

SYRIAC DIALOGUE

SECOND NON-OFFICIAL CONSULTATION ON DIALOGUE WITHIN THE SYRIAC TRADITION

**Edited on behalf
of the Foundation
PRO ORIENTE by
Alfred Stirnemann/Gerhard Wilflinger**

Vienna 1996



The so-called „Persian Cross“
found in Valiya Pally (Big Church)
of the Kananaya Syriac Orthodox (9th century)

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**The Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic
Ecumenical Dialogue**

PRO ORIENTE Publications in English

- * First Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 1 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1972) 190 p.
- * Second Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 2 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1974) 208 p.
- * Third Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 3 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1976) 240 p.
- * Fourth Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 4 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1978) 256 p.
- * Fifth Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Papers and Minutes. Supplementary Issue Number 5 of the Periodical "Wort und Wahrheit" (Verlag Herder, Vienna 1989) 208 p.
- * Selection of the Papers and Minutes of the Four Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Edited by Ökumenische Stiftung PRO ORIENTE in Vienna (1988) 286 p.
- * 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 1996, 228 p. Available in English, planned in French and Arabic.

**The Oriental Orthodox - Roman Catholic
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PRO ORIENTE Booklet Series

- * Booklet Number 1, Communiqués and Joint Documents; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1990, 136 p. Available in English, Arabic and Malayalam, planned in 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, planned in other languages.
- * Booklet Number 4, On Primacy, First Study Seminar, June 1991; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993, 92 p. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- * Booklet Number 5, On Councils and Conciliarity, Second Study Seminar, June 1992; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1993. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- * Booklet Number 6, Kerala Regional Symposium, Kottayam, October 1993; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1995. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- Booklet Number 7, On Ecclesiology, Third Study Seminar, July 1994; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1995. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- * Booklet Number 8, Lebanon Regional Symposium, Kaslik, September 1994, PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1997. Planned in the above mentioned languages.
- Booklet Number 9, On Authority and Jurisdiction, Fourth Study Seminar, July 1996; PRO ORIENTE, Vienna 1997. Planned in the above mentioned languages.



بطريركية
الكنيسة الشرقية القديمة
الطائفة الآشورية الشرقية
صندوق البريد ٢٢٢٢
مخاف ٧١٩٨٣٦٢
ناكس ٧١٨٢٩١٩
بغداد - العراق

Catholicos Patriarch of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Ancient Church of the East

PREAMBLE

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16; 18-19)

This is the promise which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ granted Peter, the head of the Apostles, when the latter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God. At the same time, when our Lord heard the true faith confessed by Peter, He gave the blessed Apostle an authority in the Church and, thereupon, built His Church on Peter's faith. After the Ascension of our Lord into heaven, as the blessed Apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they began to preach the good News of Christ's salvific mystery among all nations.

With great love for their Master and zeal for mission, the Apostles established their churches within the four corners of the earth, and so, the universal Church of Jesus Christ expanded and grew to its zenith. At the same time, all Christians lived in union, united in one love and faith. For, they had received such a command from their Great Shepherd the High Priest, Christ, the Head of the Holy Church, that all believers in Him must be bounded and united with one another always through a spirit of love, just as He and His Father are.

Christ's holy and divine imperative was always preached by the Apostles and reciprocally received in faith and love by Christian believers. Thus, the Holy Church was administered solemnly by the Apostles and their successors in a healthy and prosperous fashion, in the East as well as in the West, until the fifth century. But the Evil one, the enemy of the Church who is always warring against her faithful, saw this glory of the Holy Church and began to create confusion within her folds. This led to the rise, within this communion of faith and charity, of certain church leaders who were filled with pride and self-assertion; their actions which lacked charity caused the intensifying of divisions within the Church. The Holy Church, which is the Body of Christ, was

wounded by the foolish conduct of superiors who did not live out the command of charity in faith that our Lord Jesus Christ had ordained upon his Church.

Ever since, due to lack of charity, misunderstanding and mistrust, the Church of the East and that of the West became estranged from one another for more than fifteen centuries. But Christ, who granted his divine promise to Peter as the Head of the Apostles continues to pour out His Holy Spirit in the Church when, once more, in this twentieth century raised up a holy shepherd, humble pure and rightful, to fill the See of Peter and Paul in the City of Rome. Pope John XXIII, of blessed memory, who is credited with tearing down the solid and dark walls that have divided the Church of the West from the Church of the East, opened a huge gate of dialogue in the charity of faith which had been locked for many centuries.

He invited the Catholic Bishops to attend the Second Vatican Council in order to discuss and treat all internal and spiritual matters of today's Church and, at the same time, to launch an examination of the theological misunderstanding and misinterpretation which became the cause for controversy and division in the one Church of Christ. To this Council, bishops and clergy from Oriental and Protestant Churches were invited to participate in this spiritual dialogue as observers. After the death of Pope John XXIII Pope Paul VI, of blessed memory, was elected to Peter's See in Rome.

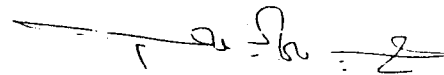
He also followed in the manner of the late Pope John XXIII. Here again, we discern the divine providence selecting another holy, just and humble shepherd to become the pivot of peace and unity within the Church of Christ. With the election of Pope John Paul II the Christian world witness a Pope who has been relentless and arduous in his zeal and numerous efforts to unite all Christians, particularly the Churches of the East with the Church of Rome. In these blessed times we have a necessary obligation to struggle ardently with Pope John Paul II to achieve this holy objective, the unity of all Christians.

Lastly, we and all of our Churches are so grateful to all those brethren who have labored so vigorously to establish and maintain the work of the Ecumenical Foundation of PRO ORIENTE. We have in mind, in particular, His Eminence Cardinal König, the Founder and Protector of PRO ORIENTE, Archbishop of Vienna, Christoph Schönborn, the Head of the board, and Alfred Stirnemann, its President, and many others. With a unique commitment to the values of the Gospel and with a pioneering ecumenical spirit, they have, since the foundation PRO ORIENTE after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, sincerely strove to facilitate important encounters of dialogue, in Vienna and elsewhere, which resulted in historic achievements between the Eastern Churches (Orthodox, Oriental and Assyrian) and the Roman Catholic Church. The scholarly work that have been produced by various consultations planned, sponsored and advanced by PRO ORIENTE - just as this present volume - has become part of the 20th century Christian tradition. PRO ORIENTE's publications of its un-official dialogues and conferences have become an important medium of knowledge for the Western Christians to understand and appreciate the Eastern Churches, and vice versa. So, let us pray and beg our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that PRO ORIENTE's work will continue to be the lighted torch that guides and directs all of us towards the path of unity and to restore peace through understanding, dialogue and charity, as between brothers and fellow Christians. Let us also allow our Lord Jesus, again, to lead us in

the prayer he offered to the Father over his Apostles before he went to his death on the Cross:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17; 20-26)

Baghdad, January 18th, 1997



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Alfred Stirnemann/Gerhard Wilflinger

FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS

Following the extraordinary interest which caused the publication of the first volume about the Syriac Dialogue we present the next volume of this series today. This second summary of papers concerning the dialogue between the Churches of the Syriac tradition contains the topics Christological achievements, Ephesus, the Three Chapters controversy and Liturgy.

From February 22nd to 27th, forty-five theologians and experts took part in the consultation, held again in Vienna. They discussed and studied papers on the following issues: the Christological debate of the Vienna dialogue's five consultations with the Oriental Orthodoxy from 1971 - 1988; the reception of the Common Declaration between H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV from November 1994; the question of the dividing or uniting function of the Ephesus Council 451; the Three Chapters controversy; and the East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology.

The atmosphere was one of warm-hearted and relaxed friendship considering the fact that in a wider sense all present churches belong to one distinct church tradition, linked together by the liturgical language, ceremonies and a common sense of living as minority of Christians among the Muslim majority. Many participants were committed to the difficult task of working for mutual trust and understanding envisioning the communion and unity of all the churches of the Syriac tradition.

Therefore the Vienna Syriac Dialogue which began two years ago could deepen its methods of discussing and its preparedness of talking about serious matters this time. The Second Syriac Consultation has shown that a certain method of dialogue is necessary. The different evaluations of the church's traditions especially concerning the councils of the fifth century could be detected obviously. Catholic theologians see many topics in a different way than Orthodox theologians. Experts coming from Europe and India often had a third view as well as a fourth one sometimes came from Oriental Orthodox observers.

Secondly the discussions have shown well prepared participants of the Assyrian Church of the East focusing the problems in their papers and presenting interesting points of a possible solution. That surprised the Syrian Orthodox participants whose papers were deeply rooted in their respective church tradition.

The Joint Communiqué carried unanimously by all the participants proposes the issues of further studies and recommends to concentrate them on the Assyrian church fathers in order to clarify their position.

Finally we express our thanks to the participants of the Second Consultation, above all to whose presenting papers. We are grateful for the work of the staff of PRO ORIENTE and particularly to H.H. Patriarch Mar Addai II for his support of sending us the preamble.

SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SECOND SYRIAC CONSULTATION

What was not to be foreseen at the „First Non-Official Consultation within the Syriac Tradition“ had meanwhile happened: on November 11th, 1994, Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV had delivered a Common Christological Declaration between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of the East. When the Second Consultation met in Vienna from February 23rd to 27th, 1996, it was not longer necessary to search for the evidence of our common christological faith because this was already achieved and out of discussion. There was no more need of questioning or proofing anyone's actual orthodoxy.

The participants were now free to deal with history exclusively in order to explain and to understand mutually their different theological developments and traditions. Even if there was asked for further clarifications this would not touch the consensus already existing. In comparison to the First Consultation of June 1994 this time the atmosphere was totally relaxed and amicable. The participants met as good friends. The different traditions should try to understand and to accept each other. Offending of the mutual ancient adversaries should be stopped and avoided.

It became apparent that the councils of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451) and Constantinople II (553) did not succeed to solve the theological problems of their time and to restore the church in peace and unity. On the contrary the divisions became manifest and irreversible. The only success of reconciliation was reached by the Union of 433. A highly explorative topic of the Second Consultation was Liturgy. In the Liturgy of the Church of the East we find at the same time Christological formulations demonstrating different approaches and concepts. On this basis one can show the orthodoxy of the Church of the East in the sense of the Alexandrian theology and at the same time also her „Theodorism“. Both attempts were really and impressively done.

Inductive and deductive interpretation of Jesus, christology from below and from above are concepts which cannot be brought to full identity but which outweighs and beware each other from one-sidedness. The Church of the East has preserved in her tradition witnesses of both christological concepts one beside the other. While she herself is pointing to the deductive texts to show her orthodoxy the representatives of the Alexandrian theology highlight the witnesses of the dualistic tradition in order to question this orthodoxy. But exactly in this plurality of christological concepts the Church of the East may be considered as a model of diversity in harmony.

The observer will be reminded of the plurality of approaches and interpretations to the mystery of Jesus already shown and contained in the New Testament. The synoptic Gospels which belong to our most esteemed documents of faith do not mention the preexistence of Jesus as Son of God or Logos before his birth or his Baptism, but nobody would criticize the holy authors because of that, or hesitate to use their writings for our readings in the liturgy. One and the same author St. Paul presents us in his undoubtedly own writings two different if not to say two opposing and contradictory christological concepts. In the letter to the Philippians he writes that „He who was in the

form of God ... humiliated himself and took the form of servant and became like a man“ (Phil 2; 6-11) but in the introduction of his letter to the Romans he says that Jesus was appointed Son of God only by his resurrection (Rom 1; 1-3). In a similar manner Paul expressed himself according to Luke in his speech in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13; 32-33). Although this is not in the line of our actual faith nobody would propose to anathematize this letter or its author or to change this text. It is a part of our heritage and it is highly esteemed as inspired by the Holy Spirit and read in our services. In a similar manner the Church of the East in her liturgy preserves different christological concepts which are not all equally normative for her faith but belong to the venerable heritage of ancient fathers and theologians. We are living now one and a half thousand years after the controversies of Ephesus, Chalcedon and Constantinople II. Experts may sometimes plunge so totally into the past that they continue the discussions of Christian antiquity. But time has gone on. Terms, concepts, problems, ways of thinking and the social and political framework have changed. The historian can only try to understand with mutual sympathy what so long ago has happened but in no way to convert the adversaries of the past to one or the other ancient position. History must finally become and definitely remain history. Getting this distance of objectivity towards the ancient origins of our divisions is one of the important aims of our studies. But this means in no way resignation. What shall be done is exactly what is already happening, and this has to be taken seriously as provided by the grace of God. The heirs of different and opposed ancient traditions meet in friendship and in the evidence of their actual common faith and Christian witness. While they are improving their mutual understanding they get also a new approach to their own history. We cannot solve the aporias of the past but we have the responsibility to realize the will of God for the very presence to accept each other as brethren, to show this to the Christian and non-Christian world and to face our common tasks for the future. For Jesus taught: „Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord“ (more over in one or the other exclusive tradition) „will go to the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my heavenly father.“ (Mt 7;21) The foundation PRO ORIENTE has successfully helped to overcome the christological dissensus dating from the Council of Chalcedon and now, going in history a step backward, tries the same concerning the alienation in the consequence of Ephesus and Constantinople II. Theological research and discussion has still to be continued in follow-up Consultations. The next one will take place in July 1997 in Chicago.

Since the Second Consultation a lot has been reached, especially in the practical field. In 1995 the Church of the East has been accepted as a member in the Middle East Council of Churches. From October 10th to 12th, 1996, the Mixed Committee for the Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East held its second meeting in Adma, Lebanon, to discuss questions of the sacraments and reached full agreement on the significance of marriage and of the anointing of the sick. According to an Associated Press release of November 14th the Catholic Bishops of the USA approved new guidelines to the Mass book admitting the faithful of the Church of the East to the Catholic eucharist in the same line with those of the Orthodox Churches. On November 30th, 1996, the two patriarchs of the Chaldean Church and of the Church of the East agreed to prepare the development of a common Catechism, a common training of priests and common pastoral programs.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 21st February 1996: Arrival

Thursday, 22nd February 1996:

9.00 Opening Ceremony: Welcome by the president of PRO ORIENTE

Alfred Stirnemann

Address by Archbishop Christoph Schönborn of Vienna,

Chairman of the Board of PRO ORIENTE

Greeting Messages

10.00 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Mar Gregorios of Aleppo

Frans Bouwen

Summary of the Christological debate in the five Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches in the Light of its Applicability to the Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East

Mar Aprem G. Mookan

Summary of the Christological debate in the five Vienna Consultations between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches in the Light of its Applicability to the Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East

12.30 Lunch

15.30 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Mar Aprem G. Mookan

Mar Gregorios

Comments to and Receptions of the Common Christological Declaration between Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV

Boulos Matar

Comments to and Receptions of the Common Christological Declaration between Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV

Mar Bawai Soro

Comments to and Receptions of the Common Christological Declaration between Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV

18.30 Dinner

Friday, 23rd February 1996

9.00 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Mar Bawai Soro

Mar Severios

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?

Louis Sako

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?

12.30 Lunch

15.30 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Boulos Matar

Mar Bawai Soro

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?

Elie Khalife

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?

18.30 Dinner

Saturday, 24th February 1996

9.00 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Mar Aprem G. Mookan

Geevarghese Chediath

The Three Chapters Controversy

Michae J. Birnie

The Three Chapters Controversy

12.30 Lunch

15.30 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Mar Bawai Soro

Mar Gregorios Saliba

The Three Chapters Controversy

Vincenzo Poggi

The Three Chapters Controversy

18.30 Dinner

Sunday, 25th February 1996

Liturgies

15.00 Excursion to the Ephesus Museum

16.00 Departure to the Monastery of Klosterneuburg

Monday, 26th February 1996

9.00 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Boulos Matar

Baby Varghese

East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

Johannes Madey

East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

12.30 Lunch

15.30 Papers and Discussions: chaired by Mar Gregorios

Pierre Yousif

East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

Michael J. Birnie

East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

18.30 Dinner

Tuesday, 27th February 1996

9.00 Conclusions and Joint Communiqué

12.30 Lunch

15.30 Joint Communiqué

18.30 End



The Inaugural Session of the Second Syriac Consultation

From left to right: Fr. Bernard Dubasque, Rome; Fr. Frans Bouwen PA, Jerusalem; Prof. Peter Hofrichter, Salzburg; Archbishop Christoph Schönborn, Vienna; President Alfred Stirmemann; Archbishop Gregorios of Alep



The Chair and the Minutes

From left to right: Archbishop Boulos Matar of Beyrouth; Archbishop Gregorios of Alep; Mr. Razek Syriani (protocoll) and Prof. Joseph Mouannes



The Chaldean Delegation

From left to right: Fr. Joseph Habbi, Bagdad; Fr. Louis Sako, Mossul; Fr. Sarhad Jammo, Troy, Michigan



The Syrian Catholic Delegation

From left to right: Patriarchal Vicar Al-Jamil, Beyrouth; Archbishop Eustache-Joseph Mounayer, Damascus; John Abraham Konat, India



The Assyrian Delegation

From left to right: Mar Odisho Oraham, Göteborg, Sweden; Fr. Joseph Eshay, Seattle, USA; Mar Yacoub Daniil, Hassake, Syria; Mar Aprem of Trichur, India; Mar Bawai Soro, San José, USA; Mar Narsai de Baz, Beyrouth



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From left to right: Fr. Bernard Dupuy OP, Paris; Fr. Vincenzo Poggi SJ, Rome; Prof. Sebastian Brock, Oxford; Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian, Vienna; Prof. Luise Abramovski, Tübingen; Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, Egypt



Delegates from India

From left to right: Prof. Xavier Koodapuzha, Kottayam; Prof. Geevarghese Chediath, Trivandrum; Fr. V.A. Mathew, Ranni; John Abraham Konat, Kottayam; Paul Sabah, now Archbishop of Jaffa



The Syrian Orthodox Delegation

From left to right: Archbishop Mar Severios, Mossul; Archbishop Mar Gregorios Saliba, Mossul

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9. Malankara Catholic

Rector Prof. Geevarghese Chediath
St. Aloysius Seminary, Pattom, Trivandrum 695 004, Kerala, India

10. PRO ORIENTE

Archbishop Christoph Schönborn of Vienna
Chairman of the Board of PRO ORIENTE

President Alfred Stirnemann
PRO ORIENTE Secretariat, Hofburg, Marschallstiege II, 1010 Vienna, Austria

Father Frans Bouwen, Regional Superior of the White Fathers in Lebanon, Jerusalem
and Ethiopia, member of the Commission for Theological Dialogue between Catholics
and Orthodox Sainte-Anne, P.O.Box 19 079, IL-91 190 Jerusalem, Israel

Prof. Peter Hofrichter, Institute for Church History
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Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt
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Others

11. Experts

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Father Vincenzo Poggi, Pontifical Oriental Institute,
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Prof. Sebastian Brock, Oriental Institute, Pusey Lane
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12. Observers:

Father Bernard Dubasque, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
Rome, Italy

Father Paul Sayah, Associate Secretary General of the MECC
Middle East Council of Churches, P.O.Box 5376, Beyrouth, Lebanon

Metropolitan Amba Bishoy of Damiette, Coptic Metropolis
ET-Damiette, Egypt

Archbishop Prof. Mesrob K. Krikorian, Armenian Apostolic Church
Kolonitzgasse 11/11, A-1030 Vienna, Austria

Archbishop Abuna Gabriel
Head of Foreign Affairs, EOC Patriarchate, P.O.Box 1283, ETH-Addis Ababa
(prevented)

Father K. V. Mathew
Mar Thoma Church, Syriac Study Centre Kottayam
Pazhavangada - 689673 Ranni, India

13. Secretaries of the Minutes:

Father Joseph Mouannes
Chairman of the Lebanese Episcopal Commission für Social Communication
Holy Spirit University, Kaslik, Jounieh, Lebanon

Razek Syriani
Syrian Orthodox Archbishopric, P.O.Box 4194, Aleppo, Syria

14. Interpreters:

Odette Nassif
Unicef, 8, Adnan Omar Sidky Street, Dokki, Cairo, Egypt

Marcelle Al-Khuri Tarakji
Kassa-Jadda-No 29, SYR-Damascus, Syria

Opening Ceremony: Thursday February 22, morning

The session begins with a prayer, welcome and greeting addresses and expressions of hope that this historical split between the churches may be brought to an end. The new Archbishop Christoph Schönborn of Vienna who is at the same time head of the Board of PRO ORIENTE is present.

Address by President Alfred Stirnemann

Your Graces and dear participants of the Consultation,

on behalf of the Board and the Executive Committee of PRO ORIENTE may I welcome all of you to our Second Syriac Consultation in Vienna.

I am happy to greet His Excellence Archbishop Christoph Schönborn who is among us and will inaugurate this consultation.

I have to convey the best wishes of our founder, the Archbishop emeritus Franciscus Cardinal König, who will attend some of our coming working sessions in the next days.

Following the worldwide interest which our First Syriac Consultation two years ago caused we meet again this week on invitation of PRO ORIENTE to continue our studies on the history, ecclesiology and christology of the Assyrian Church of the East. Our last consultation was accompanied by the Common Declaration between His Holiness Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV in Rome on November 11th, 1994. That event was a remarkable confirmation of our work on dialogue held in Vienna five months earlier.

Therefore we are assembled today in a good mood to study the chosen four topics of our Second Consultation. First we will talk about the reception of the Common Declaration of 1994 within the various churches. Then we will change to the issue of discussing the importance of the Council of Ephesus 431 for the division of the Western and Eastern Churches and the permanent controversial issue of the Three Chapters. At last our task will be to sum up the traditions and spiritual importance of the East Syriac Liturgy as the main connection between the different churches of the Syriac tradition.

The active support of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity after our First Consultation was both appreciation and encouragement for the continuation of our ecumenical work of dialogue between the churches.

My special thanks go to the Heads of all the churches of the Syriac tradition who sent greeting messages to encourage and to bless our work, namely to Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Mar Addai II, Patriarch Zakka I Iwas, Catholicos Marthoma Mathews II, Patriarch Ignace Anthony Hajek, Patriarch Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, Anthony Cardinal Padiyara and Mar Baselios of Trivandrum.

May I finally remind you of the death of two persons who were committed to our work during the last years:

Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum, the Head of the Catholic Malankara Church of India, who sent a message to our first consultation two years ago.

Father Jean Maurice Fiey OP, professor at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beyrouth who took part in our first consultation as an expert. I am still impressed by his virtuosity in explaining the exact position of Ktesiphon and of Seleucia.

God may bless their souls.

Do not mind that this time you get acquainted with the Austrian winter which is quite different to your experiences. I thank all of you for coming to Vienna again.

Address by Archbishop Christoph Schönborn of Vienna

Dear brothers in Christ,

Your Eminences, Excellencies and Fathers,

It is a great honor for us to receive you in the city of Vienna. As the president mentioned, I have been involved in the work of PRO ORIENTE. I have the privilege to be a heir my pre-predecessors Cardinal König and Cardinal Groër. I can say that Cardinal König was the founding father of PRO ORIENTE.

I have the pleasure to share with you the name of Christ, specially with those who are directly belonging to the land of our Lord, the earthly early family of our Lord. The land where He decided to be incarnated from the blessed Virgin Mary, and to choose his disciples.

It is a co-incidence today that the Catholic Church is celebrating the memory of establishing the See of St. Peter. In the prayer of this morning Eucharist, something surprising is said. It is on St. Peter who had confessed his faith as the first one of all that the Church is built like on a rock. It is really a beautiful sign of providence. I prayed and I will continue praying for your meeting. I regret that I cannot stay more with you, as His Holiness Pope John Paul II has asked me to preach in the Vatican for the week of Lent.

We all know about the efforts to defend the „rock“ against all heresies and divisions. We are sure that the believers in Christ want to defend the faith of Peter. So, I think that it is the Holy Spirit who is telling the church what is the desire of the Spirit. The Spirit is like a magnet that attracts us in our work.

I had the joy to work with professor Sebastian Brock during my research time. He showed us how close the Syrian tradition is to our faith. You have kept the heritage. It is an enrichment of the Church in the West to listen to the Church of the East. Through my doctorate studies I discovered how vital it is to know the Syrian origins.

I wish you all the blessings in your work. And I wish to thank you for coming to Vienna. It is a place where many variety of people and languages exist.

May the Lord bless all the efforts.

If you may allow me to convey your greetings to the Holy Father of Rome. I am sure that the Holy Father will enjoy hearing about this consultation.

GREETING MESSAGES RECEIVED

Assyrian Church of the East

February 10, 1996

In the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we convey our great joy greeting those of you who are gathered in Vienna upon the occasion of the *Second PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation*. The contribution in dialogue of PRO ORIENTE among the various Apostolic Churches since the first historic consultation in June 1994, has been received in our Church with profound appreciation and enthusiasm. The prodigious reflections upon the theology and history of the Assyrian Church of the East has contributed tremendously to inform Assyrians and non-Assyrians alike as to the similarities extant in our ecclesiastical traditions. We have been enabled to reflect upon that which we have in common with those of the Catholic and Orthodox Church.

The initiation to dialogue could not have come at a better time in the course of progressive history. The inestimable contribution of PRO ORIENTE has assisted the Churches of the Middle East and India in their acute need to re-establish fraternal relations with one another and that of the whole of the Christian Church. The journey into the 21st century conditions us unto a common witness to Jesus Christ in order to maintain ecclesiastical identity; thus, conveying to the eagerly awaiting world the Good News of Christ. PRO ORIENTE has provided these Churches of the Syriac tradition a forum in which a fraternal collaboration has been made possible, it is here where we can prayerfully seek rapprochement and a mutual witness to Jesus Christ.

We express our deepest and personal thanks to the president of PRO ORIENTE Ecumenical Foundation Alfred Stirnemann; to the staff of PRO ORIENTE for consistent vitality in their labor of love for this dialogue and toward advancing harmony among our churches. In like manner, we recognize the vigorous effort of His Eminence Franciscus Cardinal König, the founder of PRO ORIENTE, offering prayer intentions for his personal well being; for the continuation of his pastoral efforts in ecumenism: Amen.

We pray the Spirit of Truth to guide your efforts to fulfill the divine wish of our Lord Jesus Christ: Amen.

+ Khanania Mardinkha
Catholicos Patriarch of The Assyrian Church of the East

Holy Apostolic Catholic Church of the East

February, 1996

PRO ORIENTE Ecumenical Foundation
Vienna - Austria

I personally am grateful to President Alfred Stirnemann for the invitation of our Church to attend the *Second PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation*. On behalf of our Church, I have asked Eshai S. Joseph to represent us in Vienna and to participate in the meeting and its discussions.

I shall endeavor to inform you regarding the sincere effort made to close the gap between the Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church. A condensed look at the track record of Christ's Holy Church from the fourth century to the fourteenth century AD, reveals the Church had a heavier load of secularism to deal with; e.g., the non-believer and the pagan element. Yet the Church of Christ was much more successful in its mission to the world. This was particularly true of the Church of the East. For in this time it expanded from the near East to the far East, with its mission, the service of our Lord and master Jesus Christ. At this same time, during the reign of Constantine in the fourth century AD, the Western Church initiated the call for the convocation of the Council of Nicaea, and the Church enjoyed a great accomplishment; all churches agreed to abide by its decisions and law.

Here we see the cause for the glory of the Universal Church, because both the Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church were very close in the teaching of Christ and unity of their Doctrine. Both strove to preach the Gospel of Christ to the pagan world. Further, both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of the East respected the theological posture of one another, even though the language of each differed in small measure from the language of the other. We have proof of this in the liturgy of the Church of the East; e.g., we pray for the growth of the Church Universal especially for the Chair of St. Peter in the City of Rome.

Now, if we want the Church of Christ to grow and prosper in hope and the love of Christ, we need to respect one another, to prove the beliefs and teaching of each other.

I am exceedingly happy to see that we are nearing each other as true disciples of Christ and we are fulfilling the commandment of the Lord, who preached that we should all become one, as He and the father are one. To live together in peace.

I am truly grateful to those responsible for this convocation and to all who are working judiciously to achieve the unity of the Church of Christ.

God love you and bless you.

+ Addai II
Patriarch of the Ancient Church of the East

**Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East
Damascus - Syria**

Our Dear Brothers in Christ!

Alfred Stirnemann, President and General Secretary of PRO ORIENTE, Archbishops, Bishops and theologians who are meeting in Vienna for the Second non-official Consultation on the Syriac Dialogue.

After granting our Apostolic Blessings, and in the name of the Lord we do state: we were very pleased to read the details of the First non-official Consultation of the participants in the Syriac Dialogue that was held in Vienna in June, 1994. We could feel the spirit of love that dominated the consultation since it gathered together representatives from all denominations of the Syrian Churches with the aim of having a fraternal dialogue among them. We pray that you would be able in this present consultation, to solve radically intricate issues, and have fixed dates for ensuring the full participation of the Ancient Assyrian Church of the East with her other sister churches with which she shares a common Syriac tradition.

We are looking forward to harvesting results; due to the recent developments that affected the relations between the Ancient Assyrian Church of the East and the rest of the churches especially after the Common Christological Declaration signed by the Assyrian church and the Roman Catholic Church which opened the door for more dialogue and serious studies on the part of all Syrian Churches worldwide.

In conclusion, we do pray that God Almighty may crown your meeting with success for the glorification of His name and for the well-being of the Church everywhere.

May the Grace of God be with you!

+Ignatius Zakka I Iwas
Patriarch of Antioch and all the East
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church

**The Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church
Catholicate of the East**

Mr. Alfred Stirnemann
President of PRO ORIENTE - Vienna

February 19, 1996

Dear Mr. Stirnemann,

Apostolic blessings to you and the delegates and participants at the second Syriac Consultation in Vienna.

We are glad to learn that the PRO ORIENTE Foundation is holding the Second Consultation for dialogue within the Syriac tradition in February 1996 in Vienna.

The Syriac liturgical and literary tradition belongs to the best of our Christian heritage of the Patristic age. The present attempts in the Vienna consultation to dive deeper in this heritage is commendable.

Although the Syriac language and literature provide a common ground for our Churches which participate in the consultation, we have differences in our christological and ecclesiological positions. Further, our churches live in different cultural and socio-political settings. As local churches of ancient origin, we are trying to live and interpret the gospel tradition in our new situations. With deep mutual respect for our identities as sister churches, we need to enter into a dialogue of love and mutual understanding. Our ecumenical attempt is not to create any over-arching, universal structures in the name of the Syriac heritage, but to rediscover the catholicity of apostolic tradition in each of our ancient autocephalous Churches, and thus come to the unity of the Body of Christ.

May God bless your academic and ecumenical work in the cause of true unity in Christ our Lord and Savior.

+Baselios Marthoma Mathews II
Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan

Syrian Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch

Our greetings and the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ
to the venerable Alfred Stirnemann, President of PRO ORIENTE, and
to the members of the board,
to the Archbishops, Bishops and priests of Austria,
and to all the brothers and sisters, participating in the consultation!

Twenty months ago the first non-official consultation of the Syrian Churches took place in Vienna on invitation of PRO ORIENTE. Then it was a place of deep experiences for the participating Syrian Churches, where they got acquainted with the feelings of dialogical harmony. The discussions were held in a good climate and dealt with the reasons of the division of the churches, their different interpretations and evaluations.

Both sides had no mutual interest for each other in former times which caused a perilous difference between them and led to the division of the churches. Therefore we studied the results of Your papers and discussions with deep respect. We appreciate Your endeavors and Your decision in June 1994 to continue the dialogue between the churches of the Syrian tradition.

We were enjoyed by Your ideas and considerations and express our wishes to give hope to a future union of the Syrian Churches. The important experience given through the discussion of the participants will bring us closer to the union. Until today the Syrian Churches were divided in different groups. We hope with the new dialogue and its ideas that all the parts of the Syrian family of Churches will come together to restore the union. We will overcome what our old fathers divided. Die Syrian Church

must not stay in division, because she is one soul, one thought, one culture and one praying. She does not belong to a certain people, not to a distinct political group, is not engaged in politics, but has the power in itself, to strive for the union and to overcome the division. The discussions preparing the union could be recognized in Vienna. From that comes public interest for all proposals and intensified mutual connections.

It will be important for the future work of the Syrian Churches in the East. She is a message always reaching more and more people, because she is important within the ecumenical movement in the history of the Christian union. The Syrian Church is able to act, to move, to engage and to decide. She is among many churches one of special ecumenical commitment. She lives the union of thoughts and of the Apostolate in order to become the model for all the Christians.

We, being in one spirit, one praying and one heart with You, thank PRO ORIENTE for its new initiative to make our meetings possible and to continue the discussions among our churches.

Finally we emphasize the peace in Our Lord and greet You all in the peace of Our Lord

+Ignace Anthony II Hayek
Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch

Maronite Patriarchate

February 21, 1996

Mr. President Alfred Stirnemann
President of PRO ORIENTE - Vienna

You are holding in Vienna from 22 - 28 February, 1996, the Second Consultation of the Syriac Churches, and there will be debates with the Bishops, clergy and lay people representing all the Churches of Syriac tradition in the whole world, and also with an elite group of theologians and scholars expert in the history of the Eastern Churches.

We are happy that you are following up this work which you started during the last week of June in 1994, when you held your first symposium to these Churches, and you are continuing to exert efforts, by which your foundation is known in the area of ecumenical work, and you are completing the research in issues related to the Christological doctrine, which has been determined at the Council of Ephesus in 431. We are today happy that we agreed on it in its core with the Assyrian Church of the East especially after His Holiness Pope John Paul II has signed with His Holiness Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV a joint communiqué in Rome on 11 Tesherin (=November) 1994, in which the common faith in Christ, the Savior has been declared as perfect God in his Godhead and perfect man in His manhood.

You wanted that this meeting be an opportunity for going deep in the Eastern heritage of the Syriac Churches and to serve the union of Churches in our Eastern region and in the whole world.

While we pray that your consultation will be successful, we bestow on you and all the participants the most abundant grace and blessings.

+Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Syro-Malabar Church of India

February 20, 1996

Mr. Alfred Stirnemann
President of PRO ORIENTE - Vienna

Dear Mr. Stirnemann,

I am happy to know that the Second PRO ORIENTE Consultation within the Syriac tradition is going to be held in Vienna towards the end of February.

The venerable Syriac tradition is an important source of our Christian faith, and it is of great contemporary interest. Unfortunately, those who have inherited this tradition are not in full communion with each other. I hope the PRO ORIENTE efforts at dialogue between the various branches of tradition will strengthen the bonds of communion between the Syriac Churches, promote effective collaboration among them and further facilitate the pilgrimages towards full unity.

While assuring you of my prayers I send you my greetings and good wishes.

+Antony Cardinal Padiyara
Major Archbishop of Ernakulam Angamaly

Malankara Catholic Church of India

February 17, 1996

Dear Mr. Alfred Stirnemann, and the distinguished participants of the *Second Syriac Consultation*,

we are really pleased to learn that the PRO ORIENTE Foundation in Vienna has proposed to hold a *Consultation of the Syriac traditions* in Vienna from 22nd to 28th February 1996. I am hastening to send our cordial greetings and our best wishes to all

the participants of the consultation. God bless our efforts and guide our deliberations so that they may bring abundant blessings for the people of God.

We do sincerely appreciate all the activities of PRO ORIENTE to promote the ecumenical movement and we take this opportunity to congratulate its president and all the members of the association. I am particularly impressed by the bold step you have taken to initiate a serious dialogue among the churches of the Syriac tradition, especially with the Church of the East, namely the Assyrian Church. It was a long-felt need and I am happy that that dialogue has borne good results and is bound to bring further benefits to the good of all the churches concerned.

As I could learn from the report of the First Syriac Consultation, it was a great success especially in terms of the efforts made to bring out the riches of the Church of the East to get them fully integrated in the Universal Apostolic Tradition of the Church of Christ to the benefit of all our brethren and to the Glory of God, our Father.

As we are about to enter into the third Millennium, let us look into the future task and the great mission of the united one Church of Jesus Christ, the light of the World and the unique Savior of mankind. We shall try in our own humble way to fulfill His wish „that all may be one.“ Placed in the world as its light and called to transform it, we have to devote ourselves to unite the whole mankind as His Church and the people of God. Our Venerable Fathers had stood for their particular ecclesial traditions, and building upon those legitimate foundations, let us strive for further growth and unity, so that the whole Christian mystery may be unfolded to us to become the patrimony of the whole mankind.

Let the PRO ORIENTE Foundation be a meeting place for the Churches of the Syriac tradition so that the rich heritage of these Churches be brought to clearer light along with the other main streams of Christian tradition for the glory of God.

With every good wish,

Yours lovingly,

+Mar Baselios

Metropolitan-Archbishop of Trivandrum
and pro-Hierarchy of the Malankara Catholic Church

First working session: Thursday, February 22, 10 a.m.

The president explains that one of the papers on the first subject had to be dropped because Father Kondothra K.M. George was unable to send his paper or to arrive. The president hands over the chair to His Grace Mar Gregorios of Aleppo.

Chairman: Mar *Gregorios*, Archbishop of Aleppo

Frans Bouwen P.A.

Summary of the Christological Debate in the Five Vienna Consultations in the Light of its Applicability to the Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East

The Christological debate in the five Vienna Consultations between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches was much more than just an intellectual discussion or exchange of words. It was a living experience involving living persons and Churches, and this experience is still going on. On the other hand, the dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East is not something that still has to be invented. It is already a living reality, both on the official and the non-official level.

Just as it is difficult to pass on a living experience from one person to another, it is similarly difficult to define exactly what one living dialogue can contribute to another one. There are no ready-made methods or solutions that could be interchangeable. Each dialogue experience is, in a certain sense, unique. Nevertheless all ecumenical dialogues are aiming at the same full communion, are inspired by the same Spirit and called to grow more and more closely together. It is in this perspective that this presentation would like to point out the main factors that contributed to the elaboration and the reception of the Christological consensus in the framework of the Vienna Consultations. Likewise it may offer some inspiration for the dialogue with the Assyrian Church.

We shall regroup these elements under the following headings:

1. The interrelatedness between the official and non-official dialogues;
2. A new awareness of already existing communion;
3. The common foundations of faith;
4. A sense of respect for the mystery;
5. A new methodology;
6. A renewed faithfulness to Tradition;
7. The soteriological perspective;
8. Common witness and service.

1. Interrelatedness between Official and non-Official Dialogues

The first important feature of the Vienna Consultations between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches is their non-official status. The

participants were not officially delegated by their Churches, they did not express officially the position of their Churches and, consequently, did not involve their authority or responsibility directly. This procedure allowed a greater freedom of expression and initiative. Yet it did not diminish the commitment of the participants, neither to their Churches nor to the cause of unity. They were all deeply rooted in their specific traditions, committed members of their Churches and in constant interaction with their communities. Soon afterwards, a certain number of them occupied very important positions of authority or teaching in their Churches.

All these factors contributed in a significant way to the reception of the Christological consensus in the Churches, both at the level of the authorities and of the faithful. There is no need to remind you how it happened through the common statements signed by the Bishop of Rome and the Heads of different Oriental Orthodox Churches and through the official theological commissions.

The Syriac Dialogue, as we are getting used to calling it, started in a similar non-official way. We have to do our utmost so that it may be animated by a similar dynamic spirit and have a similar impact on the life of our Churches. This presupposes that all the participants are equally committed to their Churches and to the cause of unity.

In the meantime, also an official theological dialogue has started between the Assyrian Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

How can we conceive and promote the interrelatedness between both dialogues in the best possible way?

The official dialogue is a bilateral one, with a limited number of official delegates from both sides. The Syriac dialogue is a multilateral one, involving all the traditions and communions that are part of the overall Syriac heritage. The representativeness is notably wider, and, as a consequence, the repercussions also have a chance of being much broader. Theologians belonging to the Catholic, Oriental Orthodox and Assyrian communions react and interact on the same themes, in a fraternal spirit. They exercise a kind of mutually corrective and complementary action on each other, so much so that the danger of isolation is notably reduced and that the outcome may be expected to be more "catholic", in the original meaning of the word. The reception process in the Churches might be greatly facilitated by this common approach.

In this sense, the interaction between the official dialogue with the Assyrian Church and the Syriac Dialogue may help to prevent a certain lack of coordination which regularly occurs between different bilateral dialogues. To remedy this danger, a special Forum on bilateral dialogues is convened periodically, with the help of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.¹ Without pretending to have the same weight, the Syriac Dialogue could exercise a similar role, in its own humble way. This aspect may become even more important, when other bilateral dialogues with the Assyrian Church are initiated by some Oriental or Eastern Orthodox Churches.

As far as the themes of the dialogues are concerned, some will inevitably be the same, both in the official and non-official dialogues. Other themes may be different, because of the differences in context and participation. This should not cause any

¹ The Sixth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues was held at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (October 1994) 8-13 (Report in Faith and Order Paper no. 168)

problem. Here also a real complementarity is possible and desirable. For example, at its first meeting in Rome, 22-24 November 1995, the joint Commission for the theological dialogue between the Catholic and the Assyrian Churches, took up the theme of the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular.² The first Syriac Consultation, in June 1994, started something similar by studying the anaphora of Addai and Mari, although the approach was slightly different, being a more historical one. Other liturgical themes are on the agenda of the present Consultation. This may be of help for the future work of the joint Commission on the other sacraments.

The multilateral approach of the same themes, from within the various historical developments of the one original Syriac tradition, can shed new light on certain questions. It can also rediscover forgotten common attitudes and promote new convergences. The mutual interaction and enrichment between the two types of dialogue will be made even more fruitful by the fact that certain persons, even if they are few in numbers, participate actively in both.

2. A New Awareness of Communion

The communiqués of all five Vienna Consultations underline the importance of the fraternal atmosphere that characterized their meetings and made their mutual understanding possible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in faithfulness to the commandment and prayer of Christ "that all may be one".

This fraternal atmosphere has deepened in an unforeseeable way in the course of the last twenty years, thanks to the many contacts between the Churches at various levels. We now can openly speak of a "real, although still imperfect communion" among our Churches. More specifically, in their Common Declaration, in November 1994, Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV, can affirm: "Living by this faith and these sacraments, it follows as a consequence that the particular Catholic Churches and the particular Assyrian Churches can recognize each other as sister Churches."

The follow-up of the Five Vienna Consultations made their own contribution to the development of this new awareness of the already existing communion, through the work of the study seminars and more specifically through the regional symposia. The wide reception process and the grass-roots participation in these symposia, which some representatives of the Assyrian Church attended, played a considerable role in clearing the way for the new Syriac Dialogue.

This reciprocal re-discovering must allow us to meet in a spirit of full mutual acceptance and trust, putting aside all prejudices of the past, refusing to question the sincerity of the others, in order to be able to look at each other with new eyes and to listen with new ears. We must never disregard this fundamental requirement, if we really want to work for unity.

² B. Dubasque. Les relations œcuméniques de l'Église catholique au Moyen-Orient. In: Osservatore Romano 30.1.1996 (French edition)

3. Common foundations of faith

In such mutual trust we should be able to appreciate anew all we already have in common, in order to build on it as on a solid foundation, while re-evaluating more justly the importance or the non-importance of what still separates us.

The Vienna Consultations describe the common basis of faith as consisting, in the first place, of the Scriptures of the New Testament, the Apostolic tradition or kerygma, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This should not meet with any problem as far as the dialogue with the Assyrian Church is concerned. The matter would be rather different when mention is made of and emphasis put on the acceptance of the first three ecumenical councils. The council of Ephesus (431) raises a number of serious questions. It is not part of the heritage of the Assyrian Church, primarily because of its condemnation of Nestorius. The Christological teachings of Ephesus could perhaps be acceptable to the Assyrian Church, on condition that they are considered as being inseparable from the formula of Union of 433, but it is not possible to include Ephesus in the common basis from the start.

Furthermore, it is really important to note that the Vienna Christological formula contains an explicit reference to liturgy; its most significant elements can in fact be found in the confession of faith proclaimed by the priest immediately before partaking in the Body and Blood of Christ, in the Coptic anaphora of St. Basil. By doing so the common foundation of faith is widened so as to include the prayer and life of the Church, according to the principle *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. On the one hand, liturgy is an authentic expression of the living faith of the ecclesial community, and on the other hand, it shapes and preserves the faith and makes it come alive in the individual and the community. It is in its liturgy that a Church really owns its faith and is vivified by it.

The first Syriac Consultation already embarked upon a study of the Assyrian liturgy by examining the absence of the institution narratives in the Addai and Mari anaphora. Although this study went beyond the Christological question, it reached the conclusion that it is an "authentic anaphora of early Christianity" and therefore "quite valid as a consecrative liturgy, even in the context of Catholic theology".³ Thus it proved to be a positive contribution to the theological dialogue. The theme of "East Syrian Liturgy as an expression of Christology," is explicitly present on the agenda of this second Syriac Consultation, especially Baptism, Eucharist and the Divine Office. This essential dimension of our common search for consensus and communion may take on an even greater significance by the mere fact that the participants come from within the same wider Syriac tradition, using a common language, nourished by the common Antiochian heritage, beyond the present differentiations. They may rediscover ancient consonances and harmonies that are authentic signs of a continuing kinship and communion.

In the framework of the Syriac dialogue, another significant element can be added to these common foundations of faith: the witness "to the end" (cf. Jn 13,1), or martyrdom. On this point, the Assyrian Church feels especially close to the Syrian and Arme-

nian Churches, but the martyrs are common heritage and pride of all the Churches, even in our own century. In his recent encyclical letter *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II attaches special importance to this dimension of Christian existence in view of the search for Christian unity. He writes:

"These brothers and sisters of ours, united in the selfless offering of their lives for the Kingdom of God, are the most powerful proof that every factor of division can be transcended and overcome in the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel."⁴

In our discussions and dialogue we should always feel "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (cf. Heb 12,1).

4. A sense of Respect for the Mystery

In approaching the Christological question we should be fully aware that we find ourselves in presence of a mystery, not only in the sense that it is beyond human intelligence but also that it is at the centre of God's plan of salvation. This awareness and respect was an essential factor in preparing the way for the Christological consensus, by making it possible to acknowledge common understanding and agreement in spite of and beyond diversity and sometimes apparent contradiction between theological expressions.

From the first Vienna Consultation the principle is clearly stated:

"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."⁵

The second Consultation draws the important conclusion:

"We recognize the limits of every philosophical and theological attempt to grasp the mystery in concepts or to express it in words."⁶

Finally, the fifth Consultation deduces from this principle the legitimacy of a "certain plurality in expression":

"The fifth Consultation emphasized that the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God could not be exhaustively formulated in words, and that within the limits of condemned errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism, a certain plurality of expressions was permissible in relation to the inseparable and unconfused hypostatic union of the human and the divine in the one Lord Jesus Christ ..."⁷

This same sense of respect for the mystery of the Incarnation was very much present in the first Syriac Consultation. It was perhaps the most important fruit received

⁴ John Paul II. *Ut unum sint*, § 1, see also § 84

⁵ The Vienna Dialogue. Five PRO ORIENTE Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy. Communiqués and Common Declarations. Booklet No.1 (1991) 46 (=Booklet 1)

⁶ Booklet 1, p.48

⁷ Booklet 1, p.102

³ Joint Communiqué of the First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition. In: Syriac Dialogue 1 (=Assyr 1) Vienna 1994, p.198

from the experience of the five Consultations between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The joint communiqué literally quotes the first one, when it says:

"... we were able to recognize the fact that we, in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery to be inexhaustible and ineffable, and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible."⁸

Mar Bawai Soro recalled this principle repeatedly in the key paper he presented at the first Syriac Consultation.⁹

However this respect for the mystery in reflection and expression does not at all deny that some authentic knowledge of God and of the mystery of the Incarnation is really given, according to a sound apophatic theology. It follows, as it is said by the second Vienna Consultation with the Oriental Orthodox, that "the formulas coined by the fathers and the doctors of the Churches have enabled us to obtain an authentic glimpse of the divine truth".¹⁰ So, it is at the same time with deep humility and great confidence that we are called to continue that same approach in this Syriac Dialogue. It is a fundamental condition for this work to bear fruit in theology and doxology.

5. A New Methodology

In the new awareness of what already unites us, firmly based on our common foundations of faith, and with a deep sense of respect for the mystery, we may, "with fear and trembling" (Phi 2,12), dare to think of a new methodology, along the lines of the five Vienna Consultations.

In the first place, traditional technical terms like *physis* and *hypostasis*, that for ages have given rise to unending misunderstandings and controversies, were left aside, consciously and willingly.

Secondly, it was recognized that

"every formula that we can devise needs further interpretation. We saw that what appears to be the right formulation can be wrongly understood, and also how even behind an apparently wrong formulation there can be a right understanding."¹¹

The same principle could be applied in the dialogue with the Assyrian Church, in relation to terms like *kyana*, *qnoma* and *parsopa*, at least in a first stage, until a certain mutual understanding is reached on the essentials.

Therefore, a new common language had to be found, a language accessible to both sides and reflecting as much as possible the ancient tradition. On this point the well-known four negative attributes - "without commixtion, without confusion, without divi-

⁸ Assy 1, p.198

⁹ See Assy 1, pp.34, 37, 28, 39 and 41. - For instance, p.39: „In our various discussions with the representatives from the Catholic, the Chalcedonian Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches we have been impressed with the sense that we are all trying to express the incomprehensible mystery of the same faith, while each of us is trying to protect what we feel is threatened by terminology differing from our own. What is needed above all else is humility, openness, and a willingness to put aside suspicion about our mutual intentions.“

¹⁰ Booklet 1, p.58

¹¹ Ibidem

sion, without separation" - came as a gift from Providence. They are to be found in the definition of Chalcedon, but in fact are already present in the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Their negative form also seemed to respect the ineffable mystery better, in the spirit of the apophatic theology. This same language can easily be used with the Assyrian Church, thus securing an important symmetry and consistency between the various dialogues.

In the presence of the mystery of the Incarnation, the Vienna Consultations endeavoured to arrive at a narrower circumscription of the truth "within the limits of condemned errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism". This principle can also be considered in line with the apophatic theology. By excluding the two extremes on both sides as errors, the view on the mystery itself is narrowed down, is more centred. However later ecumenical developments have raised some questions about the opportunity of repeating condemnations of the past, especially condemnations by name either of persons or of tendencies. The many discussions about Nestorius and Nestorianism during the first Syriac consultation illustrated it very clearly. Taking into account this restriction, a similar procedure could be followed in the dialogue with the Assyrian Church. On the one hand, it would reject any extreme dyophysitism that divides Christ in two distinct personalities or attributes to Jesus' humanity any separate existence as an "ordinary man"; on the other hand, it would reject any confusion or absorption of the properties of humanity and divinity in him.

Within the limits of the commonly rejected extremes, a "certain plurality of expressions is permissible" in relation to the incomprehensible and inexpressible mystery of the Incarnation.¹² This could be applied, for instance, to the two different titles given to the Virgin Mary: "Theotokos" ("the Mother of God") and "Christotokos" ("the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour"). Both terms can be understood correctly, if they are not taken as excluding each other. While recognizing the legitimacy of the understanding and use of the other term by the other tradition, each tradition would have the right to prefer the use of the term that is more consonant with its own understanding and sensitivity. This is exactly what was stated in the Common Declaration between Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV.¹³

6. A Renewed Faithfulness to Our Traditions

In order to reach a true agreement and to have it received in the ecclesial community, it is not enough to avoid the difficulties of the past or to ignore the linguistic problems that were so vividly discussed during centuries. Every Christological consensus that is expressed in a new or at least unfamiliar way has to be explained as being faithful to the great Tradition. One of the most eloquent examples of this pastoral need seems to be, in my view, the talk that Pope Shenouda III gave at the PRO ORIENTE regional symposium at Amba Bishoy Monastery, in 1991. By using the language familiar to the faithful of the Coptic Orthodox Church all along, and by showing at diffe-

¹² Booklet 1, p.102 (Communiqué of the Fifth Consultation)

¹³ „We both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith and we both respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety.“

rent points that Catholic theology was in agreement with it, he intended to prove that nothing of their faith had been sacrificed in the Christological agreement.¹⁴

In this sense, sooner or later it will be necessary to tackle the problem of the traditional terminology, so as to reach a common interpretation. The second Vienna consultation acknowledges: "The problem of terminology remains with us". It explains:

"Our common effort to clarify the meaning of the Greek terms hypostasis and physis in the Trinitarian and Christological context made us realize how difficult it was to find a satisfactory definition of these terms that could do justice to both contexts in a consistent manner."¹⁵

The further studies devoted to the Christological question in this second Syriac Consultation should be seen in the same perspective. We need to reconcile not only our present, but also our past histories and especially the ways we read our histories. All our Churches have a strong and vivid sense of faithfulness to Tradition, a faithfulness that we do not have to renounce but, on the contrary, to purify and consolidate, in order to see how we are all solidly built and joined together upon the one cornerstone Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 2,20). Thus, in one way or another, we have "to come to terms" with the "terms"! On this point too, the draft worked out in common by the representatives of the Coptic Orthodox and the Assyrian Church, at their meeting in January 1995, tried to break new ground.

It is of primary importance that the Churches are able to approach this terminology problem with the firm conviction that they are already united in the one faith in Christ and that their different terminologies try to be faithful to the one ineffable mystery.

7. In a Soteriological Perspective

The Christological debate among the Churches is not a purely academic exercise, confined to a few specialists in history, language and theology. God's eternal plan of salvation, as well as our Church communities, are at stake. We should never lose sight of this. The late Professor André de Halleux made a remark of the kind in relation to the common Christological Declaration adopted by the joint Commission between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches; he qualifies the text as being "scholastic" in character without any consideration for the soteriological rootedness of Christology.¹⁶

¹⁴ Booklet 3 (1993) 56-71 (the paper of Pope Shenouda III. The Nature of Christ)

¹⁵ Booklet 1, p.58

¹⁶ A. de Halleux. Actualité du néochalcedonisme. Un accord christologique récent entre Orthodoxes, in *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 21, 1990, p. 32-54: "La christologie se trouve entendue ici dans son acception la plus stricte et la plus formelle, portant exclusivement sur la question speculative de l'unité de la personne de Jésus-Christ. On n'y relève pratiquement aucune considération sur l'enracinement soteriologique de la christologie. Sur ce point, le recul éclate par rapport aux conversations antérieures entre les deux familles orthodoxes. Celles-ci avaient pris comme 'point de départ, pour appréhender le mystère de l'union', le dessein salvifique de l'amour infini de Dieu pour l'humanité [...]. De même avait-on bien aperçu, à la suite des Pères, 'la relation intime' que la christologie, comprise dans cette perspective soteriologique, entretient avec la 'théologie et l'anthropologie, l'ecclesiologie, la spiritualité et toute la vie liturgique de l'Église'" (p. 48-49). A. de Halleux refers here to the agreed statement (n. 3) of the Bristol meeting (1967) between theologians of the Eastern and

In this respect, the second Vienna Consultation recalls the great patristic vision that "the Son of God was incarnate and became the Son of Man, so that we, the children of men, may become children of God by His Grace".¹⁷

Hence the vital importance of a common understanding and experience of the mystery of the Incarnation, not only for past generations, but for humankind today and tomorrow. Reinterpretation and proclamation should go hand in hand. The second Vienna Consultation expressed it in a very forceful way:

"Furthermore we realize our common need to reinterpret our faith in Christ in relation to problems that confront man today; the unity of mankind, the presence of poverty and injustice, attitudes towards people of other religions, races and cultures, towards unbelievers and despisers of the Church, and towards all those for whom it has become increasingly difficult to enter into the world of faith. While the meaning behind the ancient terminology remains valid, this terminology is hardly relevant for an adequate solution of these problems. There is urgent need to interpret in contemporary terms how the Son of God becoming one with us in the Incarnation affects the life of man today. And there we feel we can find a common approach and express our hopes that all of our Churches will work together with zeal and courage to meet this challenge."¹⁸

This sense of urgency and pastoral responsibility should be an inseparable dimension of all our meetings and discussions, be it on the meaning of theological terms of the past or on ways of common witnessing in the world today.

8. Common Witness and Service

Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV show the same sense of responsibility when they say, in their Common Declaration:

"Whatever our Christological divergences have been, we experience ourselves united today in the confession of the same faith in the Son of God who became man so that we might become children of God by his grace. We wish from now on to witness together to this faith in the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, proclaiming it in appropriate ways to our contemporaries, so that the world may believe in the Gospel of salvation."

In front of this pastoral mission of reinterpretation and proclamation, the Syriac Dialogue offers a unique opportunity. The different histories and theologies of the Churches and communions here represented - East-Syrian and West-Syrian traditions; Assyrians, Catholics and Oriental Orthodox; Middle East, India and world-wide diaspora - are all rooted in the same Syriac tradition. By putting their complementary experiences together, these Churches are in a privileged position to give new life and expression to their rich common heritage.

Oriental Orthodox Churches; cf Paulos Gregorios, W.H. Lazareth, N.A. Nissiotis (ed.). *Does Chalcedon divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology*, Geneva, 1981, p. 5

¹⁷ Booklet 1, p.59

¹⁸ Ibidem

What has the Syriac theology, liturgy and spirituality to say to contemporary Christians in the Middle East, living in the midst of a Muslim majority and culture? What message or wisdom is it able to offer to the Church in India so that she may really be incarnated in that subcontinent, as much as our Syriac ancestors incarnated their faith in their own culture and world?

At first sight, one may have the impression that such an enterprise would take us far away from our Christological debate. In fact, it is just the opposite. As Christians and as Churches, we have to proclaim the good news we received, so that all may have fellowship with us, "our fellowship that is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ". In order to be able to do that, we first have to agree on "that which is from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life" (cf. 1 Jn 1,1-4). It is impossible to debate Christology without an acute awareness of this responsibility, today.

The chairman welcomes Metropolitan Mar Aprem of Trichur upon his arrival and asks the bishop to present his paper.

Metropolitan Mar Aprem

Summary of the Christological Debate in the Five Vienna Consultations

The five Vienna consultations held between 1971 and 1988 were between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Churches. PRO ORIENTE, Vienna which conducted these five consultations came forward to conduct a similar study between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church. In the Assyrian consultations, not only the Assyrian Church of the East (nicknamed Nestorian) but also all other Churches of Syriac origin are included in the ambit of this study. The Syrian Orthodox, Catholic Chaldean and the Maronite Church are involved in addition to Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara and the Indian Orthodox Syrian Church.

The first five Vienna Consultations were held in 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1988. The first four consultations were held at rather frequent intervals while the 5th consultation was held one decade after the conclusion of the 4th.

The Syriac Commission was constituted in 1994 and the first Syriac Consultation was in June 1994 while the 2nd Syriac Consultation is the present one being held in Vienna now in February 1996.

The task of the Assyrian or Syriac Consultation is easier because there is now a workable framework used in the case of the first five Vienna Consultations. Perhaps the Syriac Consultations may not reach a fifth Consultation as the desired result can be achieved by the 4th Consultation.

In the First Vienna Consultation held on 7-12 Sept, 1971, the communiqué stated:

"We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Nicean-Constantinopolitan creed; we all confess the dogmatic decision and teachings of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus 431; we all agree in rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ..."¹

Here I do not find any objectionable phrase. There are two questions the Assyrians would need to clarify. What is the decision and teachings of Ephesus in 431? Actually there were two rival councils in 431 AD. at Ephesus. The concordat of 433 AD, patches up the disagreement between John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria.

The second question, the Nestorian position rejected in the first consultation of 1971 is in the understanding or rather misunderstanding of the enemies of Nestorius about "Nestorian" position. If that is what you had understood so far, we too would join hands with you in condemning. But clarifications are necessary to understand the true Nestorian position. We do not feel the necessity to condemn the position of Nestorius, if we understand him properly. The task of our present Syriac Consultation is to examine in detail the true Nestorian teaching and to clear the misunderstandings if any.

The first consultation itself grappled with the Christological controversy of the perfect divinity and perfect humanity of Christ.

"We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation. We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible."²

The theologians gathered there realised that there are some differences of theological and ecclesiastical traditions. Therefore they committed themselves to study them in depth:

"Realizing that there can be different emphases in the theological and dogmatic elaboration of Christ's mystery, we wish to encourage common efforts for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of this mystery in harmony with our different ecclesiastical traditions."³

The second Vienna Consultation was held on Sept 3-9, 1973. The communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Consultation confesses the common faith. In paragraph 3 of this communiqué we read:

"The problem of terminology remains with us. For those of us in the Western tradition, to hear of the one nature of Christ can be misleading, because it may be misunderstood as a denial of his humanity. For those of us in the Oriental Orthodox Churches to hear of two natures can be misleading because it can be

¹ Wort und Wahrheit (=WW 1). Supplementary Issue No 1 (1972), p.182

² Wort und Wahrheit (=WW 5). Supplementary Issue No 5 (1989), p.152

³ WW 5, p.152

misunderstood as affirming two persons in Christ. But both sides are agreed in rejecting Eutychianism and Nestorianism."⁴

I believe the problem of terminology remains with us too in this consultation. In 1973 Consultation Nestorianism is condemned without attempting to examine it. Our task today is to discuss it in detail before condemning it as in the past.

The consensus of Christology in the second Vienna Consultation was expressed in the following words:

"We believe also, that the definition of the Council of Chalcedon rightly understood today affirms the unity of person and the indissoluble union of Godhead and Manhood in Christ despite the phrase "in two natures". We all agree that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is consubstantial with the father in his Divinity Himself became consubstantial with us in His Humanity. He perfectly unites in Himself perfect Godhead with perfect Manhood without division, without separation, without change, without commixture."⁵

The above quotation begins in the middle of the paragraph two. It deliberately is quoted from that sentence, because the previous sentence is as follows. "We understand that when our common father in Christ, St Cyril of Alexandria....." It is very true in the 1973 Consultation. But in the Syriac Consultation in which we are engaged now, if we attempt to project "our common father in Christ", it should be anybody other than Cyril of Alexandria or Nestorius of Constantinople. The mutual anathemas of both Cyril and of Nestorius should be omitted by those Churches which at present recite these anathemas even in this ecumenical era.

The participants of the 1973 Consultation engaged the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in order to avoid controversial expression. In the third paragraph of the communiqué the participants confessed:

"We all agree in our confession of the one Lord Jesus Christ very God of very God, begotten before ages from the Father, who was born of the Virgin Mary, grew in Wisdom and stature as a full human being, suffered, died, was buried, rose again on the third day and ascended into Heaven, and is to come again as judge and ruler of the living and the departed."⁶

The Consultation enlarged the scope of Christology. An effort to re-interpret Christology in terms and needs relevant to us in today was made in the consultation. The communiqué rightly pointed out:

"While the meaning behind terminology remains valid, this terminology itself is hardly relevant for an adequate solution of these problems. There is urgent need to interpret in contemporary terms how the son of God becoming one with us in the Incarnation affects the life of man today. And there we feel we can find a common approach and express our hopes that all of our Churches will work together with zeal and courage to meet this challenge."⁷

⁴ WW 5, p.153

⁵ Ibidem

⁶ WW 5, p.153/4

⁷ WW 5, p.154 and Booklet No 1, p.59

The Third Vienna Consultation held three years later, on August 30-Sept 5, 1976 went ahead to discuss the understanding of the natures of Church and the structures of its unity. The communiqué stated:

"Unity is Christ's gift to His Church, and is merely the result of human endeavours. While this unity allows for a multiplicity of traditions; the diversity has to be held together by basic unity in fundamental matter."⁸

The 1976 Vienna Consultation prayerfully considered the question of conciliarity. The communiqué observes:

"We have studied together the notion of conciliarity, i.e., the understanding of the Church as a *koinonia*, so essential to the nature of the Church as the Body of Christ, and so clearly visible in the structure of its life and leadership from the very inception. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth and all unity through the councils and other means; it is to Him that we look in hope for a council in which the unity of the one Church in truth and love, in eucharistic communion and episcopal unity can be publicly affirmed and manifested."⁹

The Fourth Vienna Consultation held on Sept 11-17, 1978 discussed the nature of primacy in the exercise of the ecclesiastical authority. In the communiqué the paragraph No. 7 could be relevant in the Syriac Consultation too.

"In view of the Oriental Orthodox Churches primacy is of historical and ecclesiastical origin, in some cases confirmed by ecumenical councils. In view of the Roman Catholic Church, the historical development of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome has its roots in the divine plan for the Church. In both cases conviction about continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit was the basis for these views and yet provides the common ground for coming to mutual agreement in the future and for a common understanding of the scriptural witness."¹⁰

The question of infallibility was discussed in this 4th Consultation. Paragraph 9 states:

"There was agreement that infallibility or, as the Oriental Orthodox Churches prefer to say, dependable teaching authority, pertains to the Church as a whole, as the Body of Christ and abode of the Holy Spirit. There was no complete agreement as to the relative importance of the different organs in the Church through this inerrant teaching authority is to find expression."¹¹

Regarding full communion among the Churches, paragraph 10 states:

"We were agreed that we should work towards a goal of full union of sister Churches with communion in the faith, in the sacraments of the Church, in ministry and within a canonical structure. Each Church as well as all Churches

⁸ WW 5, p.155

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ WW 5, p.157

¹¹ WW 5, p.158

together will have primatial and conciliar structure, providing for their communion in a given place as well as regional and worldwide scale."¹²

"The structure will be basically conciliar. No single Church in this communion will by itself be regarded as the source and origin of that communion; the source of the unity of the Church is the action of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the same Spirit who operates in all sister Churches the same faith, hope and love, as well as ministry and sacraments. About regarding one particular Church as the centre of the unity, there was no agreement, though the need of a special ministry for unity was recognized by all."¹³

The Fifth Vienna Consultation was held on Sept 18-25, 1988. This Consultation referred to the mutual anathema. In the communiqué we read:

"Several Churches have, in the interest of better ecumenical relations, given up condemning fathers and teachers of the other side by name in their liturgical practice. It was recognized that it may not be possible or necessary to lift these ancient anathemas formally; wrong teaching should however continue to be re-proved."¹⁴

With regard to the question of primacy the communiqué stated:

"On the question of primacy, it was recognized that each Church has its own form of primacy. The responsibility of a Primate, be he Patriarch, Catholicos or Pope, is not understood in the same way in the different Churches through all recognize that primacy is related to the conciliar life of the Church." (...)

"In the Oriental Orthodox Churches, primacy is exercised within each Church and not by one Church over others. However, when primates meet in an ecclesial context, there is an agreed protocol of ranking attributed to them.

According to Roman Catholic understanding, in virtue of his primacy within the communion of Churches, the Bishop of Rome exercise a unique service ordered to maintaining the unity of the Churches."¹⁵

The Fifth Consultation made the following decision to continue the dialogue between these Churches.

"In order to move forward the recommendations made here, the consultation proposes to PRO ORIENTE, the formation of a small group, which will meet more frequently and search out the most effective methods to implement these recommendations and encourage the continuation of this work. Among its activities to gather from the Churches those further issues which they consider necessary for, or of vital importance to the dialogue between our Churches and arrange for the proper decision of these. Some of these issues which have already been

¹² Ibidem

¹³ Ibidem

¹⁴ WW 5, p.149

¹⁵ WW 5, p.150

suggested among the participants are a consideration e.g. of the "procession of the Holy Spirit" and the "immaculate conception."¹⁶

The concluding paragraph of the Communiqué is worth repeating here, as it is worth reminding the delegates of this Syriac Consultation:

"Finally, the consultation urgently appeals to all of the churches represented here to set up a joint official body to engage in that formal dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the family of the Oriental Orthodox Churches which will have as its objective the achieving of full communion in faith and sacramental life."¹⁷

There is a difference between the Christological issue of the five Vienna Consultations and the present Syriac Consultation.

The first Vienna Consultations were between the Churches directly involved in 451 AD controversy. The Syriac Consultation however, is between the Catholics and the "Nestorians" who were not involved in the controversy directly. That is to say that the Assyrian Church of the East was not directly involved in AD 431-433 controversy. Nestorius is only one of the three Greek doctors of this Syriac speaking Church. Nestorius who was the spokesman of the Antiochian school and bishop (or Patriarch) of Constantinople had nothing to do with the Church of the East which was in the Persian Empire.

How much do the Assyrians care for Nestorius? How much do they "hate" Cyril of Alexandria? Although the Assyrians state that Nestorius is not their founder and therefore refuse to be called Nestorians, the general trend is that Nestorius, though Greek, is very much their father. The Assyrians never cared to understand teachings of Cyril of Alexandria.

