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St. Peter and St. Mark (mosaic, St. Mark's Basilica, Venice)

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PRESENTATION

This special issue of The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity's Information Service brings together the principle documents of the first phase of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church from 1973 (the year of the historic encounter between His Holiness Paul VI, Pope of Rome, and His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark) until 1988.

During their meeting, Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III announced the creation of a Joint International Commission for Dialogue which was to hold regular sessions until 1979. It suspended its work when Pope Shenouda III was impeded by the Egyptian authorities from fully exercising his patriarchal functions. As some of the documents published here will show, contacts between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church continued during this sad period. As soon as Pope Shenouda III was able to take up his full duties in 1985, the resumption of the theological dialogue was envisaged. As the appendix at the end of this collection shows, a second phase of this dialogue has been underway since 1988.

We are publishing these documents in response to the desire of theologians and other persons particularly committed to the search for Christian unity, and who follow with interest the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, to have the principle documents concerning this dialogue easily available.

We hope as well that this publication will be a means of encouraging greater appreciation of the Coptic Church throughout the world.

This special issue is published in French and English. We look forward to its publication as soon as possible in an Arabic translation.

October 1990

PART I

SPEECHES, LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI,
HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II, AND HIS HOLINESS SHENOUDA III,
POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK

May 5th, 1973

PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III'S ADDRESS TO POPE PAUL VI

His Holiness Amba Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, was the guest of the Holy Father Pope Paul VI from May 4 to 10, 1973. At the end of their private meeting, May 5, he gave the following address in English.

Your Holiness,

We feel happy, to meet to-day Your Holiness as the Supreme Head of the Roman Catholic Church in Christendom and to exchange with Your Holiness the holy kiss of peace, and to be in Rome, the great cosmopolitan city of vast and long history which definitely has left its print on the course of human history. The importance of Rome is not exclusively civic, as it had been for a long period the capital of the Roman Empire. Its spiritual Superior, the Roman Pontiff, has had and still has a guiding role along the history of the Christian Church.

Here we wish to express our cordial gratitude to Your Holiness for Your kind invitation to us to come here to Rome and to the Vatican City and to enjoy this happy occasion of meeting each other.

We pray humbly that this meeting would have its far-reaching results in supporting and strengthening the friendly relations between our two Apostolic Churches.

We grasp the opportunity to thank you for the facilities Your Holiness has given to us and for the efforts your most venerable men have exerted, namely, their Eminences, their Excellencies and the Reverend Fathers among whom those who have received us at the airport and those who will accompany us during our stay in the Vatican City and Rome as guests of Your Holiness. We mention with great esteem the good amiable spirit of His Excellency the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio in Cairo; all those respectable men who did their best to make our trip an easy one and who, I am sure, will do their best as well to make our stay here in Rome and in the Vatican City most comfortable and pleasant until we go back to Cairo, carrying with us the holy relic of St. Athanasius the Great, the Apostolic, and with it the affections of love, esteem and endearment to Your Holiness.

Once more we thank Your Holiness in the love

of our Lord Jesus Christ and we extend to Your Holiness our cordial invitation to come to Egypt, that Your Holiness might see our beautiful country, of long glorious history, our religious archaic places and antiquities and our land once blessed by the flight of our Lord and our Lady into Egypt and recently by the apparitions of St. Mary at Zeitoun.

May the love of Christ bring us more and more together.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus and in His service, blamelessly and void of offence till the Day of His Appearing. Now unto Him be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore.

Amen.

May 5th, 1973

RESPONSE OF POPE PAUL VI TO PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

Dear Brother in Christ,

The words you have addressed to us have been particularly moving ones. We are truly happy to welcome Your Holiness to our home. From the day of your elevation to your position as Father and Head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, God has granted us the grace to maintain frequent relations through letters and through the ministry of our representatives. Now we have this opportunity to meet face to face. It is a solemn moment and a joyful one.

It is also a joy for us to greet the distinguished members of your delegation and through them the entire community of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

In his goodness, God has been wisely and patiently following out the plan of his grace for us. We meet at a time when Christians are asking themselves about the meaning of the faith they profess and the mission they have to the world. You come to this ancient See of Rome, bearing with you the traditions of the ancient See of Alexandria, of its apostles, its martyrs, its doctors, its holy monks and the vast army of its people, who have given witness to their faith in periods of great darkness. It is our hope that through our discussions and prayer we may make a significant contribution towards understanding each other better, thus

making it possible to help Christians find valid answers to the questions they are asking themselves today.

We realize that God is presenting us with a great challenge. We do not expect to overcome immediately the difficulties that fifteen centuries of history have created for us. But we do hope to be able to set out upon a way which will lead to our overcoming these difficulties. For our part, we approach these meetings in a spirit of great confidence. We are confident that our Churches are determined to reach out to each other in an effort to carry out better the mission God has entrusted to us. We strive to be faithful servants of the tradition which has been handed on to us from the Apostles through the Fathers and great spiritual leaders of this Church. But that tradition is a living one. The efforts at renewal which are going on in the Catholic Church and in the Coptic Church give testimony to this. We are confident therefore that our meetings during these days will strengthen the bonds of brotherly love between us and between our people. May God enlighten us and guide us and grant us new insights as we strive together to see how we may attain that full unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace which Christ asks of us and which is his gift.

May 6th, 1973

HOMILY OF POPE PAUL VI

During the Cappella Papale in St. Peter's on May 6, 1973, to commemorate the 16th centenary of the death of St. Athanasius, Paul VI delivered the following homily in the presence of Patriarch Shenouda III.

"That is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it". We very willingly repeat this liturgical acclamation, motivated by the feast of Easter, on this present occasion in which the presence of Patriarch Shenouda III—one who is himself honoured by the title of "Pope" of the venerable and most ancient Coptic Church which has its centre at Alexandria in Egypt—evokes in our heart a profound emotion. Here is one who is Head of a Church which is still officially separated from us and which for centuries has been absent from the communal celebration of prayer with this Church of Rome. He is indeed Head of a Church whose origin goes back to the Evangelist Mark, whom Saint Peter calls his son (1 Pt 5:13), and which had in Saint Athanasius — the sixteenth centenary of whose blessed death we are celebrating today — the invincible defender of our common Nicene faith, that is, faith in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was proclaimed, under divine inspiration, by Simon, son of John, who was therefore transformed by Christ himself into the unchanging Peter and made by him the foundation of the whole Church. He is here, and he has come expressly and spontaneously to tie again

the bonds of love (cf. Col 3:14) in happy anticipation of that perfect unity of the spirit (cf. Eph 3:4) which, after the recent Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, we are striving humbly and sincerely to restore. He is here with us and with this great assembly of faithful at the tomb of the Apostle Peter. How could we not rejoice and invite all of you, sons and daughters of this Roman Catholic Church, to praise the Lord with us on this extraordinary day? Do we not see that the book of the Church's history, in which the mysterious hand of the Lord is the chief guide of men's hands to write there "new things and old" (cf. Mt 13:52), opens before us centuries-old pages and others which are still unused and ready to register events—God willing!—which will be happier ones, the records of the merciful Providence of God in the life of the Church which is still a pilgrim in time? How could we not greet this great and venerable Brother who has come from afar and who today is so close to us, our visitor, our guest, here at our altar and united with our pontifical prayer, together with his large and representative and most noble entourage?

The reading from the Holy Gospel (Lk 24:35-48) to which we have just listened invites us to reflect on the fundamental theme of our faith: the theme of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Does not Saint Paul say: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9)? And it seems that this Gospel narrative of the Mass that we are celebrating intends to bear witness to the reality of the fact of Christ's Resurrection as an objective historical reality, proved even by the direct and tangible experience of the senses, even though it pertains to a supernatural order. It seems likewise to wish to stimulate us to draw directly from the observation of this unheard-of reality our indomitable and most lively faith, faith like that of Thomas, the positive man of criticism, of doubt and of verification, with his words which still resound: My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28).

How propitious is today's liturgical reflection, celebrating as it does the glorious memory, as we have said, of Saint Athanasius, the intrepid and undaunted defender of the faith! Saint Athanasius is a Father and Doctor of the universal Church and thus merits our common commemoration.

The best way of commemorating a Saint who made an extraordinary contribution to the life of the Church at a decisive moment of her history, when heretics denied the very consubstantial divinity of the Word and hence of Christ, seems to us to be by reflecting on the heritage which he has left us, the witness of faith in his life and in his thought.

When we reflect on his life, we see a believer solidly founded on evangelical faith, a convinced defender and champion of truth and one who was ready to endure every calumny, persecution and violence. Of the forty-six years of his episcopate, he spent twenty in repeated exile; this very city of

Rome gave him shelter for three years during his second exile, from April 339 till October 342, in the time of Pope Julius I (337-352).

Always and everywhere and before all men, before the powerful and those in error, he professed faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, true God and true man; therefore the Eastern liturgical tradition describes him as a "column of the true faith" (Apolytikon of 2 May) and the Catholic Church numbers him among the Doctors of the Church.

He was indeed a man of the Church, a vigilant and attentive pastor. He dedicated his entire life to the service of the Church, not only his own Church of Alexandria but the whole Church, bringing everywhere the warmth of his faith, the edifying example of his unswervingly consistent life and the call to prayer which he had learned from the monks of the desert, amongst whom he was several times obliged to take refuge.

The divinity of Christ is the central point of Saint Athanasius' preaching to the men of his time, who were tempted by the Arian crisis. The definition of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325)—according to which Jesus Christ is the Son of God, of the same substance as the Father, true God from true God—was the constant point of reference of his teaching. Only if one accepts this doctrine can one speak of redemption, of salvation and of the reestablishment of communion between man and God. Only the Word of God perfectly redeems; without the Incarnation, man would remain in the state of corrupt nature, from which penance itself could not free him (cf. *De Incarnatione*, PG, 25, 144, 119).

Freed by Christ from corruption and saved from death, man is reborn to new life and acquires once more the pristine image of God, in which he had been created in the beginning and which sin had corrupted. "The Word of God", declares Saint Athanasius, "came himself, so that, being the Image of the Father, he might create man anew in the image of God" (*ibid.*).

Saint Athanasius evolves this theology, centering it on the sharing of redeemed man in the very life of God, through baptism and sacramental life. He even declares, in a forceful expression, that the Word of God "became man so that we might be divinized" (*ibid.*).

This new creation restores what sin had compromised: the knowledge of God and a radical change of life.

Jesus Christ reveals the Father to us and makes him knowable: "The Word of God became visible with a body so that we might be able to form an idea of the invisible Father" (*ibid.*).

From this new knowledge of God follows the need for moral renewal. Saint Athanasius calls for it strongly: "Whoever wishes to understand the things of God must purify himself in his way of life and resemble the Saints by the similarity of his own actions, so that united with them in the conduct of his life he may be able to understand what has been revealed to them by God" (*ibid.*).

We are thus brought to the centre of the Christian event: redemption by the work of Jesus Christ, the radical renewal of man with his restoration to the image and likeness of God, restored communion of life between man and God, also expressed in a profound change of conduct.

This is the sublime message which Saint Athanasius the Great today addresses also to us: to be strong in faith and consistent in the practice of the Christian life, even at the cost of grave sacrifices. It is up to us to accept this message, to meditate on it, examine it closely and put it into practice in our lives.

Through the prayers of Saint Athanasius, Father and Doctor of the Church, may God grant us—us too today—the grace to be able worthily to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that he is the Saviour of the world.

And finally we would wish to address a word to the faithful whom we see here present.

Faithful of the Roman Parish of Saint Athanasius, we are happy to see you present for this great ceremony. We greet you all and ask you to take our greetings and our blessing to the entire parish community. We urge you especially to honour the memory of the great patron of your parish: Saint Athanasius. To honour him in what way? With the commemoration of his life and the profession of his faith. With the love of Christ the Eternal Word of God, Son of God and Son of Man, our Teacher and our Saviour. And with a sincere and faithful commitment to the Church of Christ and with a practical charity towards our neighbour. Are we understood? To all of you and to your Parish Priest we impart our special Apostolic Blessing.

May 6th, 1973

ADDRESS OF PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

After the celebration of Holy Mass, Patriarch Shenouda III went to the main altar of the basilica where he was greeted by Paul VI. He then delivered the following address.

Dear Brother in the Lord,

Your Holiness Pope Paul VI,

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the Father: "That they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, are in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (*Jn* 17,21), "... that they may be one, even as we are one" (*Jn* 17,11). Jesus Christ, who so said, undoubtedly leads with His Holy Spirit every action that tends to unity, whether of heart, mind or faith. For the Church is Christ's body; and He has but one body.

We fully believe that He has disposed for this meeting so that we may take a step forward in strengthening the relations between our two apostolic Churches which were two among the four

great apostolic Churches of early Christianity. We have a responsibility, we believe, to work for the unity of faith, not only between us but all over Christendom.

We dare say our differences were for the sake of Christ's love, through which we love each other regardless of the differences. We meet today so that we may deepen our mutual love. Talks guided by the Holy Spirit in such an atmosphere should lead to unity of heart, mind and faith.

However, we have to declare there are between us many points of agreement in the principles of faith. We all believe in the One God, the divine Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Lord's Incarnation, act of Redemption, Resurrection, Ascension and Second Coming to judge the living and the dead are our common belief. Yes, we believe that the human soul is everlasting, we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life hereafter, the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints, the seven sacraments and the work of the Holy Ghost in them. We believe in one way for salvation and we condemn the heresies of Arius, Nestorius, Euthyches, Sabelius, Macedonios and the others.

As for points of difference, there is no doubt that after fifteen centuries of study, examination and controversy both on theological and public levels we are undoubtedly on much nearer grounds than our ancestors of the fifth and sixth centuries. We all are readier and more intensive to reach solutions for the differences and attain simpler and more practical forms of expression for the conceptions of faith that all would welcome. We are mindful that the tension of old philosophic and linguistic understandings together with the political implications connected with the days of schism and the following centuries have been considerably reduced.

Your Holiness, the world of today, suffering from movements of atheistic, materialistic, sceptic or immoral natures is in drastic need for the cooperation of all Churches so that proper human conscience would find support in the twentieth century. Hence, fully conscious of its duty of witnessing to Christ, the Church is committed to unite so that it would proclaim its spiritual message more effectively. Only through communion in the mystery of the One Christ would it achieve its mission of reconciliation, between God and man, the spirit and the flesh.

Your Holiness, the friendly relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church have become stronger and more expansive in this generation, particularly through meetings, visits and messages. Coptic delegates attended the sessions of the Vatican Council since 1962. Catholic representatives attended the celebration of the inauguration of St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, June 1968. The friendly gift of Your Holiness at that time of the relic of St. Mark now laid in his See in Cairo has met with feelings of deep regard and gratitude on behalf of the Copts.

