

COMMUNIQUE

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

(Chambesy, 10-15 December 1985)

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

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

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

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

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

“Towards a common Christology”

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

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

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

+ PROF. DR. CHRUSOSTOMOS KONSTANTINIDIS
METROPLITAN OF MYRA
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
Co-President of the Commission

+BISHOP BISHOY
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH
Co-President of the Commission

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Communique

Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches

(Anba Bishoy Monastery, Egypt)
20 - 24 June, 1989

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

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

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

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

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

Agreed Statement

We have inherited from our fathers in Christ the one apostolic faith and tradition, though as churches we have been separated from each other for centuries. As two families of Orthodox Churches long out of communion with each other we now pray and trust in God to restore that communion on the basis of the common Apostolic

faith of the undivided church of the first centuries which we confess in our common Creed. What follows is a simple reverent statement of what we do believe, on our way to restore communion between our two families of Orthodox Churches.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The four adverbs used to qualify the mystery of the hypostatic union belong to our common tradition - without commingling (or confusion) (asyngchytos), without change (atreptos), without separation (achoristos) and without division (adiairetos). Those among us who speak of two natures in Christ, do not thereby deny their

inseparable, indivisible union; those among us who speak of one united divine-human nature in Christ do not thereby deny the continuing dynamic presence in Christ of the divine and the human, without change, without confusion.

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

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

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

This joint Sub-Committee will have its first meeting from December 5th to 9th in Anba Bishoi Monastery and will prepare a report for the next meeting of the joint Commission.

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

- One) The report of the joint Subcommittee on Pastoral Problems.
- Two) Conciliar formulations and anathemas. (Rev. Prof. John S. Romanides, H. Dr. Paulos Mar Greoorios).
- Three) Historical factors. (Prof. Vlassios Phidas, Rev. Father Tadros Y. Malaty).
- Four) Interpretation of Christological dogmas today. (Metropolitan Georges Khodr of Mt Liban, Bishop Mesrob Krikorian, and Mr. Joseph Moris).
- Five) Future steps.

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

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Metropolitan Damaskinos Papandreou
Metropolitan of Switzerland
Orthodox Co-President of the joint
Commission.

Bishop Bishoy
Bishop of Damiette
General Secretary Holy Synod
Coptic Orthodox Church
Orient Orth. Co-President of the joint
commission

Prof. Vlassios Phidas
Co-secretary

Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios
Metropolitan of Delhi
Sec. to Synod for Inter Ch. Relations

Dr. Joseph Moris Faltas
Dipl. theol. Assistant Co-Seretary