Discussion:

Dr. Hainthaler: I would like to thank Father Bouwen for his clear paper. I remember that in one of the consultations we mentioned speaking of the two natures of Jesus Christ. Yet, we do not maintain that one of the natures is less in level than the other. Fr. Bouwen's paper was a very good example to examine each terminology and clarify it to us.

Bishop Matar: I would like to refer to Fr. Bouwen's paper in chapter 7 (see above p.36) and mention that it is a problem to exclude the Christian culture in the Middle East, just mentioning Muslim culture. The impact of Christian culture on Islam is big. So, I ask Fr. Bouwen to refer to Christian and Muslim cultures in the Middle East.

Mar Bawai: Fr. Bouwen's paper is a valuable analysis. Yet, in c.7 (see above p.35/6) I wish to add a footnote from the perspective of the Assyrian Church: „are all rooted in

¹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁷ WW 5, p.151

the same Antiochian and Mesopotamian Syriac tradition." Because the Mesopotamian tradition has enriched also the Christian tradition. And we are not all coming only from the Antiochian tradition.

Father Habbi: I have two remarks on Father Bouwen's paper:

1. The Christian tradition should be read in the new light of all traditions (see above, p.28/29).
2. We should add the trinitarian perspective to the text (see above, p.35).

Amba Bishoi: On Father Bouwen's paper (see above, p.34). Speaking about the titles given to the Virgin Mary. It is mentioned in the statement: Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

See above, p.36. I wish to explain that the Oriental Orthodox Churches include also other churches. This applies to the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church who both are rooted in Antioch and Alexandria. In our Coptic Church we can understand the Antiochian Church without refusing the Alexandrian one.

Prof. Chediath: On Father Bouwen's paper (see above, p.36). We should mention the Antiochian, Mesopotamian and Indian tradition.

Archbishop Mounayer: Thanking Father Bouwen for his paper which is full of useful arguments. At the end of his paper he is encouraging us to find a solution for our divisions amidst the Muslim majority of the society. I feel that we Christians in the East, should stop using such expressions of *oikonomia* and debate about it, while our people are emigrating and leaving their homeland. We have to be realistic. Christians are feeling afraid to go on living in their land. We Christian churches are divided and our communities are more living outside their countries. I feel that we should reach a quick solution for our divisions in order to preserve our people. If we do not cooperate as Christians we will perish.

Bishop Saliba: On Mar Aprem's paper, I wish to know when the two natures of Jesus Christ are united, before or after His birth?

Father Kodapuzha: On Father Bouwen's paper (see above, p.36) The Syriac heritage in India is considered part of our original tradition and not as a foreign tradition. The authenticity of the patristic heritage is part of the Indian tradition.

The non-Christian Indian does not consider the Syriac tradition and heritage as foreign ones.

Dr. Winkler: I realize that the Syriac churches have the same christological faith. But, unfortunately there has been no formal declaration on that. The Catholic Church has formal declarations with the Assyrian Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Church. I propose that we should study the formula of 1994. On the other hand, it is very difficult to find out what Nestorius said.

Father Bouwen's paper shows that the unity of churches could be reached.

Amba Bishoy: Commenting Mar Aprem's paper I would say that the reconciliation happened between Patriarch John of Antioch and St. Cyril in 433. After that year the Ecumenical Councils were recognized by the two churches.

Archbishop Krikorian: First I would like to ensure Mar Aprem that there are no atrocities against Nestorius.

I have three small comments:

1. I have the impression that there are two Nestorius: The historical Nestorius whom we condemn and the theologian whom we respect as good Orthodox theologian.
2. I don't think that it is right to put Nestorius on the same level of St. Cyril.
3. The best way of striving for unity is having a reconciliation between the two Christologies of Nestorius and other churches.

Mar Gregorios: I would like to comment on the last page of Mar Aprem's paper and ask: How can we combine Nestorius as being of Greek origin and at the same time as father of the Eastern church?

Father Bouwen: I appreciate all the comments and remarks come from the floor, of which I agree with most of it. I wish to assess the following comments:

I do not deny that there is a Christian culture which influenced the Muslim culture. But, I wanted to say how can we present the message of Christianity in a way that can be accepted by Muslims or at least, not immediately rejected by the Muslim majority. I talked about Antioch believing in a certain way that it was the first road to spread the Gospel. I agree that there is something in common among Antioch, Mesopotamia and India.

I agree that the Indian tradition is apostolic and not foreign. Yet, I wanted to question what the Syrian tradition and the ancient Christian churches can offer to these Indian churches.

Mar Aprem: I wish to confirm that the union of divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ happened at the birth or before the birth, and never after the birth.

Regarding Nestorius' origin, I can say that he was from Greek origin. He never spoke, read or wrote in Syriac. He is not our founder. Yet, we have to find a way that our people can understand Nestorius.

Comments to and Reception of the Common Christological Declaration Between Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV

In the 70's while still a student in Rome, I attended a liturgy in Santa Maria Maggiore on one of the Virgin Mary's Feasts, and was astonished to hear the priest, after reading the Gospel, address the congregation of no more than fifty, telling them in detail in a long homily of some of the minutes of the Third Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus 431. At first I imagined him lecturing in one of the theological schools especially when he affirmed that the renunciation of the doctrine of Nestorius was one of the most significant triumphs the universal Christian church achieved in the first millennium.

I was surprised because I never thought, neither did the faithful, while living in the city of Rome in the 1980's, of listening to the details of a historic event that had happened 15 centuries before; but it seemed that the preacher wanted to explain the expression "The Mother of God Theotokos" and found no better way to explain this expression than to go back to the decisions of that well known council.

Whenever the expression "The mother of God" is mentioned, we do think of the new concepts adopted by the patriarch of Constantinople which were repudiated by the entire church as heretical thus causing the excommunication of Nestorius and his partisans. These doctrinal disputes created an atmosphere of tension particularly among the faithful of one tradition in Mesopotamia.

Even today, we in the Syrian Orthodox church of Antioch, still write and speak about Nestorius as a heretic and consider the anathemas of the twelve chapters of St. Cyril of Alexandria the foundation of our Orthodox faith in the divine „mystery of incarnation and the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God".

The majority of Syrian chroniclers do not agree with the behaviour of our first Antiochene Patriarch John I and his support of Nestorius. Never had our church supported her bishops who advocated Nestorius publicly and secretly, and those who abstained from using the expression "Theotokos." We still use accusing phrases in our liturgical books when speaking of Nestorius as a person and an advocate of a doctrine originating from a school of thought not in conformity with the faith of our Apostolic fathers and not concomitant with the ecumenical atmosphere we live in these days. It suffices to cite one example that indicates the extent of hatred the church feels towards Nestorius. In the feast of St. Severus of Antioch, the Crown of Syrians (†538) we repeat a statement of our church fathers who wrote about the escape of Mar Severus of Antioch to Egypt saying:

"Oh Egypt, Egypt awake and welcome Severus, the fugitive open your doors and sweep thy streets for him who would expel the teachings of Nestorius the impudent."

It goes without saying that dogmatic disputes were not restricted to church leaders specialized in theology but extended further to the schools of thought that were spread in diverse monasteries and churches. These were also reflected in the controversial writings of the Holy Fathers and theological centres associated with the competitions already present among the great church centres, personal conflicts and rising national allegiances.

The role of the monks and their supporters among the people was so clear in the life of the enthusiastic faithful that they encouraged the emperors who were at the peak of their temporal authority to interfere even in the most critical affairs of the church. In our oriental history we cannot ignore this time of theological controversies which occupied a great part of the life of the faithful and might themselves be the cause behind the demographic changes that took place in the region, because the church was engaged in these controversies which were augmented later on in the fifth and sixth centuries. The church was so involved in these controversies that it neglected to search for unity from within in order to form a solid barrier against all trends inside and outside the church that aimed at destroying its structure and faith.

The christological dilemma remains the most important in church life. Theologians disagreed on the terms of the union between divinity and humanity. Some affirmed that it was a union of essence while others, following Nestorius, affirmed that it was an accidental union. On the basis of these diverse interpretations, that started in the fifth century and lasted until the seventies of this century, accusations have been maintained in catechetical curricula that were taught in seminaries and theological schools and in history books thus highlighting these disagreements among churches. The initiative came from the decisions of the Second Vatican Council which opened the door wide for a new vision of this dilemma. After studying the christological terminologies in a spirit of openness and deep awareness of the necessity for restoring the Unity of Communion, which was present among churches before the schisms, theologians, under the guidance of church leaders, dedicated themselves to laying solid foundations for healing the rift between brothers in different churches and traditions.

The foundation PRO ORIENTE has played a distinctive role in paving the way for the non-official dialogue between theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church in order that a reconsideration of theological terminology be accomplished and new foundations be laid under the fact that our confession of the doctrine of Incarnation is one and that there is no essential disagreement between us in terms of this dilemma.

I can refer here to what has been stated by Professor De Vries in the first consultation concerning this:

"We must admit as a matter of fact that the Council of Chalcedon did not fulfil the expectations placed on it. Not only did it fail to restore peace in the universal church, it even caused a schism which has 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: to attest that there is only one Christ who is true God and true man at the same time. The dispute arose from the basic inability of men at that time to believe that the same truth may be expressed in different words which may even be apparently contradictory." (1st Cons. p.60)

The majority of participants in the theological consultations in Vienna affirmed that regardless of any negative reaction on the part of churches, the step taken by church leaders received spiritual acceptance in all communities.

Common declarations and statements made by the Popes of Rome and the Patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches have had a great impact on the relations between these two church families. We find important quotations from Oriental Orthodox fathers in the speeches and declarations of Popes. I do stress that theologians, after the repudiation of heresies, have found the common foundations based on the Apostolic traditions and the first three ecumenical councils expressing their common confession of Christ in the following communiqué:

"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 commixture, 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."

"We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions. We are convinced, however, that these differing formulations on both sides can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicea and Ephesus."

My aim in this introduction is to state that this dialogue, based on deep rooted confidence and mutual respect, was the impetus that encouraged theologians and hierarchs to be aware of the necessity of searching for the positive points that call for a unity of faith instead of separation and schisms.

Despite the long period of time that separated us from our brothers in the Ancient Church of the East there have been unsuccessful attempts at re-establishing unity between us. Needless to say that the past was so tragic and the aftermath of divisions and schisms have had a bad effect on the life of our people to the extent that any kind of rapprochement between us has been rejected notwithstanding our common heritage, language and the geographical regions in which we fought and struggled in order to maintain our connections.

Even in the 1940's when one of our Antiochene Patriarchs spoke of the intermarriage between us and the Ancient Church of the East, he attacked the doctrine of Nestorius shaking thus all possible bases on which any rapprochement could be achieved between us.

The atmosphere is different today. Rapprochement and the agreements to have mutual services between the two churches wherever they might be located, east or west,

are more likely to be effected. The encounter in 1988 between H.H. Zakka I. Iwas and H.H. Mar Dinkha IV, which was the beginning of a bilateral dialogue between the two churches, is still in mind. The two churches are working according to the decisions taken by their synods to have this rapprochement in view and in many fields of activities realised. We do hope that this dialogue be maintained in order to arrive at common denominators that might unite us in order to be able to work together for the revival of our mutual heritage in our Aramaic language.

The faithful of the Syrian Church of Antioch rejoiced at the common declaration issued in Rome following the historical encounter between His Holiness John Paul II Pope of Rome and the Catholic Church and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East on October 26, 1994; after which our church considered all the declarations and statements to be courageous steps towards the efforts to join these dear churches together in the various fields of service.

May I state a few comments on the speeches of His Holiness the Pope of Rome and His Holiness the Patriarch of the East and the address of His Holiness the Pope delivered on Sunday October 13, 1993.

The addresses of the Pope and the Patriarch included some of the points that elucidated some of the background of the common declaration. The Roman Pope mentioned the first official visit paid by the Patriarch ten years prior to the signing of the common declaration saying:

"You shared with me your ardent wish that a declaration of the Pope of Rome and of the Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East would one day be able to express our two churches' common faith in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary."

Hence it was a common desire of the two pontiffs to declare the common faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate. The Pope stressed that historians and theologians immediately set about examining very carefully the christological consequences of the council of Ephesus concerning the person of Christ.

We have not read the minutes of the sessions stating what had taken place between theologians and historians. We have no idea of either the number of participants or their names and the place where they convened and on which bases they were capable, through a mutual dialogue, to come to this common declaration in which they state:

"The fruitful dialogue has enabled us to overcome the ambiguities and misunderstandings of the past."

In this connection, the Patriarch, for his part, considers that the dialogue has brought down the walls which have separated us and kept us apart for fifteen centuries.

The Patriarch asserts that he has come to Rome with his episcopal delegates to agree on a "statement of common faith - a statement providing a foundation of hope and relationship."

The Patriarch admits, in his address, the presence of some differences between the two churches, yet still expresses his sincere hopes that the statement of faith he is signing, "will be both a partial realization of past dreams and a significant step towards future co-operation and enhanced ecumenical relations."

In his address, and after referring to the one historical faith that Jesus Christ is the only son of God who is our Lord, God and Saviour, he states that this agreement will promote a new atmosphere of harmony and understanding between the two distinct churches.

Neither in the two addresses nor in the Pope's address, in his Sunday Angelus; introducing the Patriarch to the faithful on Nov. 9, 1994, have we come across any clear reference whatsoever to the major difference between the two churches for the last fifteen centuries.

There was only one clear reference to the misunderstanding that took place in Ephesus "and lasted for fifteen centuries in terms of the faith in Christ true God and true man."

I'm sure that we are incapable of overcoming all the obstacles that have caused this deplorable schism which has afflicted the church all these centuries and led to the disunity of Christianity between east and west just through the addresses of the Pope and the Patriarch.

It's true that personal rivalry and the excessive reluctance in the past of hierarchs, to cede their positions are among the numerous reasons behind the events that have happened. However, the Nestorian thought is so conspicuous in denying that Christ is perfect in his Divinity and perfect in his Humanity; a position maintained by the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

The acts of the Second Council of Ephesus in Syriac completely reveal the Nestorian position which was contradictory with the well known Apostolic position.

In those addresses there is no reference, whatsoever, to the first three ecumenical councils as it was the case with the previous addresses between the Pope and the rest of the Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs. Even when Ephesus was mentioned, the Pope stated that the council of Ephesus "aimed at defining accurately the deep conviction of the church that Christ's humanity has no other subject than the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it made it his own, from his conception " in Mary's womb.

In this context and in his public audience "Ut Unum Sint " in Rome on May 25, 1995, Pope John Paul II referred to the progress attained between the church of Rome and the church of the East saying:

"Today I would like to thank the Lord for the great joy given me last week of signing a common christological declaration with His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, who expressed his desire to visit me in Rome in October 1994. With deep conviction of the presence of differences in theological terminologies we could declare our faith in Christ. I would like to express my exultation with the words of the Blessed Virgin "My soul magnifies the Lord." (Luke 1:46)

In his address before the Pope, the Patriarch stressed that the church of the East was established by Saint Thomas, Saint Bartholomew and Saint Addai from the seventy as proclaimers of the good news in Mesopotamia and all Asia which meant that this church like all other Apostolic churches, including the Catholic Church was established on one common foundation which was Apostolic tradition.

The declaration is the basis of our discourse because it forms the basis for a better and deeper understanding of the confession of this church which has been isolated for a

long period of time even on its own Lord because she was estranged from her sister churches with which she shared a common heritage.

She has had communion with the other Christian churches up till now. The two pontiffs, the Pope and the Patriarch consider the common declaration a basic step on the way toward full communion to be restored between their churches.

The two pontiffs state that living by this faith and these sacraments, it follows as a consequence that the particular Catholic churches and the particular Assyrian church can recognize each other as sister churches. To be full and entire, communion presupposes unanimity concerning the content of the faith, the sacraments and the constitution of the church since this unanimity for which we aim has not yet been attained. We cannot unfortunately celebrate together the Eucharist which is the sign of the ecclesial communion already fully restored. It has been a great step taken by the two pontiffs to declare the possibility of accomplishing an entire step even before obtaining the results of the dialogue between their two churches. In his discourse to the Patriarch, the Pope referred to his contacts with the Chalcedon bishops, stressing their readiness to foster the great movement towards the restoration of the unity of all Christians. Does this mean that the "full unity" anticipated between the two churches is a unity with the Catholic church through the Chalcedon church?

This fact has never been made public by any of the Popes in all the previous common declarations made between them and the patriarchs of the Oriental Orthodox churches. In the Pope's call for them to be one in his discourse he touches upon the subject from a different perspective saying: "We all recognize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the rich heritage of each of our churches, and that a diversity of customs and observances is in no way an obstacle to unity. This diversity includes the power of our churches to govern themselves according to their own disciplines and to keep certain differences in theological expressions which, as we have verified, are often complementary rather than conflicting."

The Patriarch refers to the meaning of full unity as follows:

"May this new understanding between our two venerable churches add to the foundation of unity already laid with other Christian churches, and lead us further along the path toward restoring the Apostolic communion which once existed between the Apostles and their churches during the earliest generations of Christians."

The passage that turns about the historical dispute includes quotations from the Nicene Creed. The mystery of the Divine Incarnation is indisputable because all churches believe that Jesus Christ, the Lord Incarnate is perfect in his Divinity and perfect in his Humanity; and we in the Syrian Church of Antioch believe in what had been acknowledged by our fathers, especially St. Cyril and St. Severus of Antioch together, with the rest of theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. We did express our faith in the communiqué of the first non-official ecumenical consultation organised by the foundation PRO ORIENTE as follows:

"We believe, that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the son incarnate; perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, 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. We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible."

This confessional affirmation was preceded by very significant phrases in the same consultation, affirming that the theologians have found a common denominator in the Apostolic tradition itself as affirmed in the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed. The theologians also stated:

"We all confer the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431)."

They wouldn't have arrived at a christological consensus if they had not agreed on rejecting both the Nestorian and Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ. In the second non-official ecumenical consultation in 1973, and after having fundamentally agreed upon the common faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, there was a significant elucidation in terms of definition issued by the Council of Chalcedon concerning the person of Jesus Christ. It 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. We believe also that the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, rightly understood today, affirms the unity of person and the indissoluble union of Divinity and Humanity in Christ despite the phrase "in two natures."

We all agree that our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is consubstantial with the Father in his Divinity hence became consubstantial with us in his Humanity.

Notwithstanding the dialogues in the five Vienna consultations, the rejection of Nestorianism like Arianism and Eutychianism, remained a basis for any confessional affirmation between the two church families. In the fifth non-official consultation in 1988, and after the acknowledgement that a distinguished progress had been achieved in terms of christology, theologians reiterated the rejection of Nestorianism, like Arianism and Eutychianism.

The fifth consultation emphasized that the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God could not be exhaustively formulated in words, and that within the limits of condemned errors like Arianism, Nestorianism and Eutychianism, a certain plurality of expressions was permissible in relation to the inseparable and unconfused hypostatic union of the human and the divine in 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.

If we compare the common declaration with what has been stated in the dialogues of the non-official Vienna consultations we will find that the section that deals with the common faith in the person of Jesus Christ which is the basis of disagreement as mentioned, is not different in its essence from the affirmation stated in other common declarations except for the absence of renouncing Nestorianism as it was the case with the other rejected doctrines like Arianism and Eutychianism. We, in the Syrian Orthodox church of Antioch do not see any obstacles standing in the way of accepting a com-

mon declaration of this sort, while preserving our right to declare that these very affirmations represent the position of this sister church.

The second dilemma which formed an obstacle between us and our brothers in the Ancient Church of the East is the expression of "theotokos" (the mother of God) acknowledged by all the churches except the Ancient Church of the East. In reference to the paper of Mar Aprem the Bishop of Trichur, we find that this terminology is not acceptable in the Church of the East. His Grace states that Nestorius had fears against the use of the term. In this regard he states:

"The necessity for a "Nestorian" christology becomes inevitable when we think of the greatest position ascribed to the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. The fear expressed by Nestorius against the use of theotokos should not be ignored. It is one of the positive contributions of Nestorius to have exposed the potential danger of this title."

As far back as our records of history go there was nobody to speak against this title before 428 AD though it was used by certain individuals. Perhaps it would have become the standard expression of all Christians if Nestorius had not waged such a crusade against this title. Till the Reformation in the 16th century, the church of the East was the only church which shared the concern of Nestorius against the use of "theotokos." Since the Reformation however, many churches share this attitude and thus the position taken by the Church of the East alone down through the centuries is vindicated.

In these days when statements such as "the Immaculate Conception of Mary," "the Assumption of Mary to Heaven" and proclaiming Mary "as the Queen of Heaven" are made, Christians have begun to open their eyes to the dangers of over-emphasizing the importance of Mary. The opposition of excessive Mariology demonstrated at the Vatican II and the opposition to a separate schema on Mary from many bishops at the council show that even in the Roman Church, some at least are beginning to see the dangers of the title of "theotokos". Therefore the position explained by Nestorius and consistently maintained by the Church of the East, deserves the appreciation of Christians.

De Halleux states:

"One of Nestorius' priests had scandalized a number of the faithful by criticizing the venerable title "Mother of God", while the archbishop claiming to arbitrate the controversy, had in turn shocked his own congregation by his offensive christological expressions. In addition, he had received into his fellowship a bishop who had openly declared: 'if any one says Mary, Mother of God let him be anathema.'"

The common christological declaration has given a new but ambiguous interpretation when it states:

"That is the reason why the Assyrian Church of the East is praying through the virgin Mary as "the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour." In light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the virgin Mary as "the Mother of God" and also as the "Mother of Christ".

We do accept the interpretation of this point in the paper of father André de Halleux entitled "Nestorius: History and Doctrine". De Halleux starts by saying:

"Nestorius has been considered historically a heretic who denied that the Blessed Virgin was the Mother of God, because he failed to confess that Emmanuel is truly God."

After reviewing the doctrine of Nestorius, De Halleux wonders saying:

"But what about the main accusation, the one that began the 'ecumenical scandal', the opposition by Nestorius to the name 'Mother of God'? This 'scarecrow' should be reduced to its just proportions. (Socrates, h.e, 7.32) Before the explosion of the dispute, this Marian title virtually did not appear in the abundant literary production of Cyril, while it occurred at least once in a homily of Nestorius (LH 34.5,7,8). And further, at the height of the controversy, the archbishop of Alexandria restricted his use of the title to simply calling Mary the 'Blessed Virgin'."

Nestorius only opposed the exploitation of the term "Mother of God" in a Manichean or Apollinarian sense, as it was thought "rightly or wrongly" as the term was used by certain of the devotees of the expression at Constantinople (LH 91-92). Upon receiving the Roman and Alexandrian sentence, he yielded to the advice of moderation that John of Antioch himself had cast away, declaring in a homily: The Blessed Virgin is Mother of God ... because the temple created in her by the Holy Spirit was united with divinity". (C 78) This explanation in actual fact returns to the Antiochene formula, the Orthodoxy of which Cyril himself would recognize: the Blessed Virgin is Mother of God because God the word ... from the moment of conception united the temple assumed from her." (V127,5)

In conclusion we have to reflect upon certain points in the declaration:

1. We don't find any mention of Nestorius the Patriarch of Constantinople or of his doctrine which was the basis of the dispute. With the understanding that the Assyrian Church of the East counts him among her saints (without, however, reserving for him a particular liturgical commemoration), she considers him an Orthodox doctor and venerates him as Orthodox teacher described in history books as unjustly excommunicated.

A few questions might be raised in this connection:

1.1. Will the signing of the common declaration mean that the Ancient Church of the East will abandon all the characteristics ascribed to Nestorius, at least as an Orthodox teacher in all its history books and forget him as one of her fathers?

1.2. Or would the Church of the East, in her dialogue with the Catholic Church or even with the other Christian churches with which an accord might be achieved, demand that the writings of Nestorius be studied in the light of the new findings and have a final judgement issued to show whether his doctrine was Nestorian in the heretical sense understood by the church or orthodox as understood by other fathers.

1.3. Has the Ancient Church of the East ever thought, in case the doctrine of Nestorius ever proved to be true, to request that his name be lifted from among those ana-

thematized to be one of the Orthodox fathers, thus restoring recognition of him like all other patriarchs and bishops who had been accused of heresy by others?

2. We have no idea about the position of this church towards the Council of Ephesus which is considered by all Christians an ecumenical council. Will the Church of the East have second thoughts about the decisions of this council and accept its decisions and include it among other ecumenical councils? Or will she consider it like any other general synod convened by the Holy Church? And if it is acknowledged as a general synod, what justification is there for this church to reject the doctrine of Nestorius as unorthodox?

3. Will the church, in light of what has been stated in the common declaration consider it enough to speak of Mary as the "Mother of Christ our Lord and Saviour" or will she, like all other churches, use the expression "Mother of God" in reference to the virgin Mary?

I do sincerely hope that we would be ready to accept one another to be the congregation of one shepherd who is Jesus Christ.

Bishop Paul Matar

Commentary on the Joint Christological Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East - Its Reception by Catholics

The date 11th of November 1994 is being linked in Christian memory to another date which takes us much farther back into history, for it refers to the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus held in the year 431. One thousand five hundred and sixty-four years were to pass before the two Churches, Roman Catholic and Assyrian of the East, professed in a joint declaration the same faith in Christ, the Word incarnate, true God and true man, come on earth for our salvation.

On the Catholic side, the Holy Father himself having received His Holiness Mar Dinkha the Fourth, Catholicos and Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, in the Vatican City, expressed his profound joy at the renewal of relations between these two apostolic Churches which now put an end to fifteen centuries of separation and mutual ignorance. Indeed, the way was now open to a communion between them which it was hoped would be complete and perfect.

The Christological Declaration of 1994 had been ten years in the making, through meetings and joint consultations between representatives of the two Churches. The first official visit of Mar Dinkha IV to the Holy See lasted from the 7th to 9th of November, 1984. It allowed an opportunity for the two Churches to express a common desire to know each other better and to be drawn closer together. It was an act of Providence that His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV had attended at Rome the Holy Mass of the inauguration of the ministry of Pope John-Paul II on the 22nd of October, 1978. It was also providential that the new pope was inspired to consider his ecumenical engagement as

one of the pastoral priorities of his pontificate (Ut Unum Sint, No. 99). So we may well say that the first meeting between the two men took place against a background of prayer and for this reason was to bear fruit.

The Encyclical Ut Unum Sint shows us the road already covered since the beginning of the pastoral ministry of the Sovereign Pontiff. Concerning the ecumenical question in general, the Holy Father expresses there the hope of seeing the visible unity of the Churches attained with the dawn of the third millennium. As for the reconciliation under way between the Church of Rome and the Assyrian Church of the East, it enabled him to say: "Our Lord has bestowed on me the great joy of signing a joint Christological declaration with the Assyrian Patriarch of the East, His Holiness Mar Dinkha." He adds: "...I wish to say the joy which all that gives me in taking up the words of the Holy Virgin, 'My soul exalts the Lord' " (Ut Unum Sint, No. 62)

The Holy Father himself set the tone for the Catholic reception of the announcement of this historic event. The speech which he pronounced on the very day of the signature of the declaration contained already three major lines of thought which should be pointed out. The first one concerns the Council of Ephesus with its consequences past and present. The second concerns present collaboration between the two Churches in the pastoral and catechetical fields. Finally, the third concerns future relations between the two Christian Churches; each has to develop its own rich heritage, since "it is by no means against unity that within it there should be diversity of manners and customs." In this speech of the 11th of November, 1994, His Holiness also added the following: "This diversity allows freedom for our Churches to rule themselves according to their own disciplines and to keep certain differences in their theological formulations which, as we have just verified, are often to be considered as complementary rather than as opposed to each other."

These three considerations in the pope's discourse are perfectly fitted as a plan for our study of the reception by Catholics of the joint Christological declaration of the 11th of November, 1994, and their comments.

But first we must stress the capital importance of the reception of such declarations both for the Church and for ecumenical progress. While reminding us of this fact in the encyclical we have just quoted, Ut Unum Sint, the Holy Father gives us guidelines of an active and dynamic reception (No. 80). These joint declarations, he points out, should be a common patrimony. Further, for them to be attained, the whole people of God should be involved, according to the competence of every one of its members, in order to reach a consensus experienced by all the faithful. Ecumenical commissions are called on to apply themselves to the task, guided by the magisterium, which will always have the final word in matters of faith. The concluding directive given by His Holiness in this domain is the following:

"In all this it will be most useful, from the point of view of methodology, to always bear in mind the distinction between the deposit of faith and the way in which it is expressed, as recommended by Pope John XXIII in his opening speech at Vatican Council II (No. 81).

These directives of the Holy Father about the reception of any declaration signed by the Roman Catholic Church jointly with any other Church will help us to clarify the attitude adopted by Catholics towards the Christological agreement of 11th November, 1994. The final remark concerning the deposit of faith and its various formulations

constitutes also the best means of approaching the subject of the Council of Ephesus and its consequences, whether within the framework of our present talk or within that of the congress which now brings us together as a whole, one which taken all together is devoted to this very subject.

1. The Catholic-Assyrian declaration and the dogmatic problem

Generally speaking, the Christian conscience has already travelled far in its consideration of relations with the Assyrian Church of the East. Separated both from the Catholic Church and from all the Orthodox Churches, this Church, with its prestigious past and celebrity due to the great missionary activity which led it to the outer confines of Asia, from the time of the first Councils always lay outside the Roman Empire and therefore beyond the frontiers of the Oecumene. Although it had subsequently accepted the two first Councils, Nicea and Constantinople I (one), the Assyrian Church was not immediately informed about the holding of the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, which condemned the Christology and Mariology of Nestorius.

Today we must ask ourselves exactly what has been the attitude of the Assyrian Church towards Ephesus. On the Catholic side, the Christological accord we are here dealing with would not have been possible without the safeguarding of the doctrinal teaching of this Third Ecumenical Council. However, historical research and theological studies have made possible a distinction between on one hand the doctrinal gains made at Ephesus, its teaching about Christ, true God and true man, whose "divinity and humanity are united in the person of the same and only son of God and Lord", and on the other hand the errors rejected by this Council, whether attributed to Nestorius himself, to Nestorianism or to those who professed them. Christian faith sees Christ not as an ordinary man, nor as an ordinary human person in some way adopted by the divine person for there to be in him two persons and two natures with no possible true union. For us the Virgin Mary is not merely mother of the human person of Christ; she is the Mother of God, for Christ is one sole divine person and the Holy Virgin is his mother as such. Whether for this question Nestorius was not in fact truly what we call Nestorian is for history to judge. The Assyrian Church's view of him as a martyr unjustly treated may also have historical and cultural reasons rather than motives connected with the faith as experienced in the hearts of believers. There can be no doubt that the theology of Nestorius certainly lacked consistency, and the rather complex cultural distinction between "Qnouma" and "Pharsoupha" caused confusion in people's minds, particularly where these two concepts lacked respective equivalents.

In point of fact, historical research has brought to light the particularly difficult situation which the Assyrian Church found itself in after Constantine's proclamation of Christianity as the official religion. The hostilities that broke out between the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire made life exceedingly difficult for the Christians of this latter eastern region, so remote and isolated. For these believers Byzantium and Alexandria became dangerous names to evoke. On the other hand, Antioch was not a symbol of force and of domination, and what is more it was close to the Christians of the East in its language and in its culture. Through psychological identification, Nestorius with his Antiochian origins could be considered by the Assyrian Church as the victim of his adversaries. But this does not mean that this Church based on him all

its faith and its theology. There was certainly cross-interference between them, but this did not mean that the Assyrian Church could not have its martyrs or develop its missionary activity in Central Asia and the Far East. For example, it is most illuminating to study the similarities that have remained embedded in the respective liturgies of the various Syriac Churches, despite their schisms and ecclesiastical divisions. A book of the Gospels written in Arabic rhyme at the end of the thirteenth century by the Assyrian Bishop of Nisibis, Abd Yeshuh as-Soubawi, gives striking evidence of these similarities, since the Sunday readings for the Assyrian liturgical year contained within it are much like those of the Maronite liturgical calendar. We might also note a most unusual adaptation to the language and rhymed prose of the Quran due the milieu of the Assyrian Church being already considerably arabised.

From what we have said concerning both theology and history, one can only conclude that the Assyrian Church of the East, in its origin and in its development, goes far beyond any Nestorian influence on its formulations of dogma. In spite of these, the Christological Declaration of Rome reveals a common faith professed by the two Churches, Catholic and Assyrian. It also reveals the sequels of the past division between the two Churches by the mention of the points which still have to be clarified before the return to full ecclesiastical communion between them.

The most essential of the common points contained in the Declaration is resumed in the following formula: "The same Word of God, engendered by the Father before all ages, without beginning according to his divinity, was in recent times born of a mother, without a father, in his humanity. The humanity to which the blessed Virgin Mary gave birth has always been that of the Son of God himself. This is why the Assyrian Church of the East prays to the Virgin Mary as the mother of Christ our God and Saviour. . . " In this text we have no difficulty recognising the very teaching proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus.

However, the Declaration also stresses the theological and ecclesiological problems still pending between the two Churches. In the passage devoted to the theology of the sacraments, the text of the Declaration insists on the same faith in Baptism, in Confirmation conferred by anointing, in the Eucharist, in Penance and in Ordination. Despite this substantial identity of belief, two sacraments are missing from the list, those of Holy Matrimony and of the Anointing of the Sick. One may therefore raise a question here and consider the problem of Matrimony, which in Assyrian theological tradition has not yet appeared in all evidence and in the appropriate texts as a sacrament of the New Testament. The same may be said of the problem of the Anointing of the Sick. A deepening of the dialogue concerning these two questions is both a theological and a pastoral necessity, particularly as the marriages of Catholics are sometimes dissolved by their admission into the Assyrian Church and the consequent possibility of legitimising their divorce.

On this subject the Declaration in any case concludes by saying: "To be full and entire, communion presupposes unanimity about the content of faith, about the sacraments and about the constitution of the Church. As we have not yet reached this unanimity towards which we must make further progress, we cannot unfortunately celebrate together the Eucharist, which is the sign of Ecclesiastical communion already fully restored." This passage brings us to another matter for dialogue, that of ecclesiology, of

the organic relationship between the two Churches and of the ministry of unity exercised by the chair of Peter.

However, the way lies wide open towards a common witness to the Gospel and to co-operation in specific pastoral situations, "most particularly in the fields of catechising and of the formation of priests." In view of with the results of these ten years of dialogue, it is possible to admit that the ground already covered on the way towards full communion is greater than that which still remains. This is why one is entitled to expect that on the Catholic side this declaration should be given a reception according to the understanding accorded to it by the Holy Father in all its dimensions.

2. Present-day collaboration between the two Churches

If the Joint Declaration alludes to two privileged domains of collaboration, those of catechising and of the formation of priests, it confirms first of all that the two Churches may well call themselves Sister Churches. Our two Churches are therefore invited to work together in order to educate the new generations which will together write a new history for the future. So it is necessary, following the Christological Agreement, for attitudes to change at every level and in a way concerning all categories of people who are members of the two Churches.

Within the Catholic party, the acceptance most immediately and directly felt was that of the Chaldean Church. Sons of one people, playing one historical role, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans feel that it is their vocation to become, or rather to become once again, one and the same Church. They both use one and the same liturgy and share one and the same culture. The Pope has expressly invited them to take this step. In point of fact, it is not a matter of some mere pious wish; it is one of a reality which involves the daily affairs of a common life in the fields of research and academic labours. We have already heard this call, at the first unofficial consultation organised at Vienna by the Foundation which we welcome here today. Representatives of the Assyrian Church and of the Chaldean Church affirmed the unity of their peoples and proposed that their Churches, once unified, should be called one day the Assyro-Chaldean Church. The collaboration of these two Churches is of vital practical utility for the maintenance of their communities scattered as a diaspora over every continent. The Chaldean Church is the natural bridge between the Assyrian Church and the Catholic world as a whole.

Another significant reaction to the Christological Agreement has been registered in the Middle East, where the different Christian Churches are grouped into four ecclesiastical families, collaborating among themselves for the promotion of their unity in the framework of the Middle East Council of Churches. Contacts had already been made between officials of the MECC and the Assyrian Church. The latter had presented a request for its participation in this regional ecumenical body, and there can be no doubt that the prospective of the Declaration of 11th November 1984 hastened the admission of the Assyrian Church into the organisation. According to the statutes of the MECC, it had to be incorporated if only on grounds of historical and spiritual closeness within one of the four component families. The Evangelical family could not take on the inclusion of this Church within its framework. The two other families of the Greek Orthodox and the Old Orthodox preferred the Assyrians' incorporation within the

Catholic family, precisely because their dialogue with the Catholic Church had made greater progress than with others and was finally to take expression in the Declaration of Rome. It was therefore a member of the Catholic family which presented an official motion for the admission of the Assyrian Church to the MECC at the final General Assembly of this Association in Cyprus in October of 1994. The meeting a few days between the Holy Father and His Holiness Patriarch Dinkha IV was already certainly known to all. Raising on an official level the question of the necessary membership of the Assyrian Church to one of its four families, the Middle East Council of Churches intimated that the Catholics might facilitate matters by admitting the sister Church within their fold as they were themselves requesting. An official contact between the Catholic president of the MECC Patriarch Sabbah and the Holy See resulted in encouragement for this fraternal procedure, considered as a particularly significant expression of Catholic acceptance of the Christological agreement of Rome. Today the Assyrian Church is already a member of the Middle East Council of Churches, although there are still certain difficulties about this because of a request addressed to its hierarchy for the suppression in its liturgical books of certain anathemas relating as might be expected to the Council of Ephesus. The problem of these formulas and of all other similar formulas, to whatever liturgy they belong, should be the subject of broad fraternal dialogue with a view to turning the page on the past and to opening up to the future in conformity with the spirit of reconciliation and of unity between us all. This effort, still short of its aim, will represent an active acceptance of all agreements reached between Churches and be a step towards the return to total unity.

The Holy Father urged such steps to be taken while at the same time demanding that agreements or joint declarations made by Churches should receive practical application by renewed relations between the faithful themselves. For full acceptance, a change is needed in the way the people speak of one another in view of their being truly brothers.

As far as the Catholics are concerned, this first year after the Joint Declaration with the Assyrian Church has seen efforts deployed for its acceptance not only in the Middle East but also throughout the world. From the moment of publication of the Declaration, the Catholic press gave it enthusiastic echo, in Europe as in America. The Catholic Churches of the two continents have welcomed Assyrian students in their theological faculties. In Australia, Assyrian children have seen the doors opened to them of the Catholic schools, in which they now receive a far warmer welcome than before. In Lebanon, agreement has been reached between the Catholic Ecumenical Commission and the Assyrian hierarchy about the pastoral aspects of Holy Matrimony stipulating respect for the legislation in force and mutual help in applying it.

Further, the Joint Commission of the two Churches met in Rome once again between the 15th and 16th of November of 1995, making more progress in its study of the theology of the Eucharist. The results are to be presented to the competent authorities. Other meetings are already foreseen in 1996, when there is to be deepened discussion of the other sacraments. The impetus for reconciliation has not slackened and the desire on the part of all concerned to overcome all obstacles is abundantly clear.

There are two other objects of concern for the respective hierarchies of the two Churches. The Assyrians are involved in the effort to restore unity to their own ranks. Nobody can remain indifferent to this undertaking of ecclesiastical and fraternal im-

port. As for Catholics, their hierarchy must urge the faithful, clerical and lay, to reach a better understanding of their Assyrian brethren, wherever they are to be found, as well as of all their other Christian brothers and sisters, in order to restore the seamless robe of the Church Visible and to live with them in the harmony of unity which goes forward ever stronger from day to day.

3. The future of our Church unity

In the field of ecumenical labour, the end of this century is characterised by some consideration of the situation and of the relations of the Churches after their hoped-for return to unity. This is enough to show how far we have moved along the road since the institution of the week of prayer for Christian unity. The first millennium is now looked on with favour as a source of inspiration for the future juridical form that unity is to take. Turning to the speech addressed by Pope John-Paul to His Holiness the patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, the very day of the signature of the Joint Christological Declaration, we may consider the import of his affirmation "that it is most important to know, venerate, conserve and develop the so rich heritage of each of our Churches and that it is in no way contrary to unity that there should be a diversity of manners and customs." This means that the Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, is to be found in the particular Churches known to human history and geography. It means also that the various Churches enrich one another and that positive Church traditions are rooted in the one tradition, accordingly as they lead the faithful there before the living source of their faith, in full accordance with Holy Scripture.

But in order that all may live together in all this richness of the faith, the Churches must meet and advance together for the realisation of the kingdom of Christ. The distance which grew between the Assyrian Church and the other Catholic and Orthodox Churches is a fact that should be the subject of deep reflection and of a common spirit of penitence involving the whole Christian Church. If once again we consider the past, it would seem to us that the Council of Chalcedon should have provided the opportunity for healing the wounds caused by Ephesus, but this was by no means the case. We have had to wait for fifteen hundred years to see such an event.

Meanwhile, the Church of Antioch has suffered the martyrdom of division and of vulnerability before all the upheavals of history. The first gathering together of all the Churches of Syriac tradition here in Vienna in 1994 must be considered as a new sign of the times. It implies a particular responsibility incumbent on each Church taking part. The traditions of Rome, Byzantium and Alexandria have kept a common aspect throughout history. The tradition of Antioch must also rediscover this face, for the good of all. The reception accorded the Joint Declaration signed with the Assyrian Church also is a step in this new and salutary ecclesiastical effort, which needs the support and help of the Church Universal. The progress of the Church towards its visible unity is seen more and more as something to be undertaken by all working together.

Understood in this light, the integration of the Assyrian Church, the last Church to join the movement, means that all are keeping their appointment with unity. With her adhesion, all the members of the Christian family are now present together to undertake the salutary effort for general reconciliation. This is true of the Churches of

Antioch and of all the other Churches as well. The first great schism to rend the Church following the Council of Ephesus has been the last to be the object of fraternal dialogue. The designs of Providence surpass our understanding but today we answer its call. The Catholic acceptance of the Joint Declaration of Rome is therefore no other than an act of faith in God's action in order to re-establish, within their diversity, communion and unity between all the Churches.

4. Conclusion

We now finish by a consideration of the actual nature of the unity of the Churches within human time. This unity implies in effect the admission of the multiplicity of the theological traditions and formulations. By analogy, we may compare it to human culture, which on one hand expresses one and the same human nature, and on the other takes its form in the diversity of the historical and geographical conditions that human beings are subjected to. We have understood since the remotest antiquity that the dialectic of unity and multiplicity is bound up with the human condition itself.

Does not also the very nature of this dialectic imply that there is no unity without multiplicity and also no multiplicity without unity? Up to the present, the Ecumenical Movement has devoted itself to obtaining recognition of the legitimacy of the multiplicity of Churches, with their particular traditions and forms of theological expression. Thus the Assyrian Church has joined the family of the Churches again, and with this adhesion one aspect of the Ecumenical Movement is in a certain sense complete. From now on, this Movement will start considering the requirements imposed by Church unity. Pope John Paul II proposed in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* a far deeper comprehension of the ministry of this unity. Whatever may be our attitudes towards this, the fact remains that the unity of the Christian Churches must be something clearly visible for the world to have faith. Our prayers and our reflections are truly the instruments of this task, which is the fruit resulting from the grace of God. For the Catholics, their contact with the Apostolic Assyrian Church of the East is one more argument in favour of recognition of multiplicity within the Church. It offers us also the opportunity to renew our faith in the visible unity of the Church, a unity which is in its essence bound up with the mystery of the Incarnation and with the permanent presence of our Lord amongst us until the end of time.

Mar Bawai Soro

Reception of the "Common Christological Declaration" in the Assyrian Church of the East - an Occasion for Christian Joy and for Cultural Vitality

1. Introduction

The reception process of the "Common Christological Declaration" (CCD) in the Assyrian Church of the East has been an occasion for theological reflection and ecclesiastical interaction between the Assyrian Church, the Catholic Church, and a number of other Churches and organizations. The CCD has obliged many intelligent people, both in Catholic and Church of the East circles, to re-examine conventional views held with conviction for many centuries. This process has provided an opportunity for people with vision to trust in God and prayerfully propose new ways of approaching old disputes, and to offer solutions that are rooted in the Sacred Scriptures and the tradition of the fathers. A careful reading of the history of the Church of the East has helped to encourage and energize this effort, an effort that, it is hoped, will before too long have a conclusive outcome which is acceptable to all.

For such a significant occasion to have come about, even before the Assyrian Church had signed the CCD with the Catholic Church in Rome on 11 November 1994, preparations for the reception and implementation of this document were being carefully planned and carried out within the various Assyrian and non-Assyrian communities of the Church of the East's four hundred thousand (400,000) world wide membership. The Holy Synod of the Church, which convened in Sydney, Australia, in July 1994, after giving its canonical sanction for the signing of the accord, instituted an ecumenical/educational office for the Patriarchate of the Church of the East. Among the primary duties assigned to this ministry (which is called the Commission on Inter-Church Relations and Education Development "CIRED") was the introduction and interpretation of the CCD to the faithful of the Church of the East. The following paper is an analysis of the context of that introduction and interpretation, and the type of responses the CCD produced within the Church.

2. Reception of the CCD within the World Wide Assyrian Community

The Assyrian and non-Assyrian people in the Church of the East, just like any other serious and lively ecclesial society, display a range of thought that reflects intelligent but diverse approaches to matters as crucial as the CCD. Here I will try to briefly survey four dominant patterns which emerge among the Assyrians,¹ reflecting their understanding of and reaction to the contents of the CCD:

¹ In this paper, the appellation "Assyrians" is used chiefly as a term to only designate the "Assyrians in the Church of the East". This restriction of terminology may clarify the fact that there are other Assyrians who belong to faith denominations such as the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant.

1. The Religiously Moderate Pattern: members within this category have a strong sense of spirituality and trust in their Church leaders. Their understanding of the Church's history and concern for its destiny in the generations to come made them open to considering the CCD without prejudice, and they became convinced that its propositions were as valid and positive as their patriarch, bishops, and the rest of the clergy had indicated. They were supportive of this accord from the beginning and their response to the CCD throughout has been extremely positive.

2. Religiously Conservative Pattern: these members also trust their Church leaders and probably have a more profound sense of spirituality, but their understanding of history and of the relations between the Catholic and Assyrian Churches has caused them to fear that the CCD represents only a new "facade" which the Catholic Church has put on, in no way different from past attempts at deceit.

They contend that the CCD is just the first among many stages in an effort to absorb the Assyrians and their Church into Catholicism. For such reasons, their responses to the CCD have ranged from mere silence to vocal opposition. Though their number is not great, yet the impact they had on certain phases of the transition, especially before the signing of the accord, was serious, and it affected the rest of the faithful. (For further comments on this pattern, see below)

3. The Nationalistic Pattern: these members viewed the CCD as a giant leap forward in promoting the cause of the Assyrian Church, and therefore, indirectly that of the Assyrian nation. Their admiration of the Church was re-enforced by the leadership shown by their spiritual leaders, and in comparison with other types of Assyrian organizations, which would have required longer periods of time and more intense public relations efforts; their response was, in general, positive. The CCD was hailed among them, and they have been its defenders on both the personal and public levels. The Assyrian nationalists' on-going support for ecumenism and church unity is consistent with the logic of their nationalism, which includes an emphasis on Christian unity and on solidarity between all Assyrian, Chaldean, and Syrian (Orthodox & Catholic) Churches. The nationalists' reaction was mostly welcomed since increasing numbers of Assyrians today justly identify with the cause of a decorous Assyrian nationalism, based on the love and respect of self, of others, and of the world.

4. The Silent Reflective Pattern: the faith and intellect of these faithful are not any different from the rest of the Church. Yet, their main distinction remains that for a number of reasons they have chosen not to express their views as the others have done. My assumption is that if these reflective and silent individuals were made fully aware of the theological and sociological implications of the CCD, they would probably join the majority of their fellow Assyrians in welcoming the results of the agreement, or at least would react one way or another to it. One could only hope to find ways in the future to make clear to them the necessity of joining in the process of reflection on such an important and historic step their Church and people have taken.

The strategy which the Assyrian Church employed in facilitating the reception of the CCD among these four patterns of our people included candidness and straightforwardness. The Church was to explain in detail the procedural steps taken in its dealings with the Catholic Church in the most sincere and direct terms. Consequently, CIRED was mandated by the Patriarchate to publish in various languages the full texts,

photos and commentaries of the signing ceremonies, publishing the Patriarchal and Papal discourses using graphic, audio, and video mediums. These productions were subsequently distributed among the Assyrian Church communities and sent to Assyrian secular organizations and publications around the world. Accordingly, various Assyrian newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs in the United States, Australia, and Europe conducted interviews and published commentaries dealing with the contents of the CCD. In addition, Episcopal sees in United States and Australia held several public lectures at the parish level. Questions and comments from the faithful present at those meetings were dealt with, and clarification were made when needed.

As the process of reception went ahead, officials in the Church of the East became increasingly aware of three important contingencies worthy of reference. The first is that differences of opinion existing among people for long periods of time do need comparable duration of time to become reconciled in their minds and hearts in such a way as to transform their thoughts and revitalize their faith. The Church of the East is today aware that any seemingly direct opposition to what it perceives as the fulfillment of God's will on earth can, indeed, be neutralized in God's good time. The second factor concerns the seriousness with which such ecumenical projects ought to be undertaken and maintained. The Church of the East, through the labor of CIRED and a number of bishops, clergy and faithful, has accomplished significant progress in promoting understanding with regard to the CCD, but the fact of the matter remains that if in the future there were supplementary mass-media and financial resources available to such projects, the task of clarifying the meaning of CCD, and of making known the necessity for upcoming projects, could be made significantly easier. The third observation stems from the fact that within certain Assyrian (diocesan and/or parochial) localities then the clergy-in-charge employed sufficient time and efforts to methodically report the proceedings of the CCD to the faithful in their churches and systematically elaborate on its contents, applying concrete facts provided to them by the Patriarchate, the result were immediate and obvious; the faithful rejoiced the occasion and, in the final analysis, became committed supporters of the CCD. Such ecumenical commitment on behalf of the clergy proved, in my opinion, to be the most important of the three propositions and, therefore, the most influential. No matter how many years have passed on conflicts, or how much tangible means for support were lacking in such ecumenical situation, sincere and committed interaction by priests and bishops does indeed have unequalled effects on the faithful.

Now that more than a year has passed since the signing of the CCD, it has become clear that, aside from a few geographical locations where extraordinary and problematical conditions confront the Church of the East, the general attitude of the people has been good, and their collective understanding and popular reception of the document, as well as their recognition of its consequences for them and the rest of the condemned communities, has been very encouraging, ranging from mere acceptance to positive enthusiasm. Given the fact that the altogether response to the CCD was positive, it might be helpful to further explore the motivations behind it. The following are four explanations of how the CCD was presented and made intelligible for our people.

1. The prominent position and trustworthy reputation which the Assyrian Patriarch, His Holiness Mar Dinkha, IV, and the members of the Holy Synod hold among the clergy and the faithful of the Church of the East overcame any reluctance about

receiving the accord with the Catholic Church. Instead, by asserting the strength of their status, the Patriarch and the bishops were able to confront any such reluctance and transform it into an opportunity to promote further understanding about the quest for Christian unity in a context where no compromise or deviation from the fundamentals is contemplated. Our People today are satisfied that their patriarch and bishops will only minister their episcopal obligation in ways that are in the full interest of the sons and daughters of the Church, to the ultimate glory of God's name. And, as long as they are assured by their hierarchy that essential elements of their creed and culture, such as, the content and teachings of faith, liturgy, ecclesial self-government, language and ethnic identity are kept intact and their essence will in no way be compromised in the future, Assyrians would not oppose such a noble cause as the unity of all Christians.

2. The charitable compassion and heart-felt commitment of the Catholic Church manifested in the texts of the numerous Papal discourses surrounding the occasion of the Patriarchal visit to the Vatican, and the signing of the accord, have made clear that the CCD was a historic vindication, not only of the theological tradition of the Church of the East, but also of the religious experience of the Assyrians as a nation and as a community of faith.

3. The Assyrian, Indian, and American constituencies of the Church of the East were certain that for over 1500 years their theological tradition was misrepresented and misunderstood; and they were also conscious that their forefathers had suffered greatly and for many centuries had paid the ultimate sacrifice for simply remaining faithful to Christ in the same theological tradition. Now that a new atmosphere of understanding, respect and an ardent desire to restore full communion among Christians in the foreseeable future has been formed, the Church of the East faithful are unwilling to dismiss easily such serious possibilities between their Church and her sister Churches.

4. Within one year after signing the CCD, there were already concrete and immediate benefits brought about by this agreement. Aside from the various ecclesial and cultural implications of the present dialogue between the Catholic and the Assyrian Churches, the most significant ecumenical breakthrough was the acceptance of the Church of the East into the Catholic Family of the Middle East Council of Churches. This membership was obtained after ten (10) years of dialogue with the member churches in the MECC. Furthermore, knowledge of, and interest in, the Assyrian Church of the East has increased within a number of mainstream Christian Churches, various ecumenical organizations and governmental bodies.

3. The Response of the Assyrian Church in Iraq

Response to the CCD coming from our Church in Iraq has been generally unlike the rest of the Churches of the East world-wide; there have been a range of signals flowing from the land of the "Two Rivers". In certain parts of the country, the CCD was received warmly. There, it was hailed as a means to reaffirm the orthodoxy of the Church of the East's faith and to claim her historic status among the other Churches of the Middle East in their region; but, more so, the CCD was welcomed in that it was able to ameliorate relations between the Assyrians and the Chaldeans in Iraq as they struggle side-by-side to persevere in the midst of the political and economical hard-

ships all Iraqis have endured for many years. On the other hand, some other individuals of the "Religious Conservative Pattern" in other parts of Iraq have given voice to their own not-so-positive opinions, mixed with criticisms of the CCD. Their reaction was due in large part to two historical circumstances, as a result of which, they maintain, the Catholic Church is unworthy of their trust. These individuals first resent and cannot forget the actions of the Catholic missionaries in India, by which the Church of the East there was devastated, indeed, virtually eliminated, during the Portuguese Colonization; second, they also remember, and are very critical of, the role that other Catholic missionaries played in the sixteenth century split in the Church of the East which resulted in the emergence of a separate jurisdiction of the Church of the East that became in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, namely, the Chaldean Catholic Church. In other words, their negative verdict on the Catholic Church, based on their experience and interpretation of church history, has prevented them from admitting any possibility that the CCD might be a means for reconciliation and rapprochement. One may ask whether these criticisms of the Catholic Church and of its missionary activities, though grounded in indisputable historical facts, should warrant the rejection of such a remedy as the CCD has offered for healing the diseases of mistrust and separation that have stood between brothers and sisters in Christ for long and bitter centuries. It is our hope that the Church's memory and sacramental celebration of Christ's Holy Mysteries, and her obedience to his commandments to forgive, love and serve one another, would in the future clear the way for these brethren, enabling them to view the CCD as a more constructive proposition.

It is true that from the time of the conversion of Constantine in AD 311 in the Roman Empire, the faithful of the Church of the East in the Persian Empire were repeatedly subjected to the experience of human suffering for their faith. Throughout their history, they have endured wars, coerced emigration, mass murders, property destruction, and cultural and spiritual annihilation from hostile and suspicious governments. Their history of martyrdom and endurance under trial is the best witness to the kind of faith journey that this once very large Christian community has undertaken for centuries. In his discourse at the signing of the CCD at the Vatican, His Holiness Pope John Paul II, graciously bore a vivid testimony to the suffering of the Assyrian people and praised the Church of the East for enduring such trials for the sake of the faith in her Lord and Saviour. The exact words (in paragraph 2) of the Pope in his address to the Assyrian Patriarch were:²

"We do not forget the long night of suffering endured by your Eastern Syriac communities, which were scattered, persecuted and massacred down the centuries for professing the name of Christ. Those who despite everything have remained in their countries in the Middle East - and who have had to face war and unjust deprivation of every kind - should know that the Holy See will employ the means at its disposal, particularly through its contacts with Governments and International Organizations, to lessen their sufferings and if possible make them cease. Finally, a Church so distinguished in its past for its heroism as regards fidelity to

² Editorial "Common Christological Declaration between Catholic Church and Assyrian Church of the East," *L'Osservatore Romano*, (Vatican City) 16 November 1994, weekly edition in English, p.3

the faith cannot remain marginalized in the Christian world, and especially among the Churches of the Middle East. We hope to be able to help you break down any isolation that still exists."

One may ask if such a commitment of the Catholic Church in the person of the Pope should have healed and restored to fullness the hopeful love of Jesus Christ, which ought to exist among all his followers, in the minds and hearts of the faithful critical of the accord. One can only hope and pray that future relations between the Catholic and the Assyrian Churches will prove for these brothers and sisters in Iraq, and surely elsewhere, that the mutual trust which today exists between Assyrians and Catholics around the world is embodied in the very charity and service that Christ desired his disciples to render to one another and to the world; and that Christ's Spirit of truth and holiness will guide His Church in this world to eradicate the mistakes of the past, whether committed by the Catholic Church, the Church of the East, or any other Church, so that with trust and charity the world and all creation may at last realize God's salvific plan.

4. The CCD and The Chaldean Factor

Unlike the perception of relations between the Orthodox Churches and their Oriental Catholic counterparts in recent years; a sense of fraternity and solidarity, and even cooperation, has increasingly characterized the relations between the Assyrian and the Chaldean Churches, both in the Motherland and in the Diaspora. Motivations behind such "communion" are many but here I would only emphasize a couple. First, the unique cultural and spiritual affinities which have been a feature of the Assyro-Chaldean peoples' relations throughout both their Christian and pre-Christian histories have among recent generations of faithful been revived at a time when their ancient homeland, Mesopotamia (today's Iraq), has undergone serious socio-economic hardships. Secondly, both the Assyrians and Chaldeans are gradually becoming aware of the fact that the chances for social, cultural and spiritual survival in today's geopolitical environment both in East and in West will soon start depending (if this is not already the case) on the unique strengths and particularities that each community can and should offer the other. Though this conviction has not yet fully settled into the consciousness at the popular level, it has, nevertheless, been made the focus of the efforts of a number of religious leaders and lay personalities both among Assyrians and Chaldeans alike.

Fortunately, the effects of the signing of the CCD did not change the dynamics of this emerging rapport between the Assyrians and the Chaldeans; on the contrary, the whole ecumenical encounter of the signing and in particular the meeting of the Assyrian delegation with the members of the Chaldean Holy Synod, whose members happened to be in Rome for an *ad limina apostolorum* during that period of time, had a significant influence in further advancing the already fraternal atmosphere between the two segments of the one Church of the East.

It is not certain that all of our people were motivated by purely religious and ecclesiastical intentions in accepting the outcome of more than ten (10) years of collaboration between their prelates and the Catholic Church, which culminated in the signing

of the CCD. But one may assume that their nationalistic awareness exemplified by their love and respect for one another and an affinity in language, identity, and spiritual and cultural heritage made them realize that if any thing, the CCD would bring the Chaldeans and the Assyrians "genuine brothers and sisters" one step closer to one another, namely, to what both in fact collectively were almost five hundred (500) years ago-the "One Church of the East", or what certain historians would today refer to as the "Assyro-Chaldean Church of the East". The CCD has affirmed to both Assyrians and the Chaldeans the fact that there is absolutely no difference in the faith of their Church Fathers. After affirming the unanimity of the Trinitarian, Christological, and Sacramental aspects of the same faith, it is felt that for whatever reason the humanly created historical conditions have existed, from which the walls of division and mistrust were erected between the Assyrians and Chaldeans centuries ago, they no longer stand between us today.

This impact of the CCD has disposed the Assyrians and the Chaldeans to seriously reflect today on the fact that the question of unanimity of faith - an issue which until now has been an important reason for continued misunderstanding and separation - has been settled, and this rediscovered unity has been added to the significant list of things that both Assyrians and Chaldeans share, along with history, language, culture, ethnic origins, liturgy, church Fathers, etc. Such reflection bears promise of elevating Assyrian-Chaldean fraternity to a new level, in which the masses would initiate their own efforts to accept the "logic of unity" in order to ensure cultural and spiritual survival, and work toward the realization of full communion! But it must be recognized that many concerned individuals are convinced that the four hundred fifty (450) years of history in which the two groups have been separated has produced certain differing social dispositions and cultural patterns within each of the two communities. These differences, if not properly dealt with and gradually reconciled, may one day cause serious complications to the relations between the two sides.

5. A Conclusion

Both the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East together have, today, a historic opportunity, bestowed upon them by the signing of the CCD, to demonstrate to the world that mutual trust and a communion of charity do exist between Christians, as it is indeed the only way to be in Christ; and that such values are fundamental elements of manifesting the Kingdom of God on earth, elements that, if applied more generally, could begin to achieve some resolution to the ills that sin and human folly have left humanity to struggle with. Without this kind of understanding and commitment, the Christian faith as proclaimed by all the Churches will fall short of demonstrating, in the eyes of an unbelieving world, that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and Life for all the world. The results of the first meeting of the "Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue" between the Catholic and Assyrian Churches were highly gratifying, creating for the members of this Committee an atmosphere of fraternity, so that they may be enabled to fulfill the desire of Christ "that they all may be one." If the logic of unity that the CCD has established is followed through by Assyrians, the outcome will be seen as an occasion for Christian joy and for cultural vitality Christian

because it fulfills the will of Christ, cultural because it brings into vitality a people that are divided.

Yet the potential of the on-going dialogue should in no way be underestimated for its benefits to the entire Christian tradition. The restoration of full ecclesial unity of one of the most ancient and venerable Christian traditions, as the Church of the East's spiritual and cultural tradition is universally recognized to be, should be the joy of all believers in Christ.

Discussion:

Father Habbi: We are considering history and especially ancient history. There were in the past some mis-understandings about the christological terms. There were some convictions which were the main key points to the classical thinking. That thinking wanted to say that the message is purely religious. While the modern thinking wants to read books in the light of its cultural context. Can we accept more than one theology and christology or not? I think, we should go beyond the old thinking, and try to read our common faith as one faith. The christology of the Eastern church is something special.

Mar Bawai: I thank the two speakers for their efforts in explaining the declaration according to their churches' perspectives. I am to a certain extent surprised from what I heard in Mar Gregorios' paper. I was expecting to hear an echo of the assurance and enthusiasm that was expressed by His Holiness Patriarch Zakka I Iwas of the Syrian Orthodox Church when he heard of the Common Christological Declaration between our church and the Catholic church. I understand that we should find better ways and methods to reach the unity among our churches. Mar Gregorios (see above p.48) is asking about the historical records of the dialogues that were generated within 10 years of dialogue between the two churches.

I wish to see the historical records between the Syrian Orthodox and the Catholic Church. I appreciate the ecumenical sign when Mar Gregorios expresses the wish of the Syrian Orthodox Church to sign a declaration with our church. Why then do we ask for gradual steps to reach a declaration?

Mar Gregorios (see above p.50) is wondering if the unity between our church and the Catholic Church is conditioned on the Chaldean Church first. The answer is „no!“

You have heard several points of views in my paper. These are my thoughts which I hope they will develop to the better, because this is the only way for the Assyrian Church to continue to exist. Nobody controlled us with our dialogue with the Catholics. It was our open and free dialogue between two sister churches. Our faith fullness is to Jesus Christ only. It is the same that happened between the Syrian Orthodox and the Catholic Church.

Father Sako: The old theologians of the Syrian Orthodox Church like al-Takrity and others all studied christology in different churches. They discovered that there is no difference between this and that. There are only differences in certain terms, but theological.

Amba Bishoy: I would like to thank His Grace Metropolitan Mar Bawai Soro for the efforts he has exerted together with his colleagues in trying to bring approach and mutual understanding among churches which accept the council of Ephesus and those which did not accept it so far.

I regard of the paper presented by His Grace Bishop Matar. I would like to refer to the paper (see above p.60) where he stated „it would seem to us that the Council of Chalcedon should have provided the opportunity for healing the wounds caused by Ephesus, but this was by no means the case.“

I am sorry to say that we are shocked whenever we hear accusations against the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus from representatives of churches which had already received and accepted this council together with our churches.

We consider this an indirect accusation against St. Cyril of Alexandria who was presiding this ecumenical council.

And since many theologians now are trying to justify Nestorius against his condemnation by this council. I shall quote from the book ascribed to him by those theologians and called „Bazar of Heraclides“ in order to show that Nestorius believed in two persons in our Lord Jesus Christ:

1. „We must not forget that the two natures involve with him two distinct hypostases and two persons (prosopons) united together by simple loan and exchange.“ (Nau, p.28)
2. „He made use of the prosopon of him who died and was crucified as his own prosopon, and in his own prosopon he made use of the things which appeared unto him who died and was crucified and was exalted.“ (Bazar, p.58)
3. „Two are the prosopa, the prosopon of he who has clothes and the prosopon of he who is clothed.“ (LH 193)

Dr. Hainthaler: I think that the question of Nestorius is a question to all churches.

I prefer to deal with the content of the declaration. Then you can feel the content of Nestorius as well.

Father Jammo: The Church of the East goes beyond Nestorius and Ephesus. The issue of Nestorius should be dealt with equality as churches deal with each other equally. The Syrian Orthodox Church has the same problem with the Catholic and the Chalcedonian churches, as the Assyrian. We do not ask the Syrian Orthodox Church for minutes of their dialogues.

I appreciate that many points in the paper of Mar Gregorios are dealt with high scholars. Yet, we should distinguish between the faith and intellectual expression of that faith. There are many systems and approaches to express one's faith.

Father Mathews: I am happy to be in Christ's human family as one of the bishops mentioned today. We can see the Lord from different angles. There are many possibilities for the differences among churches. The St. Thomas Church of India benefited for ten centuries from the Assyrian Church.

Mar Gregorios: It seems that there was a mis-understanding of what I have said in my paper. My paper speaks about historical stages which happened in the past and are still happening. I clearly mentioned that there was optimism among the Syrian Orthodox people in regard of the Assyrians. We did not come here to say words of joy to each others. Rather we came here to make history. I did not speak in my paper about dogma. I questioned why did not the declaration mention something about the ecumenical councils, simply because to me these councils are an important part of our mutual heritage. We are reading history and we are making it. We wish to know whether the Assyrian Church has any relation to these teachings (of the councils) or not? We wish to know that for the sake of history. We are here to overcome difficulties and differences. Our commitment as Syrian Orthodox Church to overcome difficulties is expressed in our being here in such consultations.

We are very clear in saying that the Vienna Consultations had lead our leaders to sign the declarations. When we were in Kaslik-Lebanon, we asked about the minutes of the dialogues and declarations. This inquiry does not mean that the declaration is not authentic. It is our right to know what happened and who participated in the dialogues for the last ten years between the Assyrian and the Catholic Church.

We, in the Syrian Orthodox Church, did not yet change our mind about Nestorius. We still condemn him. But, we are thinking in common of how to change our liturgy books when changing our attitudes towards Nestorius. Only the Holy Synod of the church has the right to change what the church believes in.

The Council of Ephesus is an important council for the Syrian Orthodox Church. Our forefathers faith is completely depending on the three councils. With regard to the Catholic Church we are not considered as Syrian Orthodox Church on our own, rather as an Orthodox family: Syrian - Coptic - Armenian - Ethiopian - Indian.

In the Syrian Orthodox Church, we did not change the faith of our forefathers; rather we followed their steps. On the other hand, other churches changed their thoughts and faith towards us.

Our dialogue here is for change from our side, if we think it is right to change. We are here to know more about each others. We are transmitting the ideas and thoughts of such consultations to our Holy Synods, which are the only decision-making bodies. We cannot change anything in our faith without the decision of the Holy Synod.

Bishop Matar: We are here, not to meet enemies. At the same time we are not expected to become enemies. We are also not expected to change our faith. Because we do not control our faith, rather it controls us. We are in dialogue and we see that our faith is one, and we accept that. I am not committed to Nestorius. I believe that Ephesus is an ecumenical council, and so is Chalcedon, and this is my belief. Our point of view should be pastoral as well as theological when dialoguing with an other church. Time only is not capable of solving the problems. How comes that after 1500 years, the Syriac Churches met now.

I ask consciously, is it legal to keep a church away from my faith for a period of 1500 years? The Pope of Rome and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV declared their common faith. We should thank God for such a progress in witnessing our one Christ. We should not bargain about the truth. And the truth is our God.

