of the dialogue in Vienna declare St. Cyril as "our common father in Christ" and assert that "he does not deny but rather express the full and perfect Humanity of Christ." In a second statement of counterbalance the theologians try to understand and interpret rightly the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon:

"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*."

Such an understanding of St. Cyril and a positive interpretation of the Christology of Chalcedon came up also in the ecumenical dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches. In September 1990 at Chambesy in the Second Agreed Statement the participants assert:

"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', 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' (τη θεωρία μόνη). Cyril interpreted correctly this use in his letter to John of Antioch and his letters to Acacius of Melitene (PG 77, 184-201), to Eulogius (PG 77, 224-28) and to Succensus (PG 77, 228-45)." (Point seven).

The double consubstantiality of Jesus Christ is another point of agreement in the Roman Catholic/Oriental Orthodox consensus which was explicitly declared in the Communiqué of the second Vienna Consultation. Beside or in relation to the consubstantiality once more it is emphasized that the wonderful unity of two natures

<sup>26</sup> Louis Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church from its Foundation to the End of the fifth Century*, London, vol. III, 1924/1960, 281-82.

was effected without commixture, without change, without division, without separation. The statement says:

"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."

The language or the formulation here used is in fact completely Cyrillian. Such sentences Cyril repeatedly wrote in his various letters and treatises. An example from his *Scholia on the Incarnation*:

"One accordingly is He who even before becoming man was true God, and in becoming man remained just what He was and is and shall be. We must not therefore formulate apart the one Lord Jesus Christ, into man peculiarly and God peculiarly; but we say that Jesus Christ is one and the same; knowing the difference of flesh and of Godhead, and keeping them unconfused one with the other."<sup>27</sup>

The *Formula of Reunion* of 433 by John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria precisely formulates the double consubstantiality of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"Accordingly we acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, to be perfect God and perfect man made up of soul endowed with reason and of body, begotten of the Father before the ages in respect of His Godhead and the same born in the last days for us and for our salvation of Mary the Virgin in respect of His Manhood, consubstantial with the Father in Godhead and consubstantial with us in Manhood. A union of two natures has been effected and therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord."<sup>28</sup>

The problem of terminology is the last Christological point which has been recorded in the Communiqué of the second consultation as a task for further investigation and discussion:

"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"<sup>29</sup> etc.

Although the Communiqué at the beginning speaks of the problem of terminology, it then smoothly shifts to traditional Christological formulae. As a theologian who has participated in almost all both Roman Catholic - Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox - Oriental Orthodox consultations, I can attest that the problem of terminology has not been thoroughly and sufficiently examined and discussed. Even at our meeting in Corinth in summer 1987 we were not able to study this question exhaustively, since some members of the Sub-Committee could not participate in the consultation. In general the Council of Chalcedon is evaluated rather as a terminological achievement which brought clarity in concepts and formulations and

<sup>27</sup> *Cyril of Alexandria's Scholia on the Incarnation*, Armenian version with English translation by Conybeare (see above note No 9), 183.

<sup>28</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Select Letters*, Appendix (see above note No 20).

<sup>29</sup> *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 2, 175-76, and *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 58.

thus contributed much to the protection and preservation of the authentic Christology. However we should not forget that the Oriental Orthodox Churches have retained their Christology in purity and authenticity without the support of Chalcedon. Moreover it is commonly accepted by Roman Catholics that the Chalcedonian terminological clarity was accomplished only in the 7th century thanks to the efforts and writings of Maximus the Confessor. I appreciate highly the sincerity of two Roman Catholic famed theologians who participated in the Vienna Consultations, namely Alois Grillmeier<sup>30</sup> and Wilhelm de Vries<sup>31</sup>. Hats off to such personalities who had the courage to declare that Chalcedon was not the definite and final answer to Christological problems and conflicts. The distinction between nature and hypostasis or prosopon was crystallised only after Chalcedon during the quarrels between the defenders and adversaries of the Council (5th to 7th centuries). Even de Vries dares to assert that "In principle the formula of Chalcedon is liable to improvement, yes it needs amendment!" However the weakness of the terminological aspect of the Dialogue was indirectly overcome by repeatedly expressed clear statements on the Incarnation that the Logos, Son of God the Father in the last days was born for our salvation of the Virgin Mary and thus the perfect God became perfect man (taking everything human on him except the sin); the hypostatic union of two natures was effected without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. In this sense the last consultation concluded the Christological discussion as follows:

"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 Eutychianism, a certain plurality of expressions was permissible in relation to the inseparable and unconfused hypostatic union of the human and the divine in 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."<sup>32</sup>

#### *Reception of the Christological Consensus*

The Christological agreement of the Vienna consultations was achieved by theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Interestingly, the fruitful results of these unofficial Consultations were accepted, articulated and published by the highest hierarchs of the Churches. Naturally, this procedure not only encouraged the discussions and the participants, but also it completed the consultations. Hardly the first consultation was finished on 12th September 1971, the heads of the Roman Catholic and the Syrian Orthodox Churches, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III, on 27th October 71 signed in Rome a Declaration which says:

<sup>30</sup>. Alois Grillmeier, "Das Kerygma von Chalcedon und die wissenschaftliche Definition von darin verwendeten griechischen Begriffen" in: Im Dialog der Liebe, "PRO ORIENTE" publication No 9, Vienna, 1986, 238-40.

<sup>31</sup>. Wilhelm de Vries, "Stellungnahme zum Round-Table-Gespräch vom 30. Oktober 1979 in Wien und zum Vortrag des Metropoliten Chrysostomos von Myra vom 29. Oktober 1979", *Ibid.* 241.

<sup>32</sup>. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 5, Vienna, 1989, 149, and *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 101.

"The celebration of the sacraments of the Lord, the common profession of faith in the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man for man's salvation, the Apostolic traditions which form part of the common heritage of both Churches, the great Fathers and Doctors, including St. Cyril of Alexandria, who are their common masters in the faith - all these testify to the action of the Holy Spirit who has continued to work in their Churches even when there have been human weakness and failings."<sup>33</sup>

In the same Declaration the Pope and the Syrian Patriarch "encourage the clergy and faithful of their Churches to even greater endeavours at removing the obstacles which still prevent complete communion among them."<sup>34</sup>

In May 1973 at Vatican Pope Paul VI and H.H. Pope-Patriarch Shenouda III signed and edited a Common Declaration which contains a very important Christological paragraph. In fact in September 1971 H.H. Patriarch Shenouda still as bishop participated in the first PRO ORIENTE consultation of Vienna and by his theological erudition and ecumenical vision contributed much to the success of the conference. It is not surprising therefore to find similarities between the Communiqué of the first consultation and the Common Declaration. The one signed by the highest hierarchs is in all points a comprehensive and balanced formulation of the authentic teaching of the Church on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, written in the language of St. Cyril. Here I quote the paragraph under discussion:

"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 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 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."<sup>35</sup>

It is striking that the affirmation does not use the terms nature and hypostasis/hypostatic, like the Communiqué of the first Vienna consultation! However, the Christological consensus resulting from the ecumenical dialogue was confirmed, blessed and proclaimed by the heads of the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches. But this was not the last blessing. In June 1984 in Vatican H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas of the Syrian Orthodox Church in a Common Declaration stated: "We find today no real basis for

<sup>33</sup>. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 1 (1972), 184, and *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 108.

<sup>34</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 2 (1974), 184, and *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 109.

the sad divisions and schisms that subsequently arose between us concerning the doctrine of Incarnation."<sup>36</sup> Then the heads of the two Churches lay open an affirmation<sup>37</sup> on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ which has been taken word for word from the above quoted formulation of May 1973.

Immense progress has been already achieved in the Christological dialogue of the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches. What remains is the reception of the Christological consensus by the faithful. In this respect there is still much work to do in order to install the unity of faith and the unity of the Churches in the hearts and mind of the believers and communities for the sake of the unity of mankind, for the peace of the world and for the Glory of the Triune God.

Moderator of the discussion:

Metropolitan Amba Bishop of Damiette and Kafr el Sheikh

*A rather lengthy exchange develops about the opportunity to engage PRO ORIENTE in a dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East, which does not accept the Council of Ephesus of 431 and was in the past considered as being Nestorian.*

Mar Gregorios (Syrian Orthodox): *From the discussion concerning Christology I see that we are in a war against Nestorius and Eutyches who are now absent.*

*The Eutycheans do not exist any more but the Nestorians continue to exist in a church which refuses to be called Nestorian. To emphasize that we are neither Eutycheans nor Nestorians is very important; but my question is: what are the practical solutions which can be put forward to the church leaders, especially in the Middle East, to receive back the Nestorians to the body of the Orthodox Church?*

*Does it need the courage of somebody or is there another solution by which we can at least think of how to receive the Nestorian "Church of the East" into the Church?*

Bishop Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic): *I did not intend to show the excommunication of Nestorius and Eutyches as much as I wanted to show the misunderstandings which happened in the fifth century. In the formulas of both the Catholics and the Oriental Orthodox it seems that we refuse Nestorius in the official and non-official dialogue. It were better if our formulas were more diplomatic, using a language which reflects Christian charity.*

Pope Shenouda: *The problem is not in Nestorius and Eutyches, the problem is in their teachings. If you want to lift the anathemas against Nestorius than you have to anathematise Cyrill and the Council of Ephesus.*

*Cyrill set twelve anathemas against Nestorius. It is true that Nestorius died but his teachings still exist. Accepting the Nestorians requires a true faith from their part. They have Arian ideas and do not call our Lady the Virgin the Mother of God but the Mother of Jesus.*

*If we are to treat them according to our Christian love then we have to lead them to the true faith.*

<sup>36</sup>. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 5 (Vienna 1989), 166, and *The Vienna Dialogue*, Booklet No 1, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup>. *Ibid.* 167.

Mar Eustathios (Syrian Orthodox) *suggests that PRO ORIENTE designate a group of theologians to study the historical sources concerning Chalcedon and publish a critical edition of the text, especially of the Tomus Leonis.*

Fr. Paul Sayah (Maronite): *What Mar Gregorios has said today and what Pope Shenouda said yesterday concerning the past and living the present shows the importance of achieving good and real results from the ecumenical dialogue.*

*I would like to ask PRO ORIENTE to try to involve those people (i.e. the Nestorians) in the ecumenical dialogue in order that we understand them and they understand us. It is healthier to talk about them in their presence and to hear whatever they want to say.*

*My question to Bishop Mesrob is: what can be practically done to achieve the full unity?*

Bishop Krikorian: *Your concern about the full unity is our concern and the concern of PRO ORIENTE. This meeting is to make known what has been achieved until now in PRO ORIENTE. Another way of explaining the results is by publishing books and pamphlets.*

Fr Samir Khalil (Roman Catholic) *declares that the so-called "Nestorian" texts, written in Arabic between the 8th and 13th centuries, are in complete agreement as far as Christology is concerned, if one takes into consideration their approach and terminology.*

*As to the term of the "Mother of God" they do not use exactly this term, but they say that she is the mother of Christ Who is God.*

Amba Bishop (Coptic Orthodox) *presents briefly the contacts which are going on with the Assyrian Church in the framework of the MECC in order to study the possibility of that Church becoming a member of the MECC: As a member of the MECC committee for dialogue with the Assyrians I will say that I cannot say precisely that the Assyrians are fully Nestorians; but there are some Nestorian elements in their teachings. We are still in dialogue with them, so please give us enough time to finish this dialogue and to reach full results.*

*They believe in two hypostases in Christ and refuse the hypostatic union in the person of Christ. They still maintain the sainthood of Nestorius, Theodorite and Theodoros, who are mentioned in their liturgy. They also anathematise St. Cyrill of Alexandria and attack him. They refuse to accept the third ecumenical Council of Ephesus. Yet there is a positive thing which is that they started accepting that the union between the two natures of Christ is inseparable, and that is something which we do not find in Nestorius' teachings. Next year we will have a dialogue about it.*

*The term "Mother of the Incarnate Word" is acceptable to them, but not "Mother of God".*

*It remains for them to decide whether to accept the third ecumenical council and refuse Nestorius.*

*His suggestion is that one should let these contacts develop and deepen and see what the outcome will be. In his view, a parallel approach by PRO ORIENTE would make matters only more complicated.*

Archimandrite Antiba (Greek Catholic): *Yesterday and today I have seen several differences in translation, yet we are talking about the difference in Chalcedon's expression. Let us think of a new way of understanding Nestorius.*

Prof. Fr. Hashem (Maronite) suggests the creation, by PRO ORIENTE, of a special commission composed of theologians belonging to all the Churches that are part of the larger Syriac tradition. An initial dialogue with the Assyrians within this one tradition could contribute greatly to clarify the positions. This "Syriac" PRO ORIENTE commission could afterwards be broadened to include others.

Fr. Kamil Samaan (Coptic Catholic) suggests that all the Churches, and particularly the Coptic Orthodox Church, publish the main texts of the Christological consensus in their different religious periodicals and newspapers:

I support the suggestion of Pope Shenouda calling on John Paul II to circulate those agreements in the Catholic Churches.

Bishop Krikorian remarks that it is now possible for the Oriental Orthodox Churches to understand the Council of Chalcedon in a new way that can lead to unity, but that does not mean that they accept the Council as such.

Pope Shenouda indicates that he would not be opposed to the idea of PRO ORIENTE handling the problem of the Assyrians after the conclusion of the work of the MECC commission dealing with this issue.

Archbishop Cyrille Bustros

## THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSENSUS BETWEEN THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The common point which unites the Christians of the different churches is their being disciples of Jesus Christ and their belief that he is the Son of God the Saviour. But their disagreement on how to express this faith on the person of Jesus Christ God and man led them since the 5th century to be divided into churches, each of them anathematising the other and accusing it of heresy. After the council of Chalcedon (451), which professed Jesus Christ one person and one hypostasis in two natures, Churches were divided into Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians, dyophysites and monophysites. We are happy to see that both tradition searched in these last years an agreement on Christology, and expressed this agreement in different Communiqués: between theologians and between heads of Churches. I shall try to answer in this paper to the following questions:

- I - What is in brief the faith of the New Testament in Jesus Christ?
- II - How did the Church maintain this faith of the N.T. against heresies before Chalcedon?
- III - Why did Chalcedon meet? What was the doctrine it professed and why did the Oriental Orthodox Churches oppose its teaching?
- IV - How did the different Churches today overcome this old quarrel and reach a consensus on Christology?

### *I. Jesus Christ in the faith of the New Testament*

Our faith in Jesus Christ is based on the faith of the Apostles and the Apostolic Church, which we find written in the holy Gospels and in the other books of the N.T. That is why in every thinking and every theological expression about the person of Jesus Christ, we must always go back to the N.T. What does it tell us about Jesus Christ?

In reading the various books of the N.T. we do not find the theological or philosophical expressions used by theologians of the first centuries and by ecumenical councils, were cause of disagreement and division between churches. We do not find expressions like: *Consubstantial (homoousios)*, *hypostasis*, *Person (prosopon)*, *Nature (physis)*, neither we find: *theotokos*, or *christotokos*.

Titles reserved to Jesus in the N.T. indicate that he is God and man: Christ, Son of Man, Lord, Son of God, Word of God. St. John in his prologue, declares explicitly these two aspects of Jesus:

"He is the Word... and the Word is God... and the word was made flesh".

Three points result from the reading of the NT., and must remain the basis for every theological thinking and every expression of our faith in Jesus Christ:

1. His divinity: He is God, because he is the Word of God
2. His humanity: He is flesh, truly man
3. He is one: the Word himself became man, and not was united to a man

## II. The faith in Jesus Christ before Chalcedon

The central point in Christianity is its faith in the appearance of God in the flesh in Jesus Christ Son of God and Word of God. And the theologians tried to explain this mystery of divine incarnation, i.e. to express it in human words: how can the Word of God become man without losing his divinity, and how this union between divinity and humanity was realised in the person of Jesus Christ. The Church in the first centuries was preoccupied by this care of maintaining the balance between divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ, so that the divinity does not disappear under humanity by considering Jesus as a created God, neither humanity be destroyed by divinity by considering Jesus as a God living on earth in a quasi human body.

### 1. Arius

Arius followed the first deviation: in order to preserve the unicity of God, he considered the Logos as a semi-God, created by God who gave him the task of creating all other creatures. Nicaea (325) condemned Arius and his teaching, and declared Jesus Christ "true God from true God, begotten not created", "consubstantial to the Father". (or "he has the same substance of the Father").

### 2. Apollinarius

Apollinarius followed the second deviation: he reduced the humanity of Christ to the body without soul, without rational soul; and sustained his position by referring to a philosophical principle which says that two complete natures cannot be united in one being. Each nature is a complete substantiated being, each nature is a hypostasis; so Apollinarius considered the hypostasis of the Logos as being the principle of all the human deeds of Jesus the Logos incarnate.

The Church condemned the teaching of Apollinarius in the second ecumenical council (Constantinople, 381) and reiterated the condemnation in the following councils.

### 3. Nestorius

Nestorius was elected patriarch of Constantinople in 428. He wanted to defend the true faith against the Arians and the Apollinarians. He attacked the title "Theotokos", because he saw in it either Arianism: if Mary gave birth to God, Jesus becomes a created God; or Apollinarism: if Mary gave birth to God, that means that Jesus Christ is not man, but only God. And he stressed that Mary gave birth, not to God the Word, but to the man Jesus. It appeared that he divided Christ in two *hypostasis*: The hypostasis of God the Logos, and the hypostasis to the man Jesus, united in the *prosopon* of union.

Cyril opposed the teaching of Nestorius, by considering the Nestorian union of the *prosopon* in Christ as an accidental union between two beings, and wanted Nestorius to agree on the "union according the hypostasis". Otherwise our saviour would be the man Jesus Christ, and not the Logos incarnated.

In 431 the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius and the Father agreed the letter sent by Cyril to Nestorius, which says:

"We profess that the Logos became one with the flesh, united with it according to the hypostasis. So we worship the one person, the Son, the Lord, Jesus Christ. We do

not separate between God and a union of dignity and power. This saying is a nonsense. Neither born from a woman. We profess one Christ, who is the Logos begotten from the Father, and who took flesh".

Concerning the Virgin Mary, the letter says: "since the blessed Virgin gave birth in flesh to God who came one with the flesh according the nature, we call her *theotokos*".

### The Symbol of union (433):

The Council of Ephesus did not have a peaceful end in 431. Cyril of Alexandria had presided it before the arrival of John of Antioch and the legates of Leo Pope of Rome. A few days later (26 June), John of Antioch and his bishops arrived and condemned Cyril for having acted illegally, and saw in his teaching Arianism and Apollinarism. On July 1, the legates of Leo Pope of Rome. A few days later (26 June), John of Antioch and his bishops arrived and agreed to the first session of 22 June and confirmed the condemnation of Nestorius. It was the total confusion. The emperor commanded the closure of the council and the arrest of both Cyril and Nestorius. Cyril succeeded in returning back to his seat, Nestorius was exiled to his convent and after that to one of the Egypt convents.