Later we attended the celebrations of St. Mark in Venice. We shared together in many conferences, to mention in particular the theological Consultation in Vienna, September 1971, between theologians of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, where a tentative formula of faith about the nature of Christ was achieved and approved by both sides. This was a positive successful and hopeful step which proved that theological discussions with friendly attitudes lead to proper and useful results.

Through this present personal meeting we are driving on to more promotion of this movement.

May we, through His Providence, the work of the Holy Spirit and for the sake of His Kingdom find a proper place for Him in every heart and exert the expansion of love, goodness, peace and justice in His world.

Your Holiness, as we celebrate the sixteenth Centenary of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, who played the greatest role in editing the Christian Creed at the Council of Nicaea and defended the right faith with all power and persistence bestowed upon him by the Almighty, we remember that St. Athanasius the Copt is Father of both of us at the same time. He is father of the Church in the East as well as in the West. In him we meet as we meet at the feet of our Lord. We unite in his dogmas and faith.

In his steps proceeded St Cyril the Great, the Alexandrian who became a pillar and a hero of Christian faith. As St. Athanasius had struggled against Arianism, so St. Cyril did for the defence of faith against Nestorianism and professed the faith of Western and Eastern Christianity. Like Athanasius he became a point of agreement not only in his faith but also in the proper and definite expression of faith which exemplify clearly the word of truth precisely and effectively.

The common traditional theology of Athanasius and Cyril stands as solid centre for the dialogue that we commit to a considerable number of theologians to go through in a spirit of faithful love. We expect them to agree on proper belief expressed in clear and uncomplicated language that all minds understand and consciences approve with comfort.

Your Holiness, at this historic moment of this blessed day we lift our hearts to Heavenly Jerusalem where we all hope to have lodging. Round the Sacred Throne of the One God gather the angels and human saints as one Family headed by one Lord and Father whom we all worship, serve and feel happy to watch. We also remember the earthly Jerusalem, the city of our God in whose streets He strode and taught, where He was crucified, died and rose back from the dead, and ascended to the Sky. We cannot forget the sufferings of the Holy Land and the Middle East which was blessed by Christ's work and life during the period of incarnation.

May Christ's love move us to exert more common effort for the return of peace of the Land of

Peace—a peace based on justice and truth! May He ever be blessed in us. May we worship Him with righteousness all our life. We humbly beg for Your Holiness and the Catholic Church all peace from the Lord to whom glory and reverence be forever. Amen.

May 6th 1973

RESPONSE OF POPE PAUL VI TO PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

Beloved Brother in Christ,

It is with joy that we extend to you our heartfelt greetings in the Lord as we welcome you in this great Basilica dedicated to the Apostle Peter, who until his death gave witness to his ardent faith in the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, and whom, with Saint Paul, we venerate as the Founder of the Church of Rome.

We greet also your brother bishops, the clergy and the distinguished laymen, worthy representatives of the entire community of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Our greetings go moreover to the two venerable bishops of the Ethiopian Church who form a worthy part of your delegation. Welcome into our home and into our hearts.

It is not only in our own name that we speak. Surrounding us are our brothers in the episcopate and thousands of our Christian priests and laity gathered here at the tomb of the Apostle to honour another great witness to the faith, Athanasius of Alexandria.

On this solemn day the Church of Rome greets the Church of Alexandria in a gesture of brotherly love and peace.

Over sixteen hundred years ago, the great Saint Athanasius was welcomed by our predecessor Julius I, who saw in him a champion of that faith which was being compromised and even denied by people who were stronger than him in political power but weaker in faith and understanding. The Church of Rome supported him steadfastly. He in turn recognized in the Church of the West a secure identity of faith despite differences in vocabulary and in the theological approach to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Triune God. His successor Peter was to find the same brotherly reception and support from our predecessor Damasus. A half century later, the Churches of Alexandria and Rome, in the person of their bishops Cyril and Celestine, were to serve once more as beacons of light when belief in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, was obscured by those who refused to render to the holy Mother of God her glorious title of "Theotokos". These are our great Fathers, Doctors of the faith and Pastors of men.

Humbly conscious of our own frailties we look to them to strengthen us now as we seek to fulfil the vocation to which God has called us.

For God has truly called us to great things. In a particular way, he wishes us to bring to the world his gift of faith, reconciliation and peace. Men,

estranged from him and from each other, are to be reconciled by our humble ministry.

First, however, we must ask ourselves how far we can accomplish this if we Christians are not reconciled with each other. The question is an important one for us. By the grace of God we share with you faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus Christ we profess the Incarnate Son of God, who for us and for our salvation was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died and rose from the dead. Incorporated into him by baptism, we share his divine life in the sacraments of his Church; we share the Apostolic traditions handed down by our common Fathers; our liturgical, theological, spiritual and devotional life are nourished from the same sources, even though they receive various legitimate expressions. We are particularly mindful of the fact that the principles of the spiritual life propounded by the great fathers of the Egyptian desert, beginning with Saint Anthony, have had an influence upon the entire Christian world.

Yet in humility and sorrow we must recognize that in the history of our Churches we have experienced fierce disputes over doctrinal formulae by which our substantial agreement in the reality they were trying to express was overlooked. Methods alien to the Gospel of Christ were at times used by some to try to impose that Gospel. Reasons of a cultural and political order as well as theological ones have been used to justify and even extend a division which should never have taken place. We cannot ignore this sad legacy. We recognize that a great deal must yet be done to overcome its harmful effects. However, we are determined that we will not let it continue to influence our relations.

A new phenomenon is taking place, of which our meeting today gives eloquent testimony. In mutual fidelity to our common Lord, we are rediscovering the many bonds which already bind us together.

In response to the brotherly invitation extended by our venerable predecessor John XXIII, your own predecessor of happy memory Kyrillos VI sent observers to all sessions of the Second Vatican Council. They were able to experience the efforts made by that great assembly to assist the reform and renewal of the Catholic Church. We are happy to greet two of them as they return to this Basilica with you today as bishops of your Church.

In 1968 we shared in the joy of the return of the relics of the Evangelist Saint Mark, from Venice to the venerable Church of Alexandria.

In 1969 we had the pleasure of greeting a large pilgrimage of Coptic Orthodox clergy and lay people; and more recently our own special delegation assisted at the solemn enthronement of Your Holiness as Father and Head of your Church. We recognize in these events signs coming from God. This is the favourable time which the Lord is granting us and we share with Your Holiness the determination to take advantage of it, knowing full well that there are still obstacles of a theological.

psychological and institutional order to be overcome. Not denying them, we refuse to be frightened by them. At one time, the Christian world, torn apart by strife and schism, finally was able to recognize in the faith preached by both Damasus of Rome and Peter of Alexandria the genuine Catholic faith.

Trusting in God's grace and walking in his Spirit, we will strive to overcome the obstacles which still exist, so that once more our Churches can give a common and more perfect witness to the world which has so much need of him.

Venerable Brother, we meet on this solemn and joyful occasion when the Church of Rome celebrates the sixteenth centenary of the death of Saint Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. He was a man of constant faith, buoyant hope and generous openheartedness, even to those who opposed him. Because he was constant in his faith, he could hope against hope. And when, after bitter exile, God allowed him to return to his flock, he opened his heart to all men, ever seeking that reconciliation and peace which are God's gifts to us in his Incarnate Son.

May Athanasius, our common Father, intercede for us, that we may be more faithful servants of God in his Church and more effective pastors to those for whose sake Christ has given us the mission of breaking the bread of his Word and of his Body.

May 6 th, 1973

POPE PAUL VI'S ADDRESS BEFORE THE "REGINA COELI"

In his brief address before the "Regina Coeli "on May 6, Paul VI spoke of Saint Athanasius and of the visit of Patriarch Shenouda III.

We must explain to you the ceremony just now celebrated by us in the Basilica of St. Peter's. We wished in this way to commemorate the XVI Centenary (no short period of time!) of the death of St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt; and we wished thereby to honour the presence among us of the new Coptic-Orthodox Patriarch Shenouda III who, with his widely representative entourage, is our guest during these days.

Two questions spontaneously arise: who was St. Athanasius, and who are the Orthodox Copts? In other words, why does Rome attach solemnity to these two themes which are not deeply rooted in our religious culture? We may limit our reply to saying that precisely because of our insufficient information on these matters, we have felt it necessary to set out in bold relief these two subjects by celebrating in St. Peter's a special service of divine worship known as the "Cappella Papale".

On the other hand, no one is ignorant of the towering figure of Athanasius, precisely in relation to our profession of the Catholic Faith in regard to Jesus Christ our Lord. Like St. Peter in the Gospel, he replied to the ever insistent question: "Who is

Jesus Christ?". He replied in the same way as the first ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea in 325, overcoming the doubts and the ambiguous opinions of the time (we are now in the fourth century at the beginning of the public life of the Church). His reply was that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the Son of God made Man, of the same substance as the Father, Himself very God, together with the Holy Spirit, in the ineffable unity of the divine nature, living in the mysterious Trinity of the three Divine Persons. Here we are at the very heart of the supreme Reality, of the supreme Truth, of the first conquest of our Faith.

In a life full of troubles and hardships, Athanasius defended, especially against the rising tide of Arianism, this faith, which has ever received from Rome its expression and support. A symbol of the most firm fidelity and of witness heroically endured, he gives us the joy to have with us his Church, cut off from Catholic communion, also by political controversies no longer existing, after the council of Chalcedon (451), which defined that in the unity of the Person, there are in Christ two natures, divine and human. This Church is now reflowering and in an act of reflection, while now it is happy to proclaim with us the identical Nicene Faith of Athanasius, champion of the unity of the East with the Latin West, himself a guest of the Roman Church for a long sojourn in 339, during the time of Pope Julius.

You see, dear sons, how the memories of the past become a presage and a hope for the future; and for their fulfilment, let us now pray.

May 10th, 1973

PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III'S ADDRESS AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS VISIT TO POPE PAUL VI AND TO THE CHURCH OF ROME

The visit of His Holiness Shenouda III concluded on May 10. At noon Pope Paul went to the Tower of St. John in the Vatican Gardens, where his guest had been living during his visit. Pope Shenouda III addressed the Holy Father in these words:

Beloved Brother in Christ,

On the last day of our happy stay in Rome and in the Vatican City and on the occasion of our leave taking, we have the pleasure to thank Your Holiness, not only in our own name but also in the name of our brothers in the episcopate, the metropolitans and bishops our companions, together with the priests and laity, but also in the name of the whole Church of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark.

We, from a full heart, thank Your Holiness for all the brotherly love Your highly esteemed Person has graciously shown towards us and for all the welcome and kind reception with which we have been received in Rome and in the Vatican City since the very moment of our arrival, from the part of Your Holiness and from the part of their

Eminences the Cardinals, their Excellencies the archbishops and bishops and the other prelates of the Roman Curia and the reverend priests, among whom those who have received us at the Airport and those who have accompanied us and those who have welcomed us with joy and love in Your magnificent and splendid Basilicas and gracious monasteries and other holy and historical places. We especially mention with profound acknowledgement the efforts and the pains of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. We shall not forget how we were moved with reverence and spiritual emotions at seeing churches and monasteries built on sites that had been irrigated with the holy blood of the martyrs of the Church who gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel as witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We very much admire the activities and the scholarly work of the staff of the theological institutes and research centres working in Rome, compiling books of deep and thorough investigations.

Once more and from our inmost soul, we present very many thanks to Your Holiness for Your invaluable present of the relic of St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the great father and doctor of the Universal Church, the herald of Orthodoxy against Arianism, the champion of truth who gave his life and fought the good fight in defence of the divinity of Christ. We cannot express in words how our clergy and people in Egypt would rejoice at our return with the relic of St. Athanasius. For this and for Your Holiness's previous most precious present of the relic of St. Mark You gave to our Church in 1968, our gratitude is unspeakable.

We grasp the opportunity to lift up our hearts to the Almighty so that He may deepen our love in Him towards one another and strengthen the bonds of brotherly affections between our two apostolic Churches and that He may render success to the joint commission representing our Churches we are setting up to guide common studies leading to the full unity of the Church.

We shall always keep in our memory these happy days we spent in Rome.

We shall remember Your Holiness and Your honourable men in our prayers and we believe that Your Holiness will do the same for us. We all have to pray earnestly and humbly for the unity of the Church, for the spread of the kingdom of Heaven on earth and for the peace of the whole world. Amen.

May 10th, 1973

THE FAREWELL SPEECH OF POPE PAUL VI TO PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

Pope Paul responded as follows:

Dear Brother in Christ,

After a week of meetings, visits and conversation, during which Your Holiness and the

distinguished members of your delegation have come to a more intimate knowledge of the Church and the people of Rome, we meet personally once again.

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks for your visit which has enabled us to know more profoundly yourself and the Church of the teaching of Saint Mark. We have been able to see even more clearly how God is calling us to a more perfect unity in Him, for the glory of His name and for the service of all men who have been redeemed by the blood of His incarnate Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. With humility, but with confidence, we renew our resolution to strive to fulfil that calling, mindful of the exhortation of Saint Paul: "If there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (*Phil 2:1-2*).

We also see in the visit of Your Holiness a significant step towards strengthening the foundations of the relations between the Churches of Rome and of Alexandria. We look forward to a growth in these relations, always based on our total commitment to that living Christian faith which has been handed down to us through the Apostles and the Fathers, and to the exigencies of Christian love. May our commitment always be that of the great Saint Athanasius, the sixteenth centenary of whose death the Church of Rome celebrated during your visit.

As you return to your See and to your country, may we ask Your Holiness to convey our greetings to the faithful of your own Church and to all the people of your country, whom we love very much. How great a privilege it would be if it were ever possible for us to meet them personally.

May God accompany Your Holiness on your journey and may He always be close to us with the inspiration of His Holy Spirit in our endeavours for the building up of His Kingdom.

May 10th, 1973

COMMON DECLARATION SIGNED BY POPE PAUL VI AND PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

At the Tower of St. John in the Vatican gardens, on May 10th, in the presence of Paul VI and Shenouda III, Cardinal Willebrands read a common declaration which the two Heads of the Churches then signed. The text is as follows:

Paul VI, bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, and Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, give thanks in the Holy Spirit to God that, after the great event of the return of relics of St. Mark to Egypt, relations have further developed between the Churches of Rome and Alexandria so that they have now been able to meet personally together. At

the end of their meetings and conversations they wish to state together the following:

We have met in the desire to deepen the relations between our Churches and to find concrete ways to overcome the obstacles in the way of our real cooperation in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us the ministry of reconciliation, to reconcile the world to Himself (2 *Cor* 5: 18-20).

