

# THE VIENNA DIALOGUE

Five PRO ORIENTE Consultations  
with Oriental Orthodoxy

KASLIK REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
SEPTEMBER 1994

Published by  
Alfred Stirnemann and Gerhard Wilflinger  
on behalf of the  
Foundation PRO ORIENTE

Booklet No 8  
Vienna 1998

## CONTENTS

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Patriarch Zakka I Iwas: Preamble .....	6
Alfred Stirnemann/Gerhard Wilflinger: Foreword by the Editors .....	7
Philipp Harnoncourt: Scholarly Achievement .....	9
Programme .....	12
List of participants .....	14

### THIRD REGIONALSYMPOSIUM

#### *Inauguration*

Patriarch Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir. Introductory Remarks .....	23
Patriarch Ignatios IV Hazim. Greeting Message .....	23
Patriarch Zakka I Iwas. Greeting Message .....	24
Catholicos Karekin II. Opening Address .....	25
Franciscus Cardinal König. Inauguration Speech .....	26
Elie Khalifé Hashem. Greeting of the Guests .....	28
Alfred Stirnemann. Greeting of the Guests .....	29

#### *Papers and Discussions*

Alfred Stirnemann: The Vienna Ecumenical Consultations between Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Theologians: Purpose and Results .....	32
Amba Bishoy: The Vienna Ecumenical Consultations between Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Theologians: Purpose and Results .....	47
Aram Keshishian: The Vienna Christological Consensus .....	55
Nicolas Antiba: The Vienna Christological Consensus .....	58
Mar Gregorios: The Vienna Christological Consensus .....	67
Elie Khalifé Hashem: The Vienna Christological Consensus .....	76
Working Groups I: Impact of the Common Declarations on Christian Life and Ecumenical Relations in Lebanon, Syria and other parts of the Middle East ..	92
Mesrob K. Krikorian: Ecclesiological Discussion of the Five Vienna Consultations	109
Cyrille Bustros: The Ministry of Unity in the Church .....	124
Mar Theophilos: The Ecclesiological Concept in the Vienna Consultations .....	129
Paul Sayah: The Discussion of Ecclesiology in the Vienna Consultations .....	133
Working Groups II: Future Models of Unity in the Middle East .....	143
Reports of the Working Groups .....	150
Gabriel Habib: Ecumenism in the Middle East .....	156
Mesrob K. Krikorian: Conclusions and Follow-up .....	161
Report of the Mashreq Symposium .....	162
Catholicos Karekin II: Conclusive Remarks .....	165
Final Ecumenical Celebrations .....	167



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**PRO ORIENTE Publications in English**

**THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX - ROMAN CATHOLIC VIENNA CONSULTATIONS**

- \* 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 Ökumenische Stiftung PRO ORIENTE in Vienna (1988) 286 p. (out of print)
- \* Five Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church 1971 - 1988. Selected Papers in One Volume. Published and edited by the Ecumenical Foundation PRO ORIENTE - Vienna (1993) 370 p.

**The PRO ORIENTE Dialogue within the Churches of Syriac Tradition**

- \* Syriac Dialogue No 1, First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1994, 240 p. Available in English, French and Arabic.
- \* Syriac Dialogue No 2, Second Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1997, 224 p. Available in English and French.
- \* Syriac Dialogue No 3, Third Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1998, available in English and French.

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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST

BAB TOUMA . PO. BOX 22260  
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**PREAMBLE**

The Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch believes that ecumenism should have a great place in the life of the churches all over the world. This is one way in which they can fulfill the will of our Lord as in St. John: 17:21, after all the divisions which started from the 5th century. One of the reasons for division was the doctrine of incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our church we have agreed since 1971 that the differences concerning the incarnation are due to different factors namely, terminological and political. In 1971, my predecessor the Late Patriarch of Antioch H.H Mar Ignatius Ya'qoub III in the common declaration signed by him and by the Late Pope of Rome H.H Paul VI emphasized this fact. We did the same in the common declaration signed by us and H.H John Paul II. These two common declarations changed a lot in the relations between our church and the Catholic Church.

We acknowledge that the efforts made by the Pro Oriente foundation helped the Theologians from both Churches, Oriental Orthodox and Catholic in producing such important documents which encourage all the churches to make progress in bringing the flock of our Lord together.

We are very happy to see that Pro Oriente is publishing the proceedings of the third regional symposium which was held between 23 - 28 September 1994 at Kaslik University - Lebanon. We have instructed our brother Metropolitans and other members of the Syrian Orthodox delegation to participate fully in the proceedings of this symposium. We believe that such publications will be excellent instruments for all those who are interested in the unity of the church specially the clergy and the seminarians.

We pray that God the Almighty may bestow His blessings up on the efforts of Pro Oriente, specially the President, the General Secretary, the Staff and the standing committee, so that we can enjoy the fruitful results which will bring all our Christian Churches to a full communion.

With apostolic blessings and best wishes.



**Ignatius Zakka I Iwas**  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme head of the Universal  
Syrian Orthodox Church

**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, Arabic Malayalam, Armenian, Amharic and German.
- \* Booklet Number 2, Summaries of the Papers; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1991, 74 p. Available in English; German 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 and Arabic, planned in other languages.
- \* Booklet Number 4, On Primacy, First Study Seminar, June 1991; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 92 p. Available in English, planned in the above mentioned languages.
- \* Booklet Number 5, On Councils and Conciliarity, Second Study Seminar, June 1992; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 68 p. Available in English, planned in the above mentioned languages.
- \* Booklet Number 6, Kerala Regional Symposium, Kottayam, October 1993; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1995, 280 p. Available in English and Malayalam
- \* Booklet Number 7, On Ecclesiology, Third Study Seminar, July 1994; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1995, 194 p. Available in English.
- \* Booklet Number 8, Lebanon Regional Symposium, Kaslik, September 1994, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1998, 170 p. Available in English.
- \* Booklet Number 9, On Authority and Jurisdiction, Fourth Study Seminar, July 1996; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1998, 140 p. Available in English.
- \* Booklet Number 10, Regionalsymposion Kröffelbach. August/September 1997, PRO ORIENTE, Wien 1999, 140 p. Available in German.
- \* Booklet Number 11, Community and Anathemata, Fifth Study Seminar, February 1999, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1999. Planned in the above mentioned languages.

**FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS**

With this Booklet No 8 in the series of the Vienna Dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonian Churches, we present the text of the lectures and the minutes of the discussion of PRO ORIENTE's Third Regional Symposium which was held at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik near Beyrouth, Lebanon from September 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 1994. Its intention was to make the participants from the Mashreq, from Lebanon, Syria, the Holy Land and from Iraq familiar with the process and the results of the dialogue which was introduced by the Foundation PRO ORIENTE of Vienna in 1991 between theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and the five Oriental Orthodox Churches i.e. the Coptic Orthodox, the Syrian Orthodox, the Armenian Apostolic, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syro-Indian Malankara Church. These dialogues started with five general Consultations in the years 1971 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988 as well as by specialized Studies Seminars in 1991 on Primacy, in 1992 on Councils and Conciliarity and in 1994 on Ecclesiology. The Vienna Dialogue is planned and directed by the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE which comprises representatives of all the Oriental Orthodox Churches and of PRO ORIENTE. Equally this project in Lebanon was elaborated and conducted by the Standing Committee who found it important that the contents of this dialogue and its results should be known to the greater public of ecumenically-interested people from all the churches concerned in a certain region, so we organized similar regional symposiums in Wadi Natrun, Egypt 1991 for the Arabic-speaking world and in Kottayam/Kerala for India in 1993 which was conducted in English and Malayalam We are most indebted to the members of the Standing Committee for their precious contribution, which was comprising of the following persons: Amba Bishoy, Coptic Orthodox Metropolitan of Damiette; Mar Gregorius, Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo; Bishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Armenian Apostolic Archbishop of Vienna (Co-Chairman); Aram Keshishian, Armenian Apostolic Archbishop of Beyrouth; Archbishop Gabriel, Head of Foreign Affairs Office of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; Dr. Kondotra K.M. George, Assistant Director of Bossey College representing the Syro-Indian Church and from PRO ORIENTE, President Alfred Stirnemann (Co-Chairman) and Msgr. Philipp Harnoncourt.

The Third Regional Symposium in Kaslik was led in Arabic and English, and hosted by the Maronite Fathers who lead this university and to whom and especially to its Rector, Fr. Elie Khalifé Hashem, we are much indebted. We express our gratitude to those Heads of Churches who have promoted our efforts and have been present at our regional symposium either personally or through representatives. So, we were able to greet personally His Holiness, Catholicos Karekin II of the Great House of Cilicia, their Beatitudes Patriarch Pierre Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir of the Maronite Church, Patriarch Jean Pierre XVIII Kasparian of the Armenian Catholic Church, Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid of the Chaldean Catholic Church. Other patriarchs were represented by their bishops such as Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and Patriarch Ignatius IV Hazim of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch as well as the Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignace Antoine II Hayek and the Melchite Patriarch Maximus V Hakim. A great honor and pleasure for all the participants were the introducing words

of the founder and protector of PRO ORIENTE Franciscus Cardinal König, Archbishop emeritus of Vienna in the inauguration ceremony.

Other words of thanks go to the lecturers, the chairpersons of the different sessions, the moderators of the discussions in the working groups, the secretaries for the minutes of the meetings, Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor at the Coptic Theological Institute, Sister Mary from the Maronite Nuns and Father Efreim Karim, now Syrian Orthodox Archbishop in New Jersey and our interpreters, Mrs. Odette Nasif from Cairo and Mrs. Marcelle Al-Khuri Tarakji from Damascus and the staff of PRO ORIENTE.

The Roman Curia showed its interest by sending Father Bernard Dubasque as an observer from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Our last word of thanks goes to His Holiness Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, himself a participant in the Vienna Dialogue when he was still Archbishop of Baghdad and Basrah and Protector of PRO ORIENTE since 1984.



Philipp Harnoncourt

## A NEW PRIORITY OF ECUMENICAL ACTIVITIES

### REGIONAL SYMPOSIA FOR THE RECEPTION OF RESULTS

#### Scholarly Achievement

For decades ecumenical meetings and consultations of PRO ORIENTE took place especially in Vienna. There were communiqués of the organizers and participants, reports in the mass media - especially in related special books - and Austrian publications of the lectures and discussions which documented these initiatives and meetings. Almost never these publications left the circle of ecumenical experts unfortunately.

The intention of PRO ORIENTE, to make known the results of the ecumenical work to a possibly group of hierarchs, theologians and the so-called "basis" and to initiate a broader discussion, unfortunately had certain limits unable to overcome at first. Such experiences are known to almost all ecumenical institutions.

Since 1991 PRO ORIENTE organized Regional Symposia in co-operation with one Ancient Oriental Church and with participation of the respective Catholic Oriental Church in order to proclaim the results reached so far - especially viewing the questions of Christology, but in growing number also ecclesiological questions - to give broad publicity as far as possible.

Five such Regional Symposia were already organized by PRO ORIENTE:

1991 in Egypt: At Deir Amba Bishoy/Wadi Natroun of the Coptic Orthodox Church

1993 in India: At the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary of Vadavathoor of the Malabar Catholic Church in Kottayam

1994 in Lebanon: At the Université du Saint Esprit of the Maronite Church in Kaslik

1995 in India: At the Jubilee Memorial Animation Centre at Vellayambalam, Trivandrum

1997 in Germany: At the Coptic St Antony-Monastery at Kröffelbach/Waldsolms in Germany

Coming symposia are in preparation: 1999 in Armenia, around 2001 in Ethiopia, maybe one in the USA.

Invitations were sent to hierarchs, ecumenical experts, professors and students of theology, further interested lay people of the respective region. Always participating were also the hierarchs and theologians of the respective Catholic Oriental Churches, in order to establish important connections by that way, which can be kept after the Regional Symposium. PRO ORIENTE is publishing a series of *Booklets* in the languages of the different regions: Arabic, English, Malayalam (for South India) and German to present the respective lectures which were discussed to the participants and other multipliers or interested people. In preparation are *Booklets* in Armenian, Amharic (for Ethiopia) and French.

At first representatives of the involved churches presented the results of the Vienna Consultations from their own view. Then much time is reserved for the discussions, because often deep-rooted and stubborn defended prejudices - grown in centuries by tradition and teaching - of many participants must be treated cautiously. But that is only possible, if the existing arguments are defeated plausibly and patiently. Basically this pro-

blem is also existing in Europe and Overseas both between Protestants and Catholics, between Protestants and Orthodox and also between Catholics and Orthodox, as everybody knows who is striving for an ecumenical encounter.

The so far shown mutual mistrust, the accusations and the condemnations as well as the long practiced strategies of defense are working till now (the youngest example are the 1998 not expected anew coming problems regarding the reception of the common declaration about the doctrine of justification between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Alliance).

The most important expectation of such a Regional Symposium is aimed to improve the information about the ecumenical dialogue and the agreements all the participating churches have agreed on and to implement really the reached results in the education of theologians, in order to overcome the old and deep rooted mutual prejudices of the churches.

Up to 1990 one could have the impression that the participation of certain churches in the ecumenical work contains the sending of delegates to conferences only. For decades the ecumenical-experts of the different Christian Churches discussed and negotiated, mostly the same persons again and again. So the divided Churches take part in the dialogue, but in a certain way as an alibi, not to be obliged to do "more".

The Regional Symposia of PRO ORIENTE show their effectiveness in that situation. Therefore meetings of that kind should be part of the ecumenical dialogue in general. It seems to be tragically and astonishingly or hurts how many really competent professors of theology still are untouched of ecumenical work and still seem to want to be free of it.

\* \* \*

This presented *Booklet* documents the Regional Symposium which took place in 1994 at the Maronite Université du Saint Esprit in Kaslik. This event was different from the usual program of Regional Symposia - characterized by some distinct circumstances:

- All the Churches of the Syriac tradition, all other non-Chalcedonian Churches and also the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church took part in and presented their lectures for discussion.
- For the first time also representatives of the Assyrian Church of the East (hitherto usually and falsely called "Nestorians") and the Catholic Chaldeans took part in the dialogue.
- A qualified preparation for a stronger and determined continued co-operation was done by the Middle East Council of Churches which took part in the preparation and organization of the Regional Symposium firmly.

In no country all over the world - not even in Jerusalem or in the whole "Holy Land" - the Christian minority (in Lebanon about 40 %, in Syria about 10 %) which decreases in present times by emigration continuously, belongs to so many different and mutually divided churches, whose members are all more or less natives:

The (Greek) Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch, the Maronite Patriarchate of Antioch (in union with Rome), the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean (Catholic) Church, the Catholicossate

of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Cilician Patriarchate of the Armenian Catholic Church, the (Latin) Roman Catholic Church.

Each of these churches claims to be accepted as the authentic local church, and each head is "successor of the Apostle Petrus, the first bishop of Antioch. Different larger or smaller Reformed Churches: Anglicans, Calvinists, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists etc. have to be added.

- Between the hierarchs there are rather friendly relations, especially, if they present themselves commonly as Christians in front of the state or of Muslim institutions.
- Among theologians and theological seminaries such relations are less usual regretably, because mutual information is insufficient and is not endangering the certainty of one's own conviction.
- But within the communities, at the basis, there is almost no ecumenism.

Some Church will secure its members by hindering contacts with members of other churches. That is an approach which is untenable in a world of globalization and is not useful for the solving of problems.

This published PRO ORIENTE documentation intended:

- for the participants of the Study Seminar of PRO ORIENTE in Vienna-Lainz to be a helpful memory and a summary of an event;
- to offer to all interested in and working for ecumenical renewal an authentic insight to that field; and
- to bring suggestions and encouragement to organize similar programs at other places.

## PROGRAMME

### FRIDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 1994

- 9.00 Inauguration, chaired by President Alfred Stirnemann  
Ecumenical Service with the Catholic Patriarchs  
Speech of Catholicos Karekin II  
Message of Patriarch Zakka I Iwas  
Message of Patriarch Ignatios IV Hazim  
Inauguration Speech of Franciscus Cardinal König
- 10.00 *Papers and Discussions*  
First Working Session, chaired by *Mar Theophilos George Saliba*
- President Alfred Stirnemann/ Metropolitan Amba Bishoy*  
The Vienna Ecumenical Consultations between Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Theologians: Purpose and Results
- 12.00 Plenary Discussion
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 *Papers and Discussions*  
Second Working Session, chaired by *Patriarchal Vicar Mons. Paul Matar*
- Archbishop Mar Gregorios/Rector Father Elie Khalifé Hashem*  
The Vienna Christological Consensus
- 16.30 - chaired by *Rector Father Elie Khalifé Hashem*
- Archbishop Aram Keshishian/Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba*  
The Vienna Christological Consensus
- 18.00 Plenary Discussion, chaired by *Archbishop Mar Gregorios*
- 20.30 Dinner

### SATURDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1994

- 8.30 Syriac Service
- 9.00 Third Working Session, chaired by *Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian*
- Plenary Discussion* (of Christology)
- 11.00 Formation of 10 Working Groups for the Discussion of the:

### *Impact of the Common Declarations on Christian Life and Ecumenical Relations in Lebanon, Syria and other parts of the Middle East*

- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.30 Working Groups continued
- 17.00 Forth Working Session, chaired by *Archbishop Mar Gregorios*
- Plenary Discussion*
- 20.30 Dinner

### SUNDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1994

Liturgies in the different church communities in Lebanon, participation of the foreign delegates as guests

### MONDAY, 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1994

- 8.30 Armenian Service
- 9.00 Fifth Working Session, chaired *Metropolitan Amba Bishoy*
- The Discussion of Ecclesiology in the Vienna Consultations:*  
*Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian*  
*Archbishop Cyrille Bustros*  
*Archbishop Mar Theophilos George Saliba*  
*Father Paul Sayah*
- 11.30 Plenary Discussion
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.30 Working Groups: *Future Models of Unity in the Middle East*
- 18.00 Sixth Working Session, chaired by *Mar Ephrem Athanasios*
- Reports of the Working Groups
- 20.30 Dinner

### TUESDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 1994

- 8.30 Byzantine Service
- 9.00 Seventh Working Session, chaired by *Archbishop Mar Gregorios*

*Gabriel Habib. Ecumenism in the Middle East*

- 9.30 Reports of the Working Groups
- 11.30 Plenary Discussion
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.30 Eighth Working Session, chaired by President Alfred Stirnemann
- Conclusions and Follow-up
- 16.00 Concluding Session  
Messages of the Patriarchs
- 17.30 Common Ecumenical Service in the Chapel of the University
- 18.30 Reception in honour of the delegates given by Mr. Khalil Fattal (Honorary Consul of the Republic of Austria)

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

***ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES:***

*1. Coptic Orthodox*

Amba Bishoy  
Metropolitan of Damiette, Secretary General of the Holy Synod,  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee

Maurice Abd Mariam  
Theological Coptic Faculty, Kairo

*2. Syrian Orthodox*

Mar Theophilos George Saliba  
Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon

Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim  
Archbishop of Aleppo, member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee  
Mar Athanasios Ephrem  
Archbishop of Beyrouth and Zahle

Mar Yohannis Poulouze Alsouki  
Patriarchal Vicar of Damascus

Elijah Bahi  
Bab Touma, Damascus

Monk Malke Malke  
Bab Touma, Damascus

Athanasius Aphrem Barsoun  
Aleppo

Farida Boulos  
Aleppo

Ghada Abdeyem  
Centre of Religious Education, Hassake

George Glore  
Parish Priest in Beyrouth

Father Ephrem Karim  
Aleppo

Elie Jarjour

Stephane Georges  
Dora

Bollos Mikhael Khoresfeskof  
Ashrafiye Sioufi, Beyrouth

Laurence Hamamayi  
Centre of Religious Education, Balounek

Joelle Ifamji  
Centre of Religious Education, Balounek

William Mansour  
President of the Centre of Religious Education, Beyrouth

Stephanos Issa  
Bouchrieh Ferdous, Beyrouth

Hanna Najah  
Adonis Immeuble Tonitis



Boulos Mikhael Khouly  
Parish Priest, Ashrafiye

Jeanette Mansour  
Achrafie, Rmeil Immeuble

Hanna Filipe Mansour  
Centre of Religious Education, Mazaha Ghanstros

Jakob Mrad  
Mezraad Jacoub

Wadidi Malo  
Zahle, Karoge Mater

Rita Malo  
Zahle

Soeur Marcelle Hadaya  
College des Soeurs des Saints Coeurs, Jounie

Charbel Ifamji  
Centre of Religious Education, Balounek

Zaza Bassam  
Damascus

### *3. Armenian Apostolic Church*

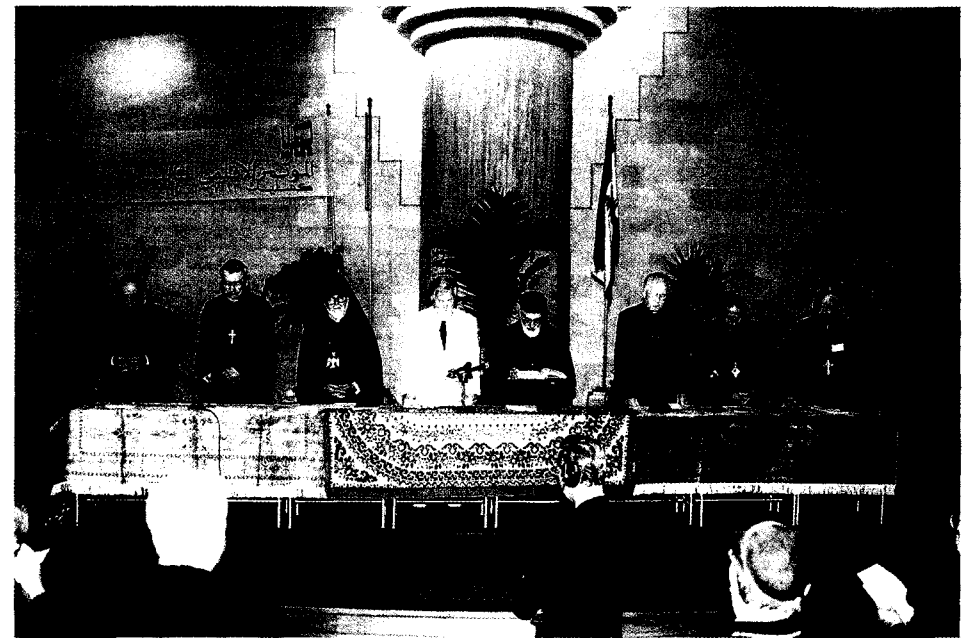
Patriarch Karekin II Sarkissian  
then Catholicos of Cilicia, now of Etchmiadzin

Mesrob K. Krikorian  
Archbishop of Austria and Central Europe,  
member and co-chairman of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee

Aram Keshishian (prevented)  
Primate of Lebanon,  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee,  
now Catholicos of Cilicia

Father Sebouh Sarkissian  
Antelias

Vatche Tatoyan  
Parish Pastor at Antelias



Inauguration of the Third Regional Symposium. From left to right: Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, Patriarch Jean Kasparian, Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia, President Stirmemann, Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, Franciscus Cardinal König, Bishop George Abou Zachem, Archbishop Mar Gregorios



Inaugural session. In front: Metropolit Mar Narsai de Baz, Mar Bawai Soro, Metropolit Theophilos George Saliba, Vicar General Boulos Matar, Bishop Mar Athanasios Aprem.



Inauguration of the Third Regional Symposium. From left to right: Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, Patriarch Jean Kasparian, Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia, President Stirmemann, Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, Franciscus Cardinal König, Bishop George Abou Zachem, Archbishop Mar Gregorios



Inaugural session. In front: Metropolitan Mar Narsai de Baz, Mar Bawai Soro, Metropolitan Theophilos George Saliba, Vicar General Boulos Matar, Bishop Mar Athanasios Aprem.



Father K. M. George Kondotra, Mons. Philipp Harnoncourt



Archbishop Mar Gregorios, President Alfred Stimmemann, Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian



Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia, Metropolitan Mar Athanasios Aprem of Beyrouth, Archbishop Abuna Gabriel of Western Shoa



Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia and Franciscus Cardinal König



President Elie Hraoui of Lebanon welcomes Catholicos Karekin II and Cardinal König

Sossie Khatchoyan  
Achrafieh Karmel Zeitun, Beyrouth

Dihrayr Panossian  
Leader of Christian Education, Antelias

Father Aren Mehranian  
Bikfaye  
Deacon Haroutioun Tchobanian  
Bikfaye

Deacon Berdi Gulumian  
Bikfaye

Deacon Haroutioun Kethedyan  
Bikfaye

Haroutin Demirdian  
Antelias

Krikor Allozian  
Antelias

Manoushag Boyadjian  
Antelias

Hasdmig Baktarian  
Antelias

*4. Ethiopian Orthodox*

Archbishop Abuna Gabriel  
Head of Department for Foreign Affairs, Addis Ababa,  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee

*5. Indo-Syrian Orthodox*

Father Kondothra K.M. George  
Assistant Director of the Ecumenical Institute Bossey (WCC),  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee

**6. GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ANTIOCH**

Bishop George Abu Zacham  
Dean of the Theological Institut Balamand,  
Secretary of the Holy Synod

Tonios El Khoury  
Institut St. John of Damascus, Balamand

Georges Maalouf  
Institut St. John of Damascus, Balamand

Wail Kheir  
Al Hamra North Matn Joseph Abou, Suleiman Building

#### 7. ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST

Mar Bawai Soro  
Bishop of Western USA, Los Angeles,  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Syrian Commission,  
Secretary General of CIRED

John Shayne  
Kazan Building, Kaslik

#### CATHOLIC CHURCH:

##### 8. Roman Catholic

Father Bernard Dubasque (observer)  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Jean Luis Lingot  
IMM. Chammas rue Siouti, Achrafieh

André Tuilier  
Enghien les Bains, France

Zeina Chemalij  
St. Camille, Jounieh

Jean Maurice Fiey  
Professor of History, Paris

Louise Löhers  
München  
Jean Corbon  
Professor of Theology, Rome

##### 9. PRO ORIENTE

Franciscus Cardinal König, Archbishop emeritus of Vienna

Alfred Stirnemann, President of PRO ORIENTE,  
member and co-chairman of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee

Mons. Philipp Harnoncourt  
Member of the Executive Board of PRO ORIENTE,  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Standing Committee

##### 10. Maronite

Mons. Boulos Matar  
Patriarchal General Vicar, Bkerke,  
member of the PRO ORIENTE Syriac Commission

Harb Chukrallah  
Archbishop of Jounieh

Father Paul Sayah  
Deputy Secretary General MECC, Beyrouth,  
now Archbishop of Haifa

Zia Mahou  
Convent of St. John Konchara

Danny Lyann  
Batrun rue Kouba, Beyrouth

Charles Chemaly  
Sehaile

Fiares Jammal  
Batroun

Tonios Khalil  
Usek

Farah Maha  
Apostolic of the Laymen, Kaslik

Henry Cremona  
University of St. Esprit, Kaslik

Michel Aouad  
University of St. Esprit, Kaslik

Khawand Louis  
University of St. Esprit, Kaslik

Zeina Maraoun  
Achrafie

Sister Antoinette Challaboub  
Deir Alsa, Bisfara

Sister Samira Asmar  
SS.CC Beit-Chabab

Massoud Massoud  
Aintoura-Kesrouan

Maroun Atallah  
President of Centre d'études et de Recherches Pastorales CERP

Denise Harik  
Usek, Zouk Michael, Kesrouan

Jean Mourad  
Jounieh Ehadir IMM. Georges

Edward Karaa  
Jal et Dib

Sister Marie Bernard Lahoud  
Convent N.D. de la Délivrance, Ain Alak

Sister Marie Xavier Skaff  
Sisters of Ecumenism

Nabil Andari  
Superieur de Seminaire Ghazin

Wahib Khawaja  
Maronite Patriarchal Seminary

Rose Abi Aad  
Congregation St. Therese de l'enfant Jesus

Antoine Abi Acar  
Parish Priest, Revue „Les Cedres“

Colette Lyann  
Zouk Imm. Kouz

Father Antoine Daou  
Convent Mar Elias, Antelias

Father Tahar Sarkis  
Mar Roukos Dekwaneh

Fade Tamous  
Achrafieh

Tanios Nijam  
University of St. Esprit, Kaslik

Sami Farah  
University of St. Esprit, Kaslik

*11. Greek (Melkite)*

Cyrille Salim Boustros  
Archbishop of Baalbek

Mons. Nehme Abraham  
Metropolitan of Homs, Hama and Jabzond

Sister Rose Therese Doummoz  
Coll.d.SS. Jounieh

Father Elias Aghia  
Dean of St. Pauls Institute, Harissa

Warde Maksour  
Soeurs des Saints Coeurs, Sioufi, Beyrouth

Makarios Jabbour  
Convent of St. Sauveur-Sarba

Mikhail Abras  
Convent of St. Sauveur-Sarba  
Samuel Lecorre  
Superieur de l'ordre du St. Jean du desert

Georges Sayess  
Aintoura-Kesrouan

Nicolas Antiba  
Convent of St. Sauveur-Sarba

Basil Mahfoud  
University of Balamand

Nicolas El Tarom  
Raboue, Antelias

Gregory Al Taum  
Parish Priest, Beyrouth

*12. Syrian Catholic*

Mons. Ignace Almeida  
Episcopal Vicar, Homs

Jaques Mourad  
Nabek Monastere St. Moese d'Ethiopie, Homs

Father Zaza Bassam  
Damascus

*13. Chaldean*

Mons. Louis Al Dairaniy  
Patriarchal Administrator, Hazmieh, Beyrouth

Father Maher Malko  
Priest, Beyrouth

Joseph Habbi  
Vicar for Foreign Affairs, Baghdad

**14. MENNONITE:**

William Janzen  
Heliopolis, Kairo

*Patriarch Boulos Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir*

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

I am pleased and honoured to welcome His Eminence Cardinal Franz König, who is visiting Lebanon for the third time, I presume. He had to interrupt his visits because of the successive wars that afflicted the country with numerous tragedies.

We would also like to welcome this conference, which is being held at the University of the Holy Spirit, as well as those who are engaged in organizing it. We are grateful to PRO ORIENTE, which was established by H. Eminence Cardinal König 30 years ago in order to promote the Syriac Heritage and tradition and to bring closer the churches that have been separated by various issues and mishaps.

Nevertheless, we do hope that these prayers and hymns will help us to fulfil the cherished wish of our lord Jesus Christ: "That they may all be one even as thou". We do not wish to make a prolonged statement because we would like to give the floor to those who are competent in this area.

We truly regret that we will not be able to stay with you a longer period of time, since we have to resume our meetings with their Beatitudes, Patriarchs of the Catholic Oriental Churches.

Following our welcoming visit to your home, we also hope that you will excuse us to go back to those meetings. Please remember us in your prayers as you continue to pray in this conference.

We wish you every success in your endeavour.

*Patriarch Ignatios IV Hazim*

**GREETING ADDRESS**

Your Beatitude Patriarch Karekin II,  
Your Excellencies,  
Reverend Fathers,  
Sisters and Brothers,

I am grateful for the invitation that you have extended to me in order that I can be present among you today. At the same time, I have the honour to convey to you the affection and tender feelings of His Beatitude, our Patriarch Ignatius IV, who also asked me to extend to you his greetings and his cordial wishes and prayers to God that He may make your deliberations at your present Conference of PRO ORIENTE a great success.

Your endeavours are but a continuation of long term action in which you are engaged in witness, not only in words but also in deeds and life style, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This witness is embodied in our Arab Orient, as His Beatitude Patriarch Karekin has already said. I would also like to reiterate, on his behalf, that our Oriental affiliation



has always been associated with our heritage, our history and our strife in the Arab Orient.

We are the children of a faith, which stems from a living testimony; here from the Orient we see that our Lord Jesus Christ himself was born, announced his Gospel, and from the Orient spread the Gospel throughout the western world.

The effort and endeavours of PRO ORIENTE in following up the present undertaking are truly welcome.

I would also like to add here another dimension to the history of the Eastern Churches; I do hope that it will indeed be a new starting point for the West to know that Christianity is still living and witnessed throughout the region of the Middle East.

We wish you every success at your present Conference, and I do pray to the Almighty God that he may bless you in your successful endeavours.

*Patriarch Zakka I Iwas*

### GREETING MESSAGE

Our beloved brothers in Christ: Alfred Stirnemann, President of PRO ORIENTE and the participants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Symposium of PRO ORIENTE in Lebanon.

We are sorry for not being able to attend the symposium due to our pre-engagements elsewhere. We wish all success to the symposium. We are aware of the results of the first symposium held in the Amba Bishoy monastery in Egypt and the second symposium in Kerala, India. We are happy with the outcome of both of these symposia.

As an Archbishop we had the opportunity to involve in the activities of PRO ORIENTE and we are proud to be one of its Protectors. Our predecessor the Late Patriarch Mar Ignatius Yacob III, one of the pioneers of the ecumenical movement, was very eager to bring some new proposals concerning the christological differences. In 1959, he wrote a famous letter to our brothers the theologians of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch proposing a new Christological definition in order to put an end to this historical dispute between our Christian Churches. This proposal was the basic formula adopted by other theologians. We mention this to show the continuation of the openness in the life of our Church beginning from the fifth century where the division took place which is existing up to now.

We in the capacity as the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and the Supreme head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church, instruct our theologians and seminarians to live in this ecumenical atmosphere and work together in a very sincere way with those who are faithful to the teachings of the Gospel and the Tradition of the Church. As we respect the mode of procedure of other sister churches, we hope that the other churches also will respond to our church in the same manner. We are proud of our Apostolic faith and teachings of our fore-fathers, the tradition of our church and all the dogmas which we believe that these treasures shall be kept honestly by us and at the same time we have to accomplish the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ as he prayed to the Father "Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." (Jn 17,11)

We again wish all success to the symposium and we hope that PRO ORIENTE will continue the efforts for mutual understanding and respect between the churches as a first step towards Christian Unity. May the blessings and grace of God be with you all.

With best wishes, yours in our Lord,

September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994

Ignatius Zakka I Iwas  
Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

*Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia*

### OPENING ADDRESS

Beloved Brethren and Sisters,

As two languages have been chosen as official languages for this consultation, I am bound to speak in English rather than in French because my Arabic as you all know is not so good so that you can understand me.

I wholeheartedly welcome this Symposium, being in our country of Lebanon. I have participated in so many ecumenical meetings, consultations, symposia in different parts of the world but to be in our own country and to have guests from different countries to come to us is a different thing, of different quality, of different nature and scope.

As people these days are tempted to speak about the life and death of the Christians in the Middle East or in the East in general, such meetings and the actual commitment of our churches that don't teach the dynamic involvement of the churches in the life of the peoples in the Middle East is the resultation of such false prophecies because recently you all have become aware of a large voluminous book "Vie et mort des chrétiens d'Orient", only God can predict the life and death. And people living in the West thinking of us and speaking in our name, I think is neither human nor Christian. And therefore, I consider such meetings to be manifestations, signs, the tangible concrete signs of our vitality and I welcome you, dear brethren and sisters from all the churches in Lebanon here and from the other countries of the Middle East to give a proof, a new proof that we are alive and we are committed to be faithful to the symbol of life eternal-our Lord risen.

My second point is that, as we have come together here, representatives of the clergy and also of the laity, we greet this idea of bringing down to the consciousness of the people of God what theologians and church leaders think, plan and envision for the future. Five consultations have been held in Vienna. Theological papers, historical analysis, doctrinal investigations in our past history and literature and liturgical tradition - all these that have been published in volumes ten times larger than this one. How all the visions, all the new insights that have been gained through these consultations, how they are doing to go into the hearts, minds and lives of the people of God. What is the meaning of having a consultation in Vienna or in Rome or in Geneva or in New York or in

London or anywhere in the world for that matter. The real part of our Christian faith is the life of the people and if any kind of new breakthrough, new insight, new horizon that dawn upon the leaders of thinkers of the church does not penetrate and infiltrate in the texture of the life of the people, I think that our work is in vain or it becomes only a kind of excellence of academic nature to be kept somewhere in the archives for the future.

You are the people who are to judge us, you are the people to tell us whether we are in the right direction or not and therefore I greet this consultation as it is a symposium bringing different people from different walks of life and responsibility in the very heart of our task of PRO ORIENTE together with the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

And my beloved friend and brother Cardinal König, you are the Founder. You are not the Founder. It was said about you to be the Protector. No, you are not the Protector. You are the Animator, you are the Inspirator of this institution. And I sincerely believe that you made the PRO ORIENTE become not only part of the history of the Roman Catholic Church whether in Vienna or in Rome but you thought about the Oriental Orthodox Churches and therefore we owe you so much that your presence is a blessing for all the participants in this gathering, in this symposium.

And I would like to finish by saying how much I appreciate very deeply having followed closely the work of the PRO ORIENTE, the task that has been performed in such an excellent manner with such efficiency, efficacy by our dear Alfred Stirnemann ..... Alfred. I have only one question in mind that has not been answered yet: Why they don't make you a real bishop? But I know your answer without you telling me. You are even without the name because you have a beard. I thank you very much. And I formulate a wish for all participants: make this symposium in Kaslik a something that we can be proud of for our country of Lebanon and our churches.

*Franciscus Cardinal König*

### INAUGURATION SPEECH

Your Holiness,  
Your Beatitudes,  
Your Excellency the Apostolic Nuntio,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

I can not express all the pleasure I feel coming back after so many years to you and to your beautiful country. And this even more as we are meeting under the auspices of the foundation PRO ORIENTE.

It is in the spirit of the apostle St. Paul and with his words that I give you the grace and peace through God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ. By this I address my respectful greetings to all the Christian Churches in this country and I address them also to all in your country with whom we share the faith in one only God, the creator of heaven and earth.

After long and painful years of war, you have made efforts with days of work in order to recreate many working posts in collaboration with innumerable men and women of your country in order to achieve a renaissance of your past, the historical country that is so much important as a crossroad of great cultures. As you are decided to come back in peace to your country.

This is an occasion which demands a lot of time, a lot of reflexions, but also a lot of respect for each other, a lot of good will which enables you to understand. PRO ORIENTE, a foundation based in Vienna, was founded in the spirit of our age of emancipation and wants to contribute, even if only modestly, to your efforts by a third regional symposium, uniting the Christian churches of Lebanon. This is in fact our intention.

I personally rejoice for you in the idea that this symposium can be held in Lebanon. May God bless this project, so that the meeting in your country may bring the fruits we hope for the ecumenism in your region, so that this meeting can make radiate from Kaslik this love which was given to us by the will of God and by His help to approach each other.

I hope vividly that also in your country the cooperation in the ecumenical spirit may contribute to pacification and contribute to peace. I hope that - just like in our country - this spirit may spread to your country, to the small and the large communities, so that they may pray all together and will encourage through acting those we love.

The foundation PRO ORIENTE, may it please that I underline this, has been brought into life by the initiative of the Cardinal of Vienna in my person and a small circle of sympathizing friends. In a tradition of a spirit of entente and comprehension which has also marked the contact with the Orthodox Churches in our country, we wish to animate our relations in Kaslik with a new breath, a breath which has been animated by the breath of the Second Vatican Council.

The meeting with the Oriental-Orthodox Churches which originate from the time of the Council of Chalcedon has filled us with a very particular sense of success. In one effort years of reflexion have allowed to work out the Christological Formula of Vienna for which Patriarch Shenuda III., the supreme spiritual head of the Coptic Church, gave a very special witness. This text has been approved by the theologians of the Oriental-Orthodox Churches and by the representatives of the Catholic Church. The following year, in 1972, Patriarch Shenuda has, at the occasion of a visit he paid to Paul VI., attracted the attention of the Pontiff on the importance and the great value of this ecumenical consultation. The Second Vatican Council has well prepared the ground. In my function as Archbishop of Vienna and with all the vitality which this council has given us, I was able to visit more than one orthodox patriarch and bishop and to welcome them in Austria. Speaking in the ecumenical spirit which seems to me indispensable in front of a situation which we have to face today, a situation marked by the provocation by a continuously rising number of movements which call themselves religious, by a continuously rising number of sects which are not only harmful to the basis of the Christian Churches, but also shake the faith of all those who believe in Christ. One more reason to intensify the ecumenical cooperation and by so doing stressing all what is uniting us, we have to underline all which enables us to overcome separation. Another reason again is a certain scepticism that takes place, a very religious indifference in the past of men in the centre of all considerations and aspirations. Here we have to ask God, the creator of heaven and earth, in whom we all believe. These tendencies towards indifference threaten all the Christian Churches and invites us to cooperate all together against such an attack.