The union was made in 433 between Antioch and Alexandria on the following text, written by Antiochene theologians:

"We confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is true God and true man composed of rational soul and flesh, begotten from the Father before ages in his divinity, and born in these last days, for us and for our salvation, from the Virgin Mary, in his humanity, consubstantial to the Father in his divinity, consubstantial to us according to the humanity. Therefore the union was made from two natures. That is why we declare one Christ, one Son, one Lord. Because of this union without confusion, we profess the holy Virgin Theotokos, because God the Logos was incarnate and became man, and, from the first instant of his conception, united to himself the temple he has taken from her".

Four affirmations are expressed in this common text, which sum up the permanent faith of the church over centuries:

1. *The divinity of Christ*: He is true God, consubstantial to the Father.
2. *The humanity of Christ*: He is true man, composed from a rational soul and flesh.
3. *Christ is one*. This unity is based on two things: a) the Son of God himself was born from the Virgin Mary, b) the union was made from two natures.
4. Because of this union, Mary is *Theotokos*.

## III. Eutyches and the Council of Chalcedon (451)

The problem of the unity of the person in Jesus Christ and how to explain this unity was raised again with Eutyches and Chalcedon.

### 1. Eutyches

The error of Eutyches is that he uses the statement of Athanasius and Cyril: "the one incarnate nature of God the Word", in a monophysitic way which reaches the

confusion of both in Christ, or the absorption of the human nature by the divine nature in Christ.

## 2. Ephesus (449)

In 449, Flavian Patriarch of Constantinople condemned Eutyches who appealed to Emperor Theodosius. A council was convoked in Ephesus (449). Presided by Dioscorus, this council rehabilitated Eutyches and condemned Flavian. Pope Leo's legates left Ephesus without approving the Council's decrees.

## 3. Chalcedon (451)

Theodosius died in 450. Marcian convoked another council in Chalcedon (451). Presided by Pope Leo's legates, Chalcedon condemned Dioscorus for acting illegally and Eutyches for his wrong teaching. The doctrine of incarnation was defined in the following terms:

"We confess the one and who is the same the Son and our Lord Jesus Christ... We proclaim that He himself is perfect in his divinity and perfect in humanity, true God and true man, and himself composed of a rational soul and flesh. He is consubstantial to the Father in the divinity, and consubstantial to us in the humanity, like us in everything except the sin. Before all ages he was born from the Father according to the divinity, and in the last days He himself, for us and for our salvation, was born from the Virgin Mary Theotokos according to the humanity. He is one, and himself is Christ, the Only Son, the Lord, whom we must confess *in two natures* united without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.

"The union of the natures did not eliminate their difference, but the properties of each of them are maintained and united in one person (*prosopon*), and one *hypostasis*. He is not separated nor divided in two persons, but he is one and the same Only-Begotten Son, God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ..."

If we compare this declaration with the formula of the union (433), we find the affirmation of: 1)the divinity of Christ; 2)the perfect humanity of Christ; 3)the unity of the person and of this unity against Nestorius. And the two natures were without confusion, repeated against Eutyches. There is still a difference: here it is spoken of *one person or hypostasis in two natures*. In the formula of union (433), it was spoken of *union from two natures*.

## 4. Why did the Oriental Orthodox churches oppose Chalcedon?

There are two reasons for that refusal, one historical, and the other theological.

### a) The historical reason: lack of dialogue at Chalcedon

In the first non-official Consultation held in Vienna in 1971, a Catholic historian W. De Vries recognised that Chalcedon failed in uniting the church, because "in Chalcedon there was no true discussion, no real dialogue between the disputing parties. Perhaps it is asking too much of the people of those days to expect such a dialogue. Nevertheless it must be said that this absence of a true dialogue was

responsible for the failure. It is our task today to make up for this mission<sup>1</sup>. Most of the fathers were in favour of the way in which Dioscorus of Alexandria was expressing the unity on Christ. But he was condemned for legal reasons before the beginning of the discussion. And the historian pointed out political factors intervened in the council. After the death of Theodosius, whom Dioscorus had convinced not to read the letter of Pope Leo to Flavian in Ephesus (449), and to rehabilitate Eutyches, his sister Pulcheria succeeded him, and "she was favourable to Pope Leo. She married to old general Marcian thus making him emperor. Marcian shared her views so that this was one occasion where pope and emperor were of quite the same opinion. Therefore it was absolutely certain right at the beginning of the council that the decision would be in keeping with the Tomus Leonis ad Flavianum whose reading at Ephesus (449) Dioscorus had prevented"<sup>2</sup>.

Prof. De Halleux, commenting this procedure says: "This kind of procedure appears today as a regrettable one, but it was the usage of that time. In particular, the way how Dioscorus at the Council of Ephesus in 449 had rehabilitated Eutyches and deposed several patriarchs and bishops, was no less reproachable than that of his condemnors in Chalcedon. These two Councils are thus putting themselves in a spiral of anathemata and of counter-anathemata, where human ambitions and susceptibilities of the hierarchs were unfortunately not absent. the manner even in which the Council of Ephesus of 431 developed, which was at the origin of the first great christological schism, is far from being edifying in any case. This aspect of the past cannot be put away, but the will of reconciliation must lead us to regret the violences, from which side they might ever have come."<sup>3</sup>

### b) The theological reason: Chalcedon id accused of Nestorianism

In saying "Christ is one person or one prosopon in two natures Chalcedon is accused of Nestorianism. The Oriental Orthodox Churches maintained the Cyrillic formula: "One incarnate nature of God the Word".

And these churches reiterate their rejection of Chalcedon because it was based on the letter of Pope Leo to Flavian, in which the action of Christ is expressed in a Nestorian way, according to their reading of this letter, especially in the following sentence:

"Each nature acts, in communion with the other, what is proper to it : the Word acts what is proper to the Word, and the flesh does what is proper to the flesh. The one shines in miracles, the other is overcome with outrages".

"At the time of Chalcedon, writes De Vries, these words were interpreted by the monophysites as implying that the two natures acted separately (Nersoyan 1st Cons., p.79). What they overlooked however, was the phrase 'cum alterius communione'. Only a semantic distinction (*distinctio rationis*) between the words and the deeds of Christ's Godhead and Christ's manhood seems to be possible to Oriental theologians today as well; from a factual point of view (*distinctio realis*), however, such a distinction cannot be accepted; Prof V.C. Samuel expressly stated so on several

<sup>1</sup>. Wilhelm De Vries, "The Reasons for the rejection of the Council of Chalcedon by the Oriental Orthodox Churches", in *Wort und Wahrheit*, supplementary Issue No 1 (Dec. 1972), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>. *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>3</sup>. Prof. André de Halleux, "The theological significance of the Results of the four Vienna Consultations", in *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplementary Issue No 5 (July 1989), p. 30.

occasion: 'but insofar as He (the God and man) was concerned, all the word and deeds were expressions of God the Son incarnate'. Therefore, no distinction was possible in reality as such (1st Cons., pp. 117, 118; in 2nd p. 23, reference is made to Severus of Antioch); only a purely rational distinction is made"<sup>4</sup>

The word "nature" in the sentence: "*one incarnate nature of God the Word*" does not mean the same thing as in the sentence: one person *from two natures*. In this last sentence, "nature" means "*one concrete reality*". Jesus Christ, as concrete reality, is one, and this one reality is composed *from two natures*, here the word "nature" refers to the quality of being which makes a thing or a person what it is. It is the answer to the question: *What is that?* In this sense the two natures are: Godhead and manhood. But Godhead and manhood are united in one reality, which is the incarnate nature of God the Word.

So, to the question: *who* is Jesus Christ?, Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians answer: He is the Word incarnate.

To the question: *What* is Jesus Christ, all answer: He is God and man, he has two natures: Godhead and manhood.

To the question: *How does He act?* Chalcedonians answer: he acts *in both his natures*: each nature performing actions proper to it. Non-Chalcedonians answer: He acts *in his one Incarnate nature*, which is composed of Godhead and manhood.

So, all agree in affirming the unity of Christ and his identity: he is the Word Incarnate, and he is God and man.

And all agree in affirming the unity of his action; the difference between Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox is that Chalcedonians see the unity of Christ's action comes from the hypostasis or prosopon of the Word, whereas Oriental Orthodox see this unity in "the one incarnate nature of God the Word": no dualism in the activity of Christ the Incarnate Word of God<sup>5</sup>. In Chalcedonian vision, the human nature is retained as a principle of activity; in Cyril's vision, God the Word is the only principle of all the activities of Jesus, but God the Word Incarnate, that means in a new mode of being, a being composed of two natures. Chalcedonians save the unity of action in Christ by referring also to the Only-Begotten Son, the Logos who became man: the term "the one and the same" is used eight times in the short crucial paragraph of the definition of the doctrine, in order to affirm this unity of action.

<sup>4</sup> W. De Vries, "The Christological consensus reached in Vienna", *Ibid.* 3, pp. 2627. "Prof. Verghese was expressly opposed to the Tome of Leo: Leo falls into error when he says that the Word does certain actions and the flesh others. Prof. Verghese admitted nevertheless that Leo might have understood his statements correctly, but the way he stated them was prone to be, and in fact was, object to misinterpretation. To certify such a teaching (of dual action) as accurate is for us one of the major mistakes of Chalcedon. From Leo's language Oriental theologians deduce that, as a logical consequence, he could not help regarding both natures in Christ as hypostatic (Samuel 2nd Cons., p. 21) (*Ibid.*, p.27)

<sup>5</sup> A. Grillmeier writes: "For the sake of unity, Cyril ascribed all energy and initiative to the Logos... Every activity, every movement has its origin in the Logos, even if human abilities are involved. The man Jesus is no longer an autonomous human identity; his spiritual and psychic life is perceived as being so deeply embedded in the Godhead that the psychic and material 'physis' of the man Jesus becomes merely an instrument of the Logos... Contrary to the Cyrilline-Severine concept, Leo made the flesh, the 'caro', i.e. Christ's human nature, into the centre of autonomous activities: Leo certainly never wished to think in a 'Nestorian' way, and thus make the man Jesus an independent person. In Christ's unity of person however, the human nature is retained as the principle of activity: 'salva igitur proprietate utriusque naturae et in unam coeuntem personam...' (i.e. each of the nature preserves its properties, while at the same time being united in one person), as Leo wrote in the same letter. (Alois Grillmeier, "The Council of Chalcedon - An Analysis of a Conflict, 1st Cons., pp. 36, 37-38).

#### IV. The contemporary consensus between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches

The non-official consultations which took place in Vienna since 1971 had shown that the dispute between Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox was not on the essence of the faith in Jesus Christ the Logos incarnate, but on the terminology used to express adequately this incarnation of God the Word.

##### 1. Agreement on essential principles of methodology

Both parties agreed on some essential principles in methodology when dealing with this christological problem:

a) *Dogmatic formulas are not absolute.* A pluralism in terminology has been recognised by both sides as legitimate in the expression of the same faith. The object of our faith in the person of Jesus Christ is not reduced to a formula "one Incarnate nature...", or "one person in two natures", but is the person of Jesus Christ himself who is God and man. The final communiqué of the second consultation (1973) reads:

"God is the mystery of the God-man; no created mind can fully comprehend the mystery of how Godhead and Manhood became united in the one Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can human words give adequate utterance attempt to grasp the mystery in concept or express it in words" (Com. 2nd Cons.)

b) *The "differences in the theological interpretations of the mystery"* are due to the "different ecclesiastical and theological traditions" (Com 1st Cons.). But all agreed that "even behind an apparently wrong formulation, there can be a right understanding" (Com. 2nd Cons.)

c) *The spirit of charity, mutual understanding, has replaced the atmosphere of anathemata* assessed from each side to the other. "A formal lifting of the anathemas may not be necessary; It may be possible for the Churches simply to drop from the liturgical corpus anathemata of saints and teachers of the other side, as some Churches have already begun to do" (Com. 2nd, 5). "A second major positive result of the first four Vienna Consultations was in relation to mutual anathema. 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 those ancient Anathemas formally; wrong teaching should however continue to be reproved." (Com. 5th Cons.)

d) All expressed the desire "to encourage common efforts for deeper and more comprehensive understanding of this mystery in harmony with our different ecclesiastical traditions", and they engage themselves "not to get tired in the search for a common language of the mystery of salvation in our Lord" (Com. 1st Cons.).

e) *There is a common basis* in the Tradition which was common to all the churches before their separation. A fundamental principle has been posed in this sense since the first Consultation: "We find our common basis in the same apostolic Tradition,



particularly as affirmed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed; we all confess the dogmatic decisions and teaching of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431); we all agree in rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ" (Com. 1st Cons.).

f) *There is a Hierarchy in the Councils.* The first ecumenical Council (Nicaea 325) is the basic Council which resumed the Christian faith in the person of Jesus Christ God and man. The second and the third threw a light on this Nicene expression without introducing anything really new, but explaining it and supporting it against heresies. These three first Councils were considered by all the participants in the Vienna Consultation as having "because of their more general Councils don't have"(Com. 2nd Cons., 6). The second Communiqué adds: "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" (Com. 2nd Cons.). In the fifth Communiqué we read:

" In relation to Councils, it was reaffirmed that our common ecumenical basis is the faith of the first three ecumenical Councils, i.e. 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 actual 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 where they were held, and Apostolic Tradition of the Church" (Com. 5th Cons.).

So the problem is not to accept the later Councils, Chalcedon included, as such in their terminology, but to accept their contents of faith. And in the case of Chalcedon, "the contents of the Council's formula seemed to be acceptable to the Oriental Orthodox Churches as well, although not because of the authority of that Council"<sup>6</sup>.

## 2. *The content of the christological consensus reached in Vienna*

According to these methodological principles, the participants in the Vienna consultations agreed on the following points which are the content of the common faith of Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox in the person of Jesus Christ:

### a) *Christ is true God and true man: He is the Son of God incarnate*

The first Communiqué says: "We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son incarnate, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity". And the second Communiqué: "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 become the children of God by His Grace" (2nd Cons.).

### b) *The incarnate Word in one person without division or separation, without change or commixture*

Oriental Orthodox had rejected Chalcedon because they accused it of Nestorianism. Here, against *Nestorianism*, all agree that the Incarnate Word is one person *without division or separation*. "His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not from the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixture, without confusion, *without division, without separation*" (Comm. 1st Cons.); "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" (Com. 2nd Cons.).

Chalcedonians had accused oriental Orthodox of Eutychianism. Here, against Eutychianism, all agree that "the Humanity of Christ is one with His Divinity *without commixture, without confusion*" (Com. 1st Cons.); *without change, without commixture*" (Com. 2nd Cons.).

All agreed to the *content* of the teaching of both Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Chalcedon, in spite of *different terminology* used in each side:

"We understand that when our common father in Christ, St. Cyril of Alexandria, speaks of *the one Incarnate nature of God's Word*, he does not deny but rather express the *full and perfect 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*' (Com. 2nd Cons., 2)

Both sides agreed in rejecting Nestorianism and Eutychianism, despite the remaining of the problem of terminology:

"The problem of terminology remains with us. For those of us in the Western tradition, to hear to 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 of the third day and ascended into heaven, and it is to come again a 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 contents in a consistent manner" (Com. 2nd Cons., 3).

Concerning this *pluralism in terminology*, "the fifth Consultation emphasised 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 Eutychianism, *a certain plurality of expressions was permissible* in relation to the inseparable and unconfused hypostatic unity of the human and the divine in 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" (Com. 5th Cons.)

<sup>6</sup> W. De Vries, "The Christological Consensus reached in Vienna", 3rd Cons., p. 25; Dr Krikorian expresses this idea, and adds: "The question is how far Chalcedon is really necessary" (2nd Cons., 42).

c) *God the word was not assuming manhood which might already have been formed in the womb of the Virgin*

The manhood assumed by the Word is not a separate entity, which existed before Incarnation, and was changed into Godhead after Christ's Resurrection and Ascension:

"The flesh possessing 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" (Com. 2nd Cons., 2).

### Conclusion

In Conclusion we can say that Chalcedonian Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches reached a consensus on Christology after fifteen centuries of division. And on this particular point, which is the essential point, and was the cause of schism and division, there is no more reason to remain divided.

Finally we thank the Lord that these non-official Vienna Consultations prepared the way to the official "Agreed Statement on Christology between the Coptic Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church" in the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, Wadi El Natrun, Egypt, on Friday the 12th of February 1988:

"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"<sup>7</sup>.

This declaration is considered as expressing the content of our common faith as Christians in Jesus Christ. Other expressions not contradicting this statement are parts of a legitimate theological pluralism, and can be subject to further reflection between theologians. The way is still open to deeper understanding of our common faith, and to reinterpretation of this common faith in relation to the problems that confront man today, as is expressed in the second Communiqué (1973):

"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 unbelievers and despises 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."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>. Follow the signatures of Coptic and Catholic Delegates. See the text with the introduction to it in: *Wort und Wahrheit*, Supplem. Issue No5, July 1989, pp. 168-169.

<sup>8</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 154

Moderator of the discussion: Metropolitan Amba Bishoy of Damiette and Kafr el Sheikh

Continuation of previous discussions, in the same effort of mutual clarification.

Fr Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox) *objects to certain aspects of Archbishop Bustros' presentation of Ephesus 449: Concerning the Council of Ephesus 449 the lecturer damaged the image of St. Dioscoros: From what he said one understands that Dioscoros justified Eutyches while he was still adhering to his heresy. Neither Dioscoros nor the Coptic Church ever accepted Eutyches' innovations.*

*The Tomus Leonis is again the subject of different questions.*

Amba Bishoy: *Certain passages of the Tomos Leonis could be understood in a dualistic or a more or less Nestorian way, but they can also be interpreted in an Orthodox way, if one presupposes the right intention of the author.*

Mar Eustathius (Syrian Orthodox) *asks for a new translation of Leo's letter adopted by the Chalcedonians which can be read by the Oriental Orthodox.*

Prof. Rushdi Behman (Coptic Orthodox): *Was Chalcedon siding with Leo's letter or was Rome trying to increase the division among the Eastern Churches, depending on historical events especially concerning the relation between Alexandria and Constantinople during the excommunication of Acacius of Constantinople?*

Archbishop Bustros: *Certain expressions of the "Tomos Leonis" as such may appear ambiguous, but the right principle of interpretation is clearly given in the emphasis put on the unity of the person, i.e. the Word or Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity.*

## THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSENSUS ACCORDING TO THE FIVE VIENNA CONSULTATIONS

In his History of the Church, Eusebius, Bishop of Cesarea, wrote: "Any man who intends to commit to writing the record of the Church's history is bound to go right back to Christ himself, whose name we are privileged to share, and to start with the beginning of a dispensation more divine than the world realizes"<sup>1</sup>. This text reminds us of Apostle Luke's Gospel when he "traced the whole sequence of events from the beginning, and has decided to set it in writing" for Theophilos (1:1-4). We too are going back to these Consultations held in Vienna. In fact, there are five gatherings called by the ecumenical foundation of PRO ORIENTE in 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988, during which participants discussed many topics treating especially Christological and Ecclesiological items.

We would like in this paper to present to you the results of these five Consultations on Christology and on the Christological agreed statement between the Churches. We start by giving a general view on these gatherings concerning Christ's theology and we finish by presenting a few of our wishes in this ecumenical field.