I believe that language is the reason of all problems, as someone said. We should thank God, if the Assyrian Church confesses the faith of all councils. And, if it did not confess we refuse it.

Mar Bawai: It seems that my paper was not that important as the others. It seems I did not touch the point. I would like to clarify a few aspects: we are here as friends and followers of Jesus Christ. Our personal relations give the impression of how our churches relations are. I receive criticism to my talks, they in its turn increase the progress. I challenge any future study which can state that the Assyrian Church has changed one single letter of its faith or dogma, when signing the declaration with the Catholic Church.

President Stirnemann: Thank you to all the three speakers and comments. I should say that Mar Bawai's paper was the first empirical research paper I heard in the last 32 years in PRO ORIENTE.

Third working session: Friday February 23, morning

Chairman: *Mar Bawai Soro*

Bishop Matar leads the morning prayer.

Mar Bawai welcomes two prominent persons: Archbishop *Mikhael Al-Jamil*, Patriarchal Vicar of the Syrian Catholic Church and Father *Paul Sayah*, Director of Faith & Unity Department and Assistant Secretary General in the Middle East Council of Churches.

Mar Bawai asks Bishop Al-Jamil to present the message of his church, conveyed by His Beatitude Patriarch Ignace Anthony II Hayek.

The session goes on by presenting the different papers on:
„Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?“

Mar Severios

The Council of Ephesus: Does it unite or divide?

First of all I would like to express my great pleasure and deep gratitude for allowing me an opportunity to contribute in this historical Syriac Dialogue by a modest article entitled: „The Council of Ephesus: Does it unite or separate?“

After having read the Book: „The Syriac Dialogue“ the first unofficial Consultation about the Syriac Tradition, translated by Marcelle Khoury, prepared and published by Gregorios Yohanna, Archbishop of Aleppo, Vienna - June 1994, and also having

read other similar books such as the Book entitled: „Council of Chalcedon. Does it unite or separate in respect of an approach to the Orthodox Christology“, which was translated to Arabic by Father Michel Negm, published in Beirut in 1987, I was attracted while reading these books I noticed that each of our dear brothers, who contributed in these researches, dealt with the concerned topics, each according to the vision and perspective of his church, to a great extent, and mostly by the spirit of Christianity and brotherhood. Many of them with a view to achieve a single and joint goal, which is uniting and not separating.

This of course is the desire of Christ our Lord to see all as one „... let them be one as we are one ...“ He also said: „He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather together with me, he separates“ (Lk 11,23)

Undoubtedly this is not an easy topic and we should speak about it, because it represents a great component and an important part of the history of the Christian Church in the fifth century in terms of event and ideology. This is because it deals with a severe conflict and great controversy about the „concept of Christ“ in terms of nature (physis) and hypostasis, which caused schism in the one Christian Church, that reached its climax at the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451.

I deemed it necessary to present this topic as well from the perspective of my Orthodox Syrian Church of Antioch only, in three points:

1. Council of Ephesus (431)
2. Mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption
3. We and the ancient Eastern Church.

1. Council of Ephesus (431)

1.1. Position

My church views this Council with all respect and full sanctification exalt as it views the two ecumenical councils: Nicea 325 and Constantinople 381. The Syrian writers whenever there is a mention of this Council in their writings, they qualify it as „holy“, i.e. Council of Ephesus, and accepts all its challenges and dogmatic and doctrinal decisions. It venerates Cyril of Alexandria and considers him one of the famous Saints in the Church and a fighter for the correct faith and qualifies him „pillar of orthodoxy“. In its liturgical rite and whenever a liturgy is celebrated, we say in commemoration of the fathers „shamlaya“ which replaced „El Debtikha“ - Chapter of El-Hayat, we say: „we commemorate also our holy fathers who departed and who maintained and handed to us the Apostolic faith free of any blemish, and which was defined by the three holy ecumenical councils: Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus“. And when the creed of the mystery of faith is recited, the faithful has to say: „... and I acknowledge the faith of the three holy councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus.“ And while practising the rite of ordaining the Clergy, in all its ranks, the ordained has to declare in public that he „believes in the faith of the three holy councils“, and that he anathematizes the innovative heretics whom these councils anathematized including Nestorius.

As regards Cyril of Alexandria, he is venerated and highly esteemed and is considered a Saint as was mentioned above. His name is mentioned in a distinguished

manner side by side with the holy fathers in the liturgy when the commemorations is read „shamlaya“ the Holy Fathers.

We mention the holy fathers and particularly „Mar Cyril, the high and real tower who proved the manhood of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ who incarnated“ As regards Nestorius, the Church anathematizes him and his heresy and repudiates all his teachings that are contrary to its doctrine.

1.2. Its Legal Position

The Church believes that this Council convened in a legal and organizational manner. It convened according to the instructions given by Ceasar Theodosios II and Valentinian III who issued messages, in which they invited the Metropolitans and Bishops of the church to attend an ecumenical Council to be held in Ephesus at the beginning of June, 431. He was represented at the Council by Erinawos and Kandidian. Consequently, the Council convened despite the resistance of Kandidian, representative of the Emperor and friend of Nestorius, who came to the Council and announced to the Bishops that they are doing this contrary to the Emperor's instructions. They asked him to present the instructions that prohibit its convening, he first refused to do so, then he presented what he had, and they did not find any thing that prohibits its convening. So the Council started its work, chaired by Cyril of Alexandria, and the message of Ceasar Theodosios was read regarding the convening of the Council.¹

It is also known that John of Antioch and most of his bishops did not attend the sessions of the Council and they even convened an anti-Council, in which they isolated Cyril and informed Ceasar accordingly. In response to this message, Theodosios, the Ceasar, wrote stating the abolishment of the first session in which Nestorius was isolated without interrogating him, but without abolishing the other decisions taken and the work of the Council. However, Mar Cyril of Alexandria wrote a book in the Greek language to Ceasar entitled: „The correct faith in manhood of our God.“ He said: „we do not strip manhood from Godhead and we do not strip the Word from manhood after the mysterious unity, which cannot be explained but we believe that the one Christ is of two things united to one, composed of both of them, not by distracting the two natures or by their mixture, but by an honourable unity.“²

After many sessions held and pleadings by the two teams before the Civil Court, what happened happened ... Finally the Ceasar decided in the interest of the Orthodox and Cyril, and ordered Nestorius to leave Constantinople to any place he likes. However, peace did not prevail among the Antiochians and the Alexandrians.

Therefore, in the year 432, Ceasar Theodosios invited both teams, John and his group and Cyril and his group to come to Constantinople for negotiations. Finally, Cyril was victorious. The Emperor ordered John and his bishops to agree with the Council and anathematize Nestorius, and acknowledge that the virgin Mary is the Mother of God, and he also wrote to Cyril to accept them. Cyril, in his turn, wrote to John a message in which he expressed his preparedness to accept him in his communion, on condition that he accepts calling the Holy Virgin „Mother of God“, and signing the

¹ History of the Syrian Church of Antioch, Vol II, author Saviros Yacoub Toma, the Emperor thereafter, p.42.

² History of the Church of Antioch, Vol: p.56 - by Bigan: News of the Martyrs and Saints, Vol 5 pp. 628-696

anathema of Nestorius and his heresy. Among what he said: „... no one can ever shake the Nicean faith, and allows himself or another to change a single word of it ...“³

Whatever the situation may be, Cyril accepted them despite the non-clarity and orthodoxy of their faith regarding Nestorius and his teachings, and the phrase „Mother of God“ and the divine incarnation, so that peace will prevail in the Church and to maintain its unity. All this took place in the year 433.⁴

There was in the Book: „The Council of Chalcedon: Does it unite or separate,“ a research entitled : „Cyril's formula of the one nature of the Incarnate God the Word“ by Father John Romanides,⁵ and the following was mentioned: „... a committee deriving from the Council of Chalcedon was formed, chaired by Anatolios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The committee presented a report in the fourth session, at the beginning of which the Emperor's representatives and the House of Senates, declared the Emperor's firm faith in Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus and their agreement on Cyril's two canonical messages, i.e. the second and third messages to Nestorius. In the same research, the following was mentioned: „Chalcedon definition of faith speaks about itself in its quality as maintaining the order and all faith constitutions which were passed by the Holy Synod, that was officially held in Ephesus.“⁶

When Theodoritis, Bishop of Qorash, and one of the three Nestorian leaders attacked Saint Cyril of Alexandria, and the first Council of Ephesus, in his Nestorian messages and classifications, Caesar Theodosios II issued a decree against him and detained him in his Church.

In the Henotikon the following was mentioned in the decree of unity issued by Zenon in 482. „We do not know another faith except that set by the holy fathers who met in Ephesus and anathemized Nestorius. We also anathemize Nestorius and Eutyches, who taught other than the faith and accept the twelve chapters written by Cyril, lover of God, who was the Archbishop of the universal Church of Alexandria.“⁷

The Chalcedonian Byzantine Caesar Iustianian, 527-565, issued a decree in the year 544 against the leaders of Nestorianism and was signed by the Chalcedonian Patriarchs: Mina of Constantinople, Zoweilis of Alexandria, Ephrem of Antioch and Peter of Jerusalem.⁸ The Council of Chalcedon declared its acknowledgement of the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus and took the formula of the new faith mentioned in Mar Cyril's two messages, as a proof to the true faith.⁹

It is clear from the above, that the Council was legal and organized and at the level of the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople.

1.3. Its Determinations

The Council of Ephesus held seven sessions. The most important issue that it dealt with was Nestorius' heresy. In the sixth session, it confirmed the constitution of

Nicean and Constantinople constitution, and its second canon ended the issues of the faith stating: „no one may announce or promulgate another law, contrary to the constitution of the Nicean law and whoever breaches this law, be anathemized.“¹⁰ It also defined in its seventh law that he who adds or eliminates anything from the faith, be anathemized and it supported the fathers' teachings that Christ has one nature, one hypostasis, one person after the unity and that Mary is the Mother of God.

2. Its Doctrine in the Mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption

When the Fathers of the Syrian Church speak about the mysteries of incarnation and redemption, they express their failure in this respect, and avoid going deep in this research, due to its ambiguity, deepness and highness, and the inability of the human mind to understand or know it. It is above the limited human knowledge. No wonder about this. St. Paul the Apostle calls these two mysteries and its sequences „depth of God“ (1Cor 2,10). Mar Ephrem, the Syrian, 373 says: „I want to approach this mystery to know, but on the other hand, I am afraid that I will be put at a distance for he who dares to approach it, trying to make a research, his fate will be put at a distance. But he who approaches to know through faith and help of the Holy Spirit is allowed to do so“. Mar Yacoub El Serougui 523 said: „you who would like to make a research, you resemble he who follows a mirage and chases an imaginary goal“. Flexinos El Mengaby 522 commenting on St. Paul's words said: „The hidden mystery since ages and generations has now been declared to his Saints, whom God wanted to teach them the richness of exalt of this Mystery who is Christ“. He says: „Indeed it is a very mysterious mystery that was only declared but remained hidden, or this mystery appeared and was revealed but was not explained.“

El Mangaby also says that St. John declared in the new Testament „The Word became flesh“ and was unable to explain how this happened. Then St. Paul followed him and said: „Great is this mystery, God appeared in flesh“ He was also unable to explain how this appearance took place and called it mystery. Mar Isaac of Antioch said: „I choose for myself the simplicity of Peter, the fisherman, than the eloquence of the intellectual Berdisan, the philosopher, and I accept to be called ignorant who does not understand than be called a daring researcher“. Sawiros of Antioch said: „Jesus Christ did not grant His mysteries to be known but only to be believed.“

Indeed research wastes the value of these two mysteries and their meaning and deforms their scope and even makes them more difficult and more complicated. Despite all this, he who follows the history of the Christian ideology since its start and up to date, will find the roots of ideological conflict in all ages, as we find a great and abundant flood of different and conflicting ideas about the concept of Christ, results of which led to great conflicts and sharp controversies and even spite and hatred.

Lots of doctrines stemmed in the Christian area which can be confined to two contradicting doctrines:

1. The doctrine of those who see in the person of Jesus a man and a man only, son of Mary and Joseph and God raised him to the Divine degree because of His righteousness.

³ Ibidem, p.58

⁴ Ibidem, pp.59-60

⁵ John Romanides, p.59

⁶ Ibidem, p.95

⁷ Sirate El Mangaby - by Patriarch Yacoub II, pp. 20-27

⁸ History of the Syrian Church of Antioch, Vol 5, p. 165

⁹ Ibidem, p.188

¹⁰ History of the Syrian Church Vol II, p.54

2. The Divine Entity who appeared in the form of mankind and He is God since the beginning and was begotten from Mary in flesh.

These two doctrines became the source of all the doctrines, teachings and heresies which spread in the Church - East and West, and they are the cause of the disruption of the one universal church into denominations, communities and churches. I believe that what will bring together these groups and churches which are separated is Christ's words: „that they may be one, as we are one ...“ This cannot be achieved except by the power of the Holy Spirit as St Paul said: „... And no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit“ Without the Holy Spirit unity of the Christians will not be only impossible due to the difficulty of the doctrinal research, its ramification and mixture with the philosophies of the world, to the extent that the doctrine of Christology became a mixture of doctrine and philosophy. This even gets more complicated by the personal interests and worship of the „Ego“.

Whatever the situation may be, we will deal with this topic to show the doctrine of the Syrian Church in these two mysteries.

The Son of God, the second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the God Father and of course the Holy Spirit, He is all the time God and with God. He descended from heaven to the Virgin's womb by her permission, without leaving the Father or without being away from whom He is with, and consubstantial with Him all the time and took from her a real manhood and became perfect man of soul and flesh by the Holy Spirit.

1. When we say He became man similar to St. John the Evangelist who said: „The Word became flesh“, we do not mean that He changed because God is unchangeable because changing is the property of the created entity and changing is a defect but becoming is a dispensation. St John and St. Paul say: He became, but changed no one has ever said it. The prophet says: „I am the Lord and I do not change“. And as he exists without a commencement, so when He „became“ did not change, because He became man by taking manhood and not a man that adhered it to His hypostasis, and this is not to bring an addition to the Trinity and hence there will be another son by the grace other than the natural Son.

2. And also when we say God became man, we do not mean that he dwelt in a man, or He built for Himself a temple and rested in it. This is because we are His temples and He rests in us by His Spirit.

3. He did not create for Him a man in the Virgin, before He rested in her, hence taking another Hypostasis because He did not unite to a human hypostasis, but to our entity by His incarnation from the Virgin. We do not know someone in the Virgin accompanied to God, or a hypostasis adhered to a hypostasis, but we know by faith a spiritual who became flesh without change. Mary did not beget a multiplied child but the only begotten incarnated, whose half is not a God and the other half is a man. He is all God because He is from the Father and He is who links Christ to God, and He is all man because he became from the Virgin and hence links Christ to mankind. And when He was baptized, He was baptized as a man and not like a man. This is because in respect of the Spirit like a pigeon and the Father like Godhead but in respect of the Son, the reality of manhood.

He was begotten from the Virgin after nine months in an ineffable manner, as she remained Virgin at the time and after the delivery and she remained Virgin for ever. She is perpetually Virgin and hence He has two births: an eternal one from the Father before all times and ages and a birth in flesh from the Virgin. And the two births are for the one Son and not to the two natures, or else He is not one. And if it is imagined that there is a nature and a nature, then naturally it will also be said a hypostasis and a hypostasis. And if this is imagined also, then it should be imagined that there are two sons. As a result to this firm and inseparable unity, the Church believes that the Incarnated Word of God has one hypostasis of two hypostases and one nature composed of two natures, i.e. the Godhead and manhood without confusion or mingling or mixture or change. And we do not divide those who united together in an ineffable manner into entities or hypostases or parts that pertain to this or that and not two as they became one, who has the great things as regards His entity, and the small things because he was stripped. He has what the Father has because He is consubstantial with Him in Godhead and He has what we have because He became like us.

In other words despite the existence of this perfect unity between the Godhead and manhood, we refer what is related to the flesh to the human nature and what is to the Divine nature to the Divine nature. This is because the Godhead did not abolish the properties of manhood and similarly the manhood did not abolish the properties of the Godhead.

And He who is begotten from Virgin Mary and perpetually Virgin, is a real God and a real perfect man, therefore Mary is the Mother of God. And this expression „Mary Mother of God“ has been given to the Virgin by the first Christian Church. Therefore it is not true by any means that some say that the Alexandrian theologians are those who first called the Virgin by this name at the end of the third century.

This deed, the Divine deed is called the mystery of incarnation of the Son of God, whereas the Godhead united with the manhood together in the womb of the Virgin at the moment when the Virgin said: „I am the servant of the Lord, Let it be done to me as you say“ (Lk 1,38)

All what we said is related to the mystery of incarnation but as regards the mystery of redemption, the Church believes that:

The Son of God and His incarnated Word has indeed been crucified, exposed to passion and died in flesh by the separation of his soul from his body and was buried. This is while His Godhead did not separate from His soul nor His body, whether when He was stretched on the cross or buried in the grave. Despite this, passion did not touch the Godhead and on the third day, he rose from among the dead. In other words, the Son who was formed in the Virgin's womb, He is the same before baptism and He is the same who was stretched on the cross. And He who accomplished the economy of salvation for us and was crucified between two thieves, is not a son other than that to whom one kneels in the Trinity. The cross is the preacher of the death of God and at the same time did not die. This is because until the cross, it was verbally believed that God cannot die. However, it was learnt in the cross by experience in both cases, i.e. when he experienced death, He also remained alive. Therefore when we say God died it does not mean that death put an end to His life, but the power of death itself was annulled by death.

Indeed His death after He became flesh is very amazing because He who tolerated death for us, was not dead like one of us, as it is impossible that the power of death be annulled by a dead person. For he who can die, is something clear to all. But to confess that He who cannot die died in flesh, this happened once only on the cross. Therefore, God having not died, does not prevent us from believing in His death. And His death also does not lead us to deny having not died.

The Godhead did not separate from the flesh when He cried on the cross saying: „Father in thy hands I commend my spirit“. However a man said to the Father: „My God my God why did you abandon me.“ He called Him His father because He is consubstantial with Him in the essence and called him His God because he became man. He who was stretched on the cross when He commended His spirit in His father's hands, He himself descended in His body to hell, and accomplished the resurrection to all bodies of mankind. Hence we do not put the entity of the Word under passion and we do not preach the death of a person alien to Him, but we believe that He who cannot die being God, is He Himself who was tempted by death as a man, and He is the only Begotten Son of the Holy Trinity.

No doubt that Christ came to accomplish the mystery of redemption for if Christ was not a real man and a real God, then our salvation would have been impossible. The presence of a Saviour was evident and necessary to accomplish the process of redemption. And this Saviour shares the Godhead and also shares mankind. It was evident that He should be a God and a man at the same time, so that He can reconcile man with God. Christ therefore was the mediator capable to perform this task of mediation and represents man by being linked to God and represent God by being linked to man, as Mar Ephrem the Syrian said:

„He became like us so that we also become like Him. He became man by His own will to make us children of His father and partners of the Holy Spirit.“

The Church repudiated whoever believes in a different doctrine, excommunicated and anathemized him. Among those: Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople who denied both of the mysteries of incarnation and redemption. He said that the Word of God did not rest in the womb of Virgin Mary, and that the Virgin begot only the man Jesus Christ who by grace became God. Therefore, it is not appropriate to call her Mother of God but Mother of Christ.

And when this man was thirty years old, the Word of God rested on him and took him as a temple. During passion and crucifixion, he separated from him and hence he who was crucified as a mere person. In support of this teaching, Nestorius called for two hypostases and two natures for Christ and declared that Christ is two Christs, one of them is the Son of God and the other is the son of man. He therefore made a distinction between the two natures, some of Christ's words and His deeds, as Divine and some as human, noting that all the sayings and deeds express one hypostasis „person“ and nothing else. The fathers of our Church resisted fiercely Nestorius and his heresy and at the top of these fathers is Flexinos El Mengaby 521 and Sawiros of Antioch 538 who in their writings confirmed the natural hypostatic union in Christ.

3. *We and the Church of the East Today*

What was mentioned in the previous two points about the perspective of the Church regarding the Council of Ephesus and Cyril and his doctrine, is the concept of the Church since the Council of Ephesus in 431 and remained prevailing in the minds and ideas of the fathers of our Church all long several centuries. And if we want to speak according to the mentality of these centuries, our position will be that this Church is „heretic“ deviating from the seriousness of the straight orthodox faith. But today it is time to speak in the language of the actual century - the contemporary language - in terms of thinking, saying and working. And build on the foundations whose bases and pillars were laid by the two Patriarchs Yacoub III, who died in 1980 and the actual Patriarch Mar Zakka I Iwas in their known communiqués with His Holiness the Pope of Rome. Based upon their role in enhancing the ecumenical movement and pushing its wheel forward, I can personally list the following:

a) The ancient Church of the East, „the Nestorian“ is a Syrian Church and that the Syriac language as a language and heritage and blood links one to the other.

b) We appreciate the sayings of the leaders of this Church when they say that their Church is not linked to Nestorius and his teachings, and that he does not play an important role as a theological and doctrinal reference. Therefore a distinction should be made between Nestorius and the Church of the East.

c) While studying the rites of the ancient Church of the East, „the Nestorian“ it seems that it is an orthodox one to a great extent and we can say that we live with it a life of faith through these common rites, and there are even important doctrinal meetings through the texts of the rites, particularly that most of these rites are set by the fathers of the Church before the painful schisms, such as Bishop of the East Shamoun Ibn El Sabagheen 341, Ephrem El Souryani 373, Maroutha the Miaphysist 421 and before Council of Salik 410, he, prepared some of its parts. I, personally, participated in the conference which was held in Limassol - Cyprus on 27 August 1991, the topic of which was „Dialogue between the Orthodox Churches and the Assyrian Church of the East“. I delivered a research entitled: „The faith of the Assyrian Church in the East in the light of its rites“ focusing on the points which unite and gather together.

d) We accept their baptism through the ecumenical movement according to the directives of His Holiness our Patriarch Mar Zakka I Iwas.

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that the purpose of convoking a council at Ephesus City in 431 was to defend the Faith and to restore peace and unity among Christians. The imperial letter sent to the metropolitans to convene in Ephesus declares:

„It's the duty of the Emperors established by God to watch over the faith and keep peace and unity in the churches ... therefore (the council) should end according to the canons, the disorder caused by the recent dispute and rectify what was done irregularly and put a firm rule of piety.“¹

The letter goes further in refusing any formulation of a new creed or declaration in doctrinal matter.² Even Cyril of Alexandria in his letter refuses a new formulation. He writes:

„We have held Synods because of the true Faith, confirming what was defined in this subject by the Holy Fathers in Nicea.“³

The given reason of Ephesus was that Nestorius refused the title of „Theotokos“ (=Mother of God)⁴ preferring rather „Christotokos“ which is for him much more acceptable and particularly it comes from the Holy Scripture.

2. The background of the problem

2.1 Two Christologies

The background of the conflict goes back to Christology: how to understand the mystery of Christ. Word became flesh, God and Man? And how to maintain the unity of both the humanity and the divinity in one person of Christ?

The tendency of the school of Antioch to which Nestorius belongs, was ascendant: from man to God. Their faith led them to stress a moral teaching afforded by Christ himself as Son of God, just in the same line with the synoptics. It's a literal sense. On the contrary the tendency of Alexandria was descendant: from God to man in the same way with Saint John's Gospel. The Word became flesh. Their faith in the divinity of the Word led them to a clear affirmation of his substantial unity and sameness with the Father. That's why for them, after the Incarnation there is one Nature, one Being. It's a mystical interpretation. The point of departure of each School was different. We are

facing two Christologies: dualist (Antioch) and unitarist (Alexandria). Both parties found supporting arguments in the Holy Scripture. Today we realize that both Christologies are legitimate and valuable, and it was unfortunate for Ephesus to oppose the mystico-allegorical interpretation of Alexandria to rationalism and realism of Antioch and to take the interpretation of Cyril only as true. The common declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church confirms that fact: „The divisions brought about in this way were due in large part to misunderstandings.“⁵

2.2. The Misuse of the Terms

The concept of the terms: *physis*, *hypostasis* and *prósopon* used by both Schools were not precise at that time. For Antioch as it is still today for the Assyrians the heirs of this christology,⁶ *physis* means an abstracted nature, and *hypostasis* a concrete nature. On the other side, Cyril and the Alexandrines use the terms of *physis* and *hypostasis* as if they were equivalent, that's why, they were saying *Mia physis* that means one nature in Christ. As a result, logically the Blessed Virgin is Mother of God. For this Cyril of Alexandria rejected Nestorius for his terminology, and accused him of heresy, and vice versa. It's sad that errors often arise from a too zealous defence of orthodoxy when it is done from one point of view instead of face to face dialogue. Father Camelot says in his famous book *Ephèse et Chalcedoine*:

“If the protagonists of this tragedy have shown more capacity and acted with moderation a number of painful complications and disastrous consequences would have been avoided.“⁷

2.3. Rivalries between Metropolitan Sees

The conflict was mainly due to the traditional hostility between Alexandria (which claimed to be the second See of the Church) and Constantinople (Nea Roma).⁸ The problem rose when Constantinople tried to predominate other Churches and to marginalize them in the process, just as it happened with the Roman See. For that reason the christological controversy was carried on with a spirit of acrimony and bitterness for which not only zeal for orthodoxy was responsible, but also private and political rivalries and ambitions which pushed the two parties to an extreme reaction. Since Constantine the emperor intervened in church affairs, and theology was politicised. The unity of the empire was bound to the unity of the church. The emperor took place among the bishops in deciding and convoking the councils. What a pity!

3. Ephesus doesn't divide from the Theological Point of View

There was no doctrinal formulation in Ephesus as we mentioned above. The council under the powerful influence of Cyril adopted the Alexandrine interpretation. Re-

¹ Ephèse et Chalcedoine. Actes de conciles. No 6, tr. A.J. Festugière. Beauchesne. Paris 1982, p.174

² Th. Camelot. Histoire des conciles oecuméniques Ephèse et Chalcedoine. Editions de l'Orante. Paris 1962, p.65; L.I. Scipioni. Nestorio e il concilio de Efeso. Vita e pensiero. Milano 1974, p.180

³ ACO I/1,7, p.142

⁴ The title „Theotokos of the Blessed Virgin“ was born in Egypt and it was probably the title of Isis, cf. G. Giamberardini. Il „Sub Tuum“ e il titolo Theotokos nella tradizione egiziana. In: Marianum 31 (1969), pp.350-362; G. Gharib. Il concilio de Efeso e la sua dottrina mariana. In: Nicolaus. Vol.1 (1982), pp.75-101

⁵ Common christological declaration between the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church. In: Messenger 11 (March 1995), p.8

⁶ Louis Sako. Lettre christologique du patriarche syro-oriental Iso'yahb II de Gdala. Rome 1983, pp.101-111

⁷ Camelot, Ephèse et Chalcedoine, p.73

⁸ P.J. Hamell. Handbook of Patrology. New York 1968, p.118

conciliation with the Antiochians was made two years later in 433. It seems the affair was between two people with different characters, nourished by the antagonisms, and Nestorius was excommunicated personally, but not the Church of Constantinople or Antioch. In fact it is Chalcedon that divided the church, from which the Church of Egypt was separated. The so-called Nestorian church was not a direct result of the Ephesus controversy. This church was wrongly associated with the council of Ephesus in 431 and the condemnation of Nestorius at the time. Ephesus is not even mentioned by the synods of this church, and the name of Nestorius appears for the first time in the assembly of bishops in 612.⁹ The Church of the East was isolated historically and politically from the Christian West, and its leaders could not share in councils held inside the Roman Empire.

The adapting of Antiochian christology is due not to Ephesus, in my opinion, but to the three Chapters when their works - mainly of Théodore - were translated into Syriac and taught in Edessa, and afterwards in Nisibis Schools. Jacob of Sarouq, a Syriac Father from the fifth century confirms that in 470, at the School of Edessa they were translating the writings of Theodore.¹⁰ And when Ibas fled to Edessa he imposed their teachings.

4. Evaluation

The time has arrived for us to take a complete vision of Christology just like the Catholic and the Assyrian Church have tried, last year in making the common christological declaration.¹¹ We should consider the political, social-cultural and ethnical context. We should not choose only one constant christology. We have to distinguish between Faith and Theology. The Faith is stable but theology changes as the Pope John XXIII said in his speech of inauguration of the Second Vatican Council. Faith comes from God, therefore it is absolute while the theology is human and relative and submitted to changes. The fault of Ephesus was maybe in adopting one christology, one school instead of including both with some nuance.

In the same way, each Church has its own personality, history, liturgy, language, it should be respected and considered a part of the universal church's heritage. The West was monogeneous at that time, but it was not the case in the East. The East was pluralist. And pluralism is a sign of civilisation indeed!

⁹ Ibidem, p.122

¹⁰ P. Martin. In: ZOMG 30, pp.18-76

¹¹ It's very interesting that the Assyrian Church admits both titles of Theotokos and Christotokos. The common christological declaration says: „In the light of this same faith the catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as „Mother of God“ and also as „Mother of Christ“. We both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith.“ Cf. Messenger 11 (March 1995), p.8

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide?

Bishop Severius Yacoub Touma, who in 1957 became Yacoub the Third, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church, asserts that "the Church did not attain its long sought peace in the Council of Ephesus because the Orientals continued to oppose Cyril and his doctrine in solidarity with their fellow compatriot Nestorius."¹

Asad Rustum, late professor of History at the American University of Beirut and historian of the Greek Orthodox See of Antioch states:

"But it (Ephesus) alone was not sufficient to restore peace and reconciliation. Cyril's 12 anathemas were still the object of deep controversy between Antioch and Alexandria. The bishops returned home in disagreement, not in peace and concord."²

Both these contemporary Antiochene historians agree that the Council of Ephesus did not achieve unity in the Church, but they attribute different causes for this judgement. Asad Rustum blames the "12 anathemas" of Cyril which were read out in the Council of Ephesus and incorporated into its records. The Syrian Orthodox historian considers the "Formula of Union," which had been drawn up by the Antiochenes in 433, sent to Cyril and gained his approval, thus forming the basis for agreement, "was written somewhat artificially, as though by people who were forced to do so ... also, they did not clearly and correctly acknowledge the title "theotokos," but somehow accepted it after some evasive interpretation."³ Professor Rustum, on the other hand, considers that the "Formula of Union," which the orientals sent to Cyril, did bring about peace in the eastern and western Church. This was due to the moderation of the orientals."⁴

I have begun my presentation with the statements of two contemporary Antiochene historians to show how the Council of Ephesus, although an ecumenical Council accepted by the Church; still gives rise to much debate and disagreement among historians in relation to understanding and interpreting its statements and teachings. This is especially the case in the Antiochene Church where Ephesus caused a great split and a deep wound from which we still suffer even today. The Council of Chalcedon, which met some twenty years after Ephesus and finally divided the Antiochene East, was but a very strong reaction to the great shock suffered by the Church of Antioch in Ephesus.

The Council of Ephesus witnessed a struggle between two conceptions of union in Christ, i.e., the union between the humanity and the divinity. According to one conception, Jesus Christ is a fully human being assumed by the Son of God, the Logos, from the moment of conception in Mary's womb, in the power of the Holy Spirit and for us and our salvation. This view was formed in Antioch during the Arian controversy.

¹ History of the Syrian Church of Antioch. Vol. 2. Beyrouth 1957, p.57

² The Church of God of Great Antioch. Vol. 1. Beyrouth 1958, p.320

³ Severius Yacoub. Cf. footnote 1 (= History), p.57/8

⁴ Rustum. Cf. footnote 2 (=Church), p.322

The Arians had held, in addition to denying the divinity of the Logos and his equality with the Father, that the incarnation was the union of the Logos, the heavenly Being created by the Father, with the body but not the rational soul. This was said so that they could show that the Logos was subject to change and suffering, as is the rational soul which is united to a body.

The Antiochenes, headed by Bishop Eustathius (325-335), the adamant defender of Nicene faith along with St. Athanasius of Alexandria (373), the first victim of Arian violence, insisted on the perfection of the human nature in the incarnate Son. They attributed to it all the human attributes such as birth, pain and death, but no human attributes were predicated of the Logos/Son. The Arians, however, who were quite strong in Antiochene lands, delighted in attributing these human qualities to the Logos in order to 'de-grade' his divine nature. Thus, the Arians used to say that the Logos was born of the Virgin Mary, that she was the mother of God, that the Logos died on the cross and rose from the tomb. It was natural for the Antiochenes to be strict in denying this manner of speaking about the Logos, the Son of God.

The second conception stresses the unity between the humanity and divinity in Christ and considers the Logos to be the one who was born of the Virgin Mary and died for us and for our salvation in the body taken from her. The Logos/Son is the principle and source of all the salvific work of Christ. This view is very clearly seen in the pre-Arian as well as post-Arian writings of St. Athanasius.

These two conceptions coexisted peacefully during the first stage of the battle against Arianism. This is clear from the strong relationship that existed between St. Athanasius, the main proponent of the "unitive" conception, and Eustathius of Antioch, the one who launched the "distinctive" conception. How are we to understand the alliance between these two in spite of the big difference between them concerning the union in the person of Christ? St. Athanasius defends Eustathius and his followers in the synod of Alexandria in 362 even after the latter's death. Athanasius invited the followers of Eustathius to that synod but not the followers of Miletus, i.e., the moderate Nicenes. The disciples of Miletus taught a "distinctive" unity in the person of Christ against the Apollinarians who were Antiochene and extreme Nicenes; they spoke of an "absorbing" unity in the person of Christ.

Antioch thus appears, ever since the Arian crisis, as a fertile ground for the dispute concerning the conception of unity in the person of Christ. St. Athanasius tried to reconcile the disputing parties around the faith of the Nicene Council. He reminded those who spoke of a "distinctive" unity that "the Logos himself became flesh and that he, although in the form of God, took the form of a servant and for us became flesh from the Virgin Mary, and so entered into our human race, liberating it in himself from sin in a total and comprehensive manner unto the heavenly kingdom." And he reminded the Apollinarians that the "Logos assumed a body with a rational soul because the Logos did not simply procure salvation for the body but also for the soul."⁵

It is noteworthy that St. Athanasius did not excommunicate anyone on account of these two different conceptions because he did not find any of them to be a denial of the truth of the incarnation. One also notices that he did not use new terms to express

the mystery of the incarnation; he simply insisted on the Nicene formula, properly understood.

Seventy years elapsed between the Synod of Alexandria (362), presided over by St. Athanasius and the Council of Ephesus (431), and the Antiochenes had not given up their "distinctive" conception of the unity in the person of Christ. But their position did not give rise to any problem in the Church universal. Theodore of Mopsuestia lived during this period, and it was he who gave the "distinctive" conception its full expression. Theodore died in peace with the Church in 428, and the Church of Antioch adopted his teachings. In that same year, however, there began what has been called the "scandalum oecumenicum" in Constantinople. The Bishop of that great Eastern capital, Nestorius, a staunch Antiochene, denied the theological legitimacy of the title "theotokos". This title had been given to the Virgin Mary in the ecclesiastical tradition. Along with this denial came also the denial of speaking of the Son of God as having suffered and died in the flesh. Rome's Pope Celestine and Alexandria were alarmed, and they hastened to remove this "scandal". Yet, in spite of the explanations and threats of St. Cyril, the warnings of Celestine with his threat of excommunication, and the pleading of John of Antioch to avoid a schism, Nestorius did not back down. On the contrary, he held even more firmly to his position and replied to his critics insisting rather confusedly, on the one hand, on his "separative" views concerning the person of Christ, but also on the unity of the same.⁶

St. Cyril did not content himself with reminding Nestorius of the Creed of Nicea, as had done Athanasius in the Alexandrian Synod of 362, but he added new terminology and explanations which he considered to be necessary in order to avoid the error of "dividing" the person of Christ - the heresy of Nestorius, according to Cyril. In this way, St. Cyril introduced new terminology to the conception of the unity of Christ's person: "hypostatic union", "natural union" and "one incarnate nature of the Word-Son". Were these expressions necessary to clarify the faith? At any rate, these terms enraged the Antiochenes for they heard in them Apollinarian teachings, a matter which they had been fighting against, and this only fueled the struggle.

When we read the letters that were exchanged between St. Cyril and Nestorius we see that the dispute between them revolved around the interpretation of the Nicene Creed, especially that section about Christ. We are before a conflict of interpretations: one reads the interpretation of the other and refutes it.

Nestorius read that paragraph about the person of Christ in the Nicene Creed as follows: "We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, of one being with the Father, who for us human beings and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate and became man, i.e., he assumed a man from the moment of conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. And the Logos united with this man is Jesus Christ who was born, suffered, died and rose on the third day." Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ is the true expression of the union between the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. That is why birth, suffering and death

⁵ In one of his sermons, Nestorius accepted the counsel of John of Antioch and said: "The Blessed Virgin is Mother of God ... because the Temple created in her by the Holy Spirit was united with the divinity." But, in an extract of his letters rejected at Ephesus, Nestorius wrote: "The Virgin mother of Christ, has not begotten the Son of God, she begot His humanity, which is Son because of the Son conjoined"; again: "Because of the one who bears, I revere him who is born. I divide the natures, but not the adoration."

⁵ Tomus ad Antiochenes. PG 804-06

are, according to him, to be attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the person (propon) of unity, and he contains the Logos and the man. In him the two natures - divine and human - are interrelated and work together for our salvation. Nestorius, however, never said that Christ was born as a human being then the Logos dwelt in him.

St. Cyril's reading of the same passage of the Creed goes like this: "We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, of one being with the Father, who himself, for us and for our salvation, was incarnate and became man, suffered and died, i.e., that the Son of God / Logos himself became human and was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and rose on the third day."

According to St. Cyril, there is a union of identity between the Son of God and the Son of Mary. It is this unity of identity which enables him to say that the Son of God was born of the Virgin, suffered and died. The Son of God is the principle of unity and action in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this also permits him to say that there is "one hypostasis in one nature of the Logos" from which, and out of which, proceeds the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Cyril understood the words of Nestorius as affirming that Jesus Christ was an ordinary human being born of the Virgin Mary in whom the Logos dwelt after his conception. In his view this was a denial of the true incarnation and the salvific work accomplished by the Incarnate Son.

Nestorius understood the sayings of St. Cyril as affirming that the Son of God was subject to birth and death; in Nestorius' view this was a denial of the divinity of the Logos as well as his salvific work. But St. Cyril never really said this. Yet, St. Cyril and Nestorius never really dialogued with each other in the sessions of the Council in order for each one to understand the true views of the other. Rather, the Council of Ephesus, in the absence of Nestorius and his followers as well as the Antiochene Fathers headed by John of Antioch, approved Cyril's interpretation of the Nicene Creed as it had been presented in his second letter to Nestorius, and they anathematized Nestorius' reply to that same letter. The 'anathema' was couched in a strong and rather violent and insulting language devoid of any humane feelings. The "procedures" were swift and simple but they gave rise to great complications in the Church.

The Antiochenes rejected the Council of Ephesus in its procedures and teachings. All efforts to convince them to join it under the leadership of St. Cyril failed, for, to join it after it had taken its decisions meant merely to sign to what others have decided.

Examining the procedures of the Council one would have to say that they were clearly deficient in their ecumenicity. A major church had neither participated in it nor accepted its decisions. The Council did not really become ecumenical except after an Antiochene formulation of the faith was accepted by the whole Church, and it was on that basis that peace and unity were restored. That formula was a compromise between Antiochene and Alexandrian theologies. In my opinion, it should have been possible to reach such a formula of union in the discussions of the Council itself, but this did not take place in the meetings themselves because the struggle was unequal. The Antiochenes had evaded participation for two reasons: first, because Nestorius was there, and he was the Antiochene who was suspect in his views and stood accused concerning the orthodoxy of his faith. Second, because St. Cyril, the arch-opponent of their conception of the unity of the person of Christ, was presiding. I believe that, had it not been for this double difficulty in which the Antiochenes fell, they would have participated in

the Council and, by means of a quiet and deep dialogue, could have reached a formula of union very similar to that of 433. The latter, i.e., the Formula of Union of 431, was in fact a revised edition of a confession of faith signed by the Antiochenes in the beginning of August, 431, before the Council was over. It had been written by Theodoret of Cyrrus, one of the most brilliant of Antiochene theologians and given to the Emperor. Thus, it is not possible to designate the Antiochenes as Nestorian in the sense understood by St. Cyril, as was mentioned above. The proof of that is that Patriarch John of Antioch had pressured Nestorius to accept the judgement of Pope Celestine and to retract some of his "separative" views which had given rise to the "ecumenical scandal."

It is very difficult to evaluate objectively the total positive and negative outcome of the Council of Ephesus which has been described by some contemporary historians as having ended in a tragedy and caused, within a period of twenty years, two yet more tragic events: the second Council of Ephesus in 449 and the Chalcedonian Council of 451. Had the Council of Ephesus succeeded, it would have spared the church these three tragedies.

The Church of Antioch, with its Syriac-speaking people, was the victim of these tragedies. Whereas the Church of Alexandria maintained its unity, enjoying its victory at Ephesus, the Roman Church stayed away from the center of the struggle, and the Emperor controlled the situation in the Church of Constantinople, matters got out of hand for the Patriarch of Antioch and he lost control of the situation.

As we saw, the Council of Ephesus approved the theology of St. Cyril as contained in his two letters to Nestorius, then the Council took an administrative decision concerning the independence of the Church of Cyprus from Antioch, and it also finalized the independence of the Jerusalem Church from Antioch. Juvenal, the bishop of Jerusalem, was one of the ardent supporters of St. Cyril. All of these measures were viewed by the Antiochenes as a blow to their Church, their teachers and their theology. Matters were made worse still by the joining of Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa, the Syriac capital of the Antiochene Church, the ranks of Cyril. Rabbula led a strong campaign against the great teachers of the Antiochene school such as Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. This led to a confrontation between Rabbula and the head of the Edessa school, the priest Hibas, who was a staunch Antiochene in his theology. A theological battle ensued between the two, and this left its clear mark on the Syriac part of the Antiochene Church. While Rabbula led the defenders of the Council of Ephesus, Hibas accused St. Cyril of despotism and Apollinarianism without, in any way, attempting to justify Nestorius. Hibas taught that Nestorius had denied the theotokos thereby leading many to believe that he was reviving the heretical teaching of Paul of Samosata. On the other hand, Hibas strongly and admiringly defended his great teacher, Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose writings he had translated into Syriac and whose interpretative and theological teachings he had made the basis for the school of Edessa. Hibas expressed all of this in the famous letter he wrote to one of his East Syrian friends in the school of Edessa, which was at the time in the Persian Empire. After he recounted the sad events which had taken place in the See of Antioch - after the Council of Ephesus, Hibas ends his letter on an optimistic note as a result of what he considered to be the ecumenical peace achieved by the formula of Union which the Antiochenes wrote and St. Cyril of Alexandria accepted in 433. It is clear that Hibas

was a moderate Antiochene who had accepted this formula of faith, and so was not 'Nestorian' in the way Cyril understood him to be.

Rabbula removed Hibas from the presidency of the school of Edessa and anathematized the teachings of Theodorus. But, after Rabbula's death, Hibas was elected bishop of Edessa. He put the school back on the Antiochene line. Many of the great theologians of the Eastern Syrian church, which was inside the Persian Empire, were formed in it before it finally moved in 489 to Nisibis inside the Persian Empire seeking a safe haven from persecutions.

In my view, the Council of Ephesus did not succeed in achieving unity because it one-sidedly defined the Nestorian heresy, fully and radically refuted it; then it accused Antiochene theology indiscriminately of being Nestorian in the sense defined and refuted by the Council. This created a confusion which lasted about 15 centuries between the "distinctive" and the "divisive" trends in the conception of the person of Christ.

The "unitive" trend won at Ephesus (431) and in the Second Constantinopolitan Council (553), whereas the "distinctive" trend won at Chalcedon (451) and in the Third Council of Constantinople (681). If, today, we desire to dialogue with the Eastern Church which belongs to the "distinctive" trend, we have to do so on the basis of those four Christological Councils to see where it stands. For myself, and from a scholarly point of view, I do not see that the Syrian Church of the East is 'Nestorian' in the manner that the Council of Ephesus defined and anathematized.

Discussion:

Amba Bishoy: May I raise a point of order on the process of the meeting. We have heard so far three papers which are heavy to follow at the end of this session. It is also difficult to discuss in short time these papers. I suggest to give more time for discussing the papers. I also suggest to have the fourth paper after the break.

Bishop Matar: I suggest that we give 30 minutes to Amba Bishoy this afternoon to present his comments on the paper from the Coptic Church perspective.

Mar Bawai: We are not cancelling any session. We will give ample time for discussions in the following sessions. I agree to give Amba Bishoy 30 minutes for comments.

Mar Gregorios: In this case, I suggest to give special time for other Oriental Churches also to present its comments as the Syrians, Indians and Armenians.

Mar Bawai: I think the Syrian Orthodox and the Indian Church were given enough time to present its comments through the papers we heard. But we can give a chance to the Coptic and Armenian Churches. I ask Your Grace to reconsider your request.

Archbishop Krikorian: May I suggest a strategy for the process of the meeting and a methodological approach followed in these discussions.

I wish to clarify a few points came out several times from yesterday's discussions and then go to the question of a strategy which I wish to present:

Why did we mention Nestorius in our consultations? Or: why did we treat him in an unfriendly manner? Not because he was absent, this is not the argument. There were no Nestorians at our meetings. But it has more historical background since our forefathers always blamed the Chalcedonians as new Nestorians. There is a large theological literature about that. And the Chalcedonians sometimes unfortunately today blamed us as Monophysite or Eutychians. So, that was the reason in order to deliberate all people, to free them from suspect that we are Eutychians and that the others were Nestorians. We regarded it 25 years ago good and fair to say both we reject Nestorius and Eutyches. This doesn't mean that we have to revise what was said at our consultations which were un-official. And this doesn't mean that we have to treat the subject in the same way. Today, if we would start such a dialogue we could perhaps avoid the names: but only mention the positions.

Now, what I could imagine for the strategy could be the following:

1. We agree to the declaration which has been signed by the Holy Father and Patriarch Mardinkha as final Christological formula. We have to agree to that. This christology corresponds to the christology of the Ancient Church or to that of the church in the 4th or 5th century. We doubt speaking much about Ephesus and so.
2. To speak in this or perhaps in another consultation about lifting anathemas generally concerning persons and councils.
3. To tolerate the churches and the traditions whether they regarded it necessary to have three or seven or 17 or 21 Ecumenical Councils.

The other way which we are trying here, I don't think it is a fruitful way. We exclude Chalcedon and we do not wish to hear the name of Chalcedon. The Assyrian Church perhaps doesn't wish to hear the name of Ephesus.

Then what remains is Constantinople and Nicea. Some people will say Constantinople was assembled as a local or regional church meeting. Therefore we can also get rid of that. And then some Anglican theologians would say Arius was a good theologian. So we will have no ecumenical council. I think we have to take a distance from condemning and trying to destroy all the ecumenical councils. At least, we should have three councils. If the Assyrian church gives its confession today that its christology corresponds to the Roman Catholic or any other Church, I think that would be enough. One thing we could think about then, and I don't know how, is the person of Nestorius.

Bishop Matar: I think that it is important to us to give some clarifications. We are not here to re-consider Nestorius. Neither, to re-examine the Council of Ephesus. Our faith is common with what was said in Ephesus. This is not the matter of debate. We are in front of a new reality which is that the Catholic Church has signed a declaration with the Assyrian Church. This means that we meet with Assyrians in one theological faith. But, from a scientific and historical view, every one has the right to discuss and research the matter. These research will enrich and support our standpoints. I wish that we do not mix theological and historical realities. When the Church of the East signed the declaration, this means that they have something to say about the reality of their faith. I wish you to have this stand so that we know each other better.

Mar Gregorios: Is the floor now open for discussions?

Mar Bawai: I suggest that we divide our discussions into two parts. Or shall we proceed with the fourth paper?

Amba Bishoy: I think we have agreed in the last session that we proceed with the fourth paper and then we give ample time for discussions.

President Stirnemann takes over chairing the working session and asks Mar Bawai to present his paper.

Mar Bawai Soro

Does Ephesus Unite or Divide? A Re-evaluation of the Council of Ephesus - An Assyrian Church of the East Perspective

1. Introduction

When Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV signed the "Common Christological Declaration" (CCD) in Rome on 11 November 1994, the Assyrian Church of the East and the Catholic Church affirmed their unity in the faith of Jesus Christ despite past suspicions on both sides growing out of different interpretations of the Council of Ephesus. Both the Pope and the Patriarch declared that "the controversies of the past led to anathemas, ... and ... the divisions brought about in this way were due in large part to misunderstanding."¹ In a historically significant and amiable discourse the Pope, during an introduction of the Patriarch to the faithful of Rome, officially stated that "(this) declaration ... will resolve the separation created by the Council of Ephesus in year 431."² It was clear that by this declaration both heads of the respective churches were actually bringing to an end one of Christianity's oldest Christological conflicts and thus effectively initiating a process whose ultimate aim is to heal a wound that has persisted for over 1,500 years in the Church, the Body of Christ. Though, according to the Catholic and Assyrian Churches, the issue of the Council of Ephesus was dealt with and successfully resolved by this Declaration, this paper, the topic of which was proposed by the PRO ORIENTE Ecumenical Foundation³, will retrospectively consider the viewpoint of the Church of the East toward the Council of Ephesus with an eye to relations between the Orthodox Churches and the Church of the East.

Immediately after the signing of the CCD, a number of Orthodox Churches expressed their desire to reconsider their centuries-old position toward the Church of the East in a spirit of good will. This new spirit was reflected in the proceedings of the dialogue between the Assyrian Church and the Middle East Council of Churches, which had been in progress since 1985. Accordingly, in October of 1995 the MECC officially

granted the Church of the East the Council's membership within the Catholic Family of the Middle East Churches. The main reasons, however, that the Orthodox had expressed criticism of the theology of the Church of the East were that the Christology of the Church of the East was thought to contain "heretical" elements because of its negative evaluation of the Council of Ephesus; and that such "heretical" elements were mainly the result of the Assyrian Church's application of the Christological formula of "two natures and two *qnome*, in one *parsopa*", and that this had consequences in liturgical practice. Of equal seriousness to the Oriental Orthodox were the Assyrian Church's anathemas imposed on Cyril of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch, and, at the same time, her veneration of, and devotion to, Nestorius and Theodore.

It is within this ecumenical context of dialogue that this paper has been prepared to clarify the Assyrian Church's understanding and attitude towards Ephesus in order to achieve further reconciliation with the Orthodox Churches. This paper will state in part II the Church of the East's historic understanding of the Council of Ephesus as it relates to Cyril's teaching and his treatment of Nestorius. Then in part III, I will draw upon the recent theological developments between the Coptic and the Assyrian Churches which have narrowed the gap between the Christologies of the Church of the East-Mesopotamian tradition and that of the Coptic Orthodox-Alexandrian traditions.

2. Assyrian Church of the East's Understanding of the Historical Context of Ephesus

There are two important points which we need to establish before entering the discussion proper which should eliminate needless evaluation. It is a matter of historical record that the Church of the East did not take part in the discussions of the Ecumenical Councils of the Roman Empire, including the Council of Ephesus. Since these Councils were not only discussions of theology and ecclesiastical affairs but also matters of the state within the *ecumene* of the Byzantine Empire, the Fathers of the Church of the East were cut off from any participation in such gatherings in the West. One of the reasons for this was a self-distancing, made necessary by the fact that during a good deal of the time in question the Persian Empire in the East was at war with the Byzantine Empire in the West.³ Another important fact is that, in the time since the Council of Ephesus, the Assyrian Church of the East has not, until the present day, been officially approached, neither by the Catholic Church nor by any other Orthodox Church, to formally accept or to reject the Council of Ephesus.⁴

Further, the Church of the East's view of Ephesus is affected by two major considerations that also determined her verdict on the Council. The first issue is the Assyrian Church's suspicion of Cyril's Christological formula: "One nature of God the Word incarnate". The second issue is the manner in which Cyril of Alexandria, together with the Council of Ephesus, dealt with Nestorius and his teachings.

¹ Editorial, "Common Christological Declaration between Catholic Church and Assyrian Church of the East," L'Osservatore Romano. (Vatican City) 16 November 1994, weekly edition in English, p.1

² Ibid. 3

³ Mar Bawai Soro/Michael Birnie. Is the Theology of the Church of the East "Nestorian". In: Syriac Dialogue 1 (PRO ORIENTE Vienna 1994 = Assy) p. 117

⁴ Mar Bawai Soro/Michael Birnie. The Vienna Christological Formula in an Assyrian Perspective. In: Syriac Dialogue 1 (PRO ORIENTE Vienna 1994) p. 35

2.1. Cyril's "One Nature of God the Word Incarnate" Formula

Relations between the Persian Church in the East and the Church in the West had been periodically strained, even before the Council of Ephesus. This was due to the rise of certain heresies in the Roman territories—specifically Arianism and Apollinarianism; they had both gained enough influence in the West to become threatening. On the one hand, the Alexandrian Fathers were pioneer adversaries of such heresies. By defending the faith, they played a critical role in developing early church doctrine in the realms of the Holy Trinity and Christology. On the other hand the Eastern bishops in upper Mesopotamia and Antioch were occupied with these matters as well, and were especially concerned with the Apollinarian threat, and therefore developed categories of thought and language to articulate the teachings of the universal Church, though with a different theological emphasis. The two centers were often competitive and sometimes in conflict even when they seemed to be attempting to express the same meaning of the mysteries of God and the Incarnation. Thus differences arose, due in large part to the fact that each school of thought employed a set of distinct philosophical suppositions and terminology.⁵

The theologians in the "Persian" Church of the East were committed to the Mesopotamian traditional theology of "two natures". The Aristotelian thought world influenced their philosophical approach, with emphasis on the historic and concrete, and literal interpretation of Scripture. Concerning the Incarnation of the Word, they characteristically described it in terms which emphasized the reality of Christ's historical "humanness". A necessary element in this approach was to establish a distinction on the formulaic or terminological level which emphasized the concrete substantial reality of both Christ's divinity and humanity. They thus rejected any formula which implied or insisted upon a *natural* union, which for them implied change in one or both of the constituent natures within the union. Theologians in the schools of Edessa and Nisibis and in Antioch, too, stressed the integral wholeness of each nature, and they carefully distinguished the divine attributes from the human, ascribing them to one or the other nature. The logic behind the formulation of their teachings derived much of its motivation from opposition to the theological interest of Apollinarianism, which they vehemently fought against in order to protect the orthodoxy of their apostolic faith.⁶

On the other hand, the theological language of the Alexandrians was considerably influenced by Platonism, and in contrast to that in Mesopotamia and Antioch, its thought was dominated by the transcendental and mystical, and its Biblical interpretation by the allegorical. This difference in methodology led to clashes between the two

systems concerning the propriety of language used or rejected by one side or the other.⁷ As a consequence theologians in Mesopotamia were suspicious when they heard an Alexandrian insist that God the Word was born, or that he suffered, or died, or was raised from the dead. This was interpreted by some as calling into question the divine immutability and impassibility, as though the divine nature could be subject *naturally* to beginning, or end, or be made subject to change or suffering. From the Mesopotamian point of view the Alexandrians seemed to have disconnected the importance of Jesus' humanity in the Incarnation and possibly denied its integral wholeness. This ultimately led to an open dispute about the propriety of a popular epithet for the Blessed Virgin, "Theotokos", a term dearly beloved by Alexandrians and by the general populace in areas of the Empire influenced by them.⁸

The Eastern "diophysite" Fathers, who had been absorbed with the intensity of their conflict with Apollinarianism, could not see any real disagreement between what Apollinarius had advocated and the teachings of Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria who led the anti-Nestorius faction at Ephesus. Cyril's formula "One incarnate nature of God the Word," seemed to be originated with Apollinarius, though Cyril mistakenly attributed it to Athanasius; and it was viewed by Nestorius and the Easterners alike to be a new adaptation of the same heresy.⁹ By this phrase Cyril seems to have intended to stress the oneness of the human and divine natures in the person of our Lord after the Incarnation, but by using it he fanned the flames of suspicion among the Easterners, who stressed the concrete reality of the two natures after the Incarnation. "One nature of God the Word" after the union seemed to suggest that one or both of the two natures "in the union" had been compromised in its essence.

2.2. Cyril's Treatment of Nestorius at Ephesus

A good deal of the zeal of Nestorius in his Christological debate with Cyril was aimed at warding off the emergence of some new form of Apollinarianism. Nestorius thought that Cyril's formula would impute to the nature of the Logos the sufferings of the God-man. Such a formula was totally unacceptable since it had no roots either in the Sacred Scriptures or in the creed. He further thought that it negated the genuinely human life in which the Master grew in wisdom, was tempted, and suffered, and thus effectively redeemed all humanity.¹⁰ But Nestorius ultimately judged wrongly and, as subsequent events bore testimony, Cyril was not advocating the heresy which Nestorius

⁵ Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1 (Atlanta 1975), pp. 473-478

⁶ Opposition to Apollinarius had forced the Antiocheans and theologians in the Church of the East to confront his heresy. In a protest against his claim that the incarnate Word had assumed an incomplete humanity, they maintained that if salvation was to be achieved, the Only begotten must have assumed a complete manhood. Further they contended that Apollinarius' notion of the divinization of Christ's flesh could only imply that Jesus was not a real man but only appeared to be so. They, in opposition, insisted that two complete entities, divine and human, could unite and form a real person, namely, that the simultaneous existence of two distinct volitional principles in one individual was conceivable. Their conclusion was that if Christ did not possess a rational human soul-capable of choice either of good or evil - in union with his divinity, the salvation of mankind could not have taken place.

⁷ For an introduction to the discussion relating to the difference between Alexandrian and Antiochean Christologies, see, Leo Donald Davis SJ, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*. Minnesota 1990, p.142. The author makes the following statement which additionally clarifies the distinct orientation of each of the two schools of thought. „Just as all philosophers are said to be basically either Aristotelian or Platonist, so, roughly speaking, all theologians are in Christology either Antiochene, beginning with the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels and attempting to explain how this man is also God (low Christology), or Alexandrian, Beginning with the Word of John's Prologue and attempting to understand the implications of the Logos taking flesh (high Christology).“

⁸ Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople who received his education at Antioch, denounced the term as inappropriate. He preferred the terms "Mother of Christ" (=Christotokos) or "Mother of our Lord", both of which he considered broad enough to include both his human and divine natures in the union, but which did not specifically call into question the impassability and immutability of Godhead.

⁹ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp.473-478

¹⁰ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*. San Francisco 1982. p.312. (A feature of Apollinarian teaching was to effectively deny that there was any moral development in Christ's life.)

suspected, and his teaching, after careful examination, ultimately received the approval of Rome and, after some compromise, even Antioch.

But did Nestorius himself receive a fair hearing? After thorough examination it might have been possible to conclude that criticisms of Nestorius were rooted in the fundamental differences in terminology between the two camps. Honesty and prudence might have brought resolution to the conflict, and even more, might have relieved the whole church of the enmity and suspicion it has had to endure among its members for centuries. Instead, a tumultuous council took place, with Cyril acting as both prosecutor and judge of Nestorius.

The trial of Nestorius at Ephesus in which he was condemned has always been viewed by the Church of the East as unfair and illegal. It should be noted that others, outside the Church of the East and with impeccable credentials as orthodox scholars, have also agreed with that judgment, attributing the chaotic and embittered atmosphere at Ephesus to personal animus and political ambition on the part of Cyril.¹¹ The Roman Catholic theologian André de Halleux, OFM, writing in 1992, described the proceedings in much the same way as Church of the East fathers have. I have summarized his conclusions below:¹²

What happened in reality is that Cyril had transformed a council at which the emperor wanted doctrine to be defined "without any dissension born of antipathy." Held in illegality by a tribunal where the judge was also the accuser and where the charge was not made the object of scrupulous verification, this trial by default could only come to an end as a questionable deposition. And yet this deposition would soon be passed off as a doctrinal anathema, imposed on the oriental bishops by an emperor more and more hostile to the archbishop of his capital.

The Church of the East feels that such historical affairs, caused by the lack of a true and mutual understanding, ultimately made resolution to the matters under consideration impossible. Our attitude toward Ephesus has always been highly coloured by this perception. And in fact any resolution to the dispute had to await the Council of Chalcedon, and while concerning the personal status of Nestorius the Church of the East would prefer to leave it up to God.

2.3. The Aftermath

The effects of what took place at Ephesus in 431 and later in 433 made a large number of Antiochean and upper Mesopotamian clergy from all ranks feel that too much had been conceded to Cyril, and many of these were forced into exile, some making their way to the more friendly Christian communities in Persia. As for Cyril's followers in Alexandria (what is today known as the Coptic Patriarchate), they too became alienated, especially when the Council of Chalcedon in 451 affirmed that

¹¹ Luise Abramowski. The history of research into Nestorius. In: Syriac Dialogue 1 Vienna 1994. pp.55-58

¹² André de Halleux. Nestorius: History and Doctrine, tr. into English by Annette Hedman. In: Syriac Dialogue 1. Vienna 1994. pp.203-210. [This paper was originally presented in French at second dialogue meeting between the representatives of the Assyrian Church and the Middle East Council of Churches, Limassol 1992

Christ is "one person in two natures". This seemed to them a repudiation of their great champion, Cyril, and a capitulation to Nestorius' way of thinking.

The Christological formula of the Council of Chalcedon proved acceptable to theologians in the Church of the East. However, interposed between "person" and "nature" was a third philosophical term, *hypostasis*. At Chalcedon the term "hypostasis" was used as a synonym for "person".¹³ Up until that time it was not so used except at Alexandria. The adoption of the Alexandrian usage of hypostasis, that is, its redefinition for the purposes of Christology, caused the bishops at Chalcedon to affirm a single *hypostasis*/person in the incarnate Christ. But in the Church of the East hypostasis continued to be used, as it always had been, as a synonym for nature. A "nature" was a given category, a description of a general species setting forth all the characteristics inherent in that species. A "hypostasis", on the other hand, was a concrete exemplar of such a given nature, a substantial representative of that nature.¹⁴ "Person" was considered to be what makes a hypostatized nature uniquely different from other hypostases of the same nature.¹⁵

This long-standing and familiar usage of "hypostasis" (*qnoma* in Syriac) made the Chalcedonian "one person, one hypostasis" formula appear to those in the East as either a mistake or a back-door means of re-asserting the "one nature" formula of Cyril. As a result, for the next 150 years after the Council of Chalcedon the Church of the East carefully avoided using the term hypostasis at all in its official Christological formulations which appeared in Synodical documents.¹⁶ Though the majority of individual bishops and teachers continued to instruct their catechumens using the old forms, namely, one person in two hypostatized natures (*qnome*), nevertheless, the official creeds of the Church of the East set forth merely one person in two natures, seemingly side-stepping the controversial word "hypostasis", and showing thereby the widespread ambivalence among the bishops toward the Chalcedonian formula.

3. A Prospect of Conformity with Ephesus: The Assyrian-Coptic Unofficial Dialogue

Following the decisions of Ephesus, specifically as they evolved and were given form through the compromises in 433 and at Chalcedon (451), what has been at the core of Christological dissension between the Church of the East and the West is a misunderstanding about the definition and the usage of the term "hypostasis". Today theologians in the Church of the East have made a conscientious effort to deal with the intricacies of this terminological conflict and have made a serious attempt to clarify their received Christological formulations and terminology, so that the Church of the

¹³ Aloys Grillmeier with Theresia Hainthaler. Christ in Christian Tradition. Vol 2/2. London 1995, pp.428-432

¹⁴ A hypostasis would contain the *ousia*, the "essence", of that nature-in men: a body, soul, spirit, etc. It would not differ, except in number, from any other hypostasis of the same nature, differing only with hypostases of other natures. A "person" was described as a hypostasis plus all accidental attributes, both internal and external, which distinguish one hypostasis from another of the same nature-in men: hair colour, height, skin pigmentation, sex, etc.; or level of wisdom, particular knowledge, skill in a craft, or some other talent or bent.

¹⁵ Through personhood a hypostatized nature becomes a subject of interest on its own, not just as a specimen of a given nature. Through "person" we know "Paul", or "Peter", say, who present to us differing appearances, abilities, interests, talents, etc. The hypostatized natures of Paul and Peter are identical: the person of each one is uniquely his own.

¹⁶ Synodicon Orientale. ed. J. B. Chabot. See pp. 55, 134-136, 194-195, 197-198, 209-210

East might be able to re-evaluate her stance toward Ephesus and fully receive Chalcedon. At the same time, it was expected that the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, too, would re-evaluate their judgment of the Assyrians and their Church. With the stimulus of the progress which has marked the Churches' efforts in recent times as they have reached out for rapprochement with one another, this assignment was given to a number of theologians in the various Churches which sincerely desired to find a solution. The first and most significant result which took place was the signing of the CCD between the Catholic and Assyrian Churches. While preparations were on way for this historic accord, in recent years the ecumenical efforts of the Middle East Council of Churches and PRO ORIENTE foundation have also bridged a significant portion of the gap resulting from misunderstanding and lack of trust between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The progress achieved through these dialogues has been due to the good will present on all sides and to intense theological reflection.

The Assyrian Church, which has inherited the strict diophysite Christology, has attempted to make clear its Christological faith to the Copts, the successors of Cyril and of the Alexandrian Christology, and they have done the same. This process of clarification has been an ongoing dialogue, taking place mainly in Middle East countries, from 1990 to 1994. The crowning jewel of this dialogue was the drafting of a common agreement¹⁷ in January of 1995, the approval of which still awaits the action of both Churches. The good will of each side in the dialogue was expressed in the mutual examination of one another's faith and the terminology which expresses it in a spirit of honest and prayerful inquiry. Since the draft of this agreement has yet to receive the full attention and approbation of the synods of the respective churches it would be premature to disclose its specific contents and recommendations, but the agreement reached on the topics under discussion in the dialogue include such critical matters as:

1. The legitimization and acceptance of the different emphases each Church has historically made concerning the mystery of Christ, in its theological tradition, because of its particular historic, philosophical and ecclesiastical backgrounds.
2. A clarification of the uses and meaning of the term *qnoma* in the categories of Christology and Trinitarian theology which should help both Churches avoid misunderstanding in the future.
3. The respective understandings of the modality of the union of the divinity and humanity in Christ: both Churches together confess one Person of the Incarnate Word of God.

¹⁷ On 13-14 January, 1995, theologians from the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East gathered at Amba Bishoy's Monastery in Egypt in order to arrive at a common agreement between their Churches, which would be submitted to the authorities of both Churches. The Coptic delegation was headed by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, with the membership of: H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, Dr. Maurice Tadros, and Dr. Emile Maher. The Assyrian delegation commissioned by His Holiness Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinkha, IV, was composed of H.E. Archbishop Mar Narsai De Baz, Metropolitan of Lebanon, Syria, & Europe, and H.E. Mar Bawai Soro, Secretary of Inter-church Relations and Education Development. Participating also were H.E. Metropolitan George Saliba of Mount Lebanon from the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, and from MECC Father Paul Sayah Director of the unit on "Faith & Unity", which has been in dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East for the past three years. At the end of this meeting, a draft of an agreement was worked out with mutual good will.

4. The place and propriety of the titles *Theotokos* (used in the Coptic Church) and *Christotokos* (used in the Church of the East): Recognition of the legitimacy and rightness of each of these terms was agreed upon.

5. Both sides made sure that any possibility of implying a duality of persons in Christ was obviated and a clear statement was made to deny any teaching that suggests „two Sons“ in Christ.

6. Concerning the status of future relations between the two Churches, both sides of the dialogue thanked God for having helped them rediscover the totality of faith that already united them, and have, therefore, pledged themselves to do everything possible to dispel the obstacles of the past which still prevent the attainment of full communion between them.