This is why the goal of PRO ORIENTE is the promotion of ecumenical aspirations and the stressing of the importance of all the bridges which can witness friendship.

Let us pray together that God the Lord of the universe who will come to judge the living and the dead fills us and strengthens us with His grace as it is in their fruits that you will recognize them and so doing by answering His grace. Let our meeting be animated by this spirit so that it may become a real ecumenical exchange, a real ecumenical experience. May the good Lord bless our meeting. Thank you!

*Elie Khalifé Hashem*

### GREETING OF THE GUESTS

Your Beatitudes,  
Your Excellencies,  
Reverend Fathers,  
Brothers and Sisters,

on behalf of the Council of the University of the Holy Spirit at Kaslik, which is hosting the Third Regional Pro Oriente conference, I have the honour to welcome the representatives of the Catholic and Orthodox Arab Orient Churches. At the invitation of the PRO ORIENTE Foundation in Vienna, Austria, they have initiated a dialogue in the spirit of affection and brotherhood on certain theological issues that are pertinent to their heritage and tradition in order to increase awareness of their heritage and tradition within their common present reality and to embody this in a sense of engagement and faithfulness within their community where, together with their Muslim brothers, they experience the witness of the love of God and for their brothers who have a different religion and heritage.

It is indeed a noble and sublime objective, one that cherishes the Glory of God and the dignity of humankind and its fundamental rights.

I would like to thank the PRO ORIENTE Foundation, represented by its founder and protector H. Eminence Cardinal Franz König, the former Archbishop of Vienna and one of the most brilliant figures of the Catholic Church in this century, for the significant role that he played during the Second Vatican Council and for the determined and persistent action he is undertaking for the purpose of bringing the people and their religions closer together.

The Foundation is also being represented by its President, Alfred Stirnemann, who has willingly devoted his life for the successful fulfilment of the task and objectives of PRO ORIENTE, where he has been working in affection and steadfastness since its inception.

The foundation is also represented by its Standing Committee, consisting of representatives of the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches. They are:

- Metropolitan Amba Bishoi Archbishop of Damiette, Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt.
- Metropolitan Mor Gregorius of Aleppo, Archbishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church.
- Metropolitan Mesrob Krikorian, Archbishop of the Apostolic Armenian Church.
- Archbishop Gabriel of Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
- Rev. Fr. George Kondothra of the Malakara Orthodox Church of India.

- Monsignore Philipp Harononcourt of the Catholic Church in Austria.

The University of the Holy Spirit is proud to host such a high-level conference which will be incorporated in its educational and research mission. The University was founded within the core of the Eastern Oriental Churches in the service of that Church as a witness to the love of Christ within its Arab community.

*Alfred Stirnemann*

### WELCOME ADDRESS

Your Holiness, Your Beatitudes, Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, dear Fathers, dear Sisters, dear Brethren!

In the name of the foundation PRO ORIENTE in Vienna I greet all of you and wish you a good welcome: „Ahlan-wa-Sahlan“! I'm grateful that you have come for this inauguration at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Symposium which we celebrate today at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik. I would like to thank especially the Rector of the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik and the fathers who work with him and who have made possible this third meeting in a Lebanon which we have found full of hope and full of ideas of future.

It is with great respect that I greet so many representatives of the ecclesiastical and public life of Lebanon and of the Middle East. I greet particularly the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia His Holiness Karekin II, the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch His Beatitude Nasrallah Pierre Cardinal Sfeir, the Armenian-Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia His Beatitude Jean-Pierre XVIII Kasparian, the Patriarch of Babylone of the Chaldeans His Beatitude Raphaël I Bidawid. I am most grateful that they have interrupted their conference of Catholic patriarchs in Raboué and that they have come to us in order to represent all the Catholic patriarchs of the Middle East. I have also to apologize for them: they can not stay with us as much as they would have liked to do so.

I can say with great satisfaction that PRO ORIENTE has had the privilege to come into close relations with the Oriental churches and with so many personalities of the Middle East. I remember in detail the contacts with His Holiness Karekin II when he was serving as Archbishop of New York and with His Beatitude Cardinal Sfeir when he served as patriarchal Vicar of his predecessor of blessed memory at Bkerké, as well as with the Archbishop of Bagdad who is now His Beatitude Jean Pierre XVIII Kasparian.

I greet the representatives of those patriarchs who do not have the possibility of being with us at this 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Symposium because of trips to other countries: the Syrian-Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, His Holiness Mar Zakka I Iwas who is represented here by the Archbishop of Aleppo His Grace Mar Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim, and the Greek-Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, His Beatitude Mar Ignace IV Hazim who is represented here by His Excellency the Bishop of Belmont Mgr George Abou Zacham, Rector of the Theological Faculty of St. John Damascenus at Balamand.

We have yesterday received a letter from the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem which informed us that His Beatitude the Patriarch Torkom Manoogian is because of certain recent developments not able to participate although we know that he had wi-

shed to come- we know that he has been elected Locum Tenens of the Patriarchate of Etchmiadzin - he assures us that he is with us in the spirit and with his prayers for our efforts.

I greet with deep respect Cardinal Franciscus König, Archbishop emeritus of Vienna, who is not only the founder of Pro Oriente, but has also been nominated Protector of this foundation. He has undertaken this trip in order to be with us in spite of many other commitments and the fact that he stands in the 90<sup>th</sup> year of his dear and rich life.

I greet the representative of the Holy Father, His Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio Mgr Pablo Puente, the Ambassador of Austria in Damascus Dr Robert Karas, the Honorary Consul of Austria in Saida Mr Khalil Fattal, as well as Mons. Gabriel Houry, the son of the former Austrian Honorary Consul at Beirut. Let me say a word of thanks to those representatives of Austria who have helped us on a level of logistics to make this symposium possible. I also greet the observer from the Pontifical Council Promoting the Unity of Christians, Father Bernard Dubasque from Rome.

Let me define in short terms the scope of our meeting:

We want to assemble a great number of Christians from all the churches existing in the Mashriq: theologians, bishops, priests, fathers and religious sisters, men and women as well as interested laypeople from Lebanon, from Syria and from the Holy Land. In order to inform them about the great output of the ecumenical dialogue that has emerged in the last 25 years between theologians of the Non-Chalcedonian Churches and the Roman-Catholic Church. A dialogue which has been for the first time after 1500 years started in Vienna, an important progress which has led in particular to the Christological Formula of Vienna.

I thank the Oriental churches and their heads who have made possible our work by their positive reaction and have made Vienna a crossing point in the dialogue of the Oriental-Orthodox and the Roman-Catholics. I also would like to thank the Syrian-Orthodox Church in the person of His Holiness Zakka I Iwas, and the Armenian-Apostolic church in the person of His Holiness Karekin II who have been our hosts and patrons and who have encouraged us to come to Lebanon for this meeting. If we do not transmit these messages to the consciousness of the church, its results will stay dead letter in the libraries. We have reached now more than 2000 pages of documented dialogue to be put into the library. It is not possible to read them in one night, however it is necessary to transmit and to translate them in the everyday life.

The Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE has developed the idea of such a meeting. The members of the Standing Committee have already been introduced by Father Rector Elias Khalifé. It is a council of eminent representatives of the Oriental-Orthodox churches of the six different jurisdictions and of PRO ORIENTE. We meet twice a year in Vienna or just as we did yesterday here at Kaslik where we propose and develop our ideas. One of the best successes was this type of Regional Symposium. This is the first symposium after the one we had in Wadi Natrun in 1991 on invitation of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and the one at Kottayam in the South of India in 1993 on invitation of the two Catholicos of India.

Last but not least I would like to thank the Organisation Committee with the Archbishop of Mount-Lebanon Mar Theophilus George Saliba, an indefatigable collaborator, and the secretary of the same committee who was the Rector of the USEK Elias Khalifé for its work. I want to thank the Lebanese television company AEPC and the media who have in advance announced our symposium after a press conference with

their messages and their information and have delivered a great service in order to transmit our goals and our ideas to the Oriental churches.

Finally, I have the privilege to transmit the best wishes of the President of the PRO ORIENTE Kuratorium, the Archbishop of Vienna, His Eminence Hans Hermann Cardinal Groer. He is spiritually with us and wishes us all the best for our work for the holy cause of the unity of the Christians and the re-establishing of the visible union of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church.

## **THE VIENNA DIALOGUE - FIVE PRO ORIENTE CONSULTATIONS WITH ORIENTAL ORTHODOXY**

### ***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 King of Jerusalem - considered themselves as protectors of the Christians in the Orient and have influenced the Sublime Porte on their behalf.

#### ***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. Under Emperor Joseph II (1765-90) the Armenians from the Eastern parts of the Austrian Empire at Suceava were invited to come to Vienna. Thus they were the first Oriental Orthodox community in the Austrian capital. In the last century even an Armenian monastery was founded by the Mechitarist fathers who helped Vienna to become a major centre of Armenian literature and scholarship. The last thirty years brought workers of Aramaic language and Christian faith from Anatolia and Mesopotamia to Austria as well as students and intellectuals 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 also can 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 chief of the Church of Vienna, Franciscus Cardinal König. 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, the Oriental Orthodox Churches and now also with the Assyrian Church of the East.

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 Piffel-Perčević from 1969 to 1989, both former ministers of education and culture of the Republic of Austria. My immediate predecessor as president of PRO ORIENTE was Dr. Rudolf Kirchschräger (1989-1993), who held for 12 years (1974 - 1986) the office of President of the Republic of Austria.

Austria's contacts with Syriac Christians date back at least 400 years. In this connection it may interest an audience of that tradition that the first bible ever in the Syriac language was printed in Vienna in 1555 in a small quarto edition of 1000 copies by Caspar Craphtus (Krafft) and Michael Cymberrmannys (Zimmermann). The Patriarch of Antioch at the time, Mar Ignatius Abdallah, had sent the "eminent scholar and priest Moussa of Mardin from the blessed village of Qaluq, son of the priest Isha", to Vienna, where the edition of the New Testament was funded by Emperor Ferdinand I (1521-1564) upon recommendation of the famous Austrian orientalist and specialist in the Arabic and Syriac languages, Johann Albert Widmanstad, who was the Emperor's chancellor and "had learned to read, write and speak Syriac staying in Italy as a youth". 300 copies were sent to the Syrian and Maronite Patriarchs, 500 were reserved for the Emperor and 200 were given to Moussa. A single copy has survived in the former imperial National Library in Vienna. It was presented to the meeting of the theologians and experts of the Syriac family of tradition in Vienna in June this year. His Holiness Mar Zakka I Iwas has informed me that he gave his own personal copy of this edition of the Holy Father in Rome and that the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate possesses still another copy. So I hope further copies may still be preserved in the library of the Maronite Patriarchate.

This initiative from Vienna was only successful as both the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches were whole-heartedly responding to the invitation. Thus, from the Byzantine tradition, the Romanian Patriarchs paid visits to the Austrian capital, Patriarch Justinian in 1968 and Patriarch Teoctist in 1987. The Serbian Patriarch Pavle came in 1993. From among the Oriental Orthodox family of churches, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III visited Vienna in October 1972, in May 1977, in May 1979 and in April 1980. PRO ORIENTE delegations, some of them led by Cardinal König, went to Damascus in May 1974 and March 1978. The present Patriarch of Antioch, H.H. Mar Ignatius Zakka I. Iwas paid an official visit to Vienna in June 1984 and was accompanied at the time by H.B. Mar Baselios Paulose II, Catholicos of the East.

In 1975 and 1982 PRO ORIENTE delegations headed by Archbishop Franciscus Cardinal König made a pilgrimage to the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and were received in audience by H.H. Pope Shenouda III.

H.H. Catholicos Vasken I, Supreme Catholicos of all Armenians, visited Vienna in 1968, 1969 and 1981. In 1977 a delegation of our foundation paid their reverence to His Holiness in Etchmiadzin. In 1980 a group of members of the board of PRO ORIENTE including President Piffli-Perčević and led by Cardinal König traveled to Armenia and was received by H.H. Catholicos Vasken I.

A PRO ORIENTE delegation including president Piffli-Perčević and myself visited H.H. Catholicos Khoren at the See of the House of Cilicia in May 1974. In April 1978 a PRO ORIENTE group led by Cardinal König paid a visit to the same Catholicos and to his Coadjutor Karekin II in Antelias.

Among the Oriental Orthodox heads of churches who were bestowed the title of Protectors of PRO ORIENTE for their great contributions to ecumenism as a whole and to the foundation PRO ORIENTE in particular, are H.H. Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, H.H. Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and the whole Orient, H.H. Catholicos Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch of all Armenians - whose recent death on 18th August 1994 we deeply deplore-, H.H. Mar Thoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the autocephalous Orthodox Church of India and other church leaders.

In 1981 the Ethiopian Patriarch Abuna Tekle Haimanot II responded positively to an invitation by Cardinal König. In 1983 Cardinal König, accompanied by members of PRO ORIENTE, was in turn received in Addis Ababa by Patriarch Abuna Tekle Haimanot. In 1988 I had the privilege to be received in audience by His Holiness and to speak at the Orthodox Qidos Paulos Seminary. In 1989 Patriarch Merkorios welcomed a delegation of our foundation at his See in the Ethiopian capital. In 1993 the present Archbishop of Vienna, Hans Hermann Groër, welcomed Patriarch Abuna Paulos in our country.

In 1983 H.H. Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews I, and his Catholicos designate Mathews Mar Coorilos were the guests of PRO ORIENTE in Rome. The latter visited Vienna in 1986 and 1989.

In October 1978, Mar Ignatius Hazim, then Metropolitan of Lattaquia spoke at the XXII Ecumenical Symposium in Vienna on "The Ecumenical Endeavours of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch".

In October 1982 a delegation of the foundation, led by Cardinal König visited the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and again in December 1989, this time led by Cardinal Groer.

PRO ORIENTE met the main pastors of the Assyrian Church of the East, thus H. H. Mar Addai II in Baghdad in 1982 and in 1994 and H.H. Mar Dinkha IV in Moscow in 1988 and in Teheran in 1994. Mar Aprem of Trichur read a paper on "Was Nestorius a Nestorian?" in Vienna in June 1990.

#### 1.4 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.

## 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 borne 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 Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I. 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, again in Munich in 1990 and in Balamand in this country in June 1993.

## 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 Lebanon Regional Symposium, which we are initiating here in Kaslik today and which is held for the benefit of the Christian Churches in the Mashriq.

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 Archbishop) 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 and Rector of the Russian College in Rome. 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 Archbishop) 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, 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 Iwas, now Syrian Patriarch of Antioch, paid to Vienna in June 1971. The then Archbishop Karekin of Isfahan was invited to take part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vienna consultation but prevented from attendance because of the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Persian Empire.

On September 7<sup>th</sup> 1971 nine Oriental and nine Catholic theologians met for the first for 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 ecclesologies. 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 between the two jurisdictions of the Syriac tradition and of the two Alexandrine traditions as between the two Armenian Catholicosates, 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 Iwas, who later became Syrian Patriarch, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Consultations, of Archbishop Keshishian of Lebanon, who is now the moderator of the World Council of Churches. Of special importance was the Indian contribution to the five consultations with the participation of Dr. Paul Verghese, later Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios of New Delhi and the North, honorary member of PRO ORIENTE since 1972.

From the Catholic side the outstanding participants and lecturers to be mentioned were Cardinal König himself, Professor Karl Lehmann, now Bishop of Mainz 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 Groër, the sermons were held by Amba Shenouda, Mar Zakka 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 Oriental Catholic 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."<sup>1</sup>

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.

### 2.3 Assyrian Studies

Only last June, with the consent of all the Patriarchs of Syriac tradition, PRO ORIENTE started a series of ecumenical studies on and with the Assyrian Churches lead by Mar Dinkha IV in Teheran and Mar Addai II in Baghdad. On this occasion theologians of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Orthodox Church of India, the Maronite, the Syrian Catholic, the Chaldean, the Malankara Catholic and the Syro-Malabar churches discussed problems of common concern.

<sup>1</sup> The Vienna Dialogue. Booklet 1. Communiqués and Joint Documents. Vienna 1991, p.87

## 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 counselors 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 27<sup>th</sup> 1971, Paul VI and Mar Ignatius 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."<sup>2</sup>

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".<sup>3</sup>

Amba Shenouda, who two months after his participation in the first Vienna Consultation became the 117<sup>th</sup> successor to Saint Mark on the See of the Patriarch of Alexandria 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."<sup>4</sup>

The Common Declaration he signed with Pope Paul VI in the Vatican on May 10<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Booklet 1, p.108

<sup>3</sup> Booklet 1, p.46

<sup>4</sup> On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1973, published in Information Service 76 (1991) p.7



### 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.

#### 3.3.1. 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 and once in Vienna, reaching progress in the area of Christology. 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 12<sup>th</sup> 1988 the Mixed Commission of the Dialogue between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox Churches met in the monastery of Amba Bishoy 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### 3.3.2. The Official Dialogue with the Malankara Syro-Indian Church

A similar official dialogue was opened by the establishing 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 22<sup>nd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> 1989 at Kottayam (Kerala) and agreed on a Doctrinal Agreement on Christology which was made public on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1990. It also contains the Vienna Christological Formula, stating that both communions share the same faith.

After the settlement of the Christological problem the issue of ecclesiology was tackled at a meeting from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> December 1992 and will again be taken up from 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November 1993 at the Sophia Centre in Kottayam. The co-chairmen are Bishop Pierre Duprey and Philippos Mar Eusebios.

#### 3.3.3. 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 Ignatius Zakka I Iwas of Antioch on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1984 with Catholicos Paulose II also present. Immediately after its ratification the Patriarch personally brought the document 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 Ignatius 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."<sup>5</sup>

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.

Dialogue with the Indian section of this Church was opened from 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> December 1992 and will be continued from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 1993 at the Mulanthuruthy Seminary. The co-chairmen are Metropolitan Mar Joseph Powathil and Metropolitan Thomas Mar Athanasios.

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 results of its work over the period of its 27 years of existence:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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

<sup>5</sup> Booklet 1, p.108

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 Bishoy 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: Archbishop Dr. Mesrob K. Krikorian, Patriarchal Delegate of the Armenian Apostolic Church for Central Europe and Sweden and honorary professor at the University of Vienna, 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 Gabriel, Head of the Foreign Affairs Department

From the Syro-Indian Orthodox Church: Dr. Kondothra M. George, Principal of the Old Seminary in Kottayam

From the Roman Catholic Church : Prof. Mons. Dr. Philipp Harnoncourt, chairman of the theological council of PRO ORIENTE, Fr. Frans Bouwen, a White Father in Jerusalem and editor of the review "Proche Orient Chrétien", Prof. Peter Hofrichter of the University of Salzburg and Alfred Stirnemann, President of PRO ORIENTE.

The Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE meets twice a year. Having met so far several times in Vienna, Geneva, Cairo and Kottayam we just yesterday had the 12th meeting here in Kaslik 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 regional symposia. 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 judgment 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. The first one aimed 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 residence in Wadi Natrun in 1991. A second one catered to the Kerala-rooted Christians

speaking Malayalam in 1993 and this here in Kaslik is the third one for the churches of the Mashriq.

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 year, the next ones in Iraq, Ethiopia and, most probably, in Armenia.

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 to 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, from 29<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July 1991 the exercise of Primacy in each church and the role of heads of churches was discussed at a study seminar held in Vienna.

From 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 1992 another group of experts met in Vienna to look into the question of Councils and Conciliarity. The last one was held from 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> July 1994 again in Vienna and dealt with the subject of "Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church".

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 five 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 English, Arabic, Malayalam, 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 get your personal copy in English or Arabic at the registration desk.

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 Arabic.

Booklet No 3 which is available in English and will soon appear in Arabic is about the first regional symposium at Deir Amba Bishoy in Wadi Natrun/Egypt.

Booklet No 4 has also just come out in English, covering the first study seminar "On Primacy". No 5 is going to be about the "Councils and Conciliarity" seminar and No 6 will be a documentation of this Indian regional symposium and come out in both English and Malayalam. Number 7 is going to cover the Kottayam Regional Symposium and No 8 this Regional Symposium held here in Lebanon.

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 more than 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.

Let me also pay tribute to the Popes John XXIII and Paul VI of blessed memory and to John Paul II, to Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch Zakka I Iwas of Antioch, the late Vasken I, Supreme Catholicos of All Armenians, and Catholicos Baselios Mar Thoma Mathews II for leading us their way. All these four 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.

May we be granted to stop the ancient polemics and the new quarrels which are amongst us- now that we have heard Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Ignatius Yacoub III in front of the Synod of Bishops in 1971, when they stated that "there is no difference in the faith they profess concerning the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become really man",<sup>6</sup> - now that we have heard that Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Zakka I Iwas have "denied that there was any difference in the faith they confess in the mystery of the Word of God made flesh and become truly man",<sup>7</sup> - now that we have read in the Doctrinal Agreement on Christology between the Roman Catholic and Malankara Syrian Orthodox Churches that

"a common text concerning their faith in the mystery of the incarnate Word was unanimously adopted in order to put an end to the Christological disagreement which existed between the two churches."<sup>8</sup>

The forthcoming second millenary of the Incarnation, the date of the year 2000, will hopefully bring us forward "to that common goal - the restoration of full communion between our churches,"<sup>9</sup> as the Roman Catholic/ Malankara Agreement of 1989 states or as the last agreement between the Roman and Syrian Patriarchs says,

"We pledge ourselves solemnly to do all that in us lies to remove the last obstacles still hindering full communion between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch."<sup>10</sup>

In the last 30 years of ecumenism and committed striving for church unity I was personally granted to witness tremendous progress. It will depend on our further efforts to accept the results of the 25 years of ecumenism, to make ourselves acquainted with them and to make them our own.

The credibility of the testimony of the Christian Churches in front of the other religions such as Islam and Judaism, to the secular world with its atheism, agnosticism and materialism will also depend on our oneness, on our unity. Our disputes, our broken unity are a major scandal of our age in this world. Let us pray that everyone "may hear what the Spirit says to the Churches."<sup>11</sup> Especially at a time the remarkable date of the year 2000 is approaching, should we not have an ear and listen to what is necessary for the Third Christian Millenary?

<sup>6</sup> Booklet No 1 p. 108, Common Declaration of H.H. Paul VI and H.H. Ignatius Yacoub III, 1971

<sup>7</sup> Booklet No 1 p. 117, Common Declaration of H.H. John Paul II and H.H. Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, 1984

<sup>8</sup> Booklet No 1 p. 123, Doctrinal Agreement on Christology between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, 1989

<sup>9</sup> Booklet No 1 p. 124, *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Booklet No 1 p. 119, *see 2)*

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 2,7; 11; 17; 18; 3,6; 13; 22

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

### 1. The Five Vienna Consultations

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

Sponsored by PRO ORIENTE, an ecumenical foundation started by His Beatitude Cardinal König, then Archbishop of Vienna, these consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988) brought together theologians of the Coptic Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Ethiopian Orthodox and Syro-Indian Orthodox churches and of the Roman Catholic Church.

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 World Council of Churches in Aarhus 1964, Bristol 1967, Geneva 1970 and Addis Abeba 1971. The priest in charge of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Vienna, Vardapet (now Archbishop) Mesrob K. Krikorian had attended them all and thus became one of the major contributors to the project. Other impulses came from a visit the late Monsignor Otto Mauer paid to Egypt in November 1970, where he met Amba Shenouda, at that time head of the Coptic Orthodox Seminary (now H. H. Pope Shenouda III), from trips of Alfred Stirmann the Secretary General (now President) to Rome where he had talks with Father (now Bishop) Pierre Duprey and from the visit the Archbishop of Baghdad and heads of other Oriental Orthodox churches like Syrian, Armenian and Indian churches.

The Communiqué of the first Vienna Consultation stated 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 deep 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 and 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 commixion, without confusion, without division, without separation. We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery inexhaustible." (The Vienna Dialogue, PRO ORIENTE, Booklet No 1, p. 46).

The Communiqué recognized 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, in the first Vienna Consultation, general presentation and discussion of the ecumenical councils, which constitute a major problem in the recovery of unity.

## 2. Official Dialogues

One of the fruits 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.

### 2.1. The official dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church

In 1973 the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III set up a special Joint Commission between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox Church 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. In Ecclesiology only little progress had been made.

Due to political conditions in Egypt, the dialogue came to virtual standstill.

It was until 1986 when Cardinal Willebrands sent a letter to the Coptic Orthodox Church, regarding the dialogue between the two churches.

The Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church presided by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III met on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1986, in order to take officially a decision concerning an agreed statement on Christology with the Roman Catholic Church and to plan for the agenda of the ongoing dialogue.

A letter was sent to Cardinal Willebrands dated 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1986 (Annex 1) carrying the results of the Coptic Orthodox Synodical meeting. The Vienna Christological Formula from 1971 was used for the official agreement which was signed on 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1988, at the St. Bishoy-Monastery (Annex 2). A similar letter addressed to Bishop Pierre Duprey, dated 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1990, added an issue to the dialogue (Annex 3).

The Joint Commission met five times in St. Bishoy Monastery, Egypt: Feb. 1988, Oct. 1988, April 1990, April 1991, Feb. 1992. The Christological agreement was signed - the first meeting. The last four meetings were dedicated to discuss the "*Procession of the Holy Spirit*" and "*the Purgatory*". No satisfactory solutions were reached but points for further clarification and discussion were pointed out.

Other issues for the dialogue are: Immaculate Conception, Indulgences, Mixed Marriages with Non Christians, The Body of the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt and The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the Salvation of Non-Believers.

The official agreement on Christology was then confirmed by a letter from Pope John Paul II on May 30th 1988.

### 2.2. The official Dialogue with the Malankara Syro-Indian Church

A similar official dialogue was opened up by the settling up of a Joint 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 1990. It also contains the Vienna Christological Formula, stating that both communions share the same Christological faith. After the settlement of the Christological problem this dialogue Commission too will be able to tackle the issue of ecclesiology.

## ANNEX I

Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate  
Cairo, Egypt

Cairo, September 16, 1986

His Beatitude Cardinal Willebrands  
President of Secretary of Christian Unity  
Vatican

Your Beatitude,  
I greet you in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With reference to my letter of 11th June 1986 to your Beatitude, I have the pleasure to send you the result of Our Church Holy Synod meeting on 21st June 1986, regarding the question of raising the Anathemas between our Churches.

The raising of Anathemas needs reaching solutions for the differences in theological concepts concerning the faith of our Churches. In its Forehead we consider the following issues:

1. Problems in Christology.
2. Procession of the Holy Spirit.
3. Purgatory.
4. Immaculate Conception.
5. Indulgences.
6. Mixed Marriages with Non Christians.
7. The Body of the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt.

Concerning the first point, we assume to have an official agreement between our Churches with the following statement:

"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 Change, nor Confusion. His Divinity was not separated from his Humanity even for a moment or a twinkling of an eye.

At the same time, we anathematize both Nestorius and Eutyches and their Doctrines."

In case your Church can accept this statement which was almost agreed upon in Vienna (PRO ORIENTE) on September 1971, we can proceed on to the next point in our Theological Dialogue toward the One Faith of the Church.

Hoping that both of our Churches will be able to nominate to the joint commission for dialogue.

I offer Your Beatitude my respectful greetings in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bishop Bishoy m.p.  
Bishop of Damiette and General Secretary of the Synod

## ANNEX II

### Agreed Statement on Christology between the Coptic Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church

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

On Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1988, the mixed commission of the dialogue between the Catholic church and the Coptic Orthodox church met in the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, Wadi Natrun, Egypt.

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

We are rejoiced at the historical meeting that happened in Vatican on May 1973, between H. H. Pope Paul VI, and H. H. Pope Shenouda III.

This was the first meeting since about 15 centuries between our two churches. In that meeting we found ourselves in agreement in many issues of faith. In this meeting also a mixed commission was formed to discuss the issues of difference of doctrines and faith between the two churches aiming at church unity. Previously in Vienna Sep. 1971, PRO ORIENTE arranged a meeting between the theologians of the Catholic church and those of the Oriental Orthodox churches: the Coptic, the Syrian, the Armeian, the Ethiopian, and the Indian. They achieved an agreement concerning Christology.

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

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

"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."

Monastery Amba Bishoy, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1988

Pope Shenouda III (Copt. Cath.)	+ Stephanos II Ghattas CM (Copt. Cath.)
+ Giovanni Moretti (Rom. Cath.)	Pierre Duprey (Rom. Cath.)
+ Mons. Athanasios Abadir (Copt. Cath.)	+ Bishop Bishoy (Copt. Orth.),
Amba Youhanna Colta (Copt. Cath.)	G. Secretary of the Holy Synod
Gérard Daucourt SPC (Rom. Cath.)	+ Bishop Benyamin (Copt. Orth.)
Fouad Twal (Copt. Cath.)	+ Bishop Serapion (Copt. Orth.)
Father Francis Nouer (Copt. Cath.)	+ Bishop Moussa (Copt. Orth.)
E. Nomis (Copt. Cath.)	+ Bishop Picenti (Copt. Orth.)
Father George Obeid CM (Copt. Cath.)	+ Bishop Paula (Copt. Orth.)

Amin Fahim (Copt. Cath.)  
P. Makarios Tewfik (Copt. Cath.)  
P. Iskander Wadith (Copt. Cath.)

Bishop Athanasios (Copt. Orth.)  
Maurice Tadros Abd Mariam (Copt. Orth.)  
Emile Maher Ishak (Copt. Orth.)

## ANNEX III

### Coptic Orthodox Church The Holy Synod

26 April, 1990

Dear Bishop Duprey,  
Greetings and love in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to inform Your Grace as the Secretary of Promoting Christian Unity in Vatican, that the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church in its meeting held on 28/5/1988, presided by H. H. Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, has decided to add to the dialogue between our Churches the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, concerning the Salvation of Non-Believers.

Hoping that such an issue could find a solution during our on-going dialogue through the Joint International Commission.

Please accept, dear Bishop Duprey, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Bishop Bishoy  
Secretary General of the Holy  
Synod

### Discussions

*Sister Wande Maksour*, Two Holy Hearts Nuns: With regard to the present positive process of the ecumenical movement, what are the difficulties that the movement faces and how could they be overcome?

*Amba Bishoy*: The Lebanese TV asked me the same question and I can give here the same reply. At the discussions that took place in the 5<sup>th</sup> century at the Council of Chalcedon there was a lot of language problems, for instance the Greek words of "Hypostasis" and "Prosopon" were both translated into Latin as "Persona". Furthermore pressing political factors, the interference of the emperors and their political goals did not allow a real dialogue. The fathers did not have a real discussion but understood themselves as being at the disposal of the emperor. Each one was ready to anathematise the other. In the present atmosphere of meeting in love and brotherly amiability each party can listen to the other and reflect the ideas deeply. Now we know that despite different christological terminologies, the essential creed on the incarnation of the Son of God is the same. This is also the result of the suggestion of H.H. Pope Shenouda when he was Bishop of

Education at the First Vienna Consultation avoiding the classical terminology, replace it by one which could be understood by present time people. So the famous Vienna Christological formula at the first consultation was laid down. All parties accepted the formula made by Amba Shenouda and the late father Otto Mauer.

Beside the christological difficulties other agreements can be solved when we meet in the spirit of love and a wish for true understanding.

*Father Louis El Khwand* (Maronite Monk of Lebanon): Among the issues dealt with in the dialogue is mixed marriage. The question has two parts: What is the attitude of the Coptic-Orthodox Church regarding marriage between Christians and non-Christians? And what is the attitude regarding marriage between Coptic-Orthodox and Coptic-Catholics?

*Malcodonia* (Syrian Orthodox Church): There is a particular dialogue between the Coptic Orthodox and the Catholic Church on issues which are of interest also for all the other Oriental - Orthodox Churches. The question is of two parts:

1. Is there a theological conception of having individual dialogues?
2. Why is the dialogue not held between all the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church?

*Amba Bishoy*: Actually there is a dialogue conducted under the auspices of PRO ORIENTE between the Catholics and the Oriental Orthodox Churches as a group. However there are other dialogues which started as an outcome of the meetings of the patriarchs and the popes of the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches. Though an official agreement on Christology was signed between the Roman Pontiff and Pope Shenouda III, the committee began to study other issues. Likewise the Head of the Indian Malankara Church and the Pope of Rome agreed on another dialogue committee. Of course in the future an international joint commission could be formed for the dialogue of the Oriental Orthodox Churches with the Roman Church but it has not yet been formed. This idea you have suggested has actually been discussed in the meetings of PRO ORIENTE, but it needs an official decision of the Churches. The official dialogue between the Chalcedonian and the non-Chalcedonian Churches started from the beginning between the two families.

*Archbishop Ignace Almeida of Horm* (Syrian Catholic Church): Does PRO ORIENTE have any clear prediction concerning the form of the decided unity. Will it be a unity concerned on the problem of primacy or just a fellowship?

*Alfred Stirnemann*: The main problem today among the traditional Churches is the problem of Church structure i.e. how authority is to be exercised. We have come over the dogmatic question which separated us in Chalcedon. Now problems of Church structure are the trouble spot. We had once in PRO ORIENTE a very prominent speaker, a German Professor of theology who said that the forthcoming unity of the third millenary should be formed according to the unity which existed in the first millenary. So Rome need not ask more common standards for unity from other Churches as what really existed in the first millenary and especially in the first centuries. This professor is now Cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger. If we can overcome with a lot of good will the problem of

cultural, ecclesiology and political ideas, we might arrive at a spirit of fellowship which existed in the first centuries.

*Father Maroun Atallah* (Antonian monk from Lebanon): We are so happy to see the results of the previous meetings which proved that the disagreements which happened at Chalcedon were a matter of terminology. We are happy to know that we have one faith concerning the divinity and the humanity of Christ. My request is that symposia should be held, like in this region in all other regions, in order to generalize the results reached. I wish that these results should be presented to the people in popular language just to let them know that we are all of one faith and that we can celebrate the feast together. These are two requests which our people in the East wait for.

*Alfred Stirnemann*: PRO ORIENTE has after its five Consultations in Vienna now undertaken to holding local conferences in order to popularise the results, these conferences started in Egypt and were attended by a great number of people. This is no longer confined to patriarchs, bishops and theologians but representatives of all the Churches including lay people, men and women took part and heard and witnessed what was said there. So we declare in all our joint documents and declarations that what unites us is much more than what separates us. So it was possible to overcome in only 20 or 30 years what was so profoundly rooted in the discussions throughout 1500 years. With the will of God and the wish of the Church we can overcome the human problems of the past.

*Bishop Paul Matar* (Maronite Patriarchal Vicar General): In the paper of Amba Bishoy the expression "Uniate Oriental Catholic Church" is used. I ask whether these Churches have the right to be called by the names they give themselves? We avoid the word "uniate"!

*Amba Bishoy*: In my paper the material included was used as in the documents presented before. But this does not mean any problem for our Church. So we can change the name. It is alright and we have no objections to use the official names and avoid this word.

*Najah Nanna* (Syrian Orthodox Church): In 325 the first Council of Nicea agreed on the Creed which we all use now. There is no necessity to show dissension when we have this Creed in common. We all are Christ's children and we want to remain his children. We hope that every one makes down one step in order that we all become one in Christ.

*Archimandrite Sebouh Sarkissian* (Armenian Apostolic-Orthodox Church): Thanking Amba Bishoy for the historic presentations of the meeting held by PRO ORIENTE and to Alfred Stirnemann for the valuable historic presentation of the achievement of this organization. Shall we now put into effect the achievements attained? Has the Church already reflected on what was reached in the past 25 years? Shall we do more to reflect this results in the life of the Church as a whole, and in our lives, in our meetings of clergymen and responsible persons?

*Amba Bishoy*: Thank you, you gave the answer yourself for your question.

*Father Antoine Daou* (Mar Elias Monastery Antelias): Thanks to PRO ORIENTE for all its efforts for Christian Unity and the Unity of the Christian Churches. There is only one Catholic Church. There are various Oriental Orthodox Churches. But we all belong to one Church. Why are the Oriental Catholics excluded in all these agreements? Why is there no presence of Maronites and other Oriental Catholic Churches? We refuse the word "uniate". The Orientals belong to the universal Church. There cannot only be the Catholic Church represented by the Latins, nor by the Orthodox Church alone. So the participation of the Maronite Church and other Oriental Catholic Churches will be important.

*Alfred Stirnemann*: In the West we have learned our lesson and we try to omit the word "uniate". - It used to be a difficult situation because for hundred years there was no dialogue at all. So we had to understand the difficult psychological situation between the Orthodox Churches and the Oriental-Catholic Churches. The situation was not of the best. So we started in a way how it was psychologically acceptable. The problem was not so much in the Near East but in Eastern Europe. Then there they were often not on speaking or on greeting terms. Now it has proved that this was the right approach because Oriental Catholics have entered to this dialogue and this has been accepted by the Orthodox.

We are now starting the third round of dialogue, first with the Chalcedonian Orthodox, afterwards with the non-Chalcedonians and now with the Assyrians. In this dialogue from the very beginning we had representatives of all the Churches of Syriac tradition, whether they are Orthodox like the Antiochians or the Indians or Catholics like the Chaldeans or Maronites, Syrian Catholics or whether they were Assyrians. So this new situation is given now and we have adapted to it but it was non possible to start from the very beginning. So in the fourth Vienna consultation, as Amba Bishoy has underlined, it were our non-Chalcedonian Orthodox friends who asked that the Oriental Catholics be invited and integrated in the process. This has become possible now but it was not so clear from the very beginning. This is really a result of thirty years of ecumenism.

### *Second working session*

*Moderator*: Bishop Boulos Matar

*Archbishop Aram Keshishian*

## **CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSENSUS REACHED BY PRO ORIENTE CONSULTATIONS (A FEW OBSERVATIONS)**

I would like in the first place to welcome you all to this symposium which I believe will be a significant step forward in the theological dialogue and ecumenical collaborations between our Churches. Secondly, I want to apologize for my absence from this important gathering. Due to my responsibilities in the World Council of Churches I was bound in these days to be in Geneva and Bucharest.

The Vienna consultations between the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, organized by PRO ORIENTE, undoubtedly opened a new promising chapter in the history of ecumenical movement in general, and the theological dialogue between East and West in particular. Four significant aspects deserve our attention:

1. After fifteen centuries of separation, estrangement and doctrinal controversies sustained sometimes by mutual anathemata, the very meeting of church hierarchs and theologians by itself was an event of great importance. The spirit of critical openness towards each other, and the sense of belonging to the one and the same church of God dominated these theological encounters.
2. Although these meetings were not official nature and scope, and the participants were not formally mandated by their respective church authorities, their findings and conclusions found a positive echo, and created an atmosphere of mutual confidence, comprehension and rapprochement in both the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. It is my conviction that the brotherly meetings of the heads of our Churches followed sometimes by common declarations, the appointment of joint theological commissions on a world level, and the growth of bilateral relations on regional and local levels during the last twenty years, were, directly or indirectly, stimulated by the meetings of PRO ORIENTE.
3. These consultations were exclusively dogmatic in content and highly academic in approach. Serious efforts were made to wrestle with the doctrinal problems of the past in the context of present day situations and vis-à-vis missiological and pastoral concerns that our Churches are faced with. I consider this vital dimension of any meaningful theological dialogue.
4. Although the PRO ORIENTE consultations were quite different in their inception, methodology and structure compared with other similar meetings, they have to be evaluated in the broader context of Roman Catholic-Eastern Orthodox encounters of PRO ORIENTE on the one hand, and Oriental Orthodox-Eastern Orthodox theological dialogue on the other. There exists a considerable degree of similarity between these theological conversations in terms of their agenda, discussion and conclusions.

With these general observations, I will first attempt to identify the major Christological consensus that emerged. Then I will outline my own reaction to the findings of these consultations. I will conclude by spelling out some of the major challenges and prospects pertaining to our future dialogue.