### 1) General View

It is noteworthy to affirm that the Ecumenical Councils did not bring anything new about the faith of Christ and of the Apostles as it is recorded in the New Testament books. However, they expressed this faith in new ways. While the New Testament was concerned to present Jesus behaving in His life as man and God, the Ecumenical Councils explained how the divine and the human elements are united to each other in the one person of Jesus. Thus, they inserted in the dogmas philosophical expressions taken from the Hellenic philosophy of that time. "The expressions didn't have the same meaning in all the philosophical schools around the Christian world. Thus it happened that the Churches called each other heretics"<sup>2</sup>.

### a) Council of Chalcedon

The Council of Chalcedon, gathered in 451, received an important place during these Vienna gatherings. It was, in fact, considered by many of the theologians and the religious leaders as a "stone of scandal" between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Thus, H.H. Pope Paul VI and H.H. Pope Shenouda III in their Common Declaration in 1973 stated: "Since the year 451 AD, theological differences, nourished and widened by non-theological factors, have sprung up"<sup>3</sup>... Grillmeier relates these non-theological factors to the rivalry between the

Cappadocian-Antiochene and the Cyrilline-Alexandrine theological schools, to the lack of a clear, definite and uniform Christological terminology, to the impetuosity and jealousy of some hierarchs, and last but not least to the political factor. In the same vein, W. de Vries remarks about Chalcedon: "The dispute arose from the basic inability of men at that time to believe that the same truth may be expressed in different words which may even be apparently contradictory"<sup>4</sup>.

Here is the definition of Chalcedon about the person of Christ:

"He is one, He Himself is Christ, the only Son, the Lord, in whom we have to confess two natures united without commixion, without confusion, without division and without separation. The union of both natures didn't suppress not annul in any way their differences; instead, intact were reserved the properties of both natures which were united in one person and in one hypostasis"<sup>5</sup>. The Fathers of the Church expressed and explained the definition: firstly the unicity of the person in Christ. Jesus Christ is one person, who is the Word of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the only-begotten Son of the Father before all ages, and he took flesh from the Virgin Mary. Secondly, each of the two natures guarded its properties in the unity of the person.

### b) The Vienna Consultations

In 1967 and during his meeting with the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, H.H. Pope Paul VI insisted on the importance of the Council of Ephesus (341), considered it the basis for the unity of the two churches, and insisted on its teaching: "God, made man for our salvation, is the God we confess in our Creed and preach to the world". Then, the Pope quotes the 12th century Armenian Catholicos Nerses IV who wrote that the term "two natures" would be acceptable to him insofar as it indicated the lack of confusion between humanity and divinity in Christ, against the teachings of Eutyches and Apollinarius. Furthermore, the Pope asked: "Has the time not come to clear up once and for all such misunderstandings inherited from the past?"<sup>6</sup>. Was Paul VI a prophet? Did his thoughts belong to the "signs of times"?

It was then a propitious occasion to deepen the knowledge of all the Chalcedonian data on Christology. That is why the first Vienna Consultation was devoted to the study of these Christological data. For this reason also, the theologians gathered in Vienna in 1971 under the auspices of Cardinal König started a new way in theological and historical research. After rejecting both the Eutychian and Nestorian Christologies, the theologians expressed their common faith in Christ in these words: "... We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the Mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions". In this first Communiqué, the theologians made great efforts to use different concepts. The words "person" and "nature" are never used. It is an effort to create a new

<sup>1</sup>. Eusebius, History of the Church, 1984, Book I, pg. 33.

<sup>2</sup>. Bustros S., Christian Theology and Modern Man (in Arabic), Harissa 1989, vol. 1, pg. 158.

<sup>3</sup>. The Vienna Dialogue, in PRO ORIENTE, Booklet I, Vienna 1991, pg. 109.

<sup>4</sup>. Krikorian M., The Theological Significance of the Results of the 5 Vienna Consultations, in PRO ORIENTE, Booklet I, Vienna 1991, pg. 12.

<sup>5</sup>. Bustros S., Op; Cit., p.176.

<sup>6</sup>. Roberson R. G., The Contemporary Relationship between the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches, in PRO ORIENTE, Booklet I, Vienna 1991, pg. 24.

vocabulary, using new concepts to express the one faith which underlies both ancient formulations<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, we find the same formulation and expressions used by these theologians in the Common Declaration signed by Pope Paul VI and the Syrian Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III. In fact, we read: "... there is no difference in the faith (we) profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become fully man". It follows in May 1973 an important meeting between H.H. Pope Paul VI and H.H. the Coptic Pope Shenouda III, where the two hierarchs insisted on the Common Declaration that in Christ "His divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye"<sup>8</sup>. If we compare the texts of the Common Declaration and of the Communiqué of the first Vienna Consultation, we find the same formulation. Thus, Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III repeated and quoted what the theologians wrote in their Communiqué.

The year 1973 saw a second meeting in Vienna where the theologians added to their first Communiqué that Christ's mystery is incomprehensible and that all concepts about him are limited. Accordingly, right formulations can be misunderstood and behind wrong formulations there can be a correct understanding. Indeed, the theologians insisted on "... 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'... 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 agree in rejecting Eutychianism and Nestorianism... Our common effort to clarify the meaning in the Trinitarian and Christological contexts 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"<sup>9</sup>.

Once again, in the Common Declaration signed by H.H. Pope John Paul II and His Beatitude the Syrian Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, we face a new and important statement. Both hierarchs insist that past schisms and divisions "in no way affect or touch the substance of their faith since they arose only because of differences in terminology and culture"<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the controversy was about terminology and not about dogma. It follows after that meeting a Doctrinal Agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankarese Syrian Orthodox Church, - agreement which put an end to the Christological dispute between them. It could be compared to the end of the first round that the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches had gone forth in their search for the Unity to whom Christ had called us. We read: "... In the Person of the Eternal Logos Incarnate are united and active in a real and perfect way the divine and human natures, with all their properties, faculties and operations"<sup>11</sup>. We find in

<sup>7</sup>. *Ibidem*, p.25.

<sup>8</sup>. Cf. Common Declaration, in PRO ORIENTE, Booklet I, Vienna 1991, pg. 109.

<sup>9</sup>. Communiqué, *Ibid*, p. 58-59.

<sup>10</sup>. Common Declaration, *Ibid*, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup>. *Ibidem*, p. 123, §5.

this text the word "Logos" that did not occur much in the Common Declarations and Communiqués. However, it occurred in the text of the Christological Agreement signed by the representatives of the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches, who met at Amba Bishoy Monastery in 1988. Here is the text: "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"<sup>12</sup>.

### c) Plurality of Expressions

We deduce from the Communiqué of the 5th Consultation in 1988 that the great mystery of the Incarnation of God's Son could not be exhaustively formulated in words. The theologians thus emphasized that, "within the limits of condemned errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism, 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"<sup>13</sup>.

Since their first gathering in 1971 the theologians called for theological pluralism to arrive towards an agreement in Christology. In searching for a solution to the problem of accepting Chalcedon, Piet Schoonenberg suggested a pluralism of Christology: "To me, a first, provisional solution seems to be that we accept the fact of diverging terminologies and ways of thinking as being expressions of one and the same Lord Jesus Christ... I do not think, however, that pluralism means the solution of all ecclesiastical difficulties. Above all, I would like to stress that pluralism expresses only half of what we accept or have to aim at. Accepting the one faith is the other half"<sup>14</sup>. Thus, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan and Grillmeier also called for pluralism. The latter insisted on the theologians' task: to deepen the faith of the Fathers as well as to adapt it to our time and understanding. These perspectives led those gathered at the first Consultation to realise "that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions; however, ... they can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicaea and Ephesus"<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, the plurality of expression helps in the understanding and in the reception of the dogma. Our modern age requests from us to be open with a new look to the future so that we communicate to our youth the truth understood in a clear and easy way. In this frame of mind came the opening speech of His Eminence Cardinal König at the second Consultation in 1973. He reported on what H.H. Pope Shenouda III had said in the presence of H.H. Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's Cathedral by emphasizing the usefulness of the theological Consultations in Vienna. These, in fact, had produced "a tentative formula of faith about Christ, which was achieved and

<sup>12</sup>. *Ibid*, p. 120.

<sup>13</sup>. *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>14</sup>. Krikorian M., Art. cit., p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>. Communiqué, in PRO ORIENTE, Booklet I, Vienna 1991, pg. 46.

approved by both sides"<sup>16</sup>. All these achievements came from a spirit of love and reconciliation, and the desire to act according to the will of Christ the Lord who calls us to unity. This responsibility is carried by every believer of good will. It is echoed in the second Consultation Communiqué: "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"<sup>17</sup>. This Communiqué was followed by the 1984 Common Declaration signed by H.H. Pope John Paul II and H. H. Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. Both hierarchs insist on the responsibility and duty "to proclaim before the world the mystery of the Person of the Word incarnate and of His saving work, the unshakeable foundation of that common faith..."<sup>18</sup>.

Pluralism will stay a difficult as well as a good means to arrive at the unique goal in our life: oneness in Christ. Indeed, great is the mystery of the God-Man! No one is able to comprehend the mystery of the unity of the Divinity and the Humanity in the One Lord Jesus Christ, and no word is capable to speak of it. Thus, we repeat in the Thanksgiving Prayer of the Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom: "... For you are a God beyond description, beyond understanding, invisible, incomprehensible..."

#### *d) Wishes made at the Consultations*

These consultations did not come out of personal desire only, but they sprang from the hearts of believers in Christ, searching for unity and establishing it among the other Christian churches. The Lord does not stop sending workers to his field to give up their positions in order to realise the Divine Will. The Churches' stewards were aware to establish a workable program helping on the path to unity. In fact, on 23 June 1979 H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Pope Shenouda III put up "Principles for guiding the search for unity between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church"<sup>19</sup>. These principles came out one year after the fourth Consultation in 1978. Indeed, they were an inevitable consequence of these consultations held between brothers from the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

The Christological problem was at the centre of these consultations, yet the idea of service and help between the two churches took a primordial place in the document mentioned. In fact we read in the fourth paragraph: "It is at the service of each to help each live better the proper gifts it has received from God's Spirit". In the sixth paragraph, both hierarchs ask in a brotherly manner the mutual need to help in problems of faith and pastoral difficulties. And so on...

In the other Communiqués produced by these consultations we find an important request that is being concretised little by little among our churches. It describes the need "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

<sup>16</sup>. Opening Speech of Card. König, *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup>. Communiqué, *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup>. Common Declaration, *Ibid*, p. 119 §5.

<sup>19</sup>. *Ibid*, p. 111-114

and love"<sup>20</sup>. In today's circumstances this difficult wish will help us and push us to think seriously about what we are teaching in our seminaries on Christology. No need to talk about the manner church history is taught and the way of accusing of heresy the other Churches! Enough dispute and division! Did we forget that Christ the only Lord is the One who is calling us to Unity? It is a long and tiring way to go, yet all of us are responsible. Since 1970 the idea returned in the Common Declaration of H.H. Pope Paul VI and H.H. Catholicos Vasken I: "This unity cannot be realised unless everyone, pastors and faithful, really strive to know each other. To this end, they urge theologians to apply themselves to a common study..."<sup>21</sup>. I also think that our gatherings these days are a realisation of these "holy" wishes expressed by the Lord Jesus, the religious hierarchs and all those who worked at the Vienna Consultations. I would like to give a personal witness.

My participation in this symposium was strictly bound to H.G. Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim, Metropolitan of Aleppo for the Syrian Orthodox Church. He was the one who called me, encouraged me and backed me up to give my account. He was the first one who asked his priests to participate in my biblical conferences held in Aleppo two years ago. He also helped me to present a document to the World Council of Churches in the Middle East for the restoration of my monastery in Lebanon. In fact, these relations bore in me sentiments of respect, love and consideration, contrary to what I learned from the books when I was a student. I fully hope that our meetings these days do not stop at the discussions and research but become a starting point towards a flourishing future in helping our brother the human person. Indeed, St. Paul says: "For all of you, who have been baptized in Christ, you are the descendance of Abraham and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29). Thus, these differences do not remain divisions among us, for Christ strongly unites to Him those who are united into His life. Christ is today everything in all mankind (cf. Col. 3:11) to prepare us that "God becomes everything in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

#### *2) Personal Wishes*

a) The person of Jesus, without doubt, concerns every human being, also the historian. He is concerned by the meaning of His life and death, by the human importance of His message, by the interpretations given by the different books of the New Testament. Consequently, we are to find divergence of results gathered either by the historian or by the theologian concerning their interpretation of the New Testament data. In fact: "No one can study and present purely 'objectively' the humanity of Jesus, the drama of His life which the Cross crowned, the message He left to humanity through His words, His work and his same existence"<sup>22</sup>. Indeed, we face the same difficulty when the Fathers of the Church considered the definitions of the Ecumenical Councils to give the content of the Biblical faith on the Person of Christ. They used, in other words "auxiliary languages" to express this same faith without exactly describing the mystery itself. We may add that whatever are the personal dispositions of the modern

<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid*, p. 59 §5.

<sup>21</sup>. *Ibid*, p. 107.

<sup>22</sup>. Commission Biblique Pontificale, in *Bible et Christologie*, Ed. du Cerf, Paris 1984, §1.1.3.3.

researcher, he has to find the constituents of the internal unity of the New Testament Christology inside the framework of its own development. Thus, we may recall that the Christology of the Synoptic Gospels differs from that of John's and Paul's writings. In fact, each part of the New Testament has its own perspective on Christ's person. Yet, if the ideas and views differ in presenting Christ through the New Testament writings, how are we to find them in the period of the Fathers or in our own age?

We always have to remember that the New Testament books are not a pure historical story about Jesus' earthly life, but they are a kerygmatic exposition of the faith established on accomplished facts and at the same time transcendent history itself. The historical Jesus, in a certain sense, provoked the faith in his disciples. As believers, these evoked "Him whom they saw by their eyes and touched by their hands" (1 Jn. 1:1-3). For this reason, when the Holy Scripture ceases to be the departing point for theological thinking and explanation, we fall into dogmatic difficulties and divergence of faith. This is what happened to the "Liberation Theology" in Latin America, and what happened to the Fathers of Chalcedon. On this purpose the Pontifical Biblical Commission said: "The formulation of Christological theses depends more on the language of patristic or medieval theologians than on the New Testament itself, as if this ultimate source of revelation was not accurate enough to furnish the doctrine a very definite formulation"<sup>23</sup>.

What I wish, first of all, is that the theologians search for an "auxiliary language" to make the Bible's special and fundamental language clearer to their contemporaries, so that all people rightly preach the Gospel in its fullness through the whole world. This wish is attached to the idea of plurality in formulating and finding expressions related to the dogmas. Thus we call and encourage clergy and laity to deepen their study of the Holy Scripture especially the New Testament writings. May I then ask: Why are the Protestant Churches not represented in these gatherings? Why do we not ask them to help us in the biblical field in which they went further than other Churches in the study of God's Word? Let us ask our Protestant brothers whose number is getting higher every day in our Middle East, with an ecumenical spirit, to help us to deepen our research and to teach us their own experiences.

b) This last wish brings us on to another field. Theological research is the Church's daughter and helps the Church's members to deepen their faith. In fact the Church embraces the present world and inserts herself in it through her members. She works through them in the world in order to let the Gospel spirit penetrate in all its familial, social and political structures.

The primitive church, where the New Testament writings took origin under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was fully aware that the same help will be given to her in the future. That is why, if we today study Christology, we must also search the study of Pneumatology. In fact, only in faith and under the inspiration and encouragement of the Holy Spirit we become able to "know" Christ glorified. This is the biblical knowledge which is offered to the human person. It becomes an undivided part of the person for it bore in him a new presence and a creative existence. In this vein Augustin Jankowski writes: "The Church of our time, even though far from the primitive church, yet confident in the help of the Holy Spirit, pursues to elaborate a

<sup>23</sup>. *Ibidem*, §1.2.1.1.

total Christology 'in the Spirit', thus without any mutilation caused by prejudgements"<sup>24</sup>.

It is important to give Christology a pneumatological dimension in order to exit from the false dichotomy between the Christology "from on high" and the Christology "from on earth". In other words, to be far away from the idea of "Jesus of the history" and "Jesus of the faith". Jesus is present in the Church in "the Spirit"; this is the foundation of the real hermeneutical actualisation of the biblical revelation. And when they ask us: can we study Christology without Pneumatology? Our answer is negative and we refer to St. Paul: "For I inform you that no one, if he speaks by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can say 'cursed be Jesus' and no one can say 'Jesus Lord' but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). This testimony continues in the church under the guidance of the Spirit "Paraklitos", as well as the testimony given by the Father and the Son: "I witness to myself, and the Father who sent me, he also witnesses to me" (Jn 8:18). The Holy Spirit is the element of the continuity and the one who calls to an interpretation adapted to the different times<sup>25</sup>.

Here resides our role as Easterners in insisting on the Holy Spirit's place in the study of Christology. The Occident reproaches us that the centre of our theology revolves around the Holy Spirit, His action and His descent. We in return reproach the Occident that the centre of its theology is revolved around Christ. What is wrong if we return to a harmony between Christology and Pneumatology? According to the expression of Yves Congar "it is permissible to remind the Easterners that the sanity of Pneumatology is Christology. But in the West, we are to better understand that the sanity of Christology is Pneumatology"<sup>26</sup>.

c) A last wish: We encourage the translation into Arabic of the text of a document prepared by the Pontifical International Biblical Commission in 1983 entitled "Bible and Christology". The Latin text was translated into French and printed in Paris. The Commission did not give any kind of directives to exegetes and theologians, but considering their works, made efforts to underline a few points to help the theological reflection, preaching and the catechesis.

In the first part of this document, the Commission takes into consideration the new theological approaches to Christ and Christology in today's world. In its second part it traces a sound way to the study of Christology, which is built on the testimonies and data contained in both Testaments on Christ. Consequently, the Commission operates as if it was extending a bridge between the exigencies of biblical criticism and the needs of pastors.

### Conclusion

These Vienna gatherings helped in unifying our purposes on Christ the full man and God, who was incarnate from the Virgin Mary for our salvation. However, does this mean that we may act as in the past, obliging others to say what we want them to say?

<sup>24</sup>. Connaitre Jésus Christ aujourd'hui dans l' Esprit Saint, *Ibidem*, p.252.

<sup>25</sup>. Cf. Schnakenburg R., Das Johannes Evangelium, Freiburg 1975, III, p. 173.

<sup>26</sup>. Congar Y., Pour une Christologie pneumatologique, in RSPTh 63 (1979) 439.

Are we going to anathematise different people if they took the courage to research and study Christology? Are we going to anathematise more brothers as we did with Eutyches and Apollinarius? Recent research showed us, for example, that Patriarch Photius of Constantinople is a great man who contributed to the understanding of the Church position in her national and universal dimensions, and what was written about him were false opinions<sup>27</sup>.

Today, we ask everyone to start from the difficult reality of life and to proclaim Christ to all mankind who became sons and daughters through adoption (cf. Eph 1:5). The Christological Consensus we reached today engages us to the mission we received from God who "wants all men be saved and arrive to the knowledge of truth, for God is one, and the mediator between God and man is one, Jesus Christ who gave himself as redemption for all men" (1 Tm 2:4f). Thus, Christology and all theology is first of all a pastoral work realising God's will, "which is that humankind forms the one people of God, gathers in the one body of Christ and builds the one temple of the Holy Spirit. This totally corresponds to the intimate desire of all humanity which brings brotherly harmony" (Vatican II, Mission of the Church, §7).