In accordance with our apostolic traditions transmitted to our Churches and preserved therein, and in conformity with the early three ecumenical councils, we confess one faith in the One Triune God, the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word of God, the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His substance, who for us was incarnate, assuming for Himself a real body with a rational soul, and who shared with us our humanity but without sin. We confess that our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect man with respect to His humanity. In Him His divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

The divine life is given to us and is nourished in us through the seven sacraments of Christ in His Church: Baptism, Chrism (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders.

We venerate the Virgin Mary, Mother of the True Light, and we confess that she is ever Virgin, the God-bearer. She intercedes for us, and, as the Theotokos, excels in her dignity all angelic hosts.

We have, to a large degree, the same understanding of the Church, founded upon the Apostles, and of the important role of ecumenical and local councils. Our spirituality is well and profoundly expressed in our rituals and in the Liturgy of the Mass which comprises the centre of our public prayer and the culmination of our incorporation into Christ in His Church. We keep the fasts and feasts of our faith. We venerate the relics of the saints and ask the intercession of the angels and of the saints, the living and the departed. These compose a cloud of witnesses in the Church. They and we look in hope for the Second Coming of our Lord when His glory will be revealed to judge the living and the dead.

We humbly recognize that our Churches are not able to give more perfect witness to this new life in Christ because of existing divisions which have behind them centuries of difficult history. In fact, since the year 451 A.D., theological differences,

nourished and widened by non-theological factors, have sprung up. These differences cannot be ignored. In spite of them, however, we are rediscovering ourselves as Churches with a common inheritance and are reaching out with determination and confidence in the Lord to achieve the fullness and perfection of that unity which is His gift.

As an aid to accomplishing this task, we are setting up a joint commission representing our Churches, whose function will be to guide common study in the fields of Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems, so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world. At the same time we express our gratitude and encouragement to other groups of Catholic and Orthodox scholars and pastors who devote their efforts to common activity in these and related fields.

With sincerity and urgency we recall that true charity, rooted in total fidelity to the one Lord Jesus Christ and in mutual respect for each one's traditions, is an essential element of this search for perfect communion.

In the name of this charity, we reject all forms of proselytism, in the sense of acts by which persons seek to disturb each other's communities by recruiting new members from each other through methods, or because of attitudes of mind, which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterize the relationships between Churches. Let it cease, where it may exist. Catholics and Orthodox should strive to deepen charity and cultivate mutual consultation, reflection and cooperation in the social and intellectual fields and should humble themselves before God, supplicating Him who, as He has begun this work in us, will bring it to fruition.

As we rejoice in the Lord who has granted us the blessings of this meeting, our thoughts reach out to the thousands of suffering and homeless Palestinian people. We deplore any misuse of religious arguments for political purposes in this area. We earnestly desire and look for a just solution for the Middle East crisis so that true peace with justice should prevail, especially in that land which was hallowed by the preaching, death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and by the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we venerate together as the Theotokos. May God, the giver of all good gifts, hear our prayers and bless our endeavours.

From the Vatican, May 10, 1973.

September 12th, 1974

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI TO COPTIC CATHOLIC PATRIARCH, CARDINAL STEPHANOS I SIDAROUS

My Lord Cardinal
and Dear Brother in Christ,

The visit that His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Preaching of St. Mark, paid to us last year, should be the beginning of a new era in relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Coptic Church. The Catholics of Egypt are aware of the importance of these steps, which they have accompanied with their prayers, and they are concerned to see what the real effects will be both in the life of the Church in Egypt and in the gradual reconciliation between Christians.

Examining with our illustrious visitor "the concrete means to overcome the obstacles existing on the way to real collaboration", we had recalled together that "true charity is an essential element of this search for perfect communion". Assured of your collaboration and of that of the Bishops of your Synod, we had continued our joint declaration rejecting, in the name of this charity, "all dealings by which persons seek to disturb the communities of others by recruiting new members among them with methods or in states of mind contrary to the requirements of Christian love or to what ought to characterize the relations between Churches".

Reaffirming these principles, we wished to create the serene atmosphere necessary for the fruitful work of the mixed commission that we and the Amba Shenouda III set up between our Churches on the occasion of our meeting. We are grateful to the Catholics of your country for the collaboration they have already given to this commission. It has just recommended the creation of a local mixed committee with the task of ensuring contacts between the Catholics and the Orthodox Copts with a view to seeking the ways leading to a greater and more brotherly collaboration between Christian brothers. It would also have the task of examining and trying to overcome the difficulties that will not fail to oppose this effort.

Knowing that Your Beatitude agrees with this proposal of the commission, we willingly approve the formation of this committee and we would like to recommend its work to your pastoral solicitude and to that of the members of your holy Synod and of all the Catholic Bishops of Egypt, over whose assembly Your Beatitude presides. We hope that this committee will be able to contribute effectively to the work of reconciliation and growth in communion which is now undertaken and which will sometimes call, on both sides, for a renewal of certain attitudes and certain pastoral practices in order to adapt them to the new situation gradually created. This situation will be the fruit of this deep conversion of the heart that the Second Vatican

Council tells us is one of the first conditions of progress in unity (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 7).

May the Holy Spirit, who arouses and guides this effort of Christians, inspire the work of this committee and give its members the courage of faithfulness and docility.

Animated with this hope, we assure you again, Beatitude and very dear Brother, of our sentiments of deep charity in Christ Jesus.

From the Vatican, 12 September 1974.

June 16th, 1979

LETTER OF PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

His Holiness the Roman Pontiff Pope John Paul II
Beloved Brother in the Lord.

A delegation composed of our brothers in the episcopate: their Graces: Archbishop Athanasius of Beni-Suef, Bishop Samuel of Ecumenical and Social Services in the Patriarchate, Bishop Gregorius for Theological Studies, Bishop Johannes of El-Gharbia, Deacon Dr. George Bebawi and Mr. Amin F. Abdelnour, is carrying respectfully in my name and in the name of our Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church of the See of St. Mark, our greetings to your Holiness and through you to the Roman Catholic Church, and conveying to your Holiness once more our congratulations after your installation as Pope of the Catholic Church. Joined with our supplications to the Almighty God imploring Him to grant your Holiness full strength and the best health so that you may hold successfully the heavy responsibility of the Pontificate on your shoulders.

We have been following with joy and admiration your openness to all people and Churches. Your pastoral visits to Latin America and to Poland have been world wide appreciated as an expression of your Christian love for God's People whom the Almighty has created in His own image. It is our confidence in the Lord that your Holiness carry on the message of reconciliation between our two Apostolic Churches which took its start generally and prophetically with Pope John XXIII and followed by Pope Paul VI of the happy memory.

We never forget the 22nd of June 1968, the day on which the relics of St. Mark were given back to Egypt and to the Coptic Orthodox Church by Pope Paul VI in Rome and in the Vatican City.

With splendid joy we have received back the relics of St. Athanasius the Apostolic on the 6th of May 1973 during our visit to Pope Paul VI in Rome and the Vatican City in an unforgettable celebration in the Basilica of St. Peter. On the 10th of May a Declaration was signed by the Pope of Rome and the Pope of Alexandria, in which it was recorded for the first time in history after fifteen centuries of complete isolation and separation, points of agreement between the two Apostolic Churches. An

official Joint Commission was set up at the same date to study points of divergence with a view to restore the unity of the Church Universal. Since then four official conferences have taken place in Cairo.

Besides those meetings, another four ecumenical non-official Pro-Oriente Conferences took place in Vienna since 1971.

It became clear that our two Churches confess and profess in essence almost the same teaching that Christ our Lord is God Incarnate, who is perfect in His Divinity, meantime He is perfect in His Humanity. His Godhead and His Manhood are united together inseparately and unconfusedly. In Ecclesiology only very little real progress has been reached.

This is why we thought it appropriate to delegate an official delegation of six members of the official Commission, in order to enhance the negotiations between our two Churches, which seem to have stopped at a point without reaching further steps of real progress in the achievement of the unity of our two Churches, in Faith, and to see what would be their conception of the future relations between the two Churches and the practical steps to be taken at present and in the near future to fulfil the unity in Faith of the Church of Christ. May the Good God keep Your Holiness in peace and health.

Pope SHENOUDA III
By the Grace of God
Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch
of the See of St. Mark

Cairo, June 16, 1979

June 23rd, 1979

ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO A COPTIC ORTHODOX DELEGATION

On June 23, 1979, the Holy Father received in audience a delegation from the Coptic Orthodox Church, representing His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark (Egypt). On this occasion the Pope gave the following address:

My dear Brothers in Christ,

It is with joy that I greet you, distinguished guests and worthy delegates of my brother. His Holiness the Patriarch of Alexandria, Pope Shenouda III. I am grateful for his having sent you and for the warm words of greeting and brotherly love he has addressed to me through you. They are a source of comfort and encouragement.

How marvelous are the ways of the Lord! He permits us to profess today our common faith in Jesus Christ, His divine Son, true God and true Man, who died and rose again and through His Holy Spirit lives in and guides His Church, the body

of which He is the head. We rejoice together that the doubts and suspicions of the past have been overcome so that with full hearts we can proclaim together once again this fundamental truth of our Christian faith.

From the very first days of my election as Bishop of Rome I have considered as one of my principal tasks that of striving to bring about the unity of all those who bear the holy name of Christian. The scandal of division must be resolutely overcome, so that we may all fulfil in the lives of our Churches and in our service to the world the prayer of the Lord of the Church « that all may be one ». I have stressed this on a number of occasions already. I repeat it to you now, since what is involved here is the communion between two apostolic Churches such as ours.

I know that one of the fundamental questions of the ecumenical movement is the nature of that full communion we are seeking with each other and the role that the Bishop of Rome has to play, by God's design, in serving that communion of faith and spiritual life, which is nourished by the sacraments and expressed in fraternal charity. A great deal of progress has been made in deepening our understanding of this question. Much remains to be done. I consider your visit to me and to the See of Rome a significant contribution towards resolving this question definitively.

The Catholic Church bases its dialogue of truth and charity with the Coptic Orthodox Church on the principles proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, especially in the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*. I am happy to make my own the statements of the Common Declaration signed by my venerated predecessor Pope Paul VI with Pope Shenouda III in 1973 and the further encouragement the Holy See has given to this dialogue since that time.

Fundamental to this dialogue is the recognition that the richness of this unity in faith and spiritual life has to be expressed in diversity of forms. Unity—whether on the universal level or the local level—does not mean uniformity or absorption of one group by another. It is rather at the service of all groups to help each live better the proper gifts it has received from God's Spirit. This is an encouragement to move ahead with confidence and reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whatever may be the bitterness inherited from the past, whatever may be the present doubts and tensions that may exist, the Lord calls us to move forward in mutual trust and in mutual love. If true unity is to be achieved, it will be the result of cooperation among pastors on the local level, of the collaboration at all levels of the life of our Churches so that our people may grow in understanding of each other, in trust and love of each other. With no one trying to dominate each other but to serve each other, all together will grow into that perfection of unity for which Our Lord prayed on the night before he died (*Jn 17*) and for which the Apos-

tie Paul exhorted us to work with all diligence (*Eph* 4, 11-15).

Again my thanks for your coming. My thought and prayers go to my brother Pope Shenouda III, to the bishops, clergy and faithful of your Church, as together with my brothers the bishops and the faithful of the Catholic Churches in Egypt you pray and work for full ecclesial communion which will be God's gift to all of us.

January 26th, 1985

TELEGRAM FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II TO PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

When Patriarch Shenouda III took up his full patriarchal duties once again after having been placed under house arrest at Amba Bishoy monastery by the Egyptian government, Pope John Paul II sent him the following telegram:

At this time when Christians are gladdened by the light of the Birth and Epiphany of Our Saviour, I am also glad to join in the joy of your Church at the return of its Pastor. Now that you are once again able to proclaim the Word of God to your people and to celebrate the Divine Mysteries with them, I offer thanks to God and pray that he will bless your ministry.

As soon as possible a delegation from our Church will visit you both to bring you my good wishes and to discuss with you how we can best pursue together that journey of hope by which the Lord is leading us towards full communion.

In the love of Christ

June 28th, 1985

EXCERPT FROM THE SPEECH OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE ROMAN CURIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXV ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY

At the same time, before you I express my joy at knowing that His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, has been able to reassume all his responsibilities at the head of his Church. We shall therefore be able to reopen our dialogue, and, with determination on the one and on the other side, let it proceed without further delays in the will to overcome in the fullness of truth those doctrinal divisions which still exist. There is also a need to dispel the disputes and condemnations of the past far from our memory and confide them to God's mercy. We must set to work building a future together which shall be more in conformity with Christ's will for unity for all his disciples.

May 30th, 1988

LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO PATRIARCH SHENOUDA III

At the request of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and for the purpose of making the doctrinal agreement contained in the common declaration of 1973 (see above, p. 8) more accessible to the faithful, a brief formula, summarizing the essential content of this agreement, was adopted during an ecumenical meeting in February 1988. Pope John Paul II expressed his satisfaction at this development in the following letter which he sent to Patriarch Shenouda III.

In this same letter, the Pope also makes reference to a christological agreement signed by the authorities of the Orthodox Churches of the Middle East on 19 November 1987.

The texts of the brief formula and the agreement of November 1987 are published here for information after the letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

TO HIS HOLINESS SHENOUDA III, POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF ST MARK

Ever since the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, I have often been in communion in prayer and thought with Your Holiness, asking the Lord to enlighten us so that we may be faithful collaborators in the accomplishment of his will. The reality of brotherhood in Christ impels me to assure you that I feel deeply part of your joy and your sorrows.

I am happy to learn that the grace of God has borne new fruit among Christians of the Near East in their search for unity. The agreement signed on February 12, 1988 by Your Holiness, His Beatitude the Patriarch Stephanos II, the Apostolic Pro Nuncio Archbishop Giovanni Moretti, and Father Pierre Duprey, together with several bishops, priests, and Egyptian lay people, resumes the essential content of the one signed on May 10, 1973 by Your Holiness and my predecessor Pope Paul VI. It was useful to give to this agreement a simpler and more popular form in order to make it accessible to all the faithful in Egypt.

The Christological agreement signed on November 19, 1987 by Your Holiness and the heads of the Orthodox Churches in the Near East is also an important event. A new step has thus been taken by Churches of the Apostolic tradition present in the Near East to overcome the Christological divergence that was among the reasons for division in the past. And so today the Christians of the Near East are no longer divided in confessing their faith in the mystery of the Incarnate Word of God, « the person of Christ who, being God of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, became truly man, and fully assumed our human nature without losing or diminishing or changing His divine nature. Being perfect God, he became perfect man without confu-

sion, without separation », as is rightly expressed in the declaration you signed on November 19, 1987.