The issue of the judgment of the Church of the East on Cyril's person and Christology was part of this discussion. In the clarification, through encounters sponsored by the MECC, the delegation of the Church of the East was able to establish a distinction between Cyril's Christology and the manner in which he confronted Nestorius, and they have accepted the former while still objecting to the latter. To indicate precisely this positive evaluation of Cyril's thought, ecclesial authorities of the Assyrian Church have recently decided on lifting the anathemas imposed on both Cyril of Alexandria and Severus¹⁸ of Antioch. The actual canonical proceedings await the convocation of the next Holy Synod of the Church of the East some time in 1997. Additionally, in her quest to further this new relation with the Oriental Orthodox brethren, the Church of the East has given careful consideration to texts presented during the dialogue which dealt with Cyril's "twelve anathemas" against Nestorius. Ten years ago, such a proposition would have been impossible to imagine. But, though the anathemas were directed by Cyril against Nestorius, the Eastern bishops, and their perceived Christology, the Church of the East was able to transcend the contextual polemics of Ephesus in which these assertions were made and find a ground for settlement with Cyril's thought. One could only pray and hope that the Oriental Orthodox Brethren from all ecclesial traditions would, in the near future, be able to take similar steps like those of the Assyrian Church and rise above the historical misunderstanding, misjudgment, or whatever difficulty they still may have with Nestorius' Christology which, I believe, today has been re-discovered, re-evaluated, understood, and accepted, by modern scholarly research, as an orthodox teaching.

Both the dialogue itself and the agreed recommendations are a historic contribution to the betterment of the atmosphere between these two ancient theological traditions. The Church of the East sees the need for continuing this dialogue, and welcomes the openness of the Coptic brethren-particularly the intellectual integrity of certain ecumenical officers/experts whose sensitivity and depth of knowledge have brought to bear on these matters. God willing, they will bear fruit unto life for many.

¹⁸ The person and Christology of Severus of Antioch were not investigated during the discussions between the Assyrians and Copts at Amba Bishoy's Monastery. But the prevalent ethnic, linguistic, and social bounds which connect the Assyrians with their Syrian Orthodox brethren - and as they were enhanced by the theological findings of this and other ecumenical encounters - have persuaded the Assyrian hierarchy to include the name of Severus of Antioch with that of Cyril of Alexandria, as far as the lifting of the anathemas is concerned.

4. Conclusion

It is worthy of note that by way of this dialogue it became very clear to the Assyrians that, though the Copts affirm "one nature of two natures", yet, they insist on the distinct integrity of the two component parts of this one nature, that is, Christ's humanity and divinity remain unconfused, unmixed, and integrally whole. Such an awareness was decisive for the Church of the East, because just the opposite perception about Alexandrian Christology was the norm in the Church of the East until very recently. So too the Assyrians affirmed their faith in the unity of the person of Christ and their recognition that his humanity never had any independent existence, but came into being solely to serve as the vehicle of God the Word's incarnation and salvific work, from the moment of the conception in the womb of the Virgin, without any intervening time, space, or circumstance. The Assyrians emphatically agree with the Copts that the two natures were united and inseparable at the instant of the miraculous conception, and that the humanity of Jesus is the humanity of the Son of God-his own and no other's; he is the subject of the incarnation. His humanity was personalized in the same single person of the Word of God at the moment of incarnation.

Once this draft statement is signed by the Coptic and the Assyrian Patriarchs, it would be fair to say that the achievement of the recent dialogue has been to move very far toward resolving formerly irreconcilable differences which historically have embittered relations between those who hold different theological traditions. Thus, many obstacles specifically created at Ephesus will have been reduced significantly. But there remains an unresolved issue between these two new partners in dialogue, which cannot be dealt with successfully without further reflection and commitment to charity and discussion. The mistrust, misunderstanding, and personality conflict between the two major opponents in this ancient debate, Cyril and Nestorius, will continue to be a barrier to future progress.

It is my personal judgment that, even though the Church of the East is willing to acknowledge the incompleteness of Nestorius' Christological formulations,¹⁹ it should not be asked to abandon his memory or to revile his name. The Chalcedonian definition represents, after all, a convergence and harmonization of the two strands of thought which Nestorius and Cyril strove to defend. As we have recently made an effort to separate Cyril's thought from the context of the very personal conflicts of Ephesus, and to focus on his orthodox concern to promote the use of language expressing the unity of the person of Christ, we would only ask that a like effort be made to understand Nestorius' equally orthodox concern to promote the use of language expressing Christ's complete and uncompromised human and divine natures. As we do not ask anyone to revile the memory of Cyril, we would respectfully ask not to be required to abandon our long held admiration of, and appreciation for, Nestorius.

¹⁹ Recent scholarly findings [for a bibliography on the recent work focusing on Nestorius and his teaching, see, Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 558-568] suggest that Nestorius was orthodox, though they also suggest that his Christological system was not equal to his faith in Christ-Nestorius' Faith in Christ was much better than his skills as a theologian. His faith indeed was orthodox. Not being an innovative theologian, Nestorius was unsuccessful in expressing the unity of natures in appropriate categories, which were only later worked out at Chalcedon. And in the process of his theological reflection he employed Antiochian Christology without regard to nuance, and interpreted Alexandrian Christology in a reductionist way.

As indicated earlier in part two of this paper, historically the Church of the East was never officially approached by the Catholic Church or by any of the Orthodox Churches to take an official position in regard to the Christological formulas of the Council of Ephesus. Yet, today, in light of modern scholarship and contemporary ecumenical efforts, there has been a significant opportunity for understanding, appreciation, and dialogue to reconcile disputed Christological teachings and their formulas, with mutual restraint and respect, and with a desire for understanding and tolerance. Therefore, when today the Assyrian Church of the East is asked the question "Does Ephesus unite or divide?", before answering, one needs to consider the following points, which were briefly mentioned in the previous PRO ORIENTE Syriac Dialogue Consultation,²⁰ so that they are factored into any official reply to such question.

1) Since, every Christological statement articulated by an authoritative body such as a Council, a Synod, or a Commission is an attempt to explain the inexplicable mystery of the Incarnation, and because of the fact that no single formula or series of statements are ever able to capture in words the essence of the mystery of the Incarnation, I therefore feel that the contents of Christological statements of the Council of Ephesus need to be respectfully considered as having validity among many other genuine expressions from both the Eastern and Western traditions that are legitimate and validly significant.

2) The Christological debate, which prompted the Emperor to convene the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 in order to resolve the ongoing debate over the modality of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, continued to persist with intensity for years even after the conclusion of Ephesus. The universal Church felt an urgent need for a more definitive resolution of the same Christological problem, which was actually achieved in the Council of Chalcedon AD 451. I therefore feel that the theological contents of the Council of Ephesus need to be considered as they are refined and brought to a fuller completion in and through the Christological formula of the Council of Chalcedon, which unequivocally affirms the objective reality of both the Divine and human natures, as well as the personal (hypostatic) oneness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

3) Today particular attention needs to be paid as well to the Christological definitions and formulae which have been canonically sanctioned in the Church of the East. And since such statements²¹ and others both the Eastern and Western traditions stem from the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic church of our Lord, it is necessary to consider all of the statements in harmony with one another and as parallel in their common objective, for they all add spiritual enrichment and theological wealth to the one Christian tradition, each statement with its own unique genius and distinct authenticity.

Finally, with these points in mind, and based on the observations of this paper, I could, retrospectively, conclude the following: If a distinction is established between, on the one hand, the theological statements which were asserted by Cyril at the Council of Ephesus ("Theotokos", "Twelve Anathemas", etc.), and on the other, the manner with which Cyril and the other bishops at Ephesus treated Nestorius, and if the que-

²⁰ Soro/Birmie. The Vienna Christological Formula in an Assyrian Perspective. In: *Syriac Dialogue* 1, p.35/36

²¹ *Ibid.* footnote 14

sion of accepting Ephesus is limited to the former only, then, I think the Assyrians should view this as an opportunity for making progress toward ecumenical reconciliation and church unity, for the Church of the East would indeed accept Ephesus and consider it as a council that unites the Church, the "Body of Christ".

Discussion:

Father Yousif: I want to thank the intervention of the co-moderator in this important issue. We got explained many aspects of a complex situation in which the Council of Ephesus was convened and also the problems and the human element in these circumstances. There are two aspects which I would like to insist:

1. The human element which sometimes seems to be for us so heavy but may be also a lesson for us for the new way of treating problems. Charity obliges us to truth and so true things should stay together in the ecumenical dialogue, besides the conversion of hearts, so to speak, in a brotherly way and in an understandable way in order to really understanding each other.

2. I want to point out one important aspect which seems not to be fully clear accepted. That is the distinction between: faith and formula. We are used to - misled often by the classical literature - identify the formula and the faith. While the formula is a human way to express in a more suitable way for the time what is common is the faith of the church. And supposes the theological effort of different parts of the church. These efforts want to take us to something absolute as against the will of God. It lacks a lot of humility. Theology should be humble.

On this point of view, I wish you to revise the formula adopted by the councils, because they reflect an important situation to which the councils wanted to answer.

Finally a point of clarification regarding the terms used in this christological discussions:

- Generation: In the Antiochean area and in Aristotle's definition it means the process of a living thing from a living thing according to nature. So, a man generates a man. Certainly, old Christians realized this, but they thought the thing in the Incarnation of the Son of God is different. But still to say that: Mary as woman would bear the Son of God, this should be explained. That is why there was the hesitation regarding the title. But the Church of the East used the term: Mother of Christ because they said Christ is both, man and God. The term „Mother of God“ would eclipse or neglect the fact that he is a man. But the unity of the individual is the same.

- Logos: The term „Logos“ is, as we know, used at that time what we call now: inculturation. We use a Greek term, but we know that the Greek term Logos was an intermediary between God and the creation. In this sense, is he equal to God, was a question. What I want to say is that the weakness of inculturation and impossible adaptation of your human terms to express what is divine and in this case, for example, Arius accepted the Logos as the Father.

In the same faith we can express the formula in different ways. The simple person faithful in our churches will say that Jesus is the God the person.

Dr. Hainthaler: I feel the necessity to clarify what is the dogmatic content of Ephesus. According to scholars, the dogmatic content of the Cyrilean concept was to say that the ground is Nicea, and also of the incarnation. There was a dogmatic formula made by the council. The Council of Cyril approved the letters of Cyril to Nestorius as an authentic interpretation of the Nicean faith and that is the real dogmatic content to say that is the firm ground. It was shared by the Cyrileans and the Orientals. There was no resistance against it. Both were in accordance. If you look at the dogmatic formula, then you can look at the formula of union of 433.

I would appreciate, in some sense, we are clear in our terminology. It was also a decision of the first session of the council of Cyril to clear the position of Nestorius. It is not a christological formulation.

Prof. Hofrichter: Up to the Council of Ephesus, it was the intent of councils not to give any new dogmatic decision. It only acknowledged the old decision of the Nicean Council. And every future council would have according to this theory only the task to maintain the doctrine of Nicea. So, it is not astonishing that the Council of Ephesus didn't bring a new formulation. It said that Nestorius is not in line with Nicean teaching. That is the only statement that was made. You know that not everybody accepted it. The other councils which took place at the same time or little later, did not agree to this statement. But only the council of Chalcedon went further in this intent. The fathers of Chalcedon had the idea that it was the task of a new council to make a new decision. But, taking into account this fact, Ephesus cannot divide because it was not able to make any dogmatic decision in the sense of a new formula, or in the sense of promoting any christology.

Dr. Hainthaler: Only one sentence again to confirm what has just been said. It is the common ground of all parties at Ephesus not to add any other symbol to Nicea. It was exactly and even the Antiocheans were more far to say it. I must add that also Chalcedon was understood itself, not as a new symbol but only to clarify several points. You can see it in the disposition of the preface.

Father Jammo: I would like to comment on Bishop Matar's distinction between dogma and historic facts. I agree with him that there is a distinction between dogmatic definitions and historic facts. Maybe I can add another note to that. We profess the church as holy. We all say in the symbol that we believe in our Holy Church. That is why whenever there is some mis-treatment or injustice that happens in the dealing of the church, that is not forgotten. For example, what happened to Galileo Galilei, even a small matter, and the great history of the church has never been forgotten. Until now somehow the Catholic Church makes clear that something wrong happened at dealing this. And somehow presents regret to that fact. This is the greatness of the Catholic Church, to be able to see the human limitation of the dealings of the church.

It is the church as holy, but always her Savior redeems herself through history. We are journeying ourselves towards heaven. That's why I think the issue of Nestorius somehow should be put into this context. Bishop Mar Bawai Soro said that the Assyrian Church is being able to make the distinction between the theological development and dogmatic definitions. The Church of the East is able to accept that, and be enriched

through it. But still the memory of Nestorius is not to be put down. Because he was sincere in his efforts to formulate the faith of the Catholic Universal Church. That's where the scholarly effort is important. One scholar is showing that some unfairness happened in the dealing with Ephesus 431.

I think that the Catholic Church has the courage to look at these facts. And see that if unfairness has happened really we should go back today to it and correct it. This is where today we have two definitions: one is dogmatic and the other is to look at the historic fact. And if there some correction has been done, I think we all should have the courage to do it at different levels and meanings. Because there is a church still thinking that some unfairness happened to Nestorius, I think it is warranted to go back and look at the events, re-evaluate it, and correct it, it should be done.

Amba Bishoy: I would like to appreciate the paper expressing the role of St. Cyril of Alexandria in defending the faith. This was presented by Mar Severios Sakka. I would like to thank him what he said about the Pope Cyril of Alexandria.

At the end of Mar Severios' paper (see above p.79), I would like to mention a minor correction in order that nobody would think that we have a wrong interpretation.

The second line: „He himself descended in his body to hell.“ I think that Mar Severios is defending our christology, he meant to say: „... in his human soul.“ And not in „his body.“ That is my remark.

Another clarification: in the paper of Mar Bawai, mentioned that the statement of „one incarnate nature of the word of God“ was that which made Nestorius mis-understand the theology of St. Cyril. But, as I know, that until the third letter of Cyril to Nestorius in which the 12 anathema were stated, and which was the letter No 17, he did not give this statement. He gave it later in his writings to the Bishop of Melitine and Cocsensos and to others. Yet, he mentioned another expression like that: „The word is said to dwell in him just as in those who are holy, and we don't define the dwelling in him to be the same, but united (cataphesia) according to nature. And not changed into flesh, the word produced and in dwelling such as the soul of man might be said to have in his own body.“ This was written in his third letter to Nestorius. But he didn't say one incarnate nature of the word of God till his last letter to Nestorius.

Fourth working session: Friday February 23, afternoon

Chairman: Bishop *Boulos Matar*

Father Khalifé: To Mar Severios' paper (see above p.79): You give us here the teaching of Nestorius in four paragraphs. Can you give us a reference where Nestorius made such statements?

Mar Severios: What I have mentioned here in my paper is taken from a book, called „The History of the Church of Antioch“ written by Patriarch Yacoub III. We consider that book as a historical reference to us.

Bishop Matar: We start thinking of the end of the consultation. Last time in 1994 we had a final communiqué. This time also we would like to have one. We would like to ask Prof. Sebastian Brock to prepare a draft of the communiqué for the assembly.

May I ask the four speakers of today to give a résumé of their papers, each lasting five minutes to refresh our memories.

Mar Severios: the topic that I have presented this morning is about the stand of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch towards the Council of Ephesus. I am obliged to say Ephesus I because we believe in a Second Council of Ephesus 449.

Most of my ideas and references are taken from the Second Council. Through the historical narration, I discovered that some brothers here said that the Council of Ephesus was not legal. I tried to say that this council was legal according to the resources of the Syrian Orthodox Church. With regard to the dogmatic point of view, I tried to summarize the belief of the church according to what Mar Philiksinos of Mabbuq and Severios of Antioch, because they lived in the period where Nestorius and Eutyches lived. That's why I went on explaining the faith of the church because I would have mentioned our faith in a different way, if our discussions were not focused on Nestorius.

Having explained that, we call for unity and we are not from those who call for division. I fear in that case the participants would think of us as fanatics. We are the people who call for unity. Our fathers were on the forefront for Christian unity. And we are still on the same line, because Christianity is the religion of love. I also explained our relation with the Church of the East.

Mar Gregorios: I wish to add three points to what Mar Severios said in his paper about the Council of Ephesus. We consider it as an important council for us.

1. We don't think that there is a dogma from this council. It is an re-assurance to what happened in Nicea.

2. There was a question about the references. The book that Mar Severios referred to is considered one of the important resources in our church. It is the first book in Arabic which depends on Syrian references. If we go back to references of this book which was written by Patriarch Yacoub III, we see that it is the letters of Mar Severios of Antioch and letters of Mar Philiksinos of Mabbuq and others. So, when we mention this book as a resource, it is not necessarily to mention all the other old books.

3. What is our relation with the Church of the East? We have an excellent relation. But we are speaking about the past history. That past was bitter and painful. And, we are speaking today not knowing what will happen tomorrow. We have come here to present what we used to think about. We are not thinking about the future. We have come here to open a new page of relations with our brothers in the Assyrian Church.

We didn't come here to close the relation. The point of view of our church in the past is very clear: we are against Nestorius as a person and doctrine in all our forefathers writings. We need a new reading of history. The topic which we are working on today, through these dialogues and through what we hear from others, and especially from the Church of the East.

Bar Hebraeus for instance who was mentioned this morning, is one of the many fathers of the church. But we cannot consider the sayings of the fathers as decisions of the synod. We use the sayings and thoughts to take a synod decision, and thus what happens between us and the Catholics. In the book of Patriarch Yacoub III there are accusations against Leon and Chalcedon. Yet, the same Patriarch signed a declaration with Rome. This shows that there is a change. I hope that the sayings of the fathers and the sayings of the scholars of today are not taken for granted. All these will lead us in the future to our unity before divisions.

Father Sako: In my paper it is mentioned that the aim of Ephesus is to preserve the faith according to what is said in Nicea. There was no new formula. But the main and announced reason was Nestorius' refusal of the term „Mother of God“, as he preferred the term „Mother of Christ“ because it is more logical and more biblical. We know from where he brought that term „Mary Mother of God“. It is an Alexandrian tradition which spread gradually.

These are several reasons for Ephesus:

- There are two Messianic theologies: Alexandria and Antiochia. The Antiochian theology thinks from the person to God. The Alexandrian theology thinks from God to the person. In Ephesus there was an adaptation to the Alexandrian theology as if it was the only orthodox theology.

- Mis-understanding the theological terms. At that time, the terms were not clear enough. If we read today, we should go back to the original texts. The Assyrian Church uses the terms: *kyana - qnoma - parsopa*.

- The quarrel between the Sees. The Alexandrian See was considered the second among others. When Constantinople appeared, it started to control the East and marginalize the other churches. Also theology war politicized.

In Ephesus they adapted the Alexandrian thinking while in Chalcedon they adapted the Antiochian thinking. And emperor Zenon wanted to unite the empire in one theological trend.

Does Ephesus divide? I do not believe so. It didn't come out with a formula of theology and doctrine. It adapted the Alexandrian trend of thinking. And anathematized Nestorius while no face-to-face dialogue happened. I think, if a humble dialogue took place at that time, there would not have happened what happened. I believe it was a fright between two schools and persons. The church that is called today Nestorian, is not a direct result of Ephesus.

The Assyrian Church is a marginalized church politically, geographically and in language. It is not a divided church or one of heretics.

It is worthless to talk a lot, why not adapting two christologies: the Alexandrian and the Antiochian? We should also distinguish between what is theology and what is faith. The faith from God is absolute while the theology can be changed.

Father Khalife: I tried to show in my paper that there is a struggle between two understandings: the unity in Christ, in the Antiochian view on one side. Antioch used to hold firmly the distinguished understanding since Arius about the person of Christ. And the Alexandrian understanding which is of unifying the person of Christ. This is what Bishop Eustathius of Antioch said in the Arius dilemma. He used to speak about

the human and the son in the one Christ. While St. Athanasius used to speak about the incarnated Son to save us.

Despite that there was no division between the two persons Eustathius and Athanasius. Then the situation was changed when an ecumenical conflict happened in Constantinople. It was because of some terms that Nestorius used in his preachings. Especially when denying the term „Mother of God“ to the Virgin Mary. At that stage, the two above mentioned understandings of Antioch and Alexandria were in a struggle because of Nestorius' teachings. Though these two understandings coexisted in peace for more than 60 years.

When the Council of Ephesus was held which is an ecumenical council recognized by the whole church, held in a legal way and which took legal decisions, this council specified the Nestorius-heresy in the absence of Nestorius himself and his followers. Also in the absence of the Antiochians from the other side. It judged the Nestorians and anathematized them. This is maybe the weak point in this council. There was no real and theological dialogue in its sessions. Whom we should blame for that? Nestorius did not arrive to the council awaiting the Antiochians to go. And the Antiochians did not hurry to go to the council, because Nestorius was a puzzling person for them. Also they had not much admiration towards St. Cyril's personality. So it came to this major absence in the council.

The specification of Nestorius' heresy which was realized in Ephesus is still today unclear. The Council of Ephesus discussed the answer of Nestorius to Cyril. But we can't explain what was he blamed for. What did Nestorius say exactly? What is the content of Nestorius' heresy? What is the reality? The council did not receive a written paper about Nestorius' teaching. We have only his answer to Cyril's letter. All the churches accepted the Council of Ephesus including the Assyrian Church. Though, at that time, this church did not exist. There was only the Church of the East in the Persian Empire. The Assyrian Church was not meant to be blamed at that time. It was Ibas who wrote about the council to his friend after three years. We cannot accuse this church that it refuses Ephesus or not.

Mar Bawai: The three presentations that have preceded described the context where my intention in this paper starts. The third paper describes it exactly. We see ourselves today divided and separated. I meant to say about the theological content of Ephesus that it is the whole christological debate that precedes the council up to that moment of the third letter of Cyril that included all these teachings. The Church of the East in the Persian Empire was separated from the rest of Christianity due to geographical, political and terminological realities. It did not receive those teachings, in fact, it later opposed them. Furtheron the fathers of our church announced anathemas on Cyril, Severios and the rest who confess these teachings. This is a very sad and bitter reality in the Christian existence.

I think, before being people who want to share our knowledge with others, we are here also to share the grace of Jesus Christ with one another. And if there is any chance to bridge this difference, then I think everyone is obligated to do so. We come here in the name of Christ. Reconciliation, unity and charity should form the character of this meeting.

Our church today is saying un-officially - this is the genius of PRO ORIENTE to speak un-officially - that it is ready to re-habilitate the theological understanding, teaching contents of the Council of Ephesus. It is serious in re-understanding Cyril and Severios. This is a possibility if we believe our church to be in the Apostolic line. We believe that the Catholic Church is in the Apostolic line. If the Catholic Church believes and accepts these teachers, then somebody must be wrong if they do not accept them. There comes the notion of understanding others from their own perspective. We try to understand others from their own theological and cultural context. This paper states explicitly that: the thoughts of Cyril of Alexandria and Severios of Antiochia are understood.

We agree with the intentions to their christology. We may say it differently. Their intention, faith and final logical systematic treatment of teachings are acceptable to us. We may not proclaim them as Saints, because simply we cannot proclaim every teacher in the world as our saint. That controversial understanding has gradually and substantially been eliminated. In this way our church is entering a new ecumenical era.

We want to make clear to you that the faith of our church is in conformity with the faith of Ephesus and Chalcedon. For us, this is a crucial point. Being who we are, it is almost the only way for us to understand Ephesus through Chalcedon. We cannot separate the two.

Christianity of today's world is going through hardship because of immigration and because of local difficult witness of Christians in the Middle East. Our church feels that it has proportional responsibility of being a cause of the suffering. That is why part of our Christian calling is to reconcile and have a common witness with the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian and Indian Orthodox Churches. Since our history is loaded with controversies against the Syrian and Coptic Orthodox Churches, we want to bring restoration, communion, understanding and fraternity between us and them. Only because we know without this knowledge the sin of schism will continue and we are paying the price for it. We want to do everything we can without jeopardizing the realities.

We have to respect one another. Also in order to respect your traditions, I really have to respect my own tradition. I don't come to you as an individual. I come to you as a representative of that tradition which I respect.

My final point will be: how do we see the relationship between Nestorius and our tradition. Nestorius is not the most important father in our tradition. In fact, there are two tendencies in our church today. One wants to assert Nestorius in every word and speech. The other wants to remove Nestorius from any word that we say completely. It is still in process though we want to arrive at a final and mature position. It is a very delicate and controversial issue. Nestorius is not the founder of our church. He is not the main theologian either. Yet, we firmly believe that Nestorius did not teach the heresies that are being attributed to him. We cannot betray our own people who feel that way. For you, it should be more important to have a coherent Church of the East, theologically and ecclesiologically. When we come to you we may bring some difficult suggestions. I know that it is the most difficult paper that I have read. I am really suffering, because I know that I am offending the Coptic, the Syrian, Armenian and the Indian participants.

My paper is our Church's position today. What will happen tomorrow? Are we able to establish a distinction between Nestorius and Nestorianism? I am not sure. Will we be

able to abandon the cause of Nestorius? I am not sure. I don't know, and I don't want to say what will happen tomorrow. Because I am only one stammering voice among many. Let the church itself decide by its own conscious faith. Here we come in charity and love in order to talk with each other. The issue here we will continue to treat and to come together, to be together. We have a dream that one day the Church of Christ will solve all its problems. It is a fact of life to live with these problems and try to solve them.

Bishop Krikorian: I wish to mention that for the Armenian Apostolic Church the Council of Ephesus is one of the venerated councils like Nicea and Constantinople.

The Armenians were not present at Ephesus, but SS. Mesrob and Sahak were on their way to Alexandria. Straight after that time they all gathered in Constantinople. They took the documents of Ephesus and went back to Armenia with a Greek text of the Bible. We were in the same situation as the Assyrian Church. There was no proper and good copy of the Greek Bible since the Persians were controlling this. But immediately in 432 the decisions of Ephesus were accepted in the Armenian Church.

To the question whether Ephesus divides or unites: Ephesus unites all churches of ancient tradition. And it divides the Assyrian church from the rest of Christendom. I want to put the question differently: Is the Christology of Ephesus - regardless to the fathers - which we heard as re-interpretation of Nicea, also valid for the Assyrians as it is the case with the Oriental Churches?

From our side I didn't see any research at this meeting, how we, the Oriental Orthodox, may accept the view that corresponds to the first three or four ecumenical councils.

Mar Gregorios: I think I will start with the question of Mar Narsai. He asked whether the term „Mother of God“ was used in the church before Ephesus. The answer is „Yes!“ Firstly Mar Ephrem (†337) used that term.

To comment on Mar Bawai's paper. I would say that if we want to change all what has been written in history we have to go back to our Holy Synod in the church and take these suggestions to study it carefully. We cannot give an answer to you now.

To comment of Father Sakos paper I wish to ask three questions:

1. What does he mean when he says (see above p.92): „For this Cyril of Alexandria rejected Nestorius for his terminology and accused him of heresy and vice-versa.“
2. I wish to say that there were no council gathering without the pressure of an emperor (see above p.92). Who favoured the persecution against Christians?
3. I think we have reached the stage in dialogue of not using the word „separated“ in our terminologies. We were one church and went on two lines.

To comment on Father Khalifés paper(see above p.88). I think the Antiochians didn't reject the teachings of Ephesus. We refused the procedures only. We accepted the teachings. We did not attend the council because we did not want Nestorius to be anathematized, simply because he was from our origin of Antioch.

The ecumenicity of the council does not come from having the churches attend it or not. It is from having the churches accept its decisions. The only church who did not accept Ephesus is the Assyrian. All other churches considered it ecumenical.

I have a question to Father Khalifé about (see above p.89). You did not specify the Nestorius heresy. Who adapted the Nestorius heresy? To what extent the Assyrian church go with the Nestorius heresy. And, if not, what is the faith of this church?

Prof. Harmoncourt: I wish to bring up the aspect of anathemas. We could come to an agreement on the objective material. What is really dividing us is the treatment of persons. We can easily discuss the theological differences and maybe we can reach an agreement. As far as persons are involved, it becomes very difficult. In the Second Vatican Council nobody was cursed or accused or anathematized. It conceived positively the doctrines of the churches. Anathemata were an old way of antiquity. It is un-Christian, against love, and against the will of God. We should have maturity in thinking.

Dr. Hainthaler: The case of Nestorius is a case for all the churches. I am happy the Church of the East preserved to us the Antiochian tradition. To comment on Mar Severios paper (see above p.80) (as a result) we can never say that the human nature of Christ has *hypostases*. We say that the only *hypostasis* of the word of God is the second person of the trinity. It has no *hypostasis* in itself.

To comment on Father Sakos paper. It is the rivalry among the Patriarchates. It was very difficult for the two Patriarchates to deal with each other and so were the personalities.

Dr. Winkler: We should look at the substance of our faith and not to the anathemata. We should not forget also the non-theological facts which could be political, social or personal problems.

Prof. Koodapuzha: Our study of the christology of Ephesus was in the context of understanding the christology of the Assyrian Church of the East. When we study the christology of the church of the East, there are explicit statements, quite contrary to the Nestorian teaching, especially in the liturgical tradition. If we take the Assyrian church as in line of the Nestorian teaching, we are out of context. We are not dealing with a church that professed that faith, but it happened to be because of historical aspects. The Assyrian Church has its terminology in its own way. I find its faith in harmony with the ecumenical councils.

Father Chediath: I would like to express my appreciation of the openness of Mar Ba-wai. He has shown Christian charity. Regarding the evaluation of Nestorius and St. Cyril, I would like to say the following: we have to take into consideration the two ancient christological traditions. And if we dissolve any of these we will not be to come into an agreement. We will not be able to understand the persons involved in these christological controversies.

St. Cyril should not be judged according to the historical background of Nestorius and the vice-versa. All through these centuries there was no re-evaluation of Nestorius' teaching.

After a break the floor is open to *Amba Bishoy* of the Coptic Orthodox Church to present as an observer his view on Nestorius and the teachings of St Cyril of Alexandria in the Comment of Ephesus 431 in a Coptic Orthodox perspective:

St. Cyril wrote three letters to Nestorius asking him to reconcile his teaching with the orthodox teachings of the fathers of the church, but Nestorius did not accept. The letters of St. Cyril always began with the salutation: „To the most pious and most God-loving Bishop Nestorius.“¹ His third and last letter to Nestorius was sent from „Cyril and the synod assembled in Alexandria from the diocese of Egypt.“

Before mentioning the twelve anathemata St. Cyril wrote in that letter:

„We confess that he, the Son begotten of God the Father, and only begotten God, though being incapable of suffering according to his own nature, suffered in his own flesh for our sake, according to the Scriptures, and that he made his own the sufferings of his own flesh in his crucified body impassably, for by the grace of God and for the sake of all he tasted death by having surrendered to it his own body although by nature he was alive, and was himself the Resurrection.“²

In this statement it was clear to Nestorius that St. Cyril did not claim that the Word of God suffered according to His divinity, but rather suffered in „His own flesh.“ Besides St. Cyril clarified that the same Word of God was impassable according to his own divine nature even on the cross after the incarnation and that according to this divine nature he continued to be alive. Therefore it is not fair to say that the teachings of St. Cyril gave to Nestorius the impression that the Logos had suffered in his own divine nature.

On the other hand concerning the man-God christology. It is clear that this can be a great heresy. If someone is going to claim that the Antiochian Christology is based in that way to say that the Logos assumed a man at the same moment when a man was formed in the womb of Virgin Saint Mary this would not mean that the Logos became incarnate or God manifested in flesh, but that man became God in Jesus Christ.

The Word of God did not assume a man with a human *prosôpon* (person), but He became man by assuming perfect humanity and uniting it to Himself from the very moment of incarnation.

There is no difference between a human person and a divine person according to person, except according to the nature this person is possessing.

The Logos was possessing the divine essence of the Father from eternity in His own *prosôpon* (person).

In the incarnation the same *prosôpon* of the Logos is possessing the human essence of our nature making this essence His very own, so that there was no need for a human *prosôpon* to be added to the *prosôpon* of the Logos. In his own *prosôpon* the human nature was personalized and became a perfect man - without sin - and at the same time He remained a perfect God as He was, without mixture, without change, without confusion.

¹ John I. McEnemey. St. Cyril of Alexandria. CVA Press 1987, p.80,85f.

² Ibidem

St. Cyril also was aiming to differentiate between dwelling and union. Thus he wrote in his third letter to Nestorius:

„Neither do we say that the Word of God dwelled, as in an ordinary man, in the one born of the Holy Virgin, in order that Christ might not be thought to be a man bearing God ... But united according to nature (*kata physin*), and not changed into flesh, the Word produced an indwelling such as the soul of man might be paid to have in its own body.“³

Some theologians⁴ claim that according to Nestorius that this natural union is incorrect: „in a natural composition, says Nestorius, it seems that none of the natures from which it exists is complete. They need each other in order to be and to subsist. So the body needs the soul for it to live and the soul needs the body for it to feel.“ (LH, p.268)⁵

In response to what Nestorius is being excused of by refusing the „natural union“, we affirm that the rational souls of human beings are existing and enjoying in paradise even after departing from their own bodies. That is why the Lord said to the repenting thief on the cross: „Today you will be with Me in paradise.“ (Lk 24,43)

On the other hand concerning the body of any person, it is well known that his body is united to his rational soul at the moment of coming into existence, so that it do not subsist separately from its own rational soul. The same happened with the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ, since it did not subsist separately from the moment of incarnation. It is His very own humanity and as the body of any human being does not subsist separately in life from its own rational soul, otherwise it would be an animal, similarly the humanity of Jesus Christ did not subsist separately from His divinity even for a moment, or for the twinkling of an eye.

There are mysteries which we should not use our thoughts to go deeper than necessary in it, remembering what St. Paul said: „I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know - God knows.“ (2 Cor. 12,2)

Concerning the teaching of Nestorius it is very clear that he taught two persons united in one person in Jesus Christ and that is why he refused the term „Theotokos“ to express the birth of the incarnate God from the Virgin St. Mary. He considered the one born from her as merely a man in (conjunction) with the Logos the Son of God.

Quotations are given as follows:

1. „Two are the *prosôpa*, the *prosôpon* of he who has clothed and the *prosôpon* of he who is clothed.“⁶

2. „Therefore the image of God is the perfect expression of God to men. The Image of God understood in this sense, can be thought of as the divine *prosôpon*. God dwells in Christ and perfectly reveals himself to men through him. Yet the two *prosôpa* are really one image of God.“⁷

³ Ibid. p.84

⁴ e.g. Bernard Dupuy. In: Syriac Dialogue 1. Vienna 1994, p.111

⁵ LH = Le Livre d'Heracleide de Damas, ed. P. Badjan. Paris - Leipzig 1910; french translation by F. Nau

⁶ LH 193, quoted by B. Dupuy in Syriac Dialogue 1, p.113

⁷ Rowan Greer. The Image of God and the Prosopic Union in Nestorius. Bazaar of Heraclides. In: Lux in Lumine. Essays to honor W. Norman Pittenger. Ed. By. R.A. Morris jr. New York 1966, p.30

3. „We must not forget that the two natures involve with him two distinct hypostases and two persons (*prosôpa*) united together by simple loan and exchange.“ (LH 28)

These three quotations are taken from the book named *Bazar of Heraclides* which some theologians are aiming to justify Nestorius by referring it to him as written in his exile after the Council of Chalcedon.

Father Habbi: I have tow remarks to Father Sako and Father Khalifé:

1. Is there really a formula in Ephesus or not? We need to deepen our understanding of the historical fact. We need to distinguish between formula and dogmatic formulation. The dogma is a point of beginning and not a point of reaching.

We need to deepen the mystery of God and Christ in other expressions according to the modern thinking.

2. I praise the paper of Mar Severios. He was unifying in all his words. I wish to ask him: Does he have today the same stand he exposed in his paper, or does he reject now some of it? Because there are major stands. Do we need to read the history according to the past or in the light of today without change, which stems from the Bible?

The Nestorius issue concerns the whole church and not just the Assyrian one.

The theologians are discovering that much of what happened between Nestorius and Cyril is something in humanitarian and theological terms rather than in faith.

Both of them don't speak against the belief in one Christ. The Cyrilian and Alexandrian theology show dualism. The Antiochian theology shows a trinitarian interpretation. We have to accept the others as they want to be accepted.

Fifth working session: Saturday, February 24, morning

Chairman: Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim

Geevarghese Chediath

The Three Chapters Controversy

1. Introduction

On June 2, 553, during the eighth Session of the Fifth General Council held at Constantinople, the Person and Writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia (428), the anti-Cyrrillian writings of Theodoret of Cyrus (459), and the letter of Ibas of Edessa (457) to Mari the Persian were condemned in three Canons:¹

"If anyone offers a defence for this more heretical Theodore, and his heretical books in which he throws up the aforesaid blasphemies against our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ and if anyone fails to anathematize him and his heretical books as well as those who, offer acceptance or defence to him, or who

¹ Norman P. Tanner. Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils I. London/Washington D.C. 1990, pp.119-122

allege that his interpretation is correct, or who write on his behalf or on that of his heretical teachings, or who are or have been : of the same way of thinking and persist until death in this error: let him be anathema."(C.12)

"If anyone defends the heretical Writings of Theodoret which were composed against the true faith, against the first holy Synod of Ephesus and against holy Cyril and his Twelve Chapters ... let him be anathema. " (C.13)

"If anyone defends the letter which Ibas is said to have written to Mari the Persian ... let him be anathema."(C.14)

"If anyone should attempt to hand on, or to teach by word or writing, anything contrary to what we have regulated, then if he is a bishop or somebody appointed to the clergy ... let him be stripped of the rank of priest or cleric, and if he is a monk or lay person, let him be anathema."(C.14)

On the other hand in the Persian church the attitude to the Antiochene Writers, especially to Mar Theodore was quite different. In their various synods they took a strong stand in support of Theodore. Mar Aba the Catholicos (540-552) in his 40th Canon writes:

"Our interpretation - that of all of us bishops in all the East - of the faith which was set forth by the 318 bishops, which we hold in our confession on our right and on our left, is that which was composed by the holy and God-loving blessed Mar Theodore, Bishop and Interpreter of the divine Scriptures."²

In 587 in the Synod of Mar Isho'yahb in Persia it was decided in its second Canon:

"A Defense of the writings and teachings of the holy Theodore and against the slander of the heretics, who have spread false information concerning him: We decree by the Word of God, who rules over and holds the heights and the depth, that no one from any of the ecclesiastical ranks is allowed, secretly or openly to revile this Doctor of the Church, or to reject his holy writings, or to accept another commentary which is alien to the truth...one who ventures hiddenly or openly, to stand against these things which, we have said and written above shall be anathematized and a stranger from all ecclesiastical congregations ..."³

Again in 596 in the Synod of Mar Sabarisho it was decided regarding the Apostolic Faith:⁴

"We also cast out and anathematize all who reject the interpretations, commentaries and teachings of the approved teacher the blessed Mar Theodore, the Interpreter and attempt to bring in new and foreign commentaries full of humbug and blasphemy, rising up against the true and accurate teaching of the blessed

one and of all the true doctors, the teachers of the schools who have continued in his footstep confirmed his teaching and handed down the true and accurate faith of orthodoxy without corruption in this our eastern region."

Again in the Synod of Gregory in 605, the decision in favour of Theodore was repeated:⁵

"Each and every one of us accept and agree with all the interpretations and writings which were composed by the blessed Mar Theodore, the Interpreter, bishop of Mopsuestia, a man who was found trustworthy by divine grace over the treasure of both the Testaments, the old and the new Everyone who rejects or obscures the definitions and opinions of this man, a teacher of the fear of God, openly or secretly, by word or in writing, affirms or sets forth things which are contrary to his books let him be bound and anathematized in heaven and on earth and may the wrath of God be upon him, with the Amen of all Christianity."

Here we have two sets of contradictory statements from two ecclesiastical traditions regarding the Antiochene writers. Some of the Apostolic Churches in the Roman Empire were apparently against Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas, while the Apostolic Church in the Persian Empire stood for true Antiochene writers and especially for Theodore. Both the churches - of the East and of the West - stood for their venerable traditions of their venerable fathers. This contradictory stand taken by the churches led to the isolation of the churches and one sided growth and exclusion of the other churches. As a result Mar Theodore became a Father of the Persian Church while he became an Archheretic for the Christians in the Byzantine Empire: Cyril became the Pillar of Orthodoxy for the Romans, the Byzantines and for the non- Chalcedonians while according to the Persian Christians he was the source of the various subsequent heresies. Generations have passed and we have now arrived at the dawn of a new century.

Should we continue this ecclesial anomaly as it is or should we think of a change of attitudes and a reconsideration of our old positions? A person cannot be a Father and a heretic at the same time. He cannot be a Father for a group and a heretic for another group simultaneously. It is the anomaly. Our divided Christianity has brought about this situation.

The "Nestorian" saints were considered as heretics for long by the non-Nestorians and there was not even a reconsideration of their ecclesial standpoint by the other churches. Theodore of Mopsuestia was considered the Father of Nestorianism. Ibas and Theodoret were not so much hated. In the Nestorian tradition St Cyril of Alexandria was a heretic and a source of several heresies. Now is the time for a reconsideration of the traditions of particular churches.

Down through the centuries there was no serious effort from the various churches in the Byzantine Empire to have a fruitful dialogue with the Church of the East. This situation lasted up to our days and in God's providence this great task is entrusted to us so that we may unofficially open the old doors and windows of the past to see whether there is any place for a reunification. The stage for this very valuable encounter was set

² J.B. Chabot. *Synodicon Orientale* (=SO). Paris 1902, p.550

³ *Ibid.* pp.136-138

⁴ *Ibid.* p.198

⁵ *Ibid.* pp.210/1

by the PRO ORIENTE foundation in Vienna, at whose invitation we have gathered here.

According to the principles adopted by PRO ORIENTE, the dialogue is taking place as between equals: i.e. the equality of the partners in the dialogue is recognized. The PRO ORIENTE dialogues avoid outdated and unjust polemics; it strives jointly for a better understanding of Christian truth. It looks forward to a common future, not looking backward to a divided past. It enables the churches to work for the unity of all the Christians as envisaged by Christ, the Captain of our Salvation.

It encourages by its ecumenical initiatives peace and understanding among people of different cultures, traditions and interests.⁶

PRO ORIENTE succeeded in reconciling the Christological divergences in the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox traditions. As a next step PRO ORIENTE took up the brave challenge of encountering the Christological tradition of the Church of the East. By inviting all the churches of the Syriac tradition for an evaluation of this ancient pre-Ephesine tradition, PRO ORIENTE is doing a great service to the Church of Christ and to all people of good will who earnestly seek the unity of all believers in Christ. May I congratulate the President of PRO ORIENTE, Mr. Alfred Stirnemann for this brave venture. Just as the theologians of the various churches, although unofficially, could understand sympathetically the "one nature formula" and the "in two natures" formula, we are trying to understand the Assyrian position sympathetically.

The Three Chapters controversy was a matter of heated debate both in the Eastern and the Western Churches. The Church of the East totally rejected the condemnation with some exception. A great part of the Western Church also took a stand against the condemnation for a long time. But under the imperial influence, the vast majority in the Byzantine world accepted the condemnation. There are evidently arguments both for the rejection and for the acceptance of the condemnation. Our attempt should not be to dig out the old wounds to sustain the division, but rather see the past in view of the future unity of the Church of the East with the rest of Christianity.

2. The Three Chapters

The following are known in history as the Three Chapters:

1. The Person and Writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia
2. The anti-Cyrrillian writings of Theodoret of Cyrus
3. The Letter of Ibas of Edessa to Mari the Persian.

Theodore of Mopsuestia was one of the luminaries of the ancient Church. He could be spoken of as the best representative of the Antiochene School and Theology. Highly respected by his contemporaries and appreciated by all for his orthodoxy and sanctity, he died in the communion of the Catholic Church in 428, the year Nestorius became the patriarch of Constantinople. He thought and wrote as an Antiochene. After his death especially after the Council of Ephesus, there was a systematic propaganda

against him and he was tarnished as the Father of Nestorianism. It resulted in his condemnation in 553 by the Fifth General Synod at Constantinople.

In the ecclesiastical conflict of the fifth century, Theodoret of Cyrus was in the camp of John of Antioch and Nestorius. At the request of John, Theodoret refuted the twelve anathemas of Cyril, and ascribed Apollinarism to Cyril in a letter to the oriental monks (Ep.151). He refused to accept the condemnation of Nestorius at Ephesus; he "however, accepted the Union symbol (433). In 447 he wrote his "Eranistes against Eutyches without mentioning him by name. In 448 an imperial Edict censured him. In 449 he was deposed in the Synod. On October 26, 451 in the 11th Session of Chalcedon he was rehabilitated, after he pronounced the condemnation of Nestorius. And he died in the communion of the Catholic Church and was considered as one of the best and greatest representatives of the Antiochene Church.

Ibas became the bishop of Edessa after the death of Rabbula, a strong defender of St Cyril and a propagator of his Christology. Ibas, however, had his sympathies for Nestorius and for the Antiochene traditions. In 449 at the Synod of Ephesus, he too was deposed together with Theodoret of Cyrus but reinstated at Chalcedon in 451. Ibas died in the communion of the Catholic Church in 457. A letter was circulating in the name of Ibas. In that letter Ibas criticized the Council of Ephesus of 431 and St Cyril of Alexandria.

3. Background

The various discussions, disputes and controversies in Christological matters have their ultimate basis in the two ancient famous theological schools of Alexandria and Antioch. The Alexandrians insisted on the unity and oneness of the Person of the Word, while the Antiochenes stressed on the duality of the natures, i.e. equal insistence on the divinity and humanity of the one Lord Jesus Christ. In those days there was no terminological clarification in Christological matters. There was no absolute criterion to judge the orthodoxy of a particular tradition. Of course, Nicaea and Constantinople were considered normative, but the various theologies were in a developing stage. The methodology adopted in those days was not wholly objective and fair. People were not in a position to understand the plurality in theology, once there was unanimity regarding the content of faith. Political rivalry and cultural differences also played their part in the controversies.

The interference of the political leaders for political motives complicated the situation. The failure of their attempts is largely due to the fact that they gave more value to political expedience than to evangelical values. However, we must confess that the Fathers and ecclesiastical leaders of Christian antiquity were very much serious and earnest about the Incarnation and Redemption and they were very sincere men committed to the cause of Christianity.

Instead of accepting both the Alexandrian and the Antiochene Christologies as complimentary, representing two ancient traditions of the undivided church, the tendency in those days everywhere was to measure the other Christology with the yardstick of one's own Christology. Thus we can note the ascendancy of the Alexandrian Christology and the condemnation of the Antiochene position at Ephesus in 431; and, although apparently a conciliatory Council, at Chalcedon in 451 the distinctive Chri-

⁶ PRO ORIENTE. The Vienna Dialogue. Kerala Regional Symposium. Booklet No 6. Vienna 1995, p.90/1

stology of Antioch dominated. And many in the Alexandrian camp considered it as a going back from the Ephesene position and St Cyril of Alexandria.

4. Between 431 and 553

The period between 431 and 553 witnessed the ascendancy of one or the other Christologies. In 553 Chalcedon was interpreted in the light of the Alexandrian terminology and Christological tradition, and based on that particular tradition the Three Chapters were found heretical and were condemned.

Immediately after the synod of 431 there arose an anti-Antiochene agitation, and precisely it was directed against the chief protagonists of the Antiochene theological thought. „The misfortune of Ephesus was that the Council went too far in the direction of Cyrils terminologies.“⁷ Rabbula of Edessa was a leading anti-Theodorian. He was a strong defender of the "mia physis" formula of Cyril. Rabbula anathematized Theodore and all who read his writings, possessed his codices and did not bring them to be burned.⁸

At Constantinople, the deacon of Proclus named Basil, the Archimandrite, took up the anti-Theodorian agitation. The Armenian monks collected extracts from the writings of Theodore and presented them to Proclus for his judgement. The result was the "Tomus ad Armenos" of Proclus. In that volume the name of Theodore was not mentioned. The deacon Basil then moved to Cyril with documents and wanted to instigate the anti-Theodorian agitation; but the deacon did not succeed; so he approached Proclus once again, and Emperor Theodosius II.

In 435 a certain Maximus, a deacon and Archimandrite from Antioch, started an anti-Theodorean agitation. Maximus also instigated Cyril. In 438 Cyril wrote a treatise "Against Diodore and Theodore" of which we have only fragments. In his Ep. 69 Cyril states "Pretending to detest the teachings of Nestorius, they applaud them in another way by admiring the teachings of Theodore, although these are tainted with an equal impiety or rather much more grievous impiety. For, Theodore was not the disciple of Nestorius but the other way around and both speak as from one mouth, emitting one and the same poison of heterodoxy from their hearts." Cyril harshly condemned Theodore in his letters 67, 69, 71 and 74 and charged him of Nestorianism.

In Edessa itself Ibas had to meet the opposition of the followers of Rabbula. Ibas was presented by his opponents as a Nestorian. The monk Bar Sauma was the leading opponent in this agitation. In the synod of 449 of Ephesus Ibas' epistle to Mari was read out. The proceedings at the Bishops' gatherings at Edessa and Berytus were again discussed at Ephesus, and the participants deposed him. In the imperial document summoning the Synod a priori decision was pronounced against him.⁹

Eutyches the Archimandrite was accused of heresy by Eusebius of Dorylaeum in the Endemousa Synod of 448. There Eutyches was judged on the basis of the two letters of Cyril "Obloquuntur" and "Laetentur Coeli". The subsequent wirepullings resulted, in the Synod of 449.

There Eutyches was rehabilitated while Theodoret of Cyrus, Ibas of Edessa, Domnus of Antioch and Irenaeus of Tyre were deposed and exiled on 22 August 449. Chalcedon reversed the condemnatory verdict.

Emperor Marcion enforced the "Chalcedonian Definition of Faith" till his death in 457. Emperor Leo I had to meet the opposition to Chalcedon in Palestine, Egypt, and Syria from the part of the monks and the people in the villages. Emperor Zeno in 482 produced a new formula, "the Henoticon", indirectly condemning Chalcedon. It was the first subtle move to reunite the opponents of Chalcedon to the Catholic Faith. He did it by condemning all formulas except that of Nicaea. Emperor Basiliscus explicitly condemned Chalcedon and the Tome of Leo. Anastasius was a professed non-Chalcedonian.

It is in this background that we have to understand the activities of Emperor Justinian. Several of the Byzantine emperors with Monophysite tendencies tried to nullify, criticise or minimise the Chalcedonian definition of Faith, without managing to destroy its historical and doctrinal authority. The Emperors were primarily motivated by political interests; which was no substitute for union based on faith, conviction and fraternal love. The unionist policies and theology of the Emperors led to the misunderstanding of the dogmatic decision of Chalcedon.

The opposition to Chalcedon was very strong among the vast majority of the population of the Eastern provinces. The following were the reasons for the opposition: Chalcedon accepted the Tome of Leo, which according to them was Nestorian; it included the "in two natures after the union" formula. It omitted the expression, "one nature after the union", "one nature of God the Word Incarnate", "natural and hypostatic union", "from two natures" or "from two one Christ". It did not make use of the twelve anathemas of Cyril. According to them it failed to condemn the Christology of Theodore. It rehabilitated Theodoret and Ibas, and finally, it condemned Dioscoros.

At the time of Emperor Justinian the agitation was gaining momentum. Philoxenus of Mabbug and Severus of Antioch gave the lead and they wanted the condemnation of Theodore. Severus named Diodore and Theodore as the true fathers of Nestorianism. Philoxenus called for the condemnation of Theodoret and Ibas along with Nestorius. As a reaction to it, there was at Cyr in 520 a ceremony honouring Diodore, Theodoret and Nestorius. For the political unity of the Empire, Justinian considered that there should be religious unity. He wanted to make peace with the various factions of Christianity in his domain. He was preoccupied with the non-Chalcedonians and their agitation and wanted to reconcile them to orthodoxy. Their disagreement with the main line of thought of the Empire was a threat to the political unity, especially of the Eastern provinces of the Empire. By condemning Chalcedon or forcing the Severians to accept Chalcedon, he could not bring about the desired unity.

At this stage Justinian made use of the anti-Nestorian sentiments among the Severians. He convened more than one ecumenical meeting with them and the principal demand of the Severians was the condemnation of the Three Chapters. After the doctrinal dialogue of 532, Justinian proposed a compromise formula: accept Chalcedon on the one hand and on the other hand condemn the Antiochene writers, namely Dio-

⁷ Methodius Fouyas. *The Person of Jesus Christ in the Decisions of the Ecumenical Councils*. Addis Ababa 1976, p.160

⁸ A. Grillmeier/Th. Hainthaler. *Christ in Christian Tradition*. Vol. 2/2. London 1995, p.412

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.417

dore, Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas together with Nestorius. This was to please both the Chalcedonians and their opponents. But it did not satisfy any group.¹⁰

According to many, the person who instigated Justinian for the condemnation of the Three Chapters was bishop Theodore Ascidas, once a pro-Origenist monk in Palestine, and since 542 Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Already in 543 Justinian condemned Origenism in a decree and it gratified everybody except bishop Theodore Ascidas and his party. Theodore was the court theologian of Justinian and was very influential at that time in the court.

On the basis of the Edict, Ascidas would have been expelled from his See and from the Palace. But Ascidas laid a snare for Justinian and he was trapped in it. He intervened and ignited the anti-Theodorean sentiments among the Severians. Thus Justinian's attention was very cunningly diverted from Origenism to Nestorianism. Theodora, the wife of Justinian, welcomed it, because she had her sympathies for the Severians. She herself was an anti-Chalcedonian and cared nothing for ecclesiastical propriety. Theodore Ascidas could persuade the Emperor that the problem of the dissidents could be solved on other lines, by condemning the Three Chapters for Nestorianism and the unity of the Church and of the State could be restored.¹¹

Theodore of Mopsuestia was hated by the Origenists and by Ascidas and also by the Severians. Ascidas brought the attention of the Emperor upon Theodoret because of his Twelve Anathemas against Cyril. Ibas was a very influential person in the Orient and was hated by the Severians as a propagator of the ideas of Theodore of Mopsuestia. So Theodore Ascidas and Domitian of Ancyra prompted the Emperor to condemn them who were hated by the Severians. "Such a condemnation, they urged, would make a good impression on the dissenters and leave them no pretext to refuse communio, with the Orthodox, especially since they had accepted the Scythian formula and thus religious unity would be restored at last."¹²

In 543/4 under the influence of Theodore Ascidas and of Theodora, Justinian published an Edict against the Three Chapters, of which we have only fragments. We learn the content of that document from the letter of Pontianus to Justinian.¹³ Facundus of Hermiane in North Africa refers to the Edict.¹⁴ It has two parts: an Epistle to the bishops and a condemnation of the Three Chapters. In the document the Emperor asserted expressly the authority of Chalcedon. Although Chalcedon proclaimed Theodoret and Ibas as orthodox and Theodore was not at all condemned at Chalcedon, the Emperor condemned them in order to please the Severians. All the bishops were asked to subscribe to the condemnation. Except the Bishop of Rome, all the other Patriarchs readily subscribed to it. The bishops of North Africa, Dalmatia and Illyricum were against the imperial intervention in the case of the departed ones. It was pointed out that it was not fair to reconsider a conciliar decision for a negative and destructive purpose.¹⁵

Justinian later wrote a letter to the Illyrian bishops who did not recognize the imperial Edict. There he repeated the claim of Ascidas that the "Ibas' letter" was not at all written by him. He, however, defended his earlier position regarding the Three Chapters that they were heretical and all those who defend them were also heretics. He repeated that he was standing for the Chalcedonian Faith but he condemned only the teaching of the persons like Theodore and Nestorius. The Emperor however, did not try to incorporate the Antiochene Theology also into his system. It would have been definitely against the interest of Ascidas. So, in effect, the Emperor widened the rift between the Antiochene and the Alexandrian traditions, in spite of the attempt to reunite them.

In the meantime Pope Vigilius was taken by force to Constantinople in order to get his support for the condemnation of the Three Chapters. On his way to the Imperial Capital, the Pope remained for long in Sicily where he met delegations of various provinces requesting him not to support the condemnation. The Pope was firm in the beginning. But after a few meetings and discussions with Justinian, he yielded to the persuasion of the Emperor in condemning the Three Chapters on April 11, 548 in the document known as *Judicatum* (Verdict).

There was strong opposition from various parts of the Church: Facundus of Hermiane, Dacius of Milan, his own deacons including his nephew were opposed to it. At the face of the strong opposition from the part of the Western Church, Pope Vigilius withdrew his *Judicatum*, but it is said that he secretly pledged to the Emperor on August 15, 550 that he would bring about the condemnation of the Three Chapters. The Pope further made it clear that nothing be done for or against the Three Chapters until a General Synod decides about it. But the Emperor did not wait for the General Synod. At the instigation of Theodore Ascidas, the Emperor published a new Edict without consulting the Pope in 551. It is known as "*Homologia Pisteos*". It had three parts: an exposition of faith, 13 anathemas and a refutation of objections. In it Christ is described as "*synthetos*". It accepted the "*mia physis*" formula of Cyril. The exposition of faith was leaning towards the Alexandrian line of thought. The Emperor did not succeed in combining the Synods of Ephesus and Chalcedon in a fruitful way.

Anathemas 11, 12 and 13 condemn the Three Chapters. It displeased the Pope very much because it was contrary to the agreement with him. So he excommunicated the men behind it, namely Menas, the Patriarch of Constantinople and Theodore Ascidas. Since there was threat to the very life of the Pope he fled more than once from Constantinople to safer places. Justinian did not want to do away with the Pope, on the contrary he wanted to show that he is doing everything with the support of the Pope. So he asked Menas and Ascidas to get reconciled with the Pope and they did it. So the Pope returned to Constantinople. On August 552 Menas died and was succeeded by Eutychius who submitted to the Papal decision regarding the Three Chapters.

During the Fifth General Synod of Constantinople of 553, the question of the Three Chapters were discussed. On May 12/13 there was examination of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Seventy one extracts from his writings and his Profession of Faith were read out. On May 17th (during the fifth Session) question came up as to whether Theodore should be condemned or not, even though he died in communion with the Church. Then the anti-Cyrrillian writings of Theodoret were examined on May 19th, during the sixth Session, the Epistle of Ibas to Mari was also examined. The task of a

¹⁰ Ibid., p.417/8

¹¹ D.J. Constantelos. Justinian and the Three Chapters Controversy. In: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 8,1-2 (1962/3) pp.80-83

¹² J. Tixeront. *History of Dogmas*. Vol. 3. Westminster/Maryland 1984, p.130

¹³ PL 67, p.995

¹⁴ Facundus. *Pro Defensione trium Capitulorum II/3 and IV/4*. In: PL 67, p.566/7

¹⁵ Tixeront. op.cit. footnote 12. p.132

detailed study and examination of the Ibas' letter was entrusted to four bishops including Theodore Ascidas and the decision was against Ibas. So the conciliar decision was in accordance with the desire of the Emperor and his "Homologia Pisteos".

At this juncture the Pope reappears on the scene. On May 14, 553 he sent his *Constitutum* (Resolution) to the Emperor. It has three parts. The first part reproduces the two Profession of Faith of Theodore Ascidas and Menas, and later of Euthymius and sums up the events up to the opening of the Synod. The second part is a re-examination of the Three Chapters: out of the 71 extracts from Theodore, the Pope retained 59 and added one more to it - the 13th - accompanied by an anathema. The Pope did not condemn the person of Theodore because he was not condemned at Ephesus or at Chalcedon.

Regarding Theodoret and Ibas the Pope was not prepared to condemn any of their writings. He forbade to condemn any writing under the name or with the name of Theodoret. However, he condemned any proposition contrary to faith. He subjoined five anathemas against Nestorianism. In conclusion, the Pope prohibited any addition or subtraction from the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith, and he prohibited all not to speak or write anything against, his teaching regarding the Three Chapters.

As a reaction to it, the Emperor Justinian asked the bishops, to remove the name of Vigilius from the diptychs. The Synod further anathematised the Three Chapters. It made a distinction between the Apostolic See and the one who is sitting (Sedens) on it. The condemnation of the Three Chapters was during the eighth Session on June 2, 553. The anathemas of the Synod were identical with those of Justinian in 551. The Synod met without the Pope and later it met against him.

The 14 anathemas dealt with: two births for the Word; insistence on the oneness of the Person of the Word; upheld the hypostatic union and composite union (*katha synthesin*); Word of God is one of the Trinity the expression "Theotokos" was admitted; it explained the expression *ek dyo physeon* and *mia physis*; the divinity is one physis with the body; Jesus Christ crucified in His body is God and one of the Trinity. Finally it condemns all the heretics. Predominantly the anathemas are in the line of the Alexandrian way of thinking and there is little of Antiochene thinking included in it.

The Eastern participants readily signed the document while it was difficult to get the signatures of the Western delegates. Although the Pope was opposed to it, he was forced to condemn the Three Chapters. On December 8, 553, Pope Vigilius wrote to Eutychius the Patriarch giving his assent to the synod in the sense of the Synod. On February 23, 554, the Pope issued his *Constitutum II* in which he repeated the condemnation.

In the Western part of the Empire, there was opposition to the condemnation from several geographical areas. Thus in Dalmatia, North Africa, North Italy, Venetia, Istria, Liguria, Illyricum and Tuscany, many dissenting bishops rejected communion with Pelagius (556-61) the successor of Vigilius in Rome. This opposition lasted for about 150 years until the time of Pope Sergius I (687-701).

But there was no religious unity in the Empire. The situation continued or it became worse. It disturbed the peace among the Antiochenes who were devoted to the Antiochene Fathers and it alienated them from the neo-Chalcedonians. It occasioned for another faction in the Church and scandalized many. Although the condemnation of the Three Chapters was meant to please the Severians and bring them back to the

Chalcedonian orthodoxy and to the main line of the Catholic thought, they remained in their anti-Chalcedonian position.

5. Evaluation

As we have mentioned above, the Christology presented at 553 was that of the Alexandrian Tradition and in the condemnation of the Three Chapters one can note the condemnation of the Antiochene Christology. In view of the reunification of the Empire, Justinian wanted to present himself at least to the West that he stood for Chalcedon and for the previous synods. But, in effect, it was one sided. It was unfortunate that the Church patronised one type of Christology and that it was made normative to judge the other legitimate and ancient Christological traditions. One may see perhaps inaccuracies, errors and even heresy in a system when it is confronted with another system. It was not of the mentality of those days to see the diversity in tradition as complementary. Instead of harmonious coexistence there was confrontation and condemnation. To the modern ecumenical mind, this method is totally unacceptable. The reason is simple: Jesus Christ our Lord God is the Supreme Mystery. No single category of thought, however sublime, can fathom fully the mystery of Incarnation of God the Word. When all the diverse traditions are put together, they somehow explain this unfathomable mystery. Still it remains a mystery.

Theodore and the other Antiochenes should not have been judged on the basis of the Christology of the Alexandrian Father St Cyril, nor on the basis of Ephesus. In the same way, St Cyril should not be condemned on the basis of the Antiochene Christology nor on the basis of Theodore or Nestorius. Each tradition has to be taken in its particular context and then one can note the real worth of the various traditions in the Universal Church. "On the whole, the controversy about the Three Chapters was a very unfortunate affair which impaired to some extent the credibility of all those who took part in it: the Emperor, the Council and the Pope."¹⁶

The quarrel re-awoke the problems those were nearly extinct and it weakened the Council of Chalcedon. In the peculiar fusion which was attempted between the Cyrillian theology that had triumphed at Ephesus and the Antiochene theology which had been raised at 433 and 451, the latter paid all the costs. The Cyrillian formulas, discarded partially at Chalcedon, were taken up again and a Chalcedonian interpretation was given to it.

According to W.H.C.Frend, "Cyril was once more exalted to the position of master Theologian; his twelve anathemas were accepted by implications through the condemnation of Theodoret; and the Antiochene tradition of theology was finally rejected. The plan ultimately miscarried."¹⁷ Emperor Justinian „Sacrificed an old, sober precious, theological legacy on the altar of a policy which in itself was hopeless. That, great portions of the church followed him along these dangerous roads of dilettantism meant for the church a theological impoverishment, which could not be balanced for a long time."¹⁸ Especially noteworthy was the style in which the Emperor acted in this

¹⁶ Ibid. P.144

¹⁷ W.H.C. Frend. *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia 1989, p.851

¹⁸ H. Jedin (ed.) *History of the Church*. Vol. 2. London 1970, p.456

case. He changed dogma and faith without regard for the doctrinal authority of the Church. Before Justinian no secular authority had acted in this manner and scarcely anybody followed him in this. He is unique in his high handed activities in doctrinal matters, and that too regarding the venerable Fathers and doctors of the Church who had long slept in the peace and communion of the Church.

The Ecumenical Councils, worthy of their name should echo the faith of the entire Catholic Church: of the various sections of Christianity. No group in the Church should exclude the theology of other Christians of good faith who are in agreement with the fundamentals of Faith.¹⁹ But the mentality of those days was to exclude everybody who were not professing the faith using the same terminology. The attitude was to force everybody to accept a few catchwords such as "one nature", "from two natures", "natural and hypostatic union" etc. Theodore Ascidas succeeded in his manoeuvres. Justinian did not do anything further against the Origenists. Ascidas himself remained in power and office. He continued to be the powerful theological adviser.

With regard to Theodore of Mopsuestia in particular it must be said that the extracts from his works were collected by his enemies and could be from hostile sources and out of context. And they were interpreted on the basis of the Alexandrian line of thought. Today with the help of Mar Babai's the Great Christology, one is in a better position to understand Theodore. Babai had at his disposal almost all the works of the Antiochene Fathers, especially of Theodore. And Mar Babai's synthesis enables us to make a reevaluation of the Antiochene position regarding the union of the two natures. Our discussions should lead us to reconsider at least unofficially the anathemas pronounced against the Antiochene Fathers. Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas are considered saints by the Church of the East. With regard to the removal of anathemas against the saints of the Roman Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church, the theologians have arrived at an agreement unofficially. Such an understanding should take place in the case of the East-Syrian saints also. Down through the centuries they were subject to severe criticism and unjust condemnation. They should have their rightful place in the Church. History of Theology and Church History pertaining to the Church of the East have to be rewritten in the light of the Ecumenical consultations, without favouring the one or the other church, as was done in the past. Furthermore, the common people who were used to the condemnation of these saints should be educated in the ecumenical spirit and the condemnations should be removed from the liturgical books of the various churches.

The Christological tradition of the Antiochene-Mesopotamian churches is a rich treasure for the one Church of Christ. It is the duty of all the churches to preserve and foster this rich tradition which had sustained millions of Christians in their faith in the East.

As Rev. Prof. Dr. V.C. Samuel remarked in the Geneva Consultation in 1970:

"Charity and patience alone can bring us together again. In the last analysis, what is needed is not intellectual victory or earthly success, but a spiritual awakening to see the love of God who in His Only Son has redeemed the world."²⁰

¹⁹ Methodios of Aksum. Edited Papers. Athens 1976, p.17

²⁰ Geneva Consultation in 1970. In: Greek Orthodox Theological Review 16, 1-2 (1971) p.60

If the churches are sincere with each other, they must be prepared to admit the errors of the past and to "correct themselves with bitter penitence, sacrificing the self esteem and reputations. The saving grace of the sacraments of the Church does not forsake the quarrelling parts of the Church at these periods of disintegration."²¹

Corbishop M. J. Birnie

The Three Chapters Controversy - The Church of the East & the Question of Theodore of Mopsuestia

The commitment by the Church of the East to the writings-particularly the biblical commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia had its origins in the early fifth century, when the Persian School at Edessa adopted Theodore's works as standard orthodox texts, translating them from Greek into Syriac and treating them as authoritative. When the school was closed and subsequently reconstituted at Nisibis, the new institution carried on the tradition of utilizing these works in the preparation of young scholars for service to the Persian church. The first head of the School of Nisibis, Narsai, spoke of Theodore in rapturous terms as the supreme expositor of the Holy Scriptures:

„It is right to call him "Doctor of doctors". . . .

All who have grown rich were made to abound from the treasury of his writings,

And from his commentaries they acquired the knowledge to interpret.

I learned from him too - I, who learned to stammer -

And by his acquaintance I acquired an acquaintance with the study of words.

His study was for me as a guide to the Scriptures,

And he lifted me up to an understanding of the books of the Spirit."¹

At Nisibis Biblical exegesis was considered the most important discipline, and its place in the curriculum was paramount. Following the footsteps of Narsai, generations of men, at Nisibis, Mount Izla, and elsewhere in the East relied on Theodore's commentaries as models of exegesis and sources of inspiration, and they developed a strong attachment and loyalty, not only to the writings, but also to the memory of the man who produced them. Many of these men became influential in the Church of the East, as educators, monks, and bishops, with some of them attaining the exalted rank of Catholicos-Patriarch.