Moderator of the discussion: Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian

Fr. Joseph Tarzi (Syrian Orthodox): *A comment about asking the help of the Protestants in the biblical studies: The Protestant interpretation is built on historical studies, while what we need is to look at the Bible with the eyes of faith, so that the interpretation is complete. I see that we have to go back to the Church Fathers who interpreted the Bible with faith.*

Archimandrite Antiba (Greek Catholic): *We should not fear the Protestant biblical studies, we should rather take them and benefit from them to achieve a deeper understanding of the Bible.*

Mr. Joseph Faltas (Coptic Orthodox): *The distinction between the heavenly Christology and the earthly one, the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith is rather a Western distinction.*

*My suggestion is to go back to the Church Fathers who interpreted the Bible and all the dogmas.*

Archimandrite Antiba (Greek Catholic): *Even in the Fathers' writings there is difference in interpretation, like the difference between the schools of Antioch and Alexandria.*

Mr. Ilija Zaki (Coptic Orthodox): *An objection to the statement that the new Testament does not give a new adequate definition of the dogmas. The shortage is not in the New Testament but in our understanding.*

Archbishop Moussa Daoud (Syrian Catholic): *Concerning the question of whether to anathematise others: Is it possible not to question and consequently anathematise whoever trespasses the dogmas of faith?*

Fr. Kamil William (Coptic Catholic): *He agrees with the speaker about getting help from the Protestants in studying the Bible. He agrees also that the New Testament gives the bases for the dogmas but not necessarily for the formulas.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox): *My question is: which sort of Protestants are we going to ask for help in the biblical studies? Are they traditionalists or charismatics? The Charismatics like the Pentecostals are evangelists who want to bring the Western spirituality to the Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and even Evangelical Churches. Is the West ready to benefit from the Eastern spirituality?*

Bishop Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic): *We are discussing a very sensitive subject and I completely understand Fr. Malaty. There are some Protestant evangelists who want to get involved in the churches, especially the Orthodox Churches, and influence them. But there are also others e.g. the Lutherans and other theologians. We can benefit from what these have done in the biblical studies.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox) *demands that the Letter of Leo should be clarified because it does not state the hypostatical union of the two natures of Christ.*

Fr. Sidarous Matta (Coptic Orthodox) *asks for biblical references concerning the term of Perfect God and Perfect Man.*

*The human properties of Christ were not only human but according to Cyrill they were also of the divine economy conducted by the will of the First Person Who was united in Christ.*

Archbishop Bustros (Greek Catholic): *The properties were not illusive, they were real because of his perfect humanity. If Christ was a real man then he should have suffered because of man's sin.*

Fr. Sidarous Matta: *There are not many biblical references in the lectures. I do not agree with the idea of dualism: God and Man.*

Archbishop Bustros: *The idea of God and Man is an expression of the perfection of the divinity and the perfection of the humanity in Christ. What it means is to mention the two natures: Divine and Human, not two persons.*

Mr. Naji Wanis Hazkeial (Coptic Orthodox):

*I agree with the idea of asking help from Protestant scholars in the biblical studies. Some of their writings are to be found in the Church Fathers' writings.*

<sup>27</sup>. Cf. Dvornik F., Eglises Nationales et Eglise Universelle, dans *Istina* n° 1 (1991) 9-52.

## COUNCILS AND CONCILIARITY

The topic of "Council and Conciliarity" is central in the search for unity between the different traditions of the Church.

Its importance can be seen in that it was an issue for study and discussion in the second and third Vienna ecumenical consultations.

The theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches were able to throw light on the topic thanks to the unofficial dialogue organised by the PRO ORIENTE foundation.

Thanks to the founder of PRO ORIENTE, His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König, and the efforts of its former President Dr. Theodor Piffli-Percevic and of Secretary General Alfred Stirnemann the dialogue began and continues.

The dialogue has proceeded on the following basis:

First, belief in the fact that the search for unity and faith among Christians starts with the teaching of the New Testament.

Second, through the decisions of local and regional councils.

Thirdly and lastly through the decisions of ecumenical councils recognised by the participating churches.

May I summarise the most important points of the discussion raised about councils and conciliarity in the second consultation held in 1973 as follows:

1. Infallibility of the church and its relation with the ecumenical councils.
2. Attitude of the Oriental Orthodox Churches towards the so-called ecumenical councils, starting with the fourth council held in Chalcedon in the year 451 and ending with the seventh council held in Nicaea on October 23, 787.
3. Reception of the statements of the councils.
4. The ecumenical councils and the role of Saint Peter the Apostle and his mission within them.

In the third consultation in 1976 we examined new research related to the Church and the councils. First some theologians spoke about Jesus Christ's Church as a local church, some of the theologians dealt with the necessity of communion (koinonia) between the local churches, the roots of the conciliar thought and the necessity of councils for the life of the universal Church. It might also be useful to point out that the issue of the authority of the councils and its relation with the unity of the Church was also presented.

We all believe that the Church is the group of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ the incarnate God Who is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We are united in the one faith as Saint Paul says in his epistle to the Ephesians. We share the Lord's sacraments, and we believe that the local councils constituted an original part of the structure of the Church, that the ecumenical councils had a universal nature, and that these local and regional councils played an important role in the life of the early Church, due to the nature of decisions taken therein.

We read about the meetings that took place between Jesus Christ and his disciples on the one hand, and in particular the last meeting in the upper room, while some believe it was the first council of the Christian Church, and also about the Apostles' meetings, the first of which mentioned in the book of Acts, was held to elect a successor to Judas the Eschariot (as mentioned in the book of Acts), and the second meeting held to select

seven deacons (also as mentioned in the Book of Acts). We can also discern through the epistles of Saint Paul, and in particular his epistle to the Corinthians, how the early Christians used to meet repeatedly to eat together and celebrate the liturgy. But the council held by the Apostles mentioned in Chapter 15 of the Book of Acts remains as the first organised council, which was followed as an example when other councils were held thereafter. Therefore it is useful to mention some important stages to be seen in the first Apostles' council held in Jerusalem.

1. Attendants were Apostles and non-Apostles from Jerusalem and outside Jerusalem.
2. The whole Church recognised the decisions. They were directed to the whole Church.
3. The decisions were faith-related and dealt with practices and traditions.
4. The decisions taken were written in message-form and given to the whole Church.
5. Peter the Apostle played an important role in the life of the Council.
6. Participation in the council was from the grassroots.

If we want to delve deeper into the work of this council, we find that the prime cause of its convening was to put an end to questions raised following arguments and discussions between some of the Apostles in Antioch. Therefore, this council remained as a unique event in the history of the early Church. This is demonstrated in the great reception of the Apostles by the local Churches after they left Jerusalem carrying with them the written decisions of the council. This council at least gives us a clear formula for the general concept of a council.

We should not forget the leading action of James the Apostle in the early Church, but the conciliar concept is also clearly demonstrated through the consultation of Bishop James with the elders, deacons and brethren.

### *Necessity of Councils*

Theologians have shown that the terminology "local council" or "regional council" was not officially used in the pre-Chalcedon era as it was after the council of Chalcedon. The local church used to meet and attendance was popular. The objectives of the meetings were that the Church remedies itself by itself with a view to preserving its union in faith and to protect itself from heresies, innovations and Western ideas. This was in the second century. As regards the third century, there were new signs of organised pastoral meetings which later on took the form of local, regional and country councils. The difference between both of them was that in the pre-third-century meetings discussion was free and democratic and participation was effective. In the latter, the bishop used to play an important role, so that in the parish council he had absolute authority and practised it on the members. Hence we raise the following questions: Is the convening of councils essential? And why?

Is not the objective of the councils the same as the Liturgy? That is to bring us together in communion, because our communion is with Jesus Christ as said by Saint Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread". (1 Cor. 10:16.17). If so, then the councils are essential, for we should note that the Church is not only the body of Jesus but it is the earthly image of the Trinity. Thus we see the Trinity through the early Church when it was composed of 5000 persons.



Councils are not only to set solutions for the problems but also to clarify the opinion of the Church in faith, traditional, rite and organisation related issues. This is clear in the regional councils. Examples are: study of the issue of Easter time, repudiation of heretical baptism and the problems of the ecclesiastical system. Though essential they are not necessary for valid conversion or additions of new dogmas. After the third council the Oriental Orthodox Churches were convinced that no addition to what had been achieved by the Fathers in the Nicaean and Constantinopolitan councils was necessary. When these Churches rejected the Chalcedon Council, this was for a clear reason. That is: this Council endeavoured to add a new formula to the faith. Consequently, the Oriental Orthodox Churches preferred to cut communion with the rest of the Churches because it appeared to be an attempt to make changes in the faith and traditions of the Church.

But the question remains: Are the councils essential? If the answer is yes, the next question is "which ones"? The Oriental Orthodox Churches, recognise only the three ecumenical councils i.e. Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381 and Ephesus 44331, as ecumenical councils, while the Byzantine Orthodox Churches accept seven ecumenical councils, and the Catholic Church of Rome considers the Pontifical councils also ecumenical, hence the number of ecumenical councils in the Catholic church is raised to 21. If the councils are essential, how did the Orthodox live 1204 years and the Eastern Orthodox Churches 1561 years with no more than three councils? Does this long period of time mean that the life of our churches lacks all that is necessary? The theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches affirmed that infallibility of the Church as an interpretation is by no means related to the old interpretation of the tradition in the Church, and that the councils are not the place in which infallibility of the church is affirmed. Also, the necessity for councils is not due to any permanent institutions needed to express its own unity. They remain essential from the historical aspect, provided that councils are held always and not only when the need arises. The council is an institution built by God in which faith issues are the objective.

### *Reception of Councils*

After the convening of the first council by the Apostles in Jerusalem, the universal Church accepted its authority. The Apostles addressed a written letter to the Churches containing decisions of this council. The question of the reception of councils raises for us the question of how to know the authenticity and legitimacy of a council. After the Apostles' council which comprised the Apostles, elders, brethren, and representatives of the whole than known church, we do not see either a local or regional or country council or even an ecumenical council. All the universal Church was present. All the Churches recognise the authenticity and legitimacy of the three councils and accept the canons of these councils and their decisions. As Athanasios the Apostolic says: acceptance of the council is a must if the council preserves the Apostolic tradition, expresses the unity of the Church and supports decisions of the other councils recognised by the Church. However, there are two steps for each council:

1. Consent of all the bishops attending and participating in the decisions of the council
2. Bringing the decisions to the knowledge of the non-attending bishops for reception and declaration.

In the case of the ecumenical council, there is a reception that the Churches were Apostolic, if they were honestly preserving the Apostolic tradition. The ecumenical council has an advantage and that is that most of its members are bishops, for bishops' authority covers a wide geographical area, so that representation is broad at an ecumenical council. The enabling of reception of an ecumenical council by the local church lies in making the council perfect for the living tradition of the faith. Reception should not necessarily be directly, the ecumenism of a council can be received gradually. Such was the case with the early ecumenical councils. This was partly because the inhabited land in fact meant the borders of the Byzantine Empire. Persia (Fars) and Ethiopia and other countries are outside the inhabited land (af maskuna), that is outside the borders of the Byzantine Empire.

Reception of the councils differs between the decisions of the ecumenical councils and other councils. At the local or regional level, there were features that might not be important in other places. Therefore, its decisions would not necessarily have to be accepted in order that the council itself be valid as legal. Regarding the ecumenical councils, and in particular in relation to the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the three ecumenical councils are automatically accepted and authoritative and the Churches have to receive them. This is because these councils were "not subject of argument in faith and all Christians should consider them as an expression of heavenly grace and the Divine Order". The reason is that "the provisions pronounced by the ecumenical council are Divine provisions" as literally mentioned in Emperor Constantine's message when he declared the decisions of the first council. He noted that the official intervention by the State in the religious affairs of the Church made the spiritual quality of the councils void.

It has been proved that reception of the local, regional and general councils in their areas of authority is easier than reception of the ecumenical councils in all the Church.

In many ways the policy of the Empire created obstacles in the reception of councils. Even Emperor Constantine, who said in one of his messages that "the provisions pronounced by the ecumenical councils are Divine provisions", changed his mind ten years later in A.D. 355 and ordered the convening of a council in Jerusalem, at which it was decided to annul the provision of the ecumenical council of Nicaea against Arius. It ordered Arius's return from exile to Alexandria, and sent a message to Pope Athanasius the Apostolic demanding that he accept him back in communion. If it had not been for Athanasius' powerful influence and the obedience of Egypt's bishops to him, he would not have been able to write to the Emperor saying: "He who has been anathematised by an ecumenical council cannot be absolved from anathema except by another ecumenical council, as he who possesses the authority of excommunication is he alone who has the authority of absolution". Similarly, the letter of the Patriarch of Constantinople Alexandrus refusing the request of Emperor Constantine to accept Arius back into communion, was written in the same spirit. He said: "He who has been excommunicated by an ecumenical council from the order of clergy, none but an ecumenical council has the right to restore".

Thus, a later ecumenical council always accepted the decisions taken by a previous council. This happened at the second ecumenical council of Constantinople, and this is what was approved by the seventh law of the third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431, which stated: "No one may present or write or compose another faith except the faith put down by the Holy Fathers meeting in the Holy Spirit in Nicaea.

Reception of local, regional, general and national councils does not form an obstacle in the way of our march towards Christian Unity, but reception of councils called

ecumenical, and held after the third ecumenical council might form an obstacle in the way of Churches that are desirous of official reconciliation between them. Orthodox theologians adopted a strict attitude in the four non-official consultations held at Aarhus 1964, Bristol 1967, Geneva 1970, Addis Ababa 1971. They insisted that acceptance of the ecumenical councils was a basic condition for any official reconciliation. However, the attitude of theologians from the Roman Catholic Church was markedly different and more elastic. They affirmed together with the theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the second Vienna consultation the following attitude:

"We agree that the first three ecumenical councils because of their broad reception in the Church, enjoy a greater share of universality than later councils".

Some of the participants expressed, regardless of ecclesiastical reception, the possibility of "spiritual reception". Perhaps this could be a reasonable solution to the problem of accepting or not accepting the later councils. After settling the disagreement over Christology, it has become the duty of the churches concerned to determine, when to receive the decisions of ecumenical and other councils in their liturgies, canons and ecclesiastical life. This was prior to the decisions of the Chalcedon Council. The issue after Chalcedon became more complicated. This is because at this Council a number of the great fathers of the Oriental Orthodox Church were anathemized until the lifting of the anathemas takes place between the Oriental Churches and the Catholic Church on the one hand, and between them and the rest of the other Churches which recognise the ecumenism of Chalcedon, on the other. This council could not be received by all churches. This did not prevent some churches, of which the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch was one, from receiving some of the canons of this council. The scholar Mar Gregorios Yohanna Bar Hebraeus, Catholicos of the East, adopted five canons which he added to his canonical collection in the book of "Nomocanon". These are about monasteries, alms-giving, priesthood and the monastic life.

Patriarch Mar Ignatios Zakka I, Patriarch of Antioch and the rest of the East: "What an openminded scholar Bar Hebraeus was? And like him were most of the Fathers of the Syrian Church. In spite of their rejecting the creed of the council which they did not recognize, they did not mind accepting the moral canons which were good enough for the institution of the church, though they were introduced in a council rejected by the church".

### *Conciliar Thought in the Life of the Church*

Doubtless conciliarity played an important role in the life of the universal Church during its long history. It was made to serve, as a living tool, the needs of the Church which is the body of Jesus Christ. Every meeting whether small or big, organised in terms of time or not, but where the bishops are present and agreements are reached by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to devise solutions to the problems of the Church, affirms that individuals however high their social status in the universal or local church, cannot replace conciliar thinking. This is because they do not have the power or authority to find suitable solutions to the problems of the whole Church. We see that the concept of conciliarity takes a clear form in the first Apostolic Council, as mentioned in the Book of Acts, Chapter 15. Since then conciliarity became a legal canonical entity.

The full conciliar expression of the Universal Church is to be found in the meeting of the bishops of the local church. The idea of conciliarity stemmed from the concept of councils. This became a component of the tradition of the Church, and therefore participants agreed in the Vienna meetings that there could be an ecclesiastical conciliar body for any church, provided that it be under the auspices of the bishop. This is because the bishop holds authority and represents it when the need arises through the faithful and not above them. Here we find that conciliarity grew and developed in the East more than in the West. In particular the See of Rome seemed not to have developed the characteristics of councils such as freedom of speech and criticism. Even at ecumenical councils, we see that Rome sent only a small number of representatives to the East, while the Oriental Orthodox and Byzantine Churches used to attach great importance to the councils. Therefore, their representation was greater than that of the Western Church. Thus, spreading of conciliar thought goes side by side with episcopal authority.

The bishop is the legal successor in the unbroken chain of the Apostles' successors. From this authority, the bishops used to meet in council and take decisions which preserved the Apostolic tradition of the Christian faith.

In the Vienna consultations whilst the theologians of the Catholic Church in Rome insisted on the concept of the universal church and the presence of a universal pastor, the Oriental Orthodox supported the concept of local pastors or patriarchs. Archbishop Paulos Mar Gregorios, said in the third consultation: "The ancient Syro-Alexandrian tradition does not recognise a universal pastor or an ecumenical Patriarch. A bishop is the bishop of the local church as he is also of the Church Catholic. The idea that 'locality' can be extended from a city to a universal or ecumenical bishop or Patriarch is not in the authentic Eastern tradition. It was a peculiar claim of the Imperial churches of Rome and Constantinople, which the other churches were always reluctant to accept. The local church was always a local manifestation of the Church Catholic, but the tradition did not conceive of a universal manifestation of the Church Catholic".

There is an emphasis in the Byzantine Orthodox Church that every decision taken outside the council, especially if it is related to a heresy or an anathema, is considered illegal. However, the authority of councils is above any other authority in the Church. This was expressed by Nicolas Cabasilas of Thessalonica in the year 1363 as follows:

"The only cause of division which still exists between the Church Latin and ourselves is the Pope's unwillingness to submit the bone of contention to the arbitration of an ecumenical council, and his desire is to set himself up as the sole judge and master of his words."

The summary of the discussions at the Vienna consultations about conciliarity and conciliar thought in the universal church came in the form of an extract from the World Council of Churches Salamanca conference, 1973:

"The one church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship each local church possesses, in communion with others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same Apostolic faith and therefore recognises the other as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit."

This is what I have been able to submit to you today about the theologians' deliberations who, thanks to PRO ORIENTE, met in the Vienna consultations, to discuss Councils and Conciliarity in the Church. Their Holinesses, the Popes and Patriarchs and also the local councils of all churches encouraged this unifying work. Our meeting today which is the first of its kind, is an appreciation of all those who have presented to us in their theological talks the resulting unifying ideology. The invitation of PRO ORIENTE to this meeting, which we hope will be repeated every year in different regions of the East, is to introduce the achievements of these ecumenical efforts, and to restore the churches to their proper unity. More awareness and hope pushes forward the process of dialogue in love and understanding.

Recently disclosed fears of proselytism mentioned by high-ranking church leaders these days in the various churches, do not encourage us in our progress towards unity. This would mean to close a chapter that has been opened in a dialogue based on Christian love and to open another with an uncertain outcome. This could be a negative turning point in the life of the Churches following an experience of several decades in the ecumenical movement, where all the churches have come to discover each other and recognise each others structures and sacraments.