In affirming together our faith in Christ, true God and true man, we become ever more strongly aware of the life as children of God which we received in baptism. « We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life » (*Rom 6:4*).

We must bear witness to this common baptism in our world since we believe that it is the « one baptism for the forgiveness of sins » (Nicene Creed) and especially because it is a baptism that we recognize reciprocally.

During these days when the feast of Pentecost is still fresh in our minds, I pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten our Churches and guide them « into all the truth » (*Jn 16:13*), and I assure Your Holiness of my warm good wishes in Christ our Lord.

From the Vatican, May 30, 1988.

THE BRIEF FORMULA

We believe that our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Incarnate-Logos is perfect in His Divinity and perfect in His Humanity. He made His Humanity one with His Divinity without mixture nor mingling, nor confusion. His Divinity was not separated from His Humanity even for a moment or twinkling of an eye.

At the same time, we Anathematize the Doctrines of both Nestorius and Eutyches.

CHRISTOLOGICAL AGREEMENT SIGNED BY THE AUTHORITIES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST,

November 19th, 1987

We render thanks to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for the joy of spiritual communion that we were graced with from above as we met here in the Holy monastery of Amba Bishoy in Egypt, on the occasion of the meeting of the Executive Committee of MECC* (16-19 November 1987) upon the

(* MECC = Middle East Council of Churches

invitation and with the gracious hospitality of our sister Coptic Orthodox Church.

It was the first time that Heads of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, members of the MECC, having our Holy Sees in the Middle East, we met together and reflected on our common task in the present day situation of the Middle East.

While reflecting once more on the deeply rooted inner unity of faith existing among our two families of churches, we rejoice by realizing how much we have advanced in our rediscovery and in the growing consciousness among our people of that inner unity of faith in the Incarnate Lord. Attempts by theologians of both families aimed at overcoming the misunderstandings inherited from the past centuries of alienation towards one another have happily reached the same conclusion that fundamentally and essentially we on both sides have preserved the same faith in our Lord Jesus Christ inspite of diverse formulations and resulting controversies.

Welcoming all such attempts made on international or regional levels, and focusing our attention particularly on the latter, namely the meetings held in Balamand, Lebanon (1972) and in Pendelli, Greece (1978), we affirm our togetherness in the true understanding of the person of Christ who being God of God, the only begotten Son of the Father, became truly man, fully assumed our human nature without losing or diminishing or changing His divine nature. Being perfect God, he became perfect man without confusion, without separation.

In the light of this conviction, we recommend that the official dialogue on both regional (Middle East) and international levels be pursued through common endeavours in the healthy process of clarifying and enhancing our commonness in faith and dispelling the misapprehensions of the past, thus preparing the way towards the full recovery of our communion.

We urge our people to continue to deepen their consciousness of the deep communiality of faith and to relate to one another as brethren and sisters who share the same Gospel, the same faith and the same mission entrusted to them by their common Lord. Thanks be to God that ancient controversies and rivalries have given way to a new era of sincere and open dialogue and communal brotherhood.

We pray that these most difficult and crucial times in the Middle East may stimulate all of us to see more clearly the demand and the command of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may be one according to His will (*John, 10*) and prayer (*John, 17*).

PART II
OTHER DOCUMENTS

March 26th-30th, 1974

FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

The first plenary session of the Joint International Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church was held in Cairo March 26 to 30, 1974. The deliberations of the Commission were inaugurated by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in the presence of His Beatitude Stephanos I, Cardinal Sidarouss, Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria, of the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Archbishop Achille Glorieux, and of representatives of the Catholic and Orthodox communities.

The members of the Commission are:

For the Catholic Church:

- Rev. Msgr. Charles Moeller, Secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, head of the Catholic delegation
His Excellency Msgr. Youhanna Kabes, auxiliary bishop to His Beatitude Patriarch Stephanos I
Rev. Louis Abadir, Rector of the Coptic Catholic Seminary of Meadi.
Rev. Prof. Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., professor at the Jesuit Faculty of Theology, Sankt-Georgen, Frankfurt
Rev. Prof. André de Halleux, OFM, professor at the University of Louvain
Rev. John Long, S.J., staff member of the Secretariat of Promoting Christian Unity, secretary of the delegation
Mr. Amin Fahim, President of the Christian Association of Upper Egypt for Schools and Social Promotion

For the Coptic Orthodox Church:

- His Grace Amba Gregorios, Bishop of Coptic Culture and Higher Theological Studies, head of the Coptic Orthodox delegation
His Grace Amba Athanasius of Beni Suef and Bahnasa
His Grace Amba Samuel, Bishop of Public, Ecumenical, and Social Services
His Grace Amba Yohannes of Gharbieh
Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor of New Testament, Coptic Theological College

Dr. George Bebawi, Professor of Patristics; General Secretary of the Association of Theological Institutions in the Near East; secretary of the Coptic Orthodox delegation

Mr. Amin Fakhry Abdelnour, lay leader in church, social, and civil institutions.

JOINT REPORT

Introduction

The Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and Coptic Orthodox Church established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III during their meeting in Rome, May 1973, held its first plenary session in Cairo from March 26 to 30, 1974. According to the mandate given it, the commission is « to guide common study in the fields of church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems, so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world ».

During its meetings the Commission considered the progress made up to the present in theological studies with a view to seeing if further steps could be taken regarding our understanding of Christology and to determining points which need further clarification and study. It was possible to move a step further in the presentation of the faith of our churches at this time in Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son of God. Recommendations for further theological studies to be undertaken by experts of both Churches, as well as recommendations concerning the cooperation between the two Churches in the practical field were agreed upon.

I. A Statement on Christology

1. With regard to the *Christological understanding of both our Churches*, and as a further development of what was already stated by our church leaders in their Common Declaration, the members of the Joint Commission are in agreement on the following.

2. We confess that the union that took place in the Incarnation between the Godhead and the Manhood of Our Lord is a mystery incomprehensible to any created mind, ineffable, inexpressible, beyond description and too great for words.

3. We must humbly recognize the limitations of our minds to grasp the truth of it, nor are we able to give adequate words in our human language to fully express it.

4. According to the truth of our salvation which is revealed to us through the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures and the tradition of our common Fathers before the schism, we together confess that one of the Holy Trinity, the Second Person, who is true God, for the sake of the economy of our salvation, has assumed to Himself from the holy Virgin Mary a real body possessing a rational soul. This ensouled flesh did not exist before the union. The body remained body although glorified after the Godbefitting resurrection and ascension. It is from the very moment of the descent of the Divine Word in the Virgin's womb, that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity united to Himself the perfect humanity which he took from the virgin. He Himself one and the same consubstantial with the Father with respect to His Divinity became consubstantial with us with respect to His Humanity.

5. As we confess the faith formulated above according to the first three Ecumenical Councils, we together anathematize Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism and profess the faith expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol. Still we need a formula of reconciliation between what the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox confess: one nature, out of two natures, or one nature that possesses the properties and qualities of the two natures, and what the Chalcedonian Catholics confess: in two natures.

6. We accept a perfect real union, and not a conjunction or combination of two persons or entities. When the Orthodox part rejects all duality in Jesus Christ, it is intended to say that every act of Jesus Christ is in fact the act of God the Word incarnate and not that some of His acts be attributed to His Divinity alone and some others to His humanity alone as it might seem. When the Catholics confess their faith in Jesus Christ, then they do not deny what the Orthodox say, but they want to emphasize that in Him are preserved all the properties of the Divinity as well as all the properties of the Humanity, a fact which the Orthodox profess incessantly.

7. When the Orthodox confess that Divinity and Humanity of Our Lord are united in one nature, they take « nature », not as a purely simple nature, but rather as one composite nature, wherein the Divinity and Humanity are united inseparately and unconfusedly. And when the Catholics confess Jesus Christ as one in two natures, they do not separate the Divinity from the Humanity, not even for the twinkling of an eye, but they rather try to avoid mingling, commixtion, confusion or alteration.

8. The Orthodox part stresses in the union the reality of the humanity of Our Lord, for the salvation of mankind could not be but the act of the

Divine Word incarnate. The Divinity did not and could not forsake the Humanity for a moment neither during the time of crucifixion nor any time after. In the Eucharist, the faithful always partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, a fact which stresses the reality of His Humanity. On the other hand, they stress the reality of the Divinity of Our Lord, the Word Who was and still is the very God incarnate. For this reason the resurrection of Our Lord is a conclusive evidence of His Divinity. This explains the most illustrious importance the Orthodox give to the feast of Resurrection.

9. It is precisely the same concern of the Catholics to confess the reality of the Humanity in Jesus Christ as the indispensable instrument of our salvation. But they also affirm that our salvation is the very act of the Word of God. They also believe that there has never been any separation of Divinity and Humanity in Jesus Christ even at the moment of crucifixion, death and descent to hell.

10. This is our faith in the mystery of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the economy of our salvation. In this we all agree.

11. It is the conviction of the Joint Commission that this statement can serve not only the deepening of relations between our two Churches but also can be used as our authentic expression of our beliefs in our relations with other Christian Churches and communities.

II. *Further Theological Studies*

The Joint Commission recommends that the following issues be further studied by experts of both Churches:

1. The history and doctrine of the Councils of the Early Church and in particular those concerned with Christology:

- a) their theological and non-theological factors
- b) their ecclesiastical authority as such
- c) the acceptance of the Canons in both Churches, especially concerning their application to our contemporary differences and needs.

2. The Sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of Salvation.

3. The recognition of Saints, concerning Orthodoxy of faith and spirituality.

4. The ways of implementing the above-mentioned points in liturgical and historical books and theological institutions.

This list is not an exhaustive one. It indicates those points of particular importance which should be given priority.

The Joint Commission will examine the ways for involving experts in these studies and bringing the results of their work to the attention of our Churches.

III. *Practical Affairs*

1. The joint Catholic-Coptic Orthodox commission recognizes that the struggle of ideologies, rapid social changes, the exaltation of materialism and atheism challenge the faith of Christians and the Churches themselves. We are called by the grace of God to a cooperation which is both serious and sincere, and which will help the Churches meet their responsibility in this world.

2. In their Common Declaration, Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III clearly encouraged this cooperation and indicated the principles which should guide it. This commission hopes, by what it will now say, to contribute to its concrete realization.

3. The Joint Commission recognizes that some of the people of our Churches still have a strong feeling of mistrust when it comes to common cooperation. We must strive to eliminate this feeling and to root out its causes. The commission also recognizes that certain people, because of a lack of proper understanding both of the Church's responsibility in the world and of the ecumenical spirit, might use the common declarations of our leaders, and our own proposals, to disturb another's community by trying to recruit new members from it or by cultivating attitudes of minds which are opposed to the exigencies of Christian love or to what should characterize brotherly relationships between Churches. Actions and attitudes of this kind can find no justification in the efforts of Catholics and Orthodox to deepen charity and cultivate mutual consultation, reflection and cooperation in the social and intellectual fields. On the contrary, we are convinced that Christian pastors and faithful who have been working zealously for the spread of Christ's kingdom will find that, by implementing the directives of our church leaders and by giving concrete substance to the suggestions and guidelines given by this Joint Commission, they will give a deeper significance to their pastoral activities and exert a more profound influence on their own people and on all with whom they will work.

4. Moreover, the Joint Commission is convinced that the programmes it proposes should be implemented with an eye to concrete situations and to the needs of our people and the resources at our disposition. To attempt to do everything in one day could lead to failure and disillusionment. To refuse to take a step because of difficulties which might be foreseen could be a refusal of the inspirations being given by the Holy Spirit and of the clear manifestations of the desire the leaders of our Churches have for the development of that profound unity among us which is Christ's will for His Church.

5. It is with these reflections in mind that the Joint Commission recommends the formation of a Local Joint Committee in Egypt whose function

will be to implement the use of resources for the service of Christ and His Church in Egypt, and to take effective measures to eliminate activities which obstruct this service.

6. In consultation with the authorities of our Churches, this committee will determine the structures useful for carrying out its task. One of these should be a joint subcommittee for regular contact with church institutions, to plan, promote and guide the use of personnel and resources towards a wider service of the whole Church and of all the people in Egypt, in a spirit of mutual respect for each other's Churches. A second subcommittee is to be established to examine and take effective measures against those practices which create tensions among the Churches or affect the spirit of mutual confidence between them.

7. Furthermore, this committee will advise and guide other groups which may wish to propose joint programmes of action, according to the spirit mentioned above.

8. The committee can also arrange studies on practical questions as shall be indicated to it by this Joint Commission. Included among these are studies of the procedures and problems arising in the perspective of our Churches' present endeavour along the road of unity in Christ which is God's gift.

9. In its endeavours the Local Joint Committee will maintain regular contact with local church authorities and will report to this Joint Commission on its work and on perspectives for future activities, to be guided and supported by the Commission.

10. As an aid towards dealing with some practical problems which may arise on the local level, our Joint Commission wishes to recall the words of the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III: "The Divine life is given to us and is nourished in us through the seven sacraments of Christ in His Church: Baptism, Chrism (Confirmation), Holy Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony and Holy Orders". We wish to emphasize that this passage underlines the common regard and mutual respect which should be had for each other's sacraments. We want to see this reflected in our pastoral practices and in our concern for the conscience of everyone.

11. This Joint Commission recommends to our Church authorities to encourage through exhortations, pastoral letters and synodal decisions, the work of the Local Joint Committee as well as to promote the adoption of the principles enunciated in the common declarations of our leaders both in the statutes and the activities of our church institutions.

12. Finally this Joint Commission expresses its conviction that the more it proves in a practical way its own sincerity and seriousness as it works

to implement the mandate given it, the more our pastors and church leaders will respond to the concrete demands made upon them to develop and guide our people towards working for full unity in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ.

October 27th-31st, 1975

SECOND MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT
COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

PRESS COMMUNIQUE

From October 27th to 31st, 1975, the Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church met in Cairo. This was the second session of the Commission since it was established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III after their historic meeting in Rome in 1973.

Following upon the common declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III, the commission, in its first meeting in March 1974, made a significant step in expressing one fundamental understanding of Christ as God Incarnate, so that we can consider the Christological problem nearly solved from a theological point of view.

The main theme of this meeting was a vision and understanding of the unity we seek. It was agreed that the union we are looking forward to achieving in the future in which our two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, would come into full communion again on the basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the undivided Church of the first four and a half centuries, would be a real unity.