Chalcedonian Christology has occupied an important place on the agenda of PRO ORIENTE discussions. An agreement has been reached on the following points:



- a) The same apostolic tradition was affirmed as the 'common basis' of our faith.
- b) The decisions and teachings of the first three Ecumenical councils namely, Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus were accepted by both Churches.
- c) The Nestorian and Eutychian teachings were rejected as heresies.
- d) Jesus Christ was confessed as being perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. The divine and human natures of Christ are united without confusion, mixture, division, and separation.
- e) The existing differences in theological formulation, interpretations and emphases have to be understood in the light Nicaea and Constantinople.
- f) The mystery of Christ remains inexhaustible and ineffable. It transcends human perceptions and expressions. Constant and common efforts need to be made to have a more comprehensive grasp of this mystery.

In fact, our common faith in the apostolic Kerygma, our common commitment to the tradition of the one church, our common attachment to the Trinitarian - incarnational mystery of Christ and our common Niceno-Constantinopolitan theological heritage constitute the firm ground and the proper context of our Christology. This means that any Christological agreement ought to be based on this consensus which certainly needs further elaboration and elucidation.

Having said this, the Oriental Orthodox Churches maintain unequivocally that:

1. The first three ecumenical councils are the foundation of our Christology, and, as such, they cannot be altered or added to. Chalcedon is only an interpretation of Nicaea and Constantinople. The Chalcedonian formula is not a credo but only a theological statement. Hence, the acceptance of Chalcedon by the Oriental Orthodox family is simply out of question.
2. The physis of Christ is both human and divine with all the properties of the two natures without mixture, confusion or separation. The human and divine natures do not act separately, but always together, inseparably united in one person. The hypostatic union of two natures makes them one. They are separated in thought alone: 'We confess the oneness of two natures' which, in fact, is not a numerical one, but a united one.

3. Terminology remains a major problem in Christology. Chalcedonian controversies proved that the same terms and formulations often had different meanings and implications in different culture and theological context. Chalcedon affirmed 'en duo' out of fear of Eutychianism. The Oriental Orthodox Churches held firm 'ek duo' over against the Nestorian tendency. Two sides used different terminologies for different concerns. Their intention, however, was the same: to maintain intact the teachings of the first three ecumenical councils against the invasion of Nestorianism.

The words of Nerses the Gracious, a twelfth-century American theologian are, indeed, challenging: 'If "one nature" is said for the indivisible and indissoluble union, and not for the confusion; and "two natures" as being unconfused, immutable and indivisible, both are within the bounds of Orthodoxy".

Historical and culture factors are still predominant in our Christological thinking. We are still expressing the one faith that we confess in different ways and with different emphases. One cannot ignore these realities. In our common attempt to reach a full consensus in Christology, and reappropriate our respective Christological teachings for our own times, I believe that we need to make seriously into consideration the following:

First, the Chalcedonian Christology and the reaction of Oriental Orthodox Churches to it must be interpreted in its proper historical background and theological milieu.

Secondary, any given terminology should not be taken as being exclusive, perfect or exhaustive. The mystery can never be wholly grasped by the human mind nor fully expressed by any human verbal utterance. We have to look for a consensus in the very substance of faith and not in its formulation.

Thirdly, it is important that we transcend the Chalcedonian terminology as a verbal expression of concepts, and identify its real intention, making it relevant to modern patterns of thinking of realities of life. This is where we actually are.

The Vienna consultations rendered a great service to our Churches in terms of bringing in focus those theological areas and concerns that we have in common as well as identifying those issues that still separate us. We must give thanks to God that in spite of centuries - old controversies that deeply affected the life and hampered the efficiency of the witness of our Churches, we are still able to stand together on the common ground of apostolic faith and tradition which, in fact, constitute the very source of our unity in Christ. What has been achieved through Pro-Oriente so far makes us hopeful. There are still serious problems of ecclesiological, dogmatic, canonical and jurisdictional natures that need to be wrestled with constantly, and with an ecumenical spirit. Therefore, the continuation of this process of critical reflection is vitally important. This is our common ecumenical calling which is more urgent today than at any time. It is beyond the immediate purview of this presentation to propose guidelines for our future work together. I would venture only to make a few suggestions:

1. The findings of PRO ORIENTE consultations have not yet been formally assessed by our Churches. Nor are they widely known to many even in the clergy. These consultations were talks exclusively among theologians, and they remained so. It is absolutely important that first, PRO ORIENTE finds proper ways and means to secure a wider circulation of the results of these consultations, both among the clergy and the laity. The publication of the Selection of the Papers and Minutes of the Four Vienna Consultations by PRO ORIENTE only recently, and its translation into Arabic are, indeed, significant steps in this respect. Secondly, our Churches need to evaluate seriously, at various levels - through synodical committees, theological faculties, seminaries, study groups and so on - the convergent and divergent points in our Christological teachings that were quite explicitly spelled out in his theological dialogues. This symposium together with other original symposiums exactly aims to take the results of PRO ORIENTE to the Churches.
2. The Christological consensus reached in the Vienna consultations ought not to be taken in exclusive terms. There are still open questions. They need to be further deepened and elucidated as well as constantly tested against the background of our historical experiences and in the light of our respective theological teachings and ecclesiological assumptions. In other words, any superficial and hasty evaluation of Christological consensus reached in these encounters might have its negative repercussions on the future of our dialogue.
3. As we continue our theological dialogue with a more organised programme and well-studied agenda, we must not aim only for a consensus formula or modus vivendi in Christology; rather we have to seek to strengthen together our common roots in the apostolic tradition. The unity of the church is not only a theological agreement, but essentially a continuous growth in the apostolic tradition.

The insights and experiences that we have gained from the previous meetings should lead us to address ourselves more boldly to critical and sensitive issues. We tackled mostly dogmatic issues. We must now deal with pastoral questions and the kind of

problems and concerns that touch the life and mission of our Churches in their local situations. We ought to know more about each other. We have to learn more from each other through personal encounters, visitation programmes, and cooperation before we engage our Churches formally in this process. The ecumenical collaboration on the local level is of crucial importance for the enhancement of our dialogue on the global level. Close collaboration in diakonia, inter-church aid, pastoral concerns, theological education, social issues and other matters of a practical nature is indispensable. In other words, consensus in Christology should not be taken by itself, but always in relation to the total life of the church.

*Nicolas Antiba*

## THE VIENNA CHRISTOLOGICAL CONSENSUS

### 1. Preliminary Remarks

In his book - *Prolix laws* - written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, St Basilus says:<sup>1</sup>

„Having the gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy, according to the proportion of faith (Rom 12,6). - For to one is given by the spirit of the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit. To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit whoever gets either of these gifts shall not have it for himself but for others.“ (1 Cor 12, 8-10)

In this text Basilus speaks about the relationship between those who aim at living a common Christian monastic life. However, it appears to me that we can apply this concept of individual gifts, in terms of the service of others, to the relationship between the Oriental Catholic and non-Catholic Churches.

The Vienna conferences, consultations and celebrations organized by the foundation of PRO ORIENTE are manifestations of the efforts aimed at the well-being of the Christian community which experienced several schisms in the past centuries.

Ever since 1964, this ecumenical foundation has diligently worked on the process of rapprochement between Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches. The latter rejected the fourth ecumenical council of Chalcedon in which it was stated: „The word incarnate is recognized in two natures, the divine and the human united in one person.“ They adhered to St Cyril's formula of „The one incarnate nature of God the word.“

### 2. The Vienna Consultations

#### 2.1. Amba Bishoy Monastery

Three years ago, from October 26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>, 1991, and in this Monastery of Amba Bishoy, Egypt, we dealt with the subject of the christological agreement arrived at

through the five Vienna consultations. In fact, it is the same subject that I have been asked to discuss today.<sup>2</sup>

Briefly speaking, the mystery of incarnation was chosen as the topic for discussions as it had been the origin of schisms that took place in the fifth century due to the Churches' divergences in the interpretation of that mystery. An agreement was reached on a formulation that expressed the basic consensus attained in relation to the interpretation of this mystery with a clear attempt at avoiding the philosophical terminology that had been the centre of disputes concerning the one or two natures of Christ.

On the other hand, the non-official Vienna consultations paved the way for the first visits of the hierarchs of the Oriental-Orthodox Churches to the see of Rome which resulted in the common doctrinal declaration based on the Vienna consultations and which led to the official theological consultations between the Catholic Church and the Coptic and Syrian Church of Indian in particular.

According to the will of the PRO ORIENTE standing committee which consists of representatives of diverse Churches taking part in the discussions, time was ripe to have these findings, agreed upon by experts, known by educated people and church hierarchs in order to have them communicated to the grass-roots. It was also decided to convene regional assemblies in the Orient itself

„with the aim of familiarizing leaders of the Churches in the region, be they bishops, theologians or people working in the Christian mass media ... with the concepts developed by ecumenical experts and acknowledged by church authorities in order to make them part of the everyday church life.“

Hence this first symposium held in the Monastery of Amba Bishoy and made possible through the hospitality of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, patriarch of the Coptic Church of Alexandria and Pope of the See of St Mark, followed by the second conference of the Malankara Churches that took place in India in 1993. Here we are now convened in a third symposium to convey this christological agreement to all Christians of good will who are working in the ecumenical field.

#### 2.2. Basic Notes

The dialogue of the Vienna consultations found its basis in the same Apostolic tradition; particularly as affirmed in the first three ecumenical councils of (Nicea 325, Constantinople 381 and Ephesus 431). The council of Chalcedon was in fact considered by many theologians and religious leaders as a stone of scandal and a bone of contention between the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

The true and honest exchange of views and stands was 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 the theologians who gathered in Vienna in 1971 under the auspices of Cardinal König started a new way in theological and historical research. After rejecting both the Eutychnian and Nestorian christologies, the theologians expressed their common faith in Christ in these words: „We see that there are still differences in the theological inter-

<sup>1</sup> St Basil the Great. *Prolix laws*. Transl. by father Joseph Alshammas. Sidon 1955, pp.27/8

<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Antiba. The christological agreement through the five Vienna consultations. In: *Al-Massara* 78 (1992) 343-356

pretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions.“ In the first communiqué, the theologians made great efforts to use different concepts. The words „person“ (*hypostasis*) and „nature“ (*physis*) are never used. It is an effort to create a new vocabulary, using new concepts to express the one faith which underlies both ancient formulations.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.3. *The Common Declaration of 1973*

Moreover, we read in the communiqué of the first non-official ecumenical Consultation between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches held in Vienna, September 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>, 1971 the following:

„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 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>4</sup>

This non-official statement had a great significance in the formulation of the common declaration of H.H. Pope Paul VI and H.H. Pope Shenouda III issued in the Vatican on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1973. H.H. Pope Shenouda III was one of the participants in the first Vienna meeting before being elected patriarch on the Alexandrian See. This common declaration reads as follows:

„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. His Divinity is united with his Humanity in a real perfect union without mingling, without commixion, 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 become 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>5</sup>

This agreed statement on christology between H.H. Pope Paul VI and H.H. Pope Shenouda III prepared the way to the meeting of the joint commission for dialogue between representatives of the Roman Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches who met at Amba Bishoy Monastery on Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1988, where a common formula of the official agreement on christology was signed by the participants. 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>6</sup>

### 2.4. *The Comment of Ignatius Dick*

In his article „In reference to the ecumenical symposium at the monastery of Amba Bishoy, Egypt“ Archimandrite Ignatius Dick comments on this concise formula which denounces all heresies that appeared concerning the nature of Christ.

The following assertion „Jesus Christ is perfect in his Divinity“ revokes Arius' teaching which denied the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and considered that Christ was not consubstantial with the Father and that he was created.

The second assertion „Jesus Christ is perfect in his Humanity“ revokes Apollinarius' claim. Apollinarius did not believe in the Lord's complete human nature. He was without a soul because God the Logos provided the needed life.

The third assertion „his Humanity is one with his Divinity“ or as stated in the formula of the communiqué of 1973 „without division, without separation“ revokes Nestorius' theory which claimed that the Logos was united with a man with all the natural properties of being reducing the union to a simple moral one. This may mean that the Logos and Christ, from a Nestorian perspective, are two.

The fourth assertion „without mixture, nor mingling, nor change“ repudiates Eutyches' claim that the human nature of Christ was absorbed and dissolved in the divine nature and Christ is not consubstantial with us in Humanity.“<sup>7</sup>

### 2.5. *The Common Declaration of 1984*

A new and important step was taken in the common declaration signed by H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas who realized that:

„The confusion and schism that occurred between their Churches in the later centuries, in no way affect or touch the substance of their faith, since these formulae adopted by different theological schools to express the same matter.“<sup>8</sup>

The disagreement was not over doctrine but over terminology. These meetings that have taken place in Vienna were crowned by the doctrinal agreement on christology between the Roman Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church made public on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, the feast of Pentecost.

This agreement reads as follows:

„We affirm our common faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ is one, perfect in his Humanity and perfect in his Divinity. 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. It is this faith which we both confess. Its content is the same in both communions. We are convinced these differences have arisen, in terminology

<sup>3</sup> R.G. Roberson. The contemporary relationship between the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches. In: The Vienna Dialogue. Five Consultations of PRO ORIENTE-foundation. Booklet No 1 (1991), p.36 (Arabic Version)

<sup>4</sup> Booklet No 1. Vienna 1991, p.46 (English version)

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p.109

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p.120

<sup>7</sup> Ignatius Dick. In reference to the ecumenical symposium in the monastery of Amba Bishoy, Egypt. In: Al-Massara 80 (1994) 126. He refers to Archbishop Cyril Saleem Bustros' article „The theological interpretation of faith in Christ, Church councils and conciliarity.“ In: Al-Massara 78 (1992) 65-75

<sup>8</sup> Booklet No 1, p.117

and that differences in formulating that content in the course of history need not and should not divide us or prevent us from having communion between each other.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.6. General Review

We may deduce from what has already been stated that the disagreement lies in the philosophical formulation of the mystery of union of the divine and human nature of Christ. However, and despite these differences, the fifth Vienna consultation of 1988 emphasized that the great mystery of the incarnation of the son of God could not be exhaustively formulated in words. Theologians also affirmed 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>10</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 (and God knows how long it will last) 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>11</sup>

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 in Vienna to realize

„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 Nicea and Ephesus.<sup>12</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. 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>13</sup>

This communiqué was followed by the 1984 common declaration signed by H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Patriarch 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 unshakable foundation of that common faith.<sup>14</sup>

Pluralism will stay a difficult as well 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 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.“

## 3. 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 realize the divine will. The Churches' stewards were aware to establish a workable program helping on the path to unity. In fact, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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>15</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:

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

The two pontiffs endeavored in item six to „treat important questions of faith, of pastoral problems, of mutual need by brotherly communications and consultations in both Churches.

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 and love.“<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p.123

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p.120

<sup>11</sup> M.K. Krikorian. In Booklet No 1, p.12

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p.12

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p.58

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p.119

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p.111-114

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p.59

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.

Achimandrite Dick reiterates the same notion saying that the christological agreement between the Catholic and the Oriental Churches requires that the council of Chalcedon continue to be a subject of further reflection and that a more forbearing terms be used in our teaching of christology and that offending terms used in publications be eliminated before the lifting of anathemata is achieved.<sup>17</sup>

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. In 1970 the idea returned in the common declaration of H.H. Paul VI and H.H. Catholicos Vasken I. „This unity cannot be realized 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>18</sup> I do think that our gatherings these days are a realization of these holy wishes expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ, the religious hierarchs and all those who worked at the Vienna consultations.

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 as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, 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 (Col 3, 11) to prepare us that „God becomes everything in all.“ (1 Cor 15, 28)

#### 4. Personal Wishes

Christology and pneumatology: Theological research is the church's daughter and help 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.

##### 4.1. The Early Church

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 total christology 'in the spirit', thus without any mutilation caused by prejudices.“<sup>19</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 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>20</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 turn 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>21</sup>

##### 4.2. The Holy Book and Christology

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.<sup>22</sup> 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

<sup>19</sup> A. Jankowski. Connaitre Jesus Christ aujourd'hui dans l'Esprit Saint. In: Bible et Christologie. Paris 1984, p.252

<sup>20</sup> G.R. Schnakenburg. Das Johannesevangelium. Bd. III. Freiburg 1975, p.173

<sup>21</sup> Y. Congar. Pour une christologie pneumatologique. In: Revue ... 63 (1979) 439

<sup>22</sup> Commission Biblique Pontificale: Bible et christologie. Paris 1984

<sup>17</sup> Dick. In: Al-Massara 80, p.132

<sup>18</sup> Booklet No 1, p.107

was extending a bridge between the exigencies of biblical criticism and the needs of pastors.

#### 4.3. Pastoral Field

It seems to me that what has been achieved so far, in terms of the dialogue and agreements between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches, urges us to have a renewal of our relations. It is not enough to have our aspirations written on paper. We would rather have them translated and lived. Our symposia call for rapprochement and cooperation in pastoral fields. We still have anathematizations pronounced by one church against the other and we still consider these Churches excommunicated and recognize them as fields of mission.

The Catholic Church revised „the ecumenical document“ after H.H. Pope John Paul II had convoked the General Secretariat of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. H.H. stated that the wide spread ecumenical movement and the growth of dialogic documents, in addition to the feeling of urgent necessity for the participation of God's people in this movement on a large scale, and the necessity for providing elaborate doctrinal media aimed at true commitment, impel us to give directives thereof.<sup>23</sup>

The Roman Pontiff emphasizes the importance of „true commitment“ in the endeavour towards unity. I would like to draw the attention here to the work achieved by our Melkite Church in the pastoral field towards fulfillment of the long aspired unity.

The synodal liturgical commission is working diligently on revising liturgical books.

*Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim*

## CHALCEDON AND THE DIALOGUE OF LOVE TODAY

### 1. Introduction

Talking about the results of the dialogue after the five historical meetings held between theologians from the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, moves us to an atmosphere in which concepts about the viewpoints of the faithful, men and women about the unity of the church are different from those that existed before the inception of the dialogue and the positive achievements fulfilled.

The conflict that took place after Chalcedon has caused a schism in the relationship between these churches which lasted for centuries and hence the language of rapprochement and communication became so divergent, it even set a black page in the history of these relations through the controversies and the offensive usage of words. The consequence of which was the denial of the presence of a common alphabet that depends upon the terminology of the Holy Scripture and the teachings of the fathers.

We in this Orient and after the basic changes that took place on the demographic and geographic level are in great need for having this atmosphere we live in today close to those atmospheres lived by our churches in order to live in a new world built upon openness and dialogue and upon the desire to infuse a spirit of faith and intimacy in order that all sorts of fears that disappointed the hopes of many Christians and spread them all over the world with no hope of complete recovery from the wounds that they suffered from after Chalcedon and after having the identity of their churches shaken up, be dispersed.

The foundation of PRO ORIENTE sponsored from its very inception by His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König, Archbishop emeritus of Vienna could depend through the five Consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988) upon the teachings of the Second Vatican Council which opened a wide door in the relations between churches and set a new basis for dealing with other churches a thing which indicated a comprehensive change in insight and attitude we shouldn't forget that the credit goes to the work team assigned to prepare the drafts that deal with the ecumenical work from all its aspects following the guidance of pope John XXIII and pope Paul VI. More over, and due to the conciliar document that was issued by the council, the participation of the Catholic Church in the ecumenical work became official and legitimate.

In the first words of „The decision taken in relation to the ecumenical movement“ we notice the change in the Catholic thinking: „The main objective of the Second (Ecumenical) Vatican Council is the restoration of unity among all Christians, as Jesus Christ established one church.“

I'm not going to give an analysis of the Catholic principles of the ecumenical movement and the practise of this ecumenism locally, regionally and internationally. What attracts the attention is the fact that these principles were at the background of the establishment of the ecumenical bodies like PRO ORIENTE that aimed at bridging the gap between churches of the Occident and those of the Orient.

<sup>23</sup> A Guide line for the Application of the Principles & Protocols of the Ecumenical Movement. Vatican 1993, p.6

## 2. Antioch and Initiatives

We in the Syrian Church of Antioch say - not out of pride -, but with much humility that the fathers who are saints of this church have dealt with the issue of the dispute that started after Chalcedon in a good way. The saints who are heroes like Philoxenos of Mabbug (†523) and Severios of Antioch (†538) and Yacoub Bordanna (†578) left eternal prints on the pages of struggle for the restoration of unity between the churches. When scholar Catholicos Mar Gregorios John Bar Hebreus (†1286) started his opinion concerning this conflict he had a sincere insight and attitude when he said:

„I am quite sure that the dispute of Christians doesn't depend on truth but on terms and terminologies, for all Christians believe that Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man without commixtion, without confusion. Concerning the kind of union achieved it is called by some *physis* and by others *hypostasis* and by a third group *pharsopho*, therefore, I found out that all Christians despite their differences are in full agreement.“<sup>1</sup>

Had the church had the chance to have a working team of theologians at that time, it would have come up with a declaration in which the church could agree that plurality in the christological expression does not lead to a dispute between churches because truth is one; and we would have been spared the task of holding all these meetings that have taken place so far.

I find myself obliged to declare that once more in my capacity as one of the faithful of this church that believes, theoretically and practically in the necessity of the restoration of faith between the different churches, because this attitude though declared non-officially is a vital element in the life of some of the leaders of this church.

Before identifying ourselves with the World Council of Churches and before becoming members in it in 1960 and prior to the Second Vatican Council 1962 which opened this large door for relations with the various church. The issue of Christian Unity was the main and most important objective that His Holiness Patriarch Yacoub III had. He addressed the Orthodox Churches of the Byzantine tradition and the Catholic Church in the name of sister churches in faith (Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopian and Indian), using for the dialogue a language of love and proposed a project for discussing the issue of disagreements on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1950 and was published in „Al Noor“ magazine in due course. He said:

„On this occasion we'd like to declare that we are among the first to look forward for this unity and work for its achievement and we do suggest that all abandoned past researches and meaningless redundant terminology in terms of one nature, two natures, a single will or two wills, one act or two acts, one hypostasis or two hypostases and let this unity be based on the following statement:

We believe that our Lord the word incarnate is perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. He performed miracles and supernatural deeds, he suffered, was crucified, died and was buried, he rose and ascended to heaven.“

Aren't these words efficient in expressing good will of our leaders with regard to the issue of Christian unity? Isn't it an evidence that all churches were working with all

the capacities possible to prompt détente through a dialogue of love to restore the unity of faith which is deeply rooted in our common apostolic traditions?

Our confession of our common apostolic faith that we keep repeating according to the orders of the fathers of Nicaea and Constantinople, and our acceptance of the Canons and teachings of the three ecumenical councils held in Nicaea, Constantinople and Ephesus; and the attempts aimed at the restoration of unity in the traditions of churches, form the rigid substratum for the dialogue that is taking place between us.

When the Oriental Orthodox Churches started in their dialogue with the Orthodox Churches of the Byzantine tradition in Aarhus 1964, Bristol 1967, Geneva 1970 and Addis Ababa 1971 this non-official dialogue formed a fertile ground for the progress achieved between these two families. In all the papers submitted by the theologians from these churches there was a consensus that the real disagreement lies in the theological terms and in the terminology used to explain the doctrine of the divine incarnation. This theological terminology was based on a theological experience in the schools of thought of these churches and on the devotional life in it.

The local language had a great role in this respect. As stated in the introduction of the declaration of Balamand the political circumstances, in addition to the other non-theological factors did not permit the attempts at the restoration of the unity between churches to come to a successful end. With the admission that we possess One Creed of faith and that we all believe in Holy Trinity and believe in the divinity of the only Son that our Lord and Saviour and King Jesus Christ is perfect God in his divinity and perfect man in his humanity and that in him the divinity and humanity are united in a real and perfect way without commixtion, without confusion, without changing, without alteration, without division or separation.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Formula of Agreement

When pope Shenouda III speaks about the relation between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church of Rome, he says that in the meeting he attended in Vienna in 1971 two months before being enthroned as patriarch, a meeting which had been called for by the foundation of PRO ORIENTE, the subject of the discussion was the statement of Saint Cyril the Great: „One physis for the word of God the incarnate“ and when we remember this statement we bring back to mind the bomb exploded by presbyter Anastas, a disciple of Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople in his well known homily in which he said: „Mary shall not be called the mother of God, for she is the daughter of humans and God can never be born from the daughter of humans.“

According to the view point of church historians, especially Syrian historians, the people at that time thought that Nestorius would excommunicate his disciple immediately, because he was the author of that famous statement which he addressed to the emperor and in which he said:

„Emperor, give me a land that is void of heretics and I shall give you heaven instead. You shall have to get rid of heretics and I shall have to get rid of the Persians.“

<sup>1</sup> Wort und Wahrheit. Supplementary Issue Number 1 (Vienna 1972), p.182 (=WW 1)

<sup>2</sup> WW 1, p.182

The truth is that the joint agreement achieved with the Catholics concerning the doctrine of divine incarnation and which reads „we believe that God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the word incarnate is perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity and that his humanity and his divinity are one without commixtion without confusion, without alterations, without change and that his divinity was never separated from his humanity not for a single moment, not even for the twinkling of an eye“<sup>3</sup> is but a repetition of all the attempts that aimed at restoring the unity of the church, the unity between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians. The teachings of our fathers St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Severios of Antioch are manifest in stating the belief of the church in the one nature of Christ. Alexandrians and Antiochenes rejected all foreign teachings that were brought about by Dioscorus and Theodoros who were the first to teach the two natures of Christ in their writings that had a destructive recognition in Syria.

#### 4. Awareness and Progress in Meetings

After all this thorough explanation we see that all Churches, though aware of their role and serious in bringing closely their different view points concerning the restoration of communion between them, they still lack the courage to form a work team devoted to reading history in a correct way and to write this history in an unbiased and non pragmatic fanatic way, an approach which is still lacking in all historical writings of all communities until the beginning of the seventies. The development of historical writing and the methods and historical concepts accompanying them did not depend on the scrutiny and examination of the narratives put down on the margins of books of history, we rather see instead that the factors that characterized the confusion in historical writings were based on the different trends which were far alienated from the unifying attitude we have today.

Our meeting today is the third of its kind after the meetings which took place in the Monastery of Amba Bishoy 1991 and at the Seminary in Kottayam 1993. The standing Committee supervising the work of the foundation of PRO ORIENTE wished to convey to you, who are an integral part of the basis in the church, its experience and the witness it presented through the non-official ecumenical consultation between theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church during the years I've already mentioned.

Five volumes have been published including 1500 pages in which the theologians dealt with important theological topics relating to the Council of Chalcedon and an analysis of the reason of disagreement and the topic of christology in the life of all these churches, the acceptance of the Council partly or wholly.

However, the writings of the fathers were vital and important sources upon which the theologians based their concepts, theories and thoughts. In the last meeting in 1988 some of these theologians answered a question about the reactions of these churches to the four previous Vienna Consultations.

The PRO ORIENTE foundation wished to summarize the most important papers in these consultations and had them published in the fifth edition in 1993 in about 37 papers in order to facilitate the process of follow up of their thoughts of those theologians

and the impact they had on the solidification of the relations between churches, for the sake of history we say that the declaration of this true faith of the church which has been reached in the view of all churches a remarkable work of real significance. There has been an unique courageous and brave turning point that has changed the course of history and has been considered an official and a legitimate one through the declarations signed by the leaders of these churches and the papers of Rome after being ratified by the church synods. These declarations have become a new and vital topic for rewriting the history of relations between the different churches.

The first thing we notice in this regard were the meetings which took place between all the patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Popes of Rome. PRO ORIENTE has facilitated the process through the papers.

And the non-official dialogue took an official form in Rome because the meeting of the leaders was concluded with the joint declaration most of which depended on the theological papers of PRO ORIENTE. Whereas the addresses of the papers were only wishes and confessions that we have one faith in Jesus Christ the son of God the word incarnate. We see patriarch Yacoub III, the first Oriental Orthodox patriarch to visit the Vatican, and the historical meeting held between him and pope Paul VI resulted in the joint declaration signed by the two pontiffs. Consequently leading to the theological détente we have between churches today. After the meeting of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Yacoub III there was another meeting between the Pope of Rome and Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria. The words of the joint declaration they had stressed what had been signed by the Roman and Antiochene pontiffs. In the meeting between the Pope of Rome and the Catholics of the Syrian Orthodox of Malankara in India they quoted the formula of Cyril of Alexandria which states the believe in the one divine-human nature.

Patriarch Zakka I was stressed in his joint communiqué with Pope John Paul II in June 1984 what had been confirmed by their predecessors. And in the meeting of the commission of the representatives of the Coptic Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church in 1988, the Coptic Church sent the response of its synod concerning the doctrine of the divine incarnation to the Church of Rome affirming what had been agreed on in Vienna in 1971. In the first meeting of the new joint commission for the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Malankara in India there was another declaration in which an agreement was reached in relation to the topic of christology as mentioned in the various declarations.

It is noteworthy that the Antiochene and Alexandrian Churches of the Oriental Orthodox family were the only ones to sign the joint communiqués with the Pope of Rome concerning the doctrine of incarnation. The Armenians and Ethiopians have not yet officially declared the viewpoint of their churches in this regard not withstanding the fact that the declaration of Pope Paul VI and Catholicos Vasken I have stressed that

„this joint search and this cooperation shall have to have a common confession of the one Christian faith and the mysteries of the sacred life and the mutual respect for one another and between their churches.“

The joint declaration of Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Karekin II speaks about the complete communion between churches without touching the topic of incarnation yet the declaration states the following:

<sup>3</sup> WW 1, p.182



„As Jesus Christ was revealed among us when he ascended to heaven he was revealed among us in his ministry in his divine church as a servant of all mankind.“

I think that after the acceptance of all churches of the Oriental Orthodox family of the implications of the joint declaration we are capable of starting a new approach after closing the old one.

### 5. *Communiqués of PRO ORIENTE*

I have before me now the communiqués of the non-official ecumenical consultations. I shall attempt to state the most important results achieved by these ecumenical consultations between theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church by throwing light on each communiqué.

In the communiqué of 1971, the theologians confessed their union in a brotherly spirit and admitted the presence of a common denominator which is the apostolic tradition as stressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of Faith. The most important point was the agreement of all participants on the following:

1. To denounce the Nestorian and Eutychian Concepts concerning Jesus Christ.
2. To deepen the spirit of mutual understanding in terms of christology according to the Council of Chalcedon and the concept that emerged after Chalcedon and the confession that this was one of the reasons for the divergence between churches.

In this communiqué we had also the Christological formula that became the basis for most of the christological studies. It reads:

„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.“<sup>4</sup>

The participants stressed in this consultation that differences in the theological interpretations which are due to the ecclesiastic and theological traditions are still present and that the contradicting trends in terms of the theological and doctrinal interpretations concerning the mystery of Christ should not remain an obstacle, so that the joint efforts towards deepening a comprehensive understanding of this mystery will be supported and enhanced.

In the communiqué<sup>5</sup> of the second ecumenical non-official consultation 1973 there was a stress on the confirmation, once more, of what had been stated in the communiqué of the first consultation. Pleading fervently that we may all be one; and in the second paragraph of the communiqué which is relatively longer than that of the first one, there was an increasing elaboration on the role of the second hypostasis, the God incarnate in the life of the church and the adoption of the statement of Cyril of Alexandria about the one incarnate nature of the word in which he expresses the perfect humanity of Jesus

<sup>4</sup> WW 1, p. 182

<sup>5</sup> WW 2 (1974), p.175/6

without denying his divinity. In the third passage there is the discussion of the dilemma of terminology and the full agreement of both sisters on the rejection of Eutychianism and Nestorianism despite the differences in these terminologies.

In the third consultation 1976<sup>6</sup> expert theologians from the two families met in one joint effort to deal with topics and issues that are still pending without solutions. During these theological studies done by the churches the expert theologians allowed themselves to confess with full humility that by the power of the Holy Spirit they could overcome the misunderstanding and the historical events that took place 1500 years ago and were the cause of the abominable division between our churches. In the communiqué of this consultation there was a great consensus concerning the subject of christology which attained progress in the two previous consultations. There were also other topics for discussion.

In the communiqué of the fourth non-official consultation 1978<sup>7</sup> we see that the topic of christology was no longer a hindrance along the path of discussing other subjects like the Primacy of the Pope and the Communion in Faith and the Sacraments of the Church, the Ministry and the restoration of communion between churches, even the term christology was not used so clearly at the end of the communiqué which stated how the disagreement started between the two families due to the divergence, mutual alienation and the particular development that existed in the era after the council of Chalcedon.

### 6. *The Communiqué of the Fifth non-Official Consultation 1988*

It appears from the agenda of this consultation<sup>8</sup> that it included a review of the work of the four previous consultations and there was a study of the official reaction of churches over the past ten years and the steps taken to overcome the remaining obstacles along the way towards full communion. An evaluation of the importance of the theological proposals and future plans that might lead to the restoration of love, confidence and communion between churches was covered in the twenty papers submitted about the goal of this consultation.

The attention of the participants was drawn to the fact that the consensus on christology which was achieved in the first four consultations led to publishing the declarations that stressed the common faith by the papers of Rome and some of the patriarchs from the Oriental Orthodox family.

The consultation stressed that no complete definition of the mystery of the incarnation of the son of God could be reached through terms and that within the limits of the rejected errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism plurality is allowed for the expression of the unity of the hypostasis which is neither divided nor mixed in the human and divine nature which is united in our one Lord Jesus Christ the word of God incarnate in the Holy Spirit from the Blessed Virgin Mary consubstantial with the father and consubstantial with us.

All the discussion about the papers which particularly dealt with christology ended in this consultation. It was necessary that those concerned in the consultation plead ear-

<sup>6</sup> published in WW 3 (1976) 228 pp.

<sup>7</sup> WW 4 (1978) p.232-234

<sup>8</sup> WW 5 (1989) 224 pp.

nestly that all churches represented in it form a joint official body that would take care of the implications in this non-official dialogue and start an official dialogue between the two families aiming at the realization of complete communion in faith and holy sacramental life.

For more information about christology we have to consider the efforts paid by the respective church leaders. Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Yacoub III attested in their joint declaration in 1971 the deep spiritual communion that existed between their churches and agreed that there was no difference in the faith they confessed concerning the mystery of the word of God incarnate who became flesh indeed.

Notwithstanding the long centuries of division that were the aftermath of misinterpretations of different theological terms, the name of St Cyril of Alexandria was mentioned among the great fathers and teachers as a witness of the common heritage handed over by fathers of both churches.

The joint declaration between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III represented another dimension, because the reason of the meeting was the desire of both sides to deepen the relations between the two churches and to find concrete methods that could help overcome the obstacles that might come up on the way of true cooperation in service of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the second passage of this declaration we find the words which were used in the first consultation, the faith in Jesus Christ perfect God in his divinity and perfect man as to his humanity. This union is real, perfect, without commixtion, without alteration, without separation, without division. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye.

The dialogue between the two churches achieved greater progress than any other church, for Pope John Paul II and Pope Shenouda III were able to present in a joint declaration principles for guiding the search for the unity between the two mentioned churches. In these principles there is no mentioning of the doctrine of incarnation. In the second paragraph there is a stress that the two churches are apostolic and

„by virtue of the apostolic succession we enjoy the full life of church sacramental mysteries especially the mystery of the Eucharist although the communion of the Eucharist has not yet been achieved between us, because of our failure to settle the dispute completely between us.“

This was stated in June 1979. 1988 and fifteen years after the historical meeting between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in May 1973 the signature of the agreement on Christology was achieved by representation from the two churches as all were capable of signing a common formula that expressed the formal agreement of the two churches on the issue of Christology which had been ratified by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Church on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1986. In this agreement we read:

„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 the Syrian Church of Antioch there was another historical meeting between the two pontiffs, the Antiochene and the Roman, in June 1984 and in the joint declaration the two pontiffs publicly announced the common faith in the mystery of the incarnation

of our Lord Jesus Christ as was done by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Yacoub III in 1971. The declaration tackled other issues.

The last agreement about the mystery of the divine incarnation was between the joint commission for the dialogue between the Catholic Church of Rome and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Malankara in India which was made public in June 1990. The members of this commission unanimously adopted the common formula about their faith in the mystery of the incarnate Logos putting thus an end to the christological dispute between them. The text is similar to the others.

Hence we can see that the issue of christology which was the reason for disagreements and schisms for 1500 years has become now an important reason for restoring communion between divergent churches of yesterday. Allow me to present to you a modest personal experience which I had in this field which I have been working in for 15 years. All these declarations, principles, official and non-official consultations will be kept on paper if not translated practically and manifested in the life of the church through a practical witness we present to the children of the church. Our homilies and writings are still void of any reference to what has been achieved as if nothing has been fulfilled since the second Vatican Council on the way towards the restoration of communion between our churches.

I hope that the papers of this third conference be made public among clergy and laity at all levels and not be only for those who have attended in order to fulfil the expectation placed in these ecumenical meetings. May I present two proposals now:

1. It would be recommendable to devote one Sunday this year or maybe next year on which the topic of the homily in all the churches of all denominations be the results of these ecumenical dialogues stressing the endeavours done by the churches for the restoration between churches.

2. Encouraging all the Orthodox Patriarchs of the East and the Catholic Patriarchs to have a common declaration the text of which is derived from the spirit of the agreements, communiqués and principles issued by PRO ORIENTE so that these issues get into the curriculum of the seminaries in all our churches in order to achieve our goal in creating a new generation that really believes in the application of the Lord's words „that all be One.“

## THE VIENNA CHRISTOLOGICAL AGREEMENT

The ultimate goal of the Vienna consultation was to heal the rift that had existed for more than fifteen centuries between Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches, and was the result of the conflict over dogmatic differences concerning truths of faith.

The first of these controversies over truths of faith was the dispute over the true understanding of the mystery of the Son of God who for us and for our salvation was incarnate. The most significant question posed was: "How did the Son of God become incarnate for our salvation?"

Oriental Orthodox Churches believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, by taking to himself a perfect manhood, had one nature resulting from the hypostatic union between Divinity and Humanity in the Logos as St. Cyril called it "The one nature of God the Incarnate Logos."

Following the council of Chalcedon (451), the Roman Catholic church professed Jesus Christ one person and one hypostasis in two natures, the Divine and the Human, without division, without separation, without change, without confusion.

These two statements concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, have, behind them, a rich history of controversies that took place in the fifth and sixth centuries AD. During which the deplorable schism between the two church families was consolidated.

In order to understand what had happened we have to go back to the year 495, fifteen centuries ago and try to imagine flying aboard a chopper, over the regions of our dear Orient from Constantinople through the Cappadocian region up to Aleppo and Latakia in the north and then move down to Beirut, Tyre, Damascus, the plains of Horan in the middle and then resume our journey towards the South to Palestine, go through Jerusalem to Jaffa, Yafa and Gaza until we reach Egypt and then cross the Nile valley from the South moving towards Alexandria.

What do we see? Inhabited cities, luxurious buildings with huge churches, plains, prairies and mountain peaks upon which monasteries inhabited by thousands of monks are spread. While still in the year 495, we are to fly over the Basilique of Simon Stylite and its monastic complex only one year after its erection to be the biggest church in the world at the time.

The entire region was Christian and was considered to be the largest and richest region in the known world materially and culturally. Politically speaking it formed the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Here we have to keep in mind that the Western part of the Empire was subdued by the Berber Tribes coming from the European north, depriving it from its political and cultural significance and making our East the unrivalled center of politics, culture and religion in the world at the time.

The ruling Emperor Anastasius was a pious believer, but a pragmatic politician who had no interest whatsoever in the theological affairs but whose prime concern was devoted to the unification of the Persian Empire. He was the historic rival enemy on the Eastern border across the Euphrates where war fares never stopped.

Inside, the empire was in fact in turmoil due to the ongoing theological controversies that resulted after the council of Chalcedon (451). In 495, the year we started our

journey, 44 years after Chalcedon, the disputes were at their climax; divisions were too overwhelmingly spread in the Empire to be controlled. Chalcedon was rejected by the church of Alexandria in Egypt and Africa yet, was accepted by the church of Constantinople whose decisions were subject to the whims of Emperors. The churches of Jerusalem and Antioch were torn by the conflict between the anti-Chalcedonian South and the North which was subject to the direct and whimsical authority of Emperors. It goes without saying that Antioch and Jerusalem determined the fate of the council. All attempts made by the Emperors to avoid the dangers of these divisions by resorting to violence, persecutions and sometimes to political solutions and theological dialogues proved to be futile.

Going back to the year 495, we find ourselves in the stage of political solution after Emperor Zeno had imposed his famous Bull of 482, known as „The Bull of Union" (Henotikon) which was almost a political manoeuvre that evaded the basic problem proposed in the council of Chalcedon and was satisfied with the anathematization of Nestorius and Eutyches. The two debating parties accused each other of Nestorianism and Eutychianism.