The ecumenical movement has encouraged most of the churches to begin dialogues with each other. Since the Second Vatican Council, most of the churches have been linked in brotherly relations with the Church of Rome. The dialogue in Vienna is an important aspect of this positive spirit which has grown throughout the Orthodox Churches. Moreover, the statements of the Patriarchs and Popes have opened a new page of relations between the Churches. On the other hand, the desire of all Orthodox Churches to join the World Council of Churches has given a push to the ecumenical movement in general, and to a dialogue of a new kind in the history of these churches with the Anglican Church.

In our region, the joining of the Middle East Council of Churches on the part of the seven Catholic Churches, with their different traditions and several languages, as a fourth unified family, brings an new conviction that the Churches can practically realise the conciliar approach in their lives. The different committees in which all churches are taking part to study theological research and educational topics come under this conciliar approach. To avoid any lack of mutual respect or trust among the Churches, and to continue our dialogue based on love, our duty is to realise the Will of our Lord that there be one flock and one shepherd who is the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn, 10:16). So brotherly relations must continue between each other in a Christian spirit based on the teachings of the Holy Bible and not on worldly values or human or material power. I deem it necessary to encourage all avenues of dialogue together with good intentions, sincere desires and true faithfulness to realise the Will of our Lord in his last prayer: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"(Jn 17:20-23).

Moderator of the discussion: Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian

Fr. Sidarous Matta (Coptic Orthodox): *A question about Peter the Apostle whether he had a big role to play in the first council in Jerusalem.*

Mar Gregorius (Syrian Orthodox): *The dispute between Peter and Paul led to the intervention of Peter and gave him an important role in the Council of Jerusalem.*

Mr. Stirnemann (Roman Catholic) *draws the attention to the fact that there is no official recognition of the number 21 for the Ecumenical Councils in the Roman Catholic Church, which Cardinal Bellarmin called as such. Following the initiative of Pope Paul VI in 1974, on the occasion of the 7th centenary of the Council of Lyon (1274), there is a general readiness to speak about "General Councils of the West" for the later councils celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church.*

*This readiness should be accepted by the Oriental side as a step in the right direction on the part of the Western Church.*

Mar Gregorius: *Changing the names of some of the councils of the Roman Catholic Church from ecumenical to general is a new thing, which is not yet reflected in the books.*

*He declares that the question of these later councils has not yet been studied explicitly in the PRO ORIENTE Consultations.*

Fr. Joseph Tarzi (Syrian Orthodox): *The main question raised concerns the necessity of ecumenical councils, since the Oriental Orthodox Churches have lived for 15 centuries without them.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox) *says that the Church is in a continuous conciliar condition, in all its life, and not only at the moment of the celebration of a council.*

Mar Gregorius: *This question was put forward by the Oriental Orthodox Churches at the Vienna Consultations. Concerning the necessity of ecumenical councils in the life of the church, we say no, it is not necessary.*

Mr. Rushdi Wasif (Coptic Orthodox): *Does the church have the right to accept some provisions of a council and to refuse the rest?*

*Is the acceptance by Bar Hebraeus of some decisions of Chalcedon to be considered a hidden recognition of the Council of Chalcedon by the Syrian Church?*

Mar Gregorius: *Every church has the right to accept the moral decisions which are related to its own life, but accepting some moral decisions of any council is not considered to be a recognition of that council by the church.*

Mr. Naji Wanis (Coptic Orthodox) *agrees with the lecturer concerning the harm which proselytism causes in the life of the church, and talks about proselytism in Sudan, stressing on the need to establish a relationship of love among the churches.*

Prof. Fr Hashem (Maronite): *It is not very clear that the Council of Constantinople (381) was received ecumenically. It seems also that the Council of Ephesus recognises only one ecumenical council: that of Nicea, not that of Constantinople.*

Mar Gregorius: *We have said that receiving a council may not be direct and immediate. It can be received according to the need of the church, when it thinks that the time is appropriate for her to receive it. Yet, not to accept a council immediately does not mean that the council is not ecumenical.*

Mr. Joseph Faltas (Coptic Orthodox): *The relationship between the unity of the church in the liturgy and its unity in the councils is important and fundamental. Was there any*

discussion in the Vienna Consultations concerning how to receive the rest of the councils since the basis for the unity of councils is the liturgical one?

Mar Gregorios: *In the Vienna Consultations many problems facing the Oriental Orthodox Churches such as primacy were treated.*

*What we are concerned about is how to establish a conciliar communion. I do not think that there is a conception of accepting all the councils.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox): *In the Coptic Church there is a collection of canons in which some of the imperial (Chalcedonian) provisions are to be found, but this does not mean that we are accepting the councils which adopted those provisions. Is the council then essential (not necessary) without which the catholicity of the church could be denied?*

Mar Gregorios: *Concerning the reception of the councils there is now a new step: we can receive the councils spiritually.*

Fr. K. M. George (Syro-Indian): *Concerning the concept of "ecumene" and the "inhabited land" India also was outside the Roman Empire, yet we receive and respect those ecumenical (imperial) councils.*

*Today there are no ecumenical councils because there is no emperor to call for them. The problem of our churches, especially the large and powerful churches is that we are trying to imitate the political system and structures.*

*While the problem of the Orthodox Churches lies in the claim by the Pope of Rome that he possesses universal authority and therefore the Orthodox Churches have to follow him, the Gospel of Christ is not limited to only one church, it is for all the children of God.*

Fr. Samir Khalil (Roman Catholic): *A comment concerning the presence of Rome in the councils: There were some practical reasons which prevented the Western Fathers from attending those councils, such as language, cost and political and cultural reasons, which existed in all the councils. Even in the Council of Ephesus we see that the behaviour of Pope Cyrill was very severe and violent, which is also true of the emperors' intervention in the councils.*

*We therefore, cannot give an idealistic view of the first councils.*

*The stand of Bar Hebraeus in adopting some of the moral canons of Chalcedon is one of the best.*

Archimandrite Ignatius Dick (Greek Catholic): *A comment on Chalcedon: Despite some undemocratic events in it, the Council of Chalcedon is far more democratic than the previous councils. In the second Council of Ephesus there were also accusations against some of the Fathers who held an Orthodox faith. The purpose of the Council of Chalcedon was to revere some of those Fathers who were unjustly treated in the second Council of Ephesus and not to set a new formula of faith.*

Archbishop Antoine Beylouni (Syrian Catholic): *Is it possible to define what makes a council ecumenical in the Syrian Church? Is it the number of bishops, the subjects discussed such as the dogmas and feasts, is it the full representation of the churches? And if a church breaks the unity, will that deny a council's ecumenism?*

Mr. Wagih Gali Moussa (Coptic Orthodox): *Why are the three ecumenical councils not taken as a basis for the dialogue and the discussion of the following councils postponed?*

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

## COUNCILS AND CONCILIARITY

Although Christological disputes have separated the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches for over fifteen centuries, from 451 A.D. (the Council of Chalcedon) till today, yet during the last three decades this problem has almost been solved, while other problems remain as an obstacle on the way of unity. One of these problems is the area of ecclesiology, especially the function of conciliarity. The same problem, but not on the same level was between the two Orthodox families, i.e., the Chalcedonian and the non-Chalcedonian, and a solution is recommended in the "Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches," between them in September 1990, in Geneva. The problem between the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches is more complicated.

In spite of the great efforts that have been done during the last three decades, in conciliarity there still remain some important areas of disagreement. Five non-official consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church were held in 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988. Many official visits between the hierarchs of these two families were paid, *Common Declarations* were signed. By 1973, at the second PRO ORIENTE theological consultation, ecclesiological problems began to be considered, and the third and fourth meetings were devoted entirely to this area.

As Pope Shenouda III wrote in his letter to Pope John Paul, "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."

### *Problems of Conciliarity*

We can summarise the problems of conciliarity in the following points:

1. The nature of the ecumenical councils.
2. The infallibility of the ecumenical councils.
3. The numeration of the ecumenical councils.
4. The anathemas and condemnations of one party against the other in councils.
5. Doctrines that have been decided by councils, which cannot be accepted by the other party.
6. Papal primacy and the Priority of some Episcopal Sees.

### *1. The Nature of Ecumenical Councils*

The two families believe that councils, especially the ecumenical ones, present an essential part of the living tradition that reveals the life of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit.

The *Communiqué* of the third PRO ORIENTE non-official Consultation [August 30 - September 5, 1976] states: "We have studied together the notion of conciliarity, i.e. 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 unto all truth and all unity through councils and other means<sup>1</sup>."

Because of this mutual concept, the 1973 Common Declaration between Pope Shenouda III and Pope Paul VI states, "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<sup>2</sup>."

A Coptic Orthodox delegation to Pope John Paul II in 1979 carried a letter from Pope Shenouda III to Pope John Paul in which he expressed his frustration at the lack of progress in the area of ecclesiology.

The 1973 Common Declaration had set up a special Joint Commission 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<sup>3</sup>."

### *Problems Concerning the Concept of Conciliarity*

Many problems arise between the two families concerning the concept of conciliarity, such as the following:

#### I. The necessity of ecumenical councils for manifesting the catholicity of the Church.

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios states that while the Church is by nature conciliar, Ecumenical or Universal Councils are not essential for the life of the Church. He says:

"While these Councils have played a very significant role in the history of the Church, the very fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches have found it possible to continue their life as Churches without such a universal or ecumenical Council since 431 A.D. (i.e. for 15 ½ centuries) is in itself highly significant. The case is not much different for the Orthodox Churches in communion with Constantinople, for they too have existed since 787 for twelve centuries without an "ecumenical" or "universal" Church Council.

If ecumenical or universal Councils are essential for the manifestation of the universal structure of the church then the fact that there was no such council from the time of Jerusalem in Apostolic times till Nicaea in 325 (a period of more than 2 ½ centuries) will also have to be sufficiently explained. Was the Church Catholic in obedience during this period? or was it defective compared to the Church of the Conciliar period which begins in 325 A.D.?...

<sup>1</sup> Wort und Wahrheit, Supplementary Issue No. 3, 1976, p. 223, published in PRO ORIENTE booklet Nr. 1, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Issue 5, 1989, p. 165, published in PRO ORIENTE booklet Nr. 1, p. 109f.

<sup>3</sup> One in Christ, p.165, published in PRO ORIENTE booklet Nr. 1, p. 109f.

The tradition insists that the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol is a unique instrument not to be altered or duplicated. In this sense no future council can have the authority that Tradition gives to the first three ecumenical Councils<sup>4</sup>."

Fr. Paul Verghese also speaks about "The role of the Councils in the Church". He says:

"Is the general or ecumenical Council an essential aspect of the normal life of the Church?"

Put that way, the question becomes very problematic. Is a Council, like the Eucharist, a periodic action of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church, without which the Church's life would wither away? Clearly, it is only the Western or Roman Catholic Church that has in fact maintained the practice of holding universal councils from time to time, but even in the Western Church there has been no consistency as to the minimum or maximum period between two universal councils, as a list of dates will clearly show:

1. Nicaea 325 (3 centuries after the birth of Christianity)
2. Constantinople 381 (56 years after Nicaea)
3. Ephesus 431 (50 years)
4. Chalcedon 451 (20 years)
5. Constantinople 553 (102 years)
6. Constantinople III 680-681 (127 years)
7. Nicaea II 787 (107 years)
8. Constantinople IV 869-870 (82 years)
9. Lateran I 1123 (353 years)
10. Lateran II 1139 (16 years)
11. Lateran III 1179 (40 years)
12. Lateran IV 1215 (36 years)
13. Lyon I 1245 (30 years)
14. Lyon II 1274 (29 years)
15. Vienne 1311-1312 (37 years)
16. Constance 1414-1418 (102 years)
17. Ferrara-Florence 1438-1439 (20 years)
18. Lateran V 1512-1517 (73 years)
19. Trent 1545-1563 (28 years)
20. Vatican I 1869-1870 (306 years)
21. Vatican II 1962 (92 years)

If the universal Council is essential to the life of the Church, should there not be a maximum period after which a council becomes mandatory?...

Thus it would appear that the Tradition of the Church does not demand the Universal Council as a periodic expression of unity of the Church. It is a false alternative that some Orthodox theologians have advanced, in suggesting that the Universal Council rather than the Papacy is the true manifestation of the unity of the Church<sup>5</sup>."

However this view needs to be more obvious. As it were that the Church believes that the Lord Jesus Christ is her Supreme Head at the Father's throne. Besides that all

<sup>4</sup> Wort und Wahrheit, Supplementary Issue No. 3, p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Issue 2, 1974, p. 50-52.

have the mind of the One Christ, accordingly union is fulfilled in the Eucharist, where the Church assembles with the Victim and Risen Christ Who considers His Body. While the ecumenical council is but to protect the one faith and the one thought that the Church practises. Nevertheless, it doesn't represent a declaration of the Church unity but merely to protect this union when necessary. Needless to say this item needs more detailed studies in an ecumenical concept.

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios also says:

"The Christian Church in its History has had only one Council which was representative of the whole Church, and that was the Council of Jerusalem in Apostolic times. This could be regarded as universal representative since the plenitude of the Apostolic College was present there. But still the Tradition does not regard Jerusalem as coming in the series of Ecumenical Councils which begins only with Nicaea. Even Nicaea was not representative of the whole Church. Churches outside the Roman Empire were not fully represented there. Although in 325 there was peace between the Roman and Persian Empires, the Persian Church was not well represented there. John of Persia (of India or of Beit Garmai, according to different accounts) seems to have been the only bishop from outside the Roman Empire, simply because he happened to be in the empire at the time...

The fact that the Emperors convened all the three councils universally acknowledged, points to their imperial rather than universal character<sup>6</sup>."

## II. The manifestation of the unity of the Church

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios says:

"The ancient Syro-Alexandrian tradition does not recognise a universal pastor or an ecumenical patriarch. A bishop is the bishop of the local Church as he is of the Catholic Church. The meaning of locality can be extended from a city, to a metropolitan province or diocese, or even a whole nation, but the concept of a universal or ecumenical bishop or patriarch is not in the authentic Eastern tradition. It was a peculiar claim of the Imperial Churches of Rome and Constantinople, which the other Churches were always reluctant to accept.

This is because, while the concept of the Catholic Church as the one Church of all ages and all places, and the concept of the local church, locality being city, province, diocese or nation, were both acceptable to the Eastern tradition, they would not recognise an entity called the "universal Church" with any particular structure of authority. The local Church was always a local manifestation of the Church Catholic, but the Tradition did not conceive of a universal manifestation of the Church Catholic.

It is for this reason that the ancient tradition does not recognise any permanent need for a structure of the universal Church beyond the Eucharist which is always and everywhere a manifestation of the Church Catholic. Councils could be held when absolutely necessary to confront a major problem<sup>7</sup>."

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid, Issue 3, p. 138.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid, Issue 3, p. 139.

## 2. The Infallibility of the Councils

Catholics believe in the infallibility of the ecumenical councils which follows that of the Church<sup>8</sup>. Leo considered the "consent" of the Council of Chalcedon to be "irretractabilis" - i.e. to exclude all further question - and denies that anyone who rejected its decrees could be counted a Catholic<sup>9</sup>.

Fr. Paul Verghese dealing with the topic: "The Infallibility of the Church", says:

" Applied to the church also many theologians find it difficult to believe that the church in its long history has never taught or practised any error. Inerrancy seems to belong only to God and not to any part of creation that has freedom...

It is not possible to prove historically that a large number of bishops gathered together have never been wrong. It is interesting to note that some of the bishops who were present at both Ephesus 449 and Chalcedon 451 contradicted themselves in the two councils. By what external criteria do we decide *a priori* that 449 was fallible and 451 infallible?<sup>10</sup>"

In the same way, the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D. condemned the "Tria Kephalaia", i.e. the Three Chapters, the writings of three semi-Nestorian authors, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus and Ibas of Edessa, which were read in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., which one of these councils is fallible and the other infallible?

Rev. Wilhelm de Vries says:

The most spectacular volte-face was made by Pope Vigilius: in his Constitutum I of May 553, he defended the essential elements of the Three Chapters with the full authority vested in the Apostolic See of Rome, whereas in February 554 he condemned them as ungodly, again by referring to this very same authority. In a similar manner, Vigilius' successor, Pelagius I (556-561), altered his attitude towards the Three Chapters. In his capacity as a Deacon he defended them vigorously; he was, in all probability, the author of Constitutum I. Apart from that he drafted a "Defensio trium capitolorum", in which he maintained that Vigilius should be anathematised because of his "Judicatum II" (usually referred to as "Constitutum II"). After he had ascended to the Papacy, though, Pelagius I made every effort to bring about acknowledgement of the Second Council of Constantinople. In his letter to Sapaudius of Arles, e. g., he complained bitterly about the bishops of Gaul, who, after the General Council (of 553) still dared to attack him on account of his precious letter. He had, he continued to explain, seen that he was wrong and revoked his error. The obvious question is how things like that could have happened. Human weakness may be one explanation<sup>11</sup>.

How can we accept the infallibility of the ecumenical councils while the Second Council of Constantinople (553) was not considered in the West as an ecumenical until A.D. 700? The council which was held in 754 was considered as heretic? That of

<sup>8</sup>. W. Addis, T. Arnold: A Catholic Dictionary, London 1951, p. 227.

<sup>9</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>. Wort und Wahrheit, Supplementary Issue No. 2, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid, Issue 2, p. 20.

869 was cancelled after ten years? And that of Florence was rejected by the Orthodox people?<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Numeration of Ecumenical Councils

The Oriental Orthodox Churches accept only the first three Councils, - that of Nicaea in 325, of Constantinople in 381, and Ephesus in 431 as ecumenical.

The Communiqué of the Second PRO ORIENTE Consultation states:

"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 representation as the reunion of Churches is hastened by the working of the Holy Spirit<sup>13</sup>."

Bishop Mesrob Krikorian says, "These are really and indisputably ecumenical, because firstly, they were assembled and accepted by the whole Christian Church, and secondly they discussed and decided doctrinal essential points which otherwise were not so clearly formulated and proclaimed.

The main subjects which have occupied the attention of the Church after the three ecumenical Councils, were the Christology and the dogma of Filioque. The Christological dispute partly divided the Church in 451, and the problem of Filioque in 1054 brought a wider division into the Christendom. Moreover, these questions were fundamentally settled at the first ecumenical synods (325, 381 and 431).

Any Council in fact is universal when it covers a large participation of the whole Church. By 'participation' we have to understand not only the actual attendance, but also a spiritual partaking or a participation with faith. For example, the Armenians were absent at Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431), but spiritually they shared the Councils and later officially accepted them.

It is unfortunate that at Chalcedon the wholeness and unity of the Church was damaged and broken; therefore all the 'ecumenical Councils' which followed it were not completely universal. Another aspect which questions the ecumenicity of the later Councils is that they did not solve any dogmatic problem which can really be regarded as new<sup>14</sup>."

It is worthy to note that the problem of the councils must not be concentrated in accepting or rejecting the numeration of the councils, what's more vital is to accept the "truth" that is proclaimed and preserved by the Church as a whole and the councils in particular. The life of the church in all her aspects, such as liturgies, canons, literature etc... represents a kind of spiritual form of an unceasing ecumenical council which guides her life in a continuous process.