It was recognized that there remain serious divergencies among us on a number of questions and particularly in regard to our understanding of the ecclesiology on which unity is based. For this reason, the Commission has decided that theological studies be undertaken on the understanding of unity which existed in the undivided Church in order to see what this has to tell us for the life of our Churches today. Not merely were these studies decided upon, but a clear plan for carrying them out was developed.

In addition, the Commission considered concrete ways by which mutual understanding could develop among our clergy and people.

In 1974, the Commission had recommended the establishment of a local Joint Committee whose objective was to implement the use of resources for the service of Christ and His Church in Egypt, and to take effective measures to eliminate activities which obstruct this service. This Committee, which is in existence for almost a year now, reported to the Commission that it has made progress in carrying out its mandate. Plans for continuing and developing its work were discussed and approved by the Commission.

The Commission feels that God has accompanied its work with blessings. If unity must still be achieved and the many common studies and activities the Commission envisages should not be interpreted as if it were already an accomplished fact, nevertheless, Catholics and Orthodox see in these studies and activities positive steps towards achieving the Unity desired and prayed for.

Participants in the meeting were:

Catholic delegation:

Msgr. Charles Moeller, General Secretary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (co-chairman).

H. E. Amba Youhanna Kabes, Auxiliary to Patriarch Stephanos I.

Rev. Fr. Louis Abadir, Rector of the Coptic Catholic Seminary of Meadi.

(Rev.) Prof. Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Jesuit Fathers, Frankfurt.

Rev. Prof. Andre de Halleux, O.F.M., professor at the University of Louvain.

Mr. Amin Fahim, president of the Christian Association of Upper Egypt for Schools and Social Promotion.

Rev. Fr. John F. Long, S.J., from the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Rev. Fr. Maurice Martin, S.J., Regional Superior for Egypt of the Jesuit Fathers.

Coptic Orthodox delegation:

His Grace Amba Gregorios, Bishop of Coptic Culture and Higher Theological Studies, co-chairman.

His Grace Amba Athanasius of Beni Suef and Bahnasa.

His Grace Amba Samuel, Bishop of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services.

His Grace Amba Yohannes of Gharbieh.

Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor of New Testament, Coptic Theological College.

Dr. George Bebawi, Professor of Patristics. General Secretary of the Association of Theological Education in the Near East.

Mr. Amin Fakhry Abdelnour, Active Layman in church, social and civil institutions.

Rev. Antonios Ragheb, parish priest, Cairo,

COMMON REPORT

Vision of union

1. We met together to discuss and to investigate, in mutual respect and with the spirit of love for one another, what we can do to hasten or to push forward the case of the union between our two Apostolic sister Churches.

2. The union we envisage is a real one, a communion in faith, in sacramental life, and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God.

Different views of the question

3. In spite of the fact of the desire and hope for the Unity for which we have been praying for centuries, we recognize the existence of points of divergences which have grown wide since the Schism which took place in Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

4. In our first meeting in March 1974, we worked together for a Christological Declaration which helped to clarify the situation more than ever and made a significant step which expresses one fundamental understanding of Christ as God Incarnate.

5. Now after our deliberations in this second meeting of the official Joint Commission, we came to realize that we met certain difficulties in regard to Ecclesiology on which Unity is based:

a) To the Orthodox, the Church of Christ is One Unique Catholic and Apostolic Church. She is the same everywhere and at all times. The Church of Alexandria is the Church Universal (Catholic) in Alexandria. If the Church be called local, that means that it is one and the same Church Universal with all its qualities and treasures of Christ and the Holy Spirit, as acting in the place, whether it is in a form of one diocese headed by its bishop or a group of dioceses in one or more than one country governed by the Holy Synod with the Patriarch as head. She can speak in matters of faith with authority which is the authority of Christ given to the Church to preach the Gospel, to propagate the faith and to govern the people of God. She can speak and decide according to the Scriptures and to the Tradition transmitted to her through the ages.

An Ecumenical Council is the Supreme body of the Church Universal to judge and decide on points of dispute. There is no need for a supreme administrative body to govern all Churches of Christendom. The Church is not in need of referring to any other bishop as if this bishop possessed the full power to be the only spokesman of Christ and the Church Universal. Bishops in the early Church used to consult each other, to impart their problems to each other as brothers and fellow-bishops of equal authority. When there be a problem that needs a decision from the Church Universal, an Ecumenical Council had to be convened. In principle, there is no assigned bishop that has the prerogatives to preside over the Council. The president is to be appointed by free election by the member bishops of the Council.

b) The Roman Catholic side also is keenly aware of the essential place occupied in the Church of Christ by the local Church, understood as the congregation of the faithful gathered around the

bishop, and by the particular Church, which is the gathering of a number of local Churches in a single body headed by a Patriarch or some other bishop. The universal Church subsists of and in the local Churches. Moreover, it believes that, in conformity with the will of Christ, a ministry of universal unity exists for the communion between local Churches, which ministry the Roman Catholic Church conceives as realized in the ministry of the bishop of Rome.

Common view

6. Since, however, Our Lord Jesus Christ willed that His Church be one, we are confident that a way will be found to achieve union between our two sister Churches.

7. The process by which it is achieved is that two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, come into full communion again on the basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the individuated Church of the first four and a half centuries.

8. Such a communion once achieved, there will be but one Coptic Church under the leadership of the one Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.

9. Since this unity would be a full communion, the richness of the Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression within the structure of this one Coptic Church for the enrichment of all.

Procedures for our work

10. We hope to achieve the study of the main theological points as well as of practical and pastoral questions within a period of six years, dividing up the work by people designated by the Commission or its Secretariat in yearly sections, with regular meetings of the Joint Commission. This period might be extended according to needs and to progress of studies.

11. Theological and historical subjects which must be studied as helps to achieving unity:

a) The type of Unity known in the history of the Church before 451 A.D.

b) The Oneness of the Church as expressed in the Nicene Creed.

c) Unity as the communion which was in existence at a certain time in the life of the Church Universal in relation to the concepts of Unity existing today.

d) The method by which the Churches solved their theological and pastoral problems and to what extent we should apply this method when Unity be achieved.

e) The question of the particular role of St. Peter and his successors in the light of common tradition of both Churches until 451 A.D.

f) Theological differences that can hinder Unity, e.g. councils, canons, saints, anathemas and other dogmas concerning the Holy Spirit, the blessed Virgin, life after death, sacraments and rites.

12. For their relations concerning questions of common interest and concern, the Church of Rome and the Church of Alexandria will agree on the methods and procedures to be used.

13. Certain concrete projects can be developed, e.g.:

a) Appreciating the work developed within the *Association for Theological Education in the Near-East (Atene)**, we recommend further collaboration between seminaries, the possible exchange of professors between local faculties as well as with faculties outside Egypt.

b) Exchanges between monasteries are also recommended.

14. The Commission learned with satisfaction of the recent meetings between members of the hierarchies of the Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholic Churches to discuss questions of common interest and concern. It expresses its hope that meetings of this type may continue on a regular basis, and may be an example and inspiration for similar meetings on other levels.

15. We recommend that a popular commentary on the events and the documents of the visit of Pope Shenouda III to Rome in 1973 be prepared in common to create a wider understanding of this event. People who took an active part in this event should be responsible for preparing this text.

16. A permanent Secretariat of the Joint Commission has to be set up to follow up the work of the Commission during the periods between its meetings. This Secretariat would see to the preparing of papers on the subjects decided for study, to the carrying out of these concrete studies and mutual consultations, and would prepare the general meetings of the Joint Commission. In addition, it would assist the Joint Local Committee in carrying out decisions made by that committee, and in other projects, such as preparing Arabic translations of documents for approval by that Committee. The members of the permanent Secretariat, serving at the pleasure of this commission, are: Fr. John Long, Fr. Louis Abadir and Fr. Antonios Ragheb.

17. The Joint Commission projects the following timetable for its next meetings:

a) Since a good number of members of the Commission will be attending the symposium sponsored by "Pro Oriente" in Vienna in September, 1976, there will be a three day meeting of these members before the symposium and dedicated specifically to the work of the Joint Commission.

* At its 1980 General meeting Atene, set up in 1967, became Atime: *Association of Theological Institutions in the Near-East*.

b) The next plenary session of the Joint Commission would be held in March, 1977.

If the meeting at the Vienna symposium cannot be arranged, the next plenary session of the Joint Commission will be held at the end of October, 1976.

August 26th-29th, 1976

THIRD MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

As proposed and agreed upon in their meeting of October 1975 in Cairo, the members of the Joint Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church who were present for an Ecumenical Consultation sponsored in Vienna from August 29th to September 5th by the Foundation « Pro Oriente », held a meeting of the Commission from August 26th to 29th. Present from the Coptic Orthodox side were His Grace Amba Gregorios, His Grace Amba Samuel, His Grace Amba Yohannes of Garbieh, Rev. Father Antonios Ragheb and Dr. George Bebawi; from the Catholic side, Rev. Msgr. Charles Moeller, Rev. Msgr. Louis Abadir, Rev. Prof. Aloys Grillmeier S.J., Rev. Prof. Andre de Halleux O.F.M., Rev. John Long S.J., Rev. Emmanuel Lanne, O.S.B. was also present for one day, during which he presented for discussion a paper on the subject of « the Unity of the Church up to the fifth century ».

COMMON REPORT

Towards a Christological Statement

The participants felt it useful to prepare a statement on Christology which would be a definitive presentation of their thought concerning the *christological understanding of both Churches*. Using material contained in the Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III and the Commission's report of March 30, 1974, they unanimously agreed to the statement attached to this report.

This statement is submitted to the authorities of both Churches for their definitive judgement and use. However, the Commission requests that even if approval is given, the statement not be made public until some time in the future which will be mutually agreed upon by the two Churches.

Theological studies

In its report of October 1975, the Joint Commission had indicated a series of theological and historical subjects which must be studied as helps to achieve unity, and had expressed its hopes that these studies be achieved within a period of six years. Father Lanne's contribution to the Vienna meeting was helpful as a beginning of this process.

However, the participants felt that procedures should be revised to speed up the process and to achieve concrete results within the next five years. They should not be merely academic studies but should be aimed at treating those specific subjects which are obstacles to full communion between the two Churches.

Furthermore they should be carried out in such a way that the proper authorities of the Churches would have the opportunity to pronounce on them within the next five years.

It is proposed, therefore, that two major studies be made in the period between now and October 1977. Each should be assigned to one or more experts from each side, each of whom would prepare a preliminary study on the topic assigned. They would exchange their studies for mutual criticisms and suggestions. After this, provision should be made for the experts to meet personally for whatever period of time is necessary to prepare together, by September 1977, conclusions to be presented to the meeting of the Joint Commission in October of that year. These conclusions should include points upon which agreement has been reached and those unresolved points for which the Commission will be asked to give its help and guidance. The Commission will determine whether it has sufficient material to be already presented in a preliminary way to its authorities.

At this same meeting, the Commission will determine the subjects to be treated for the following year.

The subjects to be studied during the coming year are:

1. With reference to *Church unity*: what were the roles of the Bishop of Rome and the Bishop of Alexandria in the Church in the first five centuries? What can this tell us about unity in the Church today?

2. With reference to *Councils of the Church*: What are the doctrinal and dogmatic points to be found in councils which have not been shared by the Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Churches. Are these acceptable? How can points of disagreement be resolved? How can a Church which has celebrated many councils be in communion with one which has not shared these councils? How much are the canons and anathemas of earlier councils binding today?

The experts who are to treat these subjects will be chosen by the end of October 1976.

Concerns and proposals about pastoral problems

The Coptic Orthodox participants informed the meeting that during the proposed period of five years of study and cooperation, they are hesitant to inform people of the work being done or the results achieved. They feel that this could be used against them, especially among the simple faithful, to foster proselytism or expansion among them.

The Coptic Orthodox therefore proposed a series of actions to be taken or promoted by the Catholic authorities concerned in various areas of religious, pastoral, educational and social work as well as in the areas of the use of Church resources and structures. It was made clear that they were for a transitional period of five years, that they were not directed at the ordinary pastoral activities of the Catholic Church in favour of its own faithful and that their purpose was to create an atmosphere in which the projected common studies and activities during the next five years would be able to achieve significant results, aiming towards full communion.

It was agreed that no ecumenical activities between our Churches should be used to create confusion in the minds of the faithful or open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. Anything of this kind would be opposed to what Pope Paul VI expressed to the Coptic Orthodox delegation in Rome in St. Peter's Basilica on May 6th, 1973 and in the Common Declaration signed by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III on May 10th of the same year.

It was therefore agreed by the commission that the following recommendations be submitted to the authorities of the Catholic Church for their approval and action:

1. The authorities of the Catholic Church who are concerned direct the religious and pastoral activities of missionaries towards service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church.

2. Through contacts with Orthodox Church authorities, institutions involved in the educational and social activities of Catholic missions invite Orthodox to be members of board or other agencies which plan and administer these services.

3. The Catholic authorities authorize the local Joint Committee to examine existing social projects conducted by missionaries in regions where all, or almost all Christians are Orthodox, to see what can be conducted by the Orthodox or what could better be conducted under joint auspices, and to recommend to the authorities the proper action to be taken.

4. Orthodox projects should be considered among the programmes supported by Catholic international agencies.

5. To help train Coptic Orthodox workers to run specific projects, a joint training institute should be established.

6. Church buildings of missionaries which are not being used or little used at present should be sold or given to Orthodox rather than to others, secular or religious.

7. The Coptic Catholic Church should refrain from expanding by not establishing new parishes or dioceses or nominating new bishops and by not establishing new monasteries or convents.

It was also recommended that the work of the Local Joint Committee be strengthened and that means be found for its work to be carried out on a regular basis. If necessary, additional members could be coopted, especially persons who are in a position to put into effect the recommendations of the committee. There is also need for the authorities of the Churches to clarify how the committee relates to persons and institutions and how its recommendations can be effectively carried out.*

The participants in the Vienna meeting submit the above observations and recommendations to their respective authorities in the conviction that they are fulfilling the charge laid upon them as a joint commission to guide common study in theoretical fields and in the field of practical problems "so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world" (cf. Common Declaration). We pray that what the commission is doing will contribute, by God's grace, to achieving full unity between our Churches.