In the hundred years between the Councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople II the ascendancy of the authority of Theodore in the East remained without serious challenge within the Church of the East. At the same time there was a recognition of, and reaction to, questions concerning Theodore which had been raised in the West. In an unauthorized - and later repudiated - Synod convened in 484 by the Metropolitan of Nisibis, Barsauma, the founder and patron of the School of Nisibis, a decree was issued condemning all who spoke against Theodore and his writings. In spite of the subse-

²¹ Addis Ababa Consultation in 1970. In: Ibid. p.251

¹ Homilies of Mar Narsai, Vol. 1 (Syriac), p. 279, Patriarchal Press San Francisco 1970

quent repudiation of the synod, the decree survived and ultimately appeared with canonical sanction in a Patriarchal Synod in 605. After recognizing that "in various places" wicked men had begun to speak audaciously against this justly revered and saintly father, and after castigating such bold and headstrong men, the decree declares:

„Therefore, if anyone ventures, secretly or openly, to calumniate or to revile this teacher of the truth and his holy writings, let him be anathematized by the truth.“²

These sentiments expressed concerning Theodore and his detractors were widely and fervently held by the great majority in the East, and the rise of anti-Theodorian feeling in the West would be answered with a similar but opposite reaction in Persian territories. Any assault on Theodore's reputation or legacy was bound to be met with a counter-attack of equal intensity.

In the fifth decade of the sixth century another element, this one potentially ominous, was introduced into the picture. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian, in his ultimately futile efforts to bring about the Constantinian ideal of theological unity throughout the empire, raised the "Three Chapters" controversy and pinned his hopes on achieving compromise by, among other things, the condemnation of Theodore's person and writings. In 544 he issued an edict condemning the "Nestorianism" of Theodore. At the same time, in Persian territory a certain man, Mar Aba I, had been elected Catholicos-Patriarch whose personal strength of character and moral authority was such that he is credited by many, East and West, as having been the greatest Patriarch in the history of the Church of the East. The coincidence of these historical happenings may have had much to do with the hardening of attitudes toward Theodore and his legacy on both sides of the border.

Mar Aba was a scholar, formerly a teacher at Nisibis, and deeply influenced by the Biblical commentaries and other works of Theodore, and he was personally committed to protecting and defending them against their detractors. In 532, some eight years before his Catholicate began, he had made a journey to Palestine and Egypt with a colleague, Thomas of Edessa, and in Alexandria he had been permitted to explain the Scriptures using the commentaries of Theodore.³ From there he and Thomas went on to Constantinople where Justinian attempted to meet with them to persuade them to condemn Theodore. At this point the Constantinian ideal was being stretched beyond the political boundaries of Byzantium in what might have been seen as an attempt to treat the Persian church as a matter of imperial concern. The political ramifications for those Christians living in Sassanid territory, if this overreaching by the Byzantine emperor should succeed, ought not to be underestimated. The administrative independence declared by the Church of the East in 424 was in part to avoid the appearance or suspicion of political sympathies with the Christian West—this after an extended period of fierce periodic repression by the Sassanian rulers. The diplomatic acumen that served Mar Aba so well after his election to the Patriarchate must certainly have alerted him at this time to the possible political and social consequences of imperial Byzan-

tium meddling in Persian church affairs. Perhaps feeling under personal threat, and in any case wanting to avoid a confrontation with the emperor, he quickly left Constantinople and returned to the East.

After his election to the Patriarchate, at a synod convened in 544 (the same year as Justinian's edict), Mar Aba and the assembled bishops drew the line against the movement in the West to anathematize the teacher so celebrated and revered in the East. The last canon of a list of forty established (or re-established) in the synod states:

„Our interpretation—that of all of us bishops in all the East-of the faith which was set forth by the three hundred and eighteen bishops, which we hold in our confession on our right and on our left, is that which was set forth by the holy and God-loving blessed one, Mar Theodorus, bishop and interpreter of the divine Scriptures.“⁴

Serving as counterpoint to Justinian's edict, this canon officially established the Church of the East in defense of Theodore and outside the bounds of Justinian's influence, as well as in direct opposition to the latter's intentions. Quite aside from theological questions, this canon may thus have served the additional purpose of shielding the Persian Christians from possible suspicion in their homeland, particularly in the light of the recent and future hostilities between Justinian's armies and those of the Persian emperor Chusrau I.

I have stressed here the political implications lurking behind the broader picture, not to downplay the very real love and devotion that was felt for Theodore and his written legacy in the East, but to suggest that there were prudential considerations of no small consequence added into the mix of emotional and intellectual attachment so many had to the one they called "The Interpreter". These ever-present background elements should never be ignored in any assessment of the dynamics of movements and counter-movements within the church of Persia. Though muted on the rhetorical level, making them difficult to evaluate, they were always present beneath the surface and had their affect as a disincentive to harmony between East and West, and an incentive to drawing distinctions.

Following Constantinople II the decision to condemn the Three Chapters had little effect upon those it was intended to influence in the West, and no effect upon the Church of the East's commitment to Theodore of Mopsuestia's memory and written legacy. It was not until the appointment of Henana as head of the School of Nisibis in 570 that a real challenge to Theodore's eminence occurred. Henana came to view The Interpreter's exegetical works as suspect and preferred those of John Chrysostom instead. Since what we know of Henana's views comes to us largely from his enemies (most of his literary output was destroyed following his condemnation), his theology is hard to reconstruct with any degree of precision. It appears that his judgment of Theodore's Biblical commentaries had much to do with his negative analysis of Theodore's anthropology.⁵ The Interpreter's understanding of man, from his creation to his future state, was a vital element in his treatment of Scripture, and his commentaries are

² *Synodicon Orientale* (= SO), ed: J. B. Chabot, p. 211 (Syr. text) Paris 1892

³ Aloys Grillmeier/Theresia Hainthaler *Christ in Christian Tradition*, London/Louisville, Mowbray/ Westminster John Knox Press, Vol. 2, p. 464.

⁴ SO (appendix), p. 550

⁵ The background of the differences between Henana and the church on the issue of Theodore is treated in the *History of the School of Nisibis*, by Arthur Vööbus, CSCO, Louvain, 1965, pp. 242-264.

shot through with analyses that reflect that understanding. Henana's own views on the human condition seem to have been more in tune with those of Augustine, and his views on Christology with those of Chalcedon (though he was also accused of associating with "Severans"). This necessitated for him a re-evaluation of the standard theological and exegetical texts, and their replacement with others more congenial with his own views.

Henana might conceivably have become an important figure in bridging the gap in understanding between East and West, but his rejection of Theodore put him beyond the pale as far as the Church of the East was concerned. In a synod held in 587, the same which produced a Christological confession which was in harmony with the Chalcedonian definition (though it skirts the issue of hypostasis), Henana and his followers are severely chastised for their treatment of the Interpreter:

„Along with other things which they say in their agitation against [Theodore], they also speak against the commentary in the spiritual sense which the Interpreter composed for the book of the blessed Job, a book written sophistically and ostentatiously by one of the sophists-those who do not concern themselves with the truth, but contract and expand narratives with inventions which are fashioned from humbug, which is far from the truth, as is clear from a reading of the truth to all who consider [it] well-for except for a small portion of it, it is filled with explanatory words which are akin to blasphemy and falsehood. However, they have ventured to say, "Did not Moses write this book of the blessed Job?" and they have cheerfully accepted the humbug that they might have occasion to revile the teachers of the community. Therefore the tongue-tied and tire-some now strive against a man who, both in his life and in his death, was an instructor to the children of grace..."⁶

Though Henana's theological opinions were later condemned after conditions had become embittered in the struggle over Christology, it is noteworthy that this particular condemnation concerns itself only with Henana's treatment of Theodore and his writings-particularly with his rejection of Theodore's commentary on Job. From that time on there would be no room in the Church of the East for criticism of this Antiochean father.

In view of this long history of an uncritical defense of Theodore, the Church of the East would seem to have become so deeply invested in his defense as not to be able to entertain discussion of his putative weaknesses or the relative merits of his works. In fact, I do not believe this to be the case. Modern scholarship has sought, with scientific disinterestedness, to re-evaluate the person of Theodore and to credit the significance of his contributions to the ultimate resolution arrived at in Chalcedon. In light of these studies and their (more or less) dispassionate conclusions, the Church of the East is prepared to join, in a spirit of ecumenism, the discussion of Theodore and his work. So long as bitterness and rancor are denied a place in the scholarly forum, and honest inquiry continues, the church will participate insofar as it is able to make a contribution.

The opening to dialogue with the other churches which we have taken advantage of during the past few years and the self-examination which has accompanied our par-

ticipation in ecumenical efforts have taught us to be more trustful of the motivations of other Christians in their dealings with us, and to question ourselves more honestly about our own feelings toward them. The reciprocal openness and sincerity of East and West, reaching out to one another in this dialogue setting provided by the Archdiocese of Vienna, is at the same time humbling and exalting, banishing the isolation which is the fruit of pride, and vanquishing the lethargy which is the offspring of defeat and demoralization. Vindication is no longer important; it is understanding we seek both for the Church of the East and for "The Interpreter" exalted in her memory.

Discussion:

Prof. Abramovski: I congratulate both speakers. They have prepared the ground for further implications and understanding. I want to add some remarks to the different papers:

1. Father Birnie: *Khinana* was often called *Severios* from the polemics in the Nestorian collection of christological texts. It was clear that he was not a Chalcedonian but a new-Chalcedonian. He evidently thought about composite *hypostases*.

2. Father Chediath: (see above p. 127) „Christology of Chalcedon and Antioch“. That is an adjective which should be avoided at all cost. Both in Chalcedon and Antioch they are always intending to express the unity of Christ. In Greek, the meaning depends on the content rather than on the polemical interpretation of the opposite side. Even if Nestorius is saying sometime *ousia*, he doesn't mean to divide the nature but to distinguish the natures. I unite the adoration. We then cannot accuse neither Chalcedonian nor Antiochian.

3. Amba Bishoy: a) *About theotokos*. You have to remember that Nestorius before his condemnation in Ephesus, in a sermon given in Constantinople in his Cathedral as an Archbishop, he used the term *theotokos* following the instructions give to him by John of Antioch. Therefore, the Antiochians used the term also in the famous symbol of union in 433.

b) *About Bazar of Heraclides*. The Apology of Nestorius. This was written after the Council of Chalcedon. Evidently, Nestorius lived up to the time of that council. We don't know quite exactly the date of his death. The second apology was written before that. I suppose it was written about 451 in a climate in the Empire which had changed after the death of the Emperor Theodosios II. Then the church political climate changed, and there must have been a friend of Nestorius writing to him and saying now there is an opportunity to declare again the injustice of his treatment and the fault of meaning.

4. Father Khalifé: (see above p.117/118). They did not avoid the Council of Ephesus, but they were very late. That's true. The reason given for this is that there was a famine in the province, they could not go out, they needed very long time to reach the council. Then they were very near to Ephesus. And one could count hours and days in order to arrive. Cyril assembled his synod and proceeded in the manner which is known to you.

The Antiochian did not avoid the participation out of fear of Cyril. When they arrived the matter was clenched. They could not communicate with it.

⁶ SO, pp.187/8

5. Mar Gregorios: (see above p.123) „however the Nestorians...“ This is not correct. The whole problem of the christology of Nestorius stems from the fact that he is teaching and preaching the perfect divinity of the Lord of the divine nature and perfect humanity of the human nature in Christ.

And because he taught them in such a perfect manner and conceived them in such a perfect manner, there results the difficulty to make him one of them. I think this cannot stand in your paper. It is impossible to publish such a thing.

6. Mar Severios: (see above p.123/4) Nestorius never said that. He always insisted on the fact that from the very first moment of conception the Logos and human nature were one.

7. Amba Bishoy: He quoted from Nestorius the famous sayings where Nestorius is teaching two *hypostases* and two *prosôpa*. He did not quote that Nestorius was teaching also *one prosôpon*. The question for him was: how to make the concrete natures to one *prosôpon*.

You have to take Nestorius as a sincere theologian. He tried to analyse the christology.

Mar Gregorios: I was reading in my paper according to what my church says about the nature of Christ.

Father Habbi: To Father Birnie. Why did the Church of the East leave the Eastern traditional theology of its own (Aphrahat, Mar Ephrem, ...) and adapted, as an interpreter, Theodoros of Nisibis? What were the reasons?

Father Mathew: The fathers of the 5th century had to interpret Christ according to their time, considering the philosophical background.

Should we follow the 5th century methodology with their background or look for a new ground?

I hope that we have an ecumenical and missionary concern to the future.

Father Sako: I hope that we can be objective and can be able to re-read the texts, and just stand defending our faith.

Father Yousif: Clarifications regarding the presence of Theodoros in the Church of the East. He has a special place in this church, because of his method in exegesis, and explaining the Bible as in the Antiochian style.

Prof. Brock: There is a great need to identify the positions behind the names of people condemned. Obviously, they were not condemned for no reason.

Are these positions, the position of the Church of the East, the historical or those of today? In my mind, they are totally different.

To identify what are the positions condemned by the Oriental Orthodox and Chalcedonian tradition, and how these positions relate to the position of the Church of the East

Bishop Matar: We are not using any more the term „Nestorian Church“, rather „Church of the East“. The papers are not enough to show the historical point of view of the *Three Chapters*, or the polemic situation.

Maybe, it is important to focus on the content of these chapters. We can benefit from the old writings and thoughts in our theology of today.

Father Jammo: The Church of the East today is concerned and dialoguing about Nestorius, Theodoros, Three Chapters of the Roman Empire. This is paradox.

The Church of the East felt itself as an integral part of the church universal. It was open to the Greek thought. Nestorius was analysing the unity of the one Son of God. He was not combining a duality in one.

Archbishop Mounayer: The Syriac Churches are called to dialogue with each others, not for the sake of going back to the past rather to go forward to the future.

We should have an open-minded and open-hearted dialogue. Our dialogue is for the future.

Prof. Hofrichter: I think that history is a kind of an analysis for the society and for the church. We have to solve the problems of the past to become friends of today.

Justine the Martyr, who spoke of two Gods, we don't condemn him historically. He is the first theologian at all in christology.

On the validity of councils. We have the duty to revise some divisions of the councils and to see them in a new light of the past. We have to be open to new insights. We have to listen to experts, and revise our tradition.

Prof. Davids: If you want to condemn somebody, you have to look for a genealogy of heresies. That was always very easy. Theologians ought to discuss this process about persons.

Mar Aprem: We think that Nestorius is trying to avoid the new title which was not common in the Christian church.

John of Antioch was always with Nestorius. There is a difference of reading history between you and us.

Father Chediath: I didn't understand what Archbishop Mounayer said. There are two references to the term *theotokos* in the first part of the *Bazar of Heraclides* and in Socrates' *Church History*. Nestorius is not denying the term *theotokos*.

George Mathew: We gathered here to understand various theological and christological positions of the churches. And also, to remove some mis-understanding. And to respect each other, and move forward in an ecumenical spirit.

Father Bouwen: Many condemnations happened for non-theological reasons. I think we can talk today of these things out of the conviction that today we have a common faith. We can try to understand what happened in the past.

Father Mouannes: I think we have to re-read the texts according to the new anthropological, linguistic point of view, and just a literary reading.

The modern theological thought should be supported by the critical sociology, the psychology of the Bible, and the content reading of the texts.
We have to have a totalistic view to the texts. How did the people live their heritage, tradition in their liturgies.

Mar Gregorios: We are here to change, be changed, and to re-study our points of view which were maybe at a certain time not correct.

I agree that we should re-read our history. Yet, there is a fact that some Oriental Churches since lately did not refer to its heritage. We newly started to re-read our fathers. Changing needs time. Lifting anathemata will happen one day.

Mar Bawai: I need to share three points:

1. I highly appreciate the love, and charity of all participants. We have to be very faithful to express our ecclesial point of view.

2. Already our church has established a two-fold distinction between three categories:

- The classical heretical teaching, termed: Nestorianism.
- Between three individuals: Nestorius - Theodorus - Theodoret.
- The whole theology and christology of the Church of the East.

We are very much at ease with this classifications.

3. Our problem is not a christological problem anymore. Since we have these distinctions, we don't feel that we have any problem in our own ecclesial daily witness, in our church. We wouldn't change our liturgy for the best reasons in the world.

The declaration of Rome is a big event in history of our Church today.

Why do we want to dialogue with the Oriental Churches and the Coptic Orthodox Church? We do that out of Christian charity.

We want to make sure that they are clarified. For us, the christological problem doesn't exist any more, after the declaration of Rome.

Father Chediath adds an intervention in written form: In antiquity and down to the centuries there was a great terror for Nestorianism: as division of Christ in two sons, the negativness of the title „Mother of God“ to the Virgin Mary and the consideration of the unity as an evidential one. This was more deep rooted in the non-Chalcedonian circles. The name of Nestorius, the gathering of the Antiochian Church and the Church of the East were all considered by them as heretics. This reflected also the liturgical practices of the churches. In my own church - the Malankara Catholic Church - there was the condemnation of Nestorius by name at the evaluating seminary. My former Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios - about whom Mr. Stirnemann made very kind and sympathetic mention at the opening ceremony - told us: instead of condemning the person by name, let us condemn the errors known after him. We are not quite sure whether they have taught their errors. So in our evaluation seminary we do not condemn Nestorius, but we condemn the errors known after him.

We should be able to make a distinction between the errors and the persons involved in the controversy. We all repudiate the errors of Eutychianism and Nestorianism. That need not necessary mean that we hate the person of Nestorius and the Nestorian Church and the fathers in the Nestorian tradition.

In the past there was an uncritical repetition of the condemnations. In modern times, especially in the recent years, there are renewed studies on Nestorius, on Theodor and on the Church of the East. The original texts with more accurate translations are available today for any student of history. We have amidst us the great authorities of Nestorian questions: Prof. Luise Abramowski, to whom I owe very much. The Nestorian does not re-evaluate. Their traditional position on other churches will be impoverished. Today no church can ignore the other churches. We aim at the fullness of Christ. And this fullness is manifested in diverse ways in the tradition of the various churches. We all, as Syriac Churches, have a grave duty to look consequently into the person of Nestorius, to the fathers of the Antiochian Church and to the East Syrian tradition. We cannot be satisfied with mere repetition of the past. May God guide us to do this for the greater sound of His Name.

Father Birnie: I answer to the question why did the Church of the East adapt theology different from its ancient tradition. I think that the Church of the East in those days was much less a witness for the world, she was self-defensive.

It did not differ to much to them whether the fathers were Greek, African or so. The salient factor is that he, whoever he is, is a Christian. In the isolation of the Church, their self-consciousness arose.

Sixth working session: Saturday, February 24, afternoon

Chairman: *Mar Bawai Soro*

Mar Gregorios Saliba

The Three Chapters Controversy from the Perspective of the Syrian Orthodox Church

Casting a quick look at the writings of the Syrian fathers of Antioch concerning the divinity of Jesus Christ, and their position towards the dispute arising in terms of this issue would enable us to be aware that a certain kind of reaction grew among them due to the heresies that appeared in the early centuries of the history of Christianity, especially those that emphasized duality. Therefore any theory of view that contradicted with what they considered as a factual truth aroused this reaction among them.

This can be a sufficient explanation of their violent rejection of any concept related to the Godhead of Christ that implied duality in terms of His person - *qnoma* -, nature, essence, will or whatever terminologies might be used. Because the union that took place between Divinity and Humanity in Jesus Christ, the Lord incarnate, does not allow any possibility of division, commixtion, confusion or separation in the nature or *qnoma*. Dualists, likewise, had a similar position towards those who contradicted with them in doctrine.

The question posed here is: why did such differences in the christological interpretation of the person and nature of God the Word incarnate exist? The answer lies in the differences between the school of Antioch and that of Alexandria in methodology, thought and theology which had a big impact on the understanding of terminologies and theological expressions which were considered the main factors behind these differences, due to the fact that these terminologies had more than one possible meaning in one language. The term *parsopa* for instance means person, figure, *kyana* means nature and essence, and *qnoma* means hypostasis, self and identity.

It is noteworthy that many of these terms share the same meaning, prompting thus divergent interpretations and suppositions in the various attempts at understanding and interpreting them in what came to be called „the war of expressions and terminologies“. Hence divergencies and divisions appeared in the one church of Christ. However, the „predominance“ of the dyophysite doctrine over the thought of the early Nestorian scholars was a result of the position of the Antiochene school of thought which they belonged to and which was more concerned with the Manhood in Jesus than with the Godhead in Him, due to the tendency of this school towards the verbatim interpretation, in contradiction with the school of Alexandria whose greatest concern was aimed at the Divinity of Christ due to her deep rooted interest in the spiritual interpretation.

It is greatly regrettable that these schism continued to be impetuously present until the establishment of the ecumenical movement which aimed at bringing views together to the extent of reaching an agreement between most doctrinal positions concerning the Divinity of the one Jesus Christ, and having official declarations made by church leaders of the common faith among them without impelling any church or community to change or alter any of their doctrines. This would imply that the essence was and still is the same. I'd like here to quote some of what was stated in these declarations concerning the common faith. The common declaration issued by the late Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Yacoub III reads:

„The Pope and the Patriarch have recognized the deep spiritual communion which already exists between their churches. The celebration of the sacraments of the Lord, the common profession of faith in the Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the word of God made man for man's salvation.“¹

And the common declaration between H.H. Pope VI and H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas who stressed what had been stated in the previous declaration reads:

„Hence we wish to reaffirm solemnly our profession of common faith in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.“²

And in the common christological declaration between H.H. Pope John Paul II and H.H. Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV they state:

„They can indeed, from now on, proclaim together before the world their common faith in the mystery of the incarnation Jesus Christ assumed from the Holy Virgin Mary a body animated by a rational soul, with which he was indissolubly united from the moment of his conception.“³

A mixed committee representing the churches of Rome and Alexandria agreed to a formulation of the doctrine of incarnation which reads as follows:

„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.“⁴

This is what has happened today but did not happen in the past; for each party tried to understand the theological expressions the way they wanted them to be; and what seemed to contradict with their views they deemed to be as conspicuous and indisputable imperfection, because each side thought that they had the absolute truths which the others had to understand and adopt. They had rigid thoughts. According to then, lenience in dogmatic matters was absolutely rejected as it either denoted doubt in their principles or betrayal of their faith. This standpoint enticed them to fight destructive battles against one another as aggressors or agressed.

However, from the perspective of my church and the teachings of her fathers, one may add that some of them dedicated from the principles of the church and erred by adhering to dualism in their interpretation of the Mystery of Incarnation among whom there were great doctors of the Nestorian doctrine known in the Three Chapters who were:

1.1. Theodore of Mopsuestia

Historians fluctuated between criticizing and praising him. At an early age he was not yet determined which kind of life to lead, ascetic or married life. Finally he was determined to lead an ascetic life. He was consecrated as a bishop of Mopsuestia in 392 and was called an exegate. He was said to have rejected to see in Christ the Word Incarnate⁵ as he stated- He represents the trend that advocates the two *qnome*, that is, two persons in Christ: „Jesus Christ is not two but in two.“⁶

He, who is the son of David and of the progeny of the Jews is not God by nature, for neither David, nor Mary of whom he had the body could give birth to the Divine

¹ PRO ORIENTE Booklet No. 1. Vienna 1990, p.108

² Patriarchal Magazin. Damascus. 9th Year, issue 9; see also Booklet No. 1, p.117

³ Najm Al-Mashreq magazine. 1st Year, issue 1; see also Syriac Dialogue No.1. Vienna 1995, p.230

⁴ PRO ORIENTE documents in Arabic, 1st Vol. (1993), p.176 (also available in English, p.120)

⁵ Theodoros. Fr. D. Paul Faohali, p.7

⁶ Ibidem, p.74

nature⁷ and as such, Theodore of Mopsuestia, according to Rabula of Edessa, is more dangerous to church than Nestorius.

1.2. Theodore of Cyrrhus

A colleague of Nestorius in the Antiochene school of theology. He was influenced by the teachings of Theodoret and Diodoros. He strongly defended the doctrine adopted by Nestorius and violently defied Cyril of Alexandria in the Council of Ephesus 431. A certain confusion appears in his thought, for he does not divide Jesus Christ into two persons, but believes at the same time in two *qnome* and two natures in Christ. He does not consider that position as inappropriate or disgraceful, but rather befitting. While he confesses that the Virgin is the Mother of God, he calls for describing her as the Mother of Man, too as long as she gave birth to a man as well as God: he says God assuming humanity (not becoming human) and that the apostle Thomas palpated the one who rose, and prostrated before the one who raised him.⁸

1.3. Ibas

Bishop of Edessa and the principal of its famous school, and the greatest advocate of Nestorius, whose views in relation to dualism are indisputable. He declares that he sees the Divine and the Human as separate entities. One is that who died and the other is the one who ascended to heaven. One is endless and the other has a beginning.⁹

These extreme positions which were concretized by Nestorius, started, somewhat, vanishing among many hierarchs in the church which was called Nestorian and is today known as the Assyrian Church of the East, to the extent that their teachings could be considered almost closer to the orthodox position. The concept of dualism started vanishing before the oneness of the person of Christ on the individual and conciliar levels. For instance Catholicos Isho'yahb Aljadali (7th century) confesses the one person of Christ: "Perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity. The Divine who became Incarnate for our salvation" He emphasizes the unity of *qnome* in Christ by saying:

„The Divine nature and *qnome* shall have to be preserved in Christ without alteration, without change ... His Human nature and *qnome* shall have to be preserved without commixtion, without confusion ...“¹⁰

He adds: „I do not say that haphazardly, however, I want to state the necessity for the existence of two *qnome* in the one person of Christ.“¹¹

Catholicos Babai the Great says: „In the union, there are two natures in Christ, the Divine and the Human, yet here is one son and one *prosopon*.“ Nevertheless, some of the Fathers of his church deny Nestorius and his christology. Timotheos the Great

⁷ cf. The History of the Syrian Church of Antioch. Ed. By Patriarch Yacoub III. Vol 2., p.83

⁸ Ibidem

⁹ Ibidem, p.69

¹⁰ Louis Sako. In: Journal of Christian concepts. No. 192. 1984

¹¹ Ibidem

(9th century) declares: „Our christology was established 500 years before Nestorius.“ Contemporary theologians advocate this position, because they think that the Assyrian Church of the East is not Nestorian.¹² They are all agreed on rejecting (Nestorius' position towards Christ).¹³

Furthermore Catholicos Ghevargeese I (7th century) denies the assumption that their doctrine was made by Nestorius or Diodoros.¹⁴ Moreover some synods of the Ancient Assyrian Church of the East (called Nestorian), acknowledged the oneness of the person of Jesus Christ, the word of God Incarnate, hence the decision of the synod of Aqaa (5th century) which reads as follows:

„While Godhead remains and is preserved in that which belongs to it, and Manhood in that which belongs to it, we combine, the copies of their natures in one Lordship and one Worship because of the perfect and inseparable conjunction which the Godhead had with the Manhood. If anyone thinks or teaches others that suffering and change adhere to Godhead of our Lord shall be anathema.“¹⁵

2. The First Leaders of the Church of the East

Then follows the synod convened by Yussep (6th century), according to which „Anyone who confesses two Christs or two sons“ and anyone who introduces a „quaternity into the Holy and immutable Trinity, let him be anathematized.“¹⁶ The synod of Sabrišo (6th century) teaches the confession of the one glorious nature of Christ and rejects anyone who calls the one Christ, the son of God, two sons or two Christs, or one who does not say that the word of God fulfilled the suffering of our salvation in the body of his Manhood. Yet, we strongly believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, who was begotten before the foundations of the world in his Godhead, spiritually, without a mother, and in the last times was born from the Holy Virgin in a fleshly manner without the intercourse of a man through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

This contradicts with what has been stated by the pillars of dualism who added a *qnome* to the Holy Trinity as stated by Philoxenos of Mabbug. According to the synod of Gregor (7th century), the two natures of Godhead and Manhood are joined in a true unity of the one *prosopon* of the son, Jesus Christ.¹⁸ Similarly, the Synod of 612 states:

„Concerning this, we believe in our hearts and confess with our lips one Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God whose Godhead does not disappear, and whose Manhood is not stolen away, but who is complete God and complete man.“¹⁹

¹² Syriac Dialogue No. 1 (1994), p.34

¹³ Ibidem, p.62

¹⁴ cf. Footnote 10 (Sako)

¹⁵ Syriac Dialogue No. 1 (1994), p.73

¹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁷ Ibidem, p.80

¹⁸ Ibidem, p.81

¹⁹ Ibidem, p.84

It is obvious, so far, that there is a great difference in the theological thought concerning the nature of Jesus Christ, in particular, among the early advocates of Nestorianism and the leading theologians in the Assyrian Church of the East who are deemed to be Nestorians. This indicates the achievement of a great progress towards of the later, whereas the early Nestorians based their doctrine on dualism. Consequently the fathers of the Syrian Church called for resisting them and proclaimed the orthodox doctrine of their church in the one incarnate nature of God the Word. I would like here to mention the views of three of those fathers in relevance to this.

2.1. Mar Philoxenos of Mabbug (5th century)

He stresses the words (one), or only when referring to the Divinity of Christ. He kneels down only before God the Word who was the only begotten son of the father, born from the blessed Virgin, who is one son, one God, one Sovereignty and the only one to whom prostration is due. He confesses that the *qnoma* of the word is one and the same man, that is God became flesh, and not God who dwelt in Man as stated by Mar Ibas of Edessa who distinguished between Christ and the Logos proclaiming that „God the Logos, knowing that Christ would be absolved, he dwelt in him.“

However, Philoxenos of Mabbug stresses that the Logos himself became man by assumption of Humanity and not by adhesion, not that he changed into (Man) for he didn't change into Manhood quoting the Gospel of John „and the word became flesh and dwelt in us.“ So Christ, becoming man, had not other *qnoma* by adhesion. Therefore, Philoxenos refuses to split Divinity from Humanity which were united ineffably. He does not see „the two becoming one, and does not know one acknowledged as two.“ His statement is an evident answer to the three chapters. He also concentrates on the unity of the *qnoma* and nature of the son. He states:

„One of the trinity is in the womb, and One is in Baptism and one is on the Cross. The One God proclaimed in Baptism is the same who said on the Cross 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit'.“

The one who was on the Cross was the same who ruled all creatures. The deathless died indeed. He died in the flesh but not in the soul because the flesh is bound to death. In his discourse concerning the resurrection of Christ he answers those who argued that the body of Christ was just a temple in which the Logos came and dwelt, and that the one crucified by the Jews was a mere man, stating

„the one dissolved as Man is the same God who resurrected, because he is his own sovereign we don't assume that the nature of the Logos was subject to suffering and do not assume the death of another, we rather believe that he who is beyond death in His Divinity is the same who suffered in His Humanity. He is the only son and the same of the Trinity ... I do confess that the animate who underwent death in the flesh is the same giver of life ... To him I add not other *qnoma* as did Theodoros and Nestorius.“²⁰

²⁰ see footnote 7, Patriarch Yacoub III

2.2. Mar Severus the Great (6th century)

He reiterates the position of Philoxenos of Mabbug concerning the unity of Godhead and Manhood in Christ, and denounces the duality in nature and *qnoma*. In the speech delivered on the occasion of his enthronement, he states:

„Let those who do not confess that he is consubstantial with the father in His Divinity and consubstantial with us in His Humanity and these who proclaim two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ the one and same after the union, the ineffable and incomprehensible, distinguishing thus their actions and properties, be anathema.“

He becomes even more ardent when he hears of the blasphemies of Nestorius. He nicknames him as the insane and the Jew. He confesses:

„Our son and one Lord, one person, one *qnoma* and the one incarnate nature of two perfect is the Divine and the Human without confusion, without Division.“

He devotes special interest to the unity of the person of Christ and his nature touching upon it so frequently. It is in Antioch that he declares his confession "in the one Jesus Christ who is yesterday, now and forever without change, one nature and one *qnoma* and one person.“ He proves the unity of the *qnoma* by wondering „would it have been possible for him to undergo our suffering if he had not been hypostatically united with the flesh which is possible? We are proud that our Lord suffered in the flesh.“

We do not assume that he presumably suffered but was really possible. Since he is one nature and one *qnoma*, he underwent voluntary suffering in the flesh and was transcendental in His Divinity. However, does Mar Severus deny the properties of each of the two natures out of which Emmanuel was?

No, he only denies the distinction and division of the properties. He states: we don't confess that properties of the two natures out of which Emmanuel was in order that the union be preserved without confusion. But we avoid distinguishing the properties assigned to each of the two natures for the sublime and the lowly are both ascribed to this one consubstantial with the Father in His Divinity and consubstantial with us, too in His Humanity except sin, without division, without confusion, without commixtion.

He finds the division of Christ after the union unnatural, unlogical or rather impossible. Christ is one Lord and Man without change, without alteration, for it is impossible to have him divided after the union because Twoness is the opposite on Oneness, because the one who was united can never become two, therefore Jesus Christ is indivisible. He is one *prosopon* and one *qnoma*, one nature of God the Word Incarnate. In his answer to Theodoret he states:

„The basis is Christ and our confession in Christ is that, being incarnate from the Holy Virgin and from the Holy Spirit. He assumed a body which is consubstantial with us in body with a rational soul without transfiguration of Divinity into Humanity and Humanity into Divinity without commixtion ... He is one in two natures. He is one Christ, one Lord, one *prosopon*, one *qnoma*, one incarnate nature ... and that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God. God remained in her womb for nine months, then was born from her in body, therefore neither

Divinity was assumed in her womb before Humanity nor Humanity was assumed before Divinity.²¹

2.3. Mar Jacob of Srug (6th century)

He emphasizes the unity of the *prosopon* of God the Word Incarnate more strongly, yet he very often repeats the term (one or only) in one sentence, whereas his style differs from all the other fathers in displaying his position or in his opposition to others. He avoids mentioning names. However, one can easily concern who he was when he speaks, for instance, of the unity of the *qnoma*, he undoubtedly repudiate the Three Chapters. Yet, he sometimes articulates these names, in his opposition to Theodoros, he calls him an anathema and stupid and describes his thoughts as filled with heresies.

To Jacob of Srug faith is the foundation stone upon which the doctrine of the mystery of incarnation is based. He does not recommend examination and scrutinization of the details of the Divine properties, because the son of God is ineffable and inexpressible, and he is within his eternal father: who doesn't apprehend scrutinizing the father who is the only one to know the son? Let those who are searching hold their peace because he is inscrutable and ineffable for both orators and listeners. He is beyond the reach of both.²²

In his poem of faith, he stresses the unity of God the Word in nature and *qnoma*, he also expresses his astonishment at those who divide the only son of God into two. He is one in number with no additions. He is from the father and from the Virgin without change. He is God as to his Father and Man as to his Mother. He is the same who is revealed in the spiritual cherubic chariot. His doctrine appears in the Divine mystery of incarnation especially in his epistles. Christ, as stated in his epistle to Lazarus, the Abbot of the Monastery of St. Bess, is the son of God and the son of Mary, the son of eternity and the son of Mary. Those who proclaim more than one nature after the union and define their characteristics and properties, are deemed to be alien. Those who divide Christ into two, and ascribe one *qnoma* to the body and keep the *qnoma* apart from and are stated as hypocrites. He says that those who think of one from the Father and another from Mary and say that each one has different properties from the others, as deviators.²³

This is a quick overview of the doctrine of the Syrian Orthodox Church concerning the mystery of Incarnation of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, and her position towards the Three Chapters and Nestorius in terms of the mystery.

3. Summary

Undoubtedly speaking, the Assyrian Church of the East, has a glorious Syrian heritage, and a rich History of cultural and advanced data. It has tight relations and

shares a deeprooted oriental tradition with our Syrian Church of Antioch through the Syriac language that brings them together.

It is well known that the Church was styled after Nestorius who founded a special Christology as mentioned beforehand, however, great attempts have been made nowadays to have this Christology tinged with orthodox hues. Nevertheless, and despite all these serious attempts made in this context, there still remains a wide gap between Nestorianism and Orthodoxy, the concept of Nestorius and his partisans (the Three Chapters). Jesus Christ according to Nestorius has two natures, one is the son of God and the other is the son of Mary. Mary did give birth to the God incarnate but to a mere man, therefore she can't be called the Mother of God.²⁴ „One must not say that God has been two or three months old.“²⁵ Therefore he cannot be deemed with his partisans as orthodox.

What we are rather concerned with is the Church of the East which is called after Nestorius and not Nestorian partisans. The members of the church today, are trying to get rid of this nomenclature, whether authentic or obtrusive. They consider that Nestorius must not be associated with their church, they rather reject him and his doctrine as well.

The formula of the Common Declaration of H.H. Mar Dinkha IV and H.H. Pope John Paul II mentioned above, in which oneness is so clear, as expressed in the confession in Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, reads: „The Assyrian Church of the East is praying the Virgin Mary as 'the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour'“. In addition to the declarations affirming the unity of the person of Jesus Christ. The following formulation reads:

„We believe that our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the Incarnate son - perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity. His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity ever for a moment or twinkling of an eye; and we believe that he made His Humanity one with His Divinity without Change nor Mingling nor Confusion.“²⁶

I am perfectly sure that such confessions and declarations are solid enough to lift the obstacles that stand on the way in order to reach Ephesus 431. This church's isolation from her sister churches was greatly due to the political circumstances. Therefore it would be fit to have this culturally rich church who played a great role in proclaiming the Good News to the furthest ends of the East isolated from her other sister churches.

²¹ Ibidem

²² Archbishop Boulos Bahnam. Khamael Al-Rahan

²³ Ibidem

²⁴ Boulos Bahnam. History of the Syrian Church of Antioch. P.34

²⁵ Ibidem, p.36

²⁶ Syriac Dialogue No. 1, p.165

The Controversy of the Three Chapters

1. The Historical Background

Justinian, even if he was absent from the sessions of the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 nevertheless played a great part in this council and its damnation of the Three Chapters. He had already prepared the way with some written works, in which he condemned Origenism and three teachers of the Church of the East, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrus and Ibas of Edessa.¹ According to Eduard Schwartz, Justinian, acting as theologian, brought the controversy inside the Church, quite differently from the emperors who had summoned the previous four councils as mere patrons of the faith.² Johannes Straub, successor of Schwartz in editing the *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, stated that the weight given by Justinian to the anathemas of the fifth Council was without precedent.³ Why did Justinian maintain this policy without being dissuaded by any opposition, neither that of Pope Vigilius,⁴ nor of the African Church⁵ nor of the Church of Aquileia?⁶ The strategy of Justinian was to gain the sympathy of the non-Chalcedonians. He wanted to please them, and therefore he condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrus and Ibas of Edessa. In fact the non-Chalcedonians justified their opposition to Chalcedon because the latter, they argued, repudiated the Council of Ephesus, which had condemned Nestorian dyophysitism. According to them Chalcedon proposed the same dyophysitism. As a "captatio benevolen-

tiae", the Church of the empire should condemn Nestorian dyophysitism at its very roots, the principal teachers of the Antiochene School. This is why Theodore of Mopsuestia was the object of the polemics of the non-Chalcedonians. Theodoret of Cyrrus had been charged by John of Antioch to answer the anathemas of Cyril against Nestorius. At Ephesus in 449 he had been deposed, and at Chalcedon in 451 he was to condemn Nestorius in order to be reinstated as bishop. Ibas was also the object of polemics by the non-Chalcedonians because of the letter to Mari. The edict of Justinian against the Three Chapters, written between 543-545, ten years before the Second Council of Constantinople, reads:

"If anyone says that the impious letter to Mari is correct, thus insulting the Holy Cyril and offering offence to the First Council of Ephesus, whilst defending Nestorius and highly prising Theodore of Mopsuestia, he shall be anathema!"⁷

Another fact demonstrates the intention of Justinian to please the non-Chalcedonians: a meeting with them, which the emperor arranged in Constantinople in 532. We have two testimonies of that meeting, one from the Chalcedonian and another from the non-Chalcedonian side. Sebastian Brock has compared the two.⁸

The testimony of the non-Chalcedonians has been edited, from two different Syriac sources, by Fr. Nau and by S. Brock. In that meeting there are polemics against the Antiochene teachers.

"We have many more things to censure in the Chalcedonian synod, but above all else, the fact that the Fathers accepted Ibas, [...] on the basis of his [sic!] letter to Mari the Persian which [...] was read out before them, (despite) it being full of every wickedness; and on its basis they held (Ibas) to be orthodox. They also accepted the wicked Theodoret, without his having changed from his evil belief; and they gave him back the priesthood too."⁹

For the non-Chalcedonians the attempt made by the Chalcedonians to disassociate Nestorianism from the Antiochene school was unsuccessful. How could the Church of the East be separated from Theodore of Mopsuestia? In the synod of Bar Sawma, which took place at Bet Lapat in 484, there is an admonition, translated into English by Stephen Geru:

"Nobody among us should have doubt concerning this holy man Theodore of Mopsuestia because of the evil rumours which the heretics have spread about him. [...] If anyone therefore dares, secretly or openly, to traduce or to revile this teacher of truth and his holy writings, let him be accursed by the Truth itself."¹⁰

The same text was quoted in the synod of Mar Gregory in 605.¹¹ There is also the homily of Narsai of Nisibis on Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius.

⁷ M. Amelotti & L. Migliardi Zingale. *Scritti teologici ed ecclesiastici di Giustiniano*. Milano 1977, p.130

⁸ S. Brock. *The Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)* OCP 47 (1981) pp.87-121

⁹ Ibid. pp.98/9

¹⁰ Stephen Gero. *Barsauma of Nisibis and Persian Christianity in the fifth Century*. Louvain 1981, p.45

¹¹ *Synodicon Orientale*. Syr. p.211, ll 2-13; transl. pp.475/6

¹ CPG 6880-6885, 6887/8; M. Amelotti & L. Migliardi Zingale. *Scritti teologici ed ecclesiastici di Giustiniano*. Milano 1977, pp.127-161; C. Capizzi. *Sul cesaropapismo di Giustiniano*. In: *Studi Salentini* (Lecce 1992) pp.85-107; Id., *Giustiniano tra politica e religione*. Soveria M.-Messina 1994; F. Carcione. L'"aftartodoce-tismo" di Giustiniano: un mistificazione strumentale del dissenso politico-religioso. In: *Studi e Ricerche sull'Oriente Cristiano VII* (1984) pp.71-78; Id. *La politica religiosa di Giustiniano nella fase iniziale della "Seconda controversia origenista" (536-543)*. Un nuovo fallimentare tentativo d'integrazione tra monofisismo e calcedonianismo alla vigilia della controversia sui Tre capitoli. In: *Studi e Ricerche sull'Oriente Cristiano VIII* (1985) pp.3-18; Id. *Gli intrecci con la controversia sui Tre Capitoli*. ibid. IX (1986) pp.131-147

² *Zur Kirchenpolitik Justinians*. *Gesammelte Schriften IV*. pp.276-320

³ *Concilium universale constantinopolitanum sub Justiniano habitum*. V/I. Ed.: Johannes Straub. Berolini 1971, ACO IV, I, Praefatio. p.XXXII

⁴ *Pelagii diaconi Ecclesiae romane in defensione Trium Capitulorum*. Ed. R. Devresse. ST 57. C.d.Vaticano 1932; Victor Tonnensis. *Chronika*. MGM, AA 11, 179-206; E. Zettl. *die Bestätigung des Fünften Ökumenischen Konzils durch Papst Vigilius: Untersuchungen über die Echtheit der Briefe "Scandala" und "Aetius"*. Bonn 1974; F. Carcione. *Vigilio nelle controversie cristologiche del suo tempo: I rapporti con Giustiniano dagli anni dell'apocrisariato al secondo editto imperiale sui Tre Capitoli (533-551)*. In: *Studi e Ricerche sull'Oriente Cristiano X* (1987) pp.37-51; Id. *Vigilio nelle controversie cristologiche del suo tempo. La lotta contro Giustiniano per la libertà della Chiesa (551-555)*. Ibid. XI (1988) pp.11-32

⁵ An African bishop, Facundus of Hermiane, has substantially preserved for us the text of the Justinian's Edict of 543/544 in his work, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum libri XII*, *Contra Mocianum scholasticum*. *Epistulae Fidei catholicae in defensione trium Capitulorum*. CC 90a. the edict of Justinian has been reconstructed by W. Pews. *Imperium, Ecclesia Universalis*. Rom. *Der Kampf der afrikanischen Kirche um die Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart 1937. There is another African account of this history: *Liberatus Carthaginensis, diaconus* s. 6. *Breve storia della controversia nestoriana e eutichiana*. Introduction. Traduzione e note a c. di F. Carcione. Anagni 1989

⁶ C. Capizzi. *I vescovi illirici e l'affare dei tre capitoli*. *Atti e memorie della Società Dalmata di Storia Patria XII N.S. I* (1987) pp.71-117; G. Cuscito. *Fede e politica ad Aquileia: dibattito teologico e centri di potere (secoli IV-VI)*. Udine 1987

"A strong indignation has taken my heart because of denying the honesty of right men and their good works. Unjustly, the rebels have crushed the ones who know the truth [...] The crushed are some priests who accomplished duly their ministry, Diodorus, Theodore and Nestorius."¹²

As a background to the Second Constantinopolitan Council one must keep in mind the political situation. The year 532, in which the non-Chalcedonians had a meeting with Justinian, was the year of the perpetual peace between the Roman and Persian empires. But a few years later, in the spring of 540, Chosroes broke this perpetual peace, and in the following year his armies were plundering Antioch. Only in 562 was another peace treaty of 50 years made between the two empires. This is important for the understanding of another meeting of Justinian with some theologians of the Church of the East. Guillaumont has proposed the precise date of 562. Barhadbeshabba 'Arbaya in his History says that Mar Abraham "sent to the Roman emperor the bishop Paul with some others to defend the faith which they professed and clear Diodorus, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius of every unjust accusation."¹³ The Chronicle of Seert is more detailed:

"We are informed that Justinian, after the Conclusion of the peace with Chosroes I, asked for some Persian scholars to treat with them theological matters. Chosroes sent to him Paul, metropolitan of Nisibis, Mari, bishop of Balad, Bar Sawma, bishop of Qardu, Ishay of Seleucia, interpreter, Isho'yahb of Arzun, the future Katholikos of the East and Babai of Singiar. Justinian received them with great honour. The meeting, which was recorded, lasted three days. They explained their doctrine and faith. Justinian asked Babai to tell him which passages of Scripture the Fathers interpreted. He quoted many of them and the emperor seemed satisfied. He paid attention to their speeches and sent them back with many gifts. But he changed his mind afterwards, as he condemned Diodorus and other Fathers like him. Some say that Abraham and John were among the theologians sent to the emperor, and that Justinian paid the same respects to them as to Paul."¹⁴

A Chaldaean scholar who studied the ecclesiastical participation in diplomatical relations between Persia and Byzantium proposes an earlier dating for the meeting with Paul.¹⁵ The fact that Justinian changed his mind seems to suggest that the meeting took place before 553, the date of the Council of the Three Chapters. But how can one contradict a specialist like A. Guillaumont, the editor of Br. Lib. Add. 14.535, the Syriac manuscript which records the discussion with Justinian? There is also coincidental evidence: Justinian's letter on the Annunciation of Our Lady and the Nativity of Our Lord, sympathizing with the non-Chalcedonians and written on 560.¹⁶ Synthe-

sizing the content of the discussion with the Church of the East, Guillaumont says: A first question is whether there exists in Christ a human hypostasis different from the divine. The Church of the East answers in the affirmative. Then the Chalcedonian retorts: 'If Christ has two hypostases, then the Trinity becomes a quaternity'. Second reply of the Church of the East: The human hypostasis of Christ forms with the divine hypostasis a personal unity. The fact of confessing two hypostases does not imply two Filiations and two sons. There is no danger of quaternity at all! Guillaumont is right when he says that this text is of great interest. It lets us know the development of the Persian theology at that time.¹⁷

There were at least two dialogues carried on by Justinian: one with non-Chalcedonians and another with theologians of the Church of the East. There was also an invitation to Severus of Antioch in 535 and the subsequent condemnation of him in 536.¹⁸ In fact, because of the Three Chapters, Justinian completely alienated the Persian Church, whilst at the same time he was unable to satisfy the challenges of the Syrian Orthodox Church.

2. The Reaction

2.1. Synodical

S. Brock pointed out that "Justinian's ecclesiastical policy had a number of repercussions for the Church of the East, the most obvious among which was the condemnation of Theodore's writings at the Fifth Council. Curiously enough we find hardly any direct reference in East Syrian sources."¹⁹ There are reasons to explain such a lack of reactions. The countervailing pressure of the Monophysite minority in the contemporary Persian Church and the total neglect of Nestorius in the official synodal records of this Church at the time.²⁰ The Church of Persia belonged to the non-Roman world and communication was difficult. In the year 580, "the king of Persia sent to the Roman emperor, through Isho'yahb, presents, letters and some other things, which the Roman emperor had asked for. The emperor said to Isho'yahb: it is a long time since our last epistulary contact, at the time of the Chalcedonian Council and we do not know whether you persist in your doctrine or you have changed it in any way."²¹ There were also other internal problems in the Church of Persia besides the non-Chalce-

¹⁷ Antoine Guillaumont. Justinien et l'église de Perse. In: DOP 23-24 (1969/70) pp.39-66. With four photographic reproductions of the syriac manuscript; Id. Un colloque entre orthodoxes et théologiens nestoriens de Perse sous Justinien. Comptes rendus de l'Académie de Inscriptions et Belles Lettres (1970) pp.201-207

¹⁸ André de Halleux. Trois impériaux synodes du VI^e siècle dans une chronique syriaque inédite. In: A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus. Ed. by Robert H. Fisher. Chicago 1977, pp.295-307

¹⁹ S. Brock. The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the fifth to early seventh century: Preliminary considerations and Materials. In: Aksum - Thyateira. Festschrift für Erzbischof Methodios. London 1985, pp.125-142; Id. The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the councils in the Roman Empire. In: Syriac Dialogue. first non-official Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition. Vienna 1994, pp.69-85, esp.77 (=SD I)

²⁰ Mar Bawai Soro/M.J. Birnie. Is the theology of the Church of the East Nestorian? In: SD I, pp. 116-132, esp. 121 and 123

²¹ Mari, Amri et Slibae: de Patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria. Romae 1896-99. ar. 173a-173b, lat. transl. 49-50; but see I. Ortiz de Urbina. Patrologia syriaca. Romae 1965, pp.130/1

¹² François Martin. Homélie de Narsès sur les trois docteurs nestoriens. In: Journal Asiatique 14 (1899) 446-492; Ibid. 15 (1900) 469-523; L. Abramowski. Das Konzil von Chalkedon in der Homilie des Narsai über die drei nestorianischen Lehrer. In: Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 66 (1954/55) 140-43; T. Jansma. Études sur la pensée de Narsai. In: L'Orient Syrien XI (1966)

¹³ PO IX, pp.628-630

¹⁴ PO VII, pp.187/8

¹⁵ L. Sako. Le rôle de la hiérarchie syriaque orientale dans les rapports diplomatiques entre la Perse et Byzance aux V^e - VIII^e siècles. Paris 1986, pp.91-95

¹⁶ M. van Esbroeck SJ. La lettre de l'empereur Justinien sur l'annonciation et la Noël en 561, AB 86 (1968) pp. 351-371; Id. Encore la lettre de Justinien. Sa date: 560 et non 561, AB 87 (1969) pp.442-444

donian minority: Bishops like Rabbula, Bar Sawma and Henana caused trouble in the Church. There were also the Messalians and, in the years 524-538, two simultaneous katholikoi, Narsai and Eliseus.

An explicit apologetic mention of Theodore of Mopsuestia is found already in the canons of Mar Aba, issued by the synod which was held in 544. The fortieth canon reads:

"Our profound sentiment for the faith professed by the 318 bishops, which we keep integrally in our confession, is the one propounded by the holy friend of God, the blessed bishop and Interpreter of the Holy Scripture Mar Theodore."²²

According to Guillaumont, a canonical reaction of the Church of the East to the Council of the Three Chapters comes only with the synod of 585, under the katholikos Isho'yahb I Canon II says:

"After exposing the true Faith, we should speak of the teachers and apostles of the same truth. Out of an urgent necessity, we should speak of one of them, the holy Interpreter Theodore, bishop of the city of Mopsuestia in Cilicia [...] At present, to the fathers of this synod, it has been said that some people arise, pretending to be called orthodox when on the contrary they give all sorts of troubles to the followers of the orthodox faith and they fight against the true traditions of the Church, strongly contesting the solid patrimony of truth which has been harvested and preserved by the help of divine grace in the books and teachings of the Interpreter. And with many other things which they say against him, they calumniate the spiritual commentary of the book of Job by the same Interpreter."²³

In effect, the Forth Session of the Council of the Three Chapters picks up accusations against Theodore of Mopsuestia. Among them, there is an indignant reproach of his commentary on Job, which attributes to the Holy Spirit a book full of paganism, "pagana sapiens".²⁴ "This man, till the end of his life a great teacher for the sons of grace, is now attacked by some stuttering and pestering persons who, like scarabs and field-cricket, persecute him as the Jews did to our Lord."²⁵

In 596 another synod was held, under the katholikos Sabrisho'. "It has been said in our presence that some people, clothed in religious dress, doubt internally in matters of true and orthodox faith, rising against sure teachers, spreading heretical ideas and corrupting the simple-hearted. They reject the commentaries and the true teaching of the sure and sincere blessed Theodore [...] We reject and anathematize everyone who refuses the commentaries, the traditions or the teachings of the sure doctor, the blessed Interpreter Theodore, as well as the ones who try to introduce new and strange teachings in opposition with the true and sure doctrine of this blessed man [...]"²⁶ In the year 598 the monks of Bar Qaiti made an agreement.

²² Synodicon Orientale, syr. 550, transl. 561

²³ Ibid. 137, transl. 399

²⁴ ACO IV, I, p.66

²⁵ Synodicon Orientale, syr. 149., Transl. 400

²⁶ Ibid., syr. 197/8, transl. 456/7

"We believe the same faith and we meditate on holy Scripture as well as on the commentaries and the doctrine of our holy Fathers, the blessed Theodore and of all his collaborators in teaching the truth."²⁷

Next followed the synod of Mar Gregory in 605. "We have learned that some unstable people[...] propagate new ideas, contrary to the spirit of the Fathers, and at the same time they twist the true sense of the Scripture. For this reason all of us participating to this synod state that each of us shall receive and accept all the commentaries and writings of the blessed Interpreter Mar Theodore [...] Nobody today can do without the writings of this glorious and holy man [...] We remember also that the holy assembly which took place in Beit Huzaya in the town of Beit Labat in April 484, whose main leaders were Bar Sawma and Nanai, stated [...] (here follows the passage already quoted in note 10)."²⁸

2.2. Theological

Michael the Syrian says in his Chronicle that the council celebrated in Constantinople in 553 is called fifth to distinguish it from the one celebrated in the same city on 381.²⁹ But in the anonymous Pseudo-Dionysian Chronicle, the katholikos Babai the Great who administered the See of the Church of the East from 609 to 628, is said to have counted the Council of 553 as the *fifth* in a deprecatory way.³⁰ I have tried in vain to trace this disparaging designation in the *Book of the Union* by Babai. Babai probably used this pejorative designation in his lost work in defence of Theodore and against Justinian which he mentions and cites more than once in his *Book of the Union* as a "long refutation".

"After these things, the worst burst out there, achieving every impiety: I mean that caused by Justinian the emperor, the Roman tyrant[...]. He dared to anathematize, out of excessive malignity, through impious priests of his land, certain true sons of the Church, who many years before had died in happy, peaceful and Catholic orthodoxy [...] as we demonstrated in a book which we wrote against his impiety and blasphemy [...] And we ought to say something about the long refutation which we wrote against the blasphemies contained in the writing of Justinian against the Orthodox so as to show the invincible truth in that venerable union made for our salvation. In fact the very words with which we confute him, destroy the error at the same time through the truth."³¹

Thereupon Babai cites the second of the anathematisms against the Three Chapters. "If anyone will not confess that the Word of God has two nativities [...]"³² It is interesting to follow the scholastic method of the School of Nisibis. Babai gives the

²⁷ Ibid., syr. 202, transl. 463

²⁸ Ibid., syr. 210/1, transl. 475/6

²⁹ Chronique de Michel le Syrien, par J.B. Chabot. Syr. tome III, 313, fr. transl. tome II 251

³⁰ Chronicon Anonymum Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum, ed. by J.B. Chabot, tome II. Paris 1933, p.139; Id. fr. gallice vertit R. Hespel. Louvain 1989, p.104

³¹ A. Vaschalde. Babai Magni. Liber de Unione. CSCO 79/80, syr. 81/2, transl. 66

³² Ibid., syr. 83, transl. 67; Norman P. Tanner (Ed.) Decrees of the Ecumenical councils. Vol. 1, p.114, Anathemas against the "Three Chapters", Can. 2

words of the adversary, in this case the canons of the council of 553. Then he proceeds to the confutation of the adversary's reasoning with multiple arguments, each of which is introduced by the adverb "tub", "rursus".

Sometimes he repeats a second time the proposition of the adversary, slightly paraphrased, to give the way to another set of counterblasts. So, for instance, after having quoted the fourth anathema and given a refutation, he repeats: "If anyone declares that it was only in respect of grace, or of principle of action, or of dignity etc., let him be anathema,"³³ adding another longer refutation. He quotes also the third canon, but in an informal way, giving only its affirmative meaning:

"The Word of God was made flesh, the same who was crucified, suffered and died, in his very nature and hypostasis, so as not to be two but one,"³⁴ which corresponds to the negative form of the third canon: "If anyone declares that the Word of God who works miracles is not identical with the Christ who suffered [...]: let him be anathema."³⁵

3. Evaluation

A. Grillmeier says that Justinian, in his *Confessio rectae fidei* of 551 helped to clarify the terminology, distinguishing hypostasis or person from physis or nature.³⁶ But, as for this terminology of the Church of the East, Brock suggests keeping the word *qnoma* without translating it.³⁷ Claire Sotinel concludes in a recent article that pope Vigilius failed in the controversy over the Three Chapters. After years of opposition and resistance, he surrendered at last, agreeing with Justinian's less universal and more political vision. The simple people took this as a failure. In fact Vigilius suffered a posthumous "damnatio personae" being the only pope of the sixth century who was not buried in the old Constantinian basilica of saint Peter.³⁸

It is certainly a good approach to try to put ourselves on the side of the ones who suffered more from the condemnation of their partners, Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas. The Church of the East did not acknowledge the Second Council of Constantinople.³⁹ In the Arabic canonical collection *Fiqh al-nasrāniya* by Ibn at-Taiyib there is no mention either of the Council of Ephesus or of the Second Council of Constantinople.⁴⁰ A famous *katholikos* of the Church of the East, Timothy I, wrote in his letter, sent in 792 or 793 to the monks of St Maron's monastery:

³³ Ibid., syr. 100/1, trans. 70/1

³⁴ Ibid., syr. 252, transl. 205

³⁵ Norman P. Tanner (Ed.), see footnote 32, p. 114

³⁶ A. Grillmeier. *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*. Vol. 2/2. die Kirche von Konstantinopel im 6. Jh. Freiburg 1989

³⁷ S. Brock. the church of the East in the sasanian Empire up to the sixth century and its Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire. In: *SD I*, p.82

³⁸ C. Sotinel. *Autorité pontificale et pouvoir impérial sous la règle de Justinien: l'exemple du pape Vigile*. In: *MEFRA* 104 (1992) 1, 439-463; Id. *Vigile*. In: *Dictionnaire historique de la Papauté*, sous la direction de Ph. Levillain. Paris 1994, pp.1724-27

³⁹ *Énumération des canons que l'Église d'Orient reçoit ... et synodes tant occidentaux et orientaux qu'elle reçoit*. In: *Synodicon Orientale*, p.611

⁴⁰ Ibn at-Taiyib. *Fiqh an-Nasrāniya*. *Das Recht des Christentums*. Ed. by. W. Hönerbach & O. Spies. Louvain 1956/7

"In your countries there have been Christian kings, who according to their particular learning could lead priests and faithful either towards an orthodox or to an heretical confession. This is how many additions and diminutions might affect the true expression of the faith. What Constantine decided might be changed by Constantius, and what Constantius stated his successor abrogated [...] But with us there has never been a Christian king [...] This is why the treasure which the holy apostles gave us was kept without change and immutated."⁴¹

This attitude was not new in the Church of the East. The assembly of the bishops of this Church, which had met almost two centuries before in 612, expressed the same conviction:

"In Persia, since the time of the Apostles till our days, no heresy showed itself nor provoked any schism or division. In the lands of the Romans, on the contrary, since the time of the apostles till nowadays, there have been many and various heresies which infected many people; and when they were expelled and fled from there, they reached, with their pest, our country. That is the case of the Manichees, Marcionites, Severians, Theopascites, with their insane doctrine."⁴²

The Church of the East was conscious of the different cultural context in which it lived, with respect to the Church of the Roman empire. Fortunately, some western scholars have noted this major difference, as for instance Wolfgang Hage and Wilhelm de Vries. Hage says:

"The confrontation of the Church of the Roman Empire with the Eastern Church of the Persian Kingdom shows, in an exemplary way, how important or rather necessary is to integrate the history of the Church of the East in the general history of the whole Church."⁴³

Wilhelm de Vries follows up accordingly:

"In order to have a concrete idea of Oriental Christianity we should divide it into three groups, each with a completely different development in relation to the Western Church. The first group is marked in a definitive way by the Constantinian trend [...] according to which the emperor is the head of Christianity [...] The second group is represented only by the Church of Persia. It never followed a Constantinian trend but was always a minority facing a state power more or less favourable, without any danger of confusing Church and state. The third group comprises the Churches which fell under the domination of the Muslims [...] We must recognize this in order to enlarge our perspective and avoid the dangerous idea of believing each group unique and exclusive."⁴⁴

⁴¹ Raphael J. Bidawid. *Les lettres du Patriarche Nestorien Timothée I (=ST 187) C.d. Vaticano 1956*, syr. 652, transl. 121

⁴² *Synodicon Orientale*, syr. 657, transl. 585

⁴³ Die Oströmische Staatskirche und die Christenheit des Perserreiches. In: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1973) pp.174-187, esp.187

⁴⁴ W. de Vries. *L'Oriente cristiano nell'insegnamento della storia della Chiesa*. In: *Seminarium* 27 (1975), pp. 403-427, esp.404/5

In this perspective I understand Albert C. Outler:

"Justinian's opening move was the condemnation (543) of the *kephalaia* from the writings of Origen. Justinian's second move was a revisionist history of the Christological controversy in praise of the Alexandrines and in dispraise of the Antiochenes. But the climactic stroke was a *Novella* in which he singled out and condemned extended passages from Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas of Edessa. It was an ingenious and imaginative initiative, offering something to everybody - save, of course, the dead and defenceless Antiochenes. As it turned out, it was an exercise in futility [...] Constantinople II refused to repudiate the *Definition* of Chalcedon. The Monophysites perceived this clearly enough and promptly rejected all the other concessions offered them [...] In an indirect way the Three Chapters and Constantinople II failed in their attempts to nullify the Antiochene Christology [...] The fame and reputations of the Antiochene theologians had been attained but their essential interest had already been secured."⁴⁵

His conclusion is also our task:

"to include the Antiochene emphases among the other valid elements in any full-robed Christology."⁴⁶

Discussion:

Father Chediath: In both papers there was a mention of Catholicos Bawai the Great. As I understand he was not a Catholicos. He was a religious teacher of monasteries of the Northern part of Persia.

Father Habbi: We can understand from Father Poggi's paper that there was a reaction of the Church of the East against any innovation in changing and renewing its faith. It was politically isolated. It was natural that that church made its own theology and christology. I hope that such mentality will not prevail today.

On Mar Saliba's paper: The three persons of the Three Chapters were dualists. The Church of the East when adapting other traditions than of its own, wanted to prove its reality and existence. The problem of Theodore was how the Son of God and the Son of man are one Christ. He wanted to give an rational and theological solution to that. We know that the modern rationalists want to approve the human Jesus and not the humanity in Jesus; and the Christ in God and not the God in Christ.

Prof. Jammo: An ecumenical effort is required from the participants in the ecumenical dialogue. It is not enough to us to quote our ancient authors in relations to the matter we are discussing.

⁴⁵ Albert C. Outler. „The Three Chapters“ A Comment on the Survival of Antiochene Christology. A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus. Chicago 1977, pp.357-364

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.364

The three papers of the Syrian Orthodox speakers reflect only what their fathers said about Nestorius. They did not make an effort to see and read the conclusion of the scholars research of this century.

Dr. Hainthaler: To the paper of Mar Saliba (see above p.135): I cannot find in the letter of Ibas to Mari that he was such a defender of Nestorius.

I think also it is difficult to say so about the dualism of the three persons.

On Severios and Philoxinos there is a difference because of their cultural background and theology. Severios was a Greek while Philoxinos was a Syriac. I was wondering whether Severios has even said so (see above p.136).

Bishop Matar: I think we have more desire now to study the Three Chapters by itself. I think that the Church of the East did not change its faith.

Dr. Kodapuzha: To Saliba's paper (see above p.134). There is a need to correct the translation.

Prof. Yousif: Was there a reaction of the Church of Antioch regarding the controversy of the Three Chapters? What is the attitude of the council in condemnation of the Three Chapters?

Amba Bishoy: I would like to put in front of the participants the result of our study concerning the term *hypostasis* in the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools.

For St. Cyril *hypostasis* is always related with two persons. It is a personalized nature. There is no *hypostasis* without a person related to it. For the Antiochians, the same applies, but in a trinitarian concept. For the Trinity *hypostasis* is a personalized nature. For the human concept, Mar Severios considered its *hypostasis* can exist in theory without a person.

It is also an individuated nature, a nature for some individual. This applies for two events in the history of human race:

Eve when taken from Adam, Christ when taken from Mary, Christ took a body, full of humanity, intelligent soul, without taking on the human person.

Out of two natures, one incarnate nature of the Word of God was composed, and out of two *hypostases* came the one *hypostasis* of the incarnate Word of God. That is why for St. Cyril, it is not possible to speak about two *hypostases*, even in thought alone.

Father Bouwen: To the paper of Mar Saliba. It shows an open spirit. There is this readiness to accept the agreements and declarations.

I think this approach has to be respected. It may sometimes be difficult to reconcile this openness of mind today with what was said by our ancestors in the faith. Nobody should ask to state when our ancestors were wrong.

Father Chediath: On Mar Saliba - I respect the ecumenical spirit. (see above p.135) last sentence: all the synods insist on the oneness of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Hainthaler: I respect the ecumenical view of Mar Saliba. There was no dialogue in the past to clarify the terminology.

Father Poggi, see above p.141: „The letter to Ibas was not authentic.“ It is clear that this letter of Ibas was authentic because we have the text in the Second Council of Ephesus 449, and also in the Acts of Chalcedon. There is not doubt about its authenticity.

Bishop Mounayer: Yacoub of Saruq remains the teacher of the Syrian Church. The terms are responsible for the mis-understanding. We lack some Arabic resources which research in the Arabic heritage.

Father Khalifé: My remarks will be to Mar Gregorios and Mar Saliba. I agree that we should not trust too much the Western scholars, especially not in a blind trust. We are not obliged to take for granted what they say. But, we are obliged to read them without necessarily taking from them. We are obliged to go back to the texts. We cannot ignore them. We have to love the text and, as we are Syrians, from where it came and we read it in details and in a scientific approach. We can benefit from the methodologies of their researches. This is what we lack.

Dr. Winkler: On Mar Saliba. (see above p.134) on it was John Paul II and not Paul VI. To Father Poggi (see above p.141): As we know today this goal failed. There was one reason because there was not a single Chalcedonian bishop invited to that meeting.

Mar Bawai: I comment the ecumenical spirit of Bishop Mar Saliba. He spoke very sincerely about the theology of our fathers. He represented his own christological point of view.

Is the Nestorian and Orthodoxy that you are referring to as it is expressed in the Church of the East? (see above p.140)

Father Poggi: I agree with Father Chediath.