Each party tried to consider "The Bull of union" as supporting their respective stands. The opponents of Chalcedon believed that the Bull overlooked the synod or rather canceled it, whereas the supporters of the council thought that it emphasized the council and anathematized its opponents depending on the principle that no one was capable of annulling a synod.

Undoubtedly, the basic objective of the Bull was to put an end to the persecution of the opponents of the council and give them political freedom in order that the Empire be united in the face of outer dangers. This goal was achieved and between 482 and 512 moderate patriarchs succeeded to the throne of Antioch from both sides yet theological turmoils never ceased as each party tried to annul the other by imposing their theological interpretations on them until the year 512, when the moderate Chalcedonian patriarch Philipanus was dethroned and succeeded by patriarch Severus who was a staunch opponent of Chalcedon. Change of politics was enough to dethrone Severus causing thus the great schism in 512 once and for all. We still live the aftermath of this great schism that had torn the Christian East and made it an easy prey to many.

What are the real reasons behind this destructive dispute between brothers? Unfortunately, contradictory theological interpretations of the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ lay behind these disagreements. One party maintained the Cyrillic formula "One incarnate nature of God the word" which is the result of the union of Divinity and Humanity, and the other party maintained that "Christ is one person in two united natures, the Divine and Human, without division, without separation, without change, without commixion" as stated in Chalcedon 451.

The council of Chalcedon caused a great schism in the church of the Orient in general and in the church of Antioch in particular. It was rejected by the church of Alexandria in Egypt and Africa but accepted by the church of Rome in the West. The church of Constantinople reiterated the whims of Emperors in her acceptance of the council. The church of Antioch got split on this issue and still is. Antioch is the main victim of this council. This symposium convened on this Antiochene land is properly located to deal with the problem that had caused the greatest damage. We do extend our gratitude to the Foundation of PRO ORIENTE which set itself the task of solving theological and historical problems resulting from this council. We do thank the foundation for conve-

ning this symposium on this Antiochene land so that all the believers in Christ living in this region feel that notwithstanding the historical and theological differences, they still have a common faith in one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the word of God who was incarnate for us and for our salvation so that we be the children of God his Father.

The Vienna consultations have virtually shown that our faith is one and the same, and that the cause of differences and theological disputes arising after the council of Chalcedon was not a difference in the essence but only in the interpretation of this faith. We might be astonished or rather stunned at the astonishing and bitter historical fact that our Antiochene East was torn and annihilated because of theological and verbal disputes that had nothing to do with the essence of faith in Christ. Wasn't it possible to tolerate pluralism? Having astonishingly discovered today that the differences were trivial and petty, we may stop to pose the question: were our Holy Fathers so much self-centered in the past fifteen centuries to have exchanged anathemata and got separated with no hope of meeting again?

The feeling of frustration is no doubt the outcome of the illegitimate obtrusion of our modern mentality upon a past that did not distinguish between political and religious affairs on the one hand, and faith and the expression of this faith on the other, especially when one party considered that any novelty in the interpretation of faith might endanger the comprehension of the essence of this faith regardless of the true convictions of the other party.

What is the essence of faith in Christ ?

And did any dispute arise in connection with this essence ? The essence of faith is that the Son of God was incarnate, died on the Cross and rose for our salvation. Our salvation through the incarnation of the Son God forms the essence of faith.

It was the mode of Incarnation and not the essence of faith that dispute centered around. A specific conception of Incarnation, no doubt, threatened the truth of salvation. Yet, never had any of those who exchanged anathemata, because of misunderstanding, been deprived of the salvation of Christ.

A good example could be cited in this connection which is the life of the Syrian monks who disagreed and split as a result of the one or two *qnome*; anathematizing one another, but who were greatly unified by the monastic heritage which is the ultimate expression of salvation achieved by the Son incarnate. We see that the Egyptian Hermit Isaia who died c 491 wrote articles about monastic life which were conveyed to us in Syria, copied, read and explained by the Syrian monks in the East and West whether advocates of the two natures and two *qnome* or believers in the one nature and one *qnoma*.

Another more illustrative personality is Isaac of Nineva, known among the Byzantines and Latins as Isaac the Syrian, who lived in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. This Isaac who belonged to the Syrian church that advocated the two natures and two *qnome* and was a bishop for a few months in that church before he finally retreated to be a hermit, had several works that depicted his experiences as a monk and were found in both churches, those which adhered to the formula of two natures and others who supported the formula of one nature.

He was exclusively one of the leading Holy Fathers in the East and West. His works were more copied by the Syrian Orthodox than by the Eastern Syrians who were accused of Nestorianism.

Imagine that when Isaac quotes Theodore of Mopsuestia the "exegete" he keeps the text without modification ascribing it either to Cyril or to one of the Holy Fathers. This

is the case also with John Dalyati or John Saba known in Arabic as "The divine sheik" in the eighth century. His works are considered to be a source of culture for all the Syrian Orthodox and others despite his conspicuous or hidden affiliation with the church which was considered by the Syrian as Nestorian.

Last but not least, reference should be made to a very well known book about the Syrian monastic life entitled "The three stages of monastic life" ascribed to the Syrian Orthodox saint Philoxenus of Mabbug, whereas the author is in fact the Nestorian monk Joseph Hezia from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century.

Depending on these examples and several others, we can deduce that Syrians, whatever their doctrinal affiliation had been, were united spiritually. They were split in their Orthodoxy but united in "Orthopraxy" which is supposed to mean living the Orthodoxy and practising it. Therefore we would be so grateful if a study seminar on the Syrian heritage could be organized by the foundation of PRO ORIENTE.

### ***Christological Consensus***

We shouldn't be surprised to hear that participants in the First Vienna Consultation 1971 affirmed that Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians had a common faith in Christ. They expressed that in the well known 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 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."

They also stated :

„We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretations 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."

The second confession was stated after the second consultation September 9, 1973 and reads as follows:

"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. Great 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 to it. We recognize the limits of every philosophical and theological attempt to grasp the mystery in concept or express it in words."

Those two confessions were considered to be integrated. The first was theological, emphasizing the ontological being of Jesus Christ who is perfect in his Divinity, perfect in his Humanity ; and the second one was economical stressing the saving action of Jesus Christ and the reflection of this action in us. The two confessions were indispensable

to each other, which signifies that the salvation of man became possible because the Son of God was Incarnate: Our becoming the children of God is limited by the becoming flesh of the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

In the formulation of the first communiqué which was a theological one, there was a clear effort to avoid using the terminology which had been involved in the ancient disputes such as physis, hypostasis and hypostatic union; only the terms agreed upon were used in this communiqué.

The second communiqué, though economical in nature touched upon the long disputed terminologies to show that deep down, they were identical when rightly understood. The communiqué reads:

"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 when he says 'The one nature of God the Incarnate Logos.' - '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.'"

Disputes between the two heritages centered around two basic terms: "hypostasis" and "physis". For Western Catholics, there is a distinction between physis and hypostasis. The latter is the carrier and creator of physis, therefore physis remains a concept until it exists in the hypostasis. In the light of this distinction, it might be said that the Humanity of Christ had no hypostasis of its own to give it an autonomous existence. Ever since the inception of Incarnation it was concurred into the person of the Son who since the beginning of time had the Divine nature. Hence, Chalcedon's definition might be reiterated that Jesus Christ is acknowledge in two natures, the Divine and the Human both concurring into one *prosopon* where the union took place at the very inception of Incarnation.

The Oriental Orthodox side adhered to the position of St. Cyril who didn't distinguish between physis and hypostasis. When speaking of Christ who is one in nature and in hypostasis according to his famous statement the one nature of God the Incarnate Logos.

"This means that the Son of God the Logos, the second person of the Holy Trinity, took the human nature of the virgin Mary so that his Divine nature was united with his human nature in a perfect hypostatic union without commixion, without change without division, without separation."

As a result of the Unity of both natures the Divine and Human inside the virgin's womb, one nature was formed out of both: "The one nature of God the Incarnate Logos". 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".

In this connection, it may also be pointed out that faith remained one in essence despite the differences in terminology. Consequently, participants in the Vienna Consultations admitted that the theological terminologies and formulations through which confessional dogmas were expressed, were for the most part determined by the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of those who formulated them. However historical and cultural changes of today makes it mandatory that a renewed theological mentality be present behind confessional dogmas as affirmed by the Holy Fathers, the first three ecumenical

councils and the first council of Nicaea 325 in particular, whose interpretation of faith was recognized by all churches. The Communiqué of the Second Vienna Consultations 1973 reads: "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 reinterpret in contemporary terms how the Son of God becoming one with us in the Incarnation affects the life of man today."

This position is the result of a deep conviction that great is the Mystery of the Son of God who was incarnate for us and for our salvation, 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 to it.

## Discussions

*Dr Maurice Tadros* (Prof. of New Testament at the Theological Coptic Institute, Egypt) refers to the expression in the paper of Father Khalifé "Was it not possible to accept plurality?" and to a similar idea in the paper of Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba, which is also concerned with the word "plurality". This term is not of any assistance to us, some Churches even refuse it completely. Concerning the Vienna agreement on christology, this was not a matter of plurality; it was rather achieved due to the conformity of two different expressions of the same truth. So it was found that the expression used by the Coptic Orthodox Church was in conformity with the Chalcedonian belief, even though the terms differed.

Father Khalifé is correcting this view on plurality when he says "The two confessions (i. e. of the two Vienna Consultations of 1971 and 1973) were integral; the first was theological and the second dispensational". I suppose these two terms are of better expression whereas "plurality" implies disagreement.

*Mar Bawai Soro* (Assyrian Church) expresses, also on behalf of his Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, his gratitude to PRO ORIENTE and its Standing Committee for having been invited as observers in this regional symposium. This initiative is highly appreciated by the Assyrian Church of the East. Furthermore, the suggestion of Mr Stirnemann of having further consultations of this type, also in other countries including Iraq, is most welcome.

As a second point, I would like to offer my appreciation for what was said in the three other papers about the "plurality of expression". Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba clearly stated that "the disagreement, then, was not concerning dogma but terminology", "with regard to all those anathematized from both sides ... anathemas should be lifted". Archbishop Aram Keshishian made a distinction between the continued teaching and the rejection of certain persons who were considered to stand in the Nestorian or Eutychian traditions. Father Khalifé tried to reconcile the different traditions of our Churches in the one ancient apostolic tradition, as each Church has witnessed to Christ.

I admire the two proposals in the paper of Mar Gregorius. However, I would like to see more sensitivity for the presence of our Church in this process. I suggest making a distinction between certain problems of our history which lay in some teachings and those who promoted these teachings and leaving the judgement on persons to the Lord himself.

*Metropolitan Amba Bishoy* (Damiette, Egypt) thanks Father Khalifé for his hospitality at the Kaslik university and for his paper where he has given us a bird's eye view of the Middle East in the prime of Christianity in very impressive words. If we had lived in that generation with the motives and desires that fill us today the destiny of this region would have been different. It is very rightly said that political factors and pressures effected the relations between our Churches and increased the rift of dissension in the region.

We benefit much from this paper, historically speaking, and it gives a chance for many future studies. May I highlight some points which in my judgement would need further research:

1) The words of St. Cyril "one nature of the Son of God, the Word incarnate" should be more accurately translated from the original expression "mia physis tou theou logou sesarkomene", i.e. the "one incarnate nature of God the Word".

a) "sesarkomene" (nominative, relating to physis) is different from

b) "sesarkomenou" (genitive, relating to logou). It is the nature that is incarnate (a), not the nature of the Word incarnate (b).

Furthermore, "of the Son of God" should be omitted in the translation for the original word is only "of God the Word".

2) Patriarch Epiphanius is described as a "mild Chalcedonian" whereas Patriarch Severus is described as a "tough opponent of Chalcedon". Probably, Father Khalifé did not want to attack St. Severus but just used a literary expression rather than a theological judgement. In the paper I read in the dialogue with the World Association of Reformed Churches in Amsterdam I offered a testimony from great Chalcedonian scholars and professors - among them some Russian professors - who testified that the christological thought of Severus of Antioch was able to bring together quite close the Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian attitudes. So St. Severus won the admiration of the Chalcedonians with his interpretations.

3) I fear that the sentence "Have our saints fathers' all these fifteen past centuries (used) such a degree of abstruseness to each other ...?" could be misunderstood. Not the saints were abstruse but the circumstances did not allow them to make sufficient elucidation. So it was above all the political situation that prevented real dialogue, the emperor having the authority to depose patriarchs.

In another passage he says "The disagreement concentrated on the method of incarnation". This should be changed into "the method of expressing and explaining the incarnation", which would render its sense more accurately.

4) Father Khalifé mentions those who distinguish between the two natures and the two persons (pl. hypostaseis) of Christ and those who believe in the unity of the nature and the person (sg. hypostasis). This comparison is not clear. What is the concept of "person" or "hypostasis"? Does it stand for the person or is it the "nature individuated"? And does the nature have the person with it or not? If the concept of "hypostasis" in Greek implies nature and the person with it, it will be very dangerous because then the existence of two hypostaseis means two Sons and two persons. Thus we would be deifying man, a matter which was rejected in Christianity on the rising of Islam. I would refer this to more theological discussion in the future.

5) As for the Nestorian monks mentioned by Father Khalifé, in fact, we admire very much Isaac the Syrian and "Al Sheikh al Rohani" in our Church. I have an open mind for dialogue with Churches of the Oriental Syrian tradition who sometimes consider Ne-

storian Fathers as their teachers. But we must state that we have not yet reached an agreement. The matter needs some historical studies. I know that "Al Sheikh al Rohani", i. e. Yohanna Saba, was anathematized by a council of the Nestorian Church. I want to emphasize that this means that he was considered to be inclined to the Orthodox thought.

A second point is that there are several persons named Isaac in Syrian history: Mar Isaac of Ninive, Mar Isaac of Raha, Mar Isaac of Antioch etc. Father Khalifé spoke about Mar Isaac of Ninive in his paper, but most of the sayings mentioned are ascribed to Mar Isaac of Antioch. According to some Syrian sources Isaac of Ninive became an Orthodox. So he may represent a common tradition, which does not mean that our Churches accept the teachings in his Nestorianism. After all, there is a need for more historical studies in this area.

*Metropolitan Mar George Saliba* (Mount Lebanon, Syrian Orthodox)

comments on the words of Amba Bishoy on the paper of Father Khalifé. I want to make a clarification concerning the various Isaacs mentioned; each of them had his role and they lived in close times. We distinguish between Yohanna El Deliati (known as Yohanna Saba or Al Sheikh Al Rohani) and a book by Isaac of Ninive on asceticism called "Al Sheikh Al Rohani", which is not a name of a person but of a book.

It was new for me to learn that the Syrians have a famous book on the monastic life called "The Three Classes of monasticism". This is ascribed by the Syrian Orthodox to Saint Lucius Al Mabbug. Actually it is written by the ascetic monk Youssef Nezzaja, a Nestorian who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. "The Three Classes of monasticism" is a chapter in the book of Mar Philoxenus Al Mabbug, the martyr, called "The Way of Perfection" which he wrote at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in 523 AD, before the ordination of Mar Severus. This is one of the most important books to the Syrians. What is ascribed to the monk Youssef Nezzaja is another book he wrote about Mar Evagrius and other saintly ascetics such as Shenouda the Coptic.

*Archbishop Ignace Almeida* (Homs, Syrian Catholic):

The christological fightings and the ensuing anathemas in the 5<sup>th</sup> century did not so much influence the believers in their love for Christ. But it was a tragedy that they resulted in dissensions which were not fully understood by our believers. We should question ourselves how such a believer may understand these meetings and the positive agreement, for which we thank PRO ORIENTE and all its participants and researchers.

*Antoine Tann* (Prof. of philosophy, teacher of Christian thought in the East):

I am thankful to Mar Gregorius for his word that we should dare rewriting history. This means that it is necessary to relinquish some of our places and privileges and stiffness. What is the role of the laity in these meetings? All of us want unity, especially in the East. Some lay people may accuse the clergy of being partially responsible for such dissensions.

In addition to the proposals by Mar Gregorius I suggest that we celebrate Easter together in the East so that we need not be ashamed before others. Instead of being distracted over our disagreements or terminology in the past we can make a unified Personal Status Law for all Christian denominations. This would be very important in cases of marriage, baptism and relations with other Churches.

*Chairman Boulos Matar:* Some additional remarks to the paper of Father Khalifé:

- 1) Up to 451 the Church of Antioch was united. The real dissension started after 518, not 495.
- 2) I do not like the justification that the emperors tried to prevent schisms through violence and persecutions. What did they really try to achieve?
- 3) I do not think our Fathers were unaware of what was going on in the days of Xenon. One of our greatest Syrian Fathers, Jakob Al Baradai, adhered to the views of Xenon. However, this was not a matter of politics which would have been to the disadvantage of dogma. So in rewriting history we should give some dignity to the Church of Antiochia, considering a great number of good initiatives which have existed at all times.
- 4) Father Khalifé states that "... in the past ... there was no distinction between politics and religion". Certainly, politics played an essential role. But the theological concept was quite clear. Our faith has never been given away for the sake of politics.
- 5) I ask Father Khalifé to check the statement "As for the Oriental Orthodox, they remained holding to the situation of St. Cyril who did not distinguish between the nature and the hypostasis" because it seems unreasonable that we depend on Cyril without knowing the meaning of these terms.

*Father Khalifé's answers to the preceding comments:*

- 1) To Amba Bishoy: Father Khalifé agrees with Amba Bishoy in many points. However, it is a historical fact that St. Severus and Philoxenus were tough opponents of Chalcedon. Father Khalifé fully accepts the improvements to the translation of the "mia physis ... sesarkomene", i.e. "the one incarnate nature ...".
- 2) As to the historical issues, i.e. the various Isaacs and their writings or sayings, mentioned by Amba Bishoy and Mar George Saliba: Father Khalifé, a specialist in this field, is not convinced of the historic remarks nor of the scientific identification of the texts given. He suggests organizing a special seminar on this topic, including philological research.
- 3) To Dr. Maurice Tadros about his comment on plurality: I do not preach theological plurality in a sense of dogmatic liberty. We should agree on the basic facts of our faith but we can express these facts differently in different places. This is what I meant with plurality. I approve of a notion of plurality which respects the Christian tradition, the tradition of the Fathers and the great ecumenical councils, which understands it right, believes in it but tries to express this tradition in a new and renewable way today. We cannot speak in one unified language, we have to find the right expressions so that people in all parts of the world understand salvation.

*Ghada Ahdeyem (Syrian Orthodox):* As for the difference of expression and terminology, does this mean cancelling the old terminology? Would interpretation be accepted?

*Father Khalifé:* It is clearly stated in the Vienna communique: "Terminology shall remain as it is but may be given a new interpretation today".

*Sister Najah Nanna (Syrian Orthodox):* I understand from Father Khalifé's paper that the Church of Antioch was heretical in the beginning. Are our Church Fathers heretics then?

If they had been heretics God would not have given them the Holy Spirit. If the Church had been heretical how could it have continued? How did it separate?

I want to emphasize that we are one body in Christ and ask you to see things more from the perspective of the believers. We do not want to have this Church broken up. We do not want to repeat again and again that 1500 years ago this Church had been like this and that Church had been like that. We wish to get united, we wish at East to celebrate the feast together.

*Father Khalifé:* Thank you for your impressive testimony. I want to add some aspects about the knowledge of history.

The knowledge of history in a scientific way is an emancipating knowledge. Certainly, this is not given to every believer or every person responsible for pastoral work. But in all Churches there should be people who work on knowing history in a scientific, emancipated - and I would say - ecumenical way.

Let me give an example which demonstrates that we are burdened with past events as long as we are ignorant of them. In the Maronite liturgy we say "Severus the cursed" - may our Egyptian brethren excuse me for this. This is wrong knowledge but honest to history. So I should read Severus of Antioch, admire him and his love for Christ in spite of the disagreement between my Church and his. We should not write history in a denominational, biased way, we should review everything. I again emphasize the necessity of historical studies in a scientific way, based on original texts, and the necessity of a philological study of language.

*Archbishop Mesrob Krikorian (Armenian Apostolic, Vienna):* Some additional remarks to the concept of plurality and history with regard to the Vienna formula. The Vienna formula is not so much concerned with the notion of plurality or with historical clarification. It is an agreement on the substance of christology but not a new formula. This agreement should have two important consequences: a) the rewriting of history in an unbiased, neutral way and b) above all, the lifting of anathemas. We have several studies and lectures on this topic, including a list of saintly heretics and heretical saints from all sides.

*Chairman Boulos Matar:* We can be quite optimistic. In the past there was not much ecumenical spirit, neither among the Church leaders nor among their believers. But today the people's awareness of ecumenism and their understanding for ecumenical initiatives are growing. They raise their voice for unity, e.g. when they ask for celebrating Easter on the same day. It is very important that we - in the words of Father Khalifé - become emancipated through the proper knowledge of history. It should make us free from prejudice, hatred and dissension. By studying Severus, for example, we may find out that he was not a heretic but a believer and Christian.

As Archbishop Krikorian said there is nothing new in the Vienna formula, it all existed before. I hope that this place, "The University of the Holy Spirit" will become a free platform of proper historical knowledge which confirms that all these Churches are Christian Churches.

Moderator: Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian

Continuation of the Discussions on the Christological consensus of the five Vienna consultations

Chairman Archbishop Krikorian: First some more words about the nature of the Vienna christological agreement. It was an agreement on the substance of christology, of which I want to repeat the main points:

- 1) Our dogmatic foundations are the first three ecumenical councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus)
- 2) We rejected the so-called "Nestorian" and "Eutychian" teachings and positions. This does not imply an attack on the persons Nestorius and Eutyches, only their teachings. This step was necessary because we suspected and offended each other for centuries. The Oriental Orthodox Churches (or non-Chalcedonians) were suspected to be Eutychians or monophysites whereas the Chalcedonians were suspected to be Nestorians. In order to have a neutral and more accurate term, the expression "monophysite" was replaced with "miaphysite" ("mia" implies "one united" and is taken from Cyril's words "mia physis tou theou logou sesarkomene")
- 3) We stated that Christ was perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. In this way the Arian, Nestorian and Eutychian teachings are indirectly rejected: the Arian position which denied the divinity of Christ, and partly also Nestorius in some expressions ascribed to him in which he stated that Christ's divinity came on him with baptism.
- 4) His divinity did not separate from his humanity, not even for a second or the twinkling of an eye. This means that God and man had always been together in Jesus from the beginning. It is very interesting that the Vienna formula takes up the traditional attributes of the council of Chalcedon in order to express the Incarnation - how godhead and manhood came together: without confusion, without any change, without division, without any separation. You can also find these attributes in the writings of St. Cyril and other - for example Syrian - church Fathers.
- 5) Apart from this unofficial consultation there were also official meetings between popes and patriarchs where they took up the christological formula of the first Vienna consultation. Through this it was blessed and indirectly accepted by Church heads and theologians.

Father Samih Raad to Father Khalifé: If you say that the disagreement was only on expressions and terminology but not on the essence of faith, what about these past fifteen centuries (up to the agreement of today) ?

Father Elie Khalifé: We cannot project easily our thoughts and views of today onto history. This history is very regrettable. The East was once the most flourishing Christian area of the world, which was destroyed through christological disputes and other causes. We have to accept history and to try to get a proper knowledge of it. If we continue to know history mythologically and in a biased way we shall remain tied to it and burdened with it. For example, if I write the history of my Maronite Church saying that

it was always right, this is certainly not true. Sometimes history will be against me as a Maronite and sometimes in favour of me also, the same for the Syrian Orthodox etc. The incarnate Word of God saved us by his death and resurrection. This is the truth but the way we look at it or understand it may differ. Regretfully, this theological - not dogmatic - disagreements led to fightings and separations. For fifteen centuries the Chalcedonians fought those believing in the "one incarnate nature ..." whereas the latter attacked the Chalcedonians for believing in Christ's two natures that united in the person of the Son. At the beginning of these disagreements in the fifth century the center of Christianity was in the East, especially in Antioch. The Christian West of that time was concerned with original sin, grace and salvation, not incarnation. No council of the West concentrated on christology whereas this was the main theological issue in the East. Therefore a christological writing such as pope Leo's "Tomus" did not receive much attention except by a few theologians. Later on, the Christian West became more and more important.

Chairman Archbishop Krikorian: PRO ORIENTE has no intention to force anybody to accept this agreement, which is an unofficial agreement. But this consensus could inspire all our Churches to revise and rewrite history in an objective, neutral and ecumenical way. Let us make use of this new chance.

Amba Bishoy: I agree to the way how Father Khalifé explained the Henoticon; this unity declaration of 482 under emperor Zeno was not fruitful. I want to emphasize that both sides, the Chalcedonians and the non-Chalcedonians were not happy with it. It was confined to the christological aspect but did not mention the council of Chalcedon itself.

As to the council of Chalcedon, we have to distinguish two important aspects: a) the theological, i.e. christological aspects and b) the decisions taken by the council - such as depositions and rehabilitations. Patriarch Dioscurus of Alexandria was deposed although he was theologically not faulty whereas the bishops Theodoret of Cyros and Ibas of Edessa were readmitted.

The second council of Constantinople (553) interpreted the dogma of Chalcedon and made a correction concerning the bishops Theodoret and Ibas (by rejecting them and their writings posthumously).

Again a word to St. Severus and his role in the development around Constantinople II. Although Father Khalifé called Severus a tough opponent of Chalcedon it seems that - in the light of Constantinople II - he actually came quite close to it. This is also suggested by the historian Joseph Lebon, who maintained that the teachings of Severus explained Cyril to Chalcedon. St. Severus had introduced a limitation to Cyril's "mia physis ..." and therefore came quite close to Chalcedon (although he rejected the terminology of its definition). So the teaching of St. Severus contributed to a new interpretation of Chalcedon at the Council of Constantinople.

We can see from this development that Chalcedon is a continuous object of interpretation. If a decision was not pleasing to a party, it would be corrected. As in this meeting it has been demanded several times to lift anathemas I would like the decision about the deposition of pope Dioscurus to be corrected.

Mar Athanasios Aphrem: I observed some speakers used the terms "Nestorian Church" or "Nestorians". As far as I know, the official name of this old active Church is "Ita atectul Madel Kha", that means "the old Church of the Orient". I seize the opportunity to



ask his Grace Mar Narsai de Baz for the official name of the Church in the past and in the present.

*Chairman Archbishop Krikorian:* I do not remember anyone using the title Nestorian Church. I myself used the expressions "Nestorian teaching" or "Nestorian position", which has nothing to do with the Church for which we use the name "Assyrian Church" or "Church of the East".

*Metropolitan Mar Narsai De Baz (Church of the East, Lebanon):* Our Church of Babylon, Mesopotamia had been existing 400 years before Nestorius. We take no interest in Nestorius, he was patriarch of Constantinople whereas our patriarch on the see of Babylon was Mar Dadisho. Now the name of our Church in the whole world before and after Nestorius is the "Old Church of the East". In Lebanon we are known by the Name "The Orthodox Assyrian Church of the East". We are very proud of this and we always behave as Orthodox.

*Father Antoine Abi Acar (Maronite, responsible for a Review on the Christian Orient in Paris):* Is there any study project about the procession of the Holy Spirit in the belief of the Old Churches of the Orient?

*Chairman Archbishop Krikorian:* As our discussions are basically concerned with christology, we did not touch on the question of the Holy Spirit or the Filioque. Anyway, I have the impression from dialogues with both Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Churches that this does not constitute a major problem any more.

*Amba Bishoy:* The communique on the five Vienna consultations includes the suggestion of some participants that we hold a seminar on the "Procession of the Holy Spirit" and on the "Immaculate Conception". These topics have not been discussed yet because we are working on "Primacy" at the moment. But this does not mean that the procession of the Holy Spirit has been agreed upon.

*Hanna Filip Mansour (Syrian Orthodox):* A brief note on the Greek word "physis". It has the general meaning "character", even "person". The philosophical sense is that of "substance", which is "natura" in Latin. physis is a Chalcedonian definition. The definition of the Council, the Greek formula "dyo physeis" was necessarily ambiguous because physis has several senses. In reality, both formulas "ek dyo physeon" and "en dyo physeis" are orthodox. In the Greek tradition of the Council they are concurrent with each other. Therefore, both formulas are possible and a union would be possible on that base.

*Father Daou (Maronite):* Thanks to patristic research we come to know the tradition we have forgotten for a long time. But there is still a lot of ignorance of our tradition and history so that we need further research from scholars of both East and West (because in the past there were mainly from the West).

The christological disputes of Chalcecon, including those before and after it, are due to political and cultural reasons. Have the Vienna agreements brought new solutions on the

theological-cultural level? For example, what do words like "humanity", "person", "godhead" mean for us Christians and Moslems in the Arab world?

The Vienna agreement is a great achievement but only one station on a long scientific ecumenical journey. For this it is necessary to go back into tradition and history. Furthermore, the ecumenical movement should be a general movement, not just between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians. It should include all Christians of the East and West, whatever their positions and rituals be. And we have to create a theology that is understood by the people of today, without neglecting tradition.

*Chairman Archbishop Krikorian:* The cultural inheritance will and shall be respected completely, every people shall receive and understand christology in its culture. The importance of cultural background is also emphasized in other ecumenical initiatives, such as the World Council of Churches. For PRO ORIENTE it would go too far to cover all those aspects. Can you, please, clarify what you mean by the extension of the ecumenical movement to all Churches? As to the Churches of the Orient, at the beginning it was psychologically not possible to include the Oriental Catholic communities in the consultations of PRO ORIENTE but now it is done. As PRO ORIENTE is mainly directed towards the Eastern Churches there is not much dialogue with Protestant Churches.

*Father Daou:* The Vienna agreement is one station at which we should not stop. One important step is to correlate theology and culture. We should find Arabic theological expressions for the words "godhead", "humanity", "person" so that they do not remain obscure. As our Fathers in Chalcedon disagreed on expressions derived from other cultures we shall also disagree if we express our faith in words not understood by the Christian people nor by the Moslems with whom we live. So I suggest to the theologians, universities and to PRO ORIENTE that they investigate in that regard.

In our practical ecumenical work we should not distinguish between the Churches. The ecumenical work is a comprehensive work extending to all Churches in the East and West. Therefore, this ecumenical movement, especially we here, should not concentrate on the agreement between Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians because this agreement has its shortcomings. It does not include all the Chalcedonians such as the Maronites.

*Mar Gregorius Ibrahim:* PRO ORIENTE started dialogue with the Orthodox Churches in general. When these Churches decided to start dialogue with the Catholics, the role of PRO ORIENTE ended and it started the dialogue with non-Chalcedonian Churches. So at present PRO ORIENTE is concerned with the non-Chalcedonian Churches but there is no organizational or financial capacity to enter into discussion with other Chalcedonian or with Protestant Churches. Certainly, this concern exists. Father Daou's request seems hardly attainable. There should be other ecumenical organizations in the world to carry out this task of extending dialogue to all Churches.

As to Father Daou's request for a correlation of theology and culture, I would like to add the following. It is true that politics and cultural background had its influence on dogmatic disagreements, which was also stated in the paper of Father Khalifé. However, the disagreement was not political or cultural but on faith. Anyway, I think the impact of politics was reduced since the spreading of the Arabs and Islam. As they gave us their language, also the culture became more unified.

There are still many issues which need to be solved. PRO ORIENTE plans to deal with primacy or the role of the councils of which we non-Chalcedonians only accept the first three.

To the question why the Maronites and other Oriental Catholics are not present: At the last PRO ORIENTE study seminar in Vienna this summer only two members of Oriental Catholic Churches were present. It is a difficult situation. Except for the Maronites, the Oriental Catholic Churches came into existence only very recently. So Rome had to start dialogues with the old Oriental Churches or the Orthodox.

We do approve of universal dialogue but let us start at the local level. If we cannot hold dialogue with each other in the East, how shall we hold it with the West then?

*Father Paul Sayah* (Associate General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)): PRO ORIENTE achieved a phantastic job. But now we have to ask ourselves: What have we done with those agreements to bring them down to the level of our people in the East? I would like to address in particular to Father Daou that we have to take our own responsibility in this part of the world. I think the MECC (Middle East Council of Churches), in which all our Churches have been gathered in the last four years, would be the right platform for these dialogues.

A word to Father Khalifé: I do not think that our Churches are going to disappear. We can be a bit more optimistic, especially if we work together in ecumenism.

*Metropolitan Mar George Saliba* (Syrian Orthodox): The first important aspect in these meetings is that we get to know each other and get closer. The second thing is that we acquire - in the words of Father Khalifé - an emancipating knowledge of history so that we know the reasons that led to our present situation and may find the right medicine. PRO ORIENTE and other ecumenical bodies play a very important role in melting the ice of the past, which will take a long time. We shall pray to God for all those good people working in this field and to give his Churches leaders with upright views. We in the East are convinced that the light of Christ and his gospel which started from here will be consolidated again.

*Mar Gabriel* (Ethiopian-Orthodox): The Vienna christological agreement is expressed in more biblical terminology such as "divinity" and "humanity" and not in Greek terminology which was taken from new-platonism such as "physis", "hypostasis", "prosopon". Also for the future I suggest remaining on this path of more biblical terminology. By the way, it is interesting that the phrase "his divinity did not separate from his humanity ... not even for the twinkling of an eye" in the Vienna agreement is borrowed from a liturgical prayer of the Coptic Ethiopian Orthodox Church. There the phrase "not even for the twinkling of an eye" is repeated every day.

I appreciate this kind of agreement very much. I also appreciate the contributions of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in this respect.

*Alfred Stirnemann*: I would like to explain the constituting features of PRO ORIENTE in order to avoid any misunderstandings. PRO ORIENTE is a) ecumenical and b) non-official. Certainly, these two characteristics also imply some limitations.

a) Ecumenical means dealing with controversial issues that are of importance to the different Church families. This is basically the work of theologians which cannot be do-

ne by PRO ORIENTE. The theology of the third millenary should have significant developments and not just reflect the theology of the fourth and fifth centuries.

b) Non-official implies that PRO ORIENTE is limited in its competence to ask other Churches to accept what we do. On the other hand it is a great advantage that it is non-official because we are more flexible and free to start discussions without having to ask for permission. I am not sure whether the christological formula would have been achieved that easily in an official meeting. In my opinion we should proceed on a non-official basis.

*Amba Bishoy*: I would like to thank His Eminence Abuna Gabriel for his appreciation of our Patriarch Shenouda III.

As to Father Daou's inquiry about the wording of the christological formula. The agreement was made in English so this might be due to the Arabic translation. Perhaps the terms "divinity" and "humanity" should be replaced with "godhead" and "manhood". Such it would be more understandable for ordinary people.

To the remarks of Father Khalifé on history I would like to add the following: If he says that it is not right to look at history from a pure theological perspective I would say that it is also wrong to look at theology from a pure historical perspective.

*Father Khalifé* agrees to this.

*Amba Bishoy*: I think it is dangerous to generalize history, i.e. to project the disagreement about terminology and the difficulties around Chalcedon into earlier periods such as Nicaea. This would imply that the Arian and semi-Arian conflicts were also due to disagreements on terminology and that the Arians and semi-Arians were wronged. I again insist that we should not generalize historical situations and apply them to others but study them separately.

*Chairman Archbishop Krikorian*: The Vienna agreement is an agreement on the substance of christology but we did not and could not carry out the research on terminology.

*Mar Gregorius* explains the further procedure for the work in groups:

The participants are split up into five groups to discuss the three questions below. The aim of the working groups is to hear the voices of all participants. Furthermore they shall provide a basis for the recommendations at the end of the symposium. Each group chooses a moderator and a secretary so that the results may be presented afterwards and be subject to further discussion.

## **IMPACT OF THE COMMON DECLARATIONS ON CHRISTIAN LIFE AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS IN LEBANON, SYRIA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST**

### *The Questions*

1. As churches of the Middle East, do you think we can rediscover our common Christian Traditions on the basis of the agreements at the five Vienna Consultations?
2. In the present situation of emigration of Christians, political tensions, refugees and economic uncertainties, can our Churches provide a sense of unity and security to the people?
3. In the multi-religious context (Islam, Christianity, Judaism, ...) and in a situation of heavy Western cultural influence in the Middle East, what shall be the ways of Christian witnessing today in our region?

### *First Working Group*

*Dr. Henry Cremona*

#### *Answer to the First Question:*

What is most important in the communiqué of the first Vienna consultations. Sept 7-12, 1971, is its concentration, in relation to the Christological issue, on the topic of Incarnation which helped overlook previous terminologies and interpretations bringing these churches closer to one another and having them agreed on one confessional essence. Depending upon the basis of this faith, we can proceed on the way of discovering the common points of unification between us, and find ourselves obliged to:

1. Abandon the old controversy and adopt a confessional faith in Jesus the Incarnate.
2. Respect all traditions and liturgies of others, considering them to be the expressions of one faith.
3. Call upon each church to go back to the time when churches were still united in order to discover the common traditions in that historical era. This would impel us to recognize plurality of traditions and interpretations.
4. It would be necessary to get to know one another and be ready to learn from the other and be open to the other. It's only when this is achieved that Unity could be fulfilled.
5. In order to preserve the essence of this agreement, it is incumbent on us to accept the baptism of each other and participate in the Liturgies of one another forgetting what distinguishes us, meeting as faithful Christians witnessing to our Unity before others.
6. Endeavour to pray together keeping away from all political contexts; because it's only through prayers that problems could be solved ; and the reason why we are still separa-

ted lies in our inability to pray together. Furthermore it has become an urgent necessity that a unified date for Easter be determined.

#### *Answer to the Second Question:*

Ever since the fall of Constantinople to Mohammad Al Fateh in 1453 the whole region has been unstable for we have nothing left of either Antioch or Edessa, Nisibis, Mardin, Cilicia or Armenia.

A 100 years ago we had Christian presence and power which actually meant witnessing ; Emigration in fact means the death of Christian in the Orient.

The sole security of our existence today is the church. The more aware and strong the church is in her confessional and ecclesiastic action, the stronger people will be. For instance any reference by a church authority to frustration of Christians would form a good and a direct cause to encourage emigration.

The strength and security of our brethren in the Orient depend on the strength and security of Christianity in Lebanon. It goes without saying that the weakness of the church and the failure to witness to Jesus Christ is the source of decline in the presence of Christian people in Lebanon and in the Orient. Therefore the priest shall have to be a witness to Christ and a martyr.

The more such priests we can have, the more attached to the church the people will be.

#### *Answer to the Third Question*

In terms of the means of witnessing, we have already distinguished two levels

1. The individual level
2. Church level

In order that we be witnesses to Christ we shall have to:

1. Abide by our Christian faith as individuals and as a community truly and honestly.
2. Overcome, through love, all the obstacles that might encounter us.
3. Estimate and respect whatever might be done by others and whatever could be of benefit for the future of man.
4. Bear witness to our sonship to God and live this relation with joy.
5. Live a life of compassion as true Christians that the world may believe.
6. Witness to our Christian Unity by participating and supporting church unifying activities.
7. Propagate a sense of true and voluntary service in us and in our children so that they can see your good work and glorify your father in heaven.
8. Defend our churches and take care of our children by teaching them the truths of faith, the Gospel and church history.
9. Be as meek as doves and as wise and cautious as serpents in Lebanon and in the East because we stand as a militant church in the East.
10. We have to present Jesus to the other in a positive way since we have no more to do with politics or with Educational Institutes in Lebanon and in the Orient as well. Our simple people are waiting for mercy. Shall we meet their needs ?

## *Second Working Group*

*Haytham Tahan*

### *Minutes*

The second communiqué issued by PRO ORIENTE Sept. 1973 was reviewed and the points included in it were discussed and confirmed: A recommendation was proposed to have these communiqués translated into more than one official language; and to encourage church heads to undertake, wherever they are, to explain and elucidate the implications of these communiqués in order that they be understood by the faithful.

### *Answer to the First Question*

Yes we can rediscover our common Christian traditions on the basis of our common background (common Apostolic tradition, the Creed of faith approved by the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople and the PRO ORIENTE communiqués). All participants felt that there was a great progress in terms of the ecumenical process and Unity. However, they all wished that this would be translated practically through the participation in spiritual and social services so that all the faithful would be moved by this spirit and help transmit it to others. With the understanding that regional organizations, the MECC in particular, which includes all church families in the region, can be the right body to convey this information to them.