CHRISTOLOGICAL DECLARATION

In accordance with our apostolic traditions transmitted to our two apostolic Churches and preserved therein, and in conformity with the early three ecumenical councils and the tradition of our common Fathers before the schism, we confess one faith in the One Triune God, the divinity of the Only Begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word of God, the effulgence of His glory and the express image of His substance. Who for us and for the sake of the economy of our salvation, has assumed to Himself from the Holy Virgin Mary a real body possessing a rational soul. This ensouled flesh did not exist before the union. The body remained body although glorified after the Godbefitting resurrection and ascension. It is from the very moment of the descent of the Divine Word in the Virgin's womb, that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity united to Him the perfect humanity which He took from the holy Virgin. He Himself one and the same consubstantial with the Father with respect to His Divinity became consubstantial with us with respect to His Humanity.

Our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, then is perfect God with respect to His Divinity, perfect man with respect to His Humanity. In Him His Divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without

alteration, without division, without separation. His divinity did not separate from His humanity for an instant, not for the twinkling of an eye. He who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

As we confess the faith formulated above according to the first three Ecumenical Councils, we together anathematize Arianism, Apollinarism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism and profess the faith expressed in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol. We accept a personal, real union, and not a conjunction or combination of two persons' entities. When the Orthodox part rejects all duality in Jesus Christ, it is intended to say that every act of Jesus Christ is in fact the act of God the Word incarnate and not that some of His acts be attributed to His Divinity alone as it might seem. When the Catholics confess their faith in Jesus Christ, then they do not deny what the Orthodox say, but they want to emphasize that in Him are preserved all the properties of the Divinity as well as all the properties of the Humanity, a fact which the Orthodox profess incessantly.

When the Orthodox confess that Divinity and Humanity of Our Lord are united in one nature, they take "nature", not as a pure and simple nature, but rather as one composite nature, wherein the Divinity and Humanity are united inseparately and unconfusedly. And when Catholics confess Jesus Christ as one in two natures, they do not separate the Divinity from the Humanity, not even for the twinkling of an eye, but they rather try to avoid mingling, commixtion, confusion or alteration.

We both confess in the union the reality of the humanity of Our Lord, for the salvation of mankind could not be but the act of the Divine Word incarnate. The Divinity did not and could not forsake the Humanity for a moment neither during the time of crucifixion nor any time after. In the Eucharist, the faithful always partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, a fact which stresses the reality of His Humanity. On the other hand, we stress the reality of the Divinity of Our Lord, the Word Who was and still is the very God incarnate. For this reason the resurrection of Our Lord is a conclusive evidence of His Divinity. This explains the most illustrious importance we give to the feast of Resurrection.

This is our faith in the mystery of the Incarnation of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the economy of our salvation. In this we all agree.

Vienna, August 29th, 1976

* Cf. Cardinal Willebrands' letter to Amba Samuel (28th January, 1977) which follows.

January 28th, 1977

LETTER OF CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS TO HIS GRACE AMBA SAMUEL

Your Grace,

The Catholic members of the Joint Commission between our Churches who were present at the Commission meeting in Vienna from August 26th to 29th, 1976 have presented a report on that meeting and its recommendations to the authorities of the Catholic Church. I would like to communicate to Your Grace, and through you to the authorities of the Coptic Orthodox Church, our reactions to these recommendations.

First of all, I wish to assure you that the report of the Vienna meeting has been given very careful consideration by the different parties in our Church who are concerned with the relations between our two Churches, including, in a particular way, His Holiness, Pope Paul VI. In addition, we have studied various other communications and reports including your letter of November 15th, 1976 to His Eminence, the Cardinal Secretary of State.

Thus, in giving very serious and sympathetic attention to every aspect of the report presented to us, we have at the same time considered it in the context of what has been accomplished over the whole period of time since the memorable meeting between Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III in May, 1973.

We are happy to see that the Commission makes concrete proposals about theological studies which clarify their objectives and present a time-table for carrying them out. They are not academic exercises but are aimed at pointing the way towards full communion between our two Churches. As we understand the proposal, the five years project is flexible enough and realistic enough so that even if all theological questions which exist between our Churches are not completely resolved by that time, we will nonetheless have established a firm theological base for eventually achieving that perfect communion which, in the final analysis, will be God's gift to us.

With regard to the concerns and proposals about pastoral problems, I feel it would be helpful to clarify certain general ideas before entering into a consideration of the proposals themselves.

Within the Catholic Church, it is the local Church, with the bishop, the various religious congregations, the parishes, lay organizations etc., which is primarily responsible for maintaining the Christian life of the community and its apostolic work. There is a great deal of room for local initiatives and autonomous action. The central authorities of our Church can stimulate and coordinate this activity, encourage it where it needs help, guide or correct it where abuses may occur. The Church of Rome, however, does not merely dictate to the local Church nor substitute itself for it. Communion with Rome does not mean absorption by Rome.

You will understand, therefore, that if we are sympathetic to proposals which may be made for developing our mutual relations, if we encourage them and assist them by moral and material means, we cannot simply impose them upon the local Church. It is our task — a task for which we also need your understanding and cooperation — to help local Catholic authorities, organizations and individuals to understand and accept these proposals, and even enrich them with the fruits of their own experience.

We fully agree with the statement of the Vienna report that no ecumenical activities between our Churches should be used to create confusion in the minds of the faithful or open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. In fact no activities of our Churches should be used for this purpose. At the same time, our search for union must take place in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, of frequent consultations between Catholics and Orthodox on the local scene to prevent misunderstandings and friction. There must be an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other despite the admittedly regrettable attitudes and actions of the past, and of recognition that we are all trying to fulfil God's will for His Church even if at times there may be shortcomings and failures. Catholics and Orthodox alike must work to create this atmosphere so that there is not the impression that one group is out to suppress the other or gain control of the other.

We find many of the recommendations of the Vienna report reasonable and possible of implementation. We believe it possible for Catholic congregations of men and women to work directly in the service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. We shall encourage them to do this under the pastoral guidance of the Orthodox bishops and other authorities of your Church in the same way as they do this today under the guidance of Catholic authorities.

We find the second and third recommendations concerning institutions involved in educational and social activities acceptable. Though these institutions have their own statutes and financial autonomy, we shall encourage them to put these recommendations into practice in every way possible.

We have already contacted some Catholic international agencies encouraging aid to Orthodox projects under the same conditions as this aid is now given to Catholic projects. We shall continue to do so. Furthermore, we would suggest that local Catholic and Orthodox representatives meet together to draw up plans for the training institute mentioned for submission to these international agencies (cf. n. 5 of the Vienna Report).

The transfer of property is often determined by the statutes of the individual organizations which own them and by the conditions established by the original founders or later benefactors. Keeping this fact in mind we shall encourage the sale or transfer of properties not being used to Orthodox.

The recommendation that the Catholic Church must not establish new parishes or dioceses or nominate new bishops or establish new monasteries or convents cannot be accepted in the form in which it is stated. No authorities of our Church can impose on local bishops and pastors an absolute prohibition against using those means which they judge necessary for carrying out their pastoral responsibilities towards their own faithful. There are certain needs of the faithful of the Coptic Catholic Church at present which can only be met by providing them with institutions which do not exist today.

However we recognize that the setting up of Catholic institutions has at times resulted in expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Orthodox. Therefore we could accept a formulation of a recommendation which states that the Catholic Church carry out its pastoral activities within the framework of structures and institutions already existing, and that any changes in these be determined uniquely by needs of its own faithful.

Whatever may have been attitudes in the past, we wish to state clearly that the Catholic Church does not consider the Coptic Orthodox as objects of a « mission ». If there is to be any pastoral work among Orthodox it must be done with the knowledge, approval and cooperation of the Orthodox authorities and without the intention of having people pass from one Church to the other. For this reason, we feel it necessary that there be frequent and regular contacts between the bishops and religious superiors of the Catholic Church and those of the Orthodox Church. These are absolutely necessary to create that atmosphere of respect and confidence which are lacking at present. It would help both parties to meet concrete pastoral needs of their people without fear of creating friction and competition. It would also help resolve specific cases arising out of disputes within parishes or communities or where individuals may have particular problems of conscience. Above all, it would help the ordinary faithful see that we are moving towards unity with full respect of each other, with a desire to overcome past errors and with no intention of taking advantage of the other party.

The local joint committee can be of great help in making investigations and offering advice. We are happy to see that the Vienna meeting recommended reinforcing its work and clarifying its authority. We shall remain in close contact with the local Catholic authorities to achieve this. However, we are convinced that, in the long run, only if regular and systematic consultation among the authorities of the two Churches take place will it be possible to meet the fears, preoccupations and desires expressed in the Vienna report.

Furthermore, there is one point which I think I must mention in all frankness. The authorities of our Church in Rome will make every effort to implement the recommendations of the Vienna meeting, along the lines I have indicated. However,

in our contacts with Catholic representatives at all levels — bishops, agents of Catholic fund agencies, religious superiors, laymen — we have encountered a hesitation to go further towards implementing the Vienna proposals because of a practice, recently introduced in the Coptic Orthodox Church, of refusing to recognize baptism conferred in the Catholic Church and therefore of insisting that this holy sacrament be conferred again on any Catholic who wishes to enter the Orthodox Church. By questioning the validity of Catholic baptism in these cases, the Coptic Orthodox Church seems to deny the very existence of the Catholic Church with its hierarchy, liturgy, sacraments, etc. which have their foundation in the sacrament of baptism. This practice has been the occasion of crises of conscience and of bitterness among Catholics. Many individuals and organizations see it as an obstacle to their putting themselves at the service of the Orthodox authorities and to establishing the cooperation we all desire. Until this practice, which has not been part of the long tradition of our Church, is changed, we will continue to have difficulty in receiving cooperation from many Catholics in our efforts to implement the recommendations of the common declaration of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III as well as those of the various meetings of the Joint Commission.

I must ask you, therefore, that even if no public and formal declaration about this be made on your part, something be worked out to bring this practice to an end, as a matter of fact, in all situations in which a Catholic enters your Church.

I send these reactions to you, as I mentioned in the beginning after long reflection and wide consultation. They represent the judgement of the major authorities here. It is my hope that they may form the foundation for further development of sincere and confident relations between our Churches leading to that unity which is God's will for us.

May I ask Your Grace to present to His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III, the expression of my respect and veneration. His farsightedness and trust in the Lord have contributed in a remarkable way to bring us closer as persons and as leaders of our Churches.

I wish also to assure you of my esteem and affection in the Lord and of my prayers that God will bless abundantly your efforts for serving His Church to the glory of His Name.

JOHANNES CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS
President

March 29th, 1977

LETTER OF CARDINALS JOHANNES WILLEBRANDS AND
PAUL PHILIPPE TO THE COPTIC CATHOLIC PATRIARCH,
STEPHANOS I SIDAROISS

29th March, 1977

Your Beatitude,

During the visit of Your Beatitude to Rome, last November, we had occasion to discuss the dialogue

between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. We were able to recognise that certain factors could harm relations between our Churches and we examined how these relations might be further developed. The joint committee, established following the visit of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to the Holy Father in 1973, presented certain recommendations to the Holy See for the furtherance of the dialogue. In addition there have been several exchanges of messages between the representatives of the Coptic Orthodox Church and those of the Catholic Church.

In these circumstances we thought it useful to share with Your Beatitude and your brothers in the episcopate the thinking of the Holy See on this subject, such as it has been expressed on various occasions in recent months, above all in a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State addressed to Patriarch Shenouda and also in the letter of the President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, sent to His Excellency Bishop Samuel.

As Your Beatitude knows, the Holy See considers the dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church, in the search for full communion, as one of the most important dialogues of the Catholic Church. The Coptic Orthodox Church is recognised as a Church possessing apostolic succession and a faith and sacramental life which, in the words of the Holy Father (Speech for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 1972) put it in an "almost complete" communion with the Catholic Church. In ecumenical dialogue the Coptic Orthodox Church is a partner with whom the Catholic Church seeks disinterested collaboration in order to co-operate in the development of the Christian life of her faithful and to open the way to a more perfect communion.

The Coptic Catholic Church has a specific role to play in this dialogue which she carries out according to the principles of the conciliar Decree on Ecumenism and the statements of the Holy Father. An essential part of this dialogue is the deepening of the spiritual and apostolic life of the Church. Hence the need to partake in the pastoral renewal occurring throughout the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council.

It is in this context that His Eminence Cardinal John Villot, in the name of the Holy Father, expressed his regret to His Holiness Shenouda III, that the episcopal nomination of the Catholic patriarchal Vicar, His Excellency Monsignor Athanasios Abadir, might have been thought by the Patriarch to be an obstacle to the search for unity. The Pope, who continues to disapprove of acts of proselytism between our Christian communities, is really convinced that the unity hoped for among all those who believe in Christ, cannot come about without all the faithful, clergy and laity, feeling in themselves the pain of division and ceaselessly meditating on the prayer of Christ "that they may all be one" (*John 17,21*). But this can only come about if Christians live deeply the whole message of the gospel.

The preaching of this message, wrote the Cardinal Secretary of State, and the encouragement of both clergy and laity to live it out fully, constitute an essential task of the bishops. In this perspective, the nomination of a bishop, when it is required by the pastoral needs of the faithful, is truly an act by which the Church shows its desire to maintain and strengthen her faithfulness to Christ.

The Catholic Church receives with joy all the news concerning the vitality of the Coptic Orthodox Church and rejoices in it. Likewise we would hope that the nomination of a new Catholic pastor, who must see to the deepening of the faith of the Catholics, might be thought of as being able to bring with it a greater reconciliation among brothers, according to the will of Christ.

The Holy See, concluded Cardinal Villot, considers as positive the fact that the Coptic Catholic Patriarchal Synod chose as patriarchal vicar the only Coptic Catholic priest who was a member of the joint committee of the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Indeed, this choice seems to show a desire to further tighten the different kinds of links which already unite Catholic Copts and Orthodox Copts. Such is the election of a pastor who, whilst helping the Coptic Catholic Patriarch to guide his flock, would also be sympathetic in heart and mind to dialogue with his Coptic Orthodox brethren.

One important feature in the development of the dialogue is the work of the joint committee drawn from our two Churches. In a meeting held in Vienna during August 1976, certain recommendations were drawn up and submitted to the Catholic authorities. Some of these recommendations were connected with the concern of the Orthodox Copts to ensure that dialogue and mutual collaboration did not create confusion among their faithful or open the way to an expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Orthodox.

These recommendations have been the object of an in-depth study on the part of the Holy See. The Cardinal President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity informed Bishop Samuel of our reactions in a letter written with the full agreement of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

In this letter the need was recognised for the theological dialogue to be directed towards the re-establishment of full communion between our two Churches, without it getting lost in purely academic exercises.