I agree with Dr. Hainthaler: it is authentic. The unity is important to the Church of the East as christology. I agree with Bishop Matar. There is much to do in history.

I agree with Dr. Winkler.

Mar Saliba replies to the comments of his paper:

It is a critical issue which we are discussing today. A whole church was marginalized from Christendom, namely the Assyrian. We are obliged to go back to the history either of this church, or of our church. I have to go through my fathers' sayings. I can't deny my Syrian tradition and thinking. I did not bring evidence against the other church.

The Syrian Church believes that the Three Chapters of Theodorus were not orthodox for Christians. While the Assyrian Church today differs from the christology of the Three Chapters. I only said that the christology of the Church of the East has become closer to Orthodoxy.

It is natural that Christ died by the flesh and by soul. We believe that God doesn't die. He only died in his flesh. When I spoke about christology, I referred to the Three Chapters and not to the christology of the Church of the East today.

Seventh working session: Monday February 26, morning

Chairman: Bishop *Boulos Matar*

Baby Varghese

East Syrian Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

1. Introduction

"Our doctrine agrees with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our doctrine",¹ wrote Irenaeus in the second half of the second century. The words of the bishop of Lyon very well express the mind of the early Church, which always insisted on the intrinsic relationship between the doctrine and the eucharistic liturgy. The eucharistic prayers were first composed in the interest of doctrinal, not liturgical uniformity.² In fact, the eucharistic prayer itself, with its account of the salvation history, with its repetition of the feast of the New Covenant is the proclamation of the community's common faith.³

The eucharistic prayer, even though it has a trinitarian structure, is christocentric giving great weight to the phrases on the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.⁴ The christological dimension is sometimes emphasized by addressing the Anaphora to Christ (e.g. The Greek Anaphora of Gregory of Naziansus or the post-sanctus prayer of Addai and Mari). In the later centuries, the doctrinal dimension of the liturgy was further emphasized by introducing the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.⁵ The presence of the Creed in the liturgy - also christocentric in its formulation - was the demarcation of orthodoxy. The prayers of all the sacramental and liturgical celebrations were carefully composed within the limits of orthodoxy, so that they shall express the mind of the Church. Some of the patristic texts were incorporated into the liturgical texts, both in devotional and doctrinal interest. This would explain the presence of a large number of the hymns of Saint Ephrem both in the East and West Syrian traditions. The West

¹ Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses* IV, c.18,5; cf. *Sources chrétiennes* 100 (1965) 611

² Allan Bouley. *From Freedom to Formula. The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer from the oral improvisation to written texts* (The Catholic University of America. *Studies in Christian Antiquity* 21) Washington 1981; also R.P.C. Hanson. *The Liberty of the Bishop to improvise Prayer in the Eucharist*. In: *Vigilae Christianae* 15 (1961) 173-176

³ R. Taft. *The Great Entrance*. Rome ²1978, p.404f.

⁴ On the Trinitarian structure of the Anaphora, see B. Varghese. *West Syrian Anaphorae as an expression of the Trinitarian Doctrine*. In: *The Harp* IV (1991) 215-223

⁵ On the introduction of the Creed in the liturgy, see B. Capelle. *L'introduction du symbole à la messe*. In: *Travaux liturgiques* III (1967) 60-63

Syrians placed the *manitho* of Severus of Antioch - the best summary of christology - at the beginning of the eucharistic liturgy as well as in the daily office. Similarly, the East Syrians incorporated parts of the writings of their fathers in the liturgical texts, especially to illustrate the mystery of Christ. Prayers were always carefully selected and introduced in the liturgy, to imprint the faith of the Church in the minds of the believers. Thus, the doctrine is "lived", that is, expressed, celebrated and transmitted in and through the liturgy.

2. Liturgy as the Celebration of the Mystery of Christ

For the East Syrian tradition, as in other Christian traditions, liturgy is the celebration of the economy of Christ. The Mystery of Christ is 're-presented' in and through the sacramental celebrations and the liturgical year. The liturgical year is centered on Sunday, the sacramental day of resurrection. The liturgical year is an 'anamnesis' of the Economy of Salvation, from the birth of Christ till His glorious second coming. In its structure and celebration the liturgical year has a catechetical purpose. Nativity, Epiphany and the Easter are the liturgical expressions of a Christology. Some long prayers of the Epiphany are excellent summaries of Christology, containing sometimes long meditations on the economy of Christ.⁶

Theodore of Mopsuestia, the great doctor of the East Syrian tradition, in his homilies on the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, expounds the sacramental theology of the Syro-Antiochene tradition. According to him, baptism is the "ineffable mystery (*rozo*) which contains the incomprehensible signs (*otwoto*) of the Economy of Our Lord."⁷ Whether baptism or Eucharist, we remember the death and resurrection of Christ. The sacramental celebration strengthens our hope in the final resurrection: "It is indeed evident to us, according to the words of the Apostle, that when we perform either baptism or Eucharist, we perform them in remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ; in order that the hope of the latter may be strengthened in us."⁸ Theodore points out that the celebration of the sacraments is an expression of the faith of the Church; the faith is confirmed in and through it:

"Because the things performed for us by Christ Our Lord are awe-inspiring and because we expect their complete fulfilment in the next world, we receive them now only by faith, and we proceed gradually in this world in a way that we are in nothing absent from our faith in them. This being the case, we are necessarily confirmed in the faith of the things revealed to us through this ministry of

the mystery (*rozo*) as we are led through it to the future reality, because it contains an image of the ineffable Economy of Christ Our Lord, in which we receive the vision and the shadow of the happenings that took place."⁹

Following these lines the East Syrian tradition of the later centuries clearly articulated its faith especially its christology in the liturgical texts. The East Syrian prayers strike our attention in their biblical inspiration, originality theological richness and poetical beauty. A *Tesbohta* of the Easter service provides an example for the theological richness of the prayers:

"Glory to God in heights and on earth peace and good hope to men, we adore you, we praise you we exalt you, O Eternal Being, the hidden incomprehensible nature, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, King of kings and Lord of lords, who dwells in bright light and whom no men has seen nor able to see. You alone is holy, you alone are strong, you alone are immortal we praise you through the mediation of the good things we have Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, and the Son of the High the Lamb of the living God who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. O the one who sits at the right hand of the Father, receive our supplication. You are Our God, You are Our Lord, You are Our King; You are Our Redeemer, and You are the forgiver of our sins. The eyes of all men are turned on you, O Jesus Christ, glory be to you and Holy Spirit for ever Amen."¹⁰

In another prayer Christ is called "the true light and the glorious image from the Father, and who was revealed and made manifest in this world by the first born of our race for the renewal and redemption of our race."¹¹ He is "the light which is from the light, which appeared to took on our body."¹² The whole creation has been renewed in Christ, who is the head of the new life (Col 1,15); by His resurrection, Christ has distributed life to all his race.¹³ Christ is also said to be the "beautiful shrine of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

The name of Christ is repeatedly invoked in the so-called Laku Mara (To you O Lord) prayer - one of the most beautiful traits of the East Syrian tradition:

"Lord of all, we confess You! Jesus Christ, we glorify You! For You raise our bodies, You save our souls! You, O my Lord, are in truth the raiser of our bodies, You the Good Saviour of our souls. You O my Lord, we are bound to con-

⁶ Varghese Pathikulangara. Resurrection, Life and Renewal. A Theological Study of the Liturgical Celebrations of the Great Saturday and the Sunday of Resurrection in the Chaldeo-Indian Church. Bangalore-Kottayam 1982; John Moolan. The Period of Annunciation-Nativity in the East Syrian Calendar. Its background and Place in the Liturgical Year. Kottayam 1895; Peter Kuruthukulangara. The Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord in the Chaldean and Malabar Liturgical Year. A Study of the Sources. Kottayam 1989; For the Epiphany rites, cfr. A.J. Maclean. The East Syrian Epiphany Rites. In: F.C. Conybeare. Rituale Armenorum. London 1905, pp.298-388

⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia. On Baptism. C.2; A. Mingana. Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Woodbrooke Studies VI. Cambridge 1933, p20 (syr.p.147)

⁸ Ibidem; cfr. Homily on the Eucharist. In: Mingana (see footnote 7) p.73/4 (syr.p.209). The same idea is also found in Narsai's „An Exposition of the Mysteries“ In: R.H. Connolly. The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai. Cambridge 1909, pp.2 & 54

⁹ Theodore. On the Eucharist. In: Mingana, p.85 (syr.p.222)

¹⁰ Tesbohta. In: Patikulangara (see footnote 6) §391, p.380; Syriac texts in: P. Bedjan. Breviarium iuxta Ritus Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum. Rome 1938. Tomus 2, p.37/8; for a selection of liturgical texts of christological importance, see I.H. Dalmais. Le Christ dans les liturgies syriennes orientales et occidentales. In: A.M. Triacca/A. Pistoia (eds.) Le Christ dans la liturgies. Conférences Saint-Serge. Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 20 (1981) 49-63. A large number of liturgical texts are translated by J. Mateos. Lelya-Sapra. Essai d'interprétation des matines chaldéennes. In: Orientalia Christiana Analecta 156 (1959); see also Silvester Pudichery. Rams. An Analysis and interpretation of the Chaldean Vespers. Bangalore 1972

¹¹ Pathikulangara, slotha, §352, p.374; Syriac: Bedjan II, p.34

¹² Ibidem. onitha, §185, p.340/1; Bedjan II, p.381/2

¹³ Ibidem. Qala d-Lilja, §322, p.365; Bedjan II, p.393

¹⁴ Patikulangara, p.307

fess and adore and glorify at all times, Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever."¹⁵

Sometimes the long prayers amazingly combine the doctrine and the doxology. A *kazozuta* of the Feast of The Nativity contains two parts: a doctrinal part followed by a supplication. The doctrinal part comments on the mystery celebrated on the day, with beautiful expressions of biblical inspiration:

"O Christ qui est né éternellement du Père, splendeur de sa gloire et image de sa substance, toi qui tiens et gouvernes l'univers par ta force de la parole, nous te prions ...

O Christ qui est né temporellement à la fin des temps de la Vierge Marie, source de sainteté, pour le salut de notre nature et la libération de toute créature, nous te prions ...

O Christ, Fils éternel et consubstantiel de Dieu, enfant engendré avant les étoiles, qui es né aujourd'hui à Bethléem, nous te prions ...

O Christ, Seigneur de David par ta divinité et fils de David par ton humanité, qui est né aujourd'hui de la maison de David, pour réaliser les prophéties de ton ancêtre David, nous te prions ...

O Christ, qui, sans mariage, es né aujourd'hui de la Vierge Marie, enfant admirable et fils de merveille, Dieu, le Puissant des siècles, Prince de la Paix, selon les oracles d'Isaïe, le glorieux parmi les prophètes ...

O Christ, soleil de justice qui a brillé de la maison de David, qui as manifesté aujourd'hui la gloire dans notre nature humaine pour couronner les prophéties de Jérémie et de Malachie ...

O Christ, qui lors de ta naissance selon la chair fus glorifié par les anges et annoncé par les bergers, toi à qui Siméon rendit témoignage et qu'Anne a confessé ...

O Christ, pour la naissance duquel les anges se sont écriés Gloire à Dieu dans les hauteurs, et pour laquelle ils ont annoncé paix sur la terre et bon espoir aux enfants des hommes ...

O Christ, qui en naissant d'une fille d'Eve as défait et annulé la sentence qui condamnait Eve, et as promis une vie nouvelle et bon espoir et salut à tous les enfants d'Eve ...

Christ, second Adam qui en naissant d'une fille d'Eve as rendue jeune la vieillesse du premier Adam et lui as préparé une demeure passagère du paradis..."¹⁶

This does not mean that all the liturgical texts with their christological contents would be appreciated by the churches which are not in communion with the Church of the East. Among the liturgical texts of the East Syrian Tradition expressions of strongly Nestorian Christological doctrine and sentiment can be found.

3. The Doctrine of the Duality of the Hypostases

The East Syrian tradition has inherited the christology of the ancient Antiochene school as expounded by its outstanding figures like Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyr. These three Antiochenes are characterised by the study of the gospel text literally in order to "describe the history of our salvation rather than to explain it."¹⁷ They paid particular attention to the historical Jesus especially to his human nature. They accepted the fulness of the divinity of God the Word, which is present in Christ yet it is independent in essence and in manifestation. Their main concern was to preserve the full reality of both divine and human natures in Christ. The divine and human deeds of Jesus were attributed sometimes to God and sometimes to man. A *tesbukhta* of the night service on Sundays from Advent to Epiphany, written by Babai the Great, clearly summarises the classical East Syrian christology:

"Blessed is the compassionate one, who in his loving kindness, hath supplied our life in prophecy.

With the eye of the spirit, Isaiah saw the wonderous child of the virgin.

For Mary without union bore Emmanuel, the Son of God.

From her the Holy Ghost fashioned. The body which was united (with him), as it is written.

That it might be an adorable habitation and temple. For the Brightness of the Father is one Sonship.

And at the beginning of his marvelous conception. United it with him in one honor.

That he might fulfill in him all things that were his. For the salvation of the world, as seemed good to him.

In the day of his Annunciation (or Nativity) the watchful ones glorified him. With their hallelujahs in the heights above. And also the earthly ones offered him worship. With their offerings in one honour.

One is Christ the Son of God. Worshipped by all in two natures.

In his Godhead begotten of the Father. Without beginning, before all time.

In his manhood born of Mary.

In the end of times, in the body which was united (with him).

His Godhead was not of the nature of (his) mother.

And his manhood not of the nature of the Father.

The natures are preserved in their *qnumi*. In one person of one Sonship.

And as the Godhead is. Three *qnumi* (but) one essence.

So the sonship of the Son. Is in one person two natures.

So the holy Church hath learnt. To confess the Son who is Christ.

We worship, O my Lord, thy Godhead. And thy manhood without division."¹⁸

This prayer contains Christological expressions, distinctively "Nestorian" which could be interpreted to imply of the doctrine of "two sons". The union of divinity and

¹⁵ On the use of this prayer, cfr. Silvester Pudichery. Ramsa. An Analysis and Interpretation of the Chaldean Vespers. Bangalore 1972, p.25/6; R. Taft. The Liturgy of the Hours in the Christian East: Origin, meaning, place in the life of the Church. Cochin 1984, p.166

¹⁶ J. Mateos. Lelya-Sapra, p.128/9

¹⁷ J. Meyendorff. Christ in Eastern Christian Thought. New York 1975, p.16

¹⁸ A.J. Maclean. East Syrian Daily Offices. London 1894, p.156/7

humanity is apparently ambiguous. "Two natures are preserved in their qnumi": For the critics of the East Syrian Christology, this means the independent existence of two hypostases with their proper natures in one Christ.

Since the time of Theodore of Mopsuestia the classical Antiochene approach to the person of Christ, which took seriously the manhood of Christ, has left its traces on the liturgical texts Theodore composed an anaphoral prayer and placed it on the lips of man Jesus:

"Worthy of all glory and all thanksgiving and praise is the glorious nature of thy exalted divinity; Lord of all, because thou hast constantly fulfilled in all ages various economies for the salvation of men. And despite the fact that they were so ungrateful, still thou didst ever propose to them signs of redemption. Now, however, it has seemed good to thy clemency to assume me from the (human) race and join me to thyself, and for me to put a term, set the seal on and accomplish all these former things, and through me to reveal that redemption which from the beginning, was delineated typically with those men of old. For because I have been justified and have lived without sins, thou art bestowing through me sinlessness on the entire sinful race, and so you ought to know. O my disciples, that this is my body, which is for your sake, or rather, for the sake of the world's salvation, is being broken for the forgiveness of sins; that is, through me you are going to receive perpetual life that is exempt from all sin."¹⁹

The very fact that this prayer has been placed in the mouth of man Jesus, reflects the christological concern of Theodore. Theodore preferred to speak of the man Jesus enjoying "the co-operation of the Word in proportion with the determination (toward good)."²⁰ Thus he could write "He (=the Son) did not take a body only, but the whole man, composed of a body and of an immortal and rational soul."²¹ According to the Antiochene theologumen as expounded by Theodore and his school, God's grace, His goodness, through the indwelling of the Word in the Son, aided Him to make the right use of the Freewill, whereby he overcame human sin and thus brought Man to life again. In other words, Jesus Himself, assisted by divine grace, through His union with the Word, becomes man's helper to restore him to eternal life and to deliver him from mortality.²² In the economy of the Son, the human nature becomes the instrument of the logos. In the prayer quoted above the repeated use of the expression "through me" is the remnant of that christology. The East Syrian Anaphora attributed to Theodore even though it was not composed by Theodore himself, contains several expressions from his christology. The first *g'hanta* (the prayer before the altar) reads:

"Lord God, mighty and all powerful, (repeat) who alone are eternal and who are the cause and author of all creatures, the glorious King, who have done great

incomprehensible, glorious, and exalted things unspeakable, you who with the wonderful and respectful dispensation, which your Only Begotten, Our Lord Jesus Christ did through our humanity, have wrought for us the restoration of new life and have given us in our hearts the pledge of the Holy Spirit."²³

This idea is repeated in the third *g'hanta* (the post-sanctus prayer), which is very rich in its christological content:

"Because for us men and for our salvation, the Only Begotten, God the Word, who is the image of God, did not regard it robbery to be the equal of God, but emptied himself, and received the likeness of the servant (Phil 26-7), when he descended from heaven and put on our humanity, a mortal body and a rational, intelligent and immortal soul, from the Holy Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit And through it (=through the humanity that he put on), he fulfilled and perfected all this great and wonderful dispensations which had been prepared by your foreknowledge before the foundation of the world."²⁴

The same prayer is also found in the Anaphora of Nestorius, in the postsanctus *g'hanta*. If we compare these two *g'hanta* with the post-sanctus *g'hanta* of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, an expansion is evident in the first two cases, obviously for introducing the christological phrases. The repeated use of similar expressions in the Anaphora of Theodore shows, how central was it to the East Syrian understanding of the mystery of Christ. Thus in the fourth *g'hanta* we find:

"You, good one, who will that all men should live and be converted to the knowledge of truth and they may know that you are the Lord from everlasting and from eternity, the divine nature uncreate, the author of all things, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; that for us men and for our salvation, the Son of God, God the Word put on perfect man Our Lord Jesus Christ and was perfected and justified in the power of God and in the Holy Spirit ... to whom be praised adoration for ever and ever, Amen."²⁵

One may note the regular use of the clothing metaphor in these prayers ("put on our humanity"- also found in Addai and Mari). In his remarkable synthesis of the early Syriac thought, *Symbols of the Church and Kingdom*, Robert Murray has pointed out that "Christ put on the body," is a favorite expression for the Syrian fathers to describe the incarnation. It is found frequently in the Acts of Thomas and Didascalia and Aphrahat who draws on the Diatessaron rendering of John 1,14 "the Word became body (*pagra*) and dwelt in us."²⁶ Ephrem speaks of Christ's body as a garment that he put

¹⁹ W. Macomber. An Anaphora Prayer composed by Theodore of Mopsuestia. In: Parole de l'Orient VI-VII (1975/76) 341-47, especially p.344/5. We have quoted the preserved by Cyrus of Edessa.

²⁰ Theodore of Mopsuestia. De Incarnatione. Fragment published in H.B. Swete. Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Minor Epistles of Saint Paul. Cambridge 1882, Appendix A.II, p.296

²¹ Hom. Cat. V, 19, ed. R. Tonneau. Rome 1949, p.127; R.A. Norris. Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Oxford 1963, p.203

²² H.J.W. Drijvers. Early Forms of Antiochene Christology. In: C. Laga et alii (eds.) After Chalcedon. Studies in Theology and Church History offered to Prof. Albert von Roey for his 70th Birthday. Louvain 1985, pp.99-114 (esp. P.110); Norris (see above), pp.195ff.

²³ J. Vadakkal (ed. & transl.). The East Syrian Anaphora of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia. Critical Edition, English Translation and Study. Kottayam 1989, p.78

²⁴ Ibidem, p.86 (sy. p.60). See also F.Y. Alichoran (ed. & french transl.) Missel chaldéen. Paris 1982, p.132. We have corrected the translation of Vadakkal „and through him“ as „through it“. Cfr. Alichoran: „par l'intermédiaire de notre nature humaine.“

²⁵ Vadakkal, p.89/90; Alichoran, p.140

²⁶ Robert Murray. Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition. Cambridge 1975, p.71, 310-12; cfr. S. Brock. Clothing Metaphors as a means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition. In: Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den Östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter. Hrsg. Von Margot Schmidt. Eichstätter Beiträge. Bd. 4. Regensburg 1982, pp.11-38

on: "The first-born was clothed in the body; it was the veil of his glory. The immortal Bridegroom will shin forth in this robe."²⁷

But the East Syrian usage of the expressions "he put on our humanity" or "he dwelt in the human body" are to be understood in the light of the further christological developments. Indwelling of the Word in the temple of the human body is a favorite image for the Antiochenes. Thus we find in one of the writings of Nestorius:

"By the contact of the temple in which it dwelt, the Word's divine nature became itself subject to corruption."²⁸ The later tradition put this idea in radical phrases, as we find in a *Mawtha d-Lelya* of the first Thursday of Nativity:

"The daughter of David gave birth to a child of wonder: Christ the most holy of holies, the power of the Supreme one, the temple and its recipient, the dwelling and its dweller, one person, two images (...) The Eternal Being did not become flesh as you think, O (men) hard to persuade. He chose a dwelling in order to hide his splendour, so that the race of mortal might not perish from his sight."²⁹

Again in the *Mawtha d-Lelya* of the second Tuesday of Nativity we find:

"The Word from the Father dwelt in our humanity in the child born from Mary; and He brought the nations back from error to the adoration of the lordship of the Father without beginning. Come let us shout along with the communities above and say together: Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O glorious King, who exalted our nature through the child from Mary who shone forth for our redemption."³⁰

In a prayer of the night service Epiphany rites we read:
"To the body which was of mankind which God the Word took: he gave power and lordship: like him in unity. It was the image of the living Father: and the temple of the Only-begotten Word and the shrine of the eternal Spirit without change."³¹

In another prayer of the night service of Epiphany idea is more clear:

"Hidden in the nature of his (divine) Being: the Son, who was not younger than him who sent him descended in his good will and love (and) took our nature and dwelt in it. The Holy Ghost moved upon the head: of the temple of the Word who clothed himself with it; and hovered on his body and soul: from the glorious heights of his holiness ..."³²

Later liturgical texts clearly separates the Godhead and Manhood, as we find in a prayer composed by Presbyter Shimsha Saidnaya, included in the Epiphany rites:

"Him that holdeth the bounds, the bosom of the waters did not hold; and him that is higher than all, the name of sons did not magnify: and the nature of his glory changeth not nor can it (change): But we believe thus: in the Son Christ and worship him: and we sing Holy to his Godhead and his Manhood: and give thanks to him who is God and man."³³

That christological doctrine is present even in a concluding benediction of great feasts "O Fils unique qui es reconnu en une Personne et en deux natures, benis tes serviteurs et épargne-leur tout dommage."³⁴

For the Antiochenes, impassability is the character of the divine nature. Thus Theodoret never accepted the expression "God died on the cross" and accused Cyril of Alexandria of "Theopassianism", which for him implied the absence of a genuine human nature.³⁵ For Theodoret, the expression "God died" would imply a confusion of the two natures, that is "monophysitism." This christological attitude is reflected in the Holy Week liturgy of the Church of the East Expressions such as "crucified God" or "God died on the cross" are almost absent. The liturgical texts of the Holy week prefer to speak of "the sacrifice of Christ" or "cross of Jesus".³⁶

4. A Word of Conclusion

The Theodorian concepts of indwelling of the Word, and Jesus as the Helper of humanity, are almost regularly seen in East Syrian liturgical texts. It is precisely because of such expressions that the other eastern churches accused the East Syrians of holding the doctrine of two sons. These concepts are of Mesopotamian origin, and could very well go at least two centuries back to the time of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Thus we find them in the Odes of Solomon and in the Syriac Acts of Thomas. As H.J. W. Drijvers has suggested, they might have been introduced into the Antiochene christology by Lucien of Antioch, the founder of the Antiochene School, who had his theological training in Edessa.³⁷

By introducing christological texts in the Liturgy, the East Syrian writers intended to communicate to the faithful, their traditional vision of Christ and thus to preserve it in and through the liturgical life. In this regard their approach is in perfect continuity with the early Christian tradition. But this does not mean that the other eastern sister churches could easily appreciate their doctrinal contents, sometimes too much coloured by the "Nestorian" terminology. In the ecumenical context, their interpretation, both by the East Syrians and those who are not in communion with them, is of utmost importance.

²⁷ Ephrem. Carmina Nisibena 43,21. In: E. Beck (ed.) Des Heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena. CSCO 240, SS. 102. Louvain 1963, p.45

²⁸ Nestorius. 2nd Letter to Cyril. In: PG 77, 53a

²⁹ Thomas Darmo (ed.) Ktaba da-Qdam wa-d-Batar wa-d-Hudra wa-d-Kaskull wa-d-Gazza. 3 Vols. Trichur 1960/ 61. Vol. 1, p.171/2

³⁰ Darmo. Vol. 1, p.183; Moolan, p.283

³¹ A.J. Maclean. The East Syrian Epiphany Rites, p.329

³² Ibidem, p.346

³³ Ibidem, p.363

³⁴ Alichoran, p.203

³⁵ Theodoret's 83rd Letter to Dioscorus of Alexandria. In: PG 83, 1272

³⁶ Mateos, p.230/1

³⁷ Drijvers, p.113; cfr. G. Bardy. Recherches sur Saint Lucien d'Antioche et son école. Paris 1936, p.35/6

Syro-Oriental Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

It is not my aim to present, in this paper, the Christology of the Syro-Oriental Church which was done by Mar Bawai Soro, Mar Aprem, and Professors Davids and Chediath at the first consultation in 1994.¹ So I may be allowed to concentrate alone on the christological contents as found in the official liturgical books of the Syro-Oriental Church which are basically and essentially the common treasure and heritage of all the Churches of this tradition in the Near East as well as in India.

The Syro-Oriental Church whose apostolic origin and antiquity is undisputed, because of different circumstances, did not come under the influence of Hellenistic schools of thought, but developed her own terminology and liturgy in accordance to her Semitic genius. She has always remained very close to the Holy Bible whose authors had expressed themselves in Aramaic, which is even palpable when they used Greek as a medium of expression. Her liturgy is deeply rooted in the Bible and presupposes the synagogue worship of the People of God of the Old Testament.

There is, however, an essential difference between the Liturgy of the people of the Old Testament and the Liturgy of the Syro-Oriental or Catholic and Apostolic Church of the East. „The liturgical books, especially the Divine Office (Hudra) of this Church contain both the doctrine and the terms.“² This liturgy is centred mainly on the salvific work accomplished by the second Person of the Holy Trinity. This is the reason why the Resurrection of Christ which is having such a relevance for human salvation, remains its main theme that it is never absent in any liturgical celebration, even when the Church remembers the suffering and death of her Lord and Saviour.

Looking at the structure of the liturgical services, be it the eucharistic celebration, the other mysteries or sacraments, or the Divine Praises, we find, with the only exception of the Lelya-Sapra (where it is almost at its conclusion), the typical Syro-Oriental Resurrection hymn, *Laku Mara* at the end of the introductory part or *enarxis*. This hymn is called the „Song of Adam.“³ Tradition says that those who rose up when Christ died on the Cross, coming out from their graves, sang:

„Lord of all, we praise you; Jesus Christ, we glorify you: for you are the quickener of our bodies and the gracious saviour of our souls.“⁴

The *Laku Mara* reminds us always of the Qanona preceding the Karozuta in the „Celebration of the Peace of the Resurrection“ on Easter Sunday:

„Blessed is the King who descended to the Šeol and raised us up and promised renewal to our race by his Resurrection. Creatures sing praise at your Resurrection,

because they could participate in the redemption which was for all. - O Lord of time, in whose hands all the ages are placed, destroy in us the threatening evil.“⁵

The prayer concluding the *Laku Mara* emphasises once more the contents of the hymn, the salvific work Christ accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.

„You, o my Lord are indeed the quickener of our bodies and the gracious saviour of our souls and the constant preserver of our lives. To you, o my Lord we are bound always to thank, adore and glorify. Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever.“

The Trinitarian clause makes evident that the economy of salvation cannot be seen under separate aspects of different theological disciplines, Christology has to be understood in its Trinitarian and pneumatological context.

„Consequently, if Pneumatology is understood in its integral context with Christology, no artificial partition of these two phenomena of ecclesial life is necessary.“⁶

Many orations begin with (or mention Jesus Christ as) *Our Lord and our God*.⁷ This is a confession of the humanity and divinity of Christ and a communitarian or liturgical adaptation of the faith expression „*My Lord and my God*“ of the apostle St. Thomas, the common Father of the Churches of the Syro-oriental tradition. At the same time, it is also a profession of faith in Christ's resurrection which is the central theme of their Liturgy.

There is another phenomenon in the Syro-Oriental liturgy which points to its antiquity and differs from the way of praying in the Church of the Occident which is used to address, in general, the prayers to the Father *through Christ our Lord in communion with the Holy Spirit*. There are many prayers addressed directly to Christ or in which he indirectly is asked to grant something to a particular person. Of the latter category we are quoting a few:

„May Christ instruct you in his holy doctrine making you a perfect example for those who are listening to you“ (Blessing of the reader before the reading from the Apostle).

„May Christ who was sacrificed for our redemption and who has commanded us to make the commemoration of his death, his burial and his resurrection, accept this sacrifice at our hands, in his grace and mercies for ever.“ (Offertory prayer).

„Our Lord be with us all in his grace and mercies for ever. Amen.“ (before the Creed).

¹ Mar Bawai Soro/M.J. Birnie. Is the Theology of the Church of the East Nestorian? In: Syriac Dialogue 1, Vienna 1994 (=Assyr 1) pp.126-9; Mar Aprem G. Mookan, Ibidem, p.149; A. Davids, p.138 and Geevarghese Chediath. The Theological Contribution of Mar Babai the Great. Ibidem, pp.158-165

² P.J. Podipara. The Mariology of the Church of the East. In: Christian Orient 2 (1981) 172

³ Mar Aprem. Sacraments of the church of the East. Trichur - Voice of the East 25/11 (1978) p.74

⁴ Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church. Changanacherry-Erakulam 1986, p.13; cf. K.A. Paul/Mar Aprem G. Mookan (eds.). The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and The Order of Baptism. Trichur 1967, p.7

⁵ V. Pathikulangara. Resurrection, Life and Renewal: A Theological Study on the Liturgical Celebrations of the Great Saturday and the Sunday of Resurrection in the Chaldeo-Indian Church. Bangalore-Kottayam-Paderborn 1982, p.403

⁶ Z. Glaeser. Pneumatologiczna eklezjologia Nikosa A. Nissiotisa (The pneumatological ecclesiology of Nikos A. Nissiotis). Lublin (doctoral diss.) 1995. Summary

⁷ See e.g. the prayer before the epistle on Sundays and feasts, the prayer when the priest strikes the base of the chalice with the paten at the time of offertory, the Kušapa preceding the anaphora, the G'hanta before the epiclesis, the introduction of the Lord's Prayer on Sundays and feasts, the prayer before the final Lord's Prayer on Sundays and feasts.

On the other hand, the prayers of the first Kusapa of the Qudaša Qadmaya the first sanctification or Anaphora of the Apostles, with the exception of the Trinitarian introduction, are addressed to Christ, the Redeemer, who makes us, through his earthly life, suffering and resurrection, in perfect unity with his Father and the Holy Spirit, worthy to appear before him, with *galyut ape*, openness of face, i.e. „full confidence,“ on the day of judgement.

„So also, by your grace you made us worthy of your Body and your Blood. Likewise make us worthy to appear before you on the day of judgement with innocence of face.“⁸

„Christ, you received the blood of the martyrs on the day of their immolation. Accept this incense from my poor hands in your grace and your mercies. Amen.“

Or: „O Lord, on the day of your burial, your holy body was embalmed with myrrh and the incense of Nicodemus, and we also, by this incense embalm your body buried in alabaster. This incense be blessed and sanctified effectively by your grace to accomplish this mystery and obtain for us the purification of our sins and iniquities. May it be to you and your Father and for the Holy Spirit an agreeable perfume...“⁹

The perfectness of Christ's Godhead is not only expressed in the Creed where it is said that „the one Lord Jesus Christ“ is „the Son of God, the Only Begotten, the First-born of all Creations, begotten of His Father before all worlds and not made, very God of very God; of one essence with his Father“,¹⁰ but also in the Kušapa following the Sanctus: „Holy are you, God, Father of Truth, of whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its origin. *Holy are you eternal Son, by whom all things were made.* Holy are you, Holy Spirit, by whom all things are sanctified.“ The G'hanta¹¹ that follows is a masterpiece of doxology and a condensed Christology. It praises God the Word, the hidden offspring from the Father's bosom, who, being his likeness and the splendour of his magnificence, the image of his being, thought this not robbery to be his equal, but emptied himself and took the likeness of the servant. He became perfect man with a human and mortal body and with a rational soul, endowed with knowledge and immortality. He was born from a woman and put himself under the law to redeem those who were under the law.¹²

A *tešbohta* sung from the first Sunday of the season of Annunciation until Epiphany¹³ develops this truth in detail. It is because of its theological contents that it has

been already translated into several languages. The hymn is attributed to Mar Babai the Great. The changes introduced by Paul Bedjan into his edition in the 19th century and thus into the official Chaldean and Syro-Malabar „Breviarium“ of 1938 may certainly be regarded now as obsolete. So we may return to the original text which, in its purity, has always been kept by that part of the Church of the East which was called „Nestorian“:

„Blessed is the merciful One who in his goodness provided for our life through prophecy.

With the eyes of the Spirit, Isaiah saw the wonderful child of the virginity.

Because without intercourse Mary gave birth to Emmanuel, the Son of God.

From her the Holy Spirit formed his united body, as it is written - that it might become the abode and the adorable temple for the splendour of the Father in one Filiation.

And at the beginning of his wonderful conception,

he united it with him in one honour,

so that in him might be accomplished

everything of His for the redemption of all, as was pleasing to him.

On the day of his annunciation (or birth), the watchers in heaven above praised him with their songs, and those on earth offered adoration with their offerings in unanimous honour.

Christ is the One, the Son of God adored by all in two *kyane*.

In his divinity he is born from the Father without beginning, and beyond time.

And in his humanity he is born from Mary¹⁴

at the end of time in the united body.

His divinity is not from the *kyana* of a mother

nor is his humanity from the *kyana* of a father.

The *kyane* are preserved in their *qnome*

in the *parsopa* of the One Filiation.

As the Divinity is three *qnome* and one essence,

so is the Filiation of the Son one *parsopa* in two *kyane*.

Thus the holy Church has learnt to believe in the Son who is Christ.

Lord, we adore your Divinity and humanity without doubt (*thrice*).

One power, one Lordship, one will and one glory

to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.“

The term „Mother of Christ“ preferred in the Syro-oriental Church means exactly the same as *Theotokos*, Mother of God in the Churches which accepted the Council of Ephesus. Metropolitan Mar Timotheos of Trichur who was the leader of the *Chaldean Syrian Church* - which is, by the way, the older name of the „Syro-Malabar Church“; this appellation appears for the first time in the end of the 18th century¹⁵ throughout 45

⁸ Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church, p.44 (German version. Kottayam-Paderborn 1993, p.29; cf. K.A. Paul-Mar Aprem G. Mookan (see footnote 4), p.29

⁹ F.Y. Alichoran (ed.). *Missel Chaldéen. L'Ordre des Mystères avec les Trois Anaphores selon le rite de la Sainte Église d'Orient. En usage chez les Chaldéens catholiques du Patriarcat de Chaldée-Babylone.* Paris 1982, pp.75f. - Regrettably these two prayers are not included in the Syro-Malabar liturgy.

¹⁰ Quoted from K.A. Paul-Mar Aprem G. Mookan. op.cit. footnote 4, p.18

¹¹ The edition of de Kelaita has got another text (cf. Paul-Mar Aprem, p.33). This G'hanta of the first anaphora in the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar editions is a part of that found in the third anaphora named „of Mar Nestorius“

¹² Cf. F.Y. Alichoran (see footnote 9) p.81; Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church, p.46f.

¹³ Cf. P. Bedjan/G.E. Khayyat. *Slota Qanonayta d-Kahne. Breviarium iuxta ritum Syrorum Orientalium id est Chaldaeorum.* Vol. 1. Rome. 1938, p.57ff.; T. Darmo. *Kṭāba da-dam wa-d-Batar wa d-Hudra wa d-kaškol wa d-gazza...* Vol. 1. Trichur 1960, p.116f. English translation by R.J. Podipara. *The Mariology of the Church of the East* (see footnote 2), p.173f.

¹⁴ Italics are mine.

¹⁵ C. Payngot. *Father Placid and Liturgy.* In: V. Pathikulangara (ed.). *Placidachan.* Kottayam 1995, p.277, fn.5

years, points to the Šuraya in the Ramša of Wednesdays which is addressed to Jesus as God:

„Our Lord and God, equip us with strong and invincible weapon through the prayers of *your* blessed mother Mary, and give us a share and partnership together with her in the heavenly resting place.“

This text is another proof of the christological orthodoxy of the Syro-oriental Church. Regretfully, Paul Bedjan, consciously or through inadvertence, omitted the possessive pronoun *your*, and this mistake is repeated on all the three volumes on page 13.¹⁶

The G'hanta which follows (in the present Chaldean and Syro-Malabar editions) the Institution narrative, the salvific work accomplished by Christ on our behalf is taken up again: putting on our humanity, he united it with his divinity; he exalted our humiliation, raised us from our fall and vivified our mortality. He pardoned our sins, justified our culpable nature, enlightened our intelligence and defeated our enemies.

„The salvation achieved by Christ consists in renewing the Divine image in man, and this is based on two correlated facts and premises:

1) Christ himself is the perfect image of God,¹⁷ and

2) man is created with an inherent dynamism to grow into the perfection of the Divine image which is planted in him as a seed and promise.

This Godward (upward) thrust of man being lost on account of sin, redemption consists in *renewing* him and so bringing him salvation. We find this vision also pointing to the intrinsic relationship between Christ and man (human nature). Here we perceive the relationship of unity between Christology, Anthropology and Theology. In this context we may recall that according to K. Rahner 'Christology is the beginning and end of Anthropology'.¹⁸

The prayer introducing the rite of traction and consignation, after the epiclesis, calls Christ the „source of peace of those above and of tranquillity of those below“, and he is asked to grant peace and tranquillity to the four corners of the world and particularly to the holy and catholic Church. „Those („above“), in heaven, have found it in Christ and those („below“) on earth have the hope for the same in him.“¹⁹ So Christ is addressed, after communion, when the priest consumes what is left over and in the two subsequent prayers „hope of mankind.“ The thanksgiving prayer, *tešbohta d-qubaltaibuta* on Sundays, feasts and commemorations, is a doxology expressing this hope:

„Jesus, our Lord, adorable King, by your passion you have defeated the tyrant death.

Son of God, you have promised us the new life in the kingdom of heaven.

Banish all sufferings and establish in our country peace and love.

On the day of your manifestation, let us live before you and go to your encounter, according to your will.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p.281

¹⁷ S. Athappilly. Jesus Christ the Image of the Father. In: Christian Orient 12 (1991) 107-127

¹⁸ S. Athappilly. The Theological Anthropology of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana. In: Christian Orient 16 (1995) 109

¹⁹ Ibidem p.110

With Hosannas we shall praise your name for the grace towards our race.

Abundant are your mercies towards our humanity, and your love has revealed itself on behalf of our mortal nature.

You have wiped away our sins by your pardon. Glory be to your name for all your gifts.

Blessed be your majesty in your dwelling place, you who pardon our debts in your mercy.

In your grace, make us all worthy to confess and to adore your divinity

And we shall lift up our praises to your sovereignty at all times.

Amen and Amen.“

It is only logical that the final prayer preceding the concluding „Our Father“ once again gives Christ the Redeemer all attributes due to him: our God, our Lord, our King, our Saviour, Giver of Life, Forgiver of our sins, he who makes us worthy to receive his precious body and blood which sanctifies the whole universe. This is a pledge, „for the pardon of offences and forgiveness of sins, for the great hope of resurrection from the dead and for the new life in the kingdom of heaven.“

Christ as our Saviour and Mediator to God the Father is also one of the main themes of the *Liturgy of Baptism*. Baptism is the liturgical manifestation of the faith in Christ, it is putting on Christ (Gal 3, 27; Rom 13, 14). It is Baptism which gives us a new birth, life and resurrection, so that we are counted his brethren. The prayer of „The Imposition of hands“ for male candidates says:

„He (Christ) came for the salvation of our nature and that purified mud which your holy hands have moulded, according to the will of your Godhead. He renewed it and granted again life to its mortality. He left us who are redeemed by his passion, his faith that we may become through it partaken of the entire gift, namely through the token of Baptism that he entrusted us. So we draw near today to the sign of the passion which he really endured in order to be reborn from the womb of Baptism prepared for us.“

And in the *Karozuṭa* after the pre-baptismal anointing which is attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, we are told that „in an image he portrayed and showed to us in his holy baptism the true resurrection and renewal“ which will become our share on the last day of this world. Those prepared in faith to receive the mystery of baptism, obtain absolution and become members of the Church (Rom 12, 1; 1 Cor 6, 14), Christ's brothers (cf. Col 1, 18) of which he, the First-born from among the dead, is the head. Having this in mind, the Church sings on Holy Saturday:

„O the first-borns. the children of the Church, in mystery see 'the glory of the Son' (Holy Spirit), who called to you the light of the Most High: 'the Love from above' (Holy Spirit) came down and gave us life.“²⁰

The *Karozuṭa* attributed to Bar Sauma of Nisibis professes Christ as „the Son of Truth, the Son of the nature of the Father, the physician of our souls“. Baptism is the „gift of the grace“ of our quickener, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the *Unnaya* immediately

²⁰ Oniṭa in the second Mawṭba of Great Saturday; Cf. V. Pathikulangara (footnote 5), pp.258 and 341

before the administration of baptism says. In the first prayer of the „Imposition of hands“ preceding the post-baptismal anointing or confirmation, God is thanked for having not left mankind, because of their wickedness, exposed to perdition, but by the manifestation in the flesh of the Only-begotten, God the Word, has turned them back to him and made them worthy to know him and become pure members of the body of Christ. The *Huttama* of the rite of Baptism contains the following doxology:

„Let us raise glory and honour, confession and adoration to you, the Most High. You descended and put on the flesh of our humiliation. You have made it one with him (God the Word) in all things of his divinity and promised us that you would make us heirs of his glory and children of his likeness in the communion of his honour.“

The Syro-oriental liturgy of the Great Week, particularly of Great Friday and the Sunday of Resurrection proclaim the same Christ and Lord. „The Passion Friday celebration has a particularly notable thrust to proclaim the same Christ and Lord; it will prepare the worshippers to confess Jesus Christ the Lord at the paschal baptism and thus they will be enabled to rise with him on the Sunday of Resurrection.“²¹

In the Divine Praises of Great Friday, we find the profession: „Christ, the Image of the Father, the Icon of His Only Begotten and the Beautiful Shrine of the Holy Spirit.“²² Here we have an expression of the essence of christological belief. The *Karozuta* in the *Qale d-Sahra*, the last part of the vigil of this day, is a christological hymn par excellence;²³ it is addressed to the Son of God:

He is the Word from the Father who took our humanity for our redemption.

By his holy birth from the holy virgin he acquired hope for us.

By his glorious manifestation, he renewed our nature.

He removed our slavery from the hands of the evil one through his fast.

By his holy commandments he turned us away from error to the knowledge of truth.

He gave us his body and blood for the remission of our debts.

He handed himself over for us and suffered passion on the cross for the redemption of all.

He raised us from our fall by his glorious resurrection.

He exalted our human state by his ascension.

He sent the Holy Spirit and made his apostles wise: through them he converted gentiles to the knowledge of his divinity.

As he had come and redeemed us, he will come for our renewal.

There he is called in the second part: Son of God; Child of the Father; Light of the world; Lord of all; our good shepherd; forgiver of our debts; he who wipes out our sins; healer of our pains; purifier of our blemishes; the one who renews our bodies; redeemer

²¹ A.G. Kollampampil. 'Rubta d-Haša: Friday of the Passion in the East Syrian Liturgy. A Source Study (Excerptum ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum Sacrae Liturgiae ...) Rome 1995, p.46

²² Hudra (see ann.12) II, p.490. See the commentary on this in V. Pathikulangara. Resurrection, Life and Renewal, p.245-251

²³ P. Bedjan/G.E. Khayyat (footnote 13) Vol.2, p.370f.; Hudra Vol.2, p.504f. For an English translation, see V. Pathikulangara. 'Osa'na' to Resurrection: The Holy Week Celebrations in the Syro-Malabar Church. In: Denha Services 30 (1990) 156-159

of our life; the great high-priest; the great shepherd and visitor of our souls. And the *karozuta* ends:

„Son of God, who is adored and glorified in heaven and on earth with his Father and the Holy Spirit. Christ our hope. Have mercy on us. O our Lord, have mercy on us. - Pacify your Church by your cross, protect our community by your mercy, make us all worthy to meet your manifestation with confidence. Christ, our hope, have mercy on us. O our Lord, have mercy on us.“

Concluding our deliberations, we can say that the liturgy of the Syro-oriental Church is the very locus theologicus of Christology and its sacramental and ecclesiological dimensions.

In her Liturgy the Church

„celebrates anamnatically the new paschal Lamb and continues to fulfil the suffering of the Lord. Thus liturgy is the celebration of the power of God on the Cross. The new time in the liturgical celebration is *sacred time* and not an 'ordinary linear time' *before* and *after*. The worshipping community celebrates the paschal lamb in the eternal present where past, present and future are together salvifically present. Therefore liturgy is a heavenly act: the act of the glorified Christ. So the worshipping community has to integrate or 'plunge into' this heavenly act with thanksgiving and praise. Thus a certain tension predominates in the liturgical assembly as it seeks to be authentically absorbed into this heavenly act. So they ask God to save them from evil, to grant mercy and love; to restore their relationship with Him; to forgive, to protect and to be merciful, to cure wounds, to renew and to enable them to enjoy eternal life. Thus the liturgical celebration is the anamnestic re-living of the new Pascha in sacred time with the glorified Christ and with sentiments of thanks and praise voiced by the redeemed people.“²⁴

Discussion:

Prof. Kodapuzha: The liturgical sources are extremely important. The liturgy is the celebration of the faith of the church. There are also christological texts which explicitly profess the liturgical tradition of the Assyrian Church.

- „Praised be to the child whose father is heavenly and whose mother is earthly.“

- „Blessed is the one who is born twice, divinely and humanly, eternally before all ages, and temporarily in our own day.“

- „Blessed is the word that was incarnate and was born of Mary.“

- „The one who is sealed and confirmed voice of the prophet by his second birth.“

There are many other sources of this kind.

Those liturgical texts seem to lead us to the same conclusion. Though the term Nestorian happened to exist there even centuries before.

I want to have a clarification from Dr. Varghese (see above p.153). I don't understand the meaning of „independent“. The same page towards the middle, it is said „so the

²⁴ A.G. Kollampampil (footnote 21), p.51

Sonship....“ This prayer contains christological expressions, distinctively Nestorian. It could be interpreted to imply the doctrine: two sons. The union of divinity and humanity is apparently ambiguous. Two natures are preserved in the *qnome*, for the critics of the Assyrian christology this means two independent *hypostases* with their proper natures in one Christ.

I think in the paper of Prof. Madey (see above p.165) he gives the answer: „The *kyane* are ...“ The *qnome* has to be understood in the proper original meaning. If it is taken for *hypostasis* we will be confused. *Qnome* and *hypostasis* according to the Assyrian Church are not the same. They are individual natures.

Prof. Davids: I would like to ask Prof. Madey about relations he stresses between Christ and *pneumatology*. It is very characteristic for the Assyrian tradition. On (see above p.162) you quote at the beginning of the next page prayers. But I don't see any reference there to the Holy Spirit. So, I wonder what is the connection.

Question to Father Verghese: If in the Assyrian tradition there are remains linked with the Syrian tradition, why they cannot get away from the old Syrian tradition?

Dr. Hainthaler: I would like to make three remarks on Father Verghese's paper:

(see above p.154): The conclusion you made on *qnoma*.

(see above p.156) I can't see how you can speak about a „separating“. I would appreciate it if we can say: „distinguish“.

(see above p.156): Lucian of Antioch: I think there are new researches made which see the thing quite in another way.

Mar Bawai: A short comment on Father Verghese's paper.

(see above p.154) This means two independent existences of two *hypostases* with their proper natures in one Christ.

This consultation needs to pay careful attention, and hopefully will be done some extra research on this point in an attempt to clarify the disputation here.

And on Prof. Madey's paper, (see above p.164). Why do we say the „changes“ in ... the phrase *qnome* in which he saw heretical terminology.

There has been a terminological explanation of what is the meaning of *qnome*.

I would suggest that PRO ORIENTE could make a deliberate research into this, in order to clarify it and make it official, in a way that we could use this as a reference. The point is that there is a distinction between *qnoma* and *hypostasis*.

Dr. Winkler: I want to stress the same point. I am not sure about Dr. Varghese's conclusion. At the end, he was saying that „this doesn't mean ...“ He is giving an answer in the next sentence: „the ecumenical context ..“ I got the impression that we could clarify more the terminological problem between: *kyana* - *prosôpon* - *qnoma*.

Dr. Abramovski: To Father Verghese's paper. I don't see why one should not speak about Jesus on the Cross. It is mentioned in the Gospel (see above p.156).

These lines cannot be mixed. You cannot speak of different person God and Man. We say holy to his Godhead and manhood. They are not independent.

Father Yousif: I have a few things for clarification:

- Prof. Madey, (see above p.163) *kušapa* is addressed to Christ.

- (see above p.167): The vocative is in the third person.

- Father Verghese, (see above p.154) the Anaphora related to the texts: „Worthy of all glory ..“ It touches the prayer of Christ.

Archbishop Krikorian: I was confused about the terminology. There are no confirmed understandings of the terms. I want to ask Prof. Madey whether the Syrian tradition is completely depending on the Bible. It is not. It depended on the Greek terms as well. *Kyana* is the abstract nature; *qnoma* is the concrete.

Father Chediath: 1. *Qnoma* has different meanings in the Western tradition = actual concrete being. Eastern tradition = real, or individualized nature. It is very fundamental to clarify these terms.

2. In the Eastern Syrian tradition these philosophical terms are not really important.

3. Father Verghese, (see above p.154) independent existence is a Nestorian heresy. Two independent realities in Christ is a heresy.

4. The last sentence of the last paragraph is difficult to understand.

Prof. Brock: On Father Verghese's paper, (see above p.154) is not in liturgical use. It does help to bring out an important aspect in the East Syrian tradition. That is the time aspect. Being a tradition very historically minded, that is something important.

Archbishop Powathil: Ecumenism needs a fresh look at the different traditions.

Father Habbi: On Father Varghese's paper, (see above p.152/3) I think the *qnoma* is divine and trinitarian through Christ in the liturgy.
About clarifying the term and expressions.

Prof. Hofrichter: On the question of Eastern Church devoted to Syriac concept: the terms are derived from Greek concepts.
How can Christ redeem without having a human nature.

Father Sako: The Syrians used Syriac and Greek terms.

Father Jammo: There is a doctrine in theology called „Communicatio idiomatum“. It gives the meaning of the expression of faith. We have faith, literally expression, and intellectual expression. *Qnoma* comes to emphasize Chalcedon interpretation.
On Prof. Madey (see above p.167), Jesus Son of God is the expression of humanity. It is the exchange of union.

Mar Bawai: What is the definition of *qnoma* from the Assyrian point of view.

Archbishop Mounayer: There are differences in understanding the meanings of *kyana* and *qnoma* even among the Syrians.

Beside the approach of faith and worship, I should mention the cultural aspect of this christology. This is a semitico-mesopotamic consideration of the mystery of Christ. It insists more on facts and beings than on analysing the essence (of Christ), his nature(s). It is interested in Christ's action and behaviour rather than in his quiddity; it focuses on his person rather than on his composition. The problem of number of person(s) and natures in Christ is a Greek problem to which our tradition was obliged to answer! To speculate on divine things in order to scrutinize and make of them a subject of discussion (sophistic tradition) is almost a sacrilege!

1.3. Where and how liturgy contemplates Jesus the Christ

We contemplate Jesus the Christ in our Liturgy in action. This action, as in other liturgies, is recorded in the liturgical texts, the books of the celebration of the Eucharist, of the other mysteries-sacraments, and of the praises day and night and during the whole liturgical year. We meditate Christ in this activity which is Church's activity and His! He is the Celebrant and the Celebrated. These different 'rites' are, in their variety, intimately connected, and their distinction or separation is only of order of study: prayer, sacraments, use of reading Scripture are united in the common goal of worshipping God (Christ), his glorification and the salvation of the faithful. In this respect we understand why the book of Hudra included originally the liturgical prayer, the anaphoras and proper of Mass, the rituals of baptism and of Pa'tdon (*Hussaya*). So the contemplation of divine mysteries and their adoration are in harmony with the work of redemption: the Trinity is involved in the becoming man and the rest of the mystery of the Son of God; so theology and economy are the ferment of the liturgical activity of the Church which is executed in a milieu (architecture) which reflects this complex mystery. The divine as dispensation manifests the work of God and commands the liturgical activity of the Church.

So we can divide our study in the following sections:

1. The dispensation as the tram of the theology of Christ, in the liturgical year.
2. The liturgy of the Hours as prayer celebrating the mysteries of Christ daily and weekly.
3. Holy Qurbana or Eucharist celebration of the Glorious Christ present through the mysteries and scriptures he entrusted to us.
4. the mysteries-sacraments; Communication of the Lord through signs and rites.
5. Main themes of the theology of Jesus the Christ.

2. The Dispensation as the tram of the theology of Christ in the Liturgical Year

2.1. The Locus of the Dispensation (*Mdabbranuta*) in the Liturgical Year

During a year, the Church makes the memorial of the mysteries of Our Lord and tries to actualize them in the faithful through their fruitful prayer and the help of Christ. Three elements of Church celebration take into account the gradual development of Christ's mysteries: the proper of the liturgical prayer, of the readings and of the Sanctification of the Holy Qurbana or the Eucharistic liturgy. The proper of the Church's Prayers is found in the office of the sundays, feast-days and commemora-

tions, distributed in the respective weeks, at least regarding the proper '*oniata* (-*troparia*) of the preceding sunday. There are proper readings for these same occasions but only for the Holy Qurbana. There are no biblical readings in the Office, except the last days of the Holy Week. The proper '*oniata* of the Holy Eucharist reflect the liturgical period, this is the case of the '*onita d-Qamke* (of the chancel), recited at the beginning of the celebration, is generally the Eucharist (the '*Onita d-Raze* and the response of Bem). The '*onita* of the Gospel (from Ascension to the period of the Dedication of the Church excluded) comments the Gospel reading of the days. The proper psalms are choosen in view of the celebrated mystery.

Beside this 'material' presence of liturgical elements related to the Christ's Dispensation. We may discover some fundamental elements which reflect the spirit of every period of the year that is the particular light under which is considered this divine economy. They are three:

1. The biblical readings proper to each sunday and feast-day (and the selected psalms, either in the beginning of the Qurbana or in the proper of the Office).
2. The five '*oniata* proper to each sunday distributed then in the following ferial days: - the '*onita d-basaliké* = vespers
- the 1st '*onita* of the *mautha* = kathisma
- the '*onita d-lelya* = night vigil
- the '*onita* of the *sapra* = matins
- the '*onita* of the *raze* = mysteries, in the Holy Eucharist
3. The *teshbohta* = praise, proper to each Shabo'a, i.e. *heptad* or septenary of liturgical period, and the proper diaconal *karozuta* = liturgical prayer.

2.2. The Divine Dispensation throughout the Liturgical Year

There are two acceptions possible of the Divine Economy (*mdabbranuta*) in our liturgy. In a restricted sense, then it includes the becoming man of Christ and his ministry. In this sense the proclamation of the deacon exhorting to communion says: „...and after all his Economy for us, the first-fruit of our nature was tempted is the Cross.“² In a wider sense it includes the work of the Lord till his second coming, in both cases the Dispensation begins with His conception. Rabban Btikhisho, in his famous *Introduction* to the Hudra, describes it in the last acception and according to the ordonance of Mar Isho'yahb III the reformer of our liturgy.³

Theoretically the liturgical year is divided in seven septenaries of seven weeks each. But because the year is of 52 weeks and the Resurrection is movable, the number of the septenaries and some of their respective weeks may be bigger or smaller. Besides, the first period (Annunciation - Nativity) is of six weeks, and that of the Dedication of the Church is of four weeks. Thus we have the following periods or septenaries of weeks:

- Annunciation - Nativity: six weeks
- Dedication: four weeks

² Chaldean Missal, ed. Mossul 1901, p.41/2; *raza* 1985/56 (my English translation)

³ For a French translation of this *Introduction* see J. Mateos. *Lelya-sapra*, OCA 156, 2nd ed. Rome 1972, pp.461-4

- Resurrection, Pentecost and Summer: seven weeks each
- Elija, Moses and Cross: seven weeks plus one to three days
- Dedication of the Church: four weeks

It is clear that the figure of Christ is dominating in this schema: it goes from his first coming to the second one where he will introduce the Humanity redeemed, that is the Church his Spouse, to his Bride-chamber.

Nevertheless, the liturgical year in our tradition has two principal poles: the first pole, embracing from the Annunciation to Ascension, and and it concerns more the personal mystery (or mysteries) of Christ: His conception-birth, ministry, passion and glorification, and redemption. The second pole regards Christ in his action in the Community of his disciples, through the working of the Holy Spirit, till its definite and eschatological realization; that is the pascal mystery shared by his members.

So the person of Christ, his redemptive action in the frame of the worship of the Trinity for the constitution of the People of the Kingdom constitutes the ferment of the Christian celebration of the year. So in a more specific way our liturgy celebrates in the Annunciation-Nativity the accomplishment of the prophecies in Christ, his coming and the beginning of the new Era; the Epiphany period recalls the divine manifestation of Christ and our rebirth in the Spirit. The Period of Lent proclaims Christ as the revealed Word of God and revealing Him and the giver of Life in Him through his Passion. The Resurrection period contemplates the glorification of Christ and the beginning of the messianic community and the life of the Kingdom; the Periods of Apostles and Summer sign the universal call to discipleship of the Community guided by the Spirit; the periods of Elija-Cross-Moses meditate on the establishment of this Kingdom in the Church which, in the period of Dedication, is contemplated as received by her Bridegroom the Son of God in her final realization.⁴

In the frame of the above mentioned two poles we can notice a rather substantial difference in the contemplation of Christ. In the Sundays that concern the becoming-man of Jesus, there is a clear insistence on the dogmatic aspect of his mystery the unity of his person, the duality of his *qnoma* (single nature) and of his natures (general nature). So in the Annunciation-Nativity, Epiphany, Holy Friday, Great Sunday: there it is spoken of his second birth, from his mother, his anointing, his suffering in the humanity, his resurrection. In the rest of the year, He is contemplated rather as the redeemer, the physician, the shepherd and hostage, liberator, pardoner of sins, our final hope, life and truth, way to the father, bridegroom of the Church.

⁴ When we say this, we do not exclude the role of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, but the Christian liturgy focuses on the historical action of divine redemption of which Christ is the historical actor and mediator; that is why He is also the mediator and the goal of our worship. See B. Neunheuser. *Les fêtes de l'année liturgique: Fêtes du Christ? (Comment expliquer l'absence des fêtes du Père)*, in: A.M. Triacca/A. Pistoia. *Le Christ dans la liturgie. Conférence Saint Serge 1980, BEL 20, Tome 1981, pp.143-149*

3. The Liturgy of the Hours, Weekly Celebration of Christ

3.1. Introduction

The proper parts in the vespers and morning (Night, Vigil and Matins) are prolongation and actualization of their respective liturgical season (Shabo'a). Here we speak of the common parts of these prayers of these hours. The night office is fundamentally taken from the proper; and the psalms (hullale) have no special themes. We see the rest, vespers and matins, the vigil, and Wednesday.

3.2. Vespers and Matins

Though with different structure both offices celebrate Christ the Light (and in the office of Martyr, Christ as the first martyr). The vespers and the matins include prayer to God and to the saints, etc. But they have a christological „theme“. The vespers, after the psalmody (two or one *marmithe*) contain a composite office: that of light and incense. In the incensation we pray Christ to accept our prayer as the incense; in the light office (Lucernary) the lights in the *hykla* are lit from the *qandela* (symbol of Christ) in the sanctuary; and this symbolises Christ in light of the Word. The central psalms insist on these two aspects: Ps 110 „the offering of my hands as the evening offering“ and Ps 118, 105ff: „Your word is a lamp for my feet.“ So in the darkness (night) of the world, Jesus is the light!

The matins starting from the symbolical meaning of sunrise, celebrate through cosmic praise Christ as giver of light and the light of Universe, so do the selected psalms, fundamentally the same on Sunday and week day.⁵ After the psalms the priest prays on Sundays and feast-days:

„To You, O Christ, the true light, the glorious brightness who are from the Father who were revealed and did shine forth in the world, for the renewal and salvation of our nature, in the firstfruits which are from us, we lift up praise, and honour, and confession, and worship at all times, Lord of all.“⁶

In the *Nuhra*, Saint Ephrem celebrates Christ the Light from the Father who leads us to salvation and life. In the second stanza he sings:

„The day has shone forth on the sons of men, and the power of darkness has fled; a light has shone forth for us from his light, and has enlightened our eyes who were darkened.“⁷

In the *teshbohta* (Praise) of Narsai there is a marvelous meditation on the light of Christ with which the era of understanding begins after the preceeding era which was that of ignorance: with the revelation of Christ the day begins for human kind.⁸

⁵ P. Kannokadan. *The East Syrian Lectionary System. An Historico-Liturgical Study*. Rome 1991, pp.170-211

⁶ A. J. Maclean. *East Syrian daily Offices*. Translated from the Syriac.... London 1894, p.167

⁷ *Ibidem*, p.167

⁸ *Ibidem*, p.168

3.3. The Sunday Vigil: Office of Resurrection of Christ

This is fundamentally the celebration of the pascal mystery of Christ, his victory, which appears clearly from the chosen psalms: *Hulala 14* „God reigns“: Ps 93-102 and *hulala 21*, starting from the Exodus. Then while the '*onita*' is chanted, the bishop and clergy go in procession from the bema (Jerusalem) to the sanctuary (heaven) where the glorious Christ lives for ever! The *Gloria* (by Theodore of Mopsuestia) celebrates the place of Jesus in the Trinity: He is the mediator and the Son of God.

3.4. Wednesday, Weekly Ferial Celebration of Divine Economy

The two Wednesdays, of the first and of the last, have special prayers of *mautha* (kathisma). It insists on the salvific action of Christ and it commemorates the other feasts of the Lord and saints in the Liturgical Year, Mary having special mention, also in the respective vespers.⁹ In the Qala 16, the two '*onitata d-Gawa*' (of the Assembly, or of all) sum up the celebrated mystery:

„By the prayer of Mary who gave you birth, and of John who administered your baptism, Peter and Paul and Matthew, Marc, Luc and John, the victorious martyr Stephen, the orthodox doctors, and Mar N. and the departed, preserve our assembly from the evil One.

By your Lent, Passion and Resurrection, and the martyrs who confessed your Lordship, the splendid saint George, and by your ascension, the descent of your Spirit, the findings of your Cross and the consecration of the Church of the Holiness, keep the assembly of your worshippers far from the deceit of the rebellant One.“¹⁰

4. Christ in the Liturgical Sunday Synaxis

4.1. Christological Locus proper to Holy Qurbana

We have in mind the sunday liturgy because it represents the common shape and the standard celebration (Liturgy of the Word and of the Mystery). In this celebration there are proper parts which celebrate the proper mystery of a septenary (*D-Qanke*, *d-Raze*, *d-Bem*, and some times *d-Ewangaliyon*). There are also parts, related to Christ or not, common to other celebrations: *Lakhu Mara*, etc. Remain proper parts to common holy *qurbana* and the three anaphora. Either the structure of the celebration or the liturgical disposition of the Church are in strict relation with the dispensation of Jesus, in its wider understanding.

4.2. Liturgical Disposition of the Church and Christ's Dispensation

The interior configuration of the church, that is the milieu of the celebration is realized in view of its different parts. The symbolism of each part evokes in a sug-

gestive way the mystery which is celebrated there. The whole building is divided into two parts: the east-side is the sanctuary, symbol of heaven in which the glorious Christ, the immaculate lamb is offered to his father. The west-side of the Church symbolises the earth, our world, where the congregation stays. In the middle of it the bema, a higher platform, symbolises Jerusalem in the middle of which there is a little altar, symbol of the Golgotha. In the sanctuary is celebrated the liturgy of the mystery of Christ and on the bema the liturgy of His Word.

4.3. The Sunday Celebration Actualisation of Christ's Dispensation

Though this liturgical action concentrates on Christ's ministry and pascal mystery (Passion and Resurrection), the praise office preceeding the liturgy of the Word and especially the opening of the veils during the anthem of the rails contain clear allusion to the coming of Jesus among us. This part is executed in front of the veils. The procession goes to the bema, symbolizing Christ going to preach and on the bema, the readings, especially the gospel, are Christ's predication. The mission of Christ and his ministry as the prophet are there actualised. The procession from the bema to the sanctuary symbolises the return of Christ to His Father in heaven, and the presentation of the sacrifice actualises Jesus the pontiff of the new Covenant and the glorious Lord present there through the coming of the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis): this is the same offering as that of heaven, now! The participation in the mysteries is the taking part in the Kingdom of God as realized by Jesus after his resurrection: the communion is the encounter with the adorable king as in the morning of Resurrection, and the last blessing is the blessing of the Risen Lord ascending to heaven! The lost paradise is conquered by Jesus, our firstfruits!

4.4. A Text summing up this Theology

The proclamation of the deacon exhorting the Congregation to a convenient preparation for communion includes this:

„With reverence and respect let us all approach of the body and precious blood of our Saviour. In the purity of heart and in the true faith let us recall in our mind his Passion and be consoled by (or: meditate) his Resurrection. For our sake did the Only Begotten of God receive from men a mortal body and a rational and spiritual soul endowed with immortality. By His life-giving laws and by his holy precepts he led us from error into the knowledge of truth. And after all His dispensation for us, (He) the firstfruits of our nature was tempted in the cross and rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. And He delivered to us his holy mysteries by which we all remember his grace towards us. Let us, therefore with overflowing love and a humble will receive the gift of eternal life (...“¹¹

⁹ Ibidem, pp.130-150

¹⁰ Hudra. Bedjan-Khayyat, p.124 (my English translation)

¹¹ Chaldean Missal, ed. 1901, p.41/2; Darmono. Ed. Trichur 1959, p.81/2

5. Christ in the Sacramental Rites

5.1. General Perspective

It would be unrealistic to claim to present the role and place of Our Lord in these rites with appropriate references and quotations. Here I give some aspects which could be at least to some extent verified in one or another „sacrament“. According to our tradition, these rites are, at least fundamentally, instituted by Jesus; in them he is active by the working of the Holy Spirit, after the mission of the Father and his will. Christ is communicated, in different ways, that is by his presence, his configuration, or his action, in these rites, according to the nature of each „sacrament“, as we can see below. Christ then is worshipped through the services of these sacraments which are acts of cult of the Congregation rendered to the Trinity of Which Christ is, and finally this worship supposes the Confession of the Church in Jesus the Christ as God, the Son, fully equal to his Father and his Spirit in divinity, creatorship, etc. And as man, human *qnoma*, united to the person of the Son, union which makes of him mediator and redeemer.