### *Answer to the Second Question*

Participants admitted the presence of political tension and economic crises in the region which created a feeling of insecurity about the future among Christian people and drove them to leave the country of their fathers and forefathers.

All churches consider this present condition of emigration a great loss in the long run. Participants called upon the churches of the region to encourage their members to stick to their land and endeavor to overcome political tensions and economic crises by cooperating seriously with one another with the aim of alleviating the suffering resulting thereof.

### *Answer to the Third Question*

After reviewing and discussing question no. 3 we were convinced that we, Christians of the region are open to others and our relation with them is characterized by the love of Christ. We do reject all forms of injustice to others. We have had relations with Moslems for ages; and we are eager to cooperate with the other religions in order to reach a harmonious interaction between us. We are from the Orient and we have never been aliens. Our common values form a sound basis for creating the new Oriental Man. In relation to the western culture, we are ready to choose what is positive and enriching but reluctant to accept what is negative and harmful. We are determined to stick to our land, and traditions and to face challenges. Our Christian witness shall always be the service of

others with love and the propagation of active culture. We shall always have faith in the salvation of Christ and the brotherhood of men.

## *Third Working Group*

*Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian*

### *Answer to the First Question*

#### *Participant 1:*

The answer to the first question is a positive one. A consensus has been reached concerning the communiqué, what is important is the practical application of the logical concepts in our everyday life. What matters and is of great concern to the faithful is the application and not the discussion.

#### *Participant 2:*

- It's mandatory that we understand the terminology in order to understand ourselves.
- Common thoughts are the result of the mutual understanding of what is common between us.
- It's through the unified interpretation of ancient terminology that we arrive at the practical application of our faith.
- Adherence to my faith makes me open to the faith of others; and change of terminologies comes after convictions.

#### *Participant 3:*

- Each church is proud of her tradition.
- Ambiguity of texts causes divergence.
- The text agreed upon was so positive.
- Lifting of anathemata was a good start.
- Positiveness expresses our love, as churches, to one another

#### *Participant 4:*

We need a change in teaching in Catholic churches. We used to be taught that there were some Oriental Churches which were so far away from the true faith due to our presence here is not enough to show that we have effectively the same faith.

#### *Participant 5:*

What necessitates the lifting of Anathemata?

The lifting of Anathemata aims at achieving a rapprochement, but this doesn't imply that the other side is obliged to follow the teachings of the other.

#### *Participant 6:*

We must be secured that we have to change our teaching and rewrite history, but on the other hand the mystery of God is so wide and so deep. However, diversity is not against tradition.

*Participant 7:*

Churches have come to agreement concerning christology, yet in reality Catholic churches consider Oriental Churches heretic. What is the outcome of these meetings? Why don't we delegate members from all churches to start establishing new teachings?

*Participant 8:*

Agreement on the text has enabled us to get rid of misleading and preconceived thought. We are obliged to adopt one teaching because our faith is one. Teaching is not faith but the manifestation of faith.

*Participant 9:*

We have different formulations of one reality, of one teaching (same mystery of God) and one formulation does not exclude the other.

- We have not the ambition to solve the problem of terminology. It is a work which should be done in the future.
- We have to avoid, in this case words: diversity or plurality. They are acceptable only if we mean different experiences.

*Participant 10:*

We can discover our common church traditions, provided that we look for them in a spirit of humbleness and good will? We are truly indebted to the foundation of PRO ORIENTE for succeeding in bringing these churches together.

However, we may say that it's Vatican 2 which encouraged the foundation to search for means to fulfil Christ's will that " we may be one ".

- Plurality will be tolerated if it is an expression of faith, but refuted as an expression of dogmas, what is significant is to express our faith in Christ and not to be hindered by terminologies.

Only through modesty and good will that future topics can henceforth be dealt with by PRO ORIENTE. Terminologies shall never deter us from expressing our faith.

- For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life..
- Prayer is most important ; because Christian Unity is a gift which we are not yet worthy of attaining.

*Answer to the Second Question*

*Participant 1:*

It's through repentance that Christians can stand in solidarity with others.

- Emigration of Christians is the outcome of political and economic circumstances.
- The solution of the problem of emigration can be reached by the revival and testimony of the church.
- The church is not requested to provide material security.
- A dialogue of love is more important than a dogmatic one.
- The renewal of spiritual life in churches is the beginning of a feeling of Unity and security.

*Participant 2:*

Mother Theresa's exemplary work in India and her ability to gather people around her through her individual effort were cited as a good model. How great could churches work be if they doubled social and charity activities. On the other hand solidarity between churches, ( big and small), forms a good guarantee of a better future.

Finally: the church can have a more positive role through teaching and providing assistance and good opportunities for people.

*Answer to the Third Question*

We didn't have enough time to answer the third question.

*Fourth Working Group*

*Ghada Abdayem*

*Answer to the First Question*

A. Prior to the schism, each church used to have her own local synod. Then there was a regional synod for churches of the region to be followed later on by an ecumenical synod that embraced all churches.

B. The pattern of the early church before the schism is acceptable provided that:

1. A comprehensive study of the subject be done especially of the first three centuries.
2. Synods be convened away from the temporal authority in order that decisions be taken in a liberal atmosphere emanating from the church itself.
3. Regions such as America and Australia be included on the church map.

It is already agreed upon that old sees are to keep their traditional status. Oriental Orthodox churches shall not recognize the convention of an ecumenical synod in which other churches have the majority of votes especially at the beginning of the Unity. A balanced representation of different traditions is due.

*Answer to the Second Question*

After the realization of Unity, Antioch may have one patriarch ; and each church will maintain its own Traditions. Bishops and clergies will be ordained from among the members of each church so that the heritage of each church (Syrian, Byzantine, Armenian) may be preserved.

*Answer to the Third Question*

Has already been implied in the first and second answers.

## *Fifth Working Group*

*Ephrem Karim*

### *Answer to the First Question*

The model of the undivided church of the early centuries, the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church before the schism of 451 after Chalcedon, was discussed in our group. Theoretically and practically, we could consider this model to be the ideal one as diverse traditions, backgrounds and languages were embraced in one communion; in addition to the fact that liturgies and hierarchies never developed at the time as it is the case today. This model cannot be acceptable in our modern time because of the structure of the church and the ethnological, national and traditional factors that characterize each church; bearing in mind the diffusion of the four early apostolic sees. All these factors impel us to suppose that though this model is an ideal one, yet it cannot be acceptable by the church of the twentieth century. Our image of this old model shall always be derived from the conception of the communion that had united the children of the Apostolic Sees with the goal of having One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

### *Answer to the Second Question*

Participants of our group appreciated the serious efforts made by the representatives of the Catholic and Coptic churches in setting these principles that would help direct the church towards the search for a complete Unity. In addition to the attached protocol the rest of the principles emphasize two truths that have to be mentioned.

1. We have reached the stage that would enable us to accept each other proving thus that the ecumenical work has started to bear fruit through our cooperation in different fields of service, otherwise the representatives of these two churches wouldn't have thought of proposing these principles which presuppose that we do share the same faith in the one Lord whose members we become through the same baptism.
2. The mere use of the clause "When Unity is achieved", means that the two churches have full convictions that this Unity will definitely be realized.

Never before have these two churches ever reflected such a possibility. As a group, we see that mutual respect of traditions of all churches is due. The richness of these traditions would find a clear and legitimate expression for the enrichment of all. Some of the participants found that terms used in formulating these principles might be very beneficial for our five Antiochene churches that possess the same historical, liturgical and patristic roots.

With certain additions to the terminology used in these principles, we may speak of a Unity of an Antiochene church, with due respect to the plurality of traditions that have respectively characterized our churches after the schism.

We share the same priesthood and have the same prayer and we request a communion in all sacraments including the sacrament of the Eucharist with the understanding that a Unity in Mass Media would help us find new aspects that urge us to fulfill our true communion.

We have modestly admitted that all churches have to make concessions and offer sacrifices in order to pave the way for rapprochement with other churches.

Some participants cited the council of the Catholic patriarchs as an example of such a step, and others spoke of the rapprochement manifested in the common declaration made by the fathers of the two churches, the Syrian Orthodox church and the Greek Orthodox church, and put in force directly after being signed by H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and H.H. Ignatius IV Hazim. The declaration was Issued in the name of the two churches that have today one Antiochene see and one Antiochene synod.

### *Answer to the Third Question*

One of the participants in our group cited St. Augustine's statement as an expression of the proposed Unity, "Unity in convictions; freedom in uncertainties; love in all" which signifies Unity in the Lord's spirit; plurality in heritages and love that encompasses all. Participants stressed the importance of the role of the Holy spirit in the future Unity. Others requested the unification of texts of prayers which would be one way of achieving our long expected Unity.

Concerning the form of Unity envisaged between churches of the Orient in the future, the relation between uniate churches through the council of Catholic patriarchs was proposed as an example.

Two models of Unity were envisaged:

1. The conciliar model in which each church can retain her own structure and heritage and have communion with the rest of churches through a council that includes the patriarchs of these churches as equals.
2. The model proposed between the Coptic and Catholic churches that advocates the union of all churches in one church provided that this be achieved gradually.

The desire to have this Unity attained as soon possible was remarkable in our group. However, the conception of such Unity differed according to the background of each. Some expressed the necessity for one strong church with one leadership and others found it more urgent to concentrate upon issues that deal with everyday life of people such as Easter, Christmas and the unification of the texts of common prayers.

There was a general agreement on the necessity for continuous praying for this Unity, which is the gift of God bestowed on us when prayed for earnestly and wholeheartedly, in order that a unified witness to the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be manifested to the world.

## *Saturday Afternoon - Fourth working session*

*Moderator:* Archbishop Mar Gregorios

### *Reports of the five working groups*

#### Report of the first working group by Dr. Henry Cremona

1. The First Vienna communiqué on the Christological faith, on the Incarnation helped to overcome the previous disputes and brought the Churches close together in agreement

on the principles of faith. Taking this faith as starting point we can proceed to discover the things that unite us and the things we have in common. Therefore we should

- a) Not return to the past arguments.
- b) Respect all traditions and liturgies of the others and consider them an expression of the one faith.
- c) Look back at the time when all Churches were united in order to discover the common traditions at that historic period. This necessitates that we accept plurality of traditions and the ways of expressing them.
- d) Get to know each other, learn from each other and be open to others.
- e) Accept the baptism of each other, participate in the liturgies of each other, forget anything that distinguishes us and meet as Christian believers witnessing our unity before others.
- f) Try to pray together away from any political factors; if we are still separate this is due to our failure to pray together.

2. Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 A.D. the whole area has been in a critical situation. We have no more of Antioch, Raha, Nusaybin (Nisibis), Cilicia or Armenia. One hundred years ago we still had human presence in those areas. Emigration is a sure death for Christianity in the East. The only security for us to continue in existence is the pastoral work. The more pastoral care the Church provides and the more powerful it is in its ecclesiastical function of faith and hope, the more powerful Christians will be. So, any words by the Church authority about frustration of Christians would be a direct cause for emigration. The more powerful and undisturbed Christianity is in Lebanon, the more power it will give to the Christians in the East. On the other hand, the weakness of the Church and its failure to witness the living Christ will be the cause of decrease of the Christians in Lebanon and in the East. Thus, a priest should be a witness and a martyr. The more he is so the more the Christians will be attached to his Church and the more they will be strong.

3. With regard to Christian witnessing we distinguish between two levels: the individual level and the Church level. Witnessing to Christ on both levels shall be:

- a) that we live - as individuals or communities - our Christian faith truly and honestly and give this testimony from the heart,
- b) that we overcome by love whatever problems may face us,
- c) that we live in love as Christians as the Lord said, "By this the world will know that you are my disciples if you love each other",
- d) that we appreciate what the others do and what helps human growth,
- e) that we witness to our Christian unity, participate in and encourage any actions aiming at the Church unity,
- f) that we promote within us and within our children the spirit of true free service in order that the others see our good works and glorify our Lord in the heavens,
- g) that we safeguard our Churches and our children and teach them the doctrines of faith, the gospel and the Church history,
- h) that we make others know Christ in a positive way, especially that we have no control over politics nor over educational institutions and arts in Lebanon and the Orient.

#### Report of the second working group by Haytham Tahan

The participants dealt with the second communiqué of PRO ORIENTE issued in September 1973. Being convinced of its contents they suggested and recommended that the communiqués be issued in more than one official language provided that spiritual leaders take over the task of interpreting these communiqués so that the common believers may understand them.

1. We can rediscover our Christian tradition through the common ecumenical tradition, the Creed declared by the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople and the declarations of PRO ORIENTE. All those present felt that ecumenism is in progress. We hope that all participants take part actively in this process so that all believers become aware of this ecumenical spirit and also adopt it. Regional organizations like the Middle east Council of Churches (MECC) are the competent institutions for conveying the necessary knowledge to the believers.

2. Political tensions and economic straits in the region created a feeling of insecurity among the Christians and led to the emigration of many. All Churches consider this a great loss in the long run. Therefore, we appeal to the Churches in this region to encourage their people to be steadfast and to try to limit the consequences of the political and economic difficulties through intensive cooperation.

3. We are convinced that we, the Christians, in this region are open-minded towards others. We treat the Moslems in the love of Christ. Certainly, we do not accept the oppression of any of us. We wish to emphasize our role in our countries without being criticized. Furthermore, we want to cooperate with the other religions and attain harmony and interaction with them for we are all from the Orient. We Christians are not foreigners, we try to build together with the others the new individual of the Orient. We insist on keeping our land and heritage and on holding out against challenges. Our Christian testimony is one and it is to the service of love and brotherhood. As for the Western culture, we are ready to take over its positive aspects.

#### Report of the third working group by Archbishop Krikorian

We could only treat the first two questions.

1. We agreed in discovering the ancient common tradition in the Vienna formula. Some additional notes about this acceptance:

- a) The results should be conveyed to the believers in the seminaries and through the media.
- b) The method of teaching and the teaching books, especially those on history, shall be changed.
- c) The lifting of anathemata is a good way to strengthen the unity among the different Churches.
- d) Plurality or diversity: some participants prefer the latter term in connection with the christological formula. It is acceptable that we need different expressions for the same mystery of the Incarnation.
- e) In the theological literature different christological views and interpretations dominate whereas in our liturgies or liturgical traditions we discovered our common Christian Creed and christology.

2. Our Churches can offer a feeling of unity and security especially in preaching and in charity work. The Churches shall co-operate in their charity work. They shall practise solidarity with the needy, the refugees and the sick. Apart from charity activities the renewal of spiritual life could offer a feeling of security for the Christians.

#### Report of the fourth group by Ghada Abdeyem

1. The discussion resulted in the following points:

- a) First of all, we should concentrate on the bible, secondly on the tradition conforming with the bible.
- b) Some participants think that the difficulties on the way to unity are due to the Church leaders because the faith of the people is one, others asserted the opposite.
- c) Any solutions suggested are of no effect unless they are conveyed to the people. Then the obstacles resulting from the long dissension may be removed.
- d) Discussion is the only means to solve the problems concerning terminology, different views or ignorance of historical facts. There should be a commission for discussion within the one Church.
- e) The basis for any positive results is the conviction of ecumenical work. Secondly, there should be sound knowledge because we are ignorant of each other. Thirdly, there should be the will for change and rapprochement.
- f) Different views should be acceptable.
- g) There should be an inquiry about the cause for the absence of the Catholic Oriental Churches from dialogues.
- h) The christological formula is an excellent text but not suitable for the people, it should be in more simple words.
- i) Why is this matter discussed so late, 23 years after this communiqué was issued ?
- j) We were delighted that the communiqué does not contain any of the old theological terminology which was the subject of disagreement but used only acceptable expressions.
- k) The lifting of anathemata done only in unofficial way does not achieve security and unity in the modern community.
- l) The second communiqué contained the words, "It has proved that what seems a correct expression is misinterpreted ... " Does it mean that each generation will change the expressions and terminology of the preceding generation? If some expressions are misunderstood the solution will not be to cancel them but to elucidate them in simple words acceptable to all people. When a certain essential fact is expressed in different ways it will be reasonable that each party explains to the other what is implied in the expression so as to reach a mutual agreement. So, old expressions should not be cancelled but be understood as enriching theology.

Some corrections to the translation of the second Vienna communiqué:

- 1) p. 88, lines 12 and 13 in the second paragraph, the words "taking into consideration that God's body did not turn into God" shall be replaced by "though it is God's body it did not turn into godhead".
- 2) p. 88, lines 15 and 16, third paragraph, the words "For us who hold to the Western tradition we consider the expression (i.e. the one nature of Christ) is misleading because it implies denial of Christ's humanity" shall be replaced by "For those who follow the

Western tradition we consider that hearing of the one nature of Christ might be misunderstood as denial of Christ's humanity".

3) p. 89, line 9, fourth paragraph, the phrase "Those disdain the Church" shall become "those rejected by the Church".

4) p. 89, line 6, fourth paragraph, the words "How the Son of God became one with us through the Incarnation, and this has its effect on the life of the contemporary man" shall be changed into "How the Son of God by being one with us through the Incarnation has affected the life of the contemporary man".

5) p. 89, line 9, the phrase "by which it attacked one side" shall become "by which the one side was attacked". Furthermore, the expression "We are inclined to the opinion that it has become necessary ... " shall be replaced by "We are inclined to the opinion that it is not necessary ... ".

6) p. 89, line 27, third paragraph, the word "unanimity" shall become "unanimously".

2. The christological agreement of Vienna was medicine for many old wounds as most of the conflicts in the Middle East had been due to the Chalcedonian schism that lasted for more than fifteen centuries. Unity of the Churches helps to provide care and social solidarity so that the Christians in the Middle East feel less need to emigrate.

3. The disagreement on the nature of the Lord Christ gave optimism to the other religions. Therefore, the agreement on Christology represents a turning point in the history of Christian witnessing in a region encompassing various religions because now we can talk in one way about the Incarnation. Celebrating Easter together on the same day would be a great sign of our common witnessing.

#### Report of the fifth group by Ephrem Karim

1. The rediscovery of our common Christian tradition in the light of the five Vienna consultations requires from all of us to confess our fault of not understanding each other and to repent for that. It requires also that we forgive each other, and this repentance will bring us again to submit to the testimony of the Holy Bible. From this basis we proceed to build a new concept for our new life in which we share the sacraments of the one Church of Christ. As for the meaning of tradition we distinguished between common apostolic traditions and other traditions acquired by time, the latter being subject to review.

2. a) All Churches should have one common attitude towards emigration. Some participants pointed at the fact that some Western Churches benefit from their role of helping refugees and emigrants and manipulate the children of the local Churches. An example of this is Ethiopia.

b) Local Churches should cooperate in social programs to assist in the settlement of the believers.

c) Churches should cooperate in establishing societies that will be concerned with receiving emigrants and refugees in the countries to which they emigrated and helping them adapt themselves to their new societies.

d) One important step to spread awareness of unity among the believers would be to celebrate the feasts on the same days.

e) There were different views regarding the attitude of the Church towards politics. Some of the participants were of the opinion that the Church should not interfere with



politics. Others said that the Church plays an effective role in directing the believer to the service of the country.

3. We observed that there is a great ignorance of Christianity and Christians on part of the other religions. Our testimony today is to live our faith in trust and faithfulness. We suggest that we make use of the common factors between Christianity and other religions for the service of humanity. We should try to spread our Eastern heritage and culture besides taking what is suitable of the Arab culture.

#### *Plenary discussion on the results of the working groups*

*Metropolitan George Saliba* (Syrian Orthodox): The main issue is the Christian presence in the Orient. If the Church, and especially its clergy, is not aware of its duty to be a good example we shall be contributing to evacuating this region from its Christian people. We should not go on mourning over those who have emigrated or try to make them return. We should rather protect those who are still here. Anyway, emigration is not always successful. We shall not leave behind our heritage. We all shall cooperate - with our modest capabilities - to keep our children from emigration so that Christ is witnessed in the Orient. I hope that after 100 years no one will cry over the remains of these countries as we are crying over the countries we have already left.

*Amba Bishoy*: We, the fourth group, did not mean to criticize the present translation of the Vienna consultation communiqués in our report. But we felt it necessary to correct some words which have the opposite meaning as the original text or are not clear. These corrections should be observed in the following editions. However, we appreciate the great effort made in the translation because translation is a theological work not only a pure linguistic work.

As the time to prepare the reports was rather limited not all the questions could be answered. I want to add a few words:

1) Some of the statements included represent the views of individual participants, not of the whole group, for example, the statement that lifting anathemas unofficially does not achieve security among the Churches. After a theological agreement on christology the Greek Orthodox Churches and our Oriental Orthodox Churches agreed that anathemas should be lifted mutually. So there should be no more anathemas by one Church of the fathers of another Church in the liturgy. This is the solution reached by us.

2) Our report made it clear that the christological agreement of Vienna has brought very much hope among the people and the clergy of our Churches in this region. They feel no more the bitterness of the bloody conflicts that resulted from the Chalcedonian schism and they began to talk with each other in a better way. Furthermore, the common language we have found in order to speak about the Incarnation makes our witnessing more powerful. It would even become more powerful if we celebrated the feasts on the same days.

3) I agree with Mar Gregorius Ibrahim that we should find a new language for our theological books and for the teaching in our seminaries in order to avoid a language that reflects the old dissension. What does this change of language mean in relation to Nestorius? Shall it be to his advantage? Or shall it reveal his real teachings so that the people may understand why we refuse him?

*Bishop Boulos Matar* (Maronite): I was very happy to attend the meeting in Vienna where all Churches of one Syrian tradition from the Middle East to India met for the first time after 1500 years. It is important that we get to know each other.

Growing up as a Maronite my Church did not tell me anything about any other Christian Church; not even at the Jesuit University I was taught anything about any other Oriental Church. Through this kind of meetings old wounds are being healed so that it is the more deplorable that the number of participants is not so high as we hoped.

It is historic what is going on, we are rediscovering our common history. We shall put the achievements of the Vienna consultations into effect: in teaching the clergy and in writing a book on the Christian doctrine which no one of us has written so far. In Syria the state wrote a book on Christian doctrine!

The Syrian Church in its various branches has the same faith as the Coptic Church or the Armenians. We can unite in spite of the Arab saying "If ten Christians meet, they will have eleven different views".

As for emigration I would like to add the following: Our presence in the Orient is not only important for the salvation of Christians but of the Orient itself. There is a lot of pain, oppression and underdevelopment, and we shall give a helping hand to all people. Furthermore, we shall play an important role in re-forming the new people in the Arab region in spite of all the difficulties we experience. We shall work for the realization of human rights. Together with our Moslem brothers we should try to create a new civilization. And our Christian witnessing shall be love.

*Mar Gregorius Ibrahim*: As for the question on Nestorius raised by Amba Bishoy. The Syrian Orthodox Church has the same faith as the Coptic Church. When I mentioned Nestorius, I was speaking about liturgical concepts in our books. In adherence to the verse "Bless and so not curse" I suggested that the liturgical books should be cleansed of hard words.

With regard to the Assyrian Church we Syrian Orthodox wish to make a distinction between the people of that Church, who never have had any relation with that person Nestorius, and between the heresy of Nestorius which exists today. Dialogues are now being held to lift the burden put on the shoulders of this Church by history to which we also participated.

The heresy of Nestorius has no existence on our liturgical books; in our daily prayers we anathematize and curse Nestorius and the sister Assyrian Church with which we are holding dialogue. I hope the dialogue will soon achieve some positive results so that we make the Assyrian Church feel like a real sister Church to the Churches of Syria or the other Churches of the same faith.

*Amba Bishoy*: Our Coptic Church has never anathematized anybody in any of its prayers. Our patriarchs are known for resisting theological deviations but they never expressed this in curses during prayer. If other Churches which have this practice would like to change it we have no objection. But the danger of a too sudden change shall be considered. The people might think that you changed your theological opinion about a person that has been anathematized in the prayers for centuries. Before putting such a change into effect you should make a balance by providing theological teaching so that the people know whose teaching is right and whose is wrong. In our Church we have

books that are read - not prayed - during mass and which inform about anathematized persons and their faults.

As for the Assyrian Church they consider Nestorius and Theodore (of Mopsuestia) as saints. They mention them in their prayers among the saints but they curse Cyril and Severus, which is well known by the Syrian fathers. This matter needs a solution. The solution offered by the Assyrian Church is that their Oriental heritage is much older than Nestorius and that they had their own fathers whose theological views were different from that of Nestorius. Although they sympathized with Nestorius and other fathers and considered them to have been treated unjustly they can express their theology in a way that enables them to come to an understanding with other Churches. Hence, we can agree first on christology and incarnation. Then they can return to their original beliefs and give up Nestorius so that they might not be held responsible for his sins and teachings. They may also forget those other fathers with whom they sympathized. Then we can also come to an understanding concerning their curses against Cyril and Severus. One of the Assyrian metropolitans seemed to express this morning that they would be prepared to forget those fathers with whom they once sympathized.

*Mar Gregorios:* In 518 AD the Christians in Antioch were divided so that from then on there have always been two patriarchs. All these intellectual tensions also appeared in our liturgical books. Now, with all this openness, the dialogues and all the declarations signed, we should think about lifting anathema. This does not mean that we confirm an old heresy or an existing one. But our liturgical books should strongly emphasize mutual Christian love.

*Bishop Boulos Paulos:* I want to emphasize that we love the unofficial but brotherly dialogue between the Syrian Churches and the Assyrian Church of the East. Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople, what have they got to do with him? They lived outside the Roman empire, far away, and preached the gospel in India and China. This brotherly dialogue is certainly not at the expense of the truth, love will open our eyes so that we can discover the truth.

*Mar Bawai Soro (Assyrian):* First, I would like to thank PRO ORIENTE for inviting the Assyrian Church as observers. I would also like to say thank you for the Christian love and brotherly friendship with which you talk about the Assyrian Church, especially to His Grace Amba Bishoy and His Grace Bishop Matar.

Some of us think that there are theological issues which separate us but we are still optimistic that we will find a way to show that we share the same faith even though we express this apostolic faith in various reasonable and acceptable ways.

Amba Bishoy is right that we mention the names of Nestorius and Theodore in our liturgy a few times per year. Still fewer times, perhaps two or three times a year, we mention the anathemata imposed by our fathers on some fathers of the Syrian and Coptic Churches. However, this subject was studied by some synods, the anathemata will be lifted and prayers are given so that these Churches be released from these anathemata.

We are a small divided church, only one third of us living in Iraq, the rest being dispersed all over the world. We try to keep the Christian faith in this region but we cannot keep it alone. Our Christian life depends on our ecumenical relations.

*Chairman Krikorian:* We appreciate the great work done by this Church for the heritage, especially for the translations from Greek into the Syrian and Arab languages. I am optimistic that these dialogue will lead to positive results. We have to witness together for the sake of our existence and continual presence in this region.

*Sister Najah:* You are repeatedly returning to Nestorius but I think it is much more important to concentrate on "today's heresies" and problems. One such significant problem is emigration. Our children face a lot of hardships, e.g. at school. I ask the Churches to help its people, especially the youth, if you want to keep them in the Orient.

*Chairman Krikorian:* There are historical factors which have their impacts on our Churches and on relationships with each other. Dealing with this subject is necessary in order to enable the Assyrian Church to return to the other Churches after being separate.

*Bishop Matar:* Certainly, the people are our main concern. In Lebanon, some people are really suffering poverty as a result of the civil war. If we unite, rich and poor, the Church and its children, we shall be able to overcome the difficult situation. Our country is still a developing country and we have to practise solidarity and help our people.

*Chairman Krikorian:* In fact, it is not the time now to talk about Nestorius but to concentrate on the present situation and on the three questions that were dealt with in the group reports. Emigration is a significant problem, especially for the Syrian Church, which has lost many of its original places in Syria, Lebanon and Mesopotamia.

- 1) How can we - at least partly - repair the damage already done? How can we save the cultural heritage, also the material heritage?
- 2) We should intensify our pastoral work so that people may feel more at home in their original country.

*Mar Gregorius Ibrahim:* It is true that especially the Syrian Church suffered from the impacts of emigration, in particular in Mesopotamia where we had lived in monasteries for centuries. The Syrian Church feels its responsibility for the last remnants in the East. We repeatedly emphasized that emigration is not the solution for our problems but things have developed differently. In all our dioceses in South America, North America, Central Europe and Sweden we try to keep the Syrian language as far as possible. All the Churches should cooperate so that we will be able to witness Christ in this region.

*Amba Bishoy:* The Vienna agreement was a means of rapprochement between the Churches. Now they can speak in one language about the incarnation, in this way we shall also be able to solve other problems. It is important that dialogues of this kind are conducted by specialized persons and researchers in order to yield the desired fruits.

It was unjustly criticized by Sister Najah that we touched on the person of Nestorius because it was necessary within this context. It is true that Nestorius died a long time ago but there are still thousands of people who defend his teaching, some of whom live among us in the Middle East in the Assyrian Church. We began a dialogue on this subject and we are aware that Nestorius died as a person but not his teaching. I want to remind you all of the fact that the Vienna agreement was achieved on condition that we rejected the teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches because one party saw the other as

Nestorian or Eutychian. Therefore, it was necessary to have these clarifications with regard to Nestorius.

*Abuna Gabriel* (Ethiopia): I think it is a great miracle that after 1500 years of controversy we had official consultations between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Now we also have an agreement on christology between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches through the Vienna unofficial consultations. This ecumenical spirit is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Again, I would like to emphasize the importance of using simple, biblical terminology in those agreements. Thus it may also be understood by our people so that they may unite in Jesus Christ.

*Macarius Jabbour* (Aleppo Monastery): I wonder and cannot understand why the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Syrian Orthodox Churches are still angry with Nestorius. If St. Cyril was on the left and Nestorius on the right we shall not be angry with Nestorius. In our theological discourse today we can call St. Cyril's views - christologically speaking - an "upper theology". He used it to fight against Arianism and new-platonism. At the Council of Chalcedon the defense line changed because they could no understand St. Cyril. His Church became non-Chalcedonian.

Nestorius, on the other hand, talked about the incarnation "from below", being afraid of Sabellianism and other movements from which the Assyrian Church was suffering. Therefore, Your Grace Amba Bishoy, I think that we are treating Nestorius wrongly.

#### ***Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup> - Fifth working session***

*Moderator:* Metropolitan Amba Bishoy

Introduction by the chairman: Today's topic is ecclesiology which was dealt with in the five Vienna consultations from 1971 to 1988 and in three following seminars: "On Primacy" in June 1991, "On Councils and Conciliarity" in June 1992 and "On Ecclesiology and Church Unity" in June 1994. The four lectures of this morning will summarize the results of these meetings.

## **ECCLESIOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS OF FIVE VIENNA CONSULTATIONS**

### ***1. Introduction***

The purpose of my paper is not to provide a systematically achieved study of ecclesiology, but to communicate to the present illustrious audience the results of some important ecclesiological discussions of the Five International Vienna Consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988).

The ecclesiology covers the concept, nature and reality of the Church as well as the forms of its structure and administration. The elements and aspects of ecclesiology are to be found in the New Testament, patristic literature and in the Christian literature of the Middle Ages, but as a branch of Theology it has been developed only in and after 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on the Church or Lumen Gentium ("Light of all Nations") is the main ecclesiological document of Vatican II which offers important guidelines to Roman Catholic theologians for further reflections and discussions. The Orthodox Church has not produced such a document as yet.

In May 1973 Pope Paul VI and H. H. Pope - Patriarch Shenouda III at the end of a meeting in Vatican published a common declaration in which they state:

"We have, to a large degree, the same understanding of the Church, founded upon the Apostles, and of the important role of ecumenical and local councils. Our spirituality is well and profoundly expressed in our rituals and in the Liturgy of the Holy Mass which comprises the centre of our public prayer and the culmination of our incorporation into Christ in his Church."<sup>2</sup>

It is true that the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches have in general "the same understanding of the Church", they have the same apostolic faith (the Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed) and succession, but their ecclesiology exposes also great differences in crucial problems, such as the questions of primacy, of councils and conciliarity, and of the role of laity in the life and organization of the Church. With good reasons, Ronald G. Roberson CSP in his assessment of the relationship between the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches concludes as follows:

"Ecclesiology remains the area which contains the greatest disagreement. It is doubtful that any of the Oriental Orthodox Churches will accept any form of unity with the Roman Catholic Church which does not fully respect their administrative independence. And the Catholic Church must decide if full communion with another church necessarily means that the Bishop of Rome must have unlimited authority to intervene in the affairs of the other church. These issues will provide ample material for research and reflection in the years to come as the relationship between these churches reaches greater maturity."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> New Catholic Encyclopedia, prepared by an Editorial staff at the Catholic University of America, Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, New York, V/1967, 34; see also vol. III/1967, article "Church"; Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, Verlag Herder Freiburg, III/1959, 781 - 87.

<sup>2</sup> The Vienna Dialogue - Five Pro Oriente Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy, communiqués and common declarations, Booklet No 1/1990-91, 109.

<sup>3</sup> The Vienna Dialogue, *ibid.* 35.

It is now my task to present to you some of the ecclesiological topics which were discussed at Vienna Consultations; even if the discussions did not lead to full agreements, at least they crystallized the positions.

## 2. *The Local and the Universal Church*

Is there a Universal Church or are there only local churches at different levels? Is every church a church or are there distinctive and characteristic marks and attributes for a true church? Is the Universal Church the total of special churches, does it cover all the churches or is the recognition of jurisdictional primacy of the Roman Pontiff a necessary condition for churches to be in the communion of the Universal Church? The examination and discussion of these questions are very important for the ecclesiological dialogue.

Reading the documents of Vatican II and other Roman Catholic official writings one gets the impression that the "*Universal Church*" and the "*Roman Catholic Church*" are the same; moreover the terms "*universal*" and "*catholic*" are very often used as synonyms! For the Orthodox the local church - an assembly of baptized Christians united in the apostolic faith and sharing Eucharist under the pastoral care and authority of an episcopos, is the manifestation of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which is the mystical Body of Jesus Christ and which transcends the eternal times. Justly and rightly the New Catholic Encyclopedia commenting on the present state of ecclesiology writes:

"Many problems still need to be further elucidated, e.g., the exact nature of collegial authority and its relationship to the primatial authority of the pope; the need for the development of a theology of the local church (vitaly needed in the dialogue with the Orthodox Churches, whose ecclesiology has always been centered on the reality of the local church); the ecclesial nature of the Churches not in communion with Rome."<sup>4</sup>

At the first two Vienna Consultations (1971 and 1973) the christological problems were specially discussed. At the third and fourth Consultations (1976 and 1978) the question of the local church came up. Substantial contributions to the clarification of the problem were made by Wolfgang Beinert and Jakob Speigl of the Roman Catholic Church, Amba Gregorios of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and Paulus Mar Gregorios of the Indian Syrian Orthodox Church. Speaking of the Church in Jerusalem, Amba Gregorios stated:

"In this way a local church is formed in Jerusalem. Meanwhile this local church is the Church of Christ Universal without any real discrimination between what is local and what is universal. For the church of Christ in Jerusalem is the Church of Christ Universal. It has all the qualities, merits and characteristics of the church of Christ as a celestial embassy on earth representing the kingdom of Heaven on earth to propagate the message of Christ to all mankind."<sup>5</sup>

Then the lecturer quoted St. Ignatius:

"St. Ignatius Martyr (†110 A.D.) gave for the first time a description of the church as a community of believers in Christ, all Christian communities are parts of one Universal

Church. He said, 'Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church' (*Ubi Christus est, ibi Catholica est Ecclesia*) (*Epistula ad Smyrneos*, Cap. VIII)."<sup>6</sup>

It was pleasing to hear from Prof. Beinert that the Church exists only in and from the local churches in the following statement:

"The church as a spiritual reality transcends space and time. Its unity is thus objectively pre-set (by God). But as a church of the *verbum incarnatum* it is a local assembly in the individual case; the one Holy Ghost speaks many languages. In accordance with the New Testament, church in its full meaning exists where God's word is preached, where the Lord's death is commemorated, where the ministry is represented together with the other charismata - in which different ways all this is realized. The church exists only in and from the local churches. It is neither centralistic as a global undertaking with external branches nor is it particularistic as a federate institution; but it is a particular reality: In experiencing particularity the universality of God's people, in the community of all those redeemed the local character of the individual vocation is expressed. In the language of the Old Church it can be called communio."<sup>7</sup>

This declaration by a Roman Catholic author is absolutely a reconciling interpretation which can be endorsed also by the Orthodox theologians: the Church consists of a spiritual reality which transcends space and time and of the people of God, the visible community which pursues the Mission of Jesus Christ. The local church experiences and manifests "the universality of God's people."

Paulus Mar Gregorios on behalf of the Oriental Orthodox clarified and defined the three terms - local church, Universal Church and Church Catholic:

"By local church we mean the community of Christians in communion with and shepherded by the diocesan bishop. By Universal Church people usually mean the world-wide Christian community as constituted of various units in communion with and shepherded by the Bishop of Rome as Universal Pastor, and by Church Catholic we mean the Body of Christ spreading throughout space and time. The distinction between Church Universal and Church Catholic is of crucial and decisive importance."<sup>8</sup>

In his conclusions the lecturer once again emphasized that "*in our Communion in the Body of Christ, we have communio with all local churches.*"<sup>9</sup> He rejected the role of the universal or ecumenical councils as expressing the communio of all local churches, and then stated: "This has never been achieved, nor is to be regarded as essential."<sup>10</sup> He underlined rather the important role of the bishops or of the communion of the bishops as an expression of communio between local churches:

"c). The bishop being the essential element in the local church, the communion of the bishops, wherever it is expressed, is an expression of communio between local churches. In the case of an autocephalous church, this communio is more intimate and actual, and is expressed in the life of the synod of that autocephalous church. The concord of the bishops in the episcopal synod is a sign of communio between local churches which are organized to-

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p.41

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.44

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.72

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.75

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> New Catholic Encyclopedia, *ibid.*, V, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Third Ecumenical Consultation, Herder/Vienna, 1976, 38.

gether as an autocephalous church. This sign is less essential and indispensable than the Eucharist."<sup>11</sup>

The result of the discussions in 1976 concerning the Church was summarized in the Communiqué as follows:

"One of our concerns in this third non-official Consultation has been to discuss the notions 'local' church, the 'Universal' Church and Church Catholic. We confessed that it is the same mystery of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, the Body of our Risen and Ascended Lord, that is being manifest both in the 'local' church and in the 'Universal' Church. One and the same Church, for there cannot be more than one, is manifested both locally and universally as a koinonia of truth and love, characterized by eucharistic communion and the corporate unity of the episcopate. The unity of the Church has its source and prototype in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into which we have been baptized."<sup>12</sup>

At the fourth Ecumenical Consultation in 1978 where the questions of primacy were examined and discussed at length, Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios presented a paper on the development of a pre-eminence of some Churches over others in which he repeatedly and strictly rejected the jurisdictional authority of the Roman Pontiff over the Universal Church. In his conclusions he said:

"4. The Apostolic Canons, the Canons of Nicea, of Antioch in Encaenis, of Constantinople and of Chalcedon witness to a progressive development from 300 - 450, where the principle of supremacy of one see over others is recognized in more than the case of Rome.