Concerning the councils, the *Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches between the two Orthodox families* states:

12. Fr. Selim Bustros: *The Christian Theology and the Contemporary Man*, Pauline Bookstore, Beirut 1985, p. 256 (in Arabic).

13. *Wort und Wahrheit*, Issue No. 5, p. 154, published in PRO ORIENTE booklet Nr. 1, p. 58f.

14. *Ibid*, Issue 1, 1972, p. 131.

"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 that 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 disagreements in this regard."

The Communiqué of the Fifth PRO ORIENTE Consultation in September 1988, states:

"In relation to councils, it was reaffirmed that our common ecumenical basis is the faith of the first three ecumenical Councils, i.e. 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 internal 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<sup>15</sup>."

### 4. Anathemas and Condemnations

Concerning the anathemas, the *Second Agreed Statement between the two Orthodox families* states:

"10. Both families agree that all the anathemas and condemnations of the past which 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

15. *Ibid*, Issue 5, p. 149, 150, published in PRO ORIENTE booklet Nr. 1, p. 120.

consummated on the basis that the Councils and 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."

It is worthy to note that the problem is more complicated in our relation with the Catholic Church, for after the solution of the Christological problem we have no other dogmatic problems. The Agreed Statement on Christology between the Coptic Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church, states: "All other issues of differences between our churches will be discussed successively according to God's will<sup>16</sup>."

##### *5. Doctrines and Ecumenical Councils*

We face two problems:

1. The Dogmatic Formulations of the Councils:

As canon 7 of Ephesus 431 is still valid, then we regard it as part of our faithfulness to the one tradition of the undivided church, to refuse the acceptance of any later dogmatic formulations of councils.

2. Dogmas and Doctrines:

There is a need to deal with many dogmas and doctrines that have been decided by Catholic Councils, such as the Filioque, the Purgatory, Papal primacy etc...

##### *6. Papal Primacy and the Priority of some Episcopal Sees*

Papal primacy and infallibility besides the priority of some Episcopal Sees cannot be accepted by the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

According to the Catholic Church: "Ecumenical councils are those to which the bishops and others entitled to vote are convoked from the whole world under the presidency of the Pope or his delegates, and the decrees of which, having received papal confirmation, bind all Christians<sup>17</sup>."

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios says:

"The question before us is this: How happened it that some episcopal sees, notably Rome, but also many others, came to have higher administrative positions than other sees, and even some power of supervision over certain other sees?..."

The attempt at Chalcedon is to establish a kind of three-tier primacy:

a) Rome and Constantinople at the very top.

b) Alexandria and Antioch at second rank, with Jerusalem almost in.

c) Other primates, some being subject to one of the four (e.g. Pontus, Asia and Thracia), others not so e.g. Cyprus...

Apostolic times: No universal authority for any one apostle or bishop. Perhaps James of Jerusalem had some universal authority in the earliest period, but he never exercised it without reference to the Twelve. Jerusalem, the mother of the Churches, never had any jurisdiction over the other Churches.

If Eusebius is to be believed, Titus had superintendency over all the Churches in Crete, and was already a Super Metropolitan in Apostolic times. St. John Chrysostom says Timothy had supervisory powers over all the churches in Asia. The Cypriots claimed that the autocephaly of the Church of Cyprus with a Metropolitan of Constantia was set up by the Apostles.

Apart from these, there is no evidence of any bishop or see exercising authority over other sees than his own<sup>18</sup>."

"No conciliar decree gives the bishop of Rome universal authority of jurisdiction.

There is no evidence at all to show that the pre-eminence of the metropolitan sees in general had anything to do with their relation to any particular apostle. The imperial civil jurisdictions were a decisive influence in the evolution of the metropolitan sees in the Roman Empire<sup>19</sup>."

At the end we cannot ignore the eminent efforts that had been done through the PRO ORIENTE non-official Consultations and contribution to the solution of Christology, and we hope that all other problems will find solution for attaining unity. In spite of all these difficulties we believe that through love, the Holy Spirit who guides the Church can grant us unity in faith, spirit and love.

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid, p. 168, published in PRO ORIENTE booklet Nr. 1, p. 120.

<sup>17</sup>. A Catholic Dictionary, p. 225.

<sup>18</sup>. Wort und Wahrheit, Issue No 4, p. 15, 20, 21.

<sup>19</sup>. Ibid, p. 22.



## COUNCILS AND CONCILIARITY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCHES

### Results of the Five Vienna Consultations

#### *Introduction*

The five Vienna Consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988) confirmed the resolution of the Catholic Church and of the Oriental Orthodox Churches to reach total agreement on all historical diverging points of view on unity. The praiseworthy efforts made by the participants led churches to an official agreement on Christology after a fifteen century-long separation. This shows that unity between churches is no longer a dream but an attainable reality since we are now living "at the time of the Holy Spirit" which has made its presence and action felt through "signs from God". Worldwide efforts in all areas are being carried out by men of good will in order to bring down barriers between communities and create a favourable climate for unity in the midst of so many different traditions, rites and customs. Unity between Christians is a gift from God. It is up to Christian communities to receive it with gratitude and strive to achieve it in view of the joy and happiness of everybody.

After the christological question, participants tackled the problem of Councils and Conciliarity in the life of the churches during the second and third consultations. PRO ORIENTE asked me to briefly outline the results of the five Vienna Consultations on the basis of the documents available.

Many questions arise on the subject of Councils and Conciliarity as each Church understands it in its own way. Debates resulted in the two parties being better informed about each other's ideas and led them to review positions held since the time of the separation. Indeed, these positions were no longer in conformity with the changes brought about by a number of meetings which clarified diverging points in the light of history, exegesis, theology and law.

#### *I. The Origin of Councils and Conciliarity within the Church*

From the beginning, the Church has applied the principle of conciliarity. The Acts of the Apostles (chapter 15) recall the first Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem in 50 in order to examine the conflict between those who wanted to impose circumcision on the newly converted from paganism in Antioch and those who were opposed to it. In order to settle this matter, "the Apostles and the Ancients met". The decision announced by Peter and James was only reached "after a long debate". It seems that conciliarity is the continuation of the Jewish Sanhedrin which had a lot of authority and whose task it was to settle religious and civil conflicts, to sanction those who had departed from the Law and to pass judgement up to death penalty on hardened criminals. The Sanhedrin was composed of 71 members who represented three categories of people: the heads of the main families, the priests and the scribes.

Some participants regard the first Council of the Apostles as the model for any ecclesiastical council. The main elements of a Council can indeed be found there:

1. The Council of the Apostles is a gathering of Church leaders and not only from one local community.
2. The Council issued a decision the binding character of which has been recognized.
3. This settlement concerns the question of faith as well as of customs.
4. The decision was written down in a letter and formally proclaimed in the whole Church.
5. At this Synod, Peter played a decisive role.
6. In the participation of the community in the deliberations of the council, one can see a reception by the Church or even a modern form of participation "from below".

One of the participants expressed his conviction that:

"A synod following its model in the Acts 15, is an assembly of divine service in which the unity of the communities in one Church becomes reality. Communities come together in brotherly assistance in order to settle disputes of faith and of Church discipline closely connected to this".

Another participant remarked that:

"As model of such a synod could be regarded the so-called Council of the Apostles, one could also admit the formula: 'the Holy Spirit and we have decided' (Acts 15, 28). For this reason, each Council is 'the becoming present of the whole Christendom' (Tertullian); the presence of the Spirit is perceptible in the unanimity concerning the decisions and gives them authority independently from the number of the participants".

#### *II. The Meaning of Conciliarity*

Conciliarity within the Church is expressed by its common practice of having recourse to a Council gathering as a means of settling conflicts concerning faith, morals and legislation. From the beginning, conciliarity has been regarded as more than an administrative method. According to the unanimous opinion of the participants to the Vienna consultations, it was part and parcel of the nature of the Church itself. Each Church must be based on conciliarity under the guidance of their bishops. So conciliarity provides the Church with the means of reaching its objectives in a collegial way as the Churches are the body of Christ composed of members having their own function in order to ensure the life of the whole body. Practising conciliarity has not always been satisfactory. It has undergone periods of crises and individual authoritarianism but the church has always come back to an authority balanced by collegiality at the level of bishops as well as of lay members of the Church. Conciliarity has always been regarded as the driving force behind any progress and reforms. The Church is indeed only complete when there is participation from all its elements.

Bishops exercise their authority not above the community or beside it but within the community and with it. By right, it is certainly up to the bishops to meet in local or

general councils in order to take important decisions in accordance with the apostolic tradition but they are supposed to do it within the community.

The participants confirmed that the conciliarity of the Church is linked to the notion of "communion" which is an essential element of the Church as Body of Christ and of its visibility in the practice of its mission. They turned to the Holy Spirit, Source of Truth and Unity, in order that it give rise to an ecumenical council in view of the setting up of One Church in Truth and Love, eucharistic participation and the communion of bishops.

However, this being their goal, unanimity could not be reached on the following points:

1. Who should summon the bishops of all the churches throughout the world?
2. Who should preside such a council?
3. What are the best means of having past and future councils accepted by all churches?

First of all, the following matters have to be settled:

- Relationship between local churches and the Universal Church;
- Meaning of papal primacy;
- Meaning of the infallibility of the church.

### *III. Evolution of the Councils*

Following the first Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem, local councils or synods were set up. In the 2nd century, the Church of Jerusalem convened a local council in order to correct deviations from a given region in order to maintain unity and evangelical authenticity. The Church then continued to manage its own affairs through councils at provincial, regional and territorial levels. These first few councils were characterised by a great freedom of speech and their democratic spirit. Councils became gradually institutionalised and governed by an ecclesiastical, legal policy. The episcopate became dominant, with an absolute authority.

Pope Gelasius I (492-496) indicated the essential conditions for an ideal council: correspondence with the Holy Scripture, with the *traditio patrum*, the celebration of the synod according to ecclesiastical rules in favour of the Catholic faith and the preservation of the community, reception by the entire church, with the approval above all of the Apostolic See.

It seems clear that the councils held before Constantine had independence and freedom as regards the choice of appropriate methods. At that time, bishops created the rank of Metropolitan to whom was granted a greater responsibility as well as administrative priority. Bishops often held their gatherings under the direction of the Metropolitan. With the arrival of Constantine, the structure of councils underwent some changes. The coexistence between the State and the Church led to new requirements concerning the councils of bishops. They were strongly influenced by the interference of civil authorities in church matters, which gave rise to a new meaning to councils and conciliarity. For example, the first few councils were convened on the initiative and by order of the emperor, under the pretext that the emperor was regarded as a divine means of achieving God's projects. In fact, emperors

hoped to ensure the unity of their empire and the security of all its regions by putting an end to religious divisions and ecclesiastical conflicts.

The participants to the consultations stated the right of the churches to convene local or ecumenical councils and summon the bishops each time that they deem it necessary and important, especially in the light of the issues at stake in our time. They also claimed that the life of the Church does not require the holding of councils at regular periods. They equally insisted on the necessity of finding an established way of coordinating the activities of autocephalous churches in order to settle the conflicts between them and restore relations of peace and solidarity between the hierarchy of these churches and their members.

### *IV. Reception and Number of the Councils*

As regards the reception of ecumenical councils, the participants felt that three elements must be maintained: the conciliar decree, the confirmation of decrees and the reception by the Fathers of the council. These elements are part of the same process. In fact, there were decrees from ecumenical councils which were not accepted by all churches. It must also be noted that a number of canonical decrees defined by the Council of Chalcedon or other later councils were accepted by Oriental Orthodox Churches although they refused the dogmatic formulation of those councils. As a rule, Oriental Orthodox Churches do not find it necessary to have decrees confirmed by any authority whatsoever as such decrees come from the collegiality of bishops, even though the confirmation of conciliar decrees is a legal process taking place between the decision taken by councils and their reception. These churches also felt that a conciliar decree may sometimes be already included in the living tradition of the Church and as such it would not be necessary to have it officially and expressly accepted.

As for the number of accepted or refused councils, Oriental Orthodox Churches think that the common ecumenical basis is faith in the doctrine of the first three ecumenical councils: the Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431). These are truly ecumenical as all Christendom took part in them and they were approved by all the members of the Councils, with the consensus of the lay members of the churches. Besides, these councils dealt with essential, faith-related matters concerning all churches.

Regarding the Council of Chalcedon and the other councils, Oriental Orthodox Churches stated that they were not ready to accept them for reasons independent from their participation in or their absence from the councils in question. However, they are still willing to examine them in the light of socio-political circumstances in as much as they seem credible to them in view of their fidelity to the Holy Scripture and to the Apostolic tradition of the Church.

### *V. Relationship between Local Churches and the Universal Church*

The unity between Christians, gift of Christ to his Church, is an image of the unity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the Church, and of any church, is to collaborate in the achievement of this unity. The unity of churches does not mean the absorption of one community by another or the domination of one community over another. The unity to be strived for is unity in the multiplicity of traditions, languages, rites and various theological and spiritual expressions. Some participants drew the attention to the necessity of having one church responsible for promoting unity between Christians but this idea was not accepted by everyone. However, all participants agreed that each church should encourage an awareness of how unity could be promoted and safeguarded. Several means were proposed in this respect: exchange of peace messages between churches; mention of the other churches and of their hierarchy in the framework of the official liturgy of each church; formal or informal meetings between churches in order to solve joint problems affecting them.

The following question was raised: Do Oriental Catholic Churches have a special role to play in the project for unity? Oriental Orthodox Churches do not admit that the Catholic Orthodox Churches could be the official way towards the unity of churches but they reckon that they can take part in restoring eucharistic unity between sister churches, given that the meeting in the sacrament of the Eucharist is a powerful factor of communion between all Christians.

Oriental Orthodox Churches insisted on refusing to be seen by some other churches as a missionary field, as it has been the case for a long time. At any rate, the decrees of Vatican II warned Catholics against such a view which is no longer in keeping with the open and already fruitful dialogue between churches.

What kind of coordination could be established between local churches and the Universal Church? This question was raised several times during the Vienna consultations. All the participants acknowledged that all Christian communities are faced with the same mystery: the mystery of One, Universal, Holy, Apostolic Church. This Church is the Body of Christ who died and rose again, Eternally alive in the Heavens, permanently active in local churches and in the Universal Church.

The One Church - and it can only be One - is entirely present in local churches as well as in the Universal Church since communion in Truth and Love is lived by any church, with its source in the Eucharist and episcopal communion being a witness to it. But if Catholic theologians would rather regard the Church under its universal aspect, with a Universal Pastor, Oriental Orthodox Churches favour the local aspect of the Church under the guidance of a local bishop. However, the Universal Church and local churches are connected in their very existence so that the notion of Church can be totally applied in both cases. At any rate, it is out of the question to view local churches as a part of the Universal Church. Despite the efforts made by the participants, all the questions related to this aspect could not be clarified as, although local churches express the notion of Church, they are not the Universal Church in the service of all men. Some participants proposed that the notion of communion - "koinonia" - such as it was experienced in the early Church may give rise to a solution as in this communion, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, shapes His Church so that it communicates Life to all its members. Because this concerns men all over the world, the communion is truly universal.

## *VI. Conciliarity and the Authority of the Church*

Among the participants to the consultations, some considered that each church must have its own authority according to its conceptions and its experience in this respect in relation to the community. Others, who belonged to the Catholic Church, considered that the Bishop of Rome has a specific role to play because of his primacy in the communion of churches in order to promote and safeguard the unity of churches. These two ways of understanding the authority of the Church, although linked to conciliarity, are not fully in keeping with each other. It is thus necessary to go deeper into this subject, especially on the following points:

- a. the authority of the Church finds its roots in the Sacraments;
- b. the conciliar authority of the Church must be studied in the light of the theological and liturgical tradition of each church;
- c. conciliarity as the expression of communion.

The participants found it necessary that the authority of the Church should be somewhat autonomous and decentralised in order that responsibilities be carried out in view of the specific situation of each church in each country. But while autonomy must be respected, it is also important that a coordination body should be established between churches so as to prevent anarchy, especially in matters of common interest. Such coordination should favour solidarity, mutual aid and sharing between churches.

## *VII. The Historical and Cultural Background of Vatican I*

In order to understand councils and the value of their decrees, each council must be analysed in the light of its historical, cultural and political background. Such an analysis, objectively and seriously carried out, provides a specific way of understanding the council decrees. Some of these decrees, which concern faith and the Apostolic tradition, are regarded as absolute decrees. Others, agreed on at a certain time, under various external pressures, are relativized. Following their research on this subject, some Catholic and Orthodox theologians can better explain the motives behind the definition of the decrees of Vatican I, especially as regards papal primacy and infallibility. They reckon that Vatican I can be characterised by the following elements:

1. It is a Roman Council, with a Roman theology and Roman-type canon law. It is also Roman because of its efforts to consolidate the position of the Bishop of Rome and his "monarchical" authority within the Church.
2. At this Council, the major concerns were about the Western World. Given the political and religious situation of 19th century Europe, new human and political conceptions came to light, which led the Church to harden its positions. It was thus opposed to the autonomy of Reason which gave rise to modern science, it regarded with fear the autonomy of the individual in modern society and viewed with suspicion the autonomy of the State and the end of feudal regimes.
3. In the decrees of Vatican I the legal and administrative aspects prevailed over the question of faith. The authority itself was accordingly regarded more in connection with administrative matters than according to its link with priesthood by which it is given its character of service in Love and Humility just as Christ did. The question of

papal authority was also of great concern to the Fathers of the Council, to the extent that they neglected to emphasize the communion of the Pope with the episcopal college in accordance with the Apostolic tradition of the Church. For a better approach of the Council, it is necessary to answer the following questions:

1. What did the Council want to define clearly and expressly?
2. What are the points which the Fathers of the Council refused as being contrary to faith, Christian morals and tradition in the celebration of sacraments and liturgy?
3. What are the questions proposed for discussion at the Council and which were not taken into consideration because of their non-conformity with ordinary doctrine or simply because the time was not right for examining them.

It must be recalled that the Council did not define some of the points proposed by the Fathers and that it also happened that the Council did not define some points whose definition was later attributed to it. It must also be pointed out that we have no right to refuse certain points which were not defined by the council under the pretext that it did not define them.

### *VIII. The Infallibility of the Church and Ecumenical Councils*

The word "infallibility" cannot be found in the Bible or in Christian literature before the 15th century when some intellectual trends started doubting the truth of the Christian doctrine. But Christian tradition has always stated that the Church of God is infallible because of the Holy Spirit which guides it and protects it against error. Infallibility does not concern the protection of the Church against sin but against error. Christ, the founder of the Church, is Truth and He put Truth in the hands of the church so that it can be a witness to it. Undoubtedly, the Church is not the exclusive holder of Truth. It is the new people of God, people of believers in the Truth announced by Jesus Christ, in the Word of God, its food and the light on its path, people of prophets working towards the setting up of the Kingdom of God. The Church is thus protected from error i.e. it cannot state that errors are Truth.

Vatican I confirmed this doctrine:

"All the faithful who have received the anointing from the Holy One (cf. Jn 2.20.27) cannot err in the Faith. And this, their particular quality, they manifest by virtue of the supernatural sense of faith of the entire people when they voice their general agreement in matters of the faith and morality from the bishops to the last faithful layman" ("Lumen Gentium", Chapter 12).