5.2. Christ in Baptism

The first imposition of hand says that the to-be baptised „will be purified, become the member (*haddameh*) of Christ, grow at the table of his mysteries.“¹² The Karozutha of the Deacon explains in the frame of the Divine dispensation, the mystery of Christ in paulinian terms:

„He who received the form of servant though being equal to God, and opened us the way of the new life through spiritual types. The first-fruits He received from us he has drawn it nigh to the baptism of John (...) and as in an image (*salma*) he showed us by his holy baptism the true resurrection and renewal effectively granted to us at the end of this world.“¹³

The *G'hanta* of consecration of the water says again that our baptism is a continuation of His.¹⁴

The *Syamida* before the last anointing says:

„Your grace did not abandon us in the perdition which we deserved because of our wickedness, but in the revelation (*gelyana*) in the flesh of your Only One from You, God the Word, you made us come back to you ...“¹⁵

Finally the *Huttama* sums up this theology: The Incarnation humiliation of Christ, is cause of our exaltation:

„We lift up to You glory, honour, acknowledgment and adoration o Sublime One who came down and endowed the body of our humiliation and made us one with Yourself in the (prerogatives) of your divinity (...) And to you and through

you (*b-idayk*) to your Father and to the Spirit of Holiness we lift up (or: sing) glory (...)“¹⁶

From these texts we understand that baptism is a configuration to Christ, continuing his baptism (a later development, 5th century on), and so a divine adoption; this is possible because Christ is the Son of God and our First-fruits. Other aspects are also mentioned, e.g. the baptised are bridegrooms or brides, similar to Christ, etc.

5.3. Other Rites, especially Marriage

Each rite in its particularity includes an aspect of christology. The priesthood is a participation of the priesthood of Jesus who in his life practised all the orders.¹⁷ The christological relevance of the Cross is evident and through it the sacraments are performed. The Holy Gospel is not only the Good News of Christ¹⁸ but it symbolises Jesus himself, that is why it is the priest who carries it (Him) in the procession from the sanctuary to the bema and vice-versa! The eucharistic bread, *bukhra*, is related to Christ, the first-born! Marriage celebration deserves special attention. Though Abdisho does not count it in the seven sacraments, it is highly magnified - as also the celibacy - in our tradition. Presupposing the idea of bridal covenant among God and the congregation in the Old Testament and continuing in the sense of the Epistle to Ephesians, our Liturgy of marriage is a celebration of the marriage of the Church and Christ. He is the true bridegroom during the wedding ceremony. The couple are his type, his image and continuation. The *karozutha* of Coronation sums up this theology. Christ is the true bridegroom who gives himself to the Church through his blood, etc.

„O You heavenly bridegroom who espoused your church through the priest, and the son of priest, John your brideman and messenger, we pray you ...

O ... who as a dowry and offering did shed Your precious blood to your Spouse, we pray you ...

O ... who have called those above and those below Your wedding feast, the Gospel of Your Kingdom,

O ... who have mingled Your own blood as spiritual wine to your Church to drink, and caused the water of life to flow for the happiness of your adorned Spouse, we pray ...

O ... who gave all nations rest in calling them to partake of the blessing of your marriage table ...“¹⁹

So the christian marriage is seen in the framework of the relationship between Jesus and the Church. It is Christ who crowns the spouses, who blesses them and he is the ideal of their life.²⁰ The mutual gift, the dowry, the joy of live and marriage has a

¹⁶ Ibidem, p.59

¹⁷ Liber Patrum, lat. Tr. By J.-M. Voste. Rome 1940, pp.23-35

¹⁸ Prayer of the priest searching the Gospel reading, Missal 1901, p.15

¹⁹ English translation from P. Badger. The Nestorians and their Rituals II. London 1852, p.266

²⁰ According to Ephrem a christian virgin is the spouse of Christ (and his mother since she bears him): A vivid theology of our tradition

¹² Ritual of Baptism, ed. Mossul 1907, p.4 (my English translation)

¹³ Ibidem, p.10

¹⁴ Ibidem, p.43

¹⁵ Ibidem, p.50

sublime sense as much as it is reshaped according to the behaviour of Jesus with the church.

6. Some Main Themes of Christology

6.1. Variety of the Mystery of Jesus the Christ

We have seen how our liturgical tradition presents the Christ under different lights; but all the cases suppose the unity of his person, or personal identity as the son of God, and the duality of his natures, as God and man. The dispensation shows him as mediator and redeemer; the weekly prayers meditate on him as the Son of God coming in to the world. The holy eucharist celebrates him as the Incarnated, Messenger, crucified, and glorious Son; the sacraments indicate the different ways he communicates himself to the church and her members.

I insisted on this variety, because to speak of our christology reducing it to the question, is Christ one or two, would be to deform it, to treat it in as abstract and dead way. The liturgy presents Jesus the Christ as real man and real God acting properly through the two concrete natures (*qnome*) and so realizing effectively our redemption. Our tradition does not neglect the fundamental question of the being of Christ, but it contemplates it in a vivid, sacred and loving way, as this sublime mystery deserves. With this in mind, I present some fundamental texts of „christology“ in general.

6.2. The Person of the Sonship

The Church of the East believes in One Son - son = one person - who is one of the Trinity, and who became man, taking an individual and concrete human nature (*qnoma*). Abdisho sums up this clearly.²¹ Our liturgy confesses that. He who became man in one of the Trinity and he revealed us this Holy mystery: „At the end of days, through your true Son you have spoken to our race ... and made us know that in three *qnome* is confessed your glorious divinity.“²²

This is clear in the scene of Jesus' baptism:

„Creation is renewed by her Lord, and recognized her salvation, since he was baptised and revealed her the Confession of the Trinity: The Father who proclaims and says: 'This is my beloved in whom I am pleased', and the Spirit who came and stayed on him and made known his glory to the universe ('*alme*).“²³

Jesus is the splendour of the Father, is the creator, born before time. The *huttama* of vespers says:

„Glory to You, Jesus our conquering King, the brightness of the eternal Father, begotten without beginning, before all times and things which came into being; we have no hope and expectation unless it be you, the Creator.“²⁴

²¹ 'Onita of Vespers of Second Sunday of Epiphany. Darmo, p.219

²² Ibidem, p.219

²³ Office of Epiphany. Bedjan-Khayyat. Hudra I, p.128/9

²⁴ English translation from MacLean (see footnote 6), p.20

Before the *huttama* of Sunday mass the celebrant chants: „Christ our God and our Lord, our King and our Saviour and pardoner of our sins ...“²⁵

The diaconal litany of Monday of Ba'uta announces the union as it is understood in the Church of the East:

„You who sanctified our nature through the holy first-fruits you assumed from us and made it participate to you (*w-shawtaph leh*) in the glorious unity of your sonship and of your lordship, we pray ...“²⁶

6.3. The Two Qnome

The above mentioned *karoza* speaks clearly of the two *qnome* (individual natures) of the Lord, and then of the communication of the light of divinity to the humanity: „You who enlightened the lamp of the *qnoma* of your humanity by the glorious rays of the *qnoma* of your divinity.“²⁷ The Child adored by the Magi is really the Lord, the Son, the King who will suffer: The text is so proper to our Church!

„Say peace to Jerusalem, and show this to the high priest“ said Persia to the Magi! „With the gold go and honour the king born in Judaea; and with the myrrh proclaim His Passion for our sake; through the incense manifest His (divine) Essence, since He is equal to his Father in Power, and He is the Lord (Marya) God. Indeed the mystery of Nimrud ...“²⁸

The Word assumed a historical humanity, from the race of Abraham. The 'onita of the first Sunday of Subbara sings:

„God the Word who is from the Father, it is not from the angels that he assumed the form of a servant (Phil 2,7) but from the seed of Abraham; and in the humanity of ours He came by his grace in order to save our natures (*gensa*) from error.“²⁹

The famous 'onita *Haw d-b-Ituteh* is a strong explication of this faith in this same sense: The Word assumes our *salma* (visage, image) in which He dwells and which He delivers to passion in order to save us and glorify it:

„He who is perfect in his (divine) Essence God the Word increased his piety towards our lowliness, and he put on our image so that it becomes the dwelling for his divinity; and he took it, fixed it on the Cross and delivered it to death so that by him He might vivify us; and He made it ascend and sit in heaven above heads and dominations, so that as in the first Adam we were made guilty, by the second Adam we have been made just, and his glorious generation who is capable to narrate it?“³⁰

²⁵ Chaldean Missal of 1901, p.49

²⁶ Hudra. Darmo I, p. 309 (Bedjan altered the text)

²⁷ Ibidem

²⁸ Ibidem, p.557 and Bedjan II, p.72/3

²⁹ Darmo I, p.114 and Bedjan I, p.54

³⁰ And the anthem continues as you can see above in the chapter 1.1. (and the corresponding footnote 1)

6.4. The Duality in the Unity

From the preceeding texts we easily can infer the unity of the two natures-*qnome* in the One Son. The following testimonies will better illustrate this position. The *tesh-bohta* (praise) of the Annunciation-Nativity Season reflects the official position in christological dogma of the Church of the East as then theologically expounded by Mar Bawai the Great. The *Brikh Hannana* composed by him after speaking of the birth of Emmanuel states the dogma:

„(Emmanuel) being formed of her (Mary) by the Holy Spirit, as it is written, to be an adorable abode and temple for the rays of the Father, in one filiation; which (body) at the commencement of His wonderful conception He united to Himself in one honour, herewith to fulfil all his purposes (...) One is the Messiah, adored by all in two natures, who, as touching His Godhead, is begotten of the Father, without beginning, and before all ages; and, as touching His Manhood, was born of Mary, in the fulfilment of time, a body of union. His Godhead is not from the substance (*kyana*) of His Father; but the natures and *qnome* subsist in the one Person of the One filiation; and as the Godhead is three *qnome* one Being (*ituta*) so is the filiation of the Son: in two natures (*kyane*) One person (...) We worship, my Lord, your Divinity and your Humanity without division (*thrice*). One is the power, one the lordship, one the will and one the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.“³¹

The famous *'alam* of the Feast of Nativity (*shrara galya*) narrates the principal deeds of our Lord till the discovering of his Cross in order to show that the same Lord, the same subject is God and man. I recall this poem especially because it was accused of Nestorianism! But I leave to the reader to judge!³² Here I give the beginning verses:

„The clear truth was manifested by the Son of God to His affianced Church, when it pleased Him, in His Love, to come into the Word to teach and to preach the doctrine of His Divinity and of His Humanity. He was in the bosom of His Father before the worlds, from everlasting, He being truly God. He came to us in the fulfilment of time, took our body upon Him, and therewith redeemed us, He being truly man. The prophets declared Him in their visions and the righteous typified Him, He being truly God; he was in the womb for nine months, and was born as a man, He being truly Man. The angels praised Him He being God. He was laid in a manger, He being Man. The star declared Him, He being God. He was suckled at the breast, He being Man. (...)

He was nailed on the Cross, He being man; He rent the rocks, He being truly God. ... He submitted to death, His Body was embalmed and laid in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, He being truly Man (...) He passed through closed doors, and saluted the Twelve with the salutation of peace, He being truly God. He showed them the prints of the nails ... He ascended up in glory...“

The corollary of the previous teaching is evidently that Mary is his mother, the mother of the Lord, of the Son of God.³³

6.5. Conclusion: The Glorious Christ our Lord, God and Mediator

The *Gloria in Excelsis*, chanted at the end of Matins on Sunday, sums up marvelously this teaching. It has also a symbolical importance for us because it is attributed to saint Theodore of Mopsuestia. The first part situates Jesus as one of the Trinity, as the Son:

„Glory to God in the heights, on earth peace ... we adore your ... Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, the only one who is holy, the only one who is powerful, the only one who is immortal.“

Then comes the christological part: our confession and praise are through Christ who is the Son of God, the Saviour. The hymn continues:

„We thank you (O Trinity) through the mediator of our good deeds, Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of the world, and the son of the Most-High. O lamb of the living God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us (...) because you are our God, and you are our Lord, and you are our King (...) Jesus Christ. Glory to God your Father, and to you and to the Holy Spirit, for ever. Amen.“³⁴

Corbishop M.J. Birnie

The Church of the East: Liturgy as an Expression of Christology

1. Introduction

The question addressed in this paper is whether the Christology reflected in the liturgical prayers and anthems of the Church of the East expresses and nurtures a faith in the unitary person of the incarnate Logos, the Son of God. With attention to the axiom set forth by Celestine I, "The rule of prayer determines the rule of faith," I will seek to demonstrate, through extracts from the various offices of the church as contained in the Order of the Hallowing of the Apostles, the Cycle of Offices and Propers, and the Baptismal Office, that the official prayers and anthems, when they deal with Christological themes, are directed to, or speak of, a single subject in the person of Christ, and nourish a faith in the undivided incarnate Word.

Since the initial "cause of scandal" which led to the first Council of Ephesus concerned the propriety of the use of the "exchange of predicates" between the divine and human natures of the person of Christ, I shall attempt to demonstrate through the above named sources that the exchange of predicates has a distinct place in the worship life of the faithful community of the Church of the East, notwithstanding the suspicion

³¹ Darmono I, p.118 (Bedjan altered the text). English translation in Badger II (see footnote 19), p.33/4

³² Darmono I, pp.562-565; Bedjan, pp.334-337. English translation by Badger, pp.35-38

³³ See Yousif. Marie Mère du Christ dans la liturgie chaldéenne. In: Etudes Mariales 39 (1982) 57-85

³⁴ Darmono, p.108; Bedjan, p.37/8

its use has occasioned in the church and among its theologians. The appearance of the "exchange" in these texts, and their long history without revision, testify to its acceptance by generations of worshippers in the church. And with Celestine's axiom in mind, I will consider the practical consequences this may have for the conceptualization of the worshipper as he visualizes the object of his worship.

2. The Exchange of Predicates

It is typical in liturgies of the Church of the East for prayers and anthems to be addressed to God or to the Lord God, including those that are addressed to Christ and contain Christological descriptive matter. The divine Logos, the Son of God (though not conceived apart from his humanity), is intended as the one to whom those prayers and anthems are addressed. And though the exchange of predicates is seldom employed directly to express the unitary person of Christ, its use has acquired a qualified synodical approval, that is, it may be employed "occasionally and by way of the economy."¹ This official qualified acceptance of the propriety and practical use of the exchange is evidence that the Church of the East finds it useful as a legitimate, if sometimes controversial, means of addressing and confessing the unitary person of Christ, and its use in liturgical settings, though limited, is nonetheless significant.

When we look for a striking and obvious use of the exchange of predicates in prayers of the Church of the East, we must confess that it is rare. But it does occur, and its occurrence is sometimes startling. One may consider this example from the Evening Office for Wednesday, which the rubrics emphasize must be said every Wednesday of the year:

„Equip us, O our Lord and our God, with mighty and invincible armor, by the prayers of your blessed Mother, and give us a portion and fellowship with her in your heavenly bride-chamber...“²

Because the Nestorian controversy emerged in the first instance over the propriety of the term Theotokos, and because the Church of the East eventually aligned itself with those who questioned its use and its implications for Christology, when this anthem is singled out it usually provokes skepticism and a scurrying for verification. In fact, though, the veneration given the holy Virgin among members of the Church of the East is intense and proportionally similar to that given her among other Christians and Christian bodies, and the historical survival of a prayer such as this should not be surprising to those familiar with the piety of the Assyrians. The unique place of the mother of Christ in salvation history, and her singular relationship to her Son, the "Son of the Most High", are the subject matter of much hymnody in the Church. The placement and emphasis given to this prayer make it to stand out all the more.

Furthermore, as a frequently overlooked but useful example of the use of the exchange of predicates one may note the Litany of the Eucharist. A series of petitions begins with the address, "O merciful God who in mercies governs all, we beseech you."³

The following petitions, all beginning with the relative pronoun "who" or "to whom", requiring an antecedent referent and contemplating no change of subject, without distinction speak of divine and human attributes or experiences:

„Who is rich in his mercies and overflowing in his compassion, we beseech you ... Who in his nature is good and the Giver of all good things ... Who is glorified in heaven and worshipped on earth ... Who by his birth (or epiphany, etc.) gladdened the earth and cheered the heavens ... to whom immortality belongs naturally, and who dwells in gladsome light ...“

The sequential petitions which begin, "who by his birth, etc." and "to whom immortality belongs naturally", address their antecedent, "merciful God", as the subject appropriate to both descriptions, and generations of worshippers in the Church of the East have comfortably and piously joined their voices and sentiments to them without competition. An intellectual distinction of the divine and human natures of the "merciful God" to whom they make petition is possible, of course, as it is in any use of the exchange of predicates, but this is not, I believe, very likely to happen in the course of common prayer.

But it is not only in Marian references or in the above-named deacon's litany that the Church of the East makes use of the exchange of predicates, but also in other Sacramental contexts. In the Anthem of the Bema⁴ for Epiphany we find this example:

„Through water and the Spirit we have been sanctified; by your body and blood we have gained life. O Good one who fashioned us from dust, you renewed our image through water and the Spirit; through water and the Spirit you fashioned us anew. Glorious is your renewal, and lovely is your coming.“⁵

The words "your body and blood" can have no other referent than the "Good One who fashioned us from the dust." And here, as above, the subject of address is the second person of the Holy Trinity, incarnate in the manhood he took from us. The adoration is of the Word made flesh who gave us his own sanctifying body and blood, not another's.

The evocative power of the singing of the Anthem of the Bema is significant in its formative influence on the worshippers' faith and conceptualization. The familiar tunes and rhythms of these relatively short and easily remembered hymns aid in fixing them in the memory of the worshipper, who is apt to sing them at home and at work as well as in church and, in times past, to understand and assimilate their message as well.⁶ On the memorial of St. Stephen the Protomartyr the worshipper intones: "Let us sing glory and receive the body of the Son of God and his living blood."⁷ On the memorial of the Syrian Doctors: "Come, let us take delight in the glorious Mysteries of the body and blood of the Son of God."⁸ On the second Sunday in Lent: "Come, let us receive

⁴ An anthem sung at the time of the reception of the Sacrament during the Eucharist

⁵ Khudra, p.424

⁶ The modern Assyrians' lack of understanding of the classical Syriac language is a barrier to understanding and a problem yet to be addressed

⁷ Khudra, Vol. 1, p.740

⁸ Khudra, Vol. 1, p.778

¹ Synodicon Orientale, ed J. B. Chabot, (Syriac text), p.136

² Khudra, p.22

³ Ktba dTurgame, p.84/5

the body and blood of the First-born⁹ of the Godhead Come, let us receive the body of the Son who was sent from above."¹⁰ And decisively, from the Anthem of the Bema for Thursday after Easter:

„The eternal and everlasting Son, *begotten of God and co-essential with him, who gave his own body*, which wicked men sacrificed upon Golgotha, that he might give life to all, *died as he willed, revived as he sought*, and gave his body and blood to his church. Hallelujah!"¹¹

In the latter anthem the subject, the Son, begotten of the Father and of the same essence, is described as not only willing death and resurrection for his own body, but dying and rising in the same.

These examples all refer what is characteristic of the human nature of Christ to his divinity, but in some cases of prayer the *name* of the addressee to whom the exchange of predicates refers appears reversed. In the first of a series of "sealing" prayers at the conclusion of the evening office for ordinary days, the opening sentence reads as follows:

Glory to you, Jesus, our victorious King, *the Effulgence of the eternal Father, begotten without beginning beyond times and origins*, for we have no hope and expectation except for you, *the Creator*.¹²

The significance of this prayer to our discussion is the typical way that *names* are viewed and commonly used in the Church of the East. In his *Book on the Union* Babai the Great has this to say concerning the name Jesus:

„The Son of God is called "Christ", both according to the series of (divine) names which we previously set down above ... and according to the name which Gabriel ordained beforehand for him, that is, "Jesus," which indicates the special title of his human *qnoma* in the Union, which was taken from the nature of the blessed [and] holy Virgin, Mary ... Although this name Jesus, "Savior," makes known what he is going to become, yet it is the name of the *qnoma* of his manhood."¹³

This standard explanation, applying the name "Jesus" to the human nature of Christ, makes it all the more noteworthy that the address to *Jesus* should describe him as *the Effulgence of the eternal Father, begotten without beginning beyond times and origins, and the Creator*. Thus, while the previous examples I have given ascribe human attributes to the Godhead in the economy, here the reverse takes place, as the properties of the divine Word are referred to the "human" name, Jesus. A unitary subject is contemplated, here under the name of his manhood. Both the human nature and the *name* which it bears belong to the subject of the Incarnation, the divine Word, the "Effulgence of the eternal Father".

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¹⁰ Khudra, Vol. 2, p.194

¹¹ Khudra, Vol. 2, p.570

¹² Khudra, p.13

¹³ CSCO, „Book on the Union“, Paris 1915, ed. A. Vaschalde, pp.208, lines 25/6, 28-31; 209, lines 11-13

3. The Language of Prayer and Praise, and the Faith It Expresses or Evokes

The language of prayer and praise is formative in the worshipper, both through the images and sentiments it evokes, and through the faith it builds upon and reinforces by its repeated expression. In the liturgies of the Church of the East, in prayers specifically addressed to God or the Lord God, where Christ is meant, the language employed to describe his human experiences directs the worshipper's mind to the Deity as antecedent. The subject of those experiences is conceptualized as one and not as *one and another*. Whatever "duality" may emerge in the course of polemic discussion or theoretical contemplation disappears in hymnic wonder and prayerful certitude in the Assyrian Christian as he, in his ordinary worship, addresses his Lord and God, the Word become flesh. The *relationship* thus conceived and acknowledged between worshipper and worshipped is *one to one*. The suggestion of an internal, independent relationship of the divine nature to the human in the united Christ is absent from the worshipper's adoration, who acknowledges only the ontic unity which the Incarnate One is perceived to be in his person and in his relationship to his people.

To approach the divine Son of God through the veil of his flesh; to honor his mother because of the relationship of his flesh to hers, and therefore his own relationship to her; to adore him and receive him intimately through the mediating elements of the sacraments—his *own* body and blood—these acts of devotion, through cumulative effect on the worshipper, leave not the slightest room for separation to be contemplated, either by implication or through inference, in the unique and absolute union of humanity and divinity in the person of Christ. The language of worship and adoration in the liturgies of the Church of the East does not lead the worshipper to conceptualize a human person existing by himself in relationship with the Logos. The personal identity of the complete and undiminished manhood taken by the Logos is that of the eternal Son of God, "begotten without beginning beyond times and origins", who is the sole object of petition and praise. Like the worship of his Christian brothers and sisters who have been taught to confess the union in philosophical terms foreign or suspicious to him (or to his ancestors), his own worship is of the one Son of God incarnate, both Suffering Servant and King of Glory.

Discussion:

Archbishop Jamil: I would like to say the summary of my thoughts in relation to what happened in this consultation.

My intervention is a self-examination of the Syriac consciousness. My Christian identity is specified by Jesus. All what has been said speaks about the belief of our fathers in Christ as full God and human being. This is enough. In their loving and enthusiastic spirit to their faith, everyone of our fathers fears the terms of the other, it could carry a heresy. This fear makes enemies, which they should defy. All of them made mistakes.

The christology cannot be explained in human words, no language can express the divine truth in its completeness. The difference does not mean a fight. The fight between our fathers come from a different angle: political, social, cultural, self-esteem, and prejudice. It is enough that we have been matching our Syrian Churches in the East fal-

ling apart during the 15th century. We are still facing danger. Unfortunately, we did not reach adulthood to agree or change among the teaching of our fathers, the ideas that they couldn't change because of their circumstances. Unfortunately, we are fighting each other. Do we really need to finish off ourselves? Or to finish together? Or to stop this regression and save what is left?

I didn't see any difference so that we had all these centuries of being separated. If there is any shadow of differences, we shouldn't fear it, as we are the servants of the word. Nestorius of Antiochian background, and Cyril of Alexandrian background were both close to each others in meaning, even though they have differed in expression. The spirit was the same. Nestorius and Cyril are among us now. They both used the terms of their ages to explain their thoughts.

They are both astonished that we are not using the methods of our age to give a new fear to their ideas. And we got back to our Syrian Church, its unity and beauty. If the Syrian Church of the East is not Nestorian, then we should change the wordings towards it. It is important to change our old theology. We should benefit from the modern methods to learn about the new meanings of the terms. Finally, I am afraid that our churches will end before our studies end. I suggest that we should specify the meaning of the terms and expressions that was said by our fathers. And to preserve and respect it.

Amba Bishoy: I would like to ask Father Birnie two questions:

1. (see above p. 186/7) The name Jesus given to Christ on his birth, means: Jehova the Savior, the incarnate word of God.
2. (see above p. 187, end) It is meant to say that there is no separation. Can this expression exclude that Logos assumed a human person? Or in other words: can this expression be put in another way. That this does not leave the worshipper to conceptualize that the Logos assumed a human person and bringing him in relationship to him. It is not right or correct to say that a human person exists by itself in relationship with the Logos. But the other way he became man, because he personalized the human nature in his own person (of Logos).

Mar Bawai: The Assyrian delegation together with some scholars tried to put our understanding of the term (*qnoma*).

Father Mouannes: 1. The limitation and the absoluteness of the language. Is the language in the Christian thinking something divine or moving and related to the human experience. If it is absolute, then it is dangerous in language.

2. The human experience is ancient stopping at a certain era. Or it is renewed.
3. Is in our thinking a cancelling of our modern person?
4. How can we accept that a language specifies the mystery of God in an absolute way?
5. We have imprisoned the One who is far. That can be expressed in words and expression, is the limitation of the language and the wording. The language became a new dogma specifying the mystery of God.

Bishop Matar: We are more confirmed about the Orthodoxy of the Church of the East. Theology is relative, and not vice versa.

Mar Severios: There are parts in the rite. The most important is the Epiclesis.

Mar Gregorios: There are common things among us. We need to discuss it more. We need to re-understand our texts without changing them.

Father Habbi: I thank PRO ORIENTE for such an opportunity to meet and dialogue.

Father Yousif and Corbishop Birnie reply to the comment.

Joint Communiqué of the Second PRO ORIENTE non-official Syriac Consultation

In the last working session of the Second non-official Syriac Consultation organized by the foundation PRO ORIENTE of Vienna the following Communiqué has been worked out in agreement with all the participants of the Consultation:

Continuing in its quest to promote theological understanding and ecumenical relations among the apostolic Churches, the PRO ORIENTE Foundation has for a second time invited to Vienna participants from the Oriental Catholic Churches (Chaldean, Syrian, Maronite, Malabar and Malankara), from the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox from Antioch, Malankara Orthodox from India) and the Assyrian Church of the East, of both Jurisdictions, namely all who share a common ecclesial heritage in the Syriac language and traditions.

This second Dialogue to include all of the Syriac Churches took place from February 22-27, 1996, in Vienna.

Also present were observers from the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the Middle East Council of Churches and expert scholars, as well as the staff of PRO ORIENTE.

This important ecumenical initiative on the part of PRO ORIENTE was once again very warmly welcomed and appreciated by all participants, who most gratefully accepted the fraternal hospitality of the Foundation. Also appreciated was the presence of and inaugural address by H. Exc. Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna and Chairman of the board of PRO ORIENTE, and the presence of H. Em. Franz Cardinal König, founder of PRO ORIENTE.

The subjects that were treated were the christological agreement already achieved, the Council of Ephesus, the Three Chapters Controversy and the liturgical expressions of Christology in the East-Syrian tradition.

Taking as our basis the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith and relying on what had already been achieved at the First non-official Consultation within the Syriac Tradition in 1994 we, the participants, agreed with and were able to proceed from the Unity of Faith that was expressed in the Vienna Christological Formula in the words: "Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate; perfect in his Divinity and perfect in his humanity, his Divinity has 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. We realize at the same time that the mystery of the one Lord Jesus Christ is „inexhaustible and ineffable, and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible".

At the outset appreciation was given to the significance for the present dialogue of (1) the Common Christological Declaration between Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV on November 21st 1994 and (2) the five PRO ORIENTE Consultations between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches (1971, 1973, 1976, 1978, 1988).

In the course of this Second Syriac Consultation we were able to deepen our dialogue concerning the various christological traditions, Antiochene, Mesopotamian and Alexandrian.

Since it had already been recognized in the course of the First Syriac Consultation that the technical christological terms used since the Councils and writings of the fifth and sixth centuries (notably Greek *physis*, *hypostasis*, *prosopon*, and Syriac *kyana*, *qnoma* and *parsopa*) were understood in different ways by the different traditions (and so had been the cause of many misunderstandings and confusions), the Second Syriac Consultation was able to move on to discuss other important issues.

The Council of Ephesus (431), as an Ecumenical Council for the Chalcedonian and Oriental Orthodox Churches, with its affirmation of the title "Theotokos" for the Blessed Virgin Mary, together with the letters of Cyril associated with the Council, remains of special significance for the Syrian Orthodox Church, being one of the Councils recognized as ecumenical by the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The Church of the East, on the other hand, has never been officially approached by any of the other Churches to formally accept or reject it.

Nevertheless, the theological contents discussed at the Council of Ephesus 431 are shared in one form or another by all the Churches of the Syriac Tradition, and, therefore, could indeed be considered as a theological basis that could unite these Churches with the same faith in Jesus Christ. The theological thought and formulations of the Church of the East, as present in its liturgical and synodical sources, are considered to be in line with the teachings of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381), and compatible with those of the Council of Ephesus (431).

Our discussion of the "Three Chapters Controversy, and the ensuing condemnation of the "Three Chapters" at the Council of Constantinople (553), led us to see the need to make the distinction between doctrines condemned and persons anathematized.

The condemnation of specific names at the council of Ephesus, as well as that of Constantinople, is a matter which requires further discussion in the context of the present Dialogue.

The papers on the liturgical tradition of the Church of the East illustrated, among other things, how prayers addressed to Christ are always directed to a single subject in the person of Christ and how examples can also be found of the exchange of predicates (*Communicatio idiomatum*).

Thanks to the spirit of openness and mutual respect, and with the firm conviction of the necessity of remaining completely loyal to our respective Traditions, we were able to explore ways towards gaining a truer understanding of each other's Traditions and putting away past and present misconceptions on all sides. It became clear in particular, in the course of our dialogue, that there is a necessity to make an absolute distinction between the doctrinal position of the Assyrian Church of the East and the position, recognized by all to be heretical, which holds that there are two Sons, two *prosopa*, in the one Incarnate Christ, a position which is traditionally described by the Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox as "Nestorianism".

It has also become very clear from our two Consultations that it is always essential to realize that, in the context of Christology (as opposed to the situation in Trinitarian theology), there is a clear and important difference between the understanding in the Church of the East of the term *qnoma* (i.e. individuated, but not personalized nature) and that of other Syriac Churches where *qnoma* is regularly understood as the equivalent of *hypostasis* in the sense of person.

Thus the following explanation of the term of „*Qnoma*“ has been presented by the Assyrian, Chaldean and Syro-Malabar delegations of the Church of the East:

„In Christology, as expressed in the synodical and liturgical sources of the Church of the East, the term *qnoma* does not mean *hypostasis* as understood in Alexandrine Tradition, but instead, individuated nature. Accordingly, the human nature which the Holy Spirit fashioned and the Logos assumed and united to Himself without any separation, was personalized in the Person of the Son of God. When we speak of the two natures and their *qnome*, we understand this very much in the same sense as two natures and their particular properties (*dilayatha*).

It is important to note that the term *qnoma* is used in a different way in Trinitarian theology.“

We recognize that the aim of our dialogue is *not* to require that any of us should reconsider the christological doctrine of their own tradition, but *rather*, that each of us, while remaining completely true to our own Tradition, should come to perceive that the christological teaching of the other Syriac Traditions, when understood correctly, represents a legitimate expression of our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the mystery of whose Incarnation can never be exhaustively formulated in words.

Only in this way can the common witness to Christ by our Churches become truly effective in our contemporary world.

Thus, being conscious of the continuing scandal of division between the apostolic Churches, and of Christ's own prayer to the Father "That they should be one as we are one" (John 17,11), we strongly recommend that PRO ORIENTE continues and carries further its present initiative.

Recommendations:

The participants request that PRO ORIENTE, through the Syriac Commission, take the necessary steps to prepare a third „non-official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition“ which might focus on the following topics:

1. The person and teaching of Nestorius of Constantinople, with special reference to his condemnation at the Council of Ephesus.
2. The person and teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia and the relationship between him, his teaching and the Church of the East, with special reference to the „Three Chapters Controversy“.
3. The canonical status of anathemas and their lifting in relationship to the question of ecclesial communion and heresy.
4. The study of liturgical texts and practices in the Churches of the Syriac Tradition.

Further Topics:

For future reference and possible consideration, we suggest the study of ecclesiological issues between the Churches of the Syriac Tradition that presently prevent them from re-establishing full ecclesial communion.

For these and other studies the findings of PRO ORIENTE and other current dialogues should be utilized. Such studies could include:

1. The study of concepts and models of unity for the re-establishment of full ecclesial communion between the Churches of the Syriac Tradition.
2. The study of the question of primacy in the different Churches of the Syriac Tradition.
3. The significance of the Ecumenical Councils and their reception.

We have once again experienced how fruitful our Consultation has been, and we give thanks to God that it has been possible to make considerable progress in the mutual understanding of the different christological traditions represented by the Syriac Churches; finally we pray that the Holy Spirit may guide our striving towards the healing of the wounds which human misunderstanding and sin have inflicted on the Body of Christ which is his holy Church.

75th Ecumenical Symposium of RO ORIENTE Vienna, 24th February 1995

Mar Bawai Soro

Recent Ecumenical Initiatives of the Assyrian Church of the East

1. Introduction

This paper sets forth some of the important ecumenical initiatives the Assyrian Church of the East has undertaken during the last few years. It will reflect the Assyrian church of the East's relations with Churches of different traditions in the Middle East, and the recently renewed relationship with the Roman Catholic Church.

The first event in the process of ecumenical renewal - an event of utmost importance - took place in the Assyrian Church of the East on 17 October, 1976, when the Assyrian bishop of Tehran, Iran, Mar Khanania Dinkha (the present head of the Church) was elected as the 121st Catholicos-Patriarch of the East. The Assyrian community in Iran, which Mar Dinkha had served from 1958-1976, was in a unique position to provide her bishop with a vision, one which encompassed issues of social justice and ecumenism. The fact that Christians in Iran constituted a small group (less than 1% among a Moslem population of 50 millions) caused men and women from all Christian Churches to close ranks with one another in search of a true and effective witness to the Gospel of Christ. Their difficult socio-political situation forced them to develop a survival mode, one which would provide a shield against the wars and massacres which had been their fate for many centuries. As a consequence of his experience in Iran, during the first year of Mar Dinkha's tenure as Catholicos-Patriarch a vigorous program was initiated, with the objective of re-establishing ecumenical contacts in two different spheres, i.e., with the Churches of the Middle East, and with the Roman Catholic Church.

2. Relations with the Middle East Council of Churches

The Middle East Council of Churches (=MECC) was formed in 1974 by a number of Churches in the region who belonged to three confessional families: Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Protestants/Evangelicals. The Eastern Catholic Churches joined the Council after 17 years - in 1991. The Assyrian Church's attempt to become a member of MECC began in 1985, when Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV delegated one of his bishops to petition the MECC at its 4th general assembly in Limassol, Cyprus. The reply of the Council was shockingly negative. Under pressure of some of the Oriental Orthodox bishops, the application was put on hold for an indefinite time. The problem, according to those bishops, was that the Assyrian Church of the East was still perceived to be closely associated with the „Nestorian“ heresy. Nevertheless, in 1991, after the arrival of the fourth family of Churches, the MECC reviewed her position towards the Assyrians. The executive committee appointed a special commission of theologians and staff to enter into a theological dialogue with the Assyrian Church

of the East in order to clarify its position relative to the allegations of „Nestorianism“, with the end in view of satisfying the constituent members of the Council and, that being achieved, of making a positive recommendation to grant a membership in the Council to the only isolated Christian Church in the region.

The MECC side was represented by members from the four confessional families of the Council. The Coptic representatives were probably the most concerned and watchful. In reality, the two parties which had the most at stake in these talks were the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. These two ancient bodies had been proponents of two differing schools of thought, the Alexandrian and the Antiochian, each of which approached history, Biblical exegesis, and theology from different vantage points. The Alexandrian school approached Scripture and scriptural history from an allegorical perspective, and the Antiochian with literal analysis. The methodologies employed by the theologians and exegetes in the two schools led ultimately to divergent understandings of the manner in which the Incarnation of the Word ought properly to be expressed. Historically, the Copts have insisted upon acknowledging one nature in the person of Jesus Christ, while the Assyrians maintained the existence of two natures in the person of the Lord. The acceptance of the teaching of the third ecumenical Council, held in Ephesus in 431 AD., was the central point at issue between the Copts and the Assyrians.

The first of three sessions of the dialogue was convened in September 1992 in Limassol, MECC's liaison office in Cyprus. The Assyrians there presented two papers at this meeting; they reflected the Church of the East's Christological faith drawn from two important sources, i.e., its official synodical records (the *Sunhados*, or, as it is commonly recognized in the West, *Synodicon Orientale*), and its eucharistic and liturgical texts. The objective of both papers was to illustrate the fact that though the Assyrian Church of the East does not employ terms such as the „hypostatic union“ yet the practical sense of such a theological concept was not only implicitly present but, sometimes, even explicitly expressed in its theological and liturgical elaboration of the mystery of Christ. The Coptic representatives read two papers in which they presented their own Christological thought along with their point of view on how they understood the Christology of the Assyrian Church of the East. Only minor progress was made at this first friendly encounter between ecclesiastical adversaries who officially met for the very first time in fifteen centuries, a period of time characterized by mistrust and separation. No one from either side had realistically expected further progress than what was, in fact, achieved.

The organizers of the dialogue were keen to schedule a second session in this round of meetings in the following months, and consequently both sides met again in Limassol in March 1993. There were no papers presented at this meeting, but only further clarification of what had already been presented and discussed in the last session. As these meetings progressed, social interaction on part of the participants led to a growth in fraternal understanding and an appreciation by each side of the other's tradition and theological presupposition. Though each side retained its zeal for preserving the apostolic faith as it had been handed down to it, yet each experienced a positive change in its evaluation of the other's tradition. After six months, in September of the same year, the third round of meetings was called in Limassol. There the MECC had also called upon expert theologians to express their objective evaluation of the Christo-

logical positions of each Church. Some real progress was made, but the meetings ended without solving the core issues in dispute. The dynamic of the dialogue revealed that the Assyrians were there to clarify their Christological teachings while the Coptic Orthodox Church continued to press many issues in dispute, which included the following points:

1. The Assyrian Church of the East's veneration of Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius of Constantinople.
2. The Assyrian Church of the East's accusations against and anathemas upon Cyril of Alexandria, Severius of Antioch, and the „Egyptians“ (the followers of Cyril of Alexandria).
3. The acceptance of the Council of Ephesus (AD. 431).
4. The relation between Christological faith and ecclesial practice in the Assyrian Church of the East.
5. Christological Formulas and the terminology employed in framing them in the Assyrian Church: „Two Natures, Two Qnome, in One Person.“

By the conclusion of the last meeting in this round it was clear that the dialogue had opened up a number of very pressing issues for both Churches, touching on the understanding and interpretation of history, dogma, and soteriology. But the willingness of all involved to overcome the controversy was stronger than the problems at hand. Considering the bulk of issues in these discussions, a fourth meeting was scheduled, to take place after two years, in 1994. However, the Assyrian Church delegation had to subsequently excuse itself from attending the meeting because of a conflict in scheduling with the convening of the Church's Holy Synod (the fifth in the Patriarchate of Mar Dinkha IV), which was held in Sydney, Australia, in August 1994. In this Holy Synod a number of key issues were introduced for discussion. One of these was the point two above. The bishops in the Synod were convinced that it was time to remove the indictments and anathemas which had been proclaimed against the Fathers of the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox Churches.

Three months later, on 11 November 1994, Pope John Paul II and Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV signed in Rome an official document, known as the „Common Christological Declaration“, expressing agreement between their respective Churches on the expression of Christological faith. The theological clarification achieved by this agreement, and the ecclesial ramifications brought about by it, quickly had their effect among the other Churches of the Middle East. At their 6th General Assembly on 21 November 1994 the news of this development was warmly and widely welcomed, and immediately a new attitude towards the Assyrian Church of the East was demonstrated by almost all Churches. But most significantly, the Assyrian at the assembly received an invitation from His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, to visit Egypt and hold a new round of dialogue directly between the two Churches. (It should here be noted that a great deal of credit is due to the important efforts exerted by the MECC's unit on „Faith & Unity“ to bridge the wide gap which had existed between the Assyrians and Copts for over 1500 years.) Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV welcomed the invitation of Pope Shenouda III, and the Assyrians began preparations for what was hoped might be a historic opportunity to bring healing and renewal to the Body of Christ.

On 13-14 January, 1995, theologians from the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East gathered at Saint Bishoy Monastery in Egypt in order to

seek to arrive at a common agreement in Christology between their Churches, which would, in turn, be submitted to the authorities of both Churches. The Coptic delegation was headed by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, and included Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette, and two other theologians. The Assyrian delegation commissioned by His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV, was composed of Archbishop Mar Narsai de Baz, and Mar Bawai Soro. Participating in the discussions was Metropolitan George Saliba from the Syrian Orthodox Church, and, from MECC, Father Paul Sayah, Director of the unit on „Faith & Unity“, who had moderated the dialogue of MECC with the Assyrian Church of the East. At the end of this meeting a draft of a „Common Christological Declaration“ was worked out in mutual agreement. Replies to this draft have not yet been finalized by either side, but it is hoped that both Churches will agree on the same text in order for it to be signed by their Patriarchs some time in 1995.

The gist of the draft deals with Christological concerns of both Churches. For the Coptic Orthodox Church the draft-agreement asserts that though the Assyrians use a terminology of „two nature, two qnome, in one person,“ nevertheless, there is only one final subject in Jesus Christ, God the Word Incarnate, who is both perfect God and perfect man. The term „two qnome“, which historically has been at the center of this theological debate, is clarified by the Assyrian Church of the East to be the concrete realization (individuation) of each nature of divinity and humanity. For the Assyrian Church of the East the strength of the agreement lies in the fact that it recognizes that the union of the two natures did not in any manner cancel the continuing dynamics of each of Christ's two natures, divinity and humanity. And that Christ's divinity and his humanity are united in one person, without confusion or change, without division or separation, and that 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.

3. Relations with the Roman Catholic Church

The separation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East grew out of a dispute over the proper use of terminology in describing the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, a dispute which began in the Byzantine Empire with the Council of Ephesus (AD. 431), and spread to the Church in the Persian Empire. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of the East have insisted upon acknowledging the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Jesus Christ from the beginning of the dispute. In this they have always been in agreement. Where the differences came about was in accounting for the union of those two natures in the one *person* of Christ. The western Church adopted a modified terminology to describe the incarnation at the Council of Chalcedon (451), while the eastern Church continued to use terminology of an older period which in the West was deemed inadequate for the purpose of describing a true *metaphysical* union of the natures.

The political isolation of the Assyrian Church of the East under Persian - and later Arab, Mongol, and Turkish - rule, made the resolution of this conflict almost impossible. The separation was not only ecclesial, but geographical, political, cultural, and linguistic, and it was greatly exacerbated from the fifteenth century on by the near

destruction of the Church in the East and the loss of its educational and monastic institutions which had for so long supplied it with theologians and scholars. For the past 500 years there has been only limited contact between the leaders of these two ancient churches.

On November 9, 1984, the present Catholicos-Patriarch of the East, Mar Dinkha IV, made his first official visit to the Vatican and expressed to Pope John Paul II his desire that the ancient misunderstanding be resolved between the two bodies. The Patriarch had long felt that the scandal of separation had to be removed so that the Church of Christ could present a common witness to the modern world, and also work in a unified way to relieve the sufferings endured by many in the Middle East and elsewhere. In joy and hope the two leaders of the two ancient apostolic Churches set in motion a process of theological dialogue aimed at bringing understanding and clarity to the issue under dispute. Between 1984-1994 five meetings took place in which discussions were conducted in a spirit of mutual charity with a sincere desire on each side to understand the other's linguistic and cultural traditions and presuppositions, and the process culminated in the setting forth of a „Common Christological Definition“ which removed the ambiguities which had for so long been the source of suspicion and distrust.

On November 11, 1994, a historic event took place at the Vatican between the Roman Pontiff, His Holiness, John Paul II, and the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, His Holiness, Mar Dinkha IV. This meeting resolved an ancient misunderstanding which has kept the two churches at a distance from one another for 1500 years. At the meeting of the Patriarch and the Pope the Christological Definition was signed by both leaders and by dignitaries representing the Vatican and the Holy Synod of the Assyrian Church of the East. In it they make the affirmation:

„Our Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us in all things but sin. His divinity and his humanity are united in one person, without confusion or change, without division or separation. In him has been preserved the difference of the natures of divinity and humanity, with all their properties, faculties and operations. But far from constituting „one and another“, the divinity and humanity are united in the person of the same and unique Son of God and Lord Jesus Christ, who is the object of a single adoration. (...)

...the same God the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds without beginning according to his divinity, was born of a mother without a father in the last times according to his humanity. the humanity to which the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth always was that of the Son of God himself. That is the reason why the Assyrian church of the East is praying the Virgin Mary as „the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour“. In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as „the Mother of God“ and also as „the Mother of Christ“. We both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith and we both respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety.“

In his official address to the Pope at the time of the signing Mar Dinkha IV expressed the fervency of his zeal for unity:

„Today the time has come to bring down the walls which have separated us and kept us apart for fifteen centuries. Today, the door of opportunity is open and

we are bidden to enter and labor together toward the noble goal of unity in the Church, the unity for which our Lord Jesus Christ so fervently prayed, 'that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.'"

The Pope in his remarks took note of the tragic history of suffering which Christians in the East had undergone and pledged his personal support and that of the Roman Catholic Church in efforts to relieve their plight:

„We do not forget the long night of suffering endured by your Eastern Syriac communities, which were scattered, persecuted and massacred down the centuries for professing the name of Christ. Those who despite everything have remained in their countries in the Middle East - and who have had to face war and unjust deprivation of every kind - should know that the Holy See will employ the means at its disposal, particularly through its contacts with Governments and International Organizations, to lessen their sufferings and if possible make them cease. Finally, a Church so distinguished in its past for its heroism as regards fidelity to the faith cannot remain marginalized in the Christian world, and especially among the Churches of the Middle East. We hope to be able to help you break down any isolation that still exists."

Both leaders stressed the profound importance of the occasion. Both were fervent in emphasizing the need for Christian unity in a world in which new challenges arise with frequency and call for a common front and unified action on the part of Christ's body, the Church. The need for clergy and laity to be adequately prepared to meet those challenges was addressed by Pope John Paul II who put at the disposal of the Assyrian Church of the East the help of the Catholic Church in the areas of education and catechesis.

Throughout the ceremonies and public appearances the dignitaries of the Vatican and the Assyrian prelates affirmed the unique and valuable contributions made by each of the Churches to the general spiritual patrimony of historic Christianity. In the words of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II:

„We all recognize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the rich heritage of each of our Churches, and that a diversity of customs and observances is in no way an obstacle to unity. This diversity includes the power of our Churches to govern themselves according to their own disciplines and to keep certain differences in theological expressions which, as we have verified, are often complementary rather than conflicting."

Though this historic occasion has opened the way toward further unity between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Catholic Church, full visible unity has not yet been achieved. Though the desire for oneness is sincere and the progress toward unity has moved forward, there is much yet to do before it can be completely realized. The dialogues will continue and prayers will be constantly offered before Almighty God to provide the divine wisdom and spiritual understanding necessary to achieve the goal of proclaiming together in one voice the Good News of salvation to a world in need. In the words of His Holiness the Pope:

„Together let us ask the Most Holy Trinity, Model of true Unity within diversity, to strengthen our hearts so that we will respond to the call for one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world, that

the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God. May God who has begun this good work in us bring it to completion in Christ Jesus. Amen."

To the end that all this may be achieved, the Catholicos-Patriarch, Mar Dinkha IV, committed himself and his fellow-bishops:

„With thanksgiving for this day and the promise which it holds - and with prayers for the health and well-being of our most honored brother, His Holiness, Pope John Paul II - we remember the words of the Psalmist, 'How good and how comely for brothers to dwell in unity.' How good indeed, and fair in the eyes of God and men when in true humility the servants of Christ give themselves to one another in mutual love and service ... To you our brothers we offer the hand of fellowship and our unfeigned fraternal affection, and to the Holy Trinity we commit these our labors toward unity. Amen."

Joint Patriarchal Statement

*between His Holiness Mar Raphael I, BiDawid, Catholicos Patriarch,
His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos Patriarch,
and their respective delegations concerning proposals for the re-establishment
of full ecclesial unity between the Chaldean and Assyrian Churches of the East*

1. On Friday, 29 November 1996, at the Chaldean Chancery in Southfield, MI (USA), the two Patriarchs of the Church of the East held their first ever official meeting to discuss prospects of unity between their two churches. Present with His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV was Mar Bawai Soro, Bishop of Seattle and General Secretary for CI-RED, and with His Holiness Mar Raphael I, BiDawid were Mar Ibrahim Ibrahim, Chaldean Bishop of USA, Mar Yohanan Zora, Bishop of Ahwaz, and Sarhad Jammo, Vicar General of the Chaldean Diocese in USA who also was appointed by both Patriarchs to function as the common secretary for the meeting. At the end of this meeting, the two Patriarchs wished to sum up their findings in the following statement.

2. „Their Holiness, as heads of their two churches, offer gratitude to Almighty God the Father for granting them this historic opportunity to meet in a serene fraternal confidence and to discuss with deep and mutual understanding future prospects for a full and visible ecclesial reunification of their churches - the two branches of the historically One Church of the East. In a humble love to their holy church-fathers and with such a vision of unity in their minds, they pray, today, to God to send His Spirit of Holiness to help them achieve a complete rapprochement between their two churches. For, it is precisely through such path that they find themselves able to comply with our Lord's prayer for the unity of his disciples (Jn 17,21), and, similarly to encourage all Chaldeans and Assyrians, their sons and daughters in Christ, to preserve their Christian faith and to maintain their glorious Assyrian-Chaldean heritage.

3. In accordance with the Church of the East's canonical practice, Their Holiness wish to state that their task in this meeting is to discuss and to formulate proposals that

shall be subsequently submitted for the approval by their two respective Holy Synods. They, along with the other members of their two delegations, have carefully deliberated on a number of important issues that they hope will prepare the way and, one day, will lead their churches to unity. The following are their proposals:

- (i) The emphasis on, and exploration of, the several common ecclesial and cultural dimensions that, today, bind their two churches and people together, mainly, our mutual faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, our common patristic, liturgical and theological tradition, as well as the belonging to our same ancestry and culture, and the same thousands-of-years history of glory and suffering that inseparably unites the Assyrian-Chaldean people.
- (ii) The Formation of a „Joint Commission for Unity“ shall be appointed respectively by both of their Holy Synods to function as a task force in order to formulate and carry out a comprehensive ecclesial-educational plan through which both the Chaldean and Assyrian Churches of the East will be able to achieve the following objectives:
 - a. The development of a „Catechism of the Church of the East.“
 - b. The establishment of an educational ecclesial institution within the Chicago-Detroit Region for the purpose of training future priests, deacons and catechists for both of the churches and to offer continuous religious educational programs for the active clergy in the whole Church of the East.
 - c. The articulation of a joint and common attitude toward emphasizing the Aramaic mother tongue in liturgical usage and in cultural endeavors by both of the churches.
 - d. The development of pastoral programs and literary projects as means of ecclesial and cultural collaboration between parishes and dioceses of the two churches throughout the world.
4. In light of their discussions of these findings, they have accordingly commissioned Bishop Mar Bawai Soro and Sarhad Jammo to present to them, by 31st March 1997, a comprehensive draft of a plan outlining the structure and the functionality of the above proposals, in order for them to present this plan to both of their Holy Synods for the agreement.
5. Meanwhile, Their Holiness would ardently ask all of their brothers archbishops, bishops, clergy and faithful, everywhere they may be, to continue their prayers and support for the success of this noble cause that shall restore their holy and ancient Church to its historic fullness. Their Holiness pray that all of us will offer our best efforts to rally behind them, in order to be able once again to transform our beloved Church of the East into an instrument of promoting the evangelical virtues of faith, hope and charity in the world, for the glory of God's name and to the benefit of all of our Assyrian-Chaldean people.“
6. Signed on the 29th day of November 1996 at the Chaldean Chancery in Southfield, MI (USA).

Reverend Sarhad Jammo
*Vicar General of the Chaldean Diocese in USA
 and Secretary of the „Joint Patriarchal Meeting“*

Sebastian Brock

The Assyrian Church of the East
First non-official Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition Vienna
1994¹

Summaries

Alfred Stirnemann:

The Vienna Dialogue between Catholic and non-Chalcedonian Theologians and its Treatment of Nestorius and Nestorianism (= Syriac Dialogue No.1, pp.27-33)

The President of PRO ORIENTE outlined the history of PRO ORIENTE's consultations between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, which had begun in 1971. Particularly important was the communiqué of the first Vienna Dialogue (1971), which included a statement that has come to be known as the "Vienna Christological Formula", whose basic assumptions can be summarized as follows:

- (a) different formulations can exist within one Church and can be regarded as orthodox even by those who do not use them in their theological tradition.
- (b) Instead of just reinterpreting the terminology and the expressions of the fifth century it is essential to redefine the mystery of our faith in terms of the concepts of contemporary philosophy and theology and to use a modern language.
- (c) In this effort the different traditions have either stressed unity or duality. Both attempts were considered orthodox as long as the stress on unity or duality in the incarnate Christ did not deny the other aspect (human or divine, respectively).

The proposals of the Vienna Dialogues had subsequently been received by popes and patriarchs, and had even been taken over as the basis for common declarations of faith signed by the Roman Pontiffs and the Patriarchs of the Coptic Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox Churches. Although the subjects of Nestorius, Nestorianism, or the Assyrian Church of the East had not been on the agenda of any of the five non-official consultations, extreme dyophysitism had been repeatedly condemned under the name 'Nestorianism', just as extreme monophysitism had also been condemned under the label 'Eutychianism'.

In view of the general success of the Vienna Dialogues with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, it would seem sensible to follow a similar general pattern in dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East, the possibility for which arose at the First Regional Symposium, held in Egypt in 1991. There, although the inclusion of the Assyrian Church of the East in the PRO ORIENTE consultations between the Roman Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches was considered premature, it was left open to PRO ORIENTE to open a separate dialogue with the Assyrians. It had, furthermore,

¹ First published in: Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review 16 (1994)

been suggested that this might include theologians belonging to all the Churches of Syriac tradition, and it was this suggestion that was being put into practice at the present Vienna Consultation.

Mar Bawai Soro/J.M. Birnie:

The Vienna Christological Formula in an Assyrian Perspective (= pp.34-49)

In this paper, one of the most important of the Consultation, Mar Bawai provided a commentary, from the standpoint of the Assyrian Church of the East, on the Vienna Christological Formula. For convenience, the Formula was divided up into twelve segments.

Segment 1: "We, as Christians, feel united in a spirit of brotherhood in our faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, God and Savior, and recognize equally the commission and prayer of our Lord that we may all be one in Him in order that we may bear common witness to him that the world may believe (John 17,21). „We find our common basis in the same Apostolic tradition, particularly as affirmed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed; we all confess the dogmatic decisions and teachings of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381),..."

Comment: The Church of the East had officially received the decisions and teachings of the Council of Nicea at the Synod of Mar Ishaq, held in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410. Since that time the Church of the East has maintained the Nicene-Constantinopolitan tradition and has implemented in its Trinitarian and Christological teachings the essence of the Apostolic faith affirmed by the early Church Fathers. Consequently the Church of the East would find the acceptance of this segment very possible.

Segment 2: "...and Ephesus (431);..."

Comment: The Church of the East has never been officially approached by the other Churches to accept the Christological formula and dogmatic teachings of the Council of Ephesus, but in the modern context there is opportunity for dialogue and ultimately for progress in regard to the question of the relationship of the Church of the East to the Council of Ephesus; such discussion would need to be based on mutual respect and a desire for mutual understanding. Three points might be considered.

(1) Since every Christological statement is simply an attempt to explain the inexplicable, and no single formula or series of statements can ever capture in words the essence of the mystery of the Incarnation, the Christological formula of the Council of Ephesus needs to be considered as one among other genuine expressions from both Eastern and Western traditions.

(2) The Christological debate, which had led to the convening of the Council of Ephesus, persisted for many years after the conclusion of the Council, and required a more definite resolution at the Council of Chalcedon. The theological formulation of the Council of Ephesus therefore needs to be considered in the light of its refinement effected through the Christological formula of the Council of Chalcedon.

(3) Particular attention also needs to be paid to the Christological definitions and formulae which have been canonically sanctioned in the Church of the East (an English translation of these was provided in the appendix to Mar Bawai's paper).

Segment 3: "we all agree in rejecting both the Nestorian [position about Jesus Christ]."

Comment: Clarification of what the "Nestorian" Christological definition actually consists of and what it means to the different Churches is a pre-requisite for progress here. If the term "Nestorian" is used to describe a union of the two natures that results in "one and another" or "two Sons" in Christ, or suggests that Christ is an "ordinary man" whom God adopted in order to reside in him and inspire him, as in the righteous and prophets of old, then the Church of the East will also condemn and reject such teaching regardless of the "name" it has been presented under. At the same time it must be recognized that the Church of the East has never understood the term "Nestorian" to mean what has been suggested above; rather, the term has been conceived by the Church of the East to refer to a Christological position in harmony with the orthodox teaching which they had received from their Fathers, who, in turn, received it from the Apostles.

Segment 4: "and [we all agree in rejecting the] Eutychian positions about Jesus Christ."

Comment: The Church of the East has for centuries rejected the Eutychian position in its various forms.

Segment 5: "We have endeavoured for a deeper understanding of the Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Christologies which have separated us until now".

Comment: The recent on-going dialogue between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Unit on "Faith and Unity" of the Middle East Council of Churches has been an occasion for the Church of the East to get a better understanding of and insight into the (for her) problematic Christological terminology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The Church of the East reaffirms her long-held view that, though using different language and terminology from that of Cyril of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus, she does in reality share the same "essence" of the one Apostolic faith that the Catholic Church and all the Orthodox Churches also share. Since no one statement of faith will ever be sufficient to express the mystery of the Incarnation, provided a distinction is established between the "content" of our common faith and the "terminology" utilized to articulate that faith, it should be possible to overcome most of the Christological problems which have thus far been the primary obstacles to the re-establishment of communion. The Church of the East thus welcomes any bi-lateral or multi-lateral attempts to increase the understanding of all the participants in this Christological dialogue so that ultimately we may be enabled to remove all the obstacles which stand in the way of our unity in faith, love and service.

Segment 6: "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 huma-

nity is one with his divinity without commixture, without confusion, without division, without separation ..."

Comment: The Church of the East would enthusiastically affirm this segment, and one of its great theologians, Mar Babai, speaks in very similar terms. It would seem that, where non-technical language is put to use in confessional statements, as it is in segment 6, there are less possible grounds for disagreement. With this statement we not only find no objectionable concepts or terminology, but we fully agree; if such an approach were utilized regularly there should be no reason for disagreement.

Segment 7: "We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ regard his mystery to be inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible".

Comment: Such an understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation is essential for dialogues such as the present one. Such an assertion, if sincerely held, should prevent, or at least minimize, the possibility of a Church or ecclesial authority condemning or rejecting the expression of a historically-rooted and consistent statement of faith by any of the apostolic Churches when such a statement arguably contains the same essence of the faith as their own, even though the formulation is different.

Segment 8: "We see that there are still differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of Christ because of our different ecclesiastical and theological traditions."

Comment: The differences in certain theological interpretations is partly a consequence of the different emphases which our Christological formulae have made in order to protect the one faith from different "heretical" implications. Such differences in theological interpretation need to be first stated and then clarified, in order to assess the nature or the source of the differences, whether they stem from the "essence" of the Apostolic faith, or from the "form" through which that faith is being expressed. What is needed above all is humility, openness, and a willingness to put aside suspicion about our mutual intentions.

Segment 9: "...we are convinced, however, that these differing formulations on both sides can be understood along the lines of the faith of Nicea and Ephesus".

Comment: The scope of such an accord should be extended to include the Christological formula of the Council of Chalcedon as well, assuming that the problem of the terminology has been dealt with and successfully resolved. A significant part of the Christological teachings of the Council of Chalcedon have been accepted by the Church of the East, and the Council is included among the various "Western" synods considered canonical (Synodicon Orientale, p.610).

Segment 10: „Realizing that there can be different emphases in the theological and dogmatic elaboration of Christ's mystery, we wish to encourage common efforts for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of this mystery in harmony with our different ecclesiastical traditions".

Comment: We agree very strongly with the affirmation of this paragraph. We will always seek the objective that will legitimize a pluralism of expression within the one apostolic faith in Jesus Christ, while preserving at the same time the essence of that

faith. Differences of formulation within these limits should be seen as complementary rather than conflicting.

Segment 11: "We have also discussed generally the problem of the Ecumenical Councils, their authority and reception, and we urge that these problems be extensively studied on both sides".

Comment: The Ecumenical Councils were major ecclesial events for the Church within the domain of the Roman Empire. The Church of the East, being within the Persian Empire, was never directly involved in any one. Yet, it has ultimately received Nicaea, Constantinople I, and the canons of Chalcedon, and is in agreement with the tone and substance of others. In the modern context it should be asked: Is positive acceptance of all dogmas of the Councils an absolute prerequisite for agreement on other issues and for the question of unity?

Segment 12: "We commonly submit ourselves to the witness of the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament and thus to the Apostolic Kerygma and express our intention not to become weary in the search for a common language of the mystery of salvation in our Lord in a brotherly spirit... 'until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God' (Eph 4:13). We wish to see the mystery of the compassion of God translated into a life of Christian compassion.

All of us have experienced how fruitful this Consultation has been, and we pray that God who brought us together may bless us and guide our future efforts in such helpful discussions".

Comment: Commitment to such a hope and expectation is a crucial step towards reflecting in the here and now the Reign of God in our lives. With love which reflects that of Christ we can transform the Church to be a loving community of believers, a church that is conciliatory and is conformed to 'the mind that is in Christ Jesus'.

In conclusion, the following points can be made:

- The Vienna Christological Formula essentially reflects the apostolic teaching that is compatible to the theology of the Church of the East, though the terminology of some of its segments poses some linguistic difficulties. In future formulae, it is recommended that a distinction be made between the "content" and "form" of our common faith. This will enable us to eliminate a significant part of the difficulties which form a barrier between the different parties in the dialogue.

- We affirm that dogmatic unity in pluralistic expression should go hand-in-hand with reconciliation and ecclesial unity. There needs to be tolerance of the concept of "pluralistic dogmatic expression in one faith".

- Credal statements may be regarded as the outward expression of the inner exigencies of a lived faith; they should not be forcibly imposed by external authorities on groups of people not prepared for them by their corporate historical experience.

- Christological formulae should not be seen as statements of abstract philosophy using concepts that are alien and confusing to members of our Churches, but rather as statements which reflect the liberating recognition that the God of love was and still is present and active among the lives of his people today. In the course of the discussion it became clear that clarification was needed over what was meant by the expression "the

Christological teachings of Ephesus", since no specific formula was issued by the Council.

Mar Aprem G. Mookan:

The Vienna Christological Formula in an Assyrian Perspective (= p.50)

The Church of the East does not find it difficult to subscribe to the Vienna Formula of Christology since it accepts, like all other Churches, the decisions and decrees of the first two ecumenical Councils, of Nicea and Constantinople. It recites the Nicene Creed without any of the later additions, such as the Filioque clause in the Western Churches, or the term "Mother of God".

The liturgical book of the Church of the East known as the Hudra makes it quite clear that the beliefs accredited by Pope Shenouda III to Nestorius are very different from those of the Church of the East. The misunderstandings on both sides lie in differing interpretations given to certain specific key terms such as "hypostatic union", and the Syriac term "*qnoma*". The inscription which Pope Shenouda III had put on the commemorative medal for the Consultation in 1991 says everything: "...Perfect in Divinity, Perfect in Humanity - CHRIST OUR LORD - 1 Tim 3,16".

Luise Abramowski:

The History of Research into Nestorius (= pp.54-65)

Modern research takes its starting point in F. Loof's *Nestoriana* (1905), in which he collected all the extant Greek and Syriac remains of Nestorius' writings. Though some further fragments can now be added, Loof's work remains fundamental. An important new source was provided in 1910 when P. Bedjan published the Syriac "Book of Heracleides", a collection of texts, several of which are genuinely by Nestorius. A French translation by F. Nau, and an English one (less satisfactory) by G.R. Driver and L. Hodgson, made the work more widely available. The complex literary problems of the work were the subject of a monograph by L. Abramowski (1963): as a result of this investigation it became clear that the main part of the text is Nestorius' Second Apology (though with some later interpolations); the introduction, however, which is in the form of a dialogue, is not by Nestorius himself, but by an unknown author who may be called Pseudo-Nestorius. This latter document is an important witness to the survival of Antiochene Christology into the late fifth and early sixth century, probably in Constantinople. Ps-Nestorius in fact develops Nestorius' teaching concerning the *prosopa*, and differs from him in his use of *qnome* (=hypostasis).

Three fundamental propositions of Nestorius can be isolated:

(1) The unity of the one Christ is a matter of course, and is seen from the outside, so to speak; the one *prosopon* is a *prosopon* of doxology; it is also seen in Christ's work and reign.

(2) The absolutely transcendent nature of the God Logos which cannot unite itself with human nature in a "physical" manner;

(3) The full human nature without any diminution.

The problem for him was how to present the inner structure of unity in Christ, and for this reason he introduces the concept of the *prosopon physikon* of each nature: these *prosopa physika* "use" each other, and this mutual "usage" cannot be conceived to be interrupted even for a moment, otherwise there would not be the "one common *prosopon* of union" of both. What Nestorius really aims at is the identity of existence of both natures.

The starting point, however, both for Nestorius and for the Antiochene and Syriac dyophysite theologians of the fifth century can be traced back to a single passage in Theodore of Mopsuestia's *de incarnatione* (VII.63).

Among the more important discussions of Nestorius in recent times, the following contributions are especially notable. M.V. Anastos (1962), going a step further than Grillmeier, argued that Nestorius was "completely orthodox, whether judged on the criterion of the Chalcedonian Symbol or from the point of view of speculative theology". Anastos also took as his point of comparison Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius, and claimed that Cyril's characteristic notion that 'the Logos suffered in the flesh' is theologically the exact equivalent of Nestorius' dogma that the Logos suffered in the *prosopon* of the manhood he took for his own. A very different point of view was taken by G. Bebis (1964), who takes a much more negative attitude, though he rightly refutes the traditional list of heretical clichés attributed to Nestorius.

Two significant books have been contributed by L.I. Scipioni; the first, *Ricerche sulla cristologia del 'Libro di Eraclide' di Nestorio* (1956) takes a fundamentally positive view (he of course still treats the introductory Dialogue as genuinely by Nestorius). Especially helpful is his explanation of the relationship between the terms nature, *hypostasis* and *prosopon* with the help of Stoic texts. The second, *Nestorio e il concilio di Efeso* (1974), is coolly critical of Cyril's Christology, which he sees as inadequate considering the problems raised by the teaching of Apollinarius.

In an article of 1961 A. Grillmeier distinguished two viewpoints from which the teaching of Nestorius has been judged, and can be judged. The first, given the circumstances of the time, was unavoidable; but in the history of theology judgement has to be much more favourable, for Nestorius was sincerely trying to find a solution of the christological problem as it had been posed by Arianism and Apollinarianism. In the third edition (1990) of his *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche* he gives emphasis to the ecumenical importance of the theological rehabilitation of Nestorius, and the need to distinguish between the popular presentation of Nestorius as a heretic and his actual teaching. Concerning the Council of Ephesus Grillmeier points out that, if one wants to speak of an "Ephesian symbol", this will be the formula of the synod held by John of Antioch which, with some alterations, became the Symbol of Union in 433.

The survey concludes with two articles published in 1993 by the late A. de Halleux, one on the First Session of the Council of Ephesus, the second entitled 'Nestorius, histoire et doctrine' (specially written for the Middle East Council of Churches). In the

former article de Halleux emphasizes the need to make proper use of Schwartz's critical edition in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, and cognizance taken of the way the *Acta* for this session had been edited in antiquity. From an ecumenical point of view it is important to note that the first session of the synod was not the doctrinal debate demanded by the emperor, but a judicial action against Nestorius as a heretic; in view of this irregularity, two questions pose themselves: (1) Was the process against Nestorius equitable? and (2) Where is the "dogma of Ephesus"? The answer to these questions needs to be sought in the spirit of Vatican II, and on the second point de Halleux considers that the Symbol of Union in 433 can be considered to be the true conclusion of the Council of Ephesus.