5. No conciliar decree gives the bishop of Rome universal authority of jurisdiction.

6. 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>13</sup>

The study of Prof. Jakob Speigl written in a spirit of ecumenical reconciliation surpassed all expectations. He also recognized the role and pre-eminence of metropolitan bishops as chairmen of Christian communities and of regional or provincial synods, and emphasized the equality of all local churches in the "*communio*":

"The preeminence of the chairmen of a synod was at first regarded to be predominantly functional. In a perspective of the "*communio*" of the churches the equality of the churches was maintained; it was only the metropolitan upon whom certain rights were conferred in order to enable him to perform certain tasks. Thus the metropolitan was entitled to convoke, inaugurate, conclude and preside over a provincial synod. But it was understood, and this basic stipulation was inculcated time and time again, that the metropolitan would have to act with the knowledge and upon consent of the bishops of the respective province. The above-mentioned linkage of the metropolitan's task to the episcopal see of certain towns, which were always the same, gradually obliterated the commitment to obtain the consent and agreement of all bishops; the functional character of the metropolitan's task was gradually replaced by an absolute one."<sup>14</sup>

The Roman Catholic theologian was frank enough as to confess that "*the preeminence claimed for, and exercised by the Roman Church can only be explained in relation to the imperial church system*",<sup>15</sup> and after scrutinizing the available historical and canonical data, concluded:

"There is no longer an imperial church; we shall, therefore, have to strive for a new concrete form of unity for the entire Church, which would not obliterate the ancient ideal of "*communio*" in the local churches while it should, at the same time, be apt to do justice to the requirements of ecclesiastical unity on all levels. No preeminence in its present form of any church over others can be considered a remedy for unity; but we would be entertaining an illusion if we thought that the unity of the Church could be achieved bare of any pre-eminence."<sup>16</sup>

Many theologians agree that the primacy can not be regarded a remedy for the unity of the Church. From history we know that even the powerful emperors could not hinder or remedy the divisions in 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. We should not forget that the popes of Rome who claimed and claim primacy over the "*Universal Church*" could not prevent neither the schism resulted from the Reformation, nor the formation of the Old Catholic Church after the Council of Vatican I. The Orthodox do accept that an authority would be necessary for the maintenance of the authenticity and unity of the apostolic faith, but they see such an authority rather in ecumenical councils than in the person of a single hierarch. But unfortunately in and after Chalcedon (451) the universal councils too became stumbling-block in the question of protection and preservation of the unity of the Church Catholic.

In July 1994 (Vienna, 1 - 5 July 1994) the ecumenical Foundation PRO-ORIENTE organized a study seminar on "*Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church*". The meeting repeated and restated the results of the five Consultations putting a special accent on the conciliar fellowship to primacy. Quotation from the Report:

"On each place where the Eucharist is celebrated in the one faith and around the bishop in the apostolic succession the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is present in its fullness. This local church is in communion with all other churches that celebrate the same Eucharist in the same apostolic faith. The links of communion are the bishops. The world-wide Church (Church Universal) is a communion of local churches, bound together at every level by ways of a conciliar fellowship. It is within this conciliarity that the presence and function of primacy should be seen, at local, regional and universal levels."<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Councils and Conciliarity

In connection with councils and conciliarity the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches expose essential differences in organization and administration. The bishop in the Roman Catholic Church has a much stronger position than an Oriental Orthodox bishop whose authority is exercised within the bounds and limits of councils. The patriarchs are elected for life, but they do not possess the privilege of infallibility and can be deposed of their throne, if they deviate from the traditional apostolic faith (*paradosis*) of the Church.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.223

<sup>13</sup> Fourth Ecumenical Consultation, Herder/Vienna, 1978, 22

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.26

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.29

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p.31/2

<sup>17</sup> The Vienna Dialogue. On Ecclesiology. Vienna 1995 (Booklet 7), p.174

The important question of councils and conciliarity was the main topic of the third Vienna Consultation in September 1976. Scholarly papers were presented on the origins of the conciliar idea (Alois Grillmeier, Bishop Youannis of Gharbia and Vardapet Mesrob K. Krikorian), on the importance of councils for the life of the Universal Church (metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios and Walter Brandmüller), on the authority of councils (Mar Gregorios Saliba and Georg Schwaiger), as well as on the binding dogmatic decisions and the historicity of the life of the Church (Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Osthathios and Karl Lehmann, later bishop).

In a special study Krikorian examined thoroughly the Council of the Apostles, documented in Acts, chapter 15 and in the Epistle of Paul to Galatians, chapter 2, as a or the pattern of later ecclesiastical synods and at the end in search of a new conciliarity he concluded:

"After having investigated to a certain extent the origins of the conciliar idea which basically is biblical, we can now without hesitation attest to the fact that in the later developments of the Christian conciliarity some important aspects have been totally forgotten, such as the openness and spontaneity of the assemblies, the eucharistic character of local gatherings and the active participation of the community in the meetings. In the East and West there have been developed conciliar traditions which truly can be considered as extremes, one being more democratic and attached to synods, the other being more monarchic and clerical. The discrepancy is not a minor difference which could be settled through negotiations, but it presents a question of organisation and ecclesiology. In my modest opinion this problem which in fact concerns the structural system of the churches, can be solved only in the course of time through dialogue and reform, through re-discovery of an efficient conciliarity."<sup>18</sup>

Prof. Grillmeier too read a very profound lecture on the origins of the conciliar idea investigating not only biblical and patristic sources, but also describing the development of the conciliar idea. In his summary he brought some very useful conclusions forward, two of which I quote here:

1."4. If a local church had taken a decision concerning a particular question, and if that question then arose also in another local church, it was natural that the decision of the sister church was observed and taken as a model, and possibly even adapted to the respective situation. In the pre-Nicene period this was a widely adopted practice, yet not only before Nicaea, but also afterwards: exemplary decisions taken by sister churches were 'received'. The model of such reception was the synod of Antioch against Paul of Samosata in 268. By this reception it achieved almost the significance of a 'universal synod'. Other examples are the African synods under Cyprian and Augustine. Why should this practice not be continued again?"<sup>19</sup>

2. "6. If we - in agreement with St. Athanasius - understand the council above all as an act to the living paradox of the Church which adapts itself - with Christ's true foundation preserved - to the respective situation, then we will be far from pure traditionalism as well as from uninhibited progressivism. The Church must always have the possibility of formulating its teaching according to the new situation, and this must be done with the same authority with which the Fathers of the first councils had spoken. The teaching of the Church can remain identical only if it is able to express itself in new times in the respective

language. If there has been a legitimate conciliar authority in the church at one time, there will be one forever."<sup>20</sup>

Apart from local or regional and ecumenical councils which have played an important role in settling dogmatic quarrels and in proclaiming the right and binding apostolic faith, the councils within the organization and administration of particular churches, are of great help and value. In general the Orthodox, and in special the Oriental Orthodox Churches have structured and organized their life on the conciliar system. Vicars, bishops and patriarchs are elected by synods, and in some cases, as in the Armenian Church, not by episcopal synods, but by councils where the laity has a large participation. Parishes and eparchies too are governed by democratically elected councils in which laymen bear a great responsibility. To my modest opinion, reforms and reconciliation are necessary for the rapprochement between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. It is appeasing and pleasing that after Vatican II the laity was included in the active life of the Roman Catholic Church, but still the participation of laymen and women has rather a consultative and formal character.

One of the study - projects of the World Council of Churches is dedicated to the research and discussion of conciliarity. In my paper on the origins of the conciliar idea I have quoted the so called Salamanca - definition (1973) and a passage from the documents of the Meeting of Accra (1973).<sup>21</sup> The Salamanca - definition still preserves its actuality and validity: for that reason it might be allowed to cite it here again:

"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 the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith and therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same spirit. They are bound together because they have received the same baptism, and share in the same Eucharist; they recognise each other's member and ministries. They are one in their common commitment to confess the Gospel of Christ by proclamation and service to the world. To this end each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationship with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling."<sup>22</sup>

Really the one reunited Church is to be dreamed and envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which assembled around the bishops possessing the same apostolic faith, administering the same baptism, sharing the same Eucharist and thus manifesting the fullness of catholicity. This was also the conclusion of the third Vienna Consultation (1976).<sup>23</sup>

Concerning the natural relation between councils and conciliarity the Communiqué made the following clarification:

"In our discussions we distinguished between the council or synod as an event, and the synod as an aspect of the continuing structure of the Church's life. As for the council as an event, we could not agree on how and by whom such a world-wide council in our church

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.101/2

<sup>22</sup> What kind of Unity, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1974, 121; Third Ecumenical Consultation, ibid., 101-102, Günter Gassmann (editor), Documentary History of Faith and Order, 1963-1993, WCC Publications, Geneva, p.62.

<sup>23</sup> Third Ecumenical Consultation, ibid., p.223.

<sup>18</sup> Third Ecumenical Consultation, ibid. p. 101

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.133

ches should be convoked and conducted, nor could we agree completely on the procedure for the reception of past or future councils."<sup>24</sup>

No doubt that the "world-wide" or universal councils deserve special attention within the frame of the ecumenical dialogue. Almost in all five Vienna Consultations the questions concerning ecumenical councils were treated and discussed. There exist significant divergence about the reception and number of such councils, as well as with respect to the authoritative person who is entitled to convoke such councils, to preside over them and to confirm the decisions. Already at the first Consultation, where mainly problems of Christology and the Council of Chalcedon were examined, the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan spoke of a hierarchy of councils:

"There is a hierarchy of councils, both with respect to the importance ascribed to them and with respect to the extension of their reception. It is an historical fact that councils have often been accepted after their statement have been the subject of further dialogue within the Church. The highest point in this hierarchy is the Council of Nicaea. This is so not because of the formal canonicity of this Council, but because of the paramount importance attached to it by the Church on account of the work it achieved, and because of the truly universal acceptance which it commanded in all places and in all subsequent centuries. Not only does it stand at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of councils, but also its definitions have been generally held to be normative for all subsequent councils."<sup>25</sup>

Nersoyan expressed in a way the common conviction of the Oriental Orthodox, as well as the common conclusion of the same Consultation which stated:

"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 teachings of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431)."<sup>26</sup>

The second Vienna Consultation formulated more clearly the preeminence of the first three Ecumenical Councils in the hierarchy of the councils as follows:

"6. We also studied the question of ecumenical councils, especially the difference in number (three, seven or twenty one). Though no consensus is easily attainable in this issue, we agree that the first three Ecumenical Councils had, because of their more general acceptance in the Church, a greater degree of fullness, which the later councils do not have. We look forward, however, to future regional and ecumenical councils with larger representation as the reunion of churches is hastened by the working of the Holy Spirit."<sup>27</sup>

Some of the Roman Catholic participants mentioned that there is no official document which would predicate the number of the universal councils. For instance, J. G. Remmers on the ground of the research of Ives Congar,<sup>28</sup> stated that "*there is... no official list of the councils recognized by the Catholic Church to possess ecumenical au-*

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> First Non-official Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church (Vienna - Lanz, Sept. 7-12.1971), Herder/Vienna, 1972, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.182

<sup>27</sup> Second Ecumenical Consultation, Herder/Vienna, 1974, 176.

<sup>28</sup> Y. Congar, "Der Primat der vier ersten ökumenischen Konzile", in *Das Konzil und die Konzile*, edited by B. Botte, Stuttgart, 1962, 89-130.

thority."<sup>29</sup> However the new Catechism of the Catholic Church cites 17 ecumenical councils as follows:<sup>30</sup>

1. First Council of Nicaea (325)
2. First Council of Constantinople (381)
3. The Council of Ephesus (431)
4. The Council of Chalcedon (451)
5. Second Council of Constantinople (553)
6. Third Council of Constantinople (680-681)
7. Second Council of Nicaea (787)
8. Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870)
9. Fourth Council of Lateran (1215)
10. Second Council of Lyon (1274)
11. The Council of Vienne (1311-1312)
12. The Council of Constance (1414-1418)
13. The Council of Florence (1439-1445)
14. Fifth Council of Lateran (1512-1517)
15. The Council of Trent (1545-1563)
16. First Council of Vatican (1869-1870)
17. Second Council of Vatican (1962-1965)

Prof. Remmers pointed out that the Orthodox Churches need not accept the mediaeval councils and showed understanding for the Orthodox tradition. He said:

"The question if the twenty councils have to be accepted, need not be asked; for the tradition of the Oriental Churches are quite legitimate and have to remain in use. The council of Trent, e.g. was necessary in the discussion with Protestantism with which the Oriental Churches had nothing to do. The answer to the question what importance this council has, is therefore quite easy."<sup>31</sup>

Another aspect of universal councils which was discussed at the Second Consultation of Vienna - Lanz, was the infallibility of such synods. The Oriental Orthodox recognize only the preeminence and unique importance of the first three Ecumenical Councils and refuse to attribute infallibility to other councils in general. According to the Orthodox understanding neither councils nor special hierarchs of highest rank can be accepted as infallible; the Church in its entirety is infallible, or properly speaking indefectible! Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios in his lecture on the infallibility of the Church and (significance of ecumenical councils) questioned seriously the infallibility of the universal councils thus:

"Even if we decide to use the word 'infallibility', we have to distinguish between the infallibility of the Church, the infallibility of the magisterium, the infallibility of any particular bishop and the infallibility of the bishops in ecumenical councils. Even the notion that the *consensus fidelium* is infallible does not stand up very well when examined historically. 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 pre-

<sup>29</sup> Second Ecumenical Consultation, *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> *Katechismus der Katolischen Kirche*, Munich - Vienna, 1993, 748-51.

<sup>31</sup> Second Ecumenical Consultation, *ibid.*, 173.

sent 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>32</sup>

In his conclusions Mar Gregorios unequivocally defended the infallibility of the Church Catholic, denying such a qualification in respect to ecumenical councils. He stated:

"4. It would be thus unwise either to insist on a doctrine of infallibility of the Church or to attribute infallibility to ecumenical councils as such. When we speak of the indefectibility of the Church, we are not speaking either of the infallibility of all the bishops of the Church gathered in council at any particular time, nor even of all believers living on the earth at one time, but rather of the totality of the Church, the one Body of Christ, in all time and all space."<sup>33</sup>

The last disputable problem concerning the ecumenical councils is the question of the confirmation of the decisions of a universal council. The document "*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (Lumen Gentium) of Vatican II claims that ecumenical councils should be confirmed by the Roman Pontiff as follows:

"The supreme authority with which this college is empowered over the whole Church is exercised in a solemn way through an ecumenical council. A council is never ecumenical unless it is confirmed or at least accepted as such by the successor of Peter. It is the prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke these councils, to preside over them, and to confirm them."<sup>34</sup>

The main part of this demand is repeated and quoted word by word in the New Roman Catholic Catechism:

"There can never be an ecumenical council, unless it is confirmed, or at least accepted as such by the successor of Peter."<sup>35</sup>

I presume on the ground of primacy of honour many Orthodox hierarchs and theologians will agree with the prerogative of the successor of Peter to convoke - naturally prior to the decision consulting the heads of special churches, universal councils and to preside over them, as the first member of presidium. But the confirmation of decrees of the councils is rather a delicate problem, because it touches the principle of equality of the Apostles and their successors. The Orthodox tradition does not attribute jurisdictional primacy to any patriarch or catholicos, not even to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The famed Roman Catholic theologian Wilhelm de Vries relativised the suppositions and claims of Rome concerning the ecumenical councils as follows:

"The confirmation of a council's decrees by the pope or papal envoys has never been considered in the East an act of higher authority, without which the decrees would have been null and void because of a lack of confirmation on the part of the said higher authority. At Ephesus it was absolutely clear that the Council did not consider the recognition of its decision against Nestorius of 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 431, on the part of the papal envoys, who had

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 46

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 53

<sup>34</sup> W. M. Abbot and J. Gallagher (editors), *The Documents of Vatican II*, an Angelus Book, New York, 1966, page 44/parag. 22.

<sup>35</sup> *Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche*, *ibid.*, 261/parag. 884: "Ein ökumenisches Konzil gibt es niemals, wenn es vom Nachfolger des Petrus nicht als solches bestätigt oder wenigstens angenommen worden ist." (LG 22).

not arrived before the beginning of July, an approval by a higher authority (i.e. the Pope) of a decision that had been passed by a subordinate forum (i.e. the Council); it was regarded as the West's agreement to a decision of the East, which in this way became ecumenical."<sup>36</sup>

Prof. de Vries and other Roman Catholic scholars mean that the situation in the second millennium changed completely, as far as the relationship between the Ministry of Peter and ecumenical councils was concerned.<sup>37</sup>

"The role of the Ministry of Peter in the medieval councils was entirely different from the one it had played in the ecumenical councils of the first millennium. Above all since the Gregorian reform - we only need to think of Gregory VII's "Dictatus Papae" - the Papacy had risen to an absolutely dominating position. The Pope had become the head of the "Christianitas". In his capacity as Vicarius Christi, Innocent III considered himself priest and king like Christ."<sup>38</sup>

The conclusion of the author at the end of his lecture at the second Ecumenical Consultation of Vienna (1973), was quite optimistic:

"Thus the decisions of the council are not merely decrees of the popes, which impression may have been created by earlier councils; on the contrary, the fathers of the council cooperate with the pope. The pope is not only the head of the council, the council is not merely subordinate to the pope, he is also a member of it. This is the right and proper relationship between the Ministry of Peter and an ecumenical council, and it ought to be given thorough consideration; it must be taken seriously. Then, and only then, might a way of performing the Ministry of Peter be found which would no longer be unacceptable for the Eastern Churches."<sup>39</sup>

I think the discussions at Vienna Consultations concerning the ecumenical councils have reached such a stage that it is not difficult anymore to find solution for the divergence. In this respect the communiqué of the Second Consultation offers us great hope.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Authority and Primacy in the Church

It is evident that all confessions are convinced that authority and primacy necessarily belong to the nature of the Church. No church in this world can properly and fruitfully work and fulfil Christ's mission without authority and primacy. There is a general consensus in this matter; the opinions and traditions of various churches differ only in the question how or in which form should authority and primacy be exercised! The Orthodox Churches from the very beginning have developed rather a conciliar and democratic system of organization and administration, whereas the Roman Catholic Church has endowed the bishops and the successor of Peter with privileges of immense authority and primacy.

Almost at all Vienna Ecumenical Consultations the problem of authority and primacy was discussed at large. 1973 at the second meeting, in connection with ecumenical councils, also the infallibility of the Church and the Ministry of Peter were duly ex-

<sup>36</sup> Second Ecumenical Consultation, *ibid.*, 148.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p.149

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p.150

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p.159

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p.176 (see above quotation 26)



mined. The conclusion of the Consultation showed how difficult it was and is the solution of this problem:

"As regards the relation between the Ministry of St. Peter and the ecumenical councils, as the Roman Catholics understand it, we have not reached a consensus on it though the principle of collegiality emphasized by the Second Vatican Council is appreciated as a move in the right direction according to which the role of the bishop of Rome is seen within the council and not above it."<sup>41</sup>

At the fourth Vienna Consultation various aspects of primacy were extensively discussed. In respect to the passage Mt. XVI/18 Tiran Nersoyan raised a series of questions. He said:

"The statement of Jesus raises quite a few semantic problems. For example, what does in actual fact building on the personality of Peter mean? Rock is a static simile, and could not refer to the dynamic power of teaching or governing. It would appear that the character of Peter would be the guarantee for the unshakeable nature of the organic structure of the Church and for the right teaching of the faith. Would this be the case only during the life of Peter or also after his life? Would the solidity of Peter's character be transferable? Would he have primatial authority because of his rock-like character? How would Peter use his "keys"? Would the keys represent the faith which Peter professed? Could anything other than faith open the kingdom of heaven before man? Moreover, the metaphors in the other N.T. passages indicating the preeminence of Peter, bear upon the faith he professed. Peter was the first person in point of time to receive the revelation of the faith of Jesus being the Messiah. It is this fact that governs the signification of the statement of Jesus concerning Peter as being the rock."<sup>42</sup>

There are such questions about which Bible-commentators and theologians could debate very long. In any case at the moment there is no consensus on the main crucial point whether Mt. XVI/18 offers ground and reason enough for an infallible teaching-office and jurisdictional primacy of the pope over the Universal Church. The communiqué of the Consultation could state only the different understandings and interpretations of the two sides:

"14. We have agreed that the primates of all the sister churches have a special responsibility for witnessing to and promoting the manifest unity of the Church. No consensus was reached on the special responsibility which the Roman Catholic Church believes the Bishop of Rome has in this regard or on the special office of Peter in the Church. It was recognized by the Catholic participants, however, that the future exercise of such an office is not identical with the present practice which has developed without contact with the Oriental traditions. Therefore, this role of the Bishop of Rome needs further mutual discussion and elucidation among the sister Churches as well as within the Roman communion itself on the basis of the Nicene canons and the further developments which have taken place and are continuing to take place in all churches."<sup>43</sup>

1988 at the fifth Ecumenical Council two eminent theologians delivered lectures on the question of primacy and Nicene canons. After examining the canons IV and VI of Nicaea, Paulos Mar Gregorios concluded:

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 176 (Communiqué)

<sup>42</sup> Fourth Ecumenical consultation, 170/1

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 234

"The Nicene Canon which gives priority of honour to the Bishop of Rome, as we have already stated, was a matter of civil protocol at that time. Today if that primacy of honour is restored, it will be on grounds other than civil protocol, but largely on the basis of respect for the Nicene Canon, of respect for an old tradition, and of respect for the size and importance of that Church. Such primacy can be only of honour and rank, not of jurisdiction. The restoration of that primacy will be contingent upon the restoration of a common tradition and of genuine mutual trust, as well as upon the removal of the remaining stumbling-blocks on the way to enduring unity."<sup>44</sup>

Franciscus Cardinal König, former Archbishop of Vienna, investigated the 6<sup>th</sup> canon of Nicaea as well as canon 34 of the collection which is known as "Apostolic Canons", and then he made the following statement:

„1. The Christian Church of the East had a head, a protos, to preserve the unity of the Church in important matters.

2. Because of an already existing tradition there was an exousia, an authority of bishops in bigger cities (as for example Alexandria, Rome and Antioch) over other bishops to preserve unity.

3. We know of the existence of a council (agreement among others). For being able to operate such a council needs a protos as well."<sup>45</sup>

For the future model of unity, the Cardinal proposed the election of a head for the Universal Church by cardinals and patriarchs of the East and West. He said:

"I could for example imagine - it is only a personal idea - a new structure of the college of cardinals with members from Eastern and Western Churches to elect a common head. Or: The structure of a council should be considered for the nomination of members which could also be useful for the election of a protos for the Church as a whole."<sup>46</sup>

I tried to respond positively to the suggestion of His Eminence,<sup>47</sup> but I think in the end such a head of the Church Universal again would not have any privilege more than "*primacy of honour*"! Personally I am convinced that the complicated problem of primacy can be easily solved on the basis of two agreements:

1. First, the Roman Pontiff maintains all his rights, privileges and primacy within the Roman communion.

2. Secondly, the Orthodox recognize the primacy of honour of the pope (including the right of convoking ecumenical councils and presiding over them), but they fully maintain their independence and traditions!

### 5. Models of Future Church-Unity

The model(s) of future unity of the Church can be regarded as one of the issues of ecclesiology. Although it is a general theme with which directly or indirectly was dealt during all conferences, but specially it was discussed at the fifth Consultation. To the question - "*What future unity do we envisage*" two Oriental Orthodox representatives and one Roman Catholic theologian replied. According to Coptic Orthodox Fr. Tadros

<sup>44</sup> Fifth Ecumenical Consultation, Herder/Vienna, 1989, 132.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.139

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.140

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p.141

Malaty Yacoub, the unity of the Church should be based on the one faith and inner love of particular churches. He suggested a return to the era of the Church before the Council of Chalcedon (451) and then stated:

"At that time there were apostolic seats in the East and West, and each had its own culture and traditions, yet all held on to one fundamental faith based on the Holy Bible and on the apostolic tradition. They all enjoyed one harmonious patristic thought. Thus unity to us means the enjoyment of church life which is the "new life in Christ". The basis of this 'new life' is truth that is inseparably linked with love."<sup>48</sup>

Archbishop Mar Theophilos George Saliba of Mount Lebanon declared: "We have the same faith and dogma",<sup>49</sup> pointed out that "the only problem is the primacy, the administration of the Church"<sup>50</sup> and suggested: "Let us deal in practical way how to communicate with the Catholic Church to get the fruit we all of us need to plant and give!"<sup>51</sup>

Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt of the Roman Catholic Church in his contribution discussed various possible models of unity, but he preferred the communion of reconciled diversity as phrased by the Lutheran theologian Harding Meyer. The lecturer pleaded for a unity in diversity or for a diversity in unity. This form of unity in fact was and is the slogan of many ecumenical conferences and discussions of the last decades; the only point on which still the churches could not agree is the question of the bounds of diversity of traditions of dogmata, jurisdiction and administration. Harnoncourt concluded:

"To say that a dogma is true means that it is correct to speak about a mystery of faith in this defined terminology; but it never can mean that it is impossible or forbidden to speak about the same mystery in another way.

It is also necessary to recognize a similar problem within the trueness of the one Church. We have to distinguish between true structures of different local and individual churches on the one hand, and the truth of the one Church itself as the persisting presence of mystery of Incarnation on the other hand. Therefore the existence of local and individual churches will not only differ, but sometimes have contradictory structures which do not disturb or destroy the deep oneness and trueness of the one Church or Christ."<sup>52</sup>

In the guidelines for search of unity between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church signed by H. H. Pope John Paul II and H. H. Pope Shenouda III the nature of diversity has been excellently formulated:

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

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

(6) This legitimate autonomy does not deny the necessity of mutual relations between our churches. When the churches live more closely together in communion of faith and mutual charity, they will develop new contacts and patterns of relations which will indicate how to deal with questions of common interest and concern. This process will also help the churches to arrive to a better understanding of the meaning and extent of primacy in the

Church, a concept which exists in both our churches but about which there remain canonical and doctrinal differences preventing our full communion."<sup>53</sup>

These three principles could form a wonderful basis for an official dialogue to solve the thorny problem of primacy.

With the topic of models of future church-unity, I think, immediately is connected the concept and designation of "*sister Churches*". This expression is one of many good results of the Council of Vatican II which, taken seriously, may have great influence and impact on the extremely important discussions of ecclesiology. If the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches are really "*sister Churches*", then they are equal in their value and validity, in honour and rank. All members within a family, sisters and brothers, are in fact equal and enjoy the same rights, and none has the privilege of dominating over the other.

## 6. Concluding Words

In my modest study I tried to present the results of ecclesiological discussions of the five Ecumenical Consultations of Vienna. I hope I could offer to this magnificent assembly at least a general picture of the debates. I wish to end my paper with the statement of a Roman Catholic sister, Alja Payer, who is working for the monthly "Christlicher Osten". She is a humble person who does not possess any ecclesiastical rank or power, but she loves the Church Catholic of Jesus Christ. In a recent contribution she writes:

"The love of Christ urges us to seek the communion with our sister Churches, and to manifest openly the spiritual attachment to them. The communion can be built up only by respecting the full equality of value and on the mutual giving and taking. Certainly at first glance the Eastern Churches appear to be alien, but we have to learn to love the richness of colours of the world of God."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p.116/7

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.118

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.120

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.123

<sup>53</sup> The Vienna Dialogue, Booklet No 1 (see note 2), 112.

<sup>54</sup> "Christlicher Osten", circular of *Catholica Unio*, 1994/1.

## THE MINISTRY OF UNITY IN THE CHURCH

### 1. *The theology of the Church*

#### 1.1. *The mystery of the Church "What is the Church"*

Glory be to God who loved us and called us in his son Jesus Christ in his Holy Spirit to share with him his divine life. This sharing in the life of God, the father in his son Jesus Christ and in his Holy Spirit is the Church itself which we declare in the creed of faith that is one holy apostolic and universal Church. The Church is not a mere gathering of humans started by the initiative of people, neither is it a human communion embracing people who have pledged themselves to continue the mission of the teacher they loved.

The human dimension in the Church is preceded by a divine one from which one should set out to understand the mystery of the Church and to live according to it. The perpetual concentration on its divine dimension is the sole guarantee to secure the real significance of the human dimension and to give Church institutions their real character.

Depending on this divine dimension we can infer the signs of the Church. The Church is one because it shares the life of God, the one father and it is saved by the one Lord Jesus Christ, and lives through the Holy Spirit.

The Church is holy because it represents sharing in the Holy Trinity. It is universal because it is the body of Christ in whom the full divinity exists. It is apostolic because it is a continuation of the life of the Lord which the apostles lived in and spoke about in their teachings and their writings. These signs characterize the Universal church and at the same time the local churches too. The mystery of the Church Universal is represented in every local church in which we live the life of God abiding by the teachings of the Apostles.

#### 1.2. *Pastoral Care in the Church*

Within this definition we can speak about pastoral care in the Church. Jesus Christ is the first and eternal Pastor who calls his church to have an everlasting life of divinity. He is the head of the church from whom the body gets unity and coordination, and with the cooperation of all the saints as per the need of each organ, he grows and builds in love (Eph. 4: 15-16).

Jesus is the head of the body and Christians are the organs, and each has got its own function that is appropriate to him for the benefit of the body, and for sustaining his union with the Lord and his growth in love. Within the framework of the appropriate function of each organ for the growth of the body, the role of the Apostles and their successors, the bishops, in the Church shall have to be understood according to what was said to the clergy of Ephesus by Paul the Apostle: "We heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20-28).

### 1.3. *Leadership and conciliarity*

Leadership in the Church has the only goal of keeping the members of the one body in union with the divine life and in union with one another. This is the role of the bishop and he fulfills this role in each local church. He does it in its three dimensions - the filio-que dimension or the instructional one, the clerical and sacramental dimension, and the monarchical or pastoral.

The role of the bishop on the level of the local church is done by the bishops together through the councils on the regional level and on the level of the Universal church. Since the early years of Christianity we see the Apostles, and bishops later on gathering for the unification of the word and position in order that the one divine life becomes one. In all the parts of the one body, the expression of this union is manifested in the life of God in one form and one pattern.

The Apostles gathered in the Council of Jerusalem and later on we had the local councils, and the regional councils, and general Oriental councils through which the churches of the East are bound, and the general councils of the Occident through which the churches of the West gathered together, and later on the ecumenical councils starting with the Council of Nicaea 325.

Conciliarity is a fundamental characteristic, concomitant with the Church ever since its inception. The Church could recognize this in the choice of the twelve Apostles by Jesus Christ in order that they be one community witnessing together the resurrected Christ and continuing to work and his kerygmatic work among the nations.

Leadership in the Church is not an authority for predominance or an honorary recognition for vanity. Leadership is an organic ministry in the body of Christ performed by the bishop in his local church, and by the bishops together, a conciliar form at all levels, reaching the ecumenical level. This ministry consists in persistent care in order that the one life of God continues in all the parts of the body and hence all the organs of the body remain united with the head that is Jesus Christ, and united with one another. Therefore, leadership and conciliarity exist in the ministry of unity and in the ministry in an rising and healthy growth of the body of Christ.

## 2. *Vienna Consultations*

### 2.1. *The Second Study Seminar*

It gives us a great pleasure to see that these fundamental issues in the theology of the Church are common between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox churches as has been manifested at Vienna Consultations.

This was made clear in the last joint Communiqué issued by the Second Study Seminar „On Councils and Conciliarity“ held in Vienna from June 26<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>, 1992. The Communiqué includes two parts.

The first part clarifies the mystery of the Church and the common concerns in terms of conciliarity in the Church, and the second part elucidates the points that still need further clarification in the future.

### 2.1.1. Points of Agreement

There is one common faith concerning the nature of the Church which the Communiqué stresses that it is a Communion which is the image of the Holy Trinity. This Communion has two dimensions - a vertical one through which all the members of the Church are united by the Holy Trinity, and a horizontal one through which they unite with one another. This Communion is a Communion of love. It is sharing in the one body of Christ which is realized in baptism, christening, the Eucharist, in the Apostolic teaching and in the Care rendered by the Ministry on its three hierarchical levels - Episcopacy, Ministry, Diaconry, and in the service of love world-wide.

As the Church is the image of the Holy Trinity, conciliarity therefore is one of its fundamental characteristics. This is manifested on the level of the local church by the Eucharistic Communion with the bishop and the church as a whole, and then with the local, national and ecumenical councils. The Communiqué stresses that "the priest, in his capacity as a deputy of the bishop, is considered the main axis of conciliarity in the local community. He practices his ministry in a conciliar cooperation with the congregation:

1. worship service, prayers and supplications
2. service of the pastoral building up of the congregation
3. service of the loving care world-wide.

These three aspects are characteristically conciliar".<sup>1</sup>

The first three ecumenical councils manifested the apostolic faith. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of faith is the common expression of this faith. Regarding the way of holding ecumenical councils, there are no constant rules for all ages, yet in order that these councils be considered ecumenical. They have to be faithful to the apostolic tradition of the Church and to be accepted and recognized by all churches as ecumenical.

Concerning infallibility the Communiqué states that infallibility is a modern term applied in the Roman Catholic Church to the doctrinal affirmations. The Communiqué prefers to use the term indefectibility and states that it is the Holy Spirit that guides the Church towards the truth and it is the fundament of its confirmation in truth: "in the case of the deviation of a good number of members of the Church as was the case in the fourth century with Arianism, it is the Holy Spirit that would bring them back to truth".<sup>2</sup> "It is undoubtful that the ecumenical councils are capable of having an important role in this respect, but councils are not considered as indispensable in this process. For the indefectibility of the Church is a charisma of the Holy Spirit that can't be accomplished automatically".

That is to say as soon as the councils are held.

### 2.1.2. The Whole Church Gets Together in the Ecumenical Councils

The bishops represent the completeness of the local church, but priests and heads of monasteries, deacons and laity attend these councils and contribute in the discussions. The signing of the decisions taken by the councils is done by the bishops as they represent the local churches, but the faithful as a whole can participate in various ways in the

consultations albeit it is not possible for them all to attend. All the members of the churches have had the charisma of the Holy Spirit and they are responsible for making use of these charismas for the building up of the Church and consequently in the conciliar procession.

### 2.2. Points that Still Need to Be Elucidated

1. The joint Communiqué states that the greatest disagreement is in terms of the role of the Church of Rome and its Bishop in the Church Universal.

2. For the Catholic Church teaches that the communion with the see of Rome is an essential part for the unity of the Church and that the unity of the Church shall remain incomplete outside this sort of communion.

3. The distinguished role of the Bishop of Rome is based, by the Roman Catholic Church, on the conviction that he is the successor of Peter the Apostle who had a distinctive role among the group of Apostles. This means that the college of bishops cannot act without the consent and approval of the Bishop of Rome; whereas the Oriental Orthodox churches believe that the Apostles received equal authority from Jesus Christ, and that there is no necessity to have the consent of a particular bishop, whoever might he be, on the decision taken by the ecumenical councils, although it is preferable to have the agreement of all the bishops. Therefore the Oriental churches refuse any authority invested upon the Bishop of Rome for the confirmation or rejection of the decisions taken by the ecumenical councils. The Communiqué states that there are still two important issues that have to be tackled in the future.

1. The rules and regulations related to holding, conducting and confirming these councils. In the future and in case there has been an agreement to hold an ecumenical council in which all the churches participate, these churches shall have to put down together new regulations for the procedure of the ecumenical council.

2. The issue of infallibility in the definition of doctrines and the decisions taken by the councils held after the Council of Ephesus held in 431, which the Roman Catholic Church considers as ecumenical, shall have to be discussed. The Communiqué refers to a proposition that suggests considering these councils as general councils held by the Roman Catholic Church.

### 3. Steps towards full unity

Whoever reads the results of Vienna Consultations will be pleased at the great steps that have been accomplished towards the restoration of full unity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox churches. The points agreed upon are related to the essence of faith expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of faith. The points that are still in need of elucidation, yet important, can't be, in my opinion, considered as obstacles on the path towards full unity, and there would be no objection to any attempt at convoking an ecumenical council for discussing these issues.

The ecumenical meetings and dialogues that have taken place ever since the beginning of the twentieth century up to the present day, especially after the Second Vatican Council, have brought Christians much closer. These meetings underlined points of convergence on the level of faith, and it was stressed by all that these points of convergence are much more than we have imagined.

<sup>1</sup> Booklet No 5, p.59 (point 5)

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, point 9

They also stated the remaining points of disagreement whose solution, as recognized by all, was not impossible.

A great deal of misunderstanding that existed between churches was removed and a great deal of rapprochement was achieved in relation to the different view points.

The unity of the Church is a necessity agreed upon by all Christians. There is a widespread belief that setting a practical example for the ministry of unity between local churches is subject to the fluctuations of history. In this regard we have to refer to two significant statements. The first by Pope Paul VI from which it can be inferred that the councils held in the West in the Second millennium can be considered as general councils for the Western Catholic Church, and not ecumenical as was the case in the ecumenical councils held in the First millennium.

The second statement is by Pope John Paul II in his address to the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I: "We have to solve together the issue of understanding and practising the correct form of primacy".

In the main topics of disagreement, that is the number of ecumenical councils and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, there is a remarkable progress that the subsequent conferences have to follow it up. The Catholic Church has succeeded at the end of the Second millennium and after centuries of separation between the East and the West, to ascribe to the Bishop of Rome a distinctive role in the ministry of the unity of the Church Universal, in a form which is different from that set in the first millennium before division. The unity of the Universal Church is an indispensable question, but this unity can't be achieved at the expense of the local churches. If the Church is established after the age of the One triune God, then the distinction of the hypotheses will not be canceled by the unity of the essence, and consequently it shall not be permissible to have the distinction of the local churches canceled by the unity of the Church, and thus the role of the local bishops becomes absorbed; and only the role of the one Universal Bishop actually remains.

This has been agreed upon in the present ecumenical thought.

On the other hand, the local churches can't remain dispersed and separated from one another. Due to the fact that the Church is both a divine and human community and has two dimensions - the divine dimension and the human one, - it follows that the unity of the Spirit is not sufficient for securing its unity. There has to be human institutions dedicated to the service of the unity of the Spirit and the unity of faith. The ecumenical councils care of these institutions on the universal level. The Roman Catholic Church adds that the Bishop of Rome has a distinctive role in the ministry of the unity of faith. This role took a different form in the Second millennium from that adopted in the first millennium. Hence that kind of form will it take in the third millennium? And should this role be maintained? Or is it possible to have an alternative one? These questions remain open and all the churches together are called upon to answer them in the future.

We hope that in the near future there will be an ecumenical council in which all the members of the body of Christ which is one Universal Holy Apostolic Church are included.

## THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONCEPT IN THE VIENNA CONSULTATIONS

### 1. Preamble

In ecclesiastic terminology "church" means the community of those who confess our Lord Jesus Christ and whose Orthodox faith is based on the faith of Peter, the Apostle. Peter's answer to the Lord "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God" made him blessed. The other eternally confirmed statement is "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". The foundation of faith is the confession of the divinity of the Lord, the word the God incarnate. With this faith the Church with all the faithful in it form the Holy mystery placed in this community which is committed by this faith which was handed over to the saints. It is the mystery of its Continuity, steadfastness and its witness worldwide.

From this faithful community comes the sacred mission to the world aimed at education, edification and discipline and thus, righteousness man becomes perfect ready for every good deed enjoying the full charismas obtained by the faithful through the Holy Sacraments which are in their turn the work of the Holy Spirit in the community of the faithful and thus the word of God is fulfilled: "Whenever two or three are gathered together in my name I shall be among them". The Church is meaningless without a community which believes in the heavenly message which forms the living witness to the world.

The second definition of the word 'church' is the body of the clergy represented by the priests, the bishops and archbishops according to the administrative order. They are the real representatives and pastors of the community of faithful and hence the defenders of the Orthodox faith preserving it and preaching it and endeavouring to maintain its clarity and purity and at preserving the incomparable value of its essence in the whole universe.

This is made clear in the Lord's words "And if he shall reject to hear you, tell it unto the church", which means the clergy. He also said to them "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me; whoever rejects me will not accept you". This shows that the consecrated body of clergy and the community of the faithful partly and jointly form the church in both its theological and ecclesiastic aspects.

The church in the world is the extension of God and forms the goal and the means for attracting all human beings to the net of salvation and for moving them from death to salvation, from darkness to light, from perdition to survival and eternity with the Lord-sitting with him on the right side of the throne of Glory in heaven.

### 2. The Mystery of the Church

The mystery of the Church is revealed as Jesus Christ is the light of peoples and the hope of nations and the wish of generations. He is the greatest saviour and the redeemer of the world.

Our saviour has led us to the grace of adoption to become the sons of God, the inheritors of the heavenly Kingdom.

The signs of the Church extend in an unlimited over time and nations in a way that is beyond the comprehension of the human mind with the help of the Holy Spirit who works incessantly in the sacramentation, purification and forgiveness of all the faithful, according to the parable of the blessed seeds grown in the field to give good fruits. According to the capacity and gifts the faithful are endowed with through which they look at the small flock for whom God had the pleasure to grant the Kingdom of heaven. This grace and these gifts are extremely valuable in the life of people.

### 3. *The Signs of the Church*

This leads us to the full comprehension of the theological definition of the signs of the Church (one, holy, universal and apostolic).

These signs emerge from the church's reality and its eternal message. It is one because it has one faith, one Lord and one baptism.