Any believer is a witness to Truth as he lives according to Faith and Love, not only on the individual level but within a community of believers:

"The Church as a community communicates the truth of Revelation not merely through definitions of the faith but also through 'everything it is, everything it believes in'" ("Dei Verbum", article 8).

The following text drawn up by Father Camelot provides us with the essential elements of the ecclesiology of ecumenical councils:

"The bishops were fully convinced that they together represented the united body of the church (collegiate principle), because they were fully convinced that they represented and carried on the college of Apostles, with Christ being present as the

centre: At Ephesus, the evangeliary displayed on a throne in the centre of the basilica represents Christ present among the bishops. They express the faith of the Church and its living tradition, because they are witnesses and keepers of the Apostolic tradition and the faith of the Fathers (Apostolic principle and the principle of Apostolic succession). And the Holy Spirit is with them as it was in the college of Apostles:

'Spiritus Sancti testatur praesentiam congregatio sacerdotum', as St. Celestine wrote to the Council of Ephesus. And this is what the undeniable authority of the Council is composed of: its decisions have to be accepted by all; then they are the expression of God's own will".

Some suggestions were put forward with a view to bringing together Christian communities and their unity:

1. Vatican II acknowledged that Oriental Orthodox Churches are Church in the full sense of the word, which resulted in the creation of the phrase: "sister churches".

2. Vatican II also gave the authorisation, in some cases, to hold joint eucharistic celebrations between the various churches. This is a way of obtaining the grace of unity. At any rate, according to the tradition of the Early Church, this celebration is the de facto realisation of the ecclesiastical community. By such a practice, all mutual anathemas are nullified as they are no longer in keeping with communion.

The fruitful efforts carried out up to now by PRO ORIENTE between the Catholic Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Orthodox Church and which led to positive theological and ecclesiastical results are being continued in an increasingly dynamic way.

We pray to the Holy Spirit which gave rise to this project and made it fecund that in a fast-evolving world it may accelerate the realization of unity between all Christians.

Moderator of the discussion: Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo

Prof. Fr. Hashem (Maronite): *A question to Fr. Tadros: I understand from one paragraph that you attach a kind of infallibility to the first three councils, but you say in another place that the ecumenical councils are not infallible.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty (Coptic Orthodox): *What is meant is that not all the decisions of the councils are infallible, but only the dogmas and the Creed. This is also stated in Canon 7 of the Council of Ephesus.*

Archbishop Cyrille Bustros (Greek Catholic): *If the churches are going to meet in an ecumenical council in the future, will that council have the same authority as the first three councils?*

Fr. Tadros Malaty: *If that future council is going to discuss the Creed which was composed by the three first councils, it will not have the authority to change that Creed.*

*Once more the question of proselytism is raised, quoting the passage of some priests or faithful from one Church to another, in Europe (Mar Julius Cicek, Syrian Orthodox) or in Egypt (Fr Kamil Samaan (Coptic Catholic), Fr Tadros Malaty, Patriarch Stephanos (Coptic Catholic) or elsewhere. Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba (Greek Catholic) expresses the point of view that this question of proselytism should be seen in a broader and changing light today: some faithful leave one Church for another, not so much for reasons of faith, but because they find elsewhere an active, spiritual priest.*

Amba Bishoy (Coptic Orthodox) a question to Fr. Khalil: *There should be a distinction between the Apostles and the Fathers who came after the Apostles. Can we say that the Holy Spirit spoke in a council held after the Apostles, or is that true only concerning the Council of the Apostles in Jerusalem?*

*What is the difference then, between the writings of the Apostles (gospels, letters) and their council in Jerusalem on the one hand and the following councils on the other hand?*

Fr. Khalil Kochassarly (Syrian Catholic): *The Council of the Apostles is the perfect one, due to the fact that they were close to Christ and that they were filled with the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. Since the church is a community of human beings, she did not always keep that perfection even in her councils; she did not stay faithful to Jesus Christ and to His teachings. I therefore do not think that the Holy Spirit was always responding positively to the human claim. Human intervention in those councils diminished both the purity and perfection of the gospels and of Christ's teachings. However, this fact does not bother me because I know that I am a member of the Church and that the Church is made up of individuals. If everybody was a saint the Church would have been in Heaven, not on earth.*

Dom Emmanuel Lanne (Roman Catholic) expresses the conviction that it is impossible to speak about conciliarity without starting from the notion of communion, *koinonia*, i.e. the unity in the one faith and the one life of the sacraments. The councils should be seen as an expression of this life, a way given by God to keep and promote this communion. The role of the bishops is central in this perspective; the Roman Catholic Church calls it the "collegiality" of the bishops. This aspect has been absent from the discussion so far and should be taken into consideration: it is easier to see the meaning of the councils in this light.

*When Fr Khalil Kochassarly expresses the pain he felt when he was unable to receive communion at the Coptic Orthodox Liturgy on Sunday morning, a discussion follows on the relation between the unity in faith and the communion in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Fr Kochassarly presents the opinion that one has to live unity in order to realise it, and that one should not wait until canonical unity is fully achieved before living this unity concretely. Fr Tadros Malaty stresses the inseparable link between unity in faith and life, as well as the necessity to work together in all areas at the same time. Pope Shenouda emphasizes that communion in the Eucharist is the final point, not the initial one. In his view, we have gone a long way already, and in the same charity we can make more progress.*

*Two or three questions are asked about the role of James and Peter at the Apostolic council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), emphasizing the role of James and diminishing the one of Peter (Amba Bishoy and a Coptic Orthodox priest).*

Mar Eustathius (Syrian Orthodox): *A question to Fr. Khalil: Is it not the right of the church today to review her previous decisions and correct what needs correction? What is the criterion to evaluate the validity of the decisions?*

Fr. Khalil Kochassarly: *Today we should have enough courage and humility to recognise our faults, and this needs some experts in theology and history. Scientific research can lead the churches to correct many things.*

Fr. Samir Khalil (Roman Catholic): *A question to Fr. Tadros and to Mar Gregorios concerning the ecumenism of the councils and their infallibility: The distinction between a local and an ecumenical council was not clear at the beginning. There were*

*some councils dealing with particular problems in certain places, as Fr. Khalil has mentioned the example of Vatican II. In the Catholic tradition not all councils are ecumenical, there are some which are general and not ecumenical.*

*Is there nothing more important than knowing whether a council was ecumenical or not?*

Mar Gregorios (Syrian Orthodox): *Concerning the distinction between ecumenical and general councils there is no disagreement at all.*

*As to the importance of councils, it is not important to receive all the general councils, but the first three ecumenical councils are very important because they are concerned with faith and dogma.*

Fr. Joseph Tarzi (Syrian Orthodox): *To Fr. Khalil: Your treatment of the infallibility of the church and the councils gives the idea that you believe in the infallibility of the church, but your reply on one of the questions gives the impression that you do not believe in infallibility.*

Fr. Khalil Kochassarly: *I do not feel comfortable in an infallible church. The church should be infallible but not in everything. There are some human affairs which are not related to infallibility, which is concerned only with what is essential to the existence of the church, which without infallibility may go astray. There may be some ecumenical councils which are not infallible because what was discussed in them did not require infallibility.*

Archimandrite Ignatius Dick (Greek Catholic): *There were some reservations made against the early councils by some contemporaries. Can we apply the same principle to the following council? That is to say that some churches have reservations on some councils, which we are trying to understand and accept. There was a bishop enjoying authority over all the sees, now whether he was right or wrong that is another matter.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty: *Concerning the authority of some bishops over others, this is to do with the authority of local metropolitans and patriarchs (Alexandria, Antioch, Rome) and not with a universal supremacy over the entire church.*

Bishop Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic): *The criterion to assess the validity of a council is that it should be received by all participants. In the Vienna Consultations we reached a solution concerning the ecumenical councils: i.e. to emphasize that the first three councils are fundamental to the faith and to review the rest.*

*The Chalcedonian Orthodox theologian demanded that before signing any agreement on councils, the first seven councils should be accepted. The Catholic Church is ready to accept that councils which followed the seventh are just Western general and that we do not have to accept them. We then have two elements:*

- 1. The concept of conciliarity is not yet clear and there are two different traditions in this respect that of the Orthodox Churches and that of the Vatican.*
- 2. Any new ecumenical council then will bring with it many problems.*

Fr. Kamil William (Coptic Catholic): *We are still far away from Christian love, because the minority churches suffer from the same problems everywhere. There are Catholics who are being accepted into the Coptic Orthodox Churches by some Coptic bishops.*

*A question to Fr. Khalil: How are the Oriental Churches to behave towards the ecumenical movement? What can the minority churches do to face the pressure of the majority churches?*

Mar Gregorios: *There is a clear paragraph about putting an end to the problem of pressure, authority and other problems in the agreement signed by Pope Shenouda and the Pope of Rome.*

*As to the subject of caution, this is a historical matter, which has its roots in our relation with the Muslims; it is a psychological problem which can be solved.*

Fr. Khalil Kochassarly: *It is a matter of spirituality and spirituality covers both mind and heart. The dialogue should be a sincere discussion which involves mind and heart, not a political manoeuvre. We will suffer a lot through the lack of spirituality in some of the bishops and religious leaders.*

Fr. Tadros Malaty: *Concerning the issue of minorities, it is not a matter of number, it is the treatment. The Coptic Catholic in their schools treat the Orthodox students as Catholics.*

Patriarch Stephanos (Coptic Catholic): *This has been repeated more than once without producing any names or evidence.*

Fr. Ephrem Karim (Syrian Orthodox): *Fr. Khalil's paper mentions that the first three councils are considered the basis of the faith by the Oriental Orthodox Churches, in Fr. Tadros we read that all the participants in the Vienna consultations accepted that idea, which means that the Oriental Orthodox do not necessarily need to accept the following councils.*

Fr. Khalil Kochassarly: *The first three councils are important, but they cannot be separated from the rest. The church today needs a council to deal with today's affairs without dealing with the faith agreed upon in the first three councils.*

Professor Maurice Tadros (Coptic Orthodox) *stresses the role of the theological institutes in the work towards unity. He says he was very happy when ecumenism was introduced as a subject in the institutes. But there is more to it. Every professor has also to change his way of teaching in order to do it in an ecumenical spirit. How can we help in this?*

Mar Gregorios: *The aim of PRO ORIENTE in calling this meeting was to share the work and results of the consultations with the students of theology and lay people, not to keep it limited to the theologians.*

Fr. Sidarous Matta (Coptic Orthodox): *Concerning the term "Universal Church and Local Church", is the Orthodox Church universal, or not? Does the universality of the church mean an ecumenical domination?*

Archbishop Mrayati (Armenian Catholic): *Communion in the Eucharist cannot be compared with the refusal to accept Orthodox students in a Catholic school. We should give the issue of the Eucharist priority in the theological dialogue and consultations because it is more important than councils and conciliarity.*

*In his concluding remarks Pope Shenouda says that among the canons of a council some are of a provisional nature, adapted to the circumstances of a specific period, while others are valid for all times. Consequently, it is important to pay attention to the spirit of the canons and not to the letter. He accepts the principles given in the three first Ecumenical Councils concerning the authority of the Heads of the Churches of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch over the bishops of their region, but universal primacy is, in his view, something entirely different. Finally he suggests once more that the problem of proselytism could be the theme of a special congress.*

## CONCLUSIONS / OUTLOOK

Moderators: Mr. Alfred Stirnemann and Amba Bishoy

Mr. Stirnemann *outlines the important proposals put forward in the meeting and concludes them in two main proposals:*

- 1 - *To continue publishing the PRO ORIENTE books and documents in Arabic.*
- 2 - *To decide the issues to be discussed in the future, such as proselytism and the Assyrian Church.*

*Again it is stated that PRO ORIENTE cannot include the Assyrians in its consultations between Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox theologians: it would complicate the dialogue as well as its reception by the faithful. The Roman Catholic Church can, of course, have a separate dialogue with the Assyrian Church.*

Amba Bishoy: *To satisfy those who are present here, we have said that a dialogue with the Nestorians is going on in the MECC. Nevertheless we can not refuse any help from PRO ORIENTE concerning this matter. But if PRO ORIENTE wants to deal separately with them, that is something else.*

*According to Bishop M. Krikorian, PRO ORIENTE as a Catholic group is free to open a dialogue with the Assyrians, but this should not be done in the framework of the unofficial contacts between Roman Catholics and Oriental Orthodox: Thus this does not seem to be a priority for PRO ORIENTE, at the moment, but the point should be noted (Mr. A. Stirnemann).*

*There is a general agreement to continue the kind of meetings like this one in Deir Amba Bishoy, with the purpose to bring the dialogue closer to the people. It could also help the Churches to see if they are really ready to accept the Christological consensus and to ask themselves what this should change in their life, their practice and their relations (v.g. Mar Gregorios, Mgr Harnoncourt, Mr A. Stirnemann, Bishop Moussa Daoud). This kind of meetings should try to include as much as possible the local Church at the grassroots level: bishops, priests, professors and students of theology and religion, in order to involve them in the reflection and reception process. Therefore it may be preferable to plan several local, national meetings (with some international representation) instead of one larger international meeting: this would allow a larger local participation, while reducing travel expenses (Fr F. Bouwen). Amba Bishoy points out the difference between those who had the privilege to participate in the dialogue and those who did not. The aim of these local meetings is to bring the results of the dialogue to the people.*

Fr. Kondothra George *states the necessity to explore new possibilities for common endeavour in the perspectives of PRO ORIENTE, which were never purely scholastic but ecumenically oriented. He suggests a common approach of monastic and liturgical inheritance in the East and the West, through visits, contacts and study.*

*Among other suggestions for future work, the following were mentioned:*

- study and official interpretation of the texts concerning Chalcedon: Tomus Leonis, formula of the Council, etc. (Amba Bishoy, Mar Eustathius, Fr Tadros Malaty)
- relation between unity in faith and communion in the Eucharist (Amba Bishoy)
- possibility and conditions for a future Ecumenical Council (Amba Bishoy)
- infallibility of the Church and of the Councils, and perhaps of the Pope of Rome (Amba Bishoy)

-a systematic list of the problems which still prevent full communion; those topics should then be studied in order to understand them better and to shorten the way towards unity (Mar Eustathius, Amba Bishoy)

- ways of electing bishops (Bishop M. Krikorian)

It was generally agreed that the Standing Committee would make a summary of all the suggestions and send it to the participants.

The Secretary General expresses his thanks to all those who contributed to the success of this Middle East Symposium: the interpreters, Abba Angelos and his staff, General Talat and his sister at the place of venue; Amba Serapion's staff at the Bishopric for Public, Ecumenical and Social Services; the Standing Committee, the speakers and all the participants, and - most importantly - His Holiness for having offered his hospitality.

Amba Bishoy thanks PRO ORIENTE and particularly Cardinal F. König for the 20 years of ecumenical work with the Oriental Orthodox Churches and for organising the present symposium. He points out the progress already made: "We are now able to speak together as Christians."

Cardinal König expresses once again his deep gratitude to H.H. Shenouda III for the warm hospitality and for the wonderful preparation of the symposium. Among the things he learnt during the past day, he mentions the experience of a remarkable difference between the East and the West: in the East, Christ is really at the centre of the Church's life and thinking; the West forgets too easily the exciting question: "Who is Jesus Christ", and gets busy with all kinds of issues. This meeting made more clear the importance of who is Jesus Christ. "May God bless what we have begun."

Cardinal König concludes the symposium with a final blessing and prayer for the safe journey home of all participants.

As a token of the historic importance of the symposium Pope Shenouda has commissioned the coinage of a commemorative medal with the inscription "Perfect in Divinity - Perfect in Humanity. CHRIST OUR LORD 1 Tim 3:16", "PRO ORIENTE Symposium - Amba Bishoy Monastery. EGYPT Oct. 1991".

His Holiness personally distributes the medals to each individual participant together with special gifts for Patriarch Stephanos, Cardinal König and the members of the Standing Committee and a parcel with his books for the others.

REPORT AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST SYMPOSIUM  
ORGANIZED BY PRO ORIENTE IN WADI NATRUN FROM 26th TO 28th  
OCTOBER 1991

1. The participants of PRO ORIENTE's Middle East Symposium - bishops, theologians, clergy and faithful of the Coptic Orthodox, Coptic Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, Syro-Indian, Maronite, Melkite, Latin, Anglican and Protestant Churches gratefully expressed the usefulness of this meeting organized by the Vienna-based foundation on the invitation of H.H. Pope Shenouda III at Amba Bishoy Monastery in Wadi Natrun. The aim was to inform a large spectrum of church representatives about the progress achieved in ecumenism over the last 20 years through the Vienna Dialogue between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches as well as the Common Declarations between Heads of Churches and the two official theological dialogues engaged so far between Rome and the Coptic Orthodox Church and Rome and the Malankara Syrian Church of India respectively.

Thus, the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE, bringing together representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and PRO ORIENTE ecumenists, realized its intention to familiarize Christian opinion leaders with the results of the 5 Vienna Consultations of 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988, thereby eventually reaching the faithful in all walks of life in the Churches concerned. Participants and organizers were unanimous about the success and usefulness of this undertaking.

The impact of this hitherto biggest ecumenical meeting in the Middle East was largely due to the presence of two of PRO ORIENTE's Protectors, H.H. Pope Shenouda III, who also gave a lecture on the Christological consensus, and of H.Em. Cardinal König, who inaugurated the symposium together with His Holiness and concluded the meeting with a blessing. During the three days of animated and open discussions participants testified to true ecumenical brotherhood and could experience a deep sense of spiritual communion in prayers and liturgies.

2. Participants listened to and discussed papers on ecumenism and the Vienna Dialogue between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches delivered in English and Arabic alternatively. Speakers and topics ran as follows:

- Ecumenism and the Vienna Dialogue with Oriental Orthodoxy: Alfred Stirnemann, Vienna; Fr. Kondothra M. George, India

- The Christological Consensus: H.H. Pope Shenouda III; Dom Emmanuel Lanne OSB, Chevetogne; Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian Vienna; Archbishop Cyrille Salim Bustros of Baalbek; Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba, Lebanon

- Councils and Conciliarity: Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo Fr. Tadros Malaty, Alexandria; Fr. Khalil Kochassarly OP, Brussels

All papers received a vivid response.

The symposium opened with common ecumenical prayers led by His Holiness. Participants attended the Eucharistic liturgy and vespers of the monastic community and a Holy Mass in Latin rite with members of the other churches present in an ecumenical spirit.

3. The conviction was expressed that this type of symposium for the propagation in certain regions (such as India, Armenia, Ethiopia and Syria) of the ecumenical achievements reached between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman

Catholic Churches and through the Vienna Dialogue in particular should be repeated. Special attention should be given to the response and opinions of the audience representing all levels of the Churches concerned. The implementation of ecumenical results into the everyday life of the congregations and activities of their pastors is of vital importance. The majority of participants should preferably come from one country (or region) only, papers and discussions held in the locally dominant language and focus on the real problems of ordinary Christian people such as participation in the sacraments, baptism and rebaptism, mixed marriages and different dates of Christian feasts, all of which have come to be a symbol of division.