De Halleux's second article deals first with the history of the dispute over Nestorius and then with his teaching. In the first part he again lays stress on the juridical irregularity of the First Session, and points out that nowhere is Nestorius' "heresy" put in precise terms. Though judged in Ephesus to be in opposition to the faith of Nicea, Nestorius' reply to Cyril's Second Letter in fact gives a philologically correct Antiochene interpretation of the second article of the Nicene Creed; furthermore, his mode of expression needs to be understood against the background of pre-Chalcedonian Antiochene christology with its strong anti-Apollinarian impetus. In connection with the term "Theotokos", it should be noted that, while Nestorius opposed an "Apollinarian" interpretation of it, he nevertheless was willing to use it in a sermon of 430; and in any case it must be remembered that the title was far from being in universal usage prior to Ephesus. In his concluding "Une perspective pour le dialogue", de Halleux suggests that, after clearing up the misunderstandings in matters of terminology, the Assyrian Church of the East could agree to consider orthodox the Cyrillian and Chalcedonian formulas of the one *hypostasis* of the Word incarnate, situating the *Hypostasis* at the ontological level of person. However, this Church must not be asked by the other Churches to receive the formulas mentioned into her own christology; at the same time, her own formula of two hypostases (*qnome*) in Christ is to be understood in an entirely orthodox sense, given the different concept of *hypostasis*.

De Halleux's insights are of crucial importance for the present Consultations.

Finally, it is important to be aware of the inadequacies of some modern translations of Syriac christological terminology; in particular, the rendering of *qnome* by 'person', 'personne', found in a surprising number of even recent translations, is totally misleading.

Sebastian Brock:

The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire (= pp.69-85)

The paper falls into two parts: first a rapid sketch is provided of the history of the Church of the East living within the Sasanian Empire; and secondly, some prerequi-

sites for any balanced understanding of the christology of the Church of the East are suggested.

Traditional 'Church Histories' have usually followed Eusebius' example and confined their narrative to the history of the Church within the Roman Empire; as a result it is easy to forget that in Late Antiquity the term 'ecumenical council' did not have the meaning 'council of the universal Church', but rather, 'council of the Church within the Roman oikoumene', convoked by the Roman Emperor. This means that the creeds and canons issued by these 'ecumenical councils' were only authoritative within the Roman Empire, though of course they could subsequently be formally accepted by the Church outside the Roman Empire, as indeed happened with the Council of Nicea, which was accepted by the Church of the East at a synod in 410.

The early history of the Church in the Parthian Empire (up to 224) is extremely obscure, and it is only in the fourth century, under the Persian Sasanid dynasty that reliable sources begin to appear. Aphrahat, the most important witness to the character of fourth-century Christianity to the east of the Roman Empire, was contemporary with the first outbreak of persecution by Shapur II, and it is important to remember that the Church of the East continued to produce martyrs long after persecution had come to an end in the Roman Empire. The acts of these martyrs indeed constitute one of the main sources of knowledge of the life of the Church in the Persian Empire, another important source being the collection of synods (beginning with that of 410) known as the *Synodicon Orientale*. These synods provide important evidence both for relations with the Church in "the West" (i.e. the Roman Empire) and, above all, for the christology of the Church of the East as formulated in the various synods over three centuries (5th-7th).

In the fourth century the theological idiom of Aphrahat (and likewise of Ephrem, in the Roman Empire) was quite distinct from that of contemporary Greek theologians, though the underlying content was very similar. In the course of the fifth century both the Greek theological agenda and the Greek theological idiom penetrates more and more into the theological discourse of most Syriac writers. Since the Church of the East had gained its familiarity with the theological discourse of the Roman Empire for the most part through the Persian School of Edessa, by the time that school was closed (489) the specifically Theodorean variety of theological discourse had become well established in the Church of the East. Thus, when, at the end of the fifth century, and then increasingly during the sixth century, the Church in the eastern Roman Empire moved away from the Antiochene end of the Chalcedonian spectrum, the Church of the East felt more and more out of sympathy with these doctrinal developments in the Roman Empire (above all, the condemnation of Theodore's writings).

Two further historical points need remembering. Knowledge of the Council of Ephesus will have been mediated to the Church in the Persian Empire through the School of Edessa, whose sympathies will have been with the side of John of Antioch. At Chalcedon the restoration of Ibas (who was closely associated with the Persian School) to the see of Edessa will have been seen as a strong point in the Council's favour, though its Definition of Faith was seen as 'being wrapped in an obscure mea-

ning', and so 'providing a stumbling block to many'. As far as Nestorius is concerned, it is important to note that he does not feature a single time in any of the fifth- or sixth-century synods. Although Narsai treats him as one of the three 'Greek Doctors' (along with Diodore and Theodore), he clearly knows very little about his teaching, and he is included simply because he is seen as a martyr for the Antiochene christological position. Knowledge of certain of Nestorius' writings in Syriac translation, incorporated in the Book of Heracleides, only reached the Persian Empire c.540.

The second section opened with a plea to avoid misleading nomenclature and the perpetuation of sobriquets that derive from a hostile heresiographical tradition. Thus, to say that "the official adoption of Nestorianism by the Persian Church took place at the Synod of Seleucia in 486" is not only misleading but also historically incorrect. It is also important at the outset not to employ the over-simplistic threefold model found in most textbooks, where the Chalcedonian position is seen as the orthodox middle position, flanked on either side by the heretical extremes of Nestorianism and Monophysitism. A sevenfold model, allowing for various gradations of opinion across the christological spectrum is proposed, and in this model as a basic criterion for orthodoxy the formula "the incarnate Christ is consubstantial with us as well as with the Father" might be adopted. It is also of fundamental importance that the Church of the East be allowed to speak in its own terms, and not to judge its christology by the yardstick of the Greek theological agenda of the fifth to seventh centuries.

As far as the technical theological terminology is concerned, two points are essential:

(a) First of all, it goes without saying that we need to try to understand what writers actually meant by the technical terms they used, rather than rely on what their opponents claimed that they meant. In this connection it is necessary to be aware that several of the key terms used in the Chalcedonian Definition meant rather different things to different people at different times, and that complications are further introduced when these terms are translated from Greek into other languages.

(b) Secondly, it is important to be aware of the varying starting points of the different christological traditions, both from a positive and from a negative point of view. In other words, what was their primary concern in formulating their christological teaching, and what position were they trying at all costs to avoid. Different starting points, and in particular, two different views of how salvation for humanity is effected, not surprisingly produced very different formulations: in order to do full justice to the reality of the incarnation, without which salvation would not be effective, the Alexandrine christological tradition lays stress on terms of unity, whereas the Antiochene tradition of the Church of the East sees the promise of salvation for humanity as being intimately linked with the ascension in glory of the human nature of Christ, the homo assumptus, and this requires stress to be laid instead on the terms of duality in order to maintain the full reality of the link between Christ's humanity and humanity in general.

The paper ended with some examples illustrating the varying understandings of the key terms *kyana* ('nature') and *qnoma* (used to translate 'hypostasis'), and some of

the ways in which the Church of the East continued to preserve archaic phraseology long after the other Churches had ceased to use it.

Sarhad Jammo:

Three Synods of the Church of the East and Their Two Ecclesiologies (= pp.87-95)

A comparison is offered of the differing underlying ecclesiologies of two sets of early synods of the Church of the East, namely, the synods of 410 (under Mar Isaac) and 420 (under Mar Yabballaha) on the one hand, and that of the synod of 424 (under Mar Dadisho') on the other.

From the point of view of the synods of 410 and 420, the Church, East and West, is one body of Christ. It has its principle segment in the West; the East being an extension of the same body. The bishops of the West have the perfect apostolic tradition. They have the true faith. They have issued protective commandments. It is only normal for the Church of the East to adhere to their faith and order. Furthermore, the bishops of cities of the eastern Roman Empire, among them the bishop of Antioch, were collectively valid representatives of the Church in Roman Empire. However, according to the acts of these two synods, no single one of them is seen individually as a point of reference for the Church of the East. The Church of the East has accepted the care and guidance of the Western Fathers.

A completely different point of view is taken by the synod of 424, and the principle of primacy is totally transformed: the regional church takes the place of the totality of the church, and Dadisho', the Catholicos of the time, is "Peter for us". This transposition of primacy from a perfection of the universal church to a perfection of the local church is done, not through any theological rationale, but as a means of survival in a situation of emergency. If Dadisho' represents Peter, then there is nobody above him. Thus, the right of appeal to the Western Fathers is to be abrogated, the other patriarchs being "like him".

Within the space of fourteen years two different patterns of ecclesiology have been adopted by the Church of the East in the Persian Empire, each one responding to a particular concrete situation. After fifteen hundred years the Church of the East and its people are again divided between these two patterns. On the one side is the Chaldean Church, implementing basically the catholic principles and policy of the synod of Mar Isaac and Mar Yabballaha; and on the other, the Assyrian Church of the East, implementing the more regional ecclesiology of the synod of Mar Dadisho'. It is the first of these ecclesiologies that is expressed by 'Abdisho' in 1319 in his Collection of Synodical Canons.

Each of these two diverse ecclesiological attitudes has its own justification in history, and both have their own merit and validity. The former, however, would seem to represent the normal mode of ecclesiastical life, whereas the latter represents the survival mode. The Church of the East and her people are divided today into two segments, each representing one of these ecclesiologies and attitudes, instead of having

one Church of the East representing the best of both modes. In the actualization of that prospect lies the hope of the heirs of the primordial Church of the East.

J.-M. Fiey:

The Spread of the Persian Church (= pp.97-106)

This paper gave a succinct historical and topographical overview of the history of the Church of the East, its expansion across Asia in the seventh to thirteenth centuries, and its subsequent decline in the fourteenth, followed by the divisions within it which were brought about in the following centuries as a result of renewed contact with the Christian Churches in the West.

Bernard Dupuy:

The Christology of Nestorius (= pp.107-114)

When dealing with the theology of Nestorius it is always essential to keep in mind his Antiochene background; he probably studied under Theodore, and, like all the Antiochenes, he was engaged in the fight against Apollinarianism. It is also important not to exaggerate his opposition to the term Theotokos: this was not a term in wide use before it became a matter of dispute in Constantinople in 428, and indeed before the controversy had erupted even Cyril had never used the term; moreover, there is one homily where Nestorius himself does employ it. Nestorius' soteriology has often been misrepresented, but is in fact fully orthodox; as he himself wrote, 'God the Logos was inhumanized in order to make humanity the image of God in himself and to renew it in the very nature of his own humanity'.

His emphasis that 'the properties of Christ's flesh cannot ascend into the essence of God', and his desire to avoid the term 'becoming' in connection with the Logos, which he saw as implying mutability, lies at the heart of his thought. Along with the Antiochene exegetical tradition, he understood 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14) as his 'indwelling' in the Temple of his body (cf John 2:21), using vocabulary that had been employed by Athanasius, but which was abandoned by Cyril after 428, thus impoverishing the christological patrimony of the dogmatic tradition. The faith of Nestorius is in its intention profoundly orthodox, and he is a witness to the apostolic tradition, proposed in the symbol of Nicea, of the unconfounded union of divinity and humanity in the unique Son and Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate.

Nestorius rejected Cyril's 'natural union', seeing in it a hint of Apollinarianism, and as implying that God was submitted to suffering; his own phrase, 'voluntary union' was intended to safeguard the immutability and impassibility of the divine nature. Conflict with Cyril over the term '*hypostasis*' arose because for Cyril *hypostasis* implies the person, whereas for Nestorius it is always the essence. Here, as in the case of '*prosopon*', it is essential to interpret Nestorius according to his own understanding of

the terms. In fact it must be recognized that Nestorius is never absolutely clear on the question of the *prosopon* of Christ, and the relationship of the '*prosopon* of union' to the '*prosopon* of he who has clothed and the *prosopon* of he who is clothed' is never satisfactorily explained.

Many today are convinced that Nestorius never taught what was called the 'Nestorian heresy' after him, though his thought does suffer from serious shortcomings. As far as the Church of the East is concerned, it is needs to be recognized that the theologians of this Church have always rejected what their opponents describe as 'Nestorianism', and so this is a totally different issue from the question of Nestorius' own christology; on this latter point one thing at least is clear: Nestorius was condemned irregularly by the court at Ephesus, and so a dispassionate evaluation of his christological expressions is required for the Churches today. What is needed is a purification of their memories and a clarification of the real significance of the ancient individual anathemas.

Mar Bawai Soro/M.J. Birnie:

Is the Theology of the Church of the East Nestorian? (= pp.116-132)

Two questions need to be distinguished. If it is asked "Does the Church of the East venerate Nestorius and continue to employ his theological vocabulary (two kyane/ natures, two qnome/hypostaseis, one *prosopon*), then the answer is obviously yes. But if the question is "Is the Church of the East Nestorian?", the answer is not so immediately evident. Was Nestorius himself a "Nestorian" as that heresy is universally understood and described? Many scholars in modern times have given an answer in the negative, and it is very likely that if the same question applied to the Church of the East, the answer would similarly be in the negative. The question needs to be dealt with in three stages: (1) the relationship of the Persian Church to the ecumenical councils of the Byzantine Empire; (2) the historical development of the Christological terms and their use; and (3) an answer to the question from the Church of the East's own viewpoint.

(1) Though the Council of Nicea was received in 410 at the Synod of Seleucia/Ctesiphon, no mention is made of Constantinople until the Synod of Mar Yausep in 554; it is significant that no mention, however, is made at that Synod of the other intervening Councils (Ephesus, Chalcedon and Constantinople II). Perhaps part of the reasons for this official silence lies in the administrative independence of the Church of the East which had first been spelled out at the Synod of Dadisho' in 424; on that occasion the administrative separation vis a vis the Western bishops was not motivated by theological issues, but was purely practical and the result of political conditions.

(2) It was the closure of the Persian School in Edessa (489), and its relocation in Nisibis, that effectively spread the influence of the Antiochene school of thought with its strongly dyophysite Christology. To the Antiochene partisans at Nisibis Nestorius was venerated as a staunch defender of Antiochene orthodoxy and as a martyr to the pride and arrogance of Cyril. The Cyrilline position, however, also came to be repre-

sented in the Persian Empire, due to large-scale deportations of captives from the Byzantine Empire; though ultimately these 'monophysites' received the status of a separate Christian body, at first they were officially part of the Patriarchate of the Church of the East, and this may help explain the reticence of the Synods of the Church of the East over the controversial Councils of the Byzantine Empire. It is also notable that Nestorius is not named in the *Sunhados* until a canonical letter from the Catholicos-Patriarch Giwargis (660-80). An avoidance of inflammatory rhetoric and controversial terminology is also characteristic of the earliest Christological definition by the bishops of the Church of the East at the Synod of 486.

The action of the Second Council of Constantinople (553), approving the condemnation of the "Three Chapters" and the anathematization of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his writings, drew a strong reaction from the Church of the East, for whom Theodore was the Interpreter par excellence, and in the Synod of Isho'yahb I (587) those who condemn Theodore are unequivocally anathematized. It is important to note, however, that in its own christological formulation the Synod maintained a position very close to that of the Chalcedonian Definition, though avoiding the use of the (to them ambiguous) term *qnoma/hypostasis* outside a Trinitarian context.

It was the threat in 612 that the Persian king might impose a 'one nature' candidate on the vacant patriarchal see that led to a hardening of positions, and the introduction into an official confession of the term *qnoma* in the sense of Nestorius' usage, as opposed to that of Cyril. That this did not imply a dividing up of Christ into two subjects can be seen from Babai the Great's Book of the Union; here it is quite clear that he understands a unified "subject" of the incarnation: there is one Son of God who takes his own flesh, not another's, from the Blessed Virgin.

In conclusion, the Church of the East indeed venerates Nestorius and makes use of his vocabulary, but it rejects the epithet "Nestorian" because it does not accept all the implications of that name (and in any case, that Church does not originate with Nestorius or with his followers). The Church of the East confesses two natures in Christ, inseparable and unconfused, subsisting in one personal subject, whose subject, God the Word, the Son of God, God over all, is consubstantial with his Begetter in his own essential nature, and consubstantial with us in the nature which he took from the Virgin and made his own. Whether the formulae employed by this confession are adequate to express a true metaphysical union of the two disparate natures we are unable to say with any degree of certainty, for we are well aware that the "mystery" of the incarnation has eluded the powers of human thought and tongue to express to the satisfaction of all.

Mar Bawai ended by emphasizing the need for humility and the realization of the inadequacy of all our attempts to describe the indescribable. Only with a humble recognition of one's own frailty, and in a spirit of contrition for the wilful misunderstandings of the past, will it be possible to convert the present situation of divisions and schisms into a future process of healing and reunion. (An Appendix gives a helpful schematic diagram that illustrates the Church of the East's understanding of the Incarnation).

Adelbert Davids:

Is the Theology of the Assyrian Church Nestorian? (= pp.134-141)

The paper began by examining how the term 'Nestorian' was used. It is already to be found employed at the Second Council of Ephesus (449) and at Chalcedon. In the Synodicon of the Church of the East the term first appears in a document of 612, where it is simply an abusive synonym for 'dyophysite'. It is only in 680 that Nestorius is mentioned by name in an official document of the Church of the East. Theodore, on the other hand, was already mentioned by name in the (schismatic) synod of 484, and then features again in the synods of 544, 585, 596 and 605. These texts indicate that in the latter part of the sixth century Theodore of Mopsuestia had become the name that stood for Oriental Orthodoxy.

The various synods of the Church of the East during the fifth to seventh centuries provide an instructive sequence of credal statements, and the developments in phraseology and content were illustrated by means of substantial quotations.

Mar Aprem G. Mookan:

Is the Theology of the Assyrian Church Nestorian? (= pp.142-151)

The main problem in finding a suitable answer to this question lies in the different ways in which the word 'Nestorian' is understood. Those who accept the Council of Ephesus (431) consider Nestorianism as a heresy because they thought that Nestorius taught two personalities in Jesus Christ, and that Jesus was born as a human being to whom divinity was later joined. Nestorius, however, did not teach any such heresy, and in view of the irregularities of the Synod of Ephesus it remains doubtful that the Church of the East could accept it as an ecumenical Council of the universal Church.

The relevance of 'Nestorianism' (i.e. a strongly dyophysite Christology) for today lies in its emphasis on the humanity of our Lord: this emphasis was necessary at the time of Nestorius because of the influence of Apollinarius, and it is just as relevant today. Likewise his objections to the use of the term "Theotokos" should not be ignored in the context of excessive Mariology found in some parts of the Roman Catholic Church (but rightly opposed by Vatican II).

A number of modern scholars have shown that the charge of Nestorianism cannot justly be levelled against Nestorius' own teaching, and on an official level at the beginning of this century moves were made in the Anglican Church to clear the Church of the East from the charge of heresy. In the context of more recent ecumenical discussions, the results of the Aarhus consultation (1964) are in a way discouraging, for if a unilateral declaration of a Christological compromise is made by the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, then the Church of the East may find more affinity with the West than the East from the christological point of view. If the "eastern ecumenism" is based on Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus, "western ecume-

nism" will be based on the Tome of Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. As the non-Chalcedonian Churches insist on the reunion with the Orthodox Churches without having to recognize the Council of Chalcedon, then the Church of the East has a legitimate claim to insist on the reunion without recognizing the Council of Ephesus.

Is the theology of the Assyrian Church Nestorian? The answer is both Yes and No. If Nestorius himself was never a Nestorian, why should anybody bother whether the reply is Yes or No? The Assyrian Church is "Nestorian" to the extent that it considers Nestorius a saint and a Greek Doctor of the Church. The answer is "No" if the questioner thought that Nestorianism is the denial of the divinity or the total separation of the divine and human natures in Christ.

Archbishop Emmanuel Delly:

Comment Expressing the View of the Chaldean Church Today on the Christological Controversy (= pp.153-155)

The root of the trouble behind many centuries of misunderstandings lies in the use of the same terminology, but with different meanings, by the two philosophical currents represented by the Antiochene and the Alexandrian christological traditions. The writings of the Church of the East should be judged in the context of their own time and own understanding of the terminology, and not by the criterion of philosophical and theological terminology used by us today.

Archbishop Delly illustrated this point vividly from his own experience: as a young man he had written a monograph on the theology of Elia bar Shenaya, and judged him then to be a true Nestorian - unjustly, as he would say today, for the teachings of Elia, when read in the context of his own understanding of the terminology, are those of his Fathers and of the Apostles and basically those of the Church Universal. Today, he would say that the christological faith of the Church of the East always remained that of the Apostles and the Church Universal.

After commenting on the different senses in which the key terms *kyana*, *qnoma* and *parsopa* (and their Arabic equivalents) are used, Archbishop Delly concluded that, in dealing with the question of the christology of the Church of the East, we are not dealing with an error but with a different way of conceiving and understanding the meaning of terms.

Geevarghese Chediath:

The Theological Contribution of Mar Babai the Great (= pp.155-166)

The paper opened with some details about the life and writings of Babai (551/2-628). His major work, the Book of the Union, was the first large-scale treatise on the incarnation by a writer of the Church of the East and it remains one of the most authoritative statements of that Church's christological position.

Babai accepts as an unquestioned fact that the Son is one and unique and that he has two perfect natures in the union without mixture. His concern was to explain the duality in the union, and he does this by providing a synthesis of various traditions. As a follower of the Antiochene tradition he begins with the historical Jesus Christ and ascends to the divinity. On the other hand, his starting point is on occasion the Word of God, then coming down to the union, as is the case in the Alexandrine tradition. And as a follower of Theodore, Babai uses concrete and abstract expressions side by side.

In speaking of the terms Word and Son of God Babai makes a subtle distinction: he uses "Word" pointing to the common nature (divinity) and the *qnoma*, while "Son" is indicative of the particular property of the nature, the *Parsopa* of Filiation, which is incommunicable with the Father and the Holy Spirit while communicable with the creatures. His key terms are *kyana*, *qnoma* and *parsopa*. *Kyana* is the same as nature in the abstract, and is the universal compared to the particular. *Qnoma* is the concretisation of the abstract *kyana*. It is incommunicable, and on Babai's understanding of the term, a union of two perfect *qnoma* so as to form one *qnoma* is impossible. *Qnoma* may be translated as "this or that substance", "subsistence", "reality as opposed to the unreal or illusion". It is primarily referring to concrete reality or actuality rather than Person. The *qnoma* of Babai is not the Chalcedonian *hypostasis* (which is identified instead with *prosopon*). *Parsopa* for him is the property which distinguishes one *qnoma* from another *qnoma* of the same species. The indivisible and singular property of the *qnoma* is given by the *parsopa*. Thus the second *qnoma* of the Trinity is the Word, and his *parsopa* is "Sonship". God the Word, having the *parsopa* of Filiation, assumed our humanity to his *parsopa* and gave his *parsopa* to the Man formed in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Thus the *parsopa* of filiation of the Word became the *parsopa* of that which is formed in her, at the very moment of conception. The Word is a perfect *qnoma* and the humanity is a perfect *qnoma*, as any other man.

Babai lays great emphasis on the oneness of the Son, and he expresses the union of the two natures in Christ by means of a number of different terms, "union", "assumption", "conjunction", "indwelling", "putting one": all of these terms, he says, have their limitations; since each different term or phrase expresses a different aspect of the mystery that cannot be expressed in language, it is important to use a variety of terms in conjunction.

The union of the two natures is without any mixture or confusion, and Babai emphasizes that the properties of each nature are preserved. Since the divine properties subsist in the divine *qnoma*, and the human properties in the human *qnoma*, it is necessary to speak of two natures and two *qnoma*. The "Son", that is, the *parsopa* of Filiation of the Word and of the man, is the subject of attribution of all the predicates. Duality is applicable when considering the incarnate life of Christ; after the Resurrection, however, one cannot speak of duality, for there is only oneness.

Babai's Christology is Parsopic Christology. He presents a Christology which is as orthodox as the Christology of the Alexandrian tradition. His stress is on the *parsopa* of Filiation of the Word; till the incarnation he speaks in terms of the Word, and after it in terms of the Son, or Christ (i.e. the *parsopa* of Filiation). The concrete expression

"man" for the humanity does not mean a duality of Filiation, but the actuality and reality of the humanity assumed. The two *qnome* are indicative of the reality of the duality in Christ without confusion. The "homo assumptus" was in the tradition of the Church. When there are two *independent qnome*, then it becomes heretical. But as long as the two exist in one *parsopa*, the one having dependence on the other, it is orthodox.

Provided it does not lead to misunderstanding, Babai is prepared on occasion to use the term *Yaldat Alaha* (= Theotokos). If one confronts Babai's Christology with the Alexandrian Christology, and looks at it from that point of view, one may have doubts about it. But if one considers it as a particular Christology of a particular Church, contributing to the richness of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, then one would happily accept it as a particular Christology acceptable in the Christian Tradition. Babai's Christology expresses the very same truth, which the Cyrillian Christology presents to the Church. Although the same words meant different things to different people, in each context they are correct, and the words must be accepted in the particular sense of each.

Sarhad Jammo:

The Quddasha of the Apostles Addai and Mari and the Narrative of the Eucharistic Institution (= pp.167-181)

Of the three anaphoras, or *Quddashe*, used by the Church of the East it is well known that the anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari lacks an Institution Narrative. Prior to the liturgical reforms of the Catholicos Isho'yahb III in the mid seventh century there had also been other anaphoras in use, for some of which the name of attribution is known, and for one of which fragments survive in an early manuscript; in this last, it is important to note that the narrative of institution does not report the words of Christ.

From a detailed examination of the various commentators of the Church of the East on the eucharistic liturgy, it can be concluded that (1) Either explicitly or implicitly, all Assyro-Chaldean commentators refer to the Institution Narrative as part of the anaphora on which they comment. (2) One line of authors focuses more on the epiclesis and the coming of the Holy Spirit as the divine power effecting consecration. (3) Another line of commentators, led by Gabriel Qatraya (7th cent.), attributes to the Last Supper and to the words of the Lord an importance, if not a value, equal to the one attributed to the epiclesis; both form together cardinal parts of the consecratory rite.

In view of the presence of an Institution Narrative in the Maronite anaphora known as the Sharrar, or Peter III, which is otherwise very close to the anaphora of the Apostles, it has been argued by many scholars (including the speaker in his youth) that an Institution Narrative was once present in the anaphora of the Apostles as well, but that it had been later removed. The reasons for such an excision are, however, impossible to conceive, and accordingly this view must be considered untenable. Rather, the anaphora of the Apostles must be regarded as a text of great antiquity which has no

been conformed to the norm that was later to be adopted in all other anaphoras, including the two also in use in the Church of the East. It should be noted that the anaphora of the Apostles does in fact refer to the action of the Lord at the Last Supper in two specific places.

In conclusion, the anaphora of the Apostles is a venerated and valid consecratory form of eucharistic prayer, seeing that (a) it is an authentic euchological witness of primordial Christianity; (b) even though the Institution Narrative is not included, the connection between the celebration of the Church and the Last Supper is clearly and concisely established; and (c) the Church of the East has adopted two other *Quddashe* containing the Institution Narrative, thus declaring her intention of relating to the scriptural institutional rite of eucharist, accepting, as well, the theological and liturgical developments in Western Christianity.

Peter Hofrichter:

The Anaphora of Addai and Mari in the Church of the East - Eucharist without Institution Narrative? (= pp.182-191)

The liturgical reforms of Isho'yahb III restricted the anaphoras in use in the Church of the East to three, the Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari, that of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and that of Nestorius. The second and third belong to the Byzantine tradition and were only translated into Syriac in the sixth century. The Anaphora of the Apostles, however, must have originated in Syria itself at a very early time, probably in Edessa in the third or second century.

The absence of an Institution Narrative in the anaphora of the Apostles caused problems for Roman Catholic theologians in the sixteenth century when they came across it in use in India, in view of the Latin concept of the consecration and transubstantiation by and at the moment of the words of the Institution (dating back to the twelfth century). Most Western theologians took the view that the Institution Narrative had simply been omitted in the manuscripts out of respect, and that originally the words had been said by heart. Thus in many Western editions of the anaphora of the Apostles an Institution Narrative has been supplied (in older Chaldean and Syro-Malabar missals it is printed only at the end of the anaphora). There are strong reasons, however, for supposing that in the pre-Nicene period an institution narrative was absent from the eucharistic anaphora, and that the East Syrian tradition has simply preserved this tradition.

Examination of other anaphoras of Syrian origin in fact brings to light the fact that there are several anaphoras which, although they have an institution narrative, lack the actual words of institution. This is the case with the fragmentary sixth-century East Syrian anaphora, the Ethiopian anaphora of Jacob of Serugh, and three Syrian Orthodox anaphoras (those attributed to St Peter, Xystus of Rome, and Dionysius bar Salibi). Support for the original absence of an institution narrative in the eucharistic liturgy can be found, not only in the Acts of Thomas and Acts of John, but also in the

Didache (dating from between c.80 and 130), which has explicit instructions for the eucharistic prayer, but without any reference to the institution. In fact two patterns of the Eucharist can already be found in the New Testament, the first, of Paul and the Synoptic Gospels, with its emphasis on the institution of the Eucharist, and the other of John, who provides a very different emphasis.

In the new Catechism of the Catholic Church sections 1412-3 specifically speak of the words of consecration in the Institution Narrative. Since, however, this is a *sententia certa*, and not a doctrine *de fide* that is exclusive of other approaches, there is still room for the possibility of the Catholic Church agreeing to the anaphora of the Apostles in its original form, without the institution narrative. Indeed, both Catholic and Orthodox Christians should be extremely thankful to the Church of the East for having preserved an original and authentic tradition that was totally displaced and forgotten in all other branches of Christianity. Furthermore, the commentary to the Lima "Declarations of Convergence" (1982) on the Eucharist would certainly seem to be applicable to anaphora of the Apostles, as well as to other Eastern anaphoras, even though it did not have that anaphora specifically in mind.

Sebastian Brock

PRO ORIENTE's Second Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition 1996¹

In the volume about the First Syriac Consultation from 1994 (pp.223-226), a report was given of the First Consultation on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition, held in Vienna in June 1994 under the auspices of the Stiftung PRO ORIENTE. The aim was to incorporate the Assyrian Church of the East into PRO ORIENTE's ongoing non-official dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches. At the end of February 1996 PRO ORIENTE arranged a Second Consultation that again brought together theologians from various Churches of Syriac liturgical tradition. At the First Consultation the participants had been confined to theologians of the Syriac Churches, which meant that the Oriental Orthodox position - at the opposite end of the christological spectrum from the Assyrian Church of the East - was represented only by the Syrian Orthodox and Indian Orthodox participants; at the Second Consultation, however, the Oriental Orthodox were also represented by theologians from the Armenian Apostolic and Coptic Orthodox Churches (a participant from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was unfortunately unable to come); an observer from the Mar Thoma Church in India also attended.

Between the First and Second Consultations two events of greatest significance, as far as the Assyrian Church of the East was concerned, had taken place: on November

11, 1994, a common declaration of faith had been issued in Rome by Pope John Paul II and Catholicos Mar Dinkha IV, and then, only a few days later that month, the Executive Council of the Middle East Council of Churches was requested by the MECC's Sixth General Assembly to set in motion the process for receiving the Assyrian Church of the East into full membership of the MECC (this was duly effected in the course of 1995).

These two developments have had a very important effect on the way in which the Assyrian Church of the East sees its relationship with other Churches, giving it a new confidence that it is now on equal terms with them, and no longer, as it were, on probation. The Common Declaration in Rome had put the Assyrian Church of the East on a par, vis a vis the Roman Catholic Church, with the Syrian and Coptic Orthodox Churches, with whose Patriarchs Pope John Paul II had already made similar common declarations of faith. Acceptance as a full member of the MECC was also of great significance for relationship with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, by whom the Assyrian Church of the East had in the past sometimes been marginalised; here it is interesting to note that the Assyrian Church of the East was given a place in the Catholic group of Churches (among whom, of course, are the Syrian Catholic, Chaldean and Maronite Churches), since inclusion into any of the other three groups, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Protestant, would have been very problematic. Though at first surprising, this allocation in fact makes good sense from the point of view of doctrinal history, Rome always having been the strongest defender of a more strictly dyophysite position in Christology.

The topics discussed at the Second Consultation covered four main areas, the Christological declaration of November 1994, the Council of Ephesus, the „Three Chapters“ episode leading to the condemnation of both the person and the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia at the Fifth Council (553), and the liturgical texts of the Church of the East as an expression of Christology. At the First Consultation the papers had either been by theologians of the Church of the East (Assyrian and Chaldean), or by western „experts“; at the Second Consultation, however, several papers were also given by theologians of the Syrian and Indian Orthodox Churches: this provided extremely helpful, since it highlighted the kinds of problems (not always so obvious to Churches in the Chalcedonian tradition) which the Oriental Orthodox Churches perceive as foremost in any dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East.

The final Communiqué (see above, pp. 191-194) contains a number of remarkable features which stand out all the more when this Communiqué is compared with that of the First Consultation, where it had not proved possible to offer anything much more than a description of the proceedings. In the present Communiqué, by contrast, it states at the outset that the participants had been „able to proceed from the Unity of Faith that was expressed in the Vienna Christological Formula ...“ Here it needs to be recalled that the Vienna Christological Formula was formulated at the 1971 PRO ORIENTE Consultation between Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox theologians, at a time when the Assyrian Church of the East had no part in ecumenical dialogue on Christology: the fact that its central Christological statement is now also considered acce-

¹ First published in: Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review 19 (1997)

ptable by the theologians of the Assyrian Church at the Second Consultation is of no small significance. Equally significant is the passage (initially suggested by a participant from the Assyrian Church of the East) which states that the „theological contents“ of the Council of Ephesos „could indeed be considered as a theological basis that could unite these Churches (sc. of the Syriac Tradition) in the same faith in Jesus Christ.“ There is, admittedly, an element of ambiguity here, in that the Council of Ephesos (which has not been accepted by the Church of the East) never issued any doctrinal statement, and there a number of different interpretations of what the „theological contents“ might in fact be.

Both these elements in the Communiqué can be seen as reassuring, from the point of view of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, in that they indicate that the Assyrian Church of the East is in fact (and contrary to their traditional perception) perfectly happy to accept statements which describe a position which they regard as their own.

Likewise of greatest importance in this context is the statement that „there is a necessity to make an absolute distinction between the doctrinal position of the Assyrian Church of the East and the position, recognized by all to be heretical, which holds that there are two Sons, two prosopa in the one Incarnate Christ, a position which is traditionally described by the Chalcedonians and Oriental Orthodox as ‘Nestorianism’.“ This makes it absolutely clear that the Assyrian Church of the East does not hold (any certainly never has held) the doctrinal position of which its theological opponents have traditionally accused it. In connection with this, the specific explanation, given by the participants of the Church of the East (both Assyrian and Chaldean), of their understanding of one of the key christological terms (qnoma) is very helpful, in that it makes it perfectly clear that when the East Syrian tradition speaks of „the two natures and their qnoma“ in the incarnate Christ, this does not mean two hypostases. Likewise, the open acknowledgement of the different senses accorded to several of the central christological terms in the different traditions is important for the process of clearing away past misunderstandings.

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to the explicit mention of the ultimate aim of the Dialogue: no Church is being asked to reconsider its preferred christological formulation, but rather, each Church, while remaining completely true to its own tradition, when „should come to perceive that the christological teaching of the other Syriac traditions, when correctly understood, represents a legitimate expression of our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the mystery of whose Incarnation can never be exhaustively formulated in words.“ In other words, there is no question of one side being required to make concessions to the other; rather, if the Dialogue proves successful, it will be the case that all parties are winners, in that they will all have become richer in understanding.

Having had the privilege of participating in both the First and the Second Consultations, I was very aware of a noticeable difference in atmosphere between the two: at the First, although good will on all sides was very much in evidence, there was always the feeling that the Assyrian Church of the East was „on trial“, with the result that there was sometimes an underlying element of suspicion on either side present. At the

Second Consultation, however, the atmosphere was generally very different: this was not just due to the new confidence given to the Assyrian Church of the East by intervening events, as indicated above; equally important was the sense that a real mutual trust and respect had now been achieved among the participants. It is by no means easy to dispel the accumulation of misunderstanding and mistrust that has grown up over the centuries, and it is often not fully realised by members of the Chalcedonian Churches how difficult it is to bridge the perceived gap between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Oriental Orthodox Churches in matters of christology. In this context it was very helpful to have Armenian and Coptic Orthodox participants present, and the critical but constructive contributions of His Eminence Amba Bishoy were particularly valuable. These two Consultations organized by the PRO ORIENTE Foundation, under the guidance of its President Alfred Stirnemann, have ensured that the foundations for this bridge between the two very different christological traditions are being soundly laid at a non-official level, and it is earnestly to be hoped that dialogue at an official level, as well as non-official, will now build up further from these foundations.

Dietmar W. Winkler

The Current Theological Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East*

Up to now the *Assyrian Church of the East* has been called *Nestorian Church*. From a theological point of view this is a name which we have to reject today, since the term "Nestorian" has been used to insult them. Somewhat better is the expression *pre-Ephesian Church*, because it accepts only the first two imperial synods (Nicea 325, Constantinople 381) as ecumenical. But the Church of the East expanded outside the bounds of the Roman Empire. Therefore the term *East Syrian* or *Syro Oriental Church* would be more correct than a name which refers to the reception of Councils of the Roman Empire. However, the most appropriate is to respect how they call themselves: *Assyrian Church of the East* or just *Church of the East*.

My aim in this paper is to give a brief survey of the contemporary ecumenical dialogues this church is involved in, together with some observations: (1) The dialogue within the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), (2) The relationship to the Coptic Orthodox Church, (3) The unofficial Syriac Dialogue initiated by PRO ORIENTE, and finally (4) The official bilateral dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church.²

* Based on a paper read at the VIIum Symposium Syriacum in Uppsala/Sweden (12-14 August 1996). I would like to thank the Austrian "Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung" who supported my work, and Fr. Anthony Ruff OSB who improved my English text.

² Cf. D. W. Winkler, "Theologische Notizen zu den ökumenischen Dialogen mit der Assyrischen Kirche des

1. The theological dialogue within the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC)

Already in 1985 at the 4th general assembly in Nicosia (Cyprus), the Assyrian Church tried to become a member of the MECC. But since this Church was closely associated with the "Nestorian" heresy the application was turned down under the pressure of some (pre-chalcedonian) Oriental Orthodox bishops.³ The Coptic Orthodox Church was particularly uninterested in a dialogue with the Assyrian Church. Only when the family of the seven Catholic Churches in the Middle East⁴ joined the Council in 1990 at the 5th general assembly (Nicosia) did the discussion concerning the MECC-membership of the Church of the East get a fresh impetus. A *MECC-committee for dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East* was founded in 1991. From 1992 to 1994 two official dialogue sessions were held and several unofficial encounters were arranged with a reduced number of participants. No final communiqué was issued, but important theological work was done.⁵

The reservations of the Coptic Church are easily explained by the confrontation between Cyril and Nestorius and the proceedings around the Council of Ephesus (431). Therefore the subjects treated at the first meeting of the dialogue committee (September 5-6, 1991) were Christological terminology, Mariology and the teachings of Nestorius. The discussions made it clear that above all the Oriental Orthodox have a problem with the East Syrian terminology, especially concerning the term *qnomá*. But if we look closer it becomes evident that the Assyrian Christology agrees in substance with the Chalcedonian and pre-Chalcedonian theology. Nevertheless only minor progress was made at this first encounter after about fifteen centuries of separation and mistrust.

The second official meeting (September 15-20, 1992) brought the person and the teachings of Nestorius into focus. Here I just want to mention the marvellous investigation of the late André de Halleux.⁶ Today any serious analysis of the subject will have to take into consideration the results of this study.

Ostens", *Ökumenisches Forum* 17 (1994) 243-266; Idem, "Jüngste Entwicklungen in den ökumenischen Beziehungen der Assyrischen Kirche des Ostens", *Ökumenisches Forum* 18 (1995) 281-288; A. Davids, "De Syrische dialoog", *Het Christelijk Oosten* 47 (1995) 213-233.

³ Cf. B. Soro, "Recent Ecumenical Initiatives of the Assyrian Church of the East". 75th ecumenical symposium of PRO ORIENTE, Vienna, 24th Feb. 1995. See above pp. 195-201

⁴ I.e. Maronite Church of Antioch; Greek Catholic Melkite Church of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem; Armenian Catholic Church of Cilicia; Syrian Catholic Church of Antioch; Coptic Catholic Church; Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem; Chaldean Catholic Church.

⁵ Many thanks to the Director of the MECC program unit on Faith & Unity, Fr. Paul Saya (Beirut), who kindly sent me his progress report 1991-1994 and some of the papers presented at the two official meetings. Also cf. "MECC Theological Dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East", *MECC newsreport* (Dezember 1991) 2; "Second Dialogue With Assyrian Church Held" *MECC newsreport* (April 1992) 2.

⁶ A. de Halleux, "Nestorius. Histoire et Doctrine", *Irénikon* 66 (1993) 38-51. 163-178. Engl. in: PRO ORIENTE (Ed.), *Syriac Dialogue. First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue*, Vienna 1994, 200-215. De Halleux completed this investigation with the important paper: "La première session du concile d'Éphèse (22 Juin 431)" *ETHL* 69 (1993) 48-87.

André de Halleux shows "that one cannot suspect the fundamentally orthodox intention of the Christological faith of Nestorius" and that it "corresponds in substance to the apostolic tradition."⁷ De Halleux also evaluates critically the proceedings of the first Council of Ephesus (431), a rereading of the sources is given. As everybody knows it was not possible to open the Council on 7th June 431 because of John of Antioch's and the Roman delegate's delay. John of Antioch wrote a letter to Cyril in which he announced that he would arrive a bit later because of some external circumstances. Nevertheless Cyril opened the Council on 22nd June ignoring the protest of the delegate of the emperor and of 68 bishops. The first session therefore started with an important insufficiency: there was a lack of impartial verification and official authentication.⁸ In de Halleux' paper presented at the second MECC-meeting we read: "In this manner, then, the ecumenical council of Ephesus began illegally. ...there are no other examples of an ecumenical council opening against imperial orders."⁹ Furthermore there were considerable defects in the process against Nestorius. Although the assembly tried to compensate its irregular opening by the observation of canonical forms of the juridical procedure "it did, nonetheless, violate an elementary rule of natural right".¹⁰ Cyril was the head of the synod, the accuser and the judge. Even the theological positions of Nestorius were not discussed: "...the heresy which is imputed to him is not otherwise indicated than by the act 'of thinking and preaching impious things', or of 'having committed blasphemy against Christ'".¹¹ Finally the condemnation happened in the absence of Nestorius.

Following the explications of André de Halleux one cannot help feeling that the condemnation of Nestorius at Ephesus was more important than the struggle for unity in faith. The Council passed no new formal definition of the orthodox faith. Cyril transformed an imperial synod into a process against heretic.

However, the discussions at this second meeting of the *MECC-committee for dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East* also showed the need of clarifying the christological terminology, especially the problem of *hypostasis* and *qnomá*.

The 6th general assembly of the MECC (November 15-21, 1994) in Limassol (Cyprus) gave an official mandate to examine the conditions of membership of the Assyrians. The Executive Committee took valuable steps at its meeting in February 1995 "to set in motion the process for receiving the Ancient (Assyrian) Church of the East into the membership of the MECC".¹² As the MECC has a confessional family system, there was still another problem left: to which of the four families (Catholic, Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Protestant/Evangelicals) should the Assyrian Church be joined?

⁷ De Halleux, "Nestorius" 168.

⁸ Cf. De Halleux, "La première session" 50.

⁹ De Halleux, "Nestorius" 40.

¹⁰ Ibid. 42.

¹¹ Ibid. 45.

¹² "A New Beginning. An Ancient Reality. The MECC's Executive Committee Takes Action" *MECC newsreport* (January/April 1995) 11.

The disputes found a solution in October 1995: The Assyrian Church became a member of the MECC within the Catholic family.

2. *The relationship to the Coptic Orthodox Church*

The real surprise at the 6th general assembly of the MECC in November 1994 was that the Assyrian observer received an invitation from the Coptic Pope Shenouda III to visit Egypt and to start a theological dialogue between the two churches. Apparently this was a result of the efforts of the MECC sub-unit Faith and Unity and a consequence of the Common Christological Declaration of the Assyrian and the Catholic Church. The news of this declaration was warmly welcomed at that general assembly. Already on 13-14 January, 1995, this first gathering of Coptic and Assyrian theologians took place in the Coptic monastery Amba Bishoy in the Wadi Natrun/ Egypt. At this meeting a draft of a Common Christological Declaration was worked out. In essence this declaration accepts different approaches to the *Mysterium Christi* and "asserts that though the Assyrians use a terminology of 'two natures, two qnomeh, in one person', nevertheless, there is only one final subject in Jesus Christ, God the Word Incarnate, who is both perfect God and perfect man. The term 'two qnomeh', which historically has been at the center of this theological debate, is clarified by the Assyrian Church of the East to be the concrete realization (individuation) of each nature of divinity and humanity."¹³ Any theology which implies a duality of persons or any teaching which suggests two sons is rejected.

The draft has been given under the consideration of the respective holy synods. Unfortunately, as a matter of fact it has been rejected by the Coptic synod for different reasons. The signing of a Common Christological Declaration by the patriarchs and synods would have been a great event and a historic moment: In that case the wardens of the theology of Cyril and the putative Nestorians – Copts and Assyrians – would have found the way to a common witness in Christ.

3. *The non official Syriac Dialogue initiated by PRO ORIENTE*

In June 1994 the foundation PRO ORIENTE¹⁴ issued invitations to a first non-official Consultation in Vienna: "Orthodoxy and Catholicity in the Syriac Tradition with Special Attention to the Theology of the Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire".¹⁵ For the first time theologians of all the Syriac churches came together: from the Assyrian Church of the East (Old and New Calendarian), from the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Syrian Orthodox from Antioch, Malankara Orthodox from India), and from

the Oriental Catholic Churches (Chaldean, Syrian, Maronite, Malabar, and Malankara). I want to comment on some results of this consultation.

1. First it has to be pointed out in the ecumenical discussion, though it sounds very simple: The East Syrian or Persian church came not into being because of the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus (431) or a schism from the Roman Imperial Church. It can be proven that the origin of the Persian church "dates from the end of the first century, or, at latest, the beginning of the second century."¹⁶ Persian bishops were neither present at the Council of Ephesus (431) nor at the Council of Chalcedon (451). The Church has its history outside the bounds of the Roman Empire. As Sebastian Brock notes this "is especially important to remember in connection with the 'Ecumenical Councils': These were gatherings confined to the bishops of the Roman Empire and they were in any case convoked by the Roman Emperor, whose authority of course was not recognized outside the bounds of the Roman Empire. This of course meant that the creeds and canons issued by these Councils were only authoritative within the Roman Empire – though they might... be subsequently accepted by the Church outside the Roman Empire."¹⁷ The fact that the so-called "ecumenical" Councils were imperial synods, is of utmost importance for the question of the reception of councils in the contemporary ecumenical dialogue.

2. At the time when christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the Persian kings regarded the Christians as a potential endangering of their interests and suspected their loyalty. During the persecutions of the 4th century many Christians had to seek refuge in the Roman Empire. The Persian Christians got caught between the politics of the ancient superpowers Persia and Rome: they needed to distance themselves from the state religion of the Roman Empire to avoid suspicions to be collaborators of the enemy. So this could be one reason that the East Syrian church decided for a diphysite christology at the synods of Beth Lapat and Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 484/486.

3. Despite the investigations of André de Halleux it is difficult to prove the orthodoxy of Nestorius, because the sources available do not give a precise picture of his faith.¹⁸ But based on an analysis of east Syrian synods and theologians it is possible to show that the Church of the East handed down an orthodox christology. Adalbert J. Davids concludes in the light of the *Synodicon Orientale* that there is an explicit Antiochene Christology present "since the end of the fifth century and will be developed in an 'anti-Eutychian' sense from 585 onwards. At the same time there is a growing importance of the person and of the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia for the Persian

¹⁶ J. M. Fiey, "The Spread of the Persian Church" in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue* 97.

¹⁷ S. Brock, "The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and its Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire", in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue* 70.

¹⁸ Cf. the papers of B. Dupuy and Mar Aprem G. Mookan, in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue*. A. de Halleux wrote in a letter to my colleague E. Renhart (5. August 1993): "Montrer que cette appellation [i.e. 'nestorienne'] est injuste me paraît plus délicat, étant donné la difficulté de définir avec précision l'hérésie de Nestorius."

¹³ Soro, "Recent Ecumenical Initiatives".

¹⁴ PRO ORIENTE was founded in 1964 by Cardinal Franz König of Vienna to promote ecumenical relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the (Byzantine) Orthodox, pre-Chalcedonian and pre-Ephesian Churches.

¹⁵ Cf. PRO ORIENTE (Ed), *Syriac Dialogue. First Non-Official Consultation on Dialogue*, Vienna 1994.

Church."¹⁹ The theological reflection always takes as its point of departure the Nicean and Nicean-Constantinopolitan creed.

We remember that even the great scholar Wilhelm de Vries wrote: "the official adoption of Nestorianism by the Persian Church took place at the Synod of Seleucia in 486."²⁰ But the fact is that the brief Christological statement of that synod²¹ does not reveal Nestorianism but a dyophysite christology. Today there should be no doubt about the fundamental orthodoxy of this passage. Sebastian Brock finds "nothing specifically Nestorian in the formulation of the wording"²² and directs attention to William F. Macomber who mentioned already in 1958, "It is also true that the words used can be taken as materially orthodox."²³ Mar Bawai Soro, the Assyrian bishop for inter-church relations, stated in a very important paper of his, "It is of some note that the name 'Nestorius' did not appear in *Sunhados* [Synodicon Orientale] until a canonical letter from the Catholicos-Patriarch Giwargis (660-680)."²⁴ We have to recognize that the theology of the Church of the East is more "Theodorian" than "Nestorian". Among the Greek doctors of the Church of the East such as Diodor of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius, the latter seems to be more a symbol than an important theologian. But the influence of Theodore is obvious.

The road to a better understanding leads us to terminology. We have to find out what the east Syrian theologians intended to say with the terms they used, rather than asking what their opponents imagined to read in these expressions. Are *anyk* (kyanâ), *amwnq* (qnomâ) and *apwrxp* (parsopâ) really identical with *fuvsi* (physis), *ujpovstasi* (hypostasis) and *provsoyon* (prosopon)? Along such lines we have to examine the formula *two kyané and two qnomé in one parsopâ* forced by Babai the Great (551/2-628) and adopted by the Church of the East in 612. Babai the Great has been accused to be a real Nestorian, because the Syriac and the Greek terminology was regarded to be identical in their meaning.²⁵ Luise Abramowski as well as Gevarghese Chediath show the richness, nuances and brilliance of Babais' Christology.²⁶ In an analysis of Babai's ter-

minology Chediath shows that *amwnq* may not be translated with *ujpovstasi*: "Babai finds the unity of Christ on the side of the *parsopa* of Filiation and the duality on the side of natures with their proper *qnome*. There is only one Son, and he is God and man, having perfect godhead and perfect manhood".²⁷ Although the Greek hypostasis was always translated into Syriac with *qnomâ*, the Syriac term has a wider field of meaning and is often closer to *ijdiqvte* (idiotes).²⁸ Sebastian Brock therefore suggested not to translate the Syriac term *qnomâ*.²⁹

Especially today, in times of a new discovery of contextual theology and inculturation, we have to bear in mind that there is a valuable heritage of and contribution to Christology outside the bounds of the theology approved by the Roman Imperial Church.

A second non-official Syriac Consultation has been planned by the PRO ORIENTE Commission on Dialogue within the Syriac Tradition (short: Syriac Commission). This commission had its constitutive meeting in September 1994 in Kaslik (Lebanon) and further gatherings in February and June 1995 in Vienna.³⁰ The very successful second Syriac Consultation then took place in Vienna on 22-27 February, 1996. The subjects treated there were the Christological agreement already achieved, problems of the Council of Ephesus (431), the Three Chapters controversy and the liturgical expressions of Christology in the East Syrian tradition.

For the first time in ecumenical history some sort of christological convergence between the pre-Ephesian, the pre-Chalcedonian and the Chalcedonian Syriac churches was achieved at this consultation. In the Joint Communiqué we read: "the participants agreed with and were able to proceed from a common understanding with the Unity of Faith that was expressed in the Vienna Christological Formula."³¹ This "Vienna Christological Formula" is a common expression of the faith in Christ produced by Oriental Orthodox and Catholic theologians at the first PRO ORIENTE Consultation in Vienna 1971, which was the basis for subsequent official declarations between Roman pontiffs and Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs.³²

¹⁹ A. J. Davids, "Is the Theology of the Assyrian Church Nestorian?", in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue* 234-142.

²⁰ W. de Vries, "Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon", in: A. Grillmeier & H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. I, 2nd ed. Würzburg 1962, 603. Likewise Paul Krüger, "Nestorianische Kirche", in: J. Assfalg (Ed.), *Kleines Wörterbuch des Christlichen Orients*, Wiesbaden 1975, 276: "... und nahm 484/486 die nestor. Glaubenslehre offiziell an".

²¹ Vgl. J.-B. Chabot (Ed.), *Synodicon Orientale ou recueil de synodes nestoriens*, Paris 1902, 55 (lin. 1-9 syr.), 302 (frz.); D. W. Winkler, *Theologische Notizen* 249f.

²² S. Brock, "The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire", in: *Syriac Dialogue* 79f.

²³ W. F. Macomber, "The Christology of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon AD 486", OCP 24 (1958) 142-154, esp. 154.

²⁴ B. Soro & M. J. Birnie, "Is the Theology of the Church of the East Nestorian?", in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue* 121. Cf. the evaluation of Mar Bawai's papers by S. Brock, "PRO ORIENTE Consultation 1994. Orthodoxy and Catholicity in the Syriac Tradition", in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue* 224-226.

²⁵ Cf. W. de Vries, "Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon" 617.

²⁶ Cf. L. Abramowski, "Die Christologie Babai des Großen", in: *Symposium Syriacum Rom* 1974 (OCA 197) 219-244; Idem, "Babai der Große. Christologische Probleme und ihre Lösungen", OCP 41 (1975) 289-343; G. Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great* (OIRSI 49), Kottayam 1982.

²⁷ G. Chediath, "The Theological Contribution of Mar Babai the Great", in: PRO ORIENTE, *Syriac Dialogue* 164.

²⁸ Cf. S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East", in: D. Afinogenov & A. Muraviev (Ed.), *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East*, Moscow 1996, 159-179.

²⁹ Cf. S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials", in: G. D. Dragas (Ed.), *Aksum-Thyateira. A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios*, London 1985, 125-142, reprint in: S. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity. History, Literature and Theology*, London 1992.

³⁰ PRO ORIENTE Syriac Commission assyrian members: Mar Bawai Soro, Mar Aprem of Trichur (Assyrian); Oriental-orthodox members: Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo (Syrian-orthodox), Fr. K. M. George (Malankara Syrian-orthodox); Catholic members: Mar Joseph Powathil (Syro-malabar), Fr. Joseph Habbi (Chaldean), Mgr. Boulos Youssef Matar (Maronite), Mgr. Mikhael Al-Jamil (Syrian-catholic), Alfred Stirmemann, Prof. Philipp Harnoncourt, Prof. Peter Hofrichter, Fr. Frans Bouwen (Roman-catholic).

³¹ Joint Communiqué of the second PRO ORIENTE non-official Syriac Consultation [unpublished]. Emphasis mine.

³² Cf. D. W. Winkler, *Koptische Kirche und Reichskirche. Altes Schisma und neuer Dialog*. Mit einem Vorwort von Franz Kardinal König (ITS 49), Innsbruck-Wien 1997, where all these ecumenical communiqués are analysed. For the sources of the Vienna Christological Formula cf. my "Ein Passus aus der koptischen

It is noteworthy too that a theological correspondence between the Church of the East and the Imperial Church was discovered: "The theological thought and formulations of the Church of the East as present in its liturgical and synodical sources are considered to be in line with the teachings of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381) and compatible with those of the Council of Ephesus."³³ Further the Joint Communiqué points out, "that there is a necessity to make an absolute distinction between the doctrinal position of the Assyrian Church of the East and the position, recognized by all to be heretical which holds, that there are two Sons, two prosopa in the one Incarnate Christ, a position which is traditionally described by the Chaldeonians and Oriental Orthodox as 'Nestorianism'.³⁴

Another important step was done with the distinction "between the understanding in the Church of the East of the term qnoma (i.e. individuated, but not personalized nature) and that of some other Syriac Churches where qnoma is regularly understood as the equivalent of hypostasis in the sense of person."³⁵ Further the Assyrian, Chaldean and Syro-Malabar delegations of the Church of the East presented an explanation of the term qnoma: "In Christology, as expressed in the synodical and liturgical sources of the Church of the East the term 'qnoma' does not mean 'hypostasis' as understood in the Alexandrine Tradition, but instead, individuated nature. Accordingly, the human nature which the Holy Spirit fashioned, the Logos assumed and united to Himself without any separation, was personalized in the Person of the Son of God. When we speak of the two natures and their qnome, we understand this very much the same sense as two natures and their particular properties (dilayatha). It is important to note that the term 'qnoma' is used in a different way in Trinitarian theology."³⁶ This definition should be taken into consideration in any further discussion.

Concerning the Three Chapters Controversy it was very interesting for me that the historic proceedings before and at the Council of Constantinople (553) seemed to be of little interest for the participants of the Church of the East. Their papers spoke about the condemned persons and writings, but not in the context of the council. However, the joint communiqué states that the Three Chapter controversy "led us to see the need to make the distinction between doctrines condemned and persons anathematized." Participants also focused on the East Syrian liturgical tradition. On the basis of the axiom "lex orandi - lex credendi" extracts from the various offices of the Church of the East were analysed, with the result that the "papers on the liturgical tradition by members of the Church of the East illustrated, among other things, how prayers addressed to Christ are always directed to a single subject in the person of Christ and how examples can also be found of the exchange of predicates (Communicatio idiomatum)."³⁷

Basileiosliturgie und der syrischen Vita Dioscori als Quellen der Wiener Christologischen Formel" *Journal of Coptic Studies* (forthcoming).

³³ Joint Communiqué of the second PRO ORIENTE non-official Syriac Consultation.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid; cf. D. W. Winkler, "Die Beiträge zur Liturgie in den PRO ORIENTE-Konsultationen mit den Kirchen

A very hopeful sequel to this second PRO ORIENTE Syriac Consultation was a letter written by the Assyrian and the Syrian-Orthodox participants to H.H. Mar Dinkha IV and H.H. Mar Ignatios Zakka I Iwas. They ask the Patriarchs to give permission to create a Joint Committee for a theological dialogue between both ancient and apostolic sister churches. Mar Dinkha IV already agreed to this request.³⁸

4. The official bilateral dialogue with the Roman-Catholic Church

At the meeting of Mar Dinkha IV and John Paul II on 11th November 1994 the well known historic Common Christological Declaration³⁹ was signed and a Mixed Committee for the theological dialogue was installed to overcome the obstacles towards visible unity. The first meeting of this official committee took place in November 1995 in Rome, the second in October 1996 in Beirut.⁴⁰

The relations started in 1978 when Mar Dinkha visited the Vatican for the installation of Pope John Paul II. At the first official visit to the Vatican in 1984 (November 7-9) the two heads of churches initiated a process of theological dialogue.⁴¹ In the next ten years five meetings took place, which culminated in the Common Christological Declaration. The text was already worked out in 1992 at a meeting of experts in Rome. Afterwards it was given under the consideration of the respective authorities.

The last important step was taken at the fifth synod of the patriarchate of Mar Dinkha IV in July 1994 in Sydney, where the Assyrian synod agreed unanimously to sign the Declaration. This synod decided upon this for some ecumenically most relevant steps:⁴² They renewed the invitation to the Old Calendar Assyrians to convene in a joint synod to discuss the problems of their schism; they decided to establish new bonds with other Apostolic Churches with whom the Church of the East has not yet established any dialogue; for preparation for and participation in theological consultations and dialogues a new ecclesiastical department under the name "Commission on Inter-Church Relations and Educational Development (CIRED)" was established and H.G. Mar Bawai Soro was appointed as its Secretary General; and last but not least the decisive step for signing the Christological Declaration with the Catholic Church was ta-

syrischer Tradition" *Heiliger Dienst* 50 (1996) N° 4.

³⁸ Cf. *Voice of the East* 5/6, 1996, 13-14; *Der Christliche Osten* 51 (1996) 274.

³⁹ Cf. Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, *Osservatore Romano*, 12. November 1994, 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. "Commission Mixte pour le Dialogue Théologique entre l'Eglise Catholique et l'Eglise Assyrienne de l'Orient", *Courrier œcuménique du Moyen-Orient* 28 (1996) 29-31. Assyrian members: Mar Narsai de Baz (Co-Chairman), Mar Bawai Soro (USA), Mar Meelis Zaia (Australia), Fr. Gewergis Tooma (USA), Fr. William Yakoub (Sweden). Catholic members: Mgr. Pierre Duprey (Co-Chairman), Mgr. Cyril Salim Boustros of Baalbeck (Melkite, Lebanon), Mgr. Antoine Audo (Chaldean, Syria), Fr. Sarhad Jammo (Chaldean, USA), Fr. Mathew Vellanickal (Syro-Malabar, India); Secretary of the Commission: Fr. Bernard Dubasque (Rome).

⁴¹ Cf. "New Impetus to Mutual Relations", *The Messenger* 11 (1995) 20-22; *Information Service* of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity N° 88 (1995/I) 1-6.

⁴² Cf. "Decrees of the Fifth Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch. 18-29 July 1994. Sydney-Australia", *The Messenger* 11 (1995) 24-31.

ken: "The Holy Synod decreed unanimously in favor of signing the agreement between our Church and the Church of Rome. This agreement protects and preserves the faith, liturgy, order, leadership of each Church individually."⁴³

This Christological Declaration could be an ecumenical landmark. The text should not be a problem for the pre-Chalcedonian churches, because it takes into consideration previous christological declarations with the Oriental Orthodox, like those with the Coptic Orthodox Church (1973), the Syrian Orthodox Church (1984), and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (1990).

The Christological Declaration begins with a common witness to the Nicene Creed and to the only begotten Son who became man for our salvation, and then continues: "The Word of God, second Person of the Holy Trinity, became incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit in assuming from the holy Virgin Mary a body animated by a rational soul, with which he was indissolubly united from the moment of his conception." The emphasis on the rational soul of Christ became standard in orthodox theology and especially in the Antiochine tradition since the discussion concerning Apollinarius of Laodicea (~310-390). Cyril of Alexandria († 444), who quoted by error his main Christological sentence *miva fuvsi tou` qeou` lovgou sesarkwmevnh* (one Nature of God the Logos incarnate) from an Apollinaristic forgery,⁴⁴ gave an orthodox interpretation to this phrase and underlined the rational soul. Further the statement that the Logos and the human body were indissolubly united from the moment of conception is of great importance for the dialogue with the ("miaphysite") Oriental Orthodox churches, since this is a central matter of Alexandrine theology.

The Christological Declaration continues: "Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ is true man, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us in all things but sin. His divinity and his humanity are united in one person, without confusion or change, without division or separation. In him has been preserved the difference of the natures of divinity and humanity, with all their properties, faculties and operations." This paragraph takes us back to the Formula of Union (433), which was worked out at Ephesus (431) and sent to Cyril of Alexandria by John of Antioch. Cyril quotes this *symbolum antiochenum* in the so-called *Laetentur*-letter and agrees to it.⁴⁵ But Aloys Grillmeier remarks that Cyril makes a slight modification. He strengthens the unity of the subject by adding "in" twice: perfect in his divinity, perfect in his humanity.⁴⁶ And that is what the Common Christological Declaration does too.

Afterwards the four adverbs of the Chalcedonian definition are quoted: *ajsuncvwtw* (inconfuse), *ajtvrevptw* (immutabiliter), *ajdiairevtw* (indivise) und *ajcwrivstw* (inseparabiliter). "It should be noted... that at Chalcedon it was Dioscorus who for the

⁴³ Ibid. 22.

⁴⁴ Cf. J. Liébaert, *Christologie. Von der apostolischen Zeit bis zum Konzil von Chalzedon (451)* (HDG III, 1a), Freiburg-Wien 1965, 110; E. Mühlenberg, "Apollinaris v. Laodicea", TRE 3 (1978) 370.

⁴⁵ Cf. Johannes Ant., "Ep. 38 ad Cyrillum", PG 77,169D-173B; Cyrill Alex., "Ep. 39 ad Joannem Antiochenum Episcopum, missa per Paulum Episcopum Emesae" PG 77,173C-181C.

⁴⁶ Cf. A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche I*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1979, 705.

first time made a statement implying the four famous adverbs."⁴⁷ And they are de facto also included in Cyril's *Laetentur*-letter to John of Antioch to refuse those who teach a mixture of the Natures in the sense of the Stoic *kra'si* (krasis). Incidentally, this is a concern of both, Cyril and Nestorius.

The statement of the Common Christological Declaration about the difference, properties, faculties and operations of the two natures in the one Christ leads us to the Tome of Leo. Pope Leo the Great takes the term *proprietas* from Tertullian⁴⁸ and tries to explain the coexistence and the reality of the two natures on the basis of the *communicatio idiomatum*.⁴⁹ In the post-Chalcedonian quarrels this was a point of harsh criticism by the Cyrillian party. But if we read the *Laetentur*-letter properly, we see that Leo and Cyril had the same concern.

The Common Christological Declaration settles also the quarrels about the *Qeotovko*-title: "In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as 'the Mother of God' and also as 'the Mother of Christ'. We both recognize the legitimacy and rightness of these expressions of the same faith and we both respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety." The incomprehensibility of the *Mysterium Christi* and the problem of the right expression of the faith is touched when the Christological Declaration concedes the possibility of different terminologies. During the controversies of the 5th century it was not possible to discuss calmly different expressions (like *qeotovko* or *cristotovko*), which is necessary to understand the theological thinking of the other. Today the Christological Declaration makes more emphasis on a common understanding of our faith than on a standardized terminology, liturgy or piety.

So we can summarize our brief analysis,⁵⁰ saying that the core of the Christology of the Common Declaration goes back to the Formulary of Union (433) and to Cyril of Alexandria. In a sense it corresponds with the Vienna Christological Formula of 1971. There the main Christological part is: "We believe that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is God the Son Incarnate, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. His divinity was not separated from his humanity for a single moment, not for the twinkling of an eye. His humanity is one with his divinity without commixtion, without confusion, without division, without separation. We in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ regard his mystery inexhaustible and ineffable and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible."⁵¹ The last sentence is also found in

⁴⁷ V.C. Samuel, "The Council of Chalcedon: Analysis of a Conflict" *Wort und Wahrheit. Supplementary Issue* N° 1 (1971) 53. Samuel refers to E. Schwartz (Ed.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, Tom. II, vol. 1,1, Berlin 1927, p. 112 (nr 263).

⁴⁸ Cf. Tertullian, "Adv. Prax. 27,14" CCL 2, 1200, 80f.

⁴⁹ Cf. Leo, "Ep. 28 ad Flavianum Episcopum Constantinopolitanum contra Eutychis perfidem et haeresim" PL 54, 755A-781A.

⁵⁰ Cf. D. W. Winkler, "Theologische Notizen" 255-260.264-266.

⁵¹ Communiqué of the First Non-official Ecumenical Consultation between Theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches organized by the Foundation Pro oriente in Vienna, Sept. 7-12, 1971, in: PRO ORIENTE (Ed.), *The Vienna Dialogue. Five PRO ORIENTE Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy. Communiqués and Common Declarations* (Booklet 1), Vienna [1991] 46.

the Common Christological Declaration of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Din-kha IV.

It should be possible to work out an official Christological consensus between the pre-Ephesian and pre-Chalcedonian churches on the basis of previous official and unofficial declarations. The preconditions are not only results of theological research but also mutual trust and the courage to overcome the quarrels of the past. Although we have to respect tradition we should not be paralysed by it.