It is sacred because of the incessant presence of the holy saints in it. It is universal because it is the gift of heaven to all people. "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"

This call was the opposite of all others that had preceded its establishment on earth. It is apostolic because it is based on the faith of the apostles and Jesus Christ is the corner stone in it and its head.

Being endowed with these signs, the church's children are therefore equal before God in rights and duties, strong members in it support the weak ones and all pray for all, and the individual prays for all, and all for one.

I have in mind, on this occasion, three parts of a prayer we have in our liturgy in Syriac, the translation of which is this:

"Oh, Lord, I'm your servant, I am the mother of good and bad children, I pray to you to have compassion of those who are bad by the intercession, of those who are good and righteous, because the faithful and the church are always in a state of continuous repentance and incessant Spiritual renewal".

These signs are sufficient to make the faithful bound together through the common ministry of those closer to the elected by the Lord. In the church there is the consecrated ministry through which the faithful obtains the mystery of Ministry in whatever order he might be prepared for, and the ministerial service. The first is granted the mysteries which he can confer on others and the second accepts the mysteries and both of them share in prayer, worship and service in true Christian love.

### 4. *The Pastoral and Administrative system in the Church*

The Church as a universal body is bound by a system that governs its procession and deal with the affairs of its faithful. Therefore a body of pastors is organized to meet the needs of its children and those linked to it. This administrative and hierarchical system starts from the base which is the community that chooses priests, bishops and archbishops up to the patriarchs and popes who represent the apostles who were sent by God and made bishops to look after the Church that was redeemed by Jesus' blood. God han-

ded the keys of heaven over to them, so that whatsoever they shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

With such an authority the Church moves on and continues its march and its mission to the world, so that its system is maintained and its procession is never hindered, supported by its firm faith in its saviour and redeemer our Lord Jesus Christ and by the full commitment of its consecrated servants, those who have been granting its gifts especially to the sacred ministry. With such an eternal commitment its mission is different from the mission of others in the world.

The Church's affairs are run at all levels, Spiritual, behavioural, educational, financial by the bishops who are endowed with those characteristics. This wonderful ecclesiastic system of the Church distinguishes its from any other body in the universe. The hierarchical system is subject to amendment and change in time and space.

### 5. *Leadership and Administrative authority*

In order that not all be leaders and in a position of limitless responsibilities, and in order that the Church does not remain in a static state, the Church stated the authorities of its leaders in pastoral care and stated the assignment of each depending upon constitutions and statutes that are in conformity with its mission to the world. Hence we had the local synods and later on the regional and the ecumenical ones, and each church chose whatever was in conformity with its convictions and suitable to meet its needs. Hence the disputes and controversies concerning the relations between the different denominations within the Universal Church.

The synod according to the apostolic order of the church is the highest authority in each one and the source of decisions following the teachings of the apostles, and in commitment with the decisions taken by the synods that were held before the great division after Chalcedon 451.

Authorities, jurisdiction and administration of the apostolic sees were stated in the two ecumenical synods, Nicea 325 and Constantinople 381, after which the church thought that it was on the right path especially that it had just survived great persecutions.

However, human feelings and personal benefits slunk furtively into the minds of those leaders, fathers and pastors, turning them thus from servants into leaders and hierarchs. They imitated the civil authorities in their conduct and their regulations and started looking for "*the Greatest among them*", allowing thus the schism to appear in the church.

The synod of Constantinople tried to envisage a solution for the benefit of the church and the faithful, and to evaluate the political importance of the sees, so that each see could get its own honorary rights according to its importance in the Roman Empire.

Rome and Constantinople stuck to the privilege given to them by the synod in Toto whereas Alexandria and Antioch opposed this attitude stating that the essence of the decision was influenced by the political status and that it had no theological principle behind it, nor was it aimed at preferring one apostolic see to the other, neither was it after the subjection or the predominance of one over the other. The whole matter was considered a mere administrative organisation meant for "*protocol*", using the terms agreed upon by the fathers.

"The Bishop of Rome is the first among equals"

Shortly afterwards Rome and Constantinople considered this decision as binding and with the support of the political authority claimed that all the churches in the world had to abide by it. This attitude resulted in the implacable struggle between them.

The failure of the general organisation of the Church was due to these factors, and the Church in the East was split between adherents and supporters on one side, and opponents on the other. The struggle found a fertile land in the Orient due to the debilitated state of the Church in confrontation with the Roman Empire.

Whereas the Church in the West maintained its strength and stability, and turned to the other sees benefiting from their disputes and problems in general, and the region of the Orient became a field for these conflicts.

We, in the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, are sure that Peter first founded his apostolic see in Antioch, and later on moved it to Rome.

Never had Antioch even thought of becoming the leader of the Christian world although the disciples of the Lord were first called Christians in it. Antioch had all the qualification culturally and Spiritually to be a leader, but it lacked the political status in comparison with Rome and Constantinople. It accepted to be fourth in order according to the Council of Constantinople.

In our ecclesiastic traditions and regulations we state that tradition is the continuation of the life of Christ in the Church, and that what is decided in synods is to be adopted and followed after the Gospel and the teachings of the apostles, therefore we say that the responsibility in the Church is laid on the bishops from among whom the leader is elected within one see, with no predominance of one over the other, as these leaders are equal in rights, duties and prerogatives.

Hence, our Church knew no other head after Christ, but the patriarch of Antioch, and any relationship at any level with the other sees is a relation of Communion in faith, mission or friendship and cooperation.

Although the teachings of our fathers and the prayers of our liturgies state that Peter is the head of the apostles, it doesn't mean that his see in Antioch has the predominance and authority over the other sees.

## **6. Primacy in Rome**

Our attitude to the primacy in Rome is in conformity with the teachings of our fathers. We keep the old tradition stated by Constantinople 381, when evaluating the importance of sees. However, the pope of Alexandria has no authority over the patriarch of Antioch, although we are in full communion in faith with the Church of Alexandria. Likewise no such authority does the patriarch have over the patriarch of Alexandria. Only traditionally does the pope of Alexandria have the preeminence over the patriarch of Antioch yet equal in the apostolic succession.

*Paul Sayah*

## **THE DISCUSSION OF ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE VIENNA CONSULTATIONS**

Two of the ecclesiological topics that were discussed in the five Vienna Consultations (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988) were Councils - Conciliarity and Primacy. They are, of course, two related aspects of the life of the Church.

### **1. Councils & Conciliarity**

#### *1.1. Notion of Conciliarity*

The notion of conciliarity was studied in the third consultation. It was equated with the understanding of the Church as *Koinonia*, an essential notion in the understanding of the Church as Body of Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit who leads the Church into all truth through councils and other means. That has been the historical reality manifested in the life of the Christian community from the very beginning.

A distinction was drawn between the Council as an event and an aspect of the continuing life and structure of the Church.

Discussions of the Council as an event did not lead very far. No agreement was reached on the questions of who would convoke such a world-wide event or conduct it, and what procedure should be adopted for its reception.

It was recognized, on the other hand, that there is a need in the life of the Church for a structure that would secure coordination among the various autocephalous churches. Churches should also find ways to settle disputes and face together common problems and handle task confronting them in the modern world.

The importance of Councils for the life of the Universal Church was stressed in different ways: the Western perspective emphasized the fact that a general council represent a "highly important constitutional element within the Church mainly because it represents the Universal Church. From the Oriental perspective the ecumenical council was stressed as "the highest authority in the Church" which maintains unity decreeing moral laws and defining dogmas that would bind the Church together.

#### *1.2. Ecumenical Council: Number and Reception*

No consensus could easily be reached on the number of ecumenical councils (three, seven or twenty one). But it was agreed that the first three Ecumenical Councils have a "greater degree of fullness" because they were more generally accepted in the church than the later councils.

As for the receptions of the decisions of the councils it was seen as an integral part of a single process along with the taking of conciliar decisions and their confirmation. Reception has played historically an important role in the acknowledgment of the ecumenicity of the council. The reception is a complex phenomenon because it involves

not only the bishops but also the faithful, the clergy and theologians. The Oriental Churches were glad to hear the Roman Catholics state when talking about Vatican I that

"in the event of unity of the churches at some point in the future the councils of the churches hitherto not united would have to be subjected to mutual reception. While the decisions taken in the second millennium by a Church essentially restricted to the Latin West are infallible and irrevocable, the fact that they were taken in the absence of a considerable part of the Episcopate permit later amendments which would have been unnecessary had there been an ecumenical council in the sense of the first millennium. This is why the process of reception is likely to entail amendments and modifications leading to an integration of the decisions into the faith of the Church as whole".<sup>1</sup>

### 1.3. *The Authority of the Council*

The Roman Catholic theology speaks of an "infallibility" of the dogmas decreed by the council while the Oriental Orthodox prefer to talk of a "dependable teaching authority".

There was an agreement that "Infallibility .... pertains to the Church ... as the Body of Christ and abode of the Holy Spirit". (Con. IV, 9). No complete agreement was reached concerning the relative importance of the different organs in the Church through which this inerrant teaching authority is to find expression.

### 1.4. *The Council of Chalcedon*

Because the Council of Chalcedon is considered by many theologians to be the basis of the drift between the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches, it was studied extensively in the first Vienna consultation. It was shown in the discussions that many factors, besides the theological reasons, lead to the quarrels; rivalries between the theological schools of Antioch and Alexandria, lack of clear christological formulations, jealousy among some of the participating hierarchs, political strifes and rigidity of theological expression. Professor De Vries summarized the issue as follows:

"The Council of Chalcedon ... not only failed to restore peace in the Universal church, it even caused a schism which was unfortunately continued to our day. It is a tragic fact that the attempt to express the unfathomable mystery of Christ in human terms resulted in an implacable struggle of Christians against Christians. And yet they all really wanted the same thing ... The dispute arose from 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>2</sup>

The participants went from there to do precisely what the men at Chalcedon were unable to do, to express the christological dogma in one formula as follows:

"We believe that our Lord and Savior, 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 commixture, without confusion, without division, without separation."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fourth Vienna Consultation, (lecture of Prof. Greshake), p.16

<sup>2</sup> First Vienna Consultation, p.60

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.182.

The formula will be used more or less verbatim in bilateral agreements such as those between the Catholic Church and Coptic Church in May 1973 and February 1988.

## 2. *Primacies*

1. The Ecumenical Council and the Ministry of Peter (2nd. Consultation).
2. Primacy and Vatican I
3. Oriental Orthodox primacies (primacy within the Church).
4. Primacy and the Petrine office.

### 2.1. *The Ecumenical Council and the Ministry of Peter*

The Orientals, although generally committed to anti-primatial position, do not hold a fully unified stand:

Some think that the New Testament does not give Peter any prominence over the Apostles (Amba Gregorius). Others that the New Testament does give Peter a certain distinctive position but no such distinction is linked to the Petrine succession (Bishop Keshishian). While Archbishop Nersoyan states that not only does Peter have a prominent position over the Apostles but that his relationship with them should be the model of the relationship between the primate and the bishops, and he sees the prominence of one bishop as a necessity for the safeguarding of the unity of the Church.

The Roman Catholics saw that the indications in the New Testament of a special role for Peter were clear and were practiced in the Church at the beginning of the 2nd century.

Many writings also were attributed to Peter at the end of the 1st century which points to the pre-eminence he enjoyed. And some of those writings were addressed to churches that he had not founded himself.

One could refer also to the fact that Saint Cyril of Alexandria appeared to give Rome special prominence and this is why he consulted with the bishop of Rome in the case of Nestorius.

However, the role of the Pope was subject to some changes throughout history: In medieval councils he played a role different from the one he played during the first millennium, so much so that the councils of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium were called papal councils.

Vatican II recognizes the right for the Roman Pontiff in some cases to reject the decisions of the Council. But this remains open to discussion because the Roman Catholics state that "according to Vatican II the Pope is essentially the head of the college of bishops and therefore presides the church not as a mere individual but as head of a church-collective. Not is the Pope simply above the council". If the Pope were to oppose a unanimous council decision in matters of faith he would, according to Prof. Greshake, "make himself heretic and thus cease to be Pope. Consequently an infallible doctrinal decision of the Pope cannot lack the consensus ecclesiae."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Fourth Vienna Consultation, p.27.



## 2.2. Primacy and Vatican I

The Catholics stressed in this context that papal infallibility was church infallibility. And concerning the decisions taken at Vatican I it was said also that

"they were conditioned by the Spirit of the age and must be placed into the wider and more fundamental perspective of the Scriptures and Tradition. If unity with the Oriental Orthodox came about there would be the need for a new reception of Vatican I since a large number of bishops of churches today recognized as "sister churches" did not attend the Council at the time. While preserving the essence, such a reception could bring about important amendments."<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Prof. Lanne emphasized that because of the recognition of the Eastern Churches as sister churches, the restoration of unity cannot be regarded as the return of wayward children to the abandoned parental home.

The above statements and clarifications were welcomed by the Oriental Churches.

## 2.3. Oriental Orthodox Primacies

There was a general agreement concerning this topic that much work on the sources needs to be done before being able to study it properly.

The patriarchal authority is seen differently by different churches, but they all agree that the patriarchal authority has no apostolic origin. Vardapet Aram Keshishian denies any jurisdiction of one bishop over others: "Regarding the sacraments and jurisdiction there can be no power exceeding that of the bishops".<sup>6</sup> According to Prof. V.C. Samuel there is no hierarchical authority in the Church. But others (Metropolitan Mar Gregorios, Prof. Bebawi) refer to canon 6 of Nicaea and the canons of Chalcedon and thus, while not recognizing "super-diocesan rights to the patriarchs" or "the pre-eminence of one church over the other", end up making some qualifications.

But Oriental Orthodox participants remarked that there was sometimes a discrepancy between the theory and the practice, and that the patriarchs had a

"de facto high-though probably abusive - authority. Mar Gregorios said at one point in the discussion that Eastern patriarchs had sometimes acted more authoritarian than even the Popes. He also reminded of the fact that they had comprehensive civic functions when living under Islamic domination since they then were ethnarchs at the same time."<sup>7</sup>

The primacy of Patriarchs and Catholicos has no theological basis but it is a purely historical institution. The Catholics were hoping that the Oriental Orthodox would produce alternative to papal primacy as a ministry of unity for the universal Church but this was not the case.

The Oriental Orthodox pose the question differently. For them the ministry of unity as authority sounds too juridical and this for them, points to the true nature of the Church which is exclusively founded on the Triune God. It is from this fact only that unity as a characteristic of the nature of the Church is to be derived.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.27

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.28

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.29

## 2.4. Primacy and the Petrine Office

One of the major topics of the 5th consultation, "Special Problems of Primacy and Petrine Office" was dealt with in two papers, one by Metropolitan Mar Gregorios and the other by Cardinal König.

Metropolitan Mar Gregorios summed up the agreement of Catholic theology on papal primacy in three points:

- 1 - Derivation from the primacy of Peter
- 2 - Confirmation by the Council of Nicaea (canon 6)
- 3 - Support of the Holy Spirit in allowing the primacy to develop from the Lord's institution to its historical forms" (WW 4, p.34).

When Jesus talked about building the church on Peter the Rock he did not aim at any primacy. In John 21, 15-17 (Feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep) Jesus was not addressing himself to Peter in an exclusive sense but to other pastors as well. And in the Acts of the Apostles Peter was not given any pre-eminence over the Apostles and decisions were taken by the "Apostles and Presbyters". Finally, there is no mention of succession to individual Apostles as a whole. The privileges mentioned in Canon 6 of Nicaea can be interpreted in this manner.

As for the third argument, the support of the Holy Spirit, it was promised to the church as a whole and could be revealed in its fundamental conciliarity. This is why any authority in the Church must be exercised on a conciliar or collegial basis. It must be at the same time decentralized and coordinated.

So the findings of Mar Gregorios were negative on all three points.

As for His Eminence Cardinal König, he reminded in his paper of the "Principle of Unity in the diversity of Traditions", and affirmed that the tension between unity and diversity cannot be solved in favor of uniformity and that the contacts with the Oriental traditions will bring about some change in the future exercise of the office of primacy.

The 34<sup>th</sup> Canon of the "Apostolic Canons" points to a correct understanding of primacy:

"The bishops of every nation should accept that one among them be the first (protos) and consider him as head ... The other bishops "do no undertake anything important " without his agreement. But the "protos" also ought not to act without the consent of the others in matters pertaining to his authority ... Canon 6 of Nicaea ... ties also the authority of the "protoi" with collegial and conciliar processes".<sup>8</sup>

However, Catholic argumentation in favor of papal primacy is not limited to the canons quoted

"The special role of the bishops of Rome, from the early Church, cannot be separated from the martyrdom and the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul as is indeed shown by early historical documents. This is the Spiritual power of the bishop of Rome who appears as the visible sign of the unity of the Universal Church."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.35

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.55

### 3. Conclusion and Future Perspectives

We are left with two different conceptions two different ecclesial traditions of primacy in the Church structure:

- a) A Patriarchal one locally limited in the Oriental Orthodox Churches.
- b) While the one practiced by Rome Catholic is universally designed.

Regarding the ecclesiological basis for the unity of the Church, the 5th consultation saw the need both for autonomy and decentralization of authority on the one hand and for some central coordination on the other hand.

The way the Primacy will be practiced in the future will be more closely linked into conciliar processes and will thus recognize the diversity of local traditions while preserving the unity of the whole Church. Further reflections on the understanding of primacy and how it is to be exercised are called for.

The Orientals were happy with the conciliar processes but prefer the authority to be exercised on regional basis.

Finally, a further investigation of the following aspects among others may help clarify the issues at hand: (cf. 5th Cons., p.142).

1. How is church authority rooted in the sacramentality of the Church?
2. Reflections on personal and synodical authority beyond the local Episcopal church at the liturgical, canonical and pastoral levels.
3. Reflections on conciliarity as an expression of communion of churches in the light of the two above subjects.

In any case, theologians need to make a special effort still to bring about further clarifications to the theological principles and practical steps which should govern the working out of conciliar processes in the way authority in the church ought to be exercised.

#### Discussion

*Cardinal König:* A few remarks about my personal feeling: First of all, we have to discern the call for unity of all the divided Churches. Secondly, we have to consider the actual situation of today and what we call ecumenical movement among our Churches. We are in a slow process of rapprochement and a common understanding. Despite the fact that unity still seems far away we have to promote this process. We shall help each other to come together as human beings and as Christians by the work of the Holy Spirit.

*Mar Gregorios Ibrahim:* I consider ecclesiology a very important matter for the future of the ecumenical work and for restoring communion with each other. There is a difference between restoring communion and restoring complete unity of the whole Church. Restoring communion is a first step and model for the future unity.

As for ecclesiology, I think that the issue of "councils and conciliarity" is more important than "primacy". An agreement on the first subject will be the basis for discussing the power and prerogatives of the Church authority. Thus we can move from the local Church to the universal Church. Local Church is defined as the congregation of believers under the care of the archbishop of a diocese. The universal Church in the concept

of the Oriental Churches is the Body of Christ. I would like to hint at a mistake in the paper of Archbishop Krikorian in the use of the words "universal" and "Catholic".

I am glad that Archbishop Boustros mentioned that the great Pastor of the Church is Christ. His Grace presented a model of church unity in the image of the Trinity, which seems like an ideal but not very practicable. I wish you had spoken about a concept of the Church in the third millenium rather than about the problems of the first and second millenium.

*Father Samih Raad (Melkite):* To Archbishop Cyrille: What are the criteria of the Catholic Church, the old Orthodox Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church for defining "ecumenical councils"?

To Metropolitan George Saliba: With regard to the suggestion of unity in the Middle East, what are the practical procedures towards this unity?

*Father Joseph Habbi (Chaldean, Bagdad):* A question to Metropolitan George Saliba on the conception of authority. In his opinion this conception is not included in the building of the Church. Is the church authority mere result of management? Does this not bring us nearer to the Protestant conception and gets us away from the Oriental conception?

The patriarchal authority belongs to the concept of church authority. By patriarchal authority I understand the biblical concept of paternal authority, a fatherhood as the father of Zion, the Father in the Trinity and the father in a family.

*Sister Najah:* It is not so important for us to discuss which Church will preside etc. We ask for practical steps such as standardized dates for celebrating the feasts.

*Father Makarios Jabbour (Melkite):* A question to Amba Bishoy: The emperors encouraged some decisions of the councils and rejected others. Why do we justify the behaviour of the emperor in the first council and why do we not justify his behaviour in rejecting the council of Chalcedon?

*Chairman Amba Bishoy:*

1) To Metropolitan George: Did I understand you right that at the end of your presentation you stated that there is no objection if the Church had a head?

2) To Metropolitan Boustros: I like his suggestion that an ecumenical council should be held to discuss publicly the issue of primacy in the Church. Furthermore, I would like to comment on his statement "The Church is universal (Catholic) because it is Body of Christ in which all the fullness of divinity exists". Here he mixed the Word Incarnate in whom all the fullness of divinity exists and his body the Church. In my opinion, the personal body of Christ is the head of the corporate body which is the Church and which at the same time is Christ's own divine body.

3) To Archbishop Krikorian: I ask for clarification of the use of "Catholic" and "universal".

4) To Metropolitan George Saliba: I ask again to be more precise about the use of "Catholic" and "universal". I understand that you mean the Roman Catholic concept when you quote the following from the speech of Mar Gregorius, "By universal church people usually mean the worldwide Christian community as constituted of various units in com-

munion with and shepherded by the Bishop of Rome as Universal Pastor". However, people still may misunderstand this as being also an expression of the Orthodox concept.

5) To Father Paul Sayah: I was very pleased with the statement that the universal Church does not only require the agreement of bishops but also the agreement of the Church as people. This is a good concept. In the theological agreements we try to include both laity and clergy, it is not enough that agreements are signed by bishops alone.

As regards papacy, Father Sayah stated that the message of St. Cyril and Pope Coelestine confirms the papacy of the Pope of Rome. In fact, there is evidence of the opposite because Pope Coelestine sent a letter to Pope Cyril of Alexandria, saying "The spring of your pure teachings dispenses the darkness that surrounded our minds and hearts for one reason or another. In the same message he spoke about the power of each Church putting "our Church and your Church" on the same level. So Pope Coelestine expressed his great appreciation for the Pope of Alexandria, they felt like brothers. I think it is exaggerated to say that the authority of the patriarchs in the East is sometimes more strict than that of the popes. We never heard of a patriarch in the East who deposed a metropolitan or bishop through his decision.

I would also like to have an explanation for the statement that there is a discrepancy between theory and practice in our Churches.

A last question concerning the role of the Pope of Rome. If the Pope of Rome - who is often called the person who maintains the Church unity in the whole world - should be the safety valve for Church unity, what then is the parallel safety valve for protecting the Church from autocracy, i.e. one person ruling the whole Christian world?

We have many local leaders and synods and we know that the ecumenical council is the safety valve if necessary.

*Metropolitan Cyrille Boustros:* In my paper I took up points from the communique (of the second study seminar) which need to be clarified. So certain words of the communiqué itself need further clarification.

1) To Metropolitan Mar Gregorius Ibrahim concerning my perspective of a future model of the Church. This is a difficult question which cannot be separated from history. There were many councils and synods to discuss the questions of leadership, the relation between leader and council etc. One ecumenical council gave primacy to the Pope of Rome. The application of this decision in the second millennium differed from the situation in the first millennium. This development was due to the separation between East and West. We refuse this now and we want to return to the situation of the first millennium. So we have to study carefully to find new forms serving the Church unity. It is common agreement in all theological ecumenical dialogues that the new form of the one Church will not be the same as the relation between us Oriental Churches and Rome now. This was also asserted many times by the Christian Unity Church Council in the Vatican.

As regards the model of the Church according to the Trinity. The principle is the image of the Trinity applied to the Churches: one Church, one essence and distinct persons (hypostases) or distinct local Churches. We have to work together to apply this principle.

3) To Amba Bishoy: Speaking about the Body of Christ in which all the fullness of the divinity exists Amba Bishoy meant Christ himself. The Church which represents the Body of Christ can be called universal Church.

4) To Samih Raad about the criteria for defining an ecumenical council: Every council followed by a separation is not an ecumenical council. So the councils before Chalcedon are ecumenical councils, especially the first two. At the first two councils all important matters were settled, the third did not add much. If there are any theological matters of general significance for the Churches in the East or West we can hold another ecumenical council and let the Holy Spirit work.

When I as a Greek Catholic see an Orthodox I see Christ in him. We are both members of the body of Christ we are one even though we disagree on the role of the Pope in the Church.

*Archbishop Krikorian:*

1) To Mar Gregorios: There is no mistake in my paper, perhaps there is a misunderstanding due to the Arabic translation of the English text.

2) To Amba Bishoy: It should be understood that Mar Gregorios repeatedly rejected the identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Church Catholic or universal Church. In the quotation mentioned above he just reproduced a general conviction which is not a settled issue.

3) An additional comment to Archbishop Boustros: He described Western councils as universal councils. This should be avoided because sometimes ecumenical councils are referred to as universal councils. The preferable term for Western councils is "general councils of the West".

4) A critical remark to Father Paul Sayah: It is his personal opinion if he quotes Prof. Greshake saying that we are allowed to make some amendments to these Western general councils. I consider this very dangerous because it implies manipulation to do any amendment or modification of councils. It is generally agreed that the most important aspect about a council is its reception in the Church. The Oriental Orthodox only accept the first three - the so-called ecumenical - councils, the Eastern Orthodox also accept the ensuing four councils. It is through the reception of councils that we can reach an agreement. It is the right and duty of every Christian, every theologian, every Church to evaluate the theological and canonical contents of the later councils of the first and second millennium and to receive it in the life of the respective Church.

*Mar Theophilus (Syrian Orthodox):*

1) To Father Samih Raad's question how I imagine the form of unity among the Churches of the Middle East: This is a difficult subject. If we look at the situation in Beirut there are five different Catholic archbishops: a Maronite, a Greek Catholic, a Syrian Catholic, an Armenian Catholic and a Latin Catholic. These Churches have ethnic relations and a common faith. For example, the two Churches of Syrian tradition should be united. As regards the issue of authority we support the patriarchal structure. Authority in the Church is necessary, e.g. that of the archbishop over his clergy. But we should never have the predominance of Rome over other Churches. The source of our authority is the Holy Synod and the leadership of the Church.

2) To Amba Bishoy: I have no objection to having one visible head of the Church. I am totally convinced that after unity has been realized there will be one visible head of the Church. After the Bishop of Rome, the Bishop of Alexandria or Antioch or Jerusalem

will be the head of the Church. I do not say the Bishop of Rome must be the head but there is no objection to have one visible head of the Church in unity.

3) One final comment: I notice that the Catholic participants, in particular Archbishop Cyrille Boustros use the terms "separation" and "separated". We better say "dissension" because the Catholic Church was not a mother church from which all the other Churches were separated. However, the term "separation" is adequate in a different context: The Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Coptic Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches were separated from the mother Orthodox Churches in the Middle Ages. Our first and last objective is unity. I am fully convinced that our Churches never disagreed on faith or dogma. They disagreed on authority, which is a matter of politics.

*Father Paul Sayah:* In my paper I was asked to summarize the results of the PRO ORIENTE consultations. I was committed to this task without putting forward my personal opinion.

### **Monday Evening - Sixth working session**

*Moderator:* Metropolitan Mar Athanasios

## **FUTURE MODELS OF UNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

*Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian presents the questions for the working groups:*

1. There was One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church in communion before the schism in Chalcedon in 451. Do you accept this model today or not and what is your concept of this model today or not, and what is your concept of this old model?
2. Among the principles set for directing the search for unity between the Catholic and Coptic churches we have the following passage:  
"Once unity is achieved, the richness of the various traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression for the enrichment of all within the one Coptic Church under the leadership of the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark." (PRO ORIENTE Booklet No 1, p.112)  
How would you apply this principle once unity has been achieved among Christians in the Middle East?
3. Depending on the papers you have heard this morning and after reading the Communiqués of the foundation of PRO ORIENTE, how do you envisage future unity?

*Following that he gives some impulses:*

## **MODEL(S) OF CHURCH UNITY**

There is only One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church the unity of which has not been broken; unfortunately the *communio (koinonia)* is broken and it is our responsibility and duty to restore this communion.

1. For the restoration of the communion again the lifting of anathemata on both sides was regarded important and healing by the Group.
2. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed can be the basic symbol in confessing the Apostolic faith of the One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church.
3. Naturally the local churches - gathered around their bishops, will continue on different levels their sacramental, spiritual, missionary and disciplinary life.
4. All bishops and metropolitans should solve problems concerning the Universal Church - of faith or liturgy or of canon law, in ecumenical councils.
5. The unity of the Church Universal can be envisaged in the model of *regional Church* which may include or cover various traditions and cultures within one jurisdiction and under one head.
6. The principle one bishop in one town or city could be locally treated, solved and practiced. The principle of one head (patriarch, catholicos or pope) in one region or country probably will not raise great difficulties. However we are aware of such problems in the Middle East where in one region or country there are several patriarchs. For special cases should be found special solutions.
7. Many members of the Group III find the pattern of the unity of Church before 451 as a good model, but some mentioned the problems which may come out of the developments which took place in course of time in the history.
8. Some Roman Catholic members of the Group appreciated the pre-chalcedonian model, but demanded solution for later developments. Specially they regard as important the problem of the primacy of the pope. One participant said: "The Church must have a/one Head, but that Head should not be dictator!"
9. Many participants understand and envisage the unity of the Church as a dynamic reality which will be open to the Holy Spirit and to its guidance. The more we open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit, the more the unity of the Church will be strengthened.
10. Some participants thought that the model of the pre-Chalcedonian period is utopical! An Orthodox voice proposed to accept each other mutually without claims of primacy or other changes.
11. A similar suggestion came from an Oriental Catholic participant who envisages the unity on the ground of one Apostolic Faith and under one Head. He gave the example of the garden - one garden with many and various flowers!  
The last two contributions:
12. According to some participants the unity of the Church, specially in the Middle East, should be realized or effected in two stages:
  - a) First those who have the same or similar faith should come together and be united.
  - b) Secondly those Churches who have the same or similar historical and cultural traditions should come together and be united!

13. The last but not the least, an Orthodox participant expressed his worry that the time is running quickly and the Churches are doing very little for unity in the Middle East. He also thought that the unity can be effected in two stages (see Paragraph 12), pleaded for separate leaders or heads in each region or country but one head for the Universal Church for a certain period and on the system of "turnus"!

### ***First Working Group***

*Dr. Henry Cremona*

#### *Answer to the First Question*

Church communion before the schism could be truly considered a model to go back to because this communion was realized in the following way:

1. The presence of consultation and discussions among churches.
2. The absence of the spirit of dominance practiced on other churches.
3. The presence of one sole concern uniting these churches which was the manner in which Christ's mission was to be evangelized.
4. The absence of political conflicts. There was a complete communion in ministry and ecclesiology i.e. the election of the Roman Pope (Pope Climentus) or the patriarch of Constantinople (John Chrysostom) who were both from the church of Antioch.
5. Common Liturgies and prayers yet diverse forms.

Therefore it is possible to go back to this model of communion starting from the fulfilment of unity within one church family (i.e. the Syrian church family) according to the location of the church. So that in the future one could speak of: The Antiochene Syrian church or the Assyro-Chaldean church or the Coptic church.

#### *Answer to the Second Question*

This principle could be easily applied in Alexandria because of the common ethnological ground whereas it might take a longer time in other regions. However it is not hard to achieve.

#### *Answer to the Third Question*

unity can be achieved in the future through the following :

1. Communion in faith, sacraments and services.
2. The adoption of consultations instead of practising authority.
3. Concentration upon Evangelization of the Gospel.
4. Necessity to meet on the confessional level and overlook; worldly factors.

It could be stated that:

1. Conferences that discuss the issues of unity form an effective means in the progress towards unity and true communion.
2. The dialogue should not be exclusively with Rome. It should be between local churches as well. All the participants in this group expressed their wish to pay great attention to the choice of terms used and to avoid terms that might hurt others.

### ***Second Working Group***

*Haytham Tahan*

#### *Answer to the First Question*

We are so glad to go back to our common faith before 451 especially after discovering that the misunderstanding that took place in that council concerning the nature of Christ was a verbal one. We are also happy to see that all Catholic and Orthodox churches believe now that Christ is 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.

Therefore, we have to be inspired by the spirit of that model in a way that is compatible with the new conditions of the church. We remain united in our communion with Christ while preserving the plurality of churches, heritages and liturgies.

#### *Answer to the Second Question*

We think that since the main obstacle concerning the nature of Christ has been eliminated, the other less difficult obstacles can be eliminated as well, and the application of such a principle becomes possible, while each church retains its individuality and liturgical life. The most important example is the step taken by the Syrian Orthodox church and the Greek Orthodox church; in other words "unity in plurality". unity in faith and plurality in administration.

#### *Answer to the Third Question*

unity is on the way, sooner or later. There might be obstacles on the way but they are possible to be overcome such as the authority of Rome and the primacy of the Pope, his infallibility and the unification of the date of Easter.

As far as the future model of unity is concerned we look forward, however, to an international ecumenical council in which patriarchs of the five sees gather together headed alternately by the patriarchs while each church reserves its right in running its internal affairs.

### ***Third Working Group***

*Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian*

*The answers were given by the participants to all the questions:*

*Maurice Tadros (Copt.-orth.):* The first question is so important and significant because it takes us back to the one and undivided church before the schism.

Before 451 we had one church representing an ideal model which we do recognize and endeavor to achieve. It would be a great step if non-traditional churches recognized this model, and it would be a great occasion for traditional churches to reconsider their posi-

tions to see if they had deviated from the right track. This image of the early church is an ideal model that needs to be adapted to fit present time.

The issue could be settled in two stages:

- Agree to have one big church comprising all small churches?
- Cease ordaining new clergies from small churches?
- Accept the present status of bishops.

*Father George Glore (Syr.-orth.):*

I don't think we are obliged to return to the early model of the church because it was governed by politics.

- We have to take into consideration the new needs of the church today.
- Old factors have changed and the old model can't be applied.

I believe that the strong church shall have to have its own role, and to maintain its heritage and liturgy. I can figure two approaches:

1. unity between churches of one faith.
2. Rapprochement between churches with the same liturgy, traditions and history.

*Deacon Joseph Muawad (Maronite)*

- Is the model of the early church before 451 acceptable or not?
- The positive aspect of this model is the actual practice of communion of faith. Where is the negative aspect?
- It is so hard for me as a Catholic, to accept because this model doesn't emphasize the concept of papal primacy. Primacy will be a prime obstacle for this model today.
- unity is an incessant constructive and dynamic process.
- unity of the church is not limited to dogmatic or canonical issues; politics and culture are also involved.
- Saint Paul contemplates this unity when he speaks about the conflict between the body and the soul.

It is a Christian position that reflects the image of the church torn between the needs of the body and those of the soul.

Progress towards unity can be achieved when the church becomes more sanctified. There is one more thing I'd like to add concerning the primacy of the pope: The pope is the visible head of the church who doesn't interfere in the new affairs of the church in case unity is achieved.

*Father Stephanos Issa (Syr.-orth.)*

If we return to the early model of 451, will Rome stick to her convictions and accept that model?

- The applicable proposal is the mutual recognition of churches; the acceptance of one another with no jurisdictional claim of any church over the church universal.

*Father Hanna Abdo (Syr.-cath.)*

The first question is similar to asking a thirsty person whether he'd like to drink. It is not a realistic question, because it takes the church back to the era before 451. We can't

overlook the fact that we have a lot of problems. Can we ignore these problems and return to 451?

They can benefit from the prerogatives of both churches.

The unified church shall maintain one faith yet each church shall have to preserve her own liturgy in the same way the one garden has various flowers and plants consequently we have:

- The same faith.
- The same sacraments.
- Diverse church traditions.

*William Mansour (Syr.-orth.)*

- We have got to be positive.
- In this general atmosphere of tension we must have faith in Christ and in his saving work.
- We must have the same faith and the same sacraments and maintain our tradition.
- Each region shall have one leadership with the aim of facilitating the administrative affairs of the community.
- We have to stick to the land and cooperate with the church in order to stop emigration.
- Leadership of the local church shall rotate.

#### ***Fourth Working Group***

*Ghada Abdayem*

*Answer to the First Question*

The fourth non - official consultation convened in Vienna from Sept 11-17, 1978 had as its primary topic the nature and scope of primacy in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. As a related minor topic, the role of the Oriental Catholic churches was also given some consideration.

In passages 16 and 17 we read:

The results of the four Vienna consultations should be presented by the participants to their respective churches for evaluation and assessment, so that these evaluations can be a basis for further steps to be considered by an official commission of the churches.

- Discussion of the first communiqué by the fourth group continued and Bishop Amba Bishoy corrected a sentence in the third passage which had been translated incorrectly to be: "Our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions" instead of "the ecclesiastical and theological traditions."

Through the discussion, the following points have been emphasized:

1. Emphasis should be primarily on the Holy Book and then on the tradition associated with it.
2. Some of the participants stressed that it was the heads of the church and not the ordinary people who had one faith, that created the problem.
3. Other participants contradicted the previous conviction and stressed the opposite.

4. Many solutions are found on paper, yet they never come into force. There should be the means for conveying these solutions to the people so that all obstacles created by the long period of division be eliminated.
5. Dialogue is the only way for solving divergence which are the result of terminologies, interpretations, or the absence of historical facts due to the difference of church heritages.
6. Dialogue leads to the discovery of common denominators.
7. In order that we get positive results there should be:
  1. Faith in the ecumenical work.
  2. Knowledge of one another.
  3. The will and intention to have change and rapprochement.
8. An emphasis on the role of Jesus Christ in the life and salvation of man.
9. Differences in opinion shall have to be acknowledged.
10. The presence of a commission for discussion in each church and in each church family.
11. Participants wondered why the Oriental Catholic churches were absent in the dialogue.
12. The text has been considered positive enhancing thus the meeting and the dialogue. Though it was an excellent text, yet, it didn't address the people as it included all the schools of theology. We see in the text Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus and the terminology of the Cappadocian theology which emphasizes what is positive. It is the greatest text in the twentieth century.

A good choice of Arabic terms expressing Humanity and Divinity to fit the mentality of people would be a good step.

- Why did it take 23 years to have this issue propagated?
- Cancelling some of the expressions that might be misunderstood is not the right solution, yet the use of simplified terminology that had been agreed upon by all is the right initiative. When one essential truth is interpreted in diverse terms, it will be proper to have each side explain to the other all the implications associated with the term in order to achieve mutual understanding and have the old terms understood in a better way instead of having these terms cancelled, so that they cease to be the reason behind disputes and divisions but rather an enrichment of the theological interpretation and texts that elucidate truths of theology.

#### *Answer to the Second Question*

The Vienna christological agreement has contributed to the healing of wounds caused by the bitter religious conflicts resulting from the schism that had taken place in our Middle Eastern region after Chalcedon and had lasted for more than 15 centuries.

Although dogmatic differences in terms of other issues under discussion have not been overcome, yet, the healing of old wounds has been considered a basis for encouraging ecumenical meetings between churches of the region and rapprochement on church and community levels. It has also been an initiative that has opened the door for more dialogues in order to solve dogmatic differences in a spirit of love ; and to search for church unity. unity of church will help provide care for Christians who live in the Middle East eliminating thus their need for emigrating to other Christian countries in search of economic security.

#### *Answer to the Third Question*

The dispute about the nature of Jesus Christ is one of the reasons behind the questions raised among members of other religions in relation to the Incarnation of the son of God and his salutary action. Therefore the christological accord represents a turning point in the history of Christian witnessing in a multi-religious region we are capable now of using one terminology while speaking of God manifested in flesh for our salvation which is the basis of our Christian witness.

- It would be a great step if we could unify the date of Easter achieving thus one verbal practical witness.

#### *Fifth Working Group*

*Ephrem Karim*

#### *General Remarks:*

- We only had time to read the communiqué of the first consultation.
- Attention should be paid to the language when assigning work groups.
- It was recommended that sessions be started with a prayer or a hymn.

#### *Answer to the First Question*

The rediscovery of our Christian traditions in the light of the agreements arrived at in the Vienna consultation makes it mandatory for us to acknowledge our failure in understanding others, repent, tolerate and forgive others. This repentance submits us to the witness of the Holy book on which we depend for building a new conception of our new life based on sharing in the sacraments of the one church of Christ.