The Orthodox had the impression that since their dialogue was with the Catholic Church, it was enough to have contact with the Church of Rome alone in order to reach certain decisions. But Cardinal Willebrands pointed out that although the Holy See remains the principal interlocutor, it is the local Church with its bishop which is first of all responsible for the Christian life of the community. Doubtless the Holy See can stimulate and coordinate this activity, encourage and guide it, or correct it where there are abuses, but the Church

of Rome does not at all take the place of the local Church. The Church of Rome may favour certain concrete proposals; she may encourage them and assist in their realisation, both morally and materially, in active cooperation with the local Church.

The letter confirms that the Catholic Church agrees completely with the following: that none of its activities should be used to create confusion among Orthodox faithful, nor open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox. The search for full communion must take place in an atmosphere of mutual trust, reciprocal respect and continuing consultation. This atmosphere needs to be further developed, although one remains conscious of various errors, both in the past and even in the present.

We have informed Bishop Samuel that the Catholic authorities here accept a large number of the Vienna recommendations; indeed, we think it possible for members of religious congregations to work directly at the service of the religious and pastoral needs of the Orthodox Church. They could work according to the pastoral instructions of the Orthodox authorities in a manner analogous to that in which they already follow the pastoral instructions of the Catholic authorities.

The Vienna statement recommended that Catholic institutions engaged in social and educational activities might invite members of the Orthodox Church nominated by their authorities to become members of their administrative or governing bodies, and that a study be made of the social projects already in existence in areas where all (or almost all) the Christians are Orthodox. This would be in order to discover what role might be given to the Orthodox in their direction and in their day to day activity. The Catholic authorities encourage the application of such recommendations, whilst taking account of the statutes of these organisations and their financial autonomy.

We encourage international Catholic financial aid agencies to support Orthodox projects in the same way in which they support Catholic projects. Furthermore, on the occasion of the sale, or transfer, of properties belonging to Catholic institutions, we suggest that preference be given to the Orthodox. However, the statutes of the organisations which own the works, as well as the wishes of their founders or benefactors, must be taken into account.

In the same letter, the President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity let it be known that the recommendation that the Catholic Church should not set up new parishes, dioceses, or institutions such as monasteries or convents for a period of five years, was unacceptable in the form in which it had been drawn up. No such absolute prohibition could be imposed upon the bishops who are responsible for their own faithful and who must use whatever means they consider necessary to fulfil this responsibility.

However, we recognise that the setting up of Catholic institutions has at times resulted in the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Orthodox. Therefore we could accept a formulation of a recommendation which states that the Catholic Church carry out its pastoral activities within the framework of structures and institutions already existing, and that any changes be determined uniquely by the needs of its own faithful.

The Coptic Orthodox have been assured that the Catholic Church does not consider them as objects of a "mission" and that it is important that all pastoral work among Orthodox be undertaken with the knowledge, agreement and co-operation of the Orthodox authorities, and without the intention of having people pass from one Church to the other. For this reason it is necessary that there be frequent and regular contacts between Catholic bishops and religious superiors and those of the Orthodox Church. These contacts are deemed necessary in order to create that atmosphere of mutual respect and trust which is lacking at present, to meet the pastoral needs of the Christians, and to sort out particular items which could be a source of misunderstanding or friction.

Once again the Holy See commends the work of the local joint committee. Moreover, it is convinced that it is mainly by means of regular systematic consultations between the authorities of the two Churches, that the fears, worries and desires expressed in the Vienna Report can be dealt with.

In his letter to Bishop Samuel, Cardinal Willebrands spoke clearly and frankly about the practice of some Orthodox of "rebaptising" Catholics who pass to the Orthodox Church. By this custom the Orthodox Church puts in doubt the very existence of the Catholic Church with its sacraments, its liturgy, and its hierarchy. Many Catholics find in this behaviour an obstacle to their participation in the ecumenical movement. Therefore, we ask that this practice be ended, though we are not demanding any public statement on this matter.

In another letter, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity also informed Bishop Samuel of our thinking in the question of the passage of Christians from one Church to another. We recognise the possibility of such cases occurring for reasons of faith and out of a deep personal conviction, of which the local bishop is the judge. Nevertheless, when it is a matter of groups of persons able to form a community, the bishop will make a very close investigation of their motives. If these initiatives are due to a desire to withdraw, for no matter what reason, from the authority of their own bishop or parish priest, that is not sufficient motive. Such a request to pass to the Catholic Church should be refused, and the Orthodox authorities must be informed of such proposals. In collaboration with the Orthodox authorities, a solution must be sought in such a way as to restore peace to the community.

Your Beatitude can see the importance which we give to developing relations between Catholic and Orthodox bishops, whether on an individual basis or on the level of the hierarchies as such. It is important in the search for full communion that the Catholic and the Orthodox authorities really acknowledge one another as brothers in the episcopate, with pastoral concerns which transcend the present divisions and necessitate brotherly collaboration.

Recently, during the visit of the four Catholic members of the local joint committee, of which Bishop Kabès is co-president, we had an opportunity for friendly discussions which helped us better appreciate both the difficulties being encountered in this important stage of dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the common desire to overcome them.

We had occasion to clearly underline, once again, the thinking and hopes of the Holy See. It has been agreed that we must together overcome the lack of trust which separates the Coptic Catholics from the Coptic Orthodox. Hence the need for regular contacts between the two hierarchies to prevent misunderstandings, to deepen mutual respect and to favour the pastoral care of all Christians. Similarly, whilst respecting the autonomy of Catholic pastors to take the decisions they judge necessary for the pastoral care of their own people, these meetings and exchanges are especially recommended when it is a matter of taking important pastoral and organisational decisions.

During the meetings in Rome, the hope was expressed that the Assembly of Ordinaries might become an appropriate means for the encouragement of inter-ritual collaboration in the work for ecumenism as well.

As regards the collaboration offered by religious and other individuals and institutions to the Coptic Orthodox pastors, it has been decided that this collaboration would follow the general orientations of the Catholic Church, in conformity with their constitutions or statutes and according to the instructions of the hierarchy.

To conclude, the Holy See commends the local joint committee to the Catholic hierarchy. The committee's work is of particular importance for ecumenical activity in Egypt. The Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches and this Secretariat are very grateful to their colleagues for their work in this area.

In writing to Your Beatitude, we wished to offer these reflections in the hope that they might help the Catholic Church in Egypt fulfil its essential role in the search for unity between Catholics and Orthodox, a search which will lead the two sister Churches to re-establish the full communion which is Christ's will. The Holy Father has already told Your Beatitude that he is sure that the Catholics in Egypt will collaborate fully in this task. We entrust this task to your pastoral care and that of the members of your Holy Synod, and all the Catholic

Ordinaries of Egypt, of whose assembly Your Beatitude is president.

With every fraternal good wish,
Your sincerely in Christ

JOHANNES CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS
President
Secretariat for Promoting
Christian Unity

PAUL CARDINAL PHILIPPE
Prefect
S. Congregation
for the Eastern Churches

March 13th-18th 1978

FOURTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

Press Communiqué

From March 13 to 18 there took place in Cairo the fourth meeting of the Joint International Commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church. Previous meetings have been held in Cairo in 1974 and 1975 and in Vienna in 1976. The Joint Commission was established by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on the occasion of their meeting in Rome in May 1973. Its function, as stated in the Common Declaration issued then, is "to guide common study in the fields of Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect, the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today's world".

In the course of its meeting the commission discussed studies on the role of the councils in the life of the Church and on the sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of salvation. The studies had been recommended in earlier meetings as being of particular importance for reaching a common understanding of our Christian faith and life. The commission was able to clarify a number of points concerning these subjects and indicate areas which need further reflection and clarification.

The commission considered some general principles for the relations between our Churches and their activities. It also agreed upon some specific recommendations for the study of the nature and forms of the full unity we are seeking. It examined the work of the Joint Local Committee which had been set up in 1974 to promote and guide the contacts between the Churches on the local level and aid in overcoming obstacles to these contacts.

Recommendations were made for improving and strengthening this work.

The commission also stressed that, since its work and that of the local committee is an effort at accomplishing God's will for our Churches, this work should be accompanied by prayer and fasting among its members and that others in both Churches should be invited to participate in these same spiritual activities aimed at obtaining God's blessing.

The conclusions and recommendations of this meeting are now being submitted to the authorities of both Churches.

In the course of the meeting of the Commission, the members participated in fraternal suppers held at the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate and at the Apostolic Nunciature. They also made a pilgrimage to the Wadi Natroon where they were guests of the monasteries of Saint Macarios and of Deir es Suriani.

Participating in the meeting were:

For the Catholic Church: Rev. Msgr. Charles Moeller, Secretary for the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, head of the Catholic delegation; His Excellency, Msgr. Youhanna Kabes auxiliary Bishop to His Beatitude Patriarch Stephanos I; His Excellency, Mgr. Athanasios Abadir, Patriarcal Vicar; Rev. Prof. Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., professor emeritus at the Faculty of Theology Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt; Rev. Prof. André de Halleux, O.F.M., professor at the University of Louvain; Rev. John F. Long, S.J., Bureau Chief of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; Mr. Amin Fahim, President of the Christian Association of Upper Egypt for Schools and Social Promotion.

For the Coptic Orthodox Church: His Grace Amba Gregorios, Bishop of Coptic Culture and Higher Theological Studies, head of the Coptic Orthodox delegation; His Grace, Amba Samuel, Bishop of Public, Ecumenical and Social Services; Rev. Father Antonios Ragheb, Shoubia, Cairo; Dr. George Bebawi, Professor of Patristics, Coptic Theological College; Dr. Maurice Tadros, Professor of New Testament, Coptic Theological College; Mr. Amin Fakhry Abdelnour, lay leader in Church, social and civil institutions.

Two members of the delegation were unavoidably prevented from taking part in the meeting; Bishop Yohannes of Garbieh (because of ill health) and Bishop Athanasios of Beni Suef (outside Egypt for other important business).

COMMON REPORT

The Joint Commission held its fourth meeting in Cairo at the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. All the members of the Commission participated except Bishop Yohannes of Garbieh (absent because of ill health) and Bishop Athanasios of Beni Suef (outside Egypt for other important business).

I. THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

After presentation and discussion of two themes in a general session, the following conclusions were reached by the theological sub-commission and later approved by the whole commission.

A) *The Role of Councils in the Life of Our Churches*

1. Councils and synods of all kinds (local, regional, general etc.) have been an expression of the living communion of the Church.

2. Ecumenical Councils constitute one of the clearest manifestations of the life and unity of the Church.

3. The significance of an ecumenical Council for the tradition of the Church manifests itself through an on-going process of reception in the life of the universal Church.

4. The first three Ecumenical Councils are unanimously received as such by both our Churches.

5. The other councils, received in the Roman Catholic Church as ecumenical or general, should not be considered as an insurmountable obstacle in our search for unity, although the Coptic Orthodox Church does not accept them as ecumenically binding.

6. The Coptic Orthodox Church considers these other councils as subjects of further studies. She respects the conciliar tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, especially as far as it fosters the common Christian tradition.

B) *Sacraments in their relation to the Church and the economy of salvation.*

1. The Holy Spirit communicates to the faithful the redemptive work of Christ, that is his life, death and resurrection, through the kerygma and the holy mysteries, or sacraments, of the Church.

2. Through holy Baptism the faithful are incorporated into the Church as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is nourished and unified by the Holy Eucharist as the center and culmination of our communion with Christ and within his Church.

3. As unity is our ultimate goal, we realize that the issues concerning sacraments cannot be studied separately from the question of unity. We would like our dialogue to go on, seeking a solution of the problems of ecclesiology, especially those related to the sacraments.

The theological sub-commission also presented a number of questions which it judged necessary to be considered in the framework of any study being made about the unity which is envisaged between our Churches. Among these are:

1. After union, what will be the place of the one Coptic Catholic Orthodox Church in Egypt in the Catholic Communion?

2. How will the two Churches of Rome and Alexandria form one body, the Church of God?

3. How will the historical rights of Alexandria be preserved?

4. How will the developments of Roman ecclesiology since 451 be taken into consideration?

5. How can a Church which has celebrated many councils be in communion with one which has not shared these councils?

By a decision of the whole commission, these questions are to be referred to the sub-committee on the forms of unity which is to be set up in accordance with the recommendations made below.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR CHURCHES

Following upon the previous meetings of this commission, especially that of Vienna, there have been a series of meetings, letters and other communications between representatives of our Churches. From all this, the following emerge as general principles for the relations between our Churches and as practical proposals for furthering these relations.

A) *The Holy See of Rome*

a) considers its relations with the Coptic Orthodox Church as among its most important relations with Christian Churches;

b) recognizes the Coptic Orthodox Church as a Church possessing the Apostolic succession and a faith and sacramental life which establish a particular communion with the Catholic Church;

c) with the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church seeks to establish an unselfish cooperation in the service of the Gospel.

For these reasons, the following principles have been communicated to Catholic and Coptic Orthodox authorities in Egypt as representing the attitude of the Church of Rome regarding activities of the Catholic Church:

1. No activities of the Catholic Church should be used to open the way to the expansion of the Catholic Church at the expense of the Coptic Orthodox.

2. The Catholic Church does not consider the Coptic Orthodox as objects of mission.

3. Pastoral activities should not be conducted among Orthodox with the purpose of the passing of people from one Church to another.

4. Pastoral work among Orthodox must not be

done without the knowledge, approval and cooperation of Orthodox authorities.

5. The Catholic Church carries out its pastoral activities within the framework of its existing structures and institutions. When pastoral responsibilities necessitate changes in the existing structures, it is strongly recommended that these be done in mutual consultation with the appropriate Orthodox authorities in order to preserve and put into practice the principles stated above.

6. Encouragement is given by the Catholic authorities to the religious orders and congregations to direct their activities also to the service of the Orthodox Church with her approval and cooperation or in answer to her request.

From her side, the Coptic Orthodox Church welcomes the statement of these principles and the spirit animating them as a concrete step towards helping both churches to proceed further on the road to perfect union.

We therefore consider it particularly important that there be frequent and regular contacts between Catholic Bishops and religious superiors and those of the Orthodox Church:

a) to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence which are lacking now;

b) to meet the serious pastoral needs of the faithful of both communities;

c) to avoid misunderstandings which may arise;

d) to resolve specific cases which would be a source of misunderstanding or friction.

B) *Some practical recommendations of a general nature:*

1. It is strongly urged that there be avoided all words, articles, homilies, instructions and attitudes which wound each other's Churches, in their leaders or in their faithful.

2. We strongly recommend to both hierarchies the work of the Joint Local Committee and encourage their cooperation with it as an instrument which could help them in putting into practice the principles and suggestions made here.

3. We encourage the following of the Week of Prayer for Unity, as has been practised for many years in Cairo and Alexandria, in other provinces according to local institutions.