4. The publication of PRO ORIENTE documentations not only in English but for the first time also in Arabic was welcomed by everybody. For ecumenical achievements to penetrate into the practical life of the Churches their presentation in a comprehensible terminology and language spoken by Christians in the respective Churches is essential. The publication of the papers and a summary of the discussions of the Middle East Symposium in English and Arabic was welcomed. Some participants declared their willingness to report back home by means of this documentation on what they have learned, thus multiplying the positive effect of these endeavours. Institutions of theological formation should make a point of providing ecumenical literature in their libraries.

5. There was the demand that certain subjects should be subjected to more in-depth expert study, be it in the form of study seminars or individual research work. The following topics were suggested:

- a) Prosyletism, its forms, causes and strategies to avoid it,
- b) the faith expressed by the *Tomos Leonis*,
- c) monasticism and liturgical tradition in East and West,
- d) possibilities, conditions and eventual forms and contents of a really Universal Council of all Churches,
- e) consequences of conciliarity, such as in the election of bishops,
- f) psychological problems resulting from the (slow or rapid) pace of ecumenical progress,
- g) realization of ecumenism on the local level, practical problems with pastoral cooperation,
- h) common study of the documents of Vatican II,
- i) infallibility of the Church, Ecumenical Councils, the Roman Pontiff,
- j) enumeration of main obstacles for ecumenism,
- k) which ecumenical results have not yet been received within the Churches and why,
- l) Eucharistic communion and its relation to the unity of the Church.
- m) A study of the faith of the Assyrian Church of the East and its rejection of the 3rd Council of Ephesos (431) was not considered to be a subject of bilateral or multilateral dialogue in the near future, is however open to examination in the long run.

6. It was suggested that the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE propose the following subjects to the competent church authorities for further consideration:

- Official judgement of the faith expressed in the *Tomos Leonis ad Flavianum*,
- lifting of the anathemata between the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches on the example of the recommendation of the Joint Commission of the Eastern (Byzantine) Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches,

- action in the field of baptism, rebaptism and intermarriage problems,
- as it is true that history cannot be changed, history books could be improved, particularly as far as the spirit, language and presentation of the problem of Chalcedon are concerned,
- to advise rectors of theological institutions to avoid outdated polemics and include the results of ecumenical dialogue in the studies of young theologians.

7. Participants were most grateful for the organization of this event. A special debt of gratitude is owed to His Holiness for acting as the host and reading the keynote paper, to Cardinal König who took the trouble of a fatiguing journey and to the Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos II, all of whom gave additional impetus to the event through their words of encouragement. Further thanks go to Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Antonio Magnoni, who paid a visit to the symposium, to the initiators on the part of PRO ORIENTE as well as to the local organizers responsible for the technical success of this enterprise. The presence of observers from the Pontifical Oriental Institute for the Promotion of Christian Unity, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Protestant Churches of Egypt and the Anglican Communion was an additional enrichment.

Moreover, participants' meeting Coptic faithful in St Mark's Cathedral, where Pope Shenouda presented PRO ORIENTE and the results of the Middle East Symposium to an assembly of several thousand people, was of particular significance. An official invitation by the Austrian ambassador Dr. Norbert Peter Pramberger in the name of the Republic of Austria and in the presence of the Egyptian Minister of State for International Cooperation, Maurice Makamallah, underlined the role of ecumenical cooperation for the civil society as well as for peace and friendship between different peoples.



*Franciscus Cardinal König*

AN ECUMENICAL BREAKTHROUGH IN EGYPT?

*The PRO ORIENTE Middle East Symposium in Wadi Natrun in October 1991<sup>1</sup>*

*Account to an Austrian Audience at the University of Vienna<sup>2</sup>*

About 80 km long and 30 km wide, Wadi El Natrun is a basin lying to the West of the Nile Delta. It is here in the Desert of Scetis that we find one of the oldest Christian monastic colonies, with four of its extensive monastic complexes surviving to this day. One of them is Deir Amba Bishoy, dating from the 4th century. Just next to it the Coptic Pope Shenouda III has built a conference centre and it was there that the first PRO ORIENTE Middle East Symposium for dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church took place.

*1. Introduction*

The Oriental Orthodox Churches comprise the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in India who, while each enjoying self-rule and independence from one another, live in full ecclesial and sacramental communion. They are also called "pre-Chalcedonian Churches", since they did not accept but rejected the decisions and above all the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451). The Council of Chalcedon had attempted to define the mystery of Jesus Christ being perfect God and perfect man with the phrase "two natures in one person". One group of bishops - mostly belonging to the Patriarchate of Alexandria but also some from Antioch - considered this to be a threat to the true faith. They felt that this was a betrayal of the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria accepted as orthodox at the Council of Ephesus (431) and that it meant moving some way towards the Christology of Nestorius rejected by that Council. As a result the Church of Jesus Christ suffered a major division.

In 1971, upon invitation of PRO ORIENTE, Vienna saw the first "non-official ecumenical consultation" between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, which was primarily devoted to the Christological issue, the onetime reason for the split. The final Communiqué of the Vienna Consultation contains the remarkable phrases of the so-called "Vienna Christological formula": "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. "

<sup>1</sup>. This text is a speech held at the 64<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Symposion of PRO ORIENTE on March, 10<sup>th</sup>, 1992 at the great Aula of Vienna University.

<sup>2</sup>. My sincere thanks go to Mons. Philipp Harmoncort, Head of the Institute for Liturgical Studies at the University of Graz, and his committed assistant Dietmar Winkler for their support in compiling this report.

This phrasing tries to express the one faith in Jesus Christ in a new and common language, avoiding those Greek terms (hypostasis, prosopon and physis) which in the past had given rise to fierce and passionate disputes. This agreement of faith, i.e. the above-quoted "Vienna Christological formula" later come to be included in official documents and declarations. I would only like to mention three of the most important ones: the Common Declaration signed in 1973 by the Head of the Coptic Church Pope Shenouda III and Pope Paul VI, the Common Declaration issued in 1984 by the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and Pope John Paul II and the Doctrinal Agreement between the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India and the Roman Catholic Church of 1990.

The success of the first Vienna Oriental Orthodox Consultation encouraged PRO ORIENTE to hold further non-official talks in 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988. With the Christological issue largely settled, other problems were taken up which had been caused by the 1500 years of separate history and continue to obstruct the way to unity. They are among others the questions of authority, ecumenicity and reception of the councils as well as the different concepts of the Church in East and West or primacy of the Pope of Rome.

These consultations have shown that even non-theological factors played a role in the misunderstandings and divisions of the Churches. The political and economic situation in the Byzantine Empire as well as cultural influences also contributed to the split. But what is the use of new insights when they are not being spread and received?

Hence, aiming to inform mainly Arabic-speaking Christians about the results achieved so far in the Vienna Oriental Orthodox Consultations, from 26th to 28th October 1991, PRO ORIENTE together with the Coptic Church organized a three-day Middle East Symposium. The idea was to address a wider public beyond the theological experts and hierarchy involved in the ecumenical process. This is why the meeting was attended not only by bishops but also by students of theology, clergy and lay people, rectors of seminaries and professors of theology, parish priests and catechists, men and women. More than a hundred participants representing all Churches to be found in the Middle East - with the only exception of the Greek Orthodox Church - came to the Coptic conference centre in Wadi Natrun which had even been refurbished for the purpose of this event. Besides representatives of the Melkite, Maronite, Latin and the five Oriental Orthodox Churches along with observers from the Protestant and Anglican Churches, the Middle Eastern Catholic Oriental Churches united with Rome also took part.

Since Pope Shenouda III's visit to Pope Paul VI in Rome in 1973, friendly relations have developed between the Coptic Orthodox and the Coptic Catholic Churches. At the time Pope Paul VI had written a letter to the Coptic Catholic hierarchy, expressly asking them to actively promote the ecumenical process. The respect Pope Shenouda III and the Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos II have for each other is a comforting sign of the joint efforts for the Church of Jesus Christ. Especially today, at a time when many a discordant note is straining the relationship between the Catholic Oriental Churches and the Orthodox Church.

The PRO ORIENTE delegation and myself were given a very cordial welcome and reception. There was a sense of the high esteem PRO ORIENTE enjoys with the Churches in the Middle East, and it was pleasing to see that an Austrian initiative, the Vienna Oriental Orthodox Consultations, had apparently created an atmosphere of open dialogue. So much to the history leading up to Wadi Natrun.

## 2. Course of the Middle East Symposium

The symposium opened with an ecumenical worship expressing the wealth of different languages and traditions through which Christians are praising the one Lord. We experienced something of the unity in diversity which should be our ultimate Christian aim. There were prayers in Coptic and Arabic; Syriac, Armenian and Latin songs. The texts from the bible and the intercessions were read or said by representatives of the different confessions in Greek, Arabic and English and I was invited to invoke God's blessing for the ecumenical community assembled.

### a) A "General Survey"

Giving a "General Survey" of the dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, the very first main topic of the symposium showed that our activities and the results achieved in the ecumenical dialogue are not yet sufficiently known. Alfred Stirnemann, Secretary General of PRO ORIENTE, spoke about PRO ORIENTE's contribution to the dialogue. Fr. K.M. George of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in India, who teaches at the Bossey Institute of the World Council of Churches near Geneva, presented a good survey of the five Vienna Oriental Orthodox Consultations and outlined their most important results. Many participants had never heard of the outcome of the non-official dialogue held in Vienna. Even representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches from the diaspora in Canada or the US were not aware of the theological agreements or the Common Declarations of the Heads of our Churches.

### b) The "Christological Consensus"

Particularly the fact that the dogmatic differences surrounding the "Christology" have been largely settled and eliminated - the second main topic chosen by the "Standing Committee" - has apparently hardly at all entered the minds of the faithful. Pope Shenouda's paper gave rise to a very lively discussion. Most of the questions came from the attending Coptic priests, theologians and students, who attentively listened to the words of the Head of their Church. Pope Shenouda III was present almost throughout the symposium. His active involvement afforded an important contribution to the popularisation of the Christological consensus among the Coptic community. Although in formulating the faith in Jesus Christ he used a pre-Chalcedonian terminology derived from his Alexandrian tradition, he made a point of emphasizing that the Churches rejecting Chalcedon confess the same faith as those accepting the Council of Chalcedon.

Another four papers were devoted to the Christological consensus: Dom Emmanuel Lanne of the Benedictine Abbey of Chevetogne in Belgium treated the issue from a Roman Catholic point of view. Mesrob K. Krikorian, bishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church for Central Europe and Sweden, gave a detailed analysis of the Christological agreement reached in Vienna. He had taken part in all of the five Vienna Oriental Orthodox Consultations and as their co-chairman was a major contributor to the improvement in mutual understanding. That the process of the reception of the Christological consensus is only starting, was last but not least born out by the very open and lively discussion following the talks of Archbishop Cyril Bustros of Baalbek and Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba, both of the Melkite Church in Lebanon.

What is needed is a broad look at history which must not disregard the mutual offences of the past, a joint re-examination of the heresy allegations as well as the propagation of what has been achieved so far. A first PRO ORIENTE publication in Arabic, which was made available at the Middle East Symposium and is to be followed by others in Amharic and Armenian, was felt to be very useful in this respect. Although it is true, that we have reached important steps of understanding, if we want the Christological agreement achieved by theologians to enter into the hearts and the minds of the people there is still a long way to go.

### c) "Councils and Conciliarity"

Christology was not the only theological issue to be discussed at the Middle East Symposium; "Councils and Conciliarity" featured as the third main topic. The Oriental Orthodox Churches only accept the three first Councils of Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381 and Ephesus 431 as ecumenical. This is why the question of the authority, ecumenicity and reception of the later councils is a point of special attention in this dialogue. In this respect the very first paper on the topic, read by the Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, was revealing and interesting. He mentioned among other things that the Syrian Orthodox Church, while rejecting the Christological decision of Chalcedon, nevertheless has incorporated some canons of this council - pertaining to the priesthood, monastic life and charity - into its codex of canonical law. The crucial question raised in the discussion, however, was the necessity of an Ecumenical Council for the life of the Church, particularly in view of the fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches have been able to do without one for over one and a half centuries.

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty in his paper added further subjects related to the issue of conciliarity: the question of the number, nature and infallibility of councils as well as the problem of the dogmas and condemnations of later councils that are not accepted by the other side. Following the last paper read by Fr. Khalil Kochassarly, a Syrian-born Dominican from Brussels, the issue of a future Ecumenical Council came up for discussion: Which requirements would have to be met? Who or which Church convokes a council? Who presides it? The answer to these questions still needs a lot of hard theological work since it is bound up with such difficult problems as the different concepts of the Church or papal primacy. As a matter of fact, PRO ORIENTE is already planning to hold a study seminar on the unresolved questions of the wider theme of "Councils and Conciliarity" in Vienna in June 1992.

### d) Further Issues Raised

For the Christian Churches, representing a minority in the crisis-stricken Middle East which - particularly in the Syrian region - is constantly dwindling in number through massive emigration, cooperation and close relations with sister churches are a necessity of life. Hence, there was repeated reference to problems related to practical church life, problems which demonstrate the lack of unity to the outside world and have a negative influence on the ecumenical climate. They include such issues as Eucharistic communion, admission to the sacraments, different dates of feast days and last but not least proselytism. Given the highly sensitive character of the matter, my feeling is that especially when it comes to that last concern the Roman Catholic Church must act with caution vis à vis the smaller but historically very important Sister Churches of the East. The suspicion and fear of numerically smaller churches to lose their identity or to be

stified in the embrace of the big brother are understandable from a human point of view but can only be reduced through open dialogue.

From among the Syrian Orthodox Church the issue of a dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East was brought up. This Church only accepts the first two Ecumenical councils and is also called a "Nestorian" Church as a result of its rejecting the Christological definition of the Council of Ephesus (431). Whether the accusation of "Nestorianism", which this Church itself denies, is founded or not, remains to be studied by future theological research. The Coptic Orthodox Church in particular is rather reluctant regarding dialogue with the Assyrian Church. The reservations may well be historically founded, for Cyril of Alexandria was one of those chiefly responsible for the condemnation of Nestorius. Moreover, the inclusion of a third party in a hitherto successful bilateral dialogue was not deemed reasonable. There was reference to the talks the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) has started with the Assyrian Church in September 1991 and it was suggested to wait for their results.

#### *e) Proposals Put to the "Standing Committee"*

During a final round of discussions ideas and proposals for further dialogue action were put to the so-called "Standing Committee". The Standing Committee, formed of representatives of PRO ORIENTE and the five Oriental Orthodox Churches, was created in 1989. It is to ensure a more flexible and more efficient coordination of work following the Vienna Oriental Orthodox Consultations. Thus, the Standing Committee had been responsible for the detailed planning of the symposium and has now got the task to work out and coordinate future steps according to the proposals made by the participants. These proposals again brought up those problems which earlier on during the symposium had become apparent as obstructing the way to unity. The following issues were among those suggested to be made the subject of further study seminars and in-depth research work: council and conciliarity, proselytism, the liturgical tradition in East and West, problems of pastoral ecumenical cooperation on the local level, papal primacy and questions relating to the reception of ecumenical results.

#### *f) Hospitality*

Finally I would like to mention the hospitable atmosphere which characterized this symposium and impressed us all. The positive development of the symposium was not to an inconsiderable extent due to the cooperation and commitment of the staff of the Coptic Orthodox Church. There was simultaneous interpretation of the papers read in English or Arabic. The fact that the manuscripts were also available in both languages largely facilitated a constructive discussion. Last but not least the hospitable atmosphere of the Egyptian desert monastery also offered opportunities for theological exchange and encounters during the breaks, at mealtimes and until late at night. This again showed the importance of personal conversation and informal encounter.

It was very impressive, particularly for participants from the Christian West, to have a chance of attending the celebration of the Eucharist and vespers in the nearby Deir Amba Bishoy. The monks do not only convince by their ascetic way of life, they have also preserved their liturgy and songs over the centuries. The fact that many of the Coptic Christians attending Sunday service surrounded me after the celebration of the liturgy and wanted to get my blessing deeply touched and delighted me. Apparently the people are less prejudiced against Roman cardinals than the theologians.

We Catholics could celebrate mass in Latin rite. Our sisters and brothers of the other denominations were invited not to be mere spectators but to share in the celebration

and prayer through their reading of lessons and intercessions. The existence in the Coptic conference centre of an appropriate worship room for us was a pleasant discovery. Yet, all this cannot obscure the fact that it is especially during the celebration of the Eucharist that the pain of division is particularly strong.

After the Middle East Symposium we had the pleasure of being the guests of the Coptic Catholic Patriarch Stephanos II and of Pope Shenouda III. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his holding the office of Head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Pope Shenouda III invited for a reception to the Patriarchate in Cairo. This was an opportunity to get to know Pope Shenouda as someone who consciously lives up to his pastoral and episcopal duty of preaching the gospel. Each Wednesday he comes to the crypt of St. Mark's Cathedral to give religious instruction to an assembly of about five thousand Coptic Christians. This time the catechises started with an account of the Middle East Symposium. This also allowed us to experience the high esteem in which myself and those working for PRO ORIENTE are held in the Coptic Church.

#### *3. Assessment*

By way of conclusion I am now going to make an attempt to answer the question as to the special character of this symposium: The Symposium may be rated as one of the most successful examples of the popularisation and discussion of ecumenical theological dialogues. More often than not the results of these theological dialogues are unknown even to such key multipliers as directors of seminaries, professors of theology and catechists. Ecumenical documents are being issued from time to time, but their terminology is difficult to understand and the historical connections are complicated. Hence, ecumenical progress does not easily get on to the people. Moreover, day-to-day theological work and the small step forward are after all not spectacular enough for the media to report about them. This lack of knowledge leads on the one hand to an ever increasing impatience along with the opinion that ecumenism is stagnating; on the other hand prejudices, the lack of knowledge of the other and distrust linger on without any basis. This is why the difficult task of popularising the results of ecumenical dialogue is a duty which has not yet been sufficiently taken on. Wadi Natrun saw a successful dialogue not only between the denominations but also between the "experts of ecumenism" and the "grass-roots".

This prompted impulses for the implementation of dialogue results in practical Christian community life not only on the part of the expert speakers but also and above all from the participants themselves. This form of reflection made for a fruitful exchange between the two sides. It is not only the obstacles that are seen but also that which our Churches hold in common.

The general appreciation expressed by the symposium participants encouraged PRO ORIENTE to plan further regional symposia to be held every other year in India, Ethiopia, Armenia and Syria. Moreover, the idea was voiced, to organize a number of smaller local information meetings instead of a big regional symposium, in order to include into the process of reflection and reception the largest number possible of bishops, priests, professors and students of the local Churches. For while the popularisation of the progress made so far on the way to unity does not eliminate all current inter-church problems and conflicts, it does represent an important step towards mutual understanding and closer ecumenical links - and thus to a peaceful joining of efforts and common Christian witness as it is already possible today.



Press conference at Wadi Natroun, from right to left: Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Pope Shenouda III, Cardinal König and Alfred Stirnemann



From right to left: Father Khalil Kocharsarly OP, Pope Shenouda III, Archbishop Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim, Father Tadros Malaty



The participants united after the last session of the symposium



Patriarch Stephanos II receives a present by Pope Shenouda III, Cardinal König observing