We also touched upon the meaning of tradition and found out that we had a common apostolic tradition and other acquired traditions which can be discussed in order to achieve the long aspired goal.

#### *Answer to the Second Question*

Members of the group showed great interest in this question and emphasized the necessity for a unified and clear vision assumed by churches towards emigration.

- Some participants proposed the topic of proselytism exercised on local churches by western churches offering assistance to refugees and emigrants as is the case in Ethiopia.
- Local churches shall have to cooperate in establishing economic projects and social programs which would help members of these churches keep living in their countries.
- Churches shall have to cooperate in forming associations that would take care of emigrants and refugees and facilitate their orientation in the new communities.
- One of the participants proposed a number of suggestions concerning the pastoral role of the church and the way to propagate an awareness of unity among members of the church especially among the clergy with a special emphasis on the unification of the date of Christian feasts.

- Participants had different views concerning the involvement of the church in politics. Some were of the opinion that the church should keep away from politics in application of the Lord's statements "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" other participants were of the opinion that church could have a very active role in directing man towards the service of his country; a role which emanates from the three duties Jesus Christ stated:

Ministry : to live in chastity and sacredness.

Prophecy : to declare divine truths.

Sovereignty : to serve all people in a spirit of love and peace.

### *Answer to the Third Question*

It was noticed that there was a complete ignorance, on the part of other religions, of Christians and Christianity. It was also stated that our witness today was to live our faith truly and honestly.

Furthermore, a suggestion was made to benefit from the common denominators found in Christianity and other religions for the welfare of Humanity.

Concerning the diffusion of western Culture, it was suggested that our Oriental heritage and culture be diffused along with what could be appropriately adapted from other Cultures.

### **Group reports**

#### Report of the first working group by Henry Cremona

1. It is possible to restore the communion of Churches according to the model of the time before schism because this communion was realized in the following form:

- a) Consultation available among the Churches
- b) No spirit of domination over other Churches
- c) The only and common concern among these Churches was how to make the message of Christ reach the whole world.
- d) No political disagreement, no formality among Churches but full communion in priesthood and liturgy. When choosing a pope for Rome, for example, they could choose Pope Peter, or as a patriarch for Constantinople John Chrysostomos, and both were form the Church of Antioch.
- e) The same liturgy and prayers though in diverse forms

We can return to this old model of communion, e.g. starting with unity among the Churches of the Syrian family.

2. This principle may be easily applied to Alexandria where there is a common basis such as ethnic relations. But it may be difficult - not impossible - to apply it to other regions.

3. The answers above also fit here. unity may be realized in future through the following considerations:

- a) Sharing faith, sacraments and services
- b) Consultations replacing the practice of authority
- c) Transcending human factors to realize rapprochement on the level of faith

Now the next steps should be

- d) Conferences dealing with matters related to unity should be the means for proceeding towards unity.
- e) Dialogue should be held not only with Rome but at the same time with the local Churches.
- f) As to the language of research, we shall be careful to choose appropriate ecumenical terms which do not hurt anyone.

#### Report of the second working group by Haytham Tahan

1. We are happy to return to the one faith before 451, especially as it has been discovered:

- a) that the misunderstanding which happened at that council concerning the nature of Christ was a matter of terminology and
- b) that the Churches can now express together their belief that Christ is perfect God and perfect man.

Therefore, we have to take this model and put it in a form which conforms with the new circumstances of the Church and maintains the diversity of Churches, their languages and liturgies.

2. As the main obstacle related to the nature of Christ has been removed, the other easier obstacles may be removed as well. Accordingly, it will be possible to apply this model of Egypt after which each Church maintains its peculiarities, its liturgies and everything else. A very good example of this is the rapprochement between the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. In other words, unity can be realized with the existing plurality, i.e. unity in faith and diversity in administration.

3. We see that unity is forthcoming, sooner or later. In our opinion any obstacles such as primacy of Rome or the infallibility of the Pope may be overcome. As regards the future model of unity, we dream of an ecumenical council of the patriarchs of the five sees, where each presides in turn, while the Churches run their internal affairs themselves.

#### Report of the third working group by Archbishop Krikorian

As we thought the three questions are related closely we put the answers together.

The preamble to our report which is due to the impulse of Prof. Harnoncourt:

There is only one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church the unity of which has not been broken. Unfortunately, the communion (koinonia) is broken. It is our responsibility and duty to restore this communion.

- a) For the restoration of the communion the lifting of anathemata on both sides is regarded as important and healing.
- b) The Nicene - Constantinopolitan Creed can be the basic symbol for professing the apostolic faith of the one Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church.
- c) Certainly, the local Churches gathered around their bishops will continue their sacramental, spiritual, missionary and disciplinary life on different levels.
- d) All bishops and metropolitans should solve problems concerning the universal Church, of faith or liturgy or of canon law, in ecumenical councils.



e) The unity of the universal Church can be envisaged in the model of regional Churches which may include or cover the values, traditions and cultures within one jurisdiction and under one head.

f) The principle of one bishop in one town or city could be locally realized. Likewise, the principle of one head (patriarch, catholicos or pope) in one region or country will probably not raise great difficulties. However, we are aware of problems in this respect in the Middle East where in one region or country there are several patriarchs. For such cases special solutions shall be found.

g) Many members of the group find the pattern of the Church unity before 451 a good model. However, some others stated that we cannot simply ignore the historical developments and problems thereafter. Some participants considered this model utopically. Some Roman Catholic members of the group appreciated the pre-Chalcedonian model but demanded a solution for later developments. They consider the question of the primacy of the pope especially important.

An Orthodox voice proposed accepting each other without claims of primacy. An Oriental Catholic participant envisages unity on the ground of the one apostolic faith and under one head. Another Orthodox participant pleaded for separate leaders or heads in each region or country but one head for the universal Church for a certain period and in a system of turns.

h) A contribution for the situation in the Middle East: Those Churches which have the same or similar historical and cultural traditions should be united.

i) Many participants understand and envisage the unity of the Church as a dynamic reality which will be open to the Holy Spirit and to his guidance. The more we open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit the more the unity of the Church will be strengthened.

#### Report of the fourth working group by Ghada Abdeyem

All three questions were answered together:

a) Before schism the Church had local or regional councils and ecumenical councils which comprised all the Churches. The model of the Church before schism is acceptable but requires elaborate study of the subject.

b) Councils should be held in independence of civil authority, with a free conscience and the decisions coming from the heart of the Church.

c) Regions which appeared recently in the Church map such as America and Australia should be taken into consideration. It is agreed that the old Churches shall maintain their traditional position.

d) The Oriental Orthodox Churches do not accept holding an ecumenical council in which the Churches of the other traditions are represented according to their size. In such a case the Oriental Orthodox would never have a chance of winning the majority of votes. There should be an equilibrium between various traditions.

#### Report of the fifth working group by Father Ephrem Karim

1. We consider the model of the Church before the schism of Chalcedon an ideal one because the communion comprised - both theoretically and practically - all traditions and various languages. It united the people of the apostolic sees in one Holy Catholic Apo-

stolic Church. However, liturgies and ranks were not developed as they are now. We cannot ignore the Church structures of the present, the different ethnic origins and nationalities, the expansion and extension of the first four apostolic sees and the individual developments in each Church. Therefore this model of the Church before schism - though an ideal one - seems not to be acceptable and practicable at present.

2. The members of our group appreciate the great efforts of the representatives of the two Churches, the Coptic and the Coptic Catholic Churches, in laying down the principles for complete unity between these two Churches.

These principles confirm two facts which should be mentioned:

a) The desire for unity reached the extent of accepting one another. This shows that the ecumenical work began to give ripe fruits for common co-operation and service in various fields, else the representatives of the two Churches would not have laid down such principles that suppose we have one faith, one baptism and one Lord.

b) Mere talking about the time when unity may be realized supposes that both Churches are sure that unity will be realized, a matter which had not been in the thought of the two Churches before. We - as a group - are of the opinion that there should be mutual respect for Church traditions in all Churches.

Some of us found that the wording of this article of the principles may be of great benefit to our five Churches of Antioch which have the same basis whether historical or liturgical. We must give due consideration to the diversity of traditions that were introduced in our Churches after the schism. We have one thought, one prayer and we ask for communion in all sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

We also believe that unity should be realized and expressed through mass media. We admit humbly that the Churches have to sacrifice a little to pave the way for rapprochement. Some participants gave as an example the present situation of the Catholic Patriarchal Council. Some others mentioned the present rapprochement between the Syrian Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox Churches. It is based on a joint communiqué signed by the Patriarchs Mar Ignatius Zakka I and Ignatius IV. This communiqué spoke in the name of the two Churches which at present have one see in Antioch and one Antiochian council.

3. One member of our group presented a quotation from St. Augustine "unity in obligatory matters, freedom in dubious matters, love in everything". So we may have unity in the Spirit with plurality of heritage but love unites us in everything.

We asserted that the Holy Spirit has an important role in the future unity. Others suggested liturgical prayers in one language as a step towards unity.

As regards the envisaged form of unity among Churches in future, some presented as an example the relationship among the Oriental Catholic Churches through the Catholic Patriarchal Council. There are two important aspects in our conception of the model of future unity:

a) We adhere to the conciliar model, i.e. each Church maintains its heritage and structure and establishes communion with other Churches through a council including the patriarchs of those churches without distinction.

b) We approve of the model of unity between the Coptic and the Catholic Churches, i.e. unity which shall be effected by bringing together all Churches in one Church in steps. The prominent thing in our group was the desire to reach unity as quickly as possible but our conception thereof differed according to the background of each of us. Some were of the opinion that there should be one powerful Church under one leadership in the

Orient. Some others found it an urgent requirement to unify some matters that affect the daily life of the people such as the feasts or the method of prayer. But all members agree that continual prayer for unity is necessary because this unity is a gift from God.

*Further discussion of the results of the working groups*

*Prof. Harnoncourt* (Roman Catholic, member of PRO ORIENTE): Can we agree that the unity of the Church is not broken because the unity is granted by the Holy Spirit as we say one God, one Christ, one Holy Spirit, one Church, one baptism? It is not the unity which is broken but the koinonia, the communion between the Churches, and that is because of sin. As the unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit we are sinning against the Holy Spirit as long as we are not in communion. It is the communion we have to restore because the unity is given.

*Father Nanna Abdu* (Syrian Catholic): The first question for the group work is not factual but fictitious as if a magic stick had struck all dissensions away. We are not in the same position as before Chalcedon. As to a future model of the Church, there should be a head whom we called senior among brothers, equal in rights and duties. About the actual form of such presidency we shall consult the bible and history. For the future unity we hope that there will be one faith, the same sacraments and one head while each Church maintains its tradition and liturgy.

*Chairman Mar Athanasios*: I support the view that unity was not broken in Chalcedon, it is the communion which was broken to some extent. unity still exists in our lives, in our conscience and in our activities because the Holy Spirit is with us. We pray in the Creed "We believe in One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church".

After hearing the group reports I feel that something is lacking. The concept of conciliarity should have been much more elaborated.

A question to Archbishop Krikorian, who has been with PRO ORIENTE for such a long time: Can PRO ORIENTE gain any benefit from the discussions we had in the groups these two days? And can it offer something new concerning the unity of our Churches?

*Archbishop Krikorian* (Armenian, Vienna): My attitude towards these working groups is very positive. Certainly, there has been no time yet for the results to be classified systematically. Definitely, there are some new aspects which are worth dealing with in further study, for example the following suggesting: that the Churches should accept each other without claiming primacy over the other and without demanding changes in our rites and languages, or the suggestion of a local unity of the Churches in the Middle East.

*Amba Bishoy*: A comment on the repeated demand of having one head for the Church. Churches are led by their local heads. Each of the Orthodox Churches of our family has its own head, and they maintain their faith and heritage without having one general head representing the five sees.

However, in case of an urgent matter of faith or any danger for the Catholic, i.e. universal Church, we will have an ecumenical council. Certainly, the ecumenical council has a chairman who presides.

But, with the exception of ecumenical councils, what is the necessity of a general head for the Church? How can a person of one continent know the needs and the nature of life of the Churches of another continent? For example, how should the pope of Alexandria lead the people of the Church of Antioch? A general head for the Church all over the world is not practicable. From the first council of Jerusalem we can learn that the head of the Church is Christ and that the Holy Spirit is leading it.

*Father Dihrayr* (Armenian, Antelias): It is certainly a good thing to discuss and to exchange experience but I have the feeling that we are all lost. How shall we transfer all the results of this meeting to our Churches?

From my personal experience I strongly suggest that we pray for the solution of our problems. We shall create praying groups as we had them in the deserts, monasteries and homes in the past. In all our efforts to discuss and to understand we need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. We need to follow the examples of the apostles when they prayed for the Holy Spirit before Pentecost. Through the Holy Spirit everybody could understand them in his own language. In the councils and theological meetings, in this particular meeting we do not understand each other. We think to understand each other but this is only in our minds, in fact we misunderstand each other. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to work between us and through us and to bring us together.

*Prof. Nijam* (Maronite, Prof. of Philosophy): unity before schism was due to the fact that the empire was one. The Church was divided for many reasons, most of which were political. And politicians today wish to have the Church divided. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Churches shall work for unity. As for the leadership, which is not a political position but a service, they shall adopt the model of conciliarity, a model confirming with our age on the threshold of the third millennium.

*Archbishop Cyrille Boustros* (Melkite): The pope of Rome was considered a patriarch of the West by the Churches of the West. Due to the schism between East and West the Western theologians considered this patriarch of the West an ecumenical patriarch of the whole Christian world. Thus it became theologically established that the patriarch of the West is not only bishop of Rome and the West but also of the whole world. There arose an attitude that all patriarchates are to be cancelled and that the whole Christian world is to be one group under one leadership and one jurisdiction. This Western thought is rejected today by Western theologians, even in the Vatican. We also reject it and return to the old view of spiritual communion among the local Churches and their patriarchs. No one in Rome wants the Christian world to return to the view that prevailed in the First Vatican Council in 1869/70, namely that the pope becomes patriarch of the whole Christian world.

I ask all the Oriental Catholic Churches not to bring us back but to take a step forward. All Churches shall attempt to find together new forms of relations and co-operation. They should discuss together the idea of Church Federation, i.e. all Churches have one head. Again I emphasize that the practical solution should be discussed among us in an ecumenical council in the near future.

*Father Elias Aghie (Melkite):*

- a) For the first time in an ecumenical meeting I feel a spiritual relationship with everybody here. But what will remain of this friendly atmosphere when each of us returns to his work?
- b) Such meetings take place on the top level. How can we convey these thoughts to our people in their everyday life?
- c) More important than all such meetings and dialogues is the standardization of the date of Easter for all Christians. This would strengthen the Christian existence and the feeling of belonging to one Christ.

*Gabriel Chabib*

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### *Introduction*

May I express my gratefulness to PRO ORIENTE for organizing ecumenical meetings like this through which I am able to convene the results of our dialogue to you. The endeavors of PRO ORIENTE have enriched the ecumenical movement all over the world and especially in the Middle East.

First of all, I think, it is necessary to define the characteristic marks of the ecumenical movement since its beginning:

### **1. Marks of the Ecumenical Movement**

#### *1.1. The Beginning of the Ecumenical Movement*

Ecumenism was founded in the Middle Eastern countries and enriched by the following developments all over the world:

1. The first signals of a missionary movement towards unity began 1910 at Adnobra and 1925 in Jerusalem. That led to the foundation of the Church Council of the Orient, whose original members were the Protestant Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church.
2. The ecumenical experiences of the Protestant Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church in the WCC since the 1960ies helped to ease the negotiations in the Middle East, which led to the foundation of the MECC in 1974.
3. The MECC was open to the Catholic Church and all the other local and regional Churches to participate in different ecumenical meetings. The participation of the Catholic Church improved in the 1980ies the negotiations between Catholics and the MECC. The Catholic Church became an official member of the MECC.

These mutual relations led to the two following developments worldwide:

1. Each nation in its region does not feel alone with its fate anymore, but feels a helping secular power like the European countries, like in the struggle of East against West to the end of Communism or like the assistance of Western countries after the Gulf war.

2. The importance of the relations between the Churches of the Middle East and the Christianity in the world could be felt. The Churches of the Middle East received the same missionary movement which they gave in former times. Important is that the relations between the local and the universal Church build a sort of Corpus Christi.

#### *1.2. Transformation from the Élite to the Basis*

The ecumenical movement is not longer a "concealed" élite of local Churches like in the last decades, but on the way to an official platform of the Churches. It has become the possession of those, who were against it originally. Therefore it became more and more a sign of hope for the Christians within the MECC.

#### *1.3. From the One to the Whole*

Before 1990 the ecumenical movement was represented by Protestants and Orthodox officially (without Catholics). Since then, following the beginning membership of the Catholic Church to the MECC, this ecumenical movement is open for all church traditions and Christian confessions.

#### *1.4. The unity of the Church and its Relations on the Christian Way*

The belief in the unity of the Church was so deepened by the ecumenical movement as it is demanded by the Holy Scripture. This unity is witness for different other religions of the Middle East. Also Jesus Christ has demanded unity from his Church by saying, one should pray to be united, as He was united with His father. On the other hand is this deep religious belief in the unity under pressure from outside, which leads to the fact that the strive for unity gains intensively to solve the problems of the Church and the community in a better way.

About unity of the Church the following was said:

- The unity is neither a political nor a cultural front against anybody.
- The unity is one of widespread aptitude and historical knowledge.
- The unity transgresses the imperium, the secular power and the political dialogue.
- The unity overwhelms philosophy, culture and language, which led to the separation of the churches. A convenient example for that is the present theological dialogue between two orthodox church families which were separated by the council of Chalcedon

#### *1.5. Ecumenical Movement or: On the Way to unity and Spiritual Renewal*

1. This spiritual movement was acquainted as coming back to their fountain and their roots by all Churches. That led to the acception of the other Christian communities as brethren and sisters in Christ. Finally that will lead to the unity of the universal Church.
2. This spiritual renewal of the ecumenical movement could be the basis for the solving of the problems, could lead to mutual understanding and the unity of the Church.

### **1.6. Ecumenical Movement or: On the Way to unity in the Service of Mankind**

In that field the ecumenical movement generally sees the service for the people or the diakonia as the most important target and witness of the Christians.

The MECC yields the following services for the ecumenical movement:

- Mutual support to the people without counting a certain confession.
- A contribution to the justice and to the peace for all people.
- Financial support to the community for a better life of the poor and suppressed.

### **2. The Achievements of the MECC for the Ecumenical Movement through its General Assemblies**

The foundation of the MECC in 1974 was a common wish of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches. This Church council was a sign of petition of the Christians of that region because of the fear, frustration and division within and among the Churches. For the realization of that petition every church took the task to strengthen and to support the MECC for a better future. This effort was an important deed and the guarantee of the credibility with respect to justice and peace of the Middle East. Since twenty years the MECC continues its work in that manner and has already reached some goals, despite dangerous political circumstances in the Middle East.

The General Assemblies between 1974 and 1994 served as possibilities for spiritual exchange between the Churches and proved the common wish in different issues.

The following General Assemblies took place in the last twenty years:

1. In 1974 on the occasion of the foundation of the MECC the First General Assembly took place in Cyprus. It was a deed of faith, a "common Christian message", for only the faith in Jesus Christ leads to the foundation and revelation of the importance of the Church's unity.
2. From March 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>, 1977, the Second General Assembly took place at Barmana/Lebanon. The motto of it was 2 Cor 5,18: "... give us the service of reconciliation" facing the conflicts in Lebanon, the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus, the Palestine's fighting for autonomy. The Churches clarified that all of them and the MECC will always stay in the service of reconciliation without regarding religion or political conviction.
3. In 1980 the Third General Assembly took place in Nikosia. Then the assembly's motto was the sentence "Your realm may come" from the Pater Noster. Despite the many earthen possessions and forms of power the assembly decided unanimously that Jesus Christ is the real King whose realm is above all. It was stated, without denying present inspirations, that the Christians of the Middle East were the first sons of God's empire, before they become servants of other kings.
4. In 1985 the Fourth General Assembly was celebrated as 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MECC with the motto "Living Will". By considering the hopelessness and fear in the region the Churches yielded to realize the will of Jesus Christ which was transmitted to them.

But the main issue of the assembly was:

- How could other Christians take part in that will?
- How could the Churches be a signal of that will for the persecuted people in the Middle East?

5. From 22<sup>nd</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1990, the Fifth General Assembly took place in Nikosia with the motto of Eph 4,3 "Make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit through peace." In the Middle East there are division of the one Church, social suppression, endangered identities and other political, cultural and economical problems. The Fifth Assembly was convened as invitation and appeal to regain the wish of Jesus Christ to the Churches to become one as He became One with His father. The universal Church should be one in the spirit and peace. The wish of the Christians who suffer from division and war, is to see the new day of the unity, freedom, justice and peace.

### **3. Future Targets**

#### **3.1. Renovation of the Ecumenical Duty**

It is necessary to renew the common confidence in the unity and cultural exchange between the Churches. These are the ecumenical challenges of our days:

- Diocesan problems between churches like mixed-marriages and mutual attending of liturgical services.
- The return of the churches to their old cultural and traditional identity. We take this phenomenon as obviously. But that is a challenge for the state and even ecumenism, though the ecumenical movement has demanded itself to leave the own identity for a common consciousness. At the same time we should know, this return will not lead to separation, but to the enrichment of other Churches and will finally be an advantage for the ecumenical movement.

#### **3.2. Regional Connections**

The Christians and Christian confession can be divided in two groups:

- Organic relatedness to the land, where Jesus, our Savior, was born, lived, died and resurrected. This land is sanctified by the blood of the apostles, martyrs and holy men also.
- Relatedness to the common revelation among the confessions. There was spent many time by studying the relations of the local and the universal Church. I think, I have no time now, to talk about the spiritual and cultural climate of that region.

#### **3.3. New Communities**

The Christians took place in the liberation of their communities from the Ottoman empire and the Western colonization. That brought a new self-confidence:

- Preserving of the religious dignity within the communities and not the denying of it like after the French Revolution.
- Tolerance of different confessions, directions, culture and equality for all without consideration of religion, race and culture.

The Middle Eastern Christian community needs no secularism or atheism like in Europe, where the people are honored on the costs of God. Our community needs no technocratic evolution, in which the state and its government are sanctified on the costs

of the people. Our community should help to reconcile God and man and the people among them as God's children without considering their religion or race. Such a community is like all religions and cultures and guarantees a state without religious conflicts, which is based on democracy, parliament, freedom and human dignity. This community presupposes the return to the discovering of the religious tradition. Through tolerance historical traumata like Auschwitz among the Jews, the crusades among the Muslims and other atrocities could be relieved.

#### **3.4. Mutual Relations between the Christians all over the World**

The mutual relations between the Churches of the Middle East and the Christians in the world should be continued on the base of understanding at any case. By that the relations would become firmer than in former times.

The Christianity in the Middle East began at Pentecost and exists despite domestic and outer conflicts which undermined the original church through the help of the Holy Spirit until now.

Therefore from all Christians is demanded not to act thoughtlessly to avoid an even deeper division of the Church. On the contrary the Churches of the Middle East should be supported by financial and spiritual help to secure their existence.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Finally may I express my thanks to God for this present meeting and hope that he will hear the efforts of our Churches, first of all the requests of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Baba Shenouda III who said in 1973 that the first divisions of the universal Church took place in this region when he visited the Lebanon. Also the real unification should happen there.

Therefore I request you to pray together that the Holy Spirit may come to the participants of the Sixth General Assembly which will take place next November. The spirit may lead them to intensify their mission of the Christian peace between all Churches and different religions and the whole East.

*Mesrob K. Krikorian*

## **CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UPS**

### **1. Agreement on Agreements.**

1. Christological Formula positively and extensively accepted!
2. On the ground of this agreement
  - a) revise and rewrite History
  - b) revise teaching and teaching-books
  - c) lift the anathemata on both sides, specially from the liturgical texts
3. Ecumenical councils - the first three ecumenical councils enjoy the highest authority and the largest acceptance
4. Models of unity
  - a) pre-chalcedonian period - yes, but take into consideration the later developments
  - b) recognition of each other as we/they are as valid and equal churches without any claim of primacy or other changes.
5. Propagate the results always, everywhere and in every way!

### **2. Subjects for further study**

1. The very special role of the Pope (Petrine office and his Primacy) in the Third millennium.
2. Christological terminology (take into consideration also the biblical and liturgical texts and terminologies)!
3. Historical problems which until now differently interpreted by different sides.
4. Filioque
5. The question of Ecumenical councils - to lead the ecumenical dialogue to a final agreement.
6. The possibility of
  - a) one bishop in one town or city
  - b) one patriarch in one region or country
  - c) one episcopal synod in one region or country
7. Dialogue with the Assyrian Church!

### **3. Regional aspect on regional level**

1. Ecumenical meetings and study-seminars
2. Study- and research groups to examine problems of faith/doctrine, discipline and history.

### **4. Spiritual and Pastoral aspect**

1. To organize prayer groups within the local Church as well as ecumenical or inter-church prayer groups and meetings.
2. Settlement of problems of mixed marriages and mutual pastoral assistance.

**REPORT AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE MASHREQ SYMPOSIUM**  
**ORGANIZED BY PRO ORIENTE IN KASLIK UNIVERSITY**  
**FROM SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup> TO 27<sup>TH</sup> 1994**

1. The participants of the PRO ORIENTE's Mashreq Symposium - bishops, theologians, clergy and faithful of the Syrian Orthodox, the Syrian Catholic, the Maronite, the Armenian Apostolic, the Armenian Catholic, the Melchite, the Coptic Orthodox, the Latin and the Protestant Churches - gratefully expressed the usefulness of this meeting organized by the Vienna-based foundation on the invitation of the Oriental Orthodox and Catholic Patriarchs in the Holy Spirit University in Kaslik near Beyrouth. The aim was to inform the large spectrum of church representatives about the progress achieved in ecumenism over the last 25 years through the Vienna Dialogue between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches as well as the Common Declarations between Heads of Churches and the official and unofficial theological dialogues engaged so far between Rome and the individual Oriental Orthodox churches.

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 result of the five consultations of 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988 and of the PRO ORIENTE Study Seminars on Primacy (1991), on Councils and Conciliarity (1992) and on Ecclesiology (July 1994), 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 important meeting for the countries of the Mashreq was largely due to the support PRO ORIENTE was able to receive from the protectors of PRO ORIENTE such as His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas and His Eminence Cardinal König who himself inaugurated together the Regional Symposium with His Holiness Katholikos Karekin II of the Great House of Cilicia and their Beatitudes the Maronite Patriarch Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, the Armenian Catholic Patriarch Kasparian, the Chaldean Patriarch Rafael Bidawid. The participants were also pleased and honored by the presence of the representatives of the Syrian Orthodox, the Syrian Catholic as well as of the Greek Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Patriarchs of Antioch. During the four days of animated and opened 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 run as follows:

- Ecumenism and the Vienna Dialogue with Oriental Orthodoxy, Purpose and Results: President Alfred Stirnemann, Vienna; Metropolitan Amba Bishoy, Damiette, Egypt
- The Vienna Christological Consensus: Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Antelias, Beyrouth; Archimandrite Nicolas Antiba, Lebanon; Archbishop Mar Gregorius of Aleppo, Syria and Father Elie Khalifé Hâshem, Kaslik.
- The discussion of ecclesiology in the Vienna consultations: Archbishop Mar Theophilos of Mount Lebanon, Beyrouth; Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Vienna; Archbi-

shop Cyrille Salim Bustros of Baalbek, Lebanon; Father Paul Sayah, Beyrouth, Lebanon (now Archbishop of Haifa).

All papers received a vivid response.

The symposium opened with common ecumenical prayers led by the patriarchs and bishops of the different churches. Participants attended the Eucharistic liturgy of the different church communities 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 also in certain countries of Europe and America) of the ecumenical achievements reached between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches and through the Vienna Dialogue in particular should be repeated. Special attention should be given to the response and opinion of the audience representing all levels of the churches concerned. The implementation of ecumenical results into the everyday life the congregations and activities of their pastors are of vital importance. First, 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, 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 documentation not only in English but also in the national languages was welcome by everybody. The fact that the minutes of the Wadi Natrun Regional Symposium of 1991 (booklet 3) as well as the booklet on Communiqués and Joint Documents (booklet 1) and the Summaries of the Papers (booklet 2) were available in English and Arabic, was an advantage for the participants. The penetration into the practical life of the churches depends on the presentation in comprehensible terminology and language spoken by Christians and the respective churches is essential. The publication of the papers and the summary of the discussions also of this Mashreq Symposium in English and Arabic is most welcome. Participants are willing to report back home what they have heard and learned, thus, multiplying the positive effect of these endeavours. Institutions of theological formation should make a point of providing ecumenical literatures in their libraries.

On the following points, there was great unanimity among the participants:

- a. The Christological formula of Vienna was positively and extensively accepted, it should be presented always, everywhere and in every way.
- b. Anathemata should be lifted on all sides especially its use in liturgical books.
- c. In the spirit of the Vienna Dialogue and its christological formula, history books should be revised and re-written.
- d. Models of unity should be presented and discussed in ecumenical meetings and study seminars by study and research groups.
- e. The first three ecumenical councils enjoy the highest authority and the largest acceptance among all the historical church meetings.
- f. Settlements of problems of mixed marriages and mutual pastoral assistance are of primary importance for the Christian communities.
- g. Everywhere where there are not yet ecumenical councils on the local, regional or national level in existence, they should be founded.

h. Prayer groups especially at the occasion of the week for the Prayer for Christian Unity, at Pentecost and at special occasions should organize common prayers among the Christians.

6. There was a series of proposals for further studies which found a wide agreement:

- a. The special role of the Pope (Petrine Ministry and Primacy) in the third millennium.
- b. Common historical studies in order to avoid contradictory interpretation of historical facts.
- c. How could the old principle of having one bishop in one city be re-established.
- d. How authority can be exercised in the church and the role of bishops and councils of bishops.
- e. Programs for preventing Christians to emigrate from the country of their fathers and forefathers.
- f. Possibilities of dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East.
- g. Restoration of the unity within the Patriarchate of Antioch and ways to secure the existence of only one patriarch.

7. Participants were most grateful for the organization of this event. Special debt of gratitude is owed to the patriarchs for their encouragement and invitation especially for His Holiness Catholicos Karekin II, their Beatitudes Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, Patriarch Kasparian and Patriarch Bidawid and to the Rector and Staff of the University of the Holy Spirit in Kaslik (USEK) and for the members of the Standing Committee of PRO ORIENTE. We thank the President of the Republic of Lebanon Mr. Elie Hraoui for receiving the Chair of the Regional Symposium and for his help and support. Further thanks go to the Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Pablo Puente, to the Austrian Ambassador in Damascus Dr. Robert Karas, to the Honorary Consul of Austria in Saida, Mr. Khalil Fattal and to many personalities of the public life of Lebanon such as the former Prime Ministers Solch. The presence of observers from the Pontifical Council Promoting Christian Unity, from the Middle East Council of Churches and from the Assyrian Church of the East was an additional motivation.

## CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

My dear brethren and sisters,

I don't think I have the right to say the concluding words - most of the time I could not be with you - that I could make a proper assessment of the achievements of this symposium. But I read some of the papers, I listened to the speeches of the first day and I followed the oral reports of the Armenian deacons of the seminary who continuously participated in the prayers and in the deliberations. I would like to make only briefly a few points which put in my understanding such a symposium in its right context and projects to a certain extent its future.

Every time since the early days of my priesthood when I participated in the ecumenical movement in conferences, consultations, symposia I felt I was being graced by God to go up to the mountain of Tabor where one sees the light of God through the eyes of the other brother or sister. Dialogue in an ecumenical understanding is not exchange of views, a kind of intellectual purely conceptual exercise, what you think, what I think, what the other thinks, that is not dialogue. That used to be called in the 1950s the comparative ecclesiology. That ended with the Lund conference I think. Dialogue is when we can see the issues through the eyes of the other who is not the other as much as you are part of him or of her. That commonness, that sharing together of the one faith and the one love and the one Pope, that is the heart of dialogue. And I think such symposia if I rightly understand the meaning of it is that it puts an end to what we used to call polemics and now it is the kind of openness to each other. Polemics used to be a process by which I and you had to defend our positions at all costs. That was not dialogue, that was self-praise, that was arrogance. Humility is the heart of dialogue, preparedness to listen to the other. and particularly we who are called to higher responsibilities and greater responsibilities, heavier duties, we have to listen to you. How I felt glad sitting down there and listening to others; and by listening to others I began to dialogue with myself; and that is the great challenge and the benefit of ecumenical meetings. In that respect I would like to extend my deepest appreciation for PRO ORIENTE.

Now to our dear friend Père Elie Khalifé, who made this possible through his commitment. I know how much you worked and indeed if the guests say this to you it's not the same thing as my saying it to you, because we share the same conditions in our country of Lebanon.

Now the final point I would like to make. We have here declarations, the outcome, the findings of the Vienna Consultations on Christology and to a certain extent on ecclesiology, as Archbishop Mesrob Krikorian has put it so well in his paper. I think that today we may be giving the impression that we are dealing with historical facts. We are talking about the Fathers of the ancient times. We are talking about Antioch. Where is Antioch? We are talking about Alexandria. Where is Alexandria today? When we speak this language to people in the pews, what do they respond to you? That is my concern.

Let me tell you in a kind of confession that I went through a turning point in my ecumenical commitment in 1971 when I was called for the first time in my life to serve the people as diocesan bishop in Isfahan in Iran. I had been all my life a teacher in a

seminary, the dean of a seminary and so to speak a scholar type of theologian. I used to teach student classes, write articles and even books. But when I faced the people in the church, in the streets, in the businesses, the people who live in the world of God, all my talk in the classroom lost its meaning. What I was going to say to these people about the conceptions of the nature of Christ; whether "physis" was rightly understood, whether "hypostasis" was wrongly understood, whether the "prosopon" was differently understood? How were the people going to respond? One day one of our theologians, incidentally he was our common dean of the seminary, in a meeting in Cyprus, a gathering of ordinary people, he began to speak about the Christological doctrinal issues. And one of the old ladies, a mother sitting there said, "Of whom is he speaking? Our Jesus Christ, the one who we worship?" It was a completely different story that he was hearing from a theologian. So when I faced the people as diocesan people I changed my vocabulary, my way of responding to the message of the Gospel in terms of preaching it to the people.

I would like to end with a story. The stories sometimes tell more than speeches or scholarly papers. I was a young priest serving in Antelias as dean of the seminary. Archbishop John Willebrands, then not yet a cardinal came in the name of the late Pope John XXIII visiting all the Heads of the Oriental Churches and trying in the most gentle diplomatic way to explain to these Heads of the Oriental Churches that Pope John XXIII had the vision, the idea of convoking a council; and if a came to a final decision to convoke the council, would the Oriental Patriarchs be ready to send observers. The response of the Catholicos of that time, the late Catholicos Zareh I, was very simple and in its simplicity very profound. He said, "Why are you asking the question? A brother inviting a brother doubts that a brother will not accept the invitation?" and then he dais, "Look here my young bishop. If we reduce the whole teaching of the Gospel to 100 points, what does the gospel say? Let us enumerate them, classify them. I am sure we agree about 99. We may disagree about 1, but will be going on all life speaking about that one, forgetting the 99." He turned and he made in a kind of figurative way, "Look at the wall. It is blank, white. But if a black spot is there we will forget the whole whiteness of the wall and concentrate and focus our attention on the one black spot. That is the weakness of our human frailty."

Therefore ecumenism is a call for integrity, coming out of our small identities as an Armenian, as a Maronite, as a Syrian, as an Ethiopian, as a Copt, as a Greek and all other and, while keeping those diversities, see us and see them, integrate them in the totality of our identity in Christ who transcends us who embraces us, encompasses us. That is what the real heart of ecumenism consists of: the conversion, inner conversion. Either we change our eyes or ecumenism will have no good future.

## FINAL ECUMENICAL PRAYERS

*Patriarch Boulos Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir*

Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
Now and for ever.

Amen.

Let us Pray,  
O Lord, who has brought together in the confession of your name a multitude of nations,  
give us the strength to desire and realize what you command,  
in order that, amongst the people you have called to your eternal kingdom,  
spirits shall commune in one faith and  
actions shall be inspired by one piety.  
Through Jesus Christ, his Son, Our Lord  
Who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit,  
for He is the Lord now and for ever.  
Amen.

*Syriac hymn (chanted by the choir)*

Glory to your mercies, o Christ our King,  
Son of God worshipped by the universe,  
for you are our King and our God,  
Master of our life and our great Hope.  
It is You that the upper orders glorify,  
in Harmony with the chairs here below:  
they confess that you are the Invisible  
who revealed himself in our flesh at the end of times  
When you were moved by your mercy and it pleased your love,  
you came to save us and set our kind free;  
you healed our illnesses and remitted our debts,  
and taking pity on us, you resuscitated our mortal nature.  
You founded on earth a holy Church,  
modeled on that which is up there in heaven;  
on this pattern you shaped her; and with love you wedded her;  
you took her within your mercy, by the suffering  
you made her perfect.  
Behold the enemy of man who troubles her  
With his arrogance and his effrontery, by the hands of his friends.  
Do not turn away, Lord, from the holy Church.-  
May your words' promise be not deceived.  
May her desirable beauty darken not;  
May her big riches not become poor.  
Remember the promise made to Peter,



carry out with acts your words.  
Strengthen her doors, fasten her bolts,  
raise her horn, set up her walls,  
bless her sons, keep her children,  
confirm her priests, confound those who hate her.  
May peace which comes from you dwell in her;  
Extirpate from her the schismatic divisions.  
Give us to lead a peaceful life,  
free of troubles, in the true religion,  
keeping faith,  
with good hope and perfect charity.  
May our conduct please you  
So that we would attain mercy on the retribution day,  
and that we raise incessantly the glory  
to your Father and to the Holy Ghost through you.  
Praise to Him in all generations  
Without end, amen and amen.

*Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid*

You are indeed holy,  
King of the ages and source of unity;  
You have gathered the different nations into one  
To proclaim with faith your name.  
Holy is your only begotten Son,  
who on the night he was betrayed  
prayed that all who believed should be one,  
and gave up his body and blood  
as a sacrament of unity.  
Holy too is your Spirit,  
through whom it was your will  
to call and bring together  
the people of the new covenant,  
in a unity of faith, hope, and charity.  
Through him, too, you have awakened the minds of Christians,  
so that, in a penitent spirit,  
they should spend themselves in devoted toil,  
seeking to bring to perfection the unity of the Body of Christ.  
All of us indeed who are united  
In the same proclamation of the Gospel  
And the same baptism,  
and are sharers in the same sacraments and gifts of the Spirit  
and together enjoy the protection  
of Mary, the most holy Mother of God and ever-virgin,  
and are thoroughly instructed by the example  
of Apostles and Saints,  
feel deep distress that for centuries

through the tragedy of division we have gone our separate ways  
and have been held back from that full fellowship  
which would be a witness to the world.  
Look down then on us, your servants,  
who, enlightened by the grace of your Spirit,  
and led by brotherly love,  
are sorry for our sins against unity,  
and humbly ask pardon from you and our brothers,  
as with one voice we implore you  
to grant perfect unity among all who believe in you.  
We beseech you then Lord, lover of man,  
to grant us today a new and fuller  
outpouring of the grace of your Spirit.  
Cause us to lead a life  
Worthy of the calling to which we have been called,  
with patience bearing with one another in love,  
eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit  
in the bond of peace,  
so that, recognizing the signs of the times,  
and redeeming our past mistakes  
by an unwearied pursuit of unselfishness,  
we may deserve to reach the hour  
of that perfect communion  
for which we have so longed.  
Hear us favorably then, O Lord,  
and manifest in our regard  
the fulness of your ancient mercies.  
By the power of your Spirit as he comes upon us,  
put an end to division among the Churches,  
renew the beauty of the Bride of Christ,  
pour out in abundance your love and your peace,  
so that the Church may shine with greater brilliance  
as a sign lifted up among the nations,  
and the world, enlightened by your Spirit,  
may attain to faith in the Christ whom you have sent.  
Make us, all of us, sons of light and peace,  
and grant that, having here and now some presage of eternity,  
we may, with one heart and voice,  
glorify your mysterious name,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever through the ages to come.