4. Taking notice of the fact that in some places there are already positive contacts existing between our Churches, we recommend particular programmes in two geographical areas as a beginning towards developing these contacts further. In the areas of Cairo and Beni Suef-Minya, Bishops, priests and qualified laity could meet in order to study and seek solutions to such general problems as: a) modern challenges to faith and how to meet

them; b) the younger generation; c) rural migration; d) participation of the Church in the developing life of the country etc.

III. A SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION

In our second report we stated that « the union we envisage is a real one, a communion in faith, in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God. The process by which this union is to be achieved is that two Apostolic Churches, equally and with mutual respect, come into full communion again on the basis of the faith, the traditions and the ecclesiastical life of the undivided Church of the first four and a half centuries. Such a communion once achieved, there will be but one Coptic Church under the leadership of the one Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. Since this unity would be a full communion, the richness of the Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression within the structure of this one Coptic Church for the enrichment of all ». Furthermore this one Coptic Church would be in full communion with the other Christian Churches and in particular with the Church of Rome.

We feel the time has come to seek a clearer and more precise form of this unity which we envisage in order to build further confidence among Catholics and Orthodox and to show that mutual fears about absorption or losing religious and social values have no serious basis.

We therefore direct the Joint Local Committee to set up, in accordance with the provisions of our First Report, nr. III, § 8, a sub-committee whose purpose will be to study and report back to this commission one or more forms or projects of unity which might be envisaged between our Churches. It will include in this study a consideration of the theological, ecclesiastical and structural aspects of this unity, seen from both the national and international points of view.

The following points of procedure are to be observed:

1. Before the end of April, the joint Local Committee will meet to choose the members of the sub-committee and further define its activities.
2. The sub-committee is encouraged to enlist the services of "ad hoc" consultants for the study of specific questions.
3. At the beginning of its work, the sub-committee should sponsor two private consultations, one among Catholics and one among Orthodox, composed of a selected group of bishops, priests and laymen, to collect and evaluate the desires, hopes, understandings, preoccupations and fears to be found in each Church. The results of these consultations will provide useful material for the work of the sub-committee and help it to determine the priorities of its studies.

4. At least three times a year the results of the work are to be communicated through mail or in meetings to all members of the Joint Commission, including those living outside Egypt, for their suggestions, criticisms and eventual directives.

5. A detailed report of its work will be presented to this Joint Commission at its next meeting.

6. The sub-committee and its sponsor, the Joint Local Committee, should keep in mind that its concrete object is to indicate possibilities of real union. It should be open to various alternatives, not merely one; it should indicate theological and ecclesiastical problems and determine how they are to be studied and, if possible, resolved. While considering practical questions concerning the coming together of the two Churches, it should not try to go into too many minute details during this first stage of its work.

Since we are firmly convinced that this sub-committee is striving to accomplish God's will for our Churches, its work should be accompanied by prayer and fasting among its members. Others should also be invited to participate in these same spiritual activities aimed at obtaining God's blessing on this work.

IV. THE JOINT LOCAL COMMITTEE AND THE JOINT COMMISSION

The Joint Local Committee

1. Because the work of the Local Committee is being increased and expanded, it is logical that it increase its membership. The Joint Commission takes note of what was decided last November by the Committee about adding at least one, and perhaps more members from each side. It recommends, however, that the committee also take into account a more frequent use of "ad hoc" consultants, to avoid becoming too large and unwieldy itself.

2. It is recommended that the Joint Local Committee meet occasionally in places outside Cairo in order to come into closer contact with the persons and the situations of the local communities.

3. It is urged that the Bishops-members of the Joint Local Committee become the regular point of contact between the Committee and the Synods of both Churches.

The Joint Commission

1. This Commission confirms its decision to set up a permanent Secretariat to follow up the work of the Commission during the periods between its meetings. This Secretariat is to see to the preparing of papers on the subjects decided for study, to the carrying out of these concrete studies and would prepare the general meetings of the Joint Commission. It could also assist the Joint Local

Committee in carrying out decisions made by that Committee.

2. While recognizing the financial problems involved, this Commission strongly recommends that one of its meetings in the near future be held outside Egypt, possibly in the environs of Rome, to enable all members to have personal contact with the Roman Church and its institutions, general superiors of religious orders etc.

3. In the meantime, note should be taken of the presence of Egyptian members of the Commission at various meetings in Europe so that they can take advantage of these trips to arrange partial meetings of members of the Commission.

June 23rd, 1979

PRINCIPLES FOR GUIDING THE SEARCH FOR UNITY BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE PROTOCOL JOINT TO THE PRINCIPLES

The Principles and the Protocol prepared on June 23rd, 1979 by the members of the joint international commission between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church, were submitted to Pope John Paul II and to Pope Shenouda III, who approved and signed both documents.

PREAMBLE

Through meetings of an official mixed commission established in 1973, through unofficial theological consultations starting in 1971 and through other exchanges, official and informal, the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church have made important progress in understanding the deep bonds of faith and Christian life which exist between them, despite a separation which has lasted fifteen centuries. We have overcome the difficulties of the past concerning our faith in the mystery of the Word Incarnate and we can now profess in common our faith in the mystery of our redemption. We possess the same priesthood received from the Apostles and thus celebrate the same Eucharist of the Lord whose members we become through the same baptism. We share many other aspects of the Christian life proclaimed by the Apostles and handed on by the Fathers of the Church.

At the same time there are some dogmatic and canonical divergences which prevent us from enjoying that full communion which at one time existed between the Churches of Rome and Alexandria. Serious efforts have been made to overcome these divergences. However, it seemed useful to review these efforts, to register their positive aspects and discern the deficiencies up to now.

The election of His Holiness Pope John Paul II seemed an appropriate occasion for this review. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III has sent an official

delegation of the Coptic Orthodox Church to bring his greetings to the new Bishop of Rome, to express his concern about the dialogue in course and to discuss with responsible officials in Rome ways by which this dialogue may be improved and strengthened towards achieving its goal of full communion between the two Churches.

The participants in these conversations were greatly encouraged by the message of Pope Shenouda III and the warm response of Pope John Paul II. The texts of these messages contain very important reflections and guidelines for continuing the common search. In addition, the participants recognized that many important elements are to be found in the various reports and communications made over the past eight years. However, if these elements are to bear fruit among the clergy and faithful of both Churches, they must be understood within the context of certain general principles which can guide the search for unity in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence and of renewed dedication to the command of the Lord of the Church "that all may be one".

These principles are now presented to our Churches with the hope that they will be seriously studied and assimilated by our people, and with the prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide us in applying them effectively to the work which still lies ahead.

1. The objective of our efforts is a full communion of faith expressing itself in communion in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God.

2. We are two Apostolic Churches in which, by virtue of the Apostolic succession we possess the full sacramental life, particularly the Eucharist, even if Eucharistic communion has not yet been achieved between us in so far as we have not completely resolved the divergences among us.

3. The resolution of these divergences is all the more important, therefore, in order that our Churches may give more adequate expression to the communion which already exists in an imperfect way among them. Thus they will be able to give more perfect witness to their faith and their life in Christ than they can in their present state of division, since local Catholic Churches everywhere and the Coptic Church will then fully recognize each other as the realization in their places of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

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

5. The unity presupposes that our Churches continue to have the right and power to govern themselves according to their own traditions and disciplines.

6. This legitimate autonomy does not deny the necessity of mutual relations between our Churches. When the Churches live more closely together in communion of faith and mutual charity, they will develop new contacts and patterns of relations which will indicate how to deal with questions of common interest and concern. This process will also help the Churches to arrive to a better understanding of the meaning and extent of primacy in the Church, a concept which exists in both our Churches but about which there remain canonical and doctrinal differences preventing our full communion. In the meantime, important questions of faith, of pastoral problems, of mutual need can be treated by brotherly communications and consultations between the primates or by other means which will be judged useful.

7. It is in the light of all the foregoing principles that we will seek to resolve the differences which still exist among us concerning our understanding of the structures through which the unity and the integrity of the faith of the Church are to be served.

8. It is in the perspective of the search for this unity that we understand that the pastoral activity, mutual collaboration and common witness should take place at present in Egypt. None of these can have as their objective the passing of people from one Church to another. They are to serve the entire Christian community in Egypt. It is particularly important therefore that there be frequent and regular contacts between Catholic bishops and religious superiors and those of the Orthodox Church:

- a) to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence
- b) to meet the serious pastoral needs of the faithful of both communities
- c) to avoid misunderstandings which may arise
- d) to resolve specific cases which could be a source of misunderstanding or friction.

Frequent contacts at all levels of Church life will also help avoid words, articles, homilies, instructions and attitudes which might wound each other's Churches, in their leaders or in their faithful.

9. All this should be guided by and be in conformity with the principles stated in various communications made by the See of Rome to the Catholic Bishops of Egypt and to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.

10. Even if we do not adopt all the positions of the other, we should respect those positions as part of the historical heritage of the other and not exclude the possibility of reaching agreement about them.

11. Once unity is achieved, the richness of the various Christian traditions existing in Egypt would find clear and legitimate expression for the

enrichment of all within the one Coptic Church under the leadership of the Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.

12. We recognize that unity is God's gift to His Church. Its concrete expression should be in accordance with the living tradition of each Church which allows for new insights and a deeper understanding of how God wishes the Churches to meet the problems presenting themselves to all Christians today and to serve the world in unity and love.

June 23rd, 1979

PROTOCOL

1. We request official reaction to the principles by the authorities of both Churches as soon as possible and not later than the end of October. If modifications have been made, a small committee will meet immediately to discuss them and reach a common agreement about them.

2. The approved document will be communicated by each Church to its bishops and published for the use of other persons and groups affected by it.

3. We feel that the composition and the functions of the Joint Mixed Commission and the Local Joint Committee need further review and reform.

4. In the meantime two committees will be formed: one for directing studies and one for guiding practical implications. So that they can meet easily and frequently and be able to adhere to a regular time-table of work, these committees should be small, composed of two or three members from each Church.

5. Both committees should use freely the services of other experts and not feel that the permanent members must do the bulk of the work.

6. The committee for practical implications will set up at least three sub-committees: for schools, for social institutions, for pastoral projects. Each of these will have the responsibility to study the possibilities of cooperation in their particular area. They will seek to enlist the support and concrete activity of persons and institutions who can engage in this cooperation. There should be regular and frequent reporting on their work, with a minimum of three times a year.

7. The committees — with their sub-committees — advise concerned persons about the principles which have been developed at the Rome conversations of June 1979, about the possibilities for concrete action etc. They will help coordinate this action. Where questions may arise about the application or the non-application of the principles accepted, the matter should be brought to the immediate competent authority or, if this procedure is not effective, to the higher authorities, as the case may require.

8. One of the first priorities of the two committees will be to establish a programme and priorities. Basing themselves on the four commission reports (but not restricted to them), the committees will provide for a detailed outline of the theoretical and practical studies necessary for assisting the move towards unity, and determine the priorities and relations among these as well as the people from in and outside Egypt most indicated to take part in them.

9. What is of particular importance is that a programme be planned and implemented as soon as possible for bringing to the attention of the

clergy and laity of both Churches the principles which have been determined and the progressive action which can be taken to implement them. No serious search for unity between our Churches can be carried forward without an informed and sympathetic participation of the whole Church. It is recommended that the various proposals presented by the Joint Commission and the Local Joint Committee for achieving this and for ensuring cooperation among the hierarchies of our Churches be reexamined and implemented.

June 23rd, 1979

APPENDIX

THE CONTINUATION OF THE DIALOGUE

12 February 1988

THE RESUMPTION OF THE DIALOGUE

In February 1988, Fr. Pierre Duprey, Secretary of the Secretariat (now Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity, travelled to Cairo in order to organize the resumption of the work of the Joint International Commission between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The commission had held its last meeting in March 1978 (see above, pp. 26-30).

Fr. Duprey's trip to Cairo included a meeting with several members of the international commission at Amba Bishoy Monastery, and the drafting of a brief christological formula summarizing the essence of the Common Declaration signed in 1973 by Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III (see above, pp. 8-9).

We publish below the text of a communique which was issued on 12 February 1988 in order to explain the development of these conversations. Also below we outline some of the further developments that have taken place since 1988.

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

On Friday, the 12th of February 1988, the mixed commission* of the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church met in the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, Wadi El Natrun, in Egypt.

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

We have rejoiced at the historical meeting that happened in the Vatican on May 1973, between His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. This was the first meeting since about 15 centuries between our two Churches.

In that meeting we found ourselves in agreement on many issues of faith. In that meeting also a mixed commission was formed to discuss the issues of difference of doctrine and faith between the two Churches aiming at church unity. Previously in Vienna, September 1971, Pro Oriente arrang-

* Note. This is the group entrusted with the task of making a new start with the dialogue and prepare the fifth meeting of the International Joint Commission.

ed a meeting between theologians of the Catholic Church and those of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Coptic, the Syrian, the Armenian, the Ethiopian, and the Indian. They achieved an agreement concerning Christology.

We are grateful to God that we are now able to sign a common formula (see p. 13) expressing our official agreement on Christology which was already approved by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church on 21st June, 1986.

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

From 1988 Onwards

The February 1988 meeting prepared the way for the convocation of the fifth session of the Joint International Commission at Amba Bishoy Monastery from 3 to 8 October 1988. Responding positively to a proposal of the Coptic Orthodox Holy Synod, the theme considered at this meeting was the Mystery of the Redemption and its consequences for the last ends of the human person, together with its implications for the teaching of both Churches. The theme was discussed on the basis of papers prepared on this subject by both sides.

Subsequently, the Joint International Commission between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church met again at Amba Bishoy Monastery as a guest of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. At this sixth session, which took place from 23 to 27 April 1990, the members of the Commission reflected together on the history of the "filioque" controversy; biblical, theological, and patristic aspects of the procession of the Holy Spirit; and the addition of the formula "filioque" (and the Son) to the text of the Nicæan-Constantinopolitan Creed. As was the case at the fifth session, the discussion of the topic was based on working documents drafted by the Coptic Orthodox and Catholic members of the Commission.

The meetings in 1988 and 1990 provided an occasion for contacts with leaders of the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Egypt. The members of the Commission enjoyed the warm hospitality of Pope Shenouda in his residence at Amba Bishoy Monastery, and experienced once again the deep bonds of communion which unite the two Churches.

The Coptic-Catholic dialogue continues its work, looking forward to the goal described in the Principles of 1979: "The objective of our efforts is a full communion of faith expressing itself in communion in sacramental life and in the harmony of mutual relations between our two sister Churches in the one People